



AUCD Honors
Celebration

November 13, 2018



Welcome

Dear AUCD Network and Friends,

We welcome the opportunity to honor the many individuals whose tireless efforts have created a better world for people with disabilities and their families. We pay tribute to the depth and breadth of our work – from network trainees and early career professionals to seasoned leaders with decades of expertise; from families and self-advocates to national partners in disability policy and practice. The talent, diversity, and commitment of our honorees is inspiring!

A few of this year's awards are being given at other events throughout the conference and you will find them listed in this program. We hope you take the time to learn about all our award winners and to recognize their efforts, as well as those of all our network members and collaborators, as they have worked to increase opportunities for people with disabilities and their families.

Thank you for joining us as we honor tonight's awardees and their contributions. Immediately following the awards ceremony, please join us for a Minnesota State Fair-themed party to celebrate the relationships and work of our network over the past year.

Amy

Amy Hewitt, PhD, MSW

AUCD 2018 Conference Chair and AUCD Board President-Elect
UCEDD & LEND Director, Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota

Program

5:00 PM – Doors Open

5:20 PM – Awards Ceremony and Dinner

Immediately Following Awards until 9:00 PM –
Minnesota State Fair Afterparty: The Great
AUCD Get-together! Dessert & Dancing

Order of Awards

Anne Rudigier Award
International Service Award
Young Professional Award
Multicultural Award for Leadership in Diversity
Gordon Richins Award for Leadership and
Advocacy
Gold Star Award
Special Recognition Award
George S. Jesien Distinguished
Achievement Award
Lifetime Achievement Award

Awards Given at Other AUCD Conference Events

CORE Trainee Research Award
Service to the Organization Awards
President's Award





Anne Rudigier Award

This award is named for Anne Rudigier, a young woman who demonstrated that one individual's commitment, energy, love of life, and respect for all people can be shared and can persevere through others. The Award is presented by the Rudigier Family in loving memory of their daughter Anne and of the values she held in her life and in her work.

Ellen Casale, EdS, MEd

Vanderbilt Consortium LEND, Vanderbilt University
Medical Center, Nashville, TN

In Recognition of Your Commitment, Leadership, and Potential

“Ellen demonstrates an exceptional combination of accomplishment and commitment to supporting people with disabilities and their families. She integrates training, advocacy, and research in work focusing on families.

Curious about all things disability, Ellen is passionately interested in serving and learning about persons with disabilities and their families, as well as teaching and mentoring the next generation. In her two years as a UCEDD trainee, her fellow students, faculty, and VKC UCEDD staff and faculty, as well as the advocates and family members with whom she works, appreciate Ellen's passion, her kindness, and her hard work.”



International Service Award

The AUCD International Service Award recognizes outstanding contributions that further programs or policies designed to create more inclusive communities for people with disabilities and their families throughout the world. The award is given in recognition of personal and professional efforts in program areas that proactively support people with disabilities and their families at local, regional, or national levels in the host country.

Sefakor G.M.A. Komabu-Pomeyie, MA

Enlightening and Empowering People with Disabilities in Africa (eepdAfrica)-Ghana, Colchester, VT

In recognition of outstanding contributions that further programs or policies designed to create more inclusive communities for people with disabilities and their families throughout the world.

“Sefakor is a teacher, advocate, and leader in the disability field. As a person with a physical disability growing up in Ghana, she was fortunate to have parents who understood the value of education and encouraged her to pursue her dreams. In 2012, Sefakor founded Enlightening and Empowering People with Disabilities (eepdAfrica) to analyze policies, create awareness, advocate for change, and influence policies that affect people with disabilities in Africa. They champion the cause of all people to be treated with dignity and equitably, engage in dialogue with policy makers and stakeholders, and ensure that people with disabilities in Africa enjoy the rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, as well as in the policies and laws in their constitutions, without any discrimination.”



Young Professional Award

The AUCD Young Professional Award is presented to a person in the field of disabilities under the age of 40 who has demonstrated dedication and commitment to people with developmental disabilities and their families through work as a bridge between the academic sector and the community.

Jack Brandt, MS

Partnership for People with Disabilities,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

In Recognition of Your Advocacy, Commitment, and Promise

“In a year that celebrates building inclusive communities, it is no surprise that Jack is leading the pack. His dedication to improving the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) surpasses inclusion and extends to leadership. His leadership of the Council on Leadership and Advocacy and his work to create the medium-term track for Virginia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (VA-LEND) both exemplify his commitment to leadership for and by people with disabilities and their families.

As a leader with a disability, Jack’s dedication to mentoring people with disabilities and family members on their leadership journeys is unwavering. It is at the heart of all that he does and who he is.”



Multicultural Council Award for Leadership in Diversity

This Award is presented to an individual or group in recognition of exhibited leadership and commitment to advancing programs and practices aimed toward increasing the diversity, cultural, and/or linguistic competencies within a Center and the Network as a whole, and for significant contributions to further the cause of understanding the diverse needs of families seeking disability services.

Vermont LEND Program

University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

In Appreciation of Your Ongoing Leadership and Dedication to Diversity and Cultural and Linguistic Competence

“The Vermont LEND program, under the leadership of Mercedes Avila, has set a clear example on how to diversify a LEND program at all program levels: faculty/staff, trainees and curriculum. In 2011, the program completed the first organizational assessment in Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CALC) which identified significant changes needed to diversify the program. At that time, all faculty/staff and trainees/fellows identified as white. Developing relationships with local immigrant and former refugee communities resulted in a steady increase in individuals from these communities as trainees/fellows. Specific recruitment of faculty and staff from diverse communities were successful as well.

Ongoing training of all faculty/staff on racism, bias, disparities and inequity in service systems has ensured they are prepared to address these issues in all training and teaching activities. These topics have been embedded in all curriculum components.”



Gordon Richins Award for Leadership and Advocacy

The Council on Leadership and Advocacy presents the Gordon Richins Award for Leadership and Advocacy in recognition of exemplary leadership and advocacy practices of including people with disabilities and family members in projects and initiatives within a Center and the AUCD network as a whole. This award was renamed in 2018 after the passing of Gordon Richins, a long-time leader, mentor and friend in the AUCD network and beyond.

Deborah Unruh

North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities,
Minot State University, Minot, ND

In Recognition of Your Commitment, Leadership, and Potential

“As a leader, Deborah is skilled in encouraging others to share their thoughts and ideas and providing opportunities for others to step into leadership roles. In addition to Deborah’s involvement on COLA and her CAC, she is currently a Transition Coordinator at the high school in her city in North Dakota. She works diligently to help students with disabilities set and achieve goals related to independent living, postsecondary education, careers, and more. She partners with many community agencies to teach collaborative lessons to students in areas such as advocacy and self-determination, money management, finding and maintaining meaningful employment, leadership, personal safety, and other topics. She strongly feels that students should have interactions with community agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Centers, and others, before they transition out of high school.”



Gold Star Award

The AUCD Gold Star Award is presented to a Capitol Hill staffer who exemplifies a true partnership in crafting strong public policy.

This award recognizes the staffer for his/her efforts to obtain input from AUCD and the greater disability community to support AUCD's mission to advance policy and practice for and with people living with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and communities.

Kimberly Knackstedt, PhD

Disability and Education Policy Advisor to
Representative Bobby Scott, Washington, DC

*In Recognition of Your Commitment to Strong Public Policy for People
with Disabilities and their Families*

“AUCD is grateful for Kim’s unique leadership. She consistently works with the disability community, pushing forward on the paradigm shifts in civil rights, competitive integrated employment, and inclusive education for students with disabilities. Her work this congress included championing critical disability provisions for the Higher Education Act reauthorization, including the protection of teacher preparation programs, accessibility legislation and extension of the TPSID programs, the reauthorization of the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and Keep All Students Safe Act which limits restraint and seclusion practices. Kim has been a tireless advocate for people with disabilities with other Hill staffers – whether those who are familiar with disabilities or not, building relationships across the aisle and working to promote bipartisan legislation. As part of Congressman Bobby Scott’s staff, Kim is a trusted partner to the Disability community in Virginia.”



Special Recognition Award

The AUCD Special Recognition Award is presented to an individual, group, or organization outside of the AUCD network, to recognize outstanding contributions toward creating more inclusive communities for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Madeleine Will, MA

Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination (CPSD),
Washington, DC

*In Recognition of Your Leadership, Advocacy, and Commitment to
Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and their Families*

“Madeleine, since the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the mid-1990s, played a key role in convincing Congress to stop the usual legislative process that was heading towards a negative reauthorization, and instead to develop and pass IDEA 97, which significantly improved educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

Madeleine’s leadership in improving disability policy and services began long before that when her son, Jonathan, was born with Down syndrome. She has led, and continues to lead, successful bipartisan efforts at the local, state and national levels to improve services for children and adults with disabilities. She has the unique ability to bring together diverse stakeholders to create a vision of improved services and systems, and the pragmatic ability to develop strategic plans and carry out specific action steps in collaboration with others to achieve that vision.”



George S. Jesien Distinguished Achievement Award

The Distinguished Achievement Award recognizes a network member who has demonstrated a distinguished career of excellence and leadership in support of AUCD's mission to advance policy and practice for and with people living with developmental and other disabilities, their families and communities. This award was renamed after one of AUCD's past-Executive Directors, George S. Jesien, PhD.

David R. Johnson, PhD

Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota,
Minneapolis, MN

For Your Leadership and Service and Your Dedication to People with Disabilities and Their Families

“David has a lifetime of leadership, service, scholarship, published authorship, and as professor and mentor. For over 40 years he has devoted his career to improving education and transition services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through research, demonstration, teaching and education. His resume could come in chapters but has a simple theme: equality, access and opportunity for all persons with disabilities.

David has focused his work in areas of vocational rehabilitation, special education and transition to community life for people with disabilities. His lifelong commitment to improving education for people with disabilities was influenced by his family. His brother was born with an intellectual disability and his parents were early leaders in the MN Arc movement and MN special education policy development. Throughout his career he has used education, research and policy advocacy as tools to drive his passion and commitment to ensure that children with the most significant needs have opportunities for inclusive education and life in the community where they are full participants in employment, recreation and lifelong learning.”



Lifetime Achievement Award

The AUCD Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to individuals making a lifetime commitment to serving people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Wanda Willis, MEd

Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities,
Nashville, TN

*In Recognition of Your Lifetime Commitment to Individuals with
Developmental Disabilities and their Families*

“Wanda has been the Executive Director of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities since 1991, spearheading Council systems change initiatives in housing, employment, health, and other vital areas; launching the Tennessee Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute for family members and self-advocates, and most recently the Disability Leadership Academy for State of Tennessee executive employees. She was the Director of Planning for the State’s developmental disabilities agency from 1986 to 1991, the administrator for community intellectual disability services in Tennessee from 1977-1986, and a school psychologist and classroom teacher in South Carolina, 1971-1977—a lifetime of service.

It is Wanda’s achievements as Executive Director of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities for the last 27 years that most especially merits recognition of Lifetime Achievement. With her leadership, the Council has led efforts to improve the lives of Tennesseans with disabilities in ways that place Tennessee in the vanguard nationally. Without Wanda, it is unlikely that the Tennessee Developmental Disabilities Network would be as truly collaborative and vital as it is. The relationship among the Developmental Disabilities Act programs in Tennessee has been acknowledged nationally as an exemplary model of partnership.”



CORE Trainee Research Award

This award was established by the Council on Research and Evaluation and recognizes outstanding research accomplished by a current or recent AUCD trainee.

**This award was presented during the AUCD 2018 Conference Trainee Networking Session.*

Elizabeth Biggs, PhD

Vanderbilt Consortium LEND, Vanderbilt University
Medical Center, Nashville, TN

In Recognition of Your Outstanding Research Accomplishments

“Elizabeth is unwavering in her commitment to ensuring children with complex communication challenges can access the very best services and supports possible. And she is convinced every student with a severe disability ought to have the supports they need to live a good life in community with others. Her work clearly embodies what we value at our [Vanderbilt] UCEDD—undertaking rigorous, relevant research that is shared in ways that reach the practitioners who need it most.

Elizabeth is firmly committed to helping young people with severe disabilities flourish in their schools and communities. She is passionate about—and excels at—doing work that truly ‘matters’ in the lives of members of our community who too often find themselves at the margins. This is apparent not only in her emerging scholarly record, but also in the ways she personally invests her time serving the field and our local community.”



Service to the Organization Award

The AUCD Service to the Organization Award is presented to outgoing members of the AUCD Board of Directors.

**These awards will be presented during the AUCD 2018 Conference Closing Plenary.*

In appreciation of your service as a member of the Board of Directors of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Karen Brown, PhD, CCC-SLP

Virgin Islands UCEDD, University of the Virgin Islands

Celia Feinstein, MA

Institute on Disabilities, Temple University

Christine Vining, PhD, CCC-SLP

Vermont Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities, University of Vermont

Dan Zhang, PhD

Center on Disability and Development, Texas A&M University



President's Award

The AUCD President's Award is presented to the outgoing President of the AUCD Board of Directors.

**This award will be presented during the AUCD 2018 Conference Closing Plenary.*

Bruce Keisling, PhD

Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities,
University of Tennessee Health Science Center

In recognition of your most successful term of office on the Board of Directors of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities



*"Not everybody can be famous.
But everybody can be great,
because greatness is
determined by service."
~ Martin Luther King Jr.*

