



## March is Developmental Disabilities Month

A 2024 proclamation was made by Governor Kevin Stitt to designate March as Developmental Disability Awareness Day. The Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma has [posted the proclamation on their Facebook page](#). Oklahoman advocates will celebrate [Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day at the State Capitol on March 27<sup>th</sup>](#).

### HIGHLIGHT: OKLEND Graduate's Non-Profit Receives National Recognition and Award

Jeanette O'Hara, [OKLEND 2022 graduate](#), is Founder/Executive Director of the nonprofit, [Will's House](#), located just outside Tulsa in Jenks. Will's House serves as a specialized respite option that supports full time caregivers of children and young adults with complex medical needs or intellectual/developmental disabilities. Jeanette's approach is simple yet profound: "What do you need? How can we help you?" This philosophy reflects a commitment to addressing the many unrecognized gaps in services and supports for people with I/DD, family caregivers, and communities. Recently, Will's House was honored by the [ARCH \(Access to Respite Care and Help\) National Respite Network and Resource Center](#). The organization recognized Will's House as an [Innovative and Exemplary Program](#). This acknowledgment is a testament to the dedication, hard work, and impact that Will's House has had on the community. [Learn more about Will's House](#).

### New Updates to CLL's Alphabet Soup Now Available

The Center for Learning and Leadership (CLL) has updated [Alphabet Soup](#), their dictionary of disability-related abbreviations, acronyms, and terms in a new English/Spanish bilingual edition. In addition to updates to the publication, there are [videos in Spanish](#) and [in English](#) walking you through the product.

### Call for Proposals: 2024 Inclusive Communication Conference

The 2024 Inclusive Communication Conference, hosted by the [Autism Foundation of Oklahoma](#), [Beyond the Spectrum OK](#), and the [Down Syndrome Association of Central Oklahoma](#), will be held on July 17<sup>th</sup> in Oklahoma City. The one-day conference aims to bring together K-12 educators, providers, people with I/DD and other disabilities, and caregivers for a comprehensive discussion on communication in various forms. The conference will focus on challenges faced in academic settings by individuals with disabilities who use alternative methods of communication. If you are interested in presenting, please submit your proposal submission by March 31st, 2024. [Click here to submit your proposal to the Inclusive Communication Conference](#).

### Events and Announcements

#### March 21<sup>st</sup> | DSACO Luncheon Celebrating World Down Syndrome Day | 11:30-1pm | OKC

[Wear your wildest socks on March 21st](#) for [World Down Syndrome Day](#)! March 21st is World Down Syndrome Day, a worldwide awareness day to celebrate individuals with Down syndrome by advocating for their rights, inclusion, and well-being. [The Down Syndrome Association of Central Oklahoma \(DSACO\)](#) will be having a luncheon on this day from 11:30-1pm at the Central Oklahoma Homebuilders Association in Oklahoma City. [Visit DSACO for information and to register](#).

#### March 27<sup>th</sup> | Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day at the Capitol | 11am-3pm | OK Capitol

Save the date and plan to attend the 2024 Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day at the Oklahoma State Capitol! This year's theme is **We're All In**. [You can RSVP to the event and stay posted on the latest information through the event page on Facebook](#).

#### March 28<sup>th</sup> | DDS Waitlist Meeting | 1:30pm-3pm | in-person: State Capitol Rm 450 & virtual option

The DDS Waiting List Meeting will be on March 28<sup>th</sup> at 1:30pm at the Oklahoma State Capitol in room 450. There will also be a virtual option for those who cannot attend in person. The DDS Waiting List Meeting was created by family members for family members. It is a time for those on the waiting list and those who want to learn more to interact with the DDS Director, DHS leadership, and other state agencies and programs that support people with developmental disabilities and their families. Individuals, family members, and community allies share information and resources, ask questions, and raise concerns. [Virtual Waiting List Meeting - Pre-registration is required](#).

#### March 30<sup>th</sup> | Beeping Easter Egg Hunt | 1pm-2pm | Lions Club, OKC

The Heartland Council of the Blind will host the "Beeping Easter Egg Hunt for the Blind and Special Needs Children plus their Siblings." The event is scheduled for Saturday, March 30th, 2024, from 1:00-2:00 PM at Lions Club 4135 N. W. 10th Street in Oklahoma City. Children are asked to bring their own Easter baskets. **Reservations are required** and donations are accepted. To register, call (405) 642-1068.

#### April 19<sup>th</sup> | 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Joining Forces Conference | In-person and Remote Site Options

The 17th Annual Joining Forces Family – Professional Partnership Conference, hosted by the [Oklahoma Family Network](#), will be held on April 19<sup>th</sup>. There will be an in-person option in OKC or remote locations throughout Oklahoma, including sites in Poteau, Duncan, Enid, and Tulsa. The conference offers learning opportunities and support for individuals and families by establishing partnerships with community members, agencies, and organizations throughout Oklahoma. [Joining Forces Conference - Register now](#).

### We want to hear from you!

Do you have news or an event to share? Please send all information including a link (if applicable) to [learn2lead-ucedd@ouhsc.edu](mailto:learn2lead-ucedd@ouhsc.edu). All submissions should be in no later than the fourth Friday of the month before publication (ex: 4<sup>th</sup> Friday in June for July's newsletter).

Sign-up to receive our free monthly newsletter *focus facts on community living* <http://tiny.cc/focusfacts>

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The University of Oklahoma advances a diverse, equitable, and inclusive university community by embracing each person's unique contributions, background, and perspectives. OU Norman, OU Tulsa, and the Health Sciences Center recognize that fostering an inclusive environment for all, with particular attention to the needs of the historically marginalized populations, is vital to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of our institutional mission and enhances the OU experience for all students, faculty, and staff. **focus facts** is published for the University Affiliated Developmental Disabilities Network members. Its purpose is to highlight specific information and data items relevant to developing and sustaining positive community environments. Individual information items are provided for use in this form, or for further circulation. When re-printing information please reference *focus facts* and the month of issue noted below the banner at the top of this page. The name of a contact person for additional information on items referenced in the newsletter is provided for your convenience. If you have data, information or a story to report relevant to community living, please send it to **focus facts** Editor at the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD OU Health Sciences Center, PO Box 2690, Oklahoma City, OK 73126. Please include the information source, by title, a one paragraph (or less) description or story, a contact name who can provide additional information on the subject, and a daytime or evening telephone number for the contact.

If you have questions regarding the format for submissions, please call the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD Headquarters Office at (405) 271-4500. The University Affiliated Developmental Disabilities Network is open to membership by any organization or individual who shares the interests of Network members. The Network is dedicated to identifying opportunities for collaboration and information exchange among its participating members, which leads to improving our statewide, regional or local capacity to provide a better living environment in Oklahoma for people with developmental and other disabilities and their families. The Network is partially supported through a grant from the U.S. Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Health and Human Services, and by the Offices of the Designated Representatives of the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD Collaborating Partners.

If you have a disability (Deaf/hard-of-hearing, Blind/low-vision, mobility, cognitive, etc.), and require accommodations, please reach out to [Learn2Lead@ouhsc.edu](mailto:Learn2Lead@ouhsc.edu). It is helpful if you share what type of accommodations will be needed to ensure that you are able to use the resource materials.