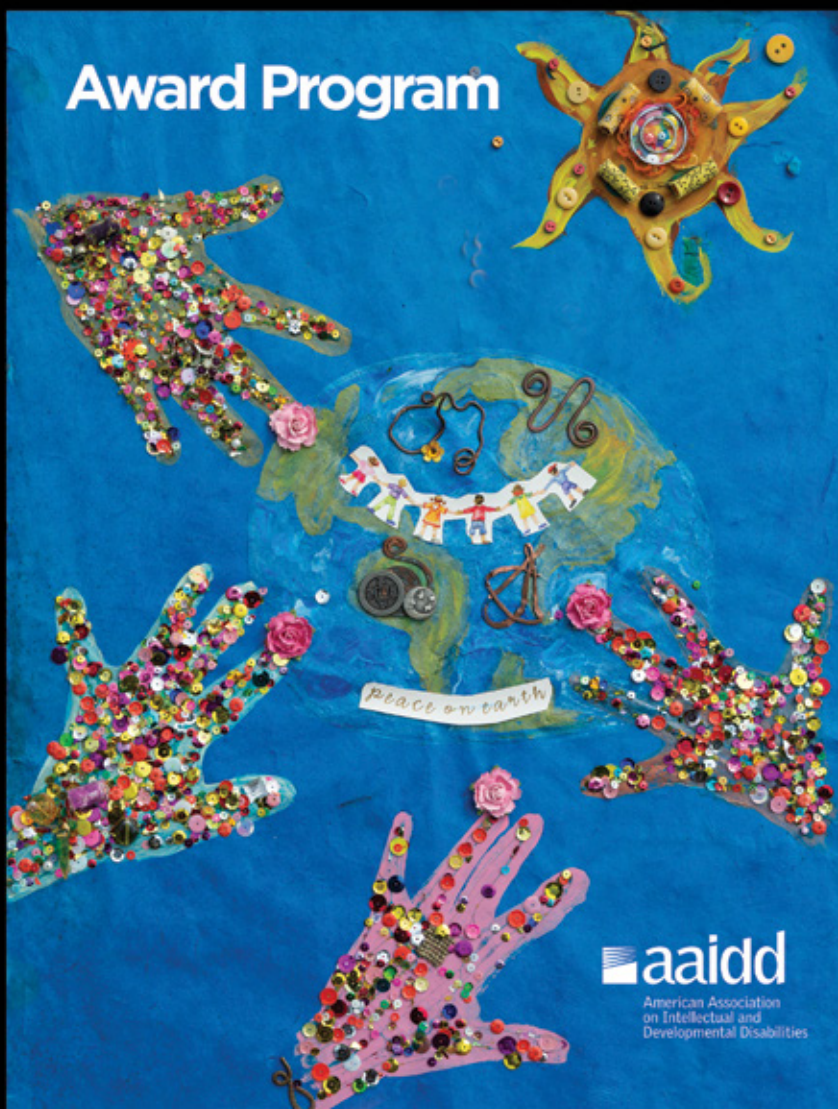


# Mentoring Across the Professional Spectrum: Doing the Fundamental Work to Get to the Next Level

AAIDD 149th Annual Meeting  
June 23-25, 2025 • Washington, DC

## Award Program



 **aaidd**  
American Association  
on Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities

# 2025 Honors

## Awards Breakfast

Wednesday, June 25, 2025 | 8:00 – 9:00 am

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## Presidential Awards

David Ervin, MA, FAAIDD

Sharon Gomez, FAAIDD

## Distinguished Career Recognition

Joanna Pierson, PhD, FAAIDD

## Awards of the AAIDD Interest Networks

### Psychology Interest Network

#### Wolf Wolfensberger Valor Award

Joan B. Beasley, MEd, PhD

### Religion & Spirituality Interest Network

#### Reimagining Spirituality Leadership Award

Sarah McKenney, MDiv, DMin

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## Fellows

Kathryn Burke, PhD

Atilla Cavkaytar, PhD

Craig Escudé, MD

Mary Etter, MPA

Deborah Fidler, PhD

# 2025 Honors

## Awards of the AAIDD

### Early Career Award

Antonio Manuel Amor González, PhD

### Education Award

Esther Lindström, PhD

### Historic Preservation Award

*Impact*

### Humanitarian Award

Genevieve Fitzgibbon

### International Award

Jan Šiška, PhD

### Leadership Award

Alixé Bonardi, MS, MHA, FAAIDD

### Media Award

*Telling It Our Way*

### Policy Award

Sheryl Larson, PhD, FAAIDD

### Research Award

Marc J. Tassé, PhD, FAAIDD

### Service to the Association Award

Mark McManus, PhD, FAAIDD

### Service to the Field Award

Deborah M. Spitalnik, PhD, FAAIDD

### Special Award

Oscar E. Hughes, PhD

### Student Award

Geonhwa Kim, MA

# About AAIDD Awards

AAIDD honors selected individuals or groups who have made outstanding contributions to the field. A call for award nominations is issued in the fall of each year. Areas in which awards for outstanding contributions or special achievement may be given are:

- **Early Career Award**—Awarded for contribution to or achievement in the field of IDD by an individual in the early stages of their career.
- **Education**—Awarded for significant contributions to dissemination of knowledge in the field of IDD.
- **Full Community Inclusion**—Awarded to culturally responsive programs that have succeeded in full community inclusion and participation.
- **Historic Preservation**—Awarded for contributions to historic preservation of the archives of the field of IDD and/or the Association.
- **Humanitarian Award**—Awarded for promotion of human welfare and social reform.
- **International**—Awarded for outstanding contributions in research, education, service, or advocacy that has had an impact on people with IDD within a particular country or across national lines.
- **Leadership**—Awarded for courage and dedication resulting in an outstanding contribution to the field of IDD.
- **Media**—Awarded for significant contributions in depicting Americans with disabilities in a positive light.
- **Policy**—Awarded for significant contributions to public policy that has advanced the field and resulted in positive outcomes for people with IDD.
- **Research**—Awarded for formulations and investigations that have contributed significantly to the body of scientific knowledge in the field of IDD.
- **Service to the Association**—Awarded for significant leadership contributions to a Chapter, Region, Interest Network, or the national organization.
- **Service to the Field**—Awarded for contributions to the impact of the interdependent professions that work for and with people with IDD in alignment with AAIDD's mission.
- **Special**—Awarded for an unusual or significant contribution or achievement not covered by other award categories.
- **Student**—Recognizes student contributions in service, leadership, or scholarship to the field of IDD.



# Presidential Award

## David Ervin, MA, FAAIDD

David Ervin, MA, is the CEO of Makom, a community services provider organization supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, and Guest Teaching Faculty for the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities. He has worked in the field of IDD for nearly 40 years, predominantly in the provider community and as a researcher and consultant in the U.S. and internationally.



Mr. Ervin's research interests include the drivers of health and health outcomes, culturally responsive healthcare delivery, and the impact of care integration on quality of life for people with IDD. He has authored or co-authored over 45 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and monographs. He is a frequent invited speaker at conferences and other events in the U.S. and internationally on health and healthcare systems for people with IDD and on organizational development and transformation.

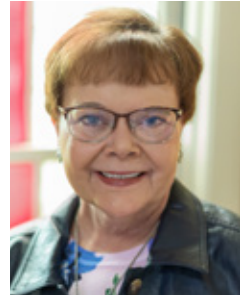
A Fellow of the AAIDD, Mr. Ervin currently serves on the editorial boards of *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, *Frontiers in Child Health & Human Development*, and *Helen: The Journal of Human Exceptionality*, and on a number of local, regional, and national committees, including the American Academy on Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD) Policy & Advocacy Committee and joint Policy and Positions Committee of the AAIDD and The Arc of the U.S. In addition, he serves as a Commissioner on the Montgomery County (Maryland) Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission and as the Vice President of the board of The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL).



## Presidential Award

# Sharon Gomez, FAAIDD

Sharon Gomez is the Chief Compliance and Privacy Officer for Evergreen Life Services, a community provider services organization in Louisiana. Her past roles at this organization include Vice President of Operations for the Central Region, Quality Enhancement Officer, and Director of Southwest Louisiana Division. In addition, Ms. Gomez's career also included service as Court Monitor for the District Court of Louisiana in the matter of Gary W. et al vs. the State of Louisiana and a Quality Enhancement Specialist for The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL).



Ms. Gomez was a member of the Committees for the 10th and 11th Editions of the Association's *Manuals*, and has authored or co-authored two peer-reviewed journal articles, two book chapters, and one magazine article.

Ms. Gomez currently serves as Co-Chair of the AAIDD Community Interest Network, and has engaged the Association at every level, having served as a President of AAIDD boards at the state, regional, and national levels. In her role as President of national board (2011–2012), Ms. Gomez spearheaded the launch of the journal *Inclusion* in 2013.

Ms. Gomez was preferred to Fellow of the AAIDD in 2000, and has been recognized on the state, regional and national levels for making significant contributions toward enhancing the quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She is an active member of the Enterprise Boulevard Church of Christ in Lake Charles, Louisiana and is a member of Gamma Phi Beta Sorority Alumnae Association.



## Distinguished Career Recognition

# Joanna Pierson, PhD, FAAIDD

Joanna Pierson, PhD, is currently Director of Research at The Arc of Frederick County (Maryland); she previously served the organization as its Executive Director of for 42 years. Since 1994, she has also been a Clinical Instructor in the University of Maryland (UMD) School of Social Work. Dr. Pierson started working in the field as a volunteer and during summers when she was in middle and high school when her older sister Marcia (who had Down syndrome), told her that “services were not good and it was my job to fix them” [because] “she would be busy living her own life,” which she proceeded to do in ways that were rare then for people who had Down syndrome.



Dr. Pierson has provided consultation to states on support coordination, contributed to several books on organizational leadership and family support, and presented at numerous national and state conferences. She teaches courses in the UMD School of Social Work that address community organizing, leadership, and policy.

An AAIDD Fellow, Dr. Pierson has served the Association in numerous roles including President, Secretary/Treasurer, and Member-at-Large of the national board; Chair of Region IX and the Maryland Chapter; President of the Social Work Division and Co-Chair of the of Community Interest Network; Standing and Ad Hoc Committees, as AAIDD’s representative on The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) board (2012–2020), and as leader of the Association’s Delegation to India (2010) and co-leader of its Delegation to Russia (2007).



# Wolf Wolfensberger Valor Award

*Presented by the AAIDD*  
Psychology Interest Network

## Joan B. Beasley, MEd, PhD

Joan B. Beasley, PhD, is a licensed mental health counselor, and at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) College of Health and Human Services' Institute on Disability, is a Research Professor and Director of the National Research Consortium for Mental Health in Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (MH in IDD). In addition to her work at UNH, she holds an appointment as adjunct research faculty at Georgetown University and is a visiting scholar at Brandeis University.



Dr. Beasley developed the cross-systems framework upon which she built and served as the principal author and investigator for the Systemic Therapeutic, Assessment, Respite and Treatment (START) model, first implemented in 1988. START is a cross-systems crisis prevention and intervention evidence-informed program aimed to improve capacity for effective mental health services, now operated around the country. In 2010, she was invited to found the Center for START services at the University of New Hampshire, Institute on Disability, which she directed until 2023.

Dr. Beasley collaborated with national partners to found the National Research Consortium for MH in IDD to assist in the development and dissemination of solutions-focused participatory research. She is currently the Principal Investigator on several national studies that emphasize inclusive research, consider measures of effective services, and promote mental health and well-being for people with IDD. Dr. Beasley has authored or co-authored many peer reviewed publications and has been invited to present at national and international forums.





# Reimagining Spirituality Leadership Award

*Presented by the AAIDD*

Religion & Spirituality Interest Network

## **Sarah McKenney, MDiv, DMin**

Sarah McKenney, MDiv, DMin, has been the Spiritual Support Coordinator for the Stone Belt Arc (Bloomington, Indiana) since 2017; her previously held positions at Stone Belt include Skills Development Clinician, Lifelong Learning Instructor, and Direct Support Professional. She earned a Master of Divinity degree at Columbia Theological Seminary in 2012, was ordained by Presbyterian Church USA in 2018, earned a professional development certificate in trauma-informed care at Indiana University School of Public Health – Bloomington in 2018, and a Doctor of Ministry at the Western Theological Seminary in 2024.



With funding from the Indiana Borough of Disability Services, Rev. Dr. McKenney developed and continues to grow the Spiritual Support Program at Stone Belt. She piloted the Spiritual Engagement Coach program, which supports both individuals with IDD in meeting their spiritual needs in the community (including grief and end-of-life support needs), and faith communities in meeting their goals for increasing inclusion and belonging for people with disabilities of faith.

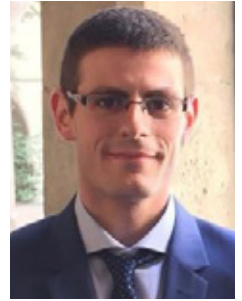
Rev. Dr. McKenney currently serves as Vice President of the AAIDD Religion & Spirituality Interest Network. She also serves as Vice President of the board of Fallen Walls Ministry, which supports people with disabilities in ministerial leadership. She shares that she experiences her life through the lenses of dyslexia and ADHD.



## Early Career Award

# Antonio Manuel Amor González, PhD

Antonio M. Amor González, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Salamanca (Spain), where he is part of the Institute for Community Inclusion (INICO), a university-recognized research group for “research on disability” and the “Consolidated Research Unit 115 Research on Disability” approved by the Ministry of Education of the Regional Government of the Autonomous Region of Castile and León.



Dr. Amor teaches in the undergraduate psychology program and in two graduate psychology degree programs as well as teaching an English-language “Psychology of Disability” course for students who come to the University as part of a study abroad program. In addition, he has a consultancy with the Government of the Autonomous Community of Valencia to increase the capacity of school guidance counselors to include students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

For his doctoral project, Dr. Amor conducted two studies, one at the University of Kansas in 2016, the other at Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, Poland in 2017. His major research interest concerns integrate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Supports Paradigm, and the Schalock and Verdugo Quality of Life Model to address the inclusion of students with IDD.

Dr. Amor has authored or co-authored over 40 peer-reviewed articles, chapters, books, technical reports, and other materials. In addition, he has contributed to 80 presentations at national and international conferences, including keynote and invited lectures, and serves as a regular reviewer for several high-impact journals.



## Education Award

# Esther Lindström, PhD

Esther Lindström, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois Chicago. She currently serves as an associate editor for *Assessment for Effective Intervention* and on the editorial boards of *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *Remedial and Special Education*, *Research in Special Education*, *Learning Disability Quarterly*, and *Intervention in School and Clinic*.



Dr. Lindström earned master's and doctoral degrees in Special Education from Vanderbilt University. Prior to her graduate studies, she served in the AmeriCorps program for five years in Chicago, the last three of which were dedicated to supporting underserved public schools.

Dr. Lindström's research interests focus on examining and improving instructional practices for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), particularly those with extensive support needs. Her current projects concern reading instruction for students with IDD and the role of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and expectations for students.

Dr. Lindström has authored or co-authored 27 peer-reviewed articles and 4 book chapters and contributed over 150 invited and juried presentations at conferences in the U.S. and internationally. A member of AAIDD since 2020, she has been active in the Association's Education, Research, and Student and Early Career Interest Networks.



## Historic Preservation Award

### Impact

*Impact* is the flagship publication of the Institute on Community Integration (ICI), University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at the University of Minnesota. From its beginnings in 1988 as a newsletter to the present, *Impact* has chronicled the development of new knowledge and its practical applications in the field. Its issues and articles are a meaningful contribution to the archives of the field.



*Impact* strives to advance the inclusion of people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities by exploring research, strategies, and promising practices in the field. Today, through articles written by people with disabilities, their families, academic leaders, and practitioners, *Impact* shares practical information useful to professionals across a variety of fields, including educators, community service providers, policymakers, and advocates, as well as persons with disabilities and their families.

*Impact* is now published three times a year as a print magazine, with an accessible digital version available in English and Spanish that offers clear-language summaries of in-depth overview articles, along with read-it-to-me and other features. Each issue bridges research to practice, focusing on a single topic important to people with disabilities—disability justice, careers, sexuality, self-advocacy, aging, and more—while offering insights to support meaningful change.

Issue editors and authors from ICI and across the global disability field share their perspectives and ideas for moving inclusion forward. In addition, a companion podcast, *Impact: The Conversation*, is available that features editors and authors discussing the key takeaways from each issue.



# Humanitarian Award

## Genevieve Fitzgibbon

Genevieve Fitzgibbon joined Keystone Human Services (KHS) in 2006. At KHS, she is both the Vice President of Global Programs and Advocacy and the CEO of the KHS subsidiary, Keystone Human Services International (KHSI). Under its KHSI subsidiary, KHS provides consultation, technical assistance, and support to community inclusion activities in several countries around the world.



In her role at KHS, Ms. Fitzgibbon is dedicated to increasing accessibility, building and strengthening critical partnerships and advocacy priorities, and shaping policies that promote community inclusion and human rights across three global regions.

Ms. Fitzgibbon's efforts contributed to the establishment of Keystone Human Services India Association. This nongovernmental organization's flagship program, Keystone Institute India, is a national educational institute on disability, community, and innovation is designed to strengthen the inclusion of people with disability in community life.

Ms. Fitzgibbon has also been leading KHS's deinstitutionalization efforts in Central and Eastern Europe. In KHSI's regional office in Chisinau, Moldova, she facilitated the development of close partnerships with the government and community partners to successfully transition hundreds of people out of institutions over the past 15 years.

In 2024, Ms. Fitzgibbon had the privilege to address the General Assembly at the United Nations during the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the topic of deinstitutionalization and community inclusion.

Ms. Fitzgibbon has written and presented on a number of inclusion and disability-related topics. She currently serves on the board of the ANCOR Foundation and Co-Chairs ANCOR's Global Council.



## International Award Jan Šiška, PhD

Jan Šiška, PhD, is a Professor of Special Education in the Czech Republic. He serves on the Faculties of Education at Charles University in Prague and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. In addition to his teaching responsibilities at these universities, Dr. Šiška co-founded an international master's program in inclusive education with partners in the UK and Norway and has delivered lectures at universities around the world, including in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Ethiopia, Estonia, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Kenya, Malta, Norway, UK, U.S., and Vietnam.



Dr. Šiška's research focuses on social policy and services to people with IDD including social empowerment through deinstitutionalization and community living, quality of support, life-course, and youth transitions. As a technical expert, evaluator, and the co-author of important commissioned reports for government agencies, he contributed systems-level policy changes in several countries that positively impacted people with IDD.

Dr. Šiška has been widely published in top U.S., British, Australian, and Czech journals. He has authored or co-authored over 40 articles, 15 chapters, and 5 books, and made numerous conference presentations across the U.S., Europe, and Africa on topics including employment, quality of life, deinstitutionalization, and youth in transition.

A member of AAIDD since 2022, Dr. Šiška currently serves as an associate editor of *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* and on the board of the International Association of Special Education (IASE).



## Leadership Award

# Alixé Bonardi, MS, MHA, FAAIDD

Alixé Bonardi, OTR, MHA, is Vice President, IDD, Aging, & Disabilities at Human Services Research Institute (HSRI), where she leads a team and projects to improve community services for people with disabilities (IDD). She also serves on the faculty of the E.K. Shriver Center LEND program and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine of the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School.



Ms. Bonardi has led a range of research and technical assistance projects that promoted opportunities for people with disabilities to meaningfully contribute to research and policy recommendations. From 2015–2020, she served as HSRI’s director of the National Core Indicators, a program that collaborates with state agencies to monitor and improve outcomes of state IDD support systems, and she authored or co-authored a number of peer-reviewed articles contributing better information about the prevalence and health experience of the national population of people with IDD.

A Fellow of the AAIDD and Honoree of the 2020 National Historic Recognition Project, Ms. Bonardi served on the AAIDD national board as Member-at-Large and Secretary-Treasurer, on the Committee for 12th Edition of the Association’s *Manual*, and currently serves as associate editor of *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.

Ms. Bonardi earned a master’s in occupational therapy from Columbia University and a master’s in health administration from Suffolk University. She was a 2002 LEND Fellow at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School’s E.K. Shriver Center and a 2009 Fulbright Fellow who investigated disability policy and decision making in New Zealand.



## Media Award

# Telling It Our Way

Launched in the summer of 2023, the *Telling It Our Way* podcast is available through the “Voices Around Us” initiative of WGTE Media, the NPR-affiliate in Toledo, Ohio. The podcast features true stories written and performed by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), covering rich, complex topics that range from friendship to romance, work life to homelessness, and creativity to grief.



*Telling It Our Way* is co-hosted by Rebecca Monteleone, PhD, of the University of Toledo, and Ally Day, PhD, of MaineHealth and formerly of the University of Toledo, who provide research, context, and resources to supplement stories shared by the contributors. To date, the podcast has run for two seasons, with 22 episodes featuring 34 storytellers.

The idea for developing the *Telling It Our Way* podcast grew out of a series of storytelling workshops conducted by Dr. Monteleone over several years with artists with IDD. Dr. Monteleone is one of the founders of the Plain Truth Project, aimed at making news media more cognitively accessible. Dr. Day is a disability and gender studies scholar with research interests that include reproductive health, chronic conditions, and bioethics.

*Telling It Our Way* is available on WGTE's website and mobile app as well as all major streaming platforms.





## Policy Award

# Sheryl Larson, PhD, FAAIDD

Sheryl Larson, PhD, is a Research Manager at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI). Since joining ICI in 1988, she served as the Principal Investigator of dozens of sponsored projects on Medicaid long-term supports and services, Supplemental Security Income, deinstitutionalization, direct support professional and supervisor recruitment, retention and training, prevalence, health care, quality assurance, and inclusive community-based supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).



Dr. Larson has directed and served as the Principal Investigator of the Residential Information Systems Project (RISP) since 2012. RISP is a longitudinal study charged with gathering, maintaining, and analyzing data on Medicaid funded long-term supports and services for people with IDD since 1977. In this role, Dr. Larson's work to answer key policy and program questions about residential and community support for people with IDD has been widely disseminated. She has authored or co-authored hundreds of articles, chapters, books, policy briefs, technical reports, and other products and has delivered both invited and juried presentations at professional conferences, workshops, and seminars in nearly every U.S. state and in Australia, Canada, France, and South Africa.

A Fellow of the AAIDD and the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities (IASSIDD), Dr. Larson serves on the editorial board of *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* and served as a member of the Committee for the 11th Edition of the Association's *Manual*.



## Research Award

# Marc J. Tassé, PhD, FAAIDD

Marc J. Tassé, PhD, is the Director of Nisonger Center, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, at The Ohio State University, where he is a Professor in the Department of Psychology and in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health.



Dr. Tassé has conducted research and provided clinical services with people with intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, and related neurodevelopmental disorders, including those with co-occurring mental/behavioral health concerns for over 30 years. He continues to conduct evaluations and gives expert testimony in capital cases where intellectual disability is an issue.

Dr. Tassé has contributed to the development of leading standardized tests including the *Diagnostic Adaptive Behavior Scale (DABS)*, *Supports Intensity Scale- Children's version (SIS-C)* *Supports Intensity Scale-Adult version (SIS-A)*, *Nisonger Child Behavior Rating Form (NCBRF)*, and the *Quebec Adaptive Behavior Scale (QABS)*.

A widely-known speaker and author, Dr. Tassé served on the Committees for the 10th and 11th Editions of the Association's *Manual* and co-authored its 12th Edition.

Dr. Tassé is a Fellow of the AAIDD, American Psychological Association (APA), and International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASSIDD). He is a past President of AAIDD (2012–2013) and is the current past President of APA Division 33. Dr. Tassé work has been recognized by the AAIDD (Presidential Award, 2024; Exceptional Service Award: 2021, 2011, 2009 & 2007), APA Division 33 (2017 John W. Jacobson Award), and in 2020 by the National Historic Recognition Project: 2000–2020.



## Service to the Association Award

# Mark McManus, PhD, FAAIDD

Mark McManus, PhD, joined University of Akron (UA) School of Social Work in 2010. Currently serving as the MSW Online Student Engagement Coordinator at the School of Social Work and Family Sciences, his past roles at UA included MSW Coordinator and Visiting Assistant Professor. Prior to joining UA, Dr. McManus worked in human services in Montana and Alaska and practiced social work in Wisconsin, where he maintains an active license.



Dr. McManus has given substantial service to the Association, serving as the Social Work Interest Network as Vice-chair (2015) and Chair (2016–2021), a peer reviewer for *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* (AJIDD, 2019) and *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* (IDD, 2018), and an abstract reviewer for the Association’s national conferences from 2017–2025. Additionally, he served on the Planning Committees for the Association’s national 2020, 2023, and 2024 conferences, on the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2023 conference, and as a moderator for many sessions at AAIDD conferences. Dr. McManus also served on the Association’s Nominations and Elections and its Awards and Fellowship Committees.

A Fellow of the AAIDD, Dr. McManus has made numerous presentations at conferences in the U.S., Canada, and China on topics concerning intellectual and developmental disabilities and health, telehealth, distance education, and family relationships.

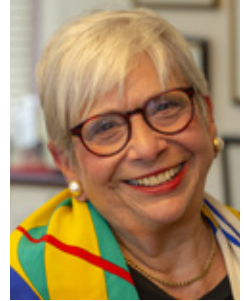
Dr. McManus was an invited participant of the Association’s 2015 National Goals in Research, Practice, and Policy meeting. In this role he contributed to the “Social Inclusion” strand’s Issue Brief, a article published in *IDD*, and a chapter in *Critical Issues in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Contemporary Research, Practice, and Policy* (2016).



## Service to the Field Award

# Deborah M. Spitalnik, PhD, FAAIDD

Deborah M. Spitalnik, PhD, retired as the Founding Executive Director of The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development (UCEDD) and NJ LEND at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, where she is Professor Emerita of Pediatrics and Family Medicine and Community Health. Prior to founding the Boggs Center in 1983, she served as Director of Community and Regional Programs at Temple University's Developmental Disabilities Center, a University Affiliated Facility (UAF, the precursor to UCEDDs) and consulted for the Office for the Special Master overseeing the Pennhurst State School and Hospital.



Dr. Spitalnik's service to the field is notable. She served for several terms on the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities. She was first appointed by President Bill Clinton, serving from 1994–2001 (Chair from 2000–2001), and appointed a second time by President Barack Obama, serving from 2009–2013.

Dr. Spitalnik was a member of the Committees for the 9th and 10th Editions of the Association's *Manuals*. She served as president of the board of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD; 1991–1992) and chair of the board of The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL; 2011–2012).

Dr. Spitalnik received gubernatorial appointments to numerous committees and served her state with distinction, notably on the Governor's Task Force on Olmstead (2000–2012), the New Jersey Medical Assistance Advisory Committee (2005–present), and the Governors' transition advisory committees for Human and Children's Services (2018), Policy (2005–2006), and Human Services (2001). Her past honors include the AUCD Lifetime Achievement Award (2023) and the AAIDD Humanitarian Award (2000).



## Special Award

# Oscar E. Hughes, PhD

Oscar E. Hughes, PhD, is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Psychology Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston, an Adjunct Sexuality Education Trainer for Elevatus Training, and Vice President of AAIDD's Region X. Prior to completing his doctoral degree, he served as a special education teacher at two Massachusetts schools: Watertown High School (2016–2019) and the May Center School for Autism and Developmental Disabilities (2014–2016).



Dr. Hughes currently conducts inclusive research on promoting self-determination and supporting gender and sexual expression. He strives to conduct research which centers the perspectives and priorities of youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and leads to the creation of resources that can improve their quality of life. He is currently studying the outcomes of a professional development program designed to promote positive relationships between teachers and their students with autism.

Dr. Hughes recently collaborated with LGBTQ+ co-researchers from Rainbow Support Groups to create a guidebook on supporting gender and sexual expression for LGBTQ+ adults with IDD. At Elevatus Training, in addition to teaching special education courses and leading professional development on healthy sexuality for people with IDD, he and has helped to create and facilitate an international research collective to advance LGBTQ+ IDD research. Dr. Hughes was honored with the 2024 Mass Advocates Standing Strong Alfred “Big Al” Daigle LGBTQ+ Community Support Award.



## Student Award

# Geonhwa Kim, MA

Geonhwa (Gina) Kim is a doctoral student in the Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas (KU). She earned a bachelor's in special education and social studies education, and a master's in special education from Ewha Womans University in South Korea. Prior to her studies at KU, she served as a special education teacher in a self-contained secondary public school in South Korea for five years, working with students with complex support needs.



Throughout her doctoral program, Ms. Kim supervised the fieldwork of graduate students working with children with low-incidence disabilities to enhance the support the children received in their inclusive classrooms. In this role, she promoted greater interdisciplinary collaboration between special education teachers and speech-language pathologists to ensure more responsive supports for students with communication needs in general education settings.

Ms. Kim's research interests are focused on strength-based approaches to high-quality inclusive education for students with disabilities. She is currently engaged in inclusive research examining providing personalized supports and teacher education and using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) communication to enhance participation and self-determination.

In all her work, Ms. Kim strives to center the intersectional identities and lived experiences of individuals with disabilities, particularly those with complex support needs, while also fostering collaborations with both pre-service and in-service teachers.



# AAIDD Milestone Members

## 5 Years

Jeanne Alpert, PhD  
Jamie Bailey  
Sara Boyd, PhD  
Lauren Bruno, PhD  
Arthur Carucci  
Marie Moore Channell, PhD  
Anna Cunningham  
Owen Doody, PhD  
Shantha Edwards  
Isabel Elliott  
Zach Gordon, MA  
Olwen Hansen-Blake  
Kristal Hebert, MS  
Ramu Iyer, MBA  
Rebecca Kammes, PhD  
Diane Keen, DNS  
Maureen Kennedy  
Adam Moore, MS  
Iva Obrusnikova, PhD  
Wendy Parent-Johnson, PhD  
Xavier Polk, PhD, MS  
LoriJo Poole, MSW  
Jade Presnell, MS, MSW  
Peter Smith, MS, PhD  
Smantha Toews, PhD  
Melonie Welsh, MS  
Allen Wong, DDS, EdD

## 10 Years

Kruti Acharya, MD, FAAIDD  
Stephen Bruce, MEd  
Kristin Dell'Armo, PhD  
Craig Escudé, MD, FAAIDD  
Mary Etter, MPA, FAAIDD  
Raynard Gant, MS  
Lisa Horan

Julie Long  
Bill Love, MEd  
Brent Mikulski, MBA  
Brent Parker, MEd  
Nicole Sullivan, MA  
Jennifer Wagner  
Katherine Walton, PhD

## 15 Years

Julie Bershadsky, PhD  
Kelly Friedlander, MSW, MPA, FAAIDD  
Stephanie Giordano, DLP, MA  
Julie Grieves, PhD  
Ravita Maharaj, PhD, FAAIDD  
Kevin McGrew, PhD, MS  
Cheryl Sartori, DLP  
Nina Watkins

## 20 Years

Kim Fisher, PhD, FAAIDD  
Abby J. Fuoto, DNP  
Sara T. Kover, PhD  
Amie Lulinksi, PhD, FAAIDD  
Anne M. Masters, MA, FAAIDD  
Colleen A. McLaughlin, MEd  
David J. Morstad, MEd, FAAIDD

## 25 Years

Harold Kleinert, EdD  
Barbara Kleist, JD, FAAIDD  
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Terri Leibfried, MEd, FAAIDD  
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Charles Snow, FAAIDD

Dan Verstraete

Shirley A. Walker

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Philip Wilson, PhD

Colleen M. Zalewski, MSA

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Amy Hewitt, PhD, FAAIDD

Donald Lafferty, MBA

Barbara Mazzella, MS, FAAIDD

Christopher Nadelbach, MA, FAAIDD

Susan Palmer, PhD, FAAIDD

Mary Kay Rizzolo, PhD, FAAIDD

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Frank J. Symons, PhD, FAAIDD

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Sandra Gerdes, MBA

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Kathryn Service, MS

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G. David Smith, PhD

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Mark Yeager, PhD, MS, FAAIDD

## 40 Years

Dotty Bell, FAAIDD

Arthur Dykstra, MS, FAAIDD

Barbara Mallette, PhD

E. Geronimo Robinson, MA, FAAIDD

## 45 Years

John Annison

Valerie Bradley, MA, FAAIDD

Kenneth Dumars, MD

Thomas Fish, PhD, FAAIDD

Tom Herman

Mary Hertz

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Theodore Bunck, PhD

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