

CENTER FOR DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Possibilities in Education and Training

A quarterly publication of the Center for Disabilities and Development, Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Disabilities at the University of Iowa Children's Hospital, Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1011

At the Iowa Children's Museum, Inclusion is a Way of Life

It's a busy Saturday afternoon in April at the Iowa Children's Museum in Coralville. Children explore 28,000 square feet of interactive exhibits, learning through hands-on play experiences in the museum's hospital, grocery store, art studio, aviation exhibit, and more! Amidst all the bustle, many stop to shoot hoops from a wheelchair, experience a sensory loss, or learn to write their name in Braille.

"If we truly want the general public to understand and embrace inclusion, then we need to demonstrate it," said Iowa Children's Museum (ICM) Executive Director Deb Dunkhase. "It was important to us that the disability awareness activities be located alongside all of the other exhibits."

According to Dunkhase, ICM staff have always been committed to inclusion. "We were fortunate to receive a grant in 2007 which allowed us to access inclusion training from the Center for Creative Play. What resulted from that training was an extensive 'to do' list," Dunkhase recalls.

Dunkhase immediately set to work on that list, forming an Inclusion Task Force comprised of ICM board and staff members as well as a variety of community stakeholders. The Task Force quickly drafted a philosophy statement on inclusion and recommended outreach efforts such as the provision of free museum memberships for families of children who experience disabilities.

"We do our best to accommodate all children, regardless of ability," explains Dunkhase. "If a child needs a quiet time to experience the museum, we will stay open past normal business hours. We will even close off an exhibit for a time or provide extra guidance through it, if that's

what it takes for a child to have an enriching experience. Our biggest challenge is convincing families that it's okay to ask for what they need."

In the opinion of this writer, the ICM sets the standard for being proactive with its efforts to promote inclusion. To accommodate visitors who experience physical disabilities, the museum added a second floor entrance to the aviation exhibit's control tower at a significant expense. The exhibit also features an accessible flight simulator. The museum's "ABC Forest" library contains several books on disability. In late June, staff will visit the Iowa Department for the Blind to attend a workshop on creating tactile art.

The ICM's commitment to promoting the arts for persons with disabilities dates back to 2004, when it hosted the first of three VSA Arts exhibits. "Celebrating Who I Am," a VSA exhibit featuring paintings and sculptures created by children with disabilities ages 8-18, is currently on display at the museum through August 15, 2010.

"We are proud to announce that Christopher, whose piece of art, ***Clay Chinese Dragon*** is featured in this exhibit, is from Ankeny, Iowa," explains Dunkhase. "We will be honoring him with an artist's reception from 2 to 3 PM at the museum on July 18. Christopher, who is eight years old, is really looking forward to autographing the exhibit guides for patrons, while his mother looks forward to discussing issues related to parenting a child with a disability."

To learn more about the "Celebrating Who I Am" exhibit, visit www.vsarts.org/celebratingwhoiam. For more information about the Iowa Children's Museum, visit www.theicm.org or call 319-625-6255.

Come Together: Closed Captioned and Signed DVDs for Everyone. . . in the Disability Resource Library

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A lending library and health information center for lowans

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Audism Unveiled (2008)

There's racism, there's sexism – we all know what those words mean. This powerful documentary introduces the term “audism” by presenting real life experiences of deaf people, from every walk of life, who convey their feelings of marginalization in a society that values hearing and speaking.

Autism is a World (2004)

Sue Rubin, who is autistic, was diagnosed and treated as mentally retarded until the age of 13, when she began using facilitated communication to express herself. This documentary takes the viewer on a journey into her mind, her daily world, and her life with autism.

Autism Times Two: How One Family Copes with the Challenges of Autism (2010)

The story of devoted parents, Jo and Darnell Cauley, who are determined to maximize the quality of life for their two sons with autism.

Beyond F.A.T. City: A Look Back, a Look Ahead (2004)

Practical strategies and inspirational advice for teachers and parents of children with learning disabilities who constantly struggle with frustration, anxiety, and tension (F.A.T.) as defined by educator and motivational speaker, Rick Lavoie.

Communication Options for Deaf Children: a Family Decision (2002)

There is no "one right way" of communicating with deaf children that will meet the needs of all families. This DVD provides facts on the various communication options available to children early in life in order to jump start the communication process.

Community Voices: Exploring Cross-cultural Care through Cancer (2001)

Using the subject of cancer as its focus, this video explores ways that differences in culture, race, and ethnicity affect health and the delivery of health care services.

Depression: Out of the Shadows (2008)

Depression is a complex disorder requiring individualized approaches to treatment. Eight men and women share their stories of coping with the disorder through various types of successful and unsuccessful treatments.

The Gillian Film (2006)

An exceptional young woman fully engages her passions and her skills in the community. Gillian is a competitive equestrian and a dancer; she works at her hometown veterinary clinic, and she just happens to have a developmental disability. When Gillian decides to move out of her childhood home, her mother must come to terms with letting go.

Good Days, Bad Days: Loving Someone with Mental Illness (2007)

This documentary profiles the impact that severe psychiatric conditions -- bipolar disorder, depression and schizophrenia -- have on members of three different families, and what they are doing to cope with the isolation of mental illness.

Kiss My Wheels (2003)

Follow the Zia Hot Shots, a nationally ranked junior wheelchair basketball team, through a season of training and tournament competition.

Last One Picked, First One Picked On: Learning Disabilities and Social Skills (1994)

In this relevant classic, Richard Lavoie guides parents and teachers to a greater understanding of social skill deficits and offers specific strategies for fostering social competence in children with learning disabilities.

Seizure First Aid (2001)

Combining footage of real seizures with reenactments, this film answers the question: "What should I do if someone is having a seizure?" People with epilepsy talk about how they feel when they have a seizure, discuss how they explain epilepsy to others and how they would like friends, family and the general public to react when a seizure occurs.

Sound and Fury (2000)

Deaf culture and its interpretation by members of one family is the crux of this riveting film. This 2001 Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary Feature continues to be aired to this day by local Public Broadcasting System stations.

Sound and Fury: 6 Years Later (2006)

Cochlear implants make their mark on the nuclear family. What must one family do to adjust? See this remarkable follow-up to *Sound and Fury*.

Success at Work: Transitions to Employment (2003)

Six high school graduates with learning disabilities and/or ADHD discuss their successful transition to employment of their choice in this upbeat young adult take on the working world.

When Billy Broke his Head, and Other Tales of Wonder (1994)

A classic documentary about how people with disabilities experience life in the United States. The film includes personal interviews that reveal individual's realities, hardships, and coping mechanisms in the face of government bureaucracy and overwhelming odds.

Worlds Apart: a Four-part Series on Cross-cultural Healthcare (2003)

Follow patients and families facing critical medical decisions as they navigate their way through the health care system. *Worlds Apart* raises awareness about the role sociocultural barriers play in patient-provider communication and in the provision of healthcare services for culturally and ethnically diverse patients.

Change not the mass but the fabric of your own
soul and your own vision, and you change all.

Vachel Lindsay

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with POSSIBILITIES:**

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Possibilities is a quarterly publication of the
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