

The Boggs Center Celebrates Graduation of the 2021-2022 NJLEND Fellows at 6th Annual Maternal and Child Health Leadership Symposium

On May 6th, 2022, The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities celebrated the graduation of the 2021-2022 NJLEND Fellows at the New Jersey Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (NJLEND) program's 6th annual Maternal and Child Health Leadership Symposium. Held virtually, the event featured a keynote address, "Empathy and Emotional Intelligence: Tools for Leadership, Providing Support, and Relationships," by Susan Stillman, EdD, Emerita Director of Education for Six Seconds, Emotional Intelligence Network and Lynne Tamor, PhD, a founding member of the Whole Schooling Consortium, an experienced family advocate, and an advocate for accessible information for both people with disabilities and their families. The symposium was attended by those from the Rutgers community, New Jersey's Department of Children and Families and Department of Health, SPAN Parent Advocacy Network, and other state and community organizations and featured brief presentations by each graduating NJLEND Fellow sharing their personal definitions of leadership, the culmination of a year-long *Defining Leadership: Charting Your Trajectory* learning exercise.

NJLEND Fellows presented posters to share about their year-long leadership projects with each other and the interdisciplinary NJLEND Faculty on Friday, April 29th at a separate virtual session.

Congratulations to the 2021-2022 NJLEND Fellows and Boggs Center Interdisciplinary Trainees: Raneta Anderson, MSW; Alexandra Bowen, MGC; Clare Bozso, DO; Cali Rae FitzGerald, MGC; Gabrielle Gunin, PsyD; Steve Gruzlovic, BA; Sophie Kang, PharmD; Audrey Mariani; Kerry McGrath, MSW; Julianne McGinnis, MGC; Melanie Niederhauser, MSN, RN, CPNP-PC, CCRC; Dominique Reminick, MA; and Heather Seid, MS, RDN.

Part of a national network, The Boggs Center's NJLEND program provides graduate-level interdisciplinary training aimed at preparing the next generation of health leaders to address the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), related developmental disabilities, and other maternal and child health populations. Funding for LEND programs is authorized by the Autism CARES Act and is administered through the federal Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

Visit the NJLEND page on The Boggs Center's website to learn more about the program and view this year's leadership project posters:

boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/student-experiences/njlend

The Boggs Center Celebrates New Jersey Partners in Policymaking 2022 Graduates

In a virtual ceremony held on Saturday, April 9, 2022, The Boggs Center, New Jersey's federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service, celebrated the graduation of its sixth Partners in Policymaking Class. New Jersey Partners in Policymaking is a leadership development and advocacy education program for adults with developmental disabilities (over age 21) and family members of young children and transition age youth available through collaboration between The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, and Disability Rights New Jersey. The goal of this program is to prepare the next generation of disability advocates to work toward meaningful change in our state.

New Jersey's program is one of twenty-eight Partners in Policymaking programs across the country. This year's class of nine people with disabilities, fourteen parents, one sibling, and one interdisciplinary trainee, join more than 30,000 graduates to-date across the country ready to collaborate with policymakers to increase the inclusion, self-determination, and well-being of people with disabilities. Graduates were celebrated through empowering remarks by Mercedes Witowsky, Executive Director, and Paul Blaustein, Chair of the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities along with Gwen Orlowski, JD, Executive Director of Disability Rights New Jersey. Deborah Spitalnik, PhD, Professor of Pediatrics and Family Medicine and Community Health and the founding Executive Director of The Boggs Center, inspired the class with her motivating speech.

Presentations from each of the graduates highlighted details about their experiences with the program and advocacy throughout the year. They shared stories of learning and advocacy across the lifespan, addressing topics including inclusive education, navigating transitions to adulthood, post-secondary education, competitive integrated employment, healthcare, Medicaid, Supported Decision Making, and community inclusion. This powerful group will lead the way toward advocating for lasting change that will help people with disabilities realize their vision for life.

To learn more about this year's graduates, their experiences over the past 8 months, and the impact of the Partners program, view the Graduation Panel Presentation recording:

<https://media.rwjms.rutgers.edu/Mediasite/Play/b94397fdef3b447e87b6bf8660ef7f481d>