



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- 1st Lady expresses an interest in Deaf Services
- FY2011 Funding Priorities
- November 12, 2009 Business Forum focus on untapped workforce
- Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers Annual Award
- Governor's Council New Appointments
- New Council Staff

# GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES & SPECIAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

## First Lady Sandy Parnell Expresses Interest in Deaf Services

Sandy Parnell, First Lady for the State of Alaska, has made several visits in the last four months to state organizations, the Anchorage School District, and the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education to learn more about deaf services. During the week of September 21, 2009 the Governor's office completed an Executive Proclamation signed by Governor Parnell recognizing September 20th through the 26th as Deaf Awareness Week. During that week a Public Service Announcement was developed by the [Governor's office](#) whereby the 1st lady and members of the deaf community encouraged citizens of Alaska to seek out additional information about the deaf community by going to the [Alaska Deaf Council](#) and the [Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education](#) Web sites. Since then Mrs. Parnell has visited the following organizations:



*1st Lady for the State of Alaska, Sandy Parnell, Gayle Hadley, School Interpreter*

- Alaska State School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – East High School
- Alaska State School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Russian Jack Elementary School
- Alaska State School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Clark Middle School
- Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Debarr Office (Deaf & Hard of Hearing Team)
- Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education office and October Board meeting

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*Continued on page 6*

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# FY2011 FUNDING PRIORITIES

The Governor's Council has several legislative priorities for FY11. These priorities have seen preliminary success. On September 9-11, 2009, Council Chair, Donna Swihart, Council Member, Kathy Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Millie Ryan, and Council Planner, Duane Mayes, presented eight funding recommendation priorities and four capital requests to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, all of which were approved. These recommendations are as follows:

## Priority #1: Intensive Support and Intervention Services

In Alaska, a lack of intensive support and intervention is a missing piece in the current service delivery system. This lack of services puts individuals and their families at risk by forcing them to move to more restrictive and costly environments. Funding used for this purpose would help to change this by developing in-state capacity to meet the needs of individuals with challenging behaviors. **GF/MH funds in the amount of \$850,000 have been recommended.**

### How will this funding be used?

- Hands-on consultation services
- Training for service providers and families
- Short-term residence to stabilize the individual in crisis
- Development of a behavioral intervention plan for individuals who have exhausted the known alternatives of families and service providers
- General grant services for people with developmental disabilities

## Priority #2: Alaska Autism Resource Center

The Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC) is a resource to assist families who have a child with an autism spectrum disorder to navigate their way through funding and treatment resources in order to ensure the well-being of their child. Autism is only beginning to gain recognition in the United States as a treatable condition through early intervention practices. Treatment has shown to highly improve the quality of life of a child once he or she becomes an adult. Because of this new recognition of autism, funding sources are often difficult for families to locate, despite the necessity of early treatment. More funds are needed to improve the quality of care this

resource can provide. **GF/MH funds in the amount of \$100,000 have been recommended.**

### How will this funding be used?

- Helping families locate early intervention/infant learning programs (EI/ILPs) for their children who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder
- Assisting society in recognizing newly-understood realities about autism and how to treat it
- Finding qualified care providers to aid individuals diagnosed with autism
- Working to open an outreach office in Fairbanks, Bethel, or both

## Priority #3: Special Education Service Agency

The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) provides no-charge services for low-incidence disabilities for 73 school districts in rural and remote locations throughout Alaska. Many of these districts have no method of guidance for assisting individuals with low-incidence disabilities. SESA sends knowledgeable staff members to give consultation to instructors and provides on-going consultation over the phone or in-person (if needed) after the initial service. **A GF/MH recommendation in the amount of \$100,000 will increase SESA's ability to do more outreach.**

### How will this funding be used?

- Assisting staff with travel to rural and isolated areas of Alaska, despite the rising cost of living and inflation
- Increasing the areas and cases that can be served by SESA

## Priority #4: Disability Program Navigator

The funding for the Disability Program Navigator will

be used to help facilitate seamless, comprehensive services to one-stop job center customers with disabilities. In providing this easily understandable service, individuals with disabilities will be able to increase their self-sufficiency and employment opportunities significantly. **GF/MH funds in the amount of \$150,000 have been recommended.**

### How will this funding be used?

- Conducting outreach to agencies and organizations that serve people with disabilities to encourage them to use the resources available at the job centers
- Guiding job center staff in helping people with disabilities access and navigate available programs
- Assisting in or out-of-school youth with disabilities to obtain employment and economic self-sufficiency
- Serving as resources on the Federal, State, local and private programs that impact the ability of people with disabilities to enter and remain in the workforce

## Priority #5: Alaska Transition Training Initiative

Funding will be made available in order to ensure that children who are transitioning from Early Intervention or Infant Learning Programs (EI/ILP) to a preschool environment are able to do so in a safe, swift and simple manner. This will also create accountability for school compliance with the annual federal indicator, as schools will now be required to meet the needs of children who have been in EI/ILPs to keep up with federal law. **GF/MH funds in the amount of \$100,000 have been recommended.**

### How will this funding be used?

- Assisting rural communities in their involvement with the transition

- Providing more workshops throughout Alaska
- Serving the projected 700 Alaskans with developmental disabilities through this expansion

### Priority #6: Transportation Operating Funds

Alaska is one of only two states in the US that does not currently have a state-funded community transportation system. Despite more people using community transportation systems, operating costs continue to rise; putting a burden on the local systems due to lack of compensation. **The GF/MH recommendation of \$100,000 will provide funding to better this situation, and will require local communities to contribute with a 10% funding match, an amount that will be capped at \$10,000.**

#### How will this funding be used?

- Compensating for rising cost of living and inflation
- Providing additional funding for operating costs
- Allow the bus service to keep the same routes rather than cutting back
- Work towards the goal of having more service in rural areas

### Priority #7: Rural Transition Services

Rural Transition Services are an opportunity for students with disabilities living in rural areas to transition from school to an active and efficient adult life. The project linked to this funding regarding the services has two important objectives. First, to spend a week of hands-on training with staff members to prepare them in the kinds of vocational and educational lifestyles that both rural students would seek to lead and that would bring benefit to their community. The second objective is to bring these services to other rural areas of the state, instead of focusing on urban areas that are difficult for their targeted audiences to access. The projected expansion of beneficiaries served by this project is from 400 to 525. **GF/MH funds in the amount of \$50,000 have been recommended.**



*Duane Mayes of the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education encourages all Alaskans to talk to their legislators about the importance of funding these important programs with the sign "testify"*

#### How will this funding be used?

- Improving available training for potential staff members
- More comprehensively understanding the vocational needs of rural communities
- Bringing the services to more rural areas
- Understanding the services and job opportunities available for students with disabilities in specific rural areas

### Priority #8: Traumatic Brain Injury Care Coordinator

This program works to lessen costs by lowering the number of emergency room visits and away-from-home care. It also readies the state for individuals who need vocational rehabilitation or employment. The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Care Coordinator Program will expand the number of TBI care coordinators with specialized expertise in the state of Alaska from one to two. **GF/MH funds in the amount of \$200,000 have been recommended.**

#### How will this funding be used?

- Increasing the number of care coordinators to two
- Providing for more in-home care
- Lowering costs for individuals in need of a TBI care coordinator

### Capital Request

#### Deferred Maintenance

This recommendation is to provide much needed grant funding for our network of non-profit service providers to maintain safe and appropriate service facilities. Past grants have funded renovations of heating/ventilation systems and other renovation projects for provider agencies. **A \$2.5 million GF/MH increment is recommended.**

#### Coordinated Transportation

This recommendation is for vehicle modification, maintenance and replacement to ensure that Trust beneficiaries have access to safe and appropriate publicly funded transportation, whether in urban areas where there is mass transit or in rural areas where coordinated transportation, such as community vans, are available. **\$800,000 GF/MH funds are recommended.**

*Continued on page 10*

# UPCOMING BILLS



State of Alaska Capitol building, Juneau

## For this year's 2010 Legislative session, the Council supports three bills that were introduced last year:

High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE) in order to receive a diploma. The HSGQE is a minimum competency exam which tests students reading, writing and math skills. Although the HSGQE was given starting in 2000, the requirement to pass it did not take effect until 2004. Currently, 26 other states require students to pass examinations in order to receive diplomas.

In February 2009, Senator Bettye Davis introduced Senate Bill 109, to remove the requirement to pass the HSGQE in order to receive a diploma. There is no federal requirement to have the HSGQE. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act does require schools test students in high school but passing that examination does not have to be required for graduation. Since 2004, graduation rates have not increased in Alaska. While overall dropout rates have increased since the implementation of the HSGQE, they have not reached pre-HSGQE levels, especially for students with disabilities. The HSGQE has not closed the gaps in the proficiency rates for students in minority subgroups (students who are disabled, Alaska Native, African American, low income or limited English).

Instead of continuing to require the HSGQE, the Council encourages the Alaska Legislature and Department of Education and Early Development to expand the current school improvement system developed to work with schools not meeting federal requirements. This school improvement system has been shown to improve the academic skills of students in these low performing schools

### Senate Bill 32

*"An Act relating to medical assistance payments for home and community-based services and provision of personal care services in a recipient's home; and providing for an effective date"*

SB 32 supports a process for rate review for payment received by care providers, both in home and community-based services. These care providers work to improve the quality of life and amount of personal independence for Alaskans with disabilities. There has been no rate review for these professionals for over a decade. With it enacted, the wages received by those care providers will go through a review process so that it can be determined whether or not their wages ought to be changed based on the fluctuating economy and cost of living in Alaska. These rate reviews will be conducted with a frequency that gives room for rates to be decided for the following fiscal year.

### Senate Bill 109

*"An Act repealing the secondary student competency examination and related requirements; and providing for an effective date"*

In 1997 the Alaska legislature passed a law requiring students to pass the

### House Bill 187

*"An Act requiring insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders."*

Autism spectrum disorders are disorders that cause social, communicative and behavioral difficulties for individuals. Current rates suggest that autism spectrum disorders affect as many as 1 in 91 children. While there is currently no cure for autism, the disorder is treatable, particularly if early intervention takes place in the life of a very young child. There is currently no insurance requirement for the diagnosis and treatment of autism in Alaska, requiring many families to leave their child's autism untreated until that child is much older. Unfortunately, this aging severely debilitates the treatment's success. HB 187 is working to require insurance coverage, as it has been proven in other states to save up to \$3.2 per capita by providing early intervention treatment for autism. Nearly 30 other states in the United States have introduced autism insurance reform legislation in the past year, and 13 states have enacted some kind of insurance coverage.

# FOCUS ON THE UNTAPPED WORKFORCE

## November 12, 2009 Business Forum focus on untapped workforce

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education hosted an educational forum for Alaskan businesses on November 12, 2009 at the Denaina Convention Center in Anchorage. The forum, titled "Maximizing Human Potential: Employing Qualified Individuals with Disabilities", provided Alaskan employers with the latest information on finding and hiring qualified individuals with disabilities, a largely untapped workforce in Alaska and elsewhere. The forum was largely paid for by Alaska's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant through the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, (Grant # 1QACMS030312).

The November 12th forum covered a number of topics for the 57 participants from Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks and the Kenai Peninsula, including:

- Recent amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act and what they mean to local businesses;
- Inexpensive job accommodations and technologies to assist workers with disabilities;
- Healthcare, insurance and other supports for employees with disabilities;
- Early return to work strategies for ill or injured employees;

The forum also featured a luncheon keynote address by Erin Riehle, Director of Project SEARCH from the Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Project SEARCH is a unique business-led program that provides employment and education opportunities

for individuals with significant disabilities. The program is dedicated to workforce development that benefits the workplace, individuals, and the community. Project SEARCH includes one-year, worksite-based school-to-work programs for high school students with disabilities and comprehensive employment, job retention, and career advancement services for adults with disabilities.

In addition, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education presented four awards to Alaskan employers for their commitment and leadership in employing persons with disabilities. The recipients of these awards were Fort Rich—US Army, NANA Management Services, Carr's Safeway of Alaska and the National Park Service.

### Comments from event participants:

*"We have discovered the incredible value, on many levels, of hiring people with significant disabilities."*  
- Erin Riehle, Director, Project SEARCH

*"As the manager of an HR department, I felt being part of this discussion was very valuable. It helped me think outside the box in ways that I could employ persons with disabilities in my place of work."*

*"Project SEARCH was awesome—the examples were great. ...very impressed!"*

**For more information about the Council's employment initiatives, contact Patrick Reinhart, Heidi Frost, Rich Sanders or Jennifer Jones at 269-8990.**

### Photos captions (from right to left):

1. Erin Riehle, Director of Project SEARCH wows the forum with her keynote address.
2. Glenn Peterson, Alaska district manager for Carr's Safeway, accepts an award for their leadership and commitment in hiring Alaskans with disabilities. "More than 5% of their work force are persons with disabilities." Also shown: Commissioner Bishop, Don Brandon and Millie Ryan.
3. Greg Cashen, Executive Director of the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, welcomes the business forum participants." Also shown, Don Brandon, Master of Ceremonies and Director of the Northwest Disability Technical Assistance Center from the University of Washington, and Patrick Reinhart, forum organizer and Business and Industry Liaison for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.
4. Click Bishop, State Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, addresses the forum during lunch. Also shown Millie Ryan, Executive Director of the Governor's Council.
5. Business Forum participants.



# FIRST LADY PARNELL'S INTEREST IN DEAF SERVICES



From left to right: Carol Comeau, Anchorage School District Superintendent; First Lady; Sandy Parnell, Gayle Hadley, School Interpreter; Duane Mayes, of the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education; Grace Parnell, daughter of Governor Sean and Sandy Parnell; Jerry Sjolander, Special Education Director; Colleen Peterson, School Interpreter.



From left to right: Macrina Fazio, Rehabilitation Manager; Mahala Slone, Rehabilitation Counselor; First Lady for the State of Alaska, Sandy Parnell; Keri Omellas, Staff Interpreter; Angela Hughes, Rehabilitation Assistant. Back row: Duane Mayes, Planner III, Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education and Andy Jose, Rehabilitation Counselor.

Continued from page 1

Through all of these visits the following topics have been discussed with the First Lady:

- Educational services for deaf students
- Vocational Rehabilitation strategies used to assist Deaf Alaskans with training and employment
- The importance of early interventions services and the establishment of language and appropriate behaviors as soon as possible

- The use of video technology to get services to Deaf Alaskans in urban and rural communities
- Promotion of the State's Provisional Hire process to increase the number of Alaskan's with disabilities going to work in State government

Of particular importance was the grace and appreciation Mrs. Parnell showed to the deaf community and staff and members of the Governor's

Council on Disabilities and Special Education. Mrs. Parnell has taken three classes in American Sign Language through the University of Anchorage Alaska and has developed the basic skills in sign to communicate with deaf Alaskans. The Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education would like to thank Mrs. Parnell for her compassion and interest in the deaf community!

## ALASKA ALLIANCE FOR DIRECT SERVICE CAREERS ANNUAL AWARD

### ***Nominations are due by February 26, 2009.***

It is time to nominate your direct service professionals for the annual Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers award. *The Outstanding Direct Service Professional of the Year Award* is given to five (5) people each year. Awards are presented during the Full Lives Conference held April 15-16, 2010. Winners will receive \$1,000.00, a pass and travel monies to attend the 2010 Full Lives Conference.

The Direct Service Provider award provides an opportunity to recognize professionals working in the following service areas:

- Developmental disabilities
- Traumatic brain injuries
- Seniors
- Mental Illness
- Substance abuse or alcoholism

Personal care attendant, certified nurse assistant, individual support specialist, infant learning provider, job coach, home care provider, recreational therapist, substance abuse counselor, mental health clinician, and a variety of other professionals qualify to receive this award. Nominees must work with individuals to help them live as independently as possible. This work can be done at home, work, in the community and/or in a provider organization.

We believe this work is important and critical in the lives of people with disabilities. We want to encourage professional work ethics within the industry. It is important to help encourage our direct service workforce and to let them know that the work they do is important!

Nomination forms are due February 26, 2009. You can access them on the Alaska Alliance for Direct Service Careers Web site ([www.aadsc.org](http://www.aadsc.org)) or the Council Web site ([hss.state.ak.us/gcdse](http://hss.state.ak.us/gcdse)).

Last years winners were selected from across the state including: Fairbanks, Anchorage, Kodiak and Petersburg:

- Heather Ciampa (working with people with developmental disabilities award),
- Valerie Nelson (working with people with traumatic brain injuries award),
- Janie Mathis (working with seniors),
- Tami Lubitsh (working with people with chronic alcoholism/substance abuse), and
- Kimberly Kilkinney (working with people with mental illness).

**Who will win in 2010?**

# GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

**Amy Simpson**, of Eagle River, is executive director of Programs for Infants and Children, Inc., a non-profit service agency for developmentally disabled children since 1995 as a speech-language pathologist, program services manager and associate director. Her volunteer work includes service on the Statewide Positive Behavioral Support Task Force, on the Governor's Council's Early Intervention Committee, and as chair of the Alaska Infant Learning Program Association. Simpson earned a bachelor's and master's degrees in communications disorders from Colorado State University, and a master's degree in non-profit management from Regis University in Denver. She was appointed to a seat reserved for a provider of services to infants or toddlers with disabilities.

**Tonja Updike**, of Soldotna, is the mother of three children, one with autism. She is an experienced volunteer and advocate for children with disabilities. She has received training in various educational techniques for children with autism, has attended an internship and advanced training at the UAA Center for Human Development's Partners in Policymaking program, participated in the Key Coalition advocacy program, belongs to a Stone Soup Group parent support group, and coordinated the Kenai Peninsula's Autism Awareness Month. Updike earned an associate's degree in human services from Kenai Peninsula College in 2000 and a bachelor's degree in human services from the University of Alaska Anchorage in 2002. She was appointed to a position reserved for a person with a family member who experiences a disability.

**Jennifer Card**, of Chugiak, is the mother of two children under age 12 with special needs. She has worked for the U.S. Public Health Service since 2000 as a clinical social worker, clinical supervisor, senior clinician and social worker in Idaho and Alaska, and is currently assigned to Southcentral Foundation in Anchorage as a social worker. She performed similar work while serving in the U.S. Army from 1994-96 and the U.S. Air Force from 1997-2000. Card is an Alaska-licensed clinical social worker and chemical dependency counselor II, and is a state-approved clinical social worker supervisor. She earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in social work, both from the University of Hawaii. Card earned an associate's degree in chemical dependency from Rio Salado College, and is pursuing an Applied

Behavioral Analysis certificate from Pennsylvania State University. She was appointed to a seat reserved for a person with a family member who is a consumer of services for the disabled.

**Velja Elstad**, of Juneau, has been a community rehabilitation specialist with the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation since 1998. She previously worked as an evaluator and counselor for the division from 1993-98, and from 1983-93 as habilitation supervisor and vocational evaluator for Reach, Inc., a non-profit residential and vocational services agency for the handicapped. She is a state-certified vocational evaluator. Elstad earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Western Washington University. She was appointed to a seat reserved for a representative of the state's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

**Dean Gates**, of Anchorage, has been an assistant municipal attorney for the Municipality of Anchorage since 2003. He previously worked as a law clerk and was a part-time legal research associate for the Institute of the North. Gates has also worked as a student living center program aide for The Arc of Anchorage from 2000-03, and as a marketing coordinator from 1994-1997. He has served as an officer and board member of the Alaska Deaf Council since 2002, and was a member of the Alaska Advisory Board on Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students from 2001-05. Gates earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from California State University-Northridge, and a law degree from Northwest School of Law in Portland, Oregon. Deaf since about age 10, he was appointed to a seat reserved for a consumer of services for the disabled.

**Kama Gregory**, of Anchorage, is the mother of a three-year old child with special needs, and has more than 18 years of experience as a health care and pregnancy resource executive. She was executive director of the Houghston Foundation, a sports and orthopedic hospital in Georgia, from 2005-06, was executive director of a domestic violence shelter in Georgia from 2004-05, has consulted for a national pregnancy resource organization since 2004, and was development director, then executive director, of a Tennessee pregnancy resource center from 1995-2001. Gregory serves on the board of Hope Imaging, a non-profit ultrasound training organization. A former licensed school counselor, she is a member

of the Alaska Transition Training Initiative's early intervention committee. Gregory earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Miami University in Ohio, and a master's degree in counseling from Middle Tennessee State University. She was appointed to a seat reserved for a person with a family member who is a consumer of services for the disabled.

**Kaleene Lamb**, of Fairbanks, experiences a developmental disability. She graduated from high school, and attended college. Lamb has advocated for Alaskans with disabilities through her participation in the Key Coalition and the People First organizations. She was appointed to a seat reserved for a consumer of services for the disabled.

**Sharon Miranda**, of Anchorage, an employment specialist with Alyeska Vocational Services since 2006 and an American Sign Language instructor at the University of Alaska Anchorage since 1989. She previously worked as a community resource counselor for The Arc of Anchorage and a rehabilitation specialist for the Alaska Center for Blind and Deaf Adults. Miranda has been a member of the Alaska Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Council since 2008, an officer of the Anchorage Club of the Deaf from 1983-90 and a board member and executive with the Alaska Association of the Deaf from 1985-94. Miranda earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. and took post-graduate ASL classes from Gallaudet. She was appointed to a seat reserved for a consumer of services for the disabled.

**Fred Villa**, of North Pole, is the father of a child with special needs. He is associate vice president for workforce programs for the University of Alaska system. Villa previously worked as special assistant to the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska from 2005-06, and worked at a North Pole oil refinery from 1985-2004 in jobs including process operator, control board operator and training director. He serves on the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and worked with the Alaska Process Industry Careers Consortium as a member, vice chair and executive board member. Villa earned a bachelor's degree in therapeutic recreation from the University of South Dakota. He was appointed to a seat reserved for a representative of higher education.

# NEW COUNCIL STAFF

## JENNIFER JONES



Jennifer Jones is the Health Program Manager I for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. Jennifer's position supports policy and development of Supported Employment Services statewide for the Alaska Works Initiative. Jennifer has worked for 15 years supporting people with disabilities in a variety of capacities. She has worked with the Alaska Works Initiative for 10 years supporting increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities as a Project Coordinator with the Council and the UAA Center for Human Development.

Jennifer has a passion for policy development to support employment and independence for all people with disabilities. She has worked on a national level to develop youth leadership for young people with disabilities. Jennifer has been recognized nationally for her work with youth by the President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, the US Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Social Services and other national and state organizations. Jennifer has also worked on a national level to develop Microenterprise and Benefit Planning services for people with disabilities.

Jennifer is a person with a significant disability and has worked as an advocate for change all of her career. She earned her Master's degree in Management and Disability Services from the University of San Francisco in 2000. Jennifer was born and raised in Alaska and enjoys spending her time with her three dogs and her partner Shon.

## MELANIE LEYDON



Melanie K. Leydon is a lifelong Alaskan. Melanie went to school in the local Jewel Lake area of Anchorage. Melanie graduated from Dimond High School in 2007. She is currently attending the University of Alaska Anchorage. Melanie is a current Pre-Medical student with an emphasis on Biology and Chemistry, with minors in Communications, Philosophy and Mathematics. Melanie is a student leader on her UAA campus. Melanie was responsible for several inter-campus changes at UAA, such as the installment of three covered bicycle racks, starting the UAA Lend-A-Bike program and the campus supported UAA Bicycle resolution, which was wholly supported by all government entities within the UAA system. Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see." This quote is Melanie's life motto, describing her relationship with community volunteerism, advocacy and involvement. Melanie started working for the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education in August of 2009. She is the current Office Assistant II and handles numerous administrative tasks primarily the travel aspect for the Council and Staff. Melanie enjoys working for the Council and the wonderful work they do.

## GCDSE STAFF MEMBERS

### **Millie Ryan, Executive Director**

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### **Melanie K. Leydon**

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## CATHERINE HELLE

Catherine Helle is the 2009-2010 Legislative Intern for the Governor's Council. A student majoring in English Literature with a minor in Alaska Native Studies at the University of Alaska Anchorage, she is heavily involved on campus with a variety of extra curricular activities and has an extensive public speaking background. Her membership in the Forty-Ninth State Fellows Program, a political science and history-based program with an emphasis on harnessing leadership in undergraduate students, introduced her to the Governor's Council and equipped her with many of the skills necessary to undertake legislative work.

Catherine is a senator for the Union of Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage. She is also involved in the Heifer International Service Learning Program, which helps students become acquainted with international issues such as hunger, as well as projects to solve such problems in local and culturally-sensitive ways. For fun, Catherine likes to spend time at her home in Washington, the Evergreen State, and reading classic literature and philosophy are among her favorite pastimes.



## SHERYL GRANGER

Sheryl Granger came to the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education in October 2009 from the Department of Labor. She moved into the Administrative Assistant I position. Having worked for the State of Alaska for nearly 7 years, she has a strong clerical and administrative background. She looks forward to working with the Council staff in all of their projects that assist the large number of people in Alaska who are affected with various disabilities.

Prior to working with the State, Sheryl worked in the printing and advertising field for many years and offers her graphics knowledge to assist in office projects.

Sheryl calls Alaska home after living here 19 years, having migrated from Oregon. Sheryl lives in the Valley with her husband, John and multiple critters. She raises championship show rabbits, an assortment of chinchillas and 3 dogs who are her family.



### **Carrie Predeger, Research Analyst III**

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### **Patrick Reinhart, Program Coordinator I**

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### **Richard Sanders, Program Coordinator II**

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# KODIAK EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING

The Education Committee for the Council traveled to Kodiak in November of 2009 for their face-to-face meeting. The Education Committee visited the Kodiak school district's special education programs and was quite impressed. The above members from left to right are Heather Christian Martens, Tonja Updike, Christie Reinhardt, Taylor's Aide, Anna Atlla, Ric Nelson, Janeane Butler, Julie Broyles, Taylor Gregg, and Teresa Holt.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Governor's Council Board meeting – Jan 26-28, Juneau Alaska
- Customized Self Employment Policy Summit - Juneau - Feb 18th
- Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference Feb 8-10 in Anchorage – Sheraton Hotel
- Outstanding Direct Service Provider Nomination deadline – Feb 26, 2010
- Key Campaign – March 1 & 2, Juneau Alaska Centennial Hall
- Full Lives April 15-16 in Anch AK – Sheraton Hotel
- Healthcare & Human Services Fair – April 21 @ Muldoon Job Center, Anchorage Alaska

## CAPITOL REQUESTS

*Continued from page 3*

### **Assistive Technology**

This capital request is for durable goods that promote independence and self-sufficiency for Trust beneficiaries. Included are simple items such as screen enlargers and alternative keyboards, as well as more complex equipment like reading machines and environmental control units. **With \$200,000 new GF/MH, it is expected that at least 440 Trust beneficiaries will be served by this recommendation.**

### **Essential Program Equipment**

This recommendation is for capital funds for equipment purchases that are necessary to deliver services for beneficiaries. Like deferred maintenance, these grants allow non-profit service providers to offer quality services to all categories of beneficiaries. Past grants have provided for snow blowers, kitchen equipment, computer equipment, projectors, security systems, and therapeutic equipment. **\$500,000 of GF/MH is being recommended.**

# COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## **Art Arnold**

State Special Education Director  
Committee: Education  
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## **Marlene (Anna) Attla**

Self-Advocate  
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## **Julie Broyles**

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## ON THE WEB

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Up-to-date information and resources on disability issues in Alaska, is available on the web.

**Legislative and Action Alert Update** Ongoing tracking of federal and state legislation impacting Alaskans with disabilities.

**Where to Turn:** Service directory of business and agencies who serve people with disabilities.

**Agency Links & Current News:** Helping you stay connected to partners and agencies who are leading the way in improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Access us on the web at:  
[hss.state.ak.us/gcdse/](http://hss.state.ak.us/gcdse/)

