

Presenter and Session Information

Keynote Address:

Behaviors are Bumps-Donna Eskut

Donna is a Behavior Support Teacher for Fayette County Board of Education working primarily with children in Pre-K through Grade 5. She has been an advocate and teacher for Special Education, Gifted Education, and General Education students for the past 21 years. She has multiple certifications including Educational Leadership, Early Childhood Education and a variety of Special Education fields. She has served in many roles both nationally and internationally including Behavior Support Teacher, Interrelated Teacher, Self-Contained Emotionally Disturbed Teacher, Gifted and Special Education and many more. She has a BS in Elementary, Gifted and Special Education and MA in Secondary Education. She has a strong belief in building relationships with the communities that work with students while putting students first.

Her presentation will focus on how behaviors can be changed; they are just a way kids are communicating with us. She will give examples and suggestions on how to work with our kids on appropriate behaviors and what to do when a kiddo melts down. She will plan to have handouts of terms used in schools as well.

Breakout Sessions:

Katie Beckett Deeming Waiver- Lisa Rydarowski

Lisa has her MA degree in Speech/Language Pathology with a concentration in Deaf/Hard of Hearing and has been a Clinical Speech/Language Pathologist for 36 years. She has been a Service Coordinator for Babies Can't Wait (BCW) since its' inception. She joined her District BCW Interagency Coordinating Council prior to becoming a Service Coordinator also serving as chairperson. She also helped develop the Guidelines for the District BCW.

Lisa has been an Instructor/Clinical Supervisor in Speech Pathology/Deaf Education for the University of North Carolina and has done numerous presentations for state associations, clinics, rehabilitation centers, and universities.

She has worn many hats with the Georgia PINES SKI-HI Program over the past 26 years including Parent Advisor, Early Hearing Orientation Specialist, and State Trainer. She has also served as a Regional Coordinator for the South Carolina SKI-HI Program. She is a member of the District Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Team as well as the State Stakeholders Committee.

It Takes a Village: Families Reaching Out, Communities Stepping In (Building a Circle of Support)-Gwen Sirmans and Susan Roush

Gwen 706-346-5646, Susan Roush 404-355-6963, 770-843-9854 (Cell)

Gwen and Susan will share their respective journeys at two different stages of life and how they were able to build a circle of support to help them achieve the goals they have set or are still striving to reach for themselves, their families and their children *and* a tad bit of “normalcy” back into their lives.

Gwen is the mom of sassy four year old Ivey who is deafblind, multi-handicapped and trailed by a long resume of medical trivia. Gwen is also the mom of two rambunctious boys, 6 and 7. She and her husband Matt feel they are most often herding cats in the journey of their ‘new’ normal, raising two typical boys, giving life to a ‘special’ little girl, being husband and wife and filling their niche in the world outside special needs.

Gwen is a co-founder of MAPS, Microthalamia Anophthalmia Parent Support, and an online support group for parents. She has participated with various local/state intervention agencies advocating for children with special needs. She encouraged Ivey’s school to integrate the expertise of the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project (GSAP) into the classroom and that they play an active role in developing, modifying and maintaining Ivey’s curriculum. Gwen has even enrolled herself in Utah State University’s deafblind courses.

When Ivey was two years old, Gwen, with the help of a group of very special people, took the old idea of a *PATH* and set out to create a life full of normalcy, independence and relationships for a tiny medically involved child with deafblindness. The group vowed to present life to her little girl beyond special need obstacles and hospitals. They declared to grow and develop with Ivey throughout her *entire* life. Gwen takes great joy in illuminating the special bond between this group of individuals and Ivey – showing how all families of children with deafblindness could have the same opportunity - and how they came to be known as *Ivey’s League*.

Susan and her husband, Alex, are the parents of two young adults. Leigh, 27, has a profound hearing loss and received a cochlear implant when she was 11 years old. She attended Savannah College of Art and Design and is employed as an interior designer. Matthew, 24, has a diagnosis of CHARGE syndrome. He has been employed at SunTrust Bank for almost three years where he scans and/or copies documents. He uses public transportation to travel.

Throughout her children's lives, Susan has been involved with many organizations that provide education and support to the families of children with disabilities. Representatives from the National Helen Keller Center and the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project helped develop an Action Plan for Matthew in coordination with his IEP Team when he was 16.

Making 'Sense' of Behavior: A Focus on Behavioral Indications and Issues of Sensory

Integration-Kate Beals

Kate has been a Registered Occupational Therapist (OTR) for 14 years, specializing in pediatrics with an emphasis on sensory integration. For the past 8 years she has been employed at the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind, and also in the past year has worked part-time home health for the birth to three population.

Since Jan. 2009, she has been the Technical Assistance Specialist for the South Carolina Interagency Deaf-Blind Project, serving children and young adults from birth to 21 with combined vision and hearing loss throughout the state of South Carolina.

Perhaps her greatest achievement is being the Mom of 21-year-old son who rocks Guitar Hero, has a real job, loves tacos and pizza, and by the way has autism. She says that, "A lot of what I know about sensory integration, I learned from him".

Your Dependent With Special Needs: Making Their Future More Secure-Pamela Hoppe
Pamela is a Chartered Financial Consultant®, CASL, a Financial Planner & Registered Representative and a Special Needs Financial Planner for MetLife's Center for Special Needs Planning, New England Financial.

Families with dependents with special needs, no matter what the age or disability, face many serious questions about how to best prepare for their future well-being. This session addresses such critical issues as protecting government benefit eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), creating Special Needs Trusts and the importance of a will. Taking steps now can help arrange for a loved one's well-being today and tomorrow.

Signing as a Bridge to Communication-Linda Clark and Sara Sims

Linda has been a Georgia PINES parent advisor for 8 years where she has served over 30 families. She serves families in both the SKI-HI and INSITE programs and is also a Supporting Parent Advisor and SKI-HI State Trainer. Linda worked in the public school system as a DHH itinerant teacher for 12 years before coming to Georgia PINES. She lives in Kennesaw with her husband and two children.

Sara- I am a mother of two very unique boys. Not only are both of my sons deaf, but they were born with a rare form of hearing loss known as Auditory Neuropathy Dysynchrony. Our family used sign language as a bridge to oral language; however, it took a lot of time, trials, and errors until our family and team of doctors decided that this way of communication would work best for our family. I assist in the training of Georgia Pines Advisors on how to give positive encouragement and thorough guidance to the parents of newly diagnosed deaf children. Today, I volunteer for Advanced Bionics, and the Auditory Neuropathy Yahoo list serve. In these programs, I assist in local meetings and help give guidance and a listening ear to other families with hearing loss. I have a very optimistic personality with a love for life and my family. I own an educational entertainment company in which I write interactive shows with music and props. I truly love working with children, singing, and acting. These talents have strengthened my confidence in therapy practice with my own children, and in my ASL skills.

Professional-to-Professional-Dr. Alice Stanley and Elena Zamora

Dr. Stanley is currently the Program Manager for Georgia PINES. She started her career as a primary level self-contained teacher of the hearing impaired in Griffin, Georgia 34 years ago. Since then, she has had various experiences in the field of Deaf Education. She was a summer

classroom instructor at Kendall Elementary School at Gallaudet University in 1978. From 1980 until 2004, she worked for Clayton County Schools as a resource teacher in junior high and high school settings, an itinerant teacher in the K-12 setting, Department Chair of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program, Special Education Coordinator for High School Mild Disability Programs and County-wide K-12 Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Visually Impaired Programs, and as a staff development instructor. She has a BA in Foreign Language and Literature, M. ED & Ed. S in Special Education concentrating in education of the deaf and hard of hearing, and Ed. D. in Child and Youth Studies. She obtained her national board (NBPTS) certification in 2000. From 2006 till 2008, she worked for Georgia State University as a Practicum Supervisor for its master program in the field of education of the deaf and hard of hearing.

She worked for Georgia Pines from 1989 till 2001 as a PA. After her retirement from the Clayton County School System in 2004, she worked for Georgia PINES as a PA again until taking the full-time position as the SKI-HI Coordinator in November, 2008. She is trained as a PA in SKI-HI, INSITE and VIISA programs. She is also a certified SKI-HI State Trainer. She completed the Professional Preparation for Cochlear Implant in June, 2009 from Smith College and Children Hospital of Philadelphia.

Elena has a background in Clinical Psychology, even though her professional life has developed on the International Business and Film Production fields.

She is a specialist in production and distribution of Educational Films, working with Disney Educational Media, Learning Corporation of America and Coronet MTI.; or specialized material like the Harvard Business Review Series, negotiating its distribution in association with the International Herald Tribune, from Paris, France.

She and her family moved to Atlanta from Spain, almost twenty years ago, to participate in a film production project with Emory University and decided to live here.

For more than five years, Elena has been part of the team of Georgia PINES, working with Spanish speaking families.

She is married to Marco. They have two children.