

SPEAKER BIOS

Annette Alfonsi

Annette chose not to disclose anything in her biography.



Anne Applegate

Anne Applegate graduated from UC Berkeley in 1989 with B.A. in Anthropology; and from UC Hastings College of the Law with a J.D. in 1994. She studied international law abroad in Europe. As a law student, Anne interned at Disability Rights Wisconsin and was a non-governmental organization delegate to the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. She was admitted to practice law in Wisconsin in 1994 and in Alaska in 2000. Anne has been a judicial clerk, a sole practitioner, an associate in a general practice firm, and a staff attorney for the designated Alaska Protection and Advocacy Agency, Disability Law Center of Alaska (DLC). Anne taught Disability Law and Ethics at the University of Alaska Anchorage as an adjunct instructor. In March of 2017, Anne joined the staff of the Governor's Council on Disability and Special Education as a Program Coordinator II, where she facilitates the work of the Education Committee and the Supported Decision Making Work Group of the Developmental Disabilities Committee.



Julie Atkinson

Julie Atkinson is a Research Professional at the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development. She is the Program Coordinator for the Friendships & Dating Program overseeing training, implementation, evaluation, and technical assistance. Julie holds a Master of Science from Utah State University, and has worked as an aide in state government on health and disabilities issues.



Michelle Carroll

Michelle Carroll has a master's degree in Deaf education from Hunter College in New York City. She is currently a life skills teacher at East High School in Anchorage. She loves it! Her main goal is to take students into the community to teach transition skills like interviewing for jobs, using a laundromat and reading a bus map. She was the state's Deaf-Blind specialist with the Special Education Service Agency for thirteen years where she traveled throughout rural and remote Alaska.



John Cowper

John Cowper is a Special Education Specialist for SERRC-Alaska's Educational Resource Center. As a SERRC team member, John works on the facilitation of Alaska Transition Outcome Project (ATOP) for SERRC and provides special education support to districts throughout the state of Alaska.

ATOP Transition Camps and services are funded through an Alaska Department of Education grant in partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Development. Transition Camps are provided to districts to support students with disabilities transition from school to adult life. The camps provide students exposure to information and resources in the following areas:

- Community Participation
- Education/Training
- Employment
- Independent Living

Transition Camp, students participate in activities designed to identify and enhance positive personal traits to support their transition to life after High School. As an

outcome, students present their Person Centered Plan to their peers and staff on the final day of the conference. The plan they develop and the exposures to resources they receive help students to begin planning for future employment and education.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) and Alaska Job Center representatives participate to help students explore opportunities available to support future employment. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to interact with community members, local and regional employers and education/training agencies.



Tom Cyrus

Tom Cyrus moved from the East Coast to the Northwest Arctic region of Alaska in 1981 with his wife Jeanne with the intent of teaching in a remote setting. During this time he served as a K-12 special education teacher, alternative education teacher and middle/high humanities and language

arts teacher.

Along the way Jeanne and Tom adopted six children from the village of Kiana. After 20 years of teaching in Buckland and Kiana he retired to the village of Kiana. Within the month, Tom was drafted by the city council to fill the vacant City Administrator position, which he agreed to do for one year. He then opened a family restaurant in the community.

After a number of tragedies in the community, Tom felt his skills might be better put to use as the Village-Based Counselor for the Maniilaq Association. He later transferred into the supervisor position for the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program.

He has been working for Maniilaq for the past 13 years. Tom also serves on the State Independent Living Council (SILC), sits on the Alaska Humanities Forum's Education Advisory Council, the Alaska Interagency Youth Transition Council, is a member of the

Governor's Council Real Transitions for Rural Youth Work Group and acts as Secretary for the Alaska Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Consortium.

Tom Dunn

Lt. Tom Dunn was born and raised in Alaska. He married his high school sweetheart and has had the privilege of raising a child with special needs. He has worked in Alaska law enforcement for nearly 23 years, including the Whittier Police Department, Homer Police Department, and currently the Alaska State Troopers. During his service with AST, he has worked in many communities with rural and urban community diversity. Lt. Dunn is a certified instructor with the Alaska State Troopers and has provided instruction at the Trooper Training Academy and at many of his current duty stations. He is currently the patrol supervisor in the Mat-Su Valley, which has the distinction of being the busiest Trooper station by call volume in the State of Alaska.

Lt. Dunn is an active and founding member of the Mat-Su Crisis Intervention Team (C.I.T.) Coalition, established January 2015. C.I.T. is an innovative first-responder model of police-based crisis intervention training designed to help persons with mental disorders and/or addictions access medical treatment rather than place them in the criminal justice system due to illness-related behaviors. It also promotes officer safety and the safety of the individual in crisis. The C.I.T. Model was first developed in Memphis and has spread internationally. It is commonly known as the "Memphis Model."

The Mat-Su C.I.T. Coalition is a community partnership of law enforcement; EMS; medical, mental health, and addiction professionals; individuals who live with mental illness and/or addiction disorders and their families; as well as other advocates. One of their main goals is to provide the 8-hour Mental Health First Aid training to all Mat-Su area emergency responders on how to respond and assist citizens who are struggling with mental illness, crisis, or substance use. Lt. Dunn is one of two AST uniformed officers who is a certified trainer in this curriculum.



Rebeka Edge

Rebeka Edge is married to her college sweetheart and is the mother of 4 wonderful children. Her oldest child has a diagnosis of High Functioning Autism. The first 15 years of her career was as a special education teacher. She worked with a variety of students and ages. Her oldest child was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome and began to work with a wonderful BCBA. This opened a new career field for her. She returned to school and earned her BCBA certification. In 2010, her family moved to Alaska where she opened Behavior Matters ABA therapy. Behavior Matters has grown and now serves families in Alaska, California, and Nebraska.



Jessica Flanigan

Jessica Flanigan, M.S., OTR/L: Jessica was born and raised in Bloomington, Indiana. She received her undergraduate degree from Indiana University and graduated from the University of Indianapolis as a Master of Occupational Therapy. Jessica's passions for pediatric OT include anxiety, autism, behavior, executive functioning, life skills, and mental health. Jessica loves spending time outside hiking, kayaking, and camping with her partner Collin and dogs Roo and Lucy.



Vonda Kay Goodman

Vonda Kay Goodman, M.S., CCC-SLP: Vonda Kay is a Speech-Language Pathologist who graduated from Baylor University with a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Science degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She loves working with children and specializes in articulation and language disorders, early intervention, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), and working with children with autism. Vonda Kay has 20 years of experience as a Speech-Language Pathologist. She has lived in

Alaska for 16 years and has worked at All For Kids since 2008. She enjoys the mountains, hiking, biking, skiing, traveling, church, and spending time with her family. Vonda Kay and her husband have three children.



Travis Hedwig

Travis is an applied cultural/medical anthropologist and assistant professor of Health Sciences at the University of Alaska Anchorage. He received his BA in anthropology from SUNY Plattsburgh (minor in music), MA in applied anthropology from the University of Alaska Anchorage, and Ph.D. in medical anthropology from the University of Kentucky. His primary research interests involve impairment/disability and health inequality at the intersections of public policy and everyday lived experience. He received a National Science Foundation dissertation enhancement award for his work on the racial and cultural politics of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in Alaska and continues to examine structural inequalities associated with FASD across the continuum of care. Travis has worked on issues of housing and homelessness, child welfare, adolescent health, family and kinship studies, suicide prevention, community-based approaches to alcohol risk prevention and mental health promotion, and health advocacy. He is passionate about teaching and learning and enjoys the challenge of translating research into practice. In his spare time, he plays bass in an eclectic rock band in Anchorage and trains in the Japanese martial art of aikido.

Ginny Jackson

Ginny is an EMS Battalion Chief/Paramedic Supervisor for the MatSu Borough. She grew up in an Air Force family and has lived various places throughout the US and abroad. She has been a paramedic for the last 14 years with experience in both medevac and 911. She is also a foster/adoptive/step mom of five kids ranging in age from 2 to 20.



Krista James

Krista James is a Term Assistant Professor of Special Education in the College of Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She earned an M.Ed. from Wilmington University in Special Education. She is currently pursuing an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She has 16 years in the field of special education beginning with teaching students with autism and other significant disabilities in a variety of settings from co-teaching in the general education classroom to self-contained settings in five different states. After leaving the classroom, she worked for Louisiana State University in the Human Development Center on a statewide autism project, coordinated the Alaska Autism Resource Center, and managed the Title VI Indigenous Education Program for Anchorage School District before joining the faculty at UAA.



Heidi Lieb-Williams

Heidi is an Autistic speaker/self-advocate, a mother of Autistic spectrum Adult Children, CEO of Puzzled With Purpose- Autistically Inspired Creations, and the founder of Alaska's Shining Abilities Craft Bazaar which features artists with IDD and related disabilities. Heidi is the author of "Marutika's Amazing Outcome", writer/producer of a short film called "Through Autism Rescue Eyes", a council member for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, and been featured on NBC and CBS new, Autism City Walks Advertisement Promos, and in a DotCom Therapy Article.



Mariana Livingston

Mariana is an Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist at ATLA (Assistive Technology of Alaska). She has a background in Occupational Therapy and Civil Engineering. She loves being able to meld these two fields in her work at ATLA. When she is not working, she enjoys spending time and traveling with her family



Tara Maltby

Tara Maltby is originally from Michigan and has been working in the field of special education for over 15 years. Tara is certified in both general education and special education. Over the years she has worked in a variety of settings including a camp for children with behavioral/emotional impairments in upstate NY, a center-based school for students with severe autism and children with multiple disabilities in MI, a resource room, and a self-contained room in a general education school setting in NC, and is currently the Program Coordinator for the Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC). The AARC is a grant funded program overseen by the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), dedicated to providing free information, resources, and training related to ASD to anyone in the state of Alaska. Tara states that she loves working with students with special needs because every day is a new adventure, and every day she learns something new.



Sara Montgomery

Sara Montgomery, PT, DPT: Sara graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science from Abilene Christian University and her Doctorate degree in Physical Therapy from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. She moved to Alaska from Searcy, Arkansas, in 2013. She has been with All For Kids for the last 5 years. Sara is passionate about working with kids in clinical and community settings. She spends her free time snowboarding, snowshoeing, bouldering, running, and hiking with her dog.



Kimberly Mouriquand

Kimberly Mouriquand has been working with kinship, foster, and adoptive families since 2008 in many different support roles. She currently works as a family support specialist and trainer for the Alaska Center for Resource Families. Originally from Colorado, Kimberly moved to Alaska in 2012. She loves her job and enjoys working with families.

Lori Nealley

Lori Nealley is the Director of Affordable Housing for NeighborWorks® Alaska an organization that is dedicated to improving the quality of life for families and individuals by preserving homes, creating new housing opportunities and strengthening neighborhoods. Ms. Nealley has worked in the affordable housing industry for 20 years primarily focused in Anchorage. She has worked in the homeownership arena assisting homeowners with mortgage lending, education and preservation strategies. Additionally, she has administered federal, state and foundation grants focused on rehabilitation and accessibility improvements for individuals and families experiencing disabilities. Most recently she is responsible for the compliance and management of a

federally regulated multi-family portfolio of more than 1,000 units of rental housing in Anchorage.



Ric Nelson

Ric Nelson was appointed as a Council member in 2007. During this time he held several key leadership positions including: Council Chair elect (2013-2015); Vice Council Chair (2011-2012); Legislative Chair (2010-2011). In 2015, he felt he could make a larger impact in Alaska by working for the Governor's

Council on Disabilities and Special Education so in August 2015 he accepted a position as a Program Coordinator. This role allows him to continue his work to help impact policies in Alaska in order to improve the lives of Alaskans with disabilities. Ric holds a Master's degree in Public Administration, a Bachelor's in Business Administration, and an Associate in Small Business Management. He servers on a variety of local and national boards, some of which include: Peer Power, National Youth Leadership Network, Youth Advocates for Community and president of TASH. In 2015, he was awarded the Alaska Journal of Commerce's 2015 "Alaska Top 40 Under 40. In his free time Ric spends lots of time with friends and family. He likes to travel around the world. Some of the places he has visited include: Tokyo, Japan; Dublin, Ireland; and all over the US.



Jamie Reyes

Jamie Reyes is a care coordinator at Alaska Center for Pediatrics. She has been a member of the ACP team for 15 years and is passionate about the care patients receive at ACP and from providers within the care community. Over the years she has developed strong relationships with the families of ACP, specialty health care providers, and all who passionately serve and support the

best outcomes for children across the State of Alaska. Jamie currently serves on the

Board of Directors for Programs for Infants and Children and has long supported the importance of developmental screening and early intervention. In her spare time she enjoys anything outdoors, but spends much of that time trying to keep up with her 16 year old daughter and 14 year old son.



Kara Thrasher-Livingston

Kara Thrasher-Livingston, M. Ed. has worked with Senior and Disabilities Services, Department of Health and Social Services, State of Alaska doing training for providers, staff and stakeholders since 2008. Prior to that she worked in a provider agency in Anchorage serving individuals experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families for 14 years. Kara has 2 teenage sons who experience autism, and a brother who experiences intellectual and developmental disability. She is also a guardian for her vulnerable adult family members. “Parents and families will always find their path. I hope to help by sharing my experience and knowledge with other parents, family members, and professionals about navigating through life and services.”



Brenda Ursel

Brenda Ursel, M.S., TBRI© Educator, has worked in adoption support services for over 10 years and has a Certificate of Adoption & Foster Family Therapy from the Portland State University as well as being a certified TBRI © (Trust Based Relational Intervention) Educator. She currently coordinates the PARKA Adoption Preparation Project for the Alaska Center for Resource Families, which recruits, trains and supports families adopting children from the State of Alaska foster care system. ACRF seeks to bring best practices in adoption competent services to Alaska families and the professionals who work with them.

Cheri Scott

Cheri Scott is the mother of 3 adult children, two of whom experience disabilities. She became involved in disability advocacy as the result of challenges she faced trying to meet the needs of her birth, foster and adoptive children.

She is a founding member of the Stone Soup Group, a private non-profit established in 1992, where she worked as a Parent Navigator supporting families of children at the time of medical diagnosis. In 2011, Cheri retired from her dual roles of Program Manager for the statewide FASD Parent Support Project and Parent Navigator for families of babies with hearing loss through the state's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program.

She has received the Catholic Social Services Exemplary Volunteer Service Award, was the first recipient of the FAS Leadership Award, now called the Arnold and Carolyn Wilson Award, presented at the annual Alaska FAS Summit in November 2001, and in 2006 was honored as the first parent awarded the Advocacy Award by NOFAS, the National Organization on FASD. Her life goals continue to include having fun, nurturing growth in those around her and learning something new every day.



Amber Shea

Amber Shea, PMHNP, RN, is a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. As a team member at Ptarmigan Connections, I help children and families by providing medication management, complimentary and alternative solutions, mental health education, validation and encouragement. My experience in the field spans more than 10 years. I have worked with very young children to very mature adults, and enjoy all ages and stages of development.

My education is through the University of Alaska's Nursing program where I earned a bachelor's and a master's in nursing science. I am a nationally certified Family

Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner and I have a state license for both Registered Nurse and Advance Nurse Practitioner.



Kristin Vandagriff

Kristin Vandagriff joined the staff of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education in October 2013 and is now the Planner. She's worked in this field for over 11 years, previously working for the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Unit as well as for Hope Community Resources working directly with people who experience I/DDs. Kristin has co-authored several national briefs around employment for individuals with disabilities and was recently published in the National Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation. Kristin graduated from the University of Alaska Anchorage with a Bachelor of Arts in political science as a University Honors Scholar. Her emphasis was on American Government, especially related to access and social justice issues for people with disabilities. Kristin has been involved with advocacy for over 24 years and is very personally invested in this work, as her brother has an intellectual and developmental disability. She is very proud of his achievements and greatly looks forward to continuing to grow opportunities for people with disabilities in Alaska. In addition, Kristin has volunteered extensively with Special Olympics in a myriad of different venues and was thankful to have been a part of the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games. Kristin was born and raised in Alaska and enjoys traveling, figure skating, and spending time with her husband and family - being a dance and basketball mom to her three kids.



Rachel Vandiver

Rachel is the mother of 3 children, Aidan, Riley and Sadie. Prior to moving to Alaska, Rachel worked in the Financial Services Industry in Texas as a Consumer Lending Manager at a local Credit Union. Currently, she is staying at home to manage the day to day care of her two youngest children who have a rare genetic form of primordial dwarfism, Russell Silver Syndrome. She serves on the Soup Group board and the board president. In addition, she is also serving on the Parent Advisory Committee for the LEND Program through Center for Human Development at UAA. She has participated in the Key Campaign in Juneau and has helped with special projects within the Women's, Children's and Family health Division of the Alaska Department of Public Health.



Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich

Shelly raised 9 children in Anchorage where she has lived for 24 years. As the caregiver of her amazing granddaughter, Claire Vendetti, she is a fierce advocate for the rights of disabled children for health care, education and community services. She routinely presents information/speaks about preventing child abuse, ongoing Early Childhood Trauma, ACES and teaches workshops to parents and educators on these topics. Past engagements have included ASSEC, Totem Conference, SSG Parent Conference, Early Childhood Conference, and several private venues in Alaska, Oregon, Arizona and even Virginia. As active members of Key Coalition, She and Claire address the legislature every year in Juneau to assist in keeping funding for special education and disability services for our most vulnerable community members.



Karen Ward

Karen Ward, Ed.D., is the Director of the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development, a UCEDD. Dr. Ward has wide experience as an educator, practitioner, and researcher in the field of disabilities, with training, experience, and published research in disability victimization issues. The Friendships & Dating Program is, in large part, a product of her clinical and research experiences with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their victimization.