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## Discovery

### Investing in Discoveries

*By Jan Rosemergy*



*The effectiveness of a multicomponent reading comprehension program for addressing the diverse needs of struggling readers is being evaluated.*

**N**ew knowledge needed to improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families comes through research. Conducting state-of-the-art research requires substantial funding.

The competition for federal research funding is fierce. A key factor for success is whether an applicant has preliminary (pilot) data to demonstrate that the approach proposed is likely to be effective. The more cutting-edge and creative the approach, the more essential it is to have pilot data.

Since 1998, the Nicholas Hobbs Discovery Grant Program has provided seed funding for initiating novel research efforts (see related story, p. 11). Awards have ranged from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for one year of funding with the aim of collecting pilot data to lay the foundation for large, federally supported research projects. Discovery Grants have indeed given our researchers that extra competitive edge needed to secure larger grants. The following examples demonstrate the critical difference Discovery Grants have made across a broad range of research problems.

#### Exploring Autism Genetics

In 1998, **James Sutcliffe**, Ph.D. (Molecular Physiology & Biophysics), received a Discovery Grant to test whether a region of chromosome 15 already shown to be involved in Prader-Willi and Angelman syndromes was also involved in autism.

“The Discovery Grant allowed me to start examining genes in this region in families affected by autism and to begin developing specific *Continued on page 2*

### Symposium Marks 40th Anniversary

*By Melissa Marino*

**T**he Vanderbilt Kennedy Center celebrated its 40th anniversary on November 30 with a scientific symposium and celebratory dinner.

The Kennedy Center was established in 1965 as a result of legislation signed by President John F. Kennedy that aimed to improve the lives of persons with developmental disabilities through collaborative and innovative research.

“The interdisciplinary nature of the Kennedy Center is buoyed by the intimacy of the Vanderbilt campus and close-knit community of Vanderbilt researchers and clinicians,” said Kennedy Center Director Pat Levitt, Ph.D.

“The Kennedy family knew firsthand just how spare and barren was the social, medical, and psychological support available for families with developmentally disabled children,” said Harry Jacobson, M.D., vice chancellor for Health Affairs. Their support of a series of centers dedicated to the study of developmental disabilities was their most profound contribution, Jacobson said.

Directors of three National Institutes of Health branches—**Duane Alexander**, M.D., of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; **Story Landis**, Ph.D., of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke; and **Thomas Insel**, M.D., of the National Institute of Mental Health—described their own institutes’ histories and initiatives and highlighted the unique *Continued on page 3*

### Director’s Message

### A Hunger for Evidence



*Pat Levitt, Ph.D., at the Tennessee State Legislature*

**T**he interest across our nation in the health and welfare of children has never been greater. In Tennessee our policy makers are faced with some difficult decisions regarding program investment. We all want the best for our children, and in an ever more complicated and competitive world, we want to provide families and our communities with the guidance that will help them make the best decisions for our future.

In February, I had the honor of testifying before the Joint Education Committee of the Tennessee State Legislature. This capped off a wonderful morning of activities sponsored *Continued on page 3*

## Investing in Discoveries

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hypothesis-driven experiments,” Sutcliffe said.

This initial work made it possible to submit an application to the National Institute of Mental Health in 1999. The grant was awarded, the studies have proceeded, and the grant recently was competitively renewed. Since then, Sutcliffe has received two additional Discovery Grants, including a Dan Marino Foundation Discovery Grant.

“Both grants have funded pilot studies to explore whether the genes involved in controlling the function of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin are likely to be a factor in the genetic risk for autism,” Sutcliffe explained. “These grants allowed us to keep studies going during the lengthy process of obtaining National Institutes of Health funding and have led to important observations about particular genes.”

In the gene for the serotonin transporter, Sutcliffe’s lab has found several functional coding mutations and several noncoding DNA sequence changes of unknown function in families where there was evidence of a genetic linkage for autism. More recently, his lab has found evidence that another gene on chromosome 17 close to the serotonin transporter gene and also involved in serotonin function is associated with autism susceptibility.

### Finding an ADHD Animal Model

The technology to manipulate genes has developed rapidly in recent years, with wide-ranging applications. Scientists have learned a great deal by manipulating genes in mice.

**Michael McDonald**, Ph.D. (Pharmacology), was working with a colleague at the National Cancer Institute who was generating mouse models of thyroid resistance. In children with genetically linked thyroid resistance, 90% of boys and 60% of girls with a particular genetic mutation have ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). In 2000, with the help of a Discovery Grant, McDonald and graduate student Bill Siesser began doing behavioral tests on a potential mouse model of ADHD.

“Most psychiatric disorders, including ADHD, are identified by behavior alone,” McDonald explained. “ADHD is diagnosed by three behaviors: inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. Most mouse models of ADHD only test hyperactivity because it is difficult to test inattention and impulsivity in mice. We have the first mouse model that shows all three symptoms of ADHD.”

With the Discovery Grant data, McDonald was successful in obtaining funding from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Data from that project in turn are leading to ways to investigate related questions in ADHD.

One issue is whether teens with ADHD may be more or less likely to abuse cocaine and amphetamines due to taking medications for ADHD for extended periods. Findings in studies of humans have been contradictory. McDonald and Ruggero Galici, Ph.D., a postdoctoral

fellow, tested the question in their mouse model. They found that mice self-administer more cocaine at smaller doses and less cocaine at higher doses, so it appears that the ADHD mice are more sensitive to cocaine than normal control mice. A grant application has been submitted to pursue this question further.

McDonald’s lab also is using their mouse model to investigate gender difference in gene expression that may play a role in ADHD, since its incidence is higher in males than females.



A Discovery Grant was instrumental in launching research on a developmental series of books for mothers to read to their young children to promote maternal and child health.

### Helping Struggling Readers

Understanding what one reads (comprehension) is dependent not just on one’s ability to read words (decoding) but also on ease and speed of reading words and sentences (fluency). In 2001, **Donald Compton**, Ph.D. (Special Education), received a Discovery Grant to compare several instructional programs in decoding for very poor readers to test how well they promoted fluency. He found differences across these decoding programs, which led to a study funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to investigate the relationship between decoding and developing fluency.

“This pilot work, combined with the research literature, led to the idea that struggling readers have more than problems in decoding and fluency,” Compton said. “They often have problems with vocabulary and being active readers—what can be thought of as metacognitive skills.”

Compton’s pilot data were instrumental in obtaining funding from the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. He is testing a clinic-based multicomponent reading comprehension program designed to address the diverse needs of struggling readers in late elementary school. The components are an evidence-based decoding program, an evidence-based fluency program using repeated readings, and a program

to teach students strategies to help them comprehend and remember information. For more on this reading program for students 7-11 years of age, contact (615) 343-2463, [jennifer.j.bauer@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jennifer.j.bauer@vanderbilt.edu).

### Improving Child Rearing Practices

A collaboration among a psychologist, a psychology graduate student, and a pediatrician led to a 2001 Discovery Grant to create and evaluate baby books to promote child health and safety. This team—**Leonard Bickman**, Ph.D. (Psychology & Human Development), **Stephanie Reich** (Psychology & Human Development), and pediatrician **Kim Worley**, M.D.—used the Discovery Grant to assess what mothers already know and whether embedding educational information into baby books was a feasible and effective way to educate mothers about typical child development. Since research had shown that only a small percentage of pediatricians provide “anticipatory guidance,” another avenue for providing information was needed.

“Our hypothesis,” Bickman said, “was that we needed to find something women could do repeatedly and could practice to learn content. We dreamed up a series of books that mothers could read to their babies. Each book focuses on a stage of development, with books at 2, 4, 6, and 12 months. We also thought a mother’s reading to her child would give an opportunity to form a stronger bond.”

Through the Discovery Grant, the team was able to survey over 200 women about their knowledge of child development as well as to create one of these books, with the artistic help of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center’s graphic designer Kylie Beck. The pilot work demonstrated that women needed the information, the books taught information new to them and were attractive enough that they would read them to their children, and a sufficient number of women could be found to take part in a larger scale study.

Based on this pilot work, the team was successful in obtaining an NICHD-funded grant to create professionally illustrated and published board books and to assess their efficacy in improving mothers’ knowledge, parenting practices, and child health over children’s first 18 months of development. This study, “Using Baby Books to Promote Maternal and Child Health,” is now underway. For information on the Baby Books Project, contact (1-888) 553-2665.

### Generating Discoveries

As the examples above illustrate, Discovery Grants are instrumental in generating discoveries related to the causes of developmental disabilities and in developing more effective practices to promote health, development, and learning. Since the program began in 1998, 24 Discovery Grants totaling \$290,180 have been awarded. Recipients have subsequently received related NIH grants totaling \$9,322,757—a 40-fold return on the investment. Vanderbilt Kennedy Center researchers are indebted to our generous, far-sighted, and caring donors who travel with us on the paths of discovery. ●



## Symposium Marks 40th

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challenges facing mental health and human development research.

While the event was a celebration of the Kennedy Center's long history, the scientific presentations focused on the future, outlining ambitious goals and exciting new directions for research on developmental disabilities.

"Most of us come into this world intent on becoming experts on people . . . but people with autism become experts on things," said **Fred Volkmar**, M.D., of Yale University. He demonstrated this apparent disinterest in other people with movie clips of social situations "seen through the eyes of a child with autism." Using a computerized device that tracks where children focus their eyes on a movie scene, Volkmar showed how children with autism avoided looking at the actors' eyes, focusing either on their mouths or on seemingly irrelevant background objects, like light switches. Eye-tracking, he said, could be used in very young children, possibly enabling diagnosis sooner than is currently possible. If diagnosed early enough, Volkmar predicted that early interventions could dramatically improve adult outcomes. [For information on related Vanderbilt Kennedy Center studies involving 3- to 15-month-olds, contact (615) 322-5913 or [stephanie.bradshaw@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:stephanie.bradshaw@vanderbilt.edu).]

Studying the basic biological mechanisms that govern brain development also is contributing to a better understanding of developmental disorders.

"The baby's brain is not just a miniature version of the adult brain, but is a dynamically changing structure in which circuits are not only being built but also modified by experience," said **Carla Shatz**, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School. Using the visual system as an example, Shatz described how the ever-changing connections in

the developing brain are influenced by both nature (genetic factors) and nurture (experience).

Shatz suggested that the prolonged period of development where "local" circuits within certain brain regions are being formed is a particularly sensitive period of development because of its dependence on stimulation. "This is the period where, when it goes awry, could cause many of the learning disabilities that we're thinking about

implications and applications for treating people with developmental disabilities.

"The psychology of developmental disabilities has not been good enough. . . . We've taken a remedial approach, a disease approach, where what we want to do is to 'get rid of what's wrong.' That's only half of what we want to do," he said. "The other half is to identify the strengths that people have, enable them to use those strengths and, in the same way we develop remedial interventions,



Thomas Insel, Pat Levitt, Steven Gabbe, Duane Alexander, and Story Landis

here and are being worked on at the Kennedy Center," she said.

**Martin Seligman**, Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania, ended the symposium on a "positive" note. The author of more than 20 popular psychology books, Seligman addressed what he describes as "positive psychology" and its

develop enhancements to enhance what makes life worth living."

Note: For a Vanderbilt News Services audio podcast of Symposium presentations, see "In the News" link at [kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/40th/index.html](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/40th/index.html).

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## Director's Message From page 1

by Vanderbilt University's Day on the Hill. There were some very positive signs, from my perspective as a scientist and a parent, that are indicative of the commitment that legislators would like to make. There is a thirst for up-to-date knowledge on our understanding of brain development, and how environment and experience influence the cognitive and social-emotional well-being of children.

That day, legislators peppered me with questions about research evidence demonstrating the influence on brain architecture and chemistry that a caring, stimulating, and safe environment can have on all children. The questions went beyond that, however, as they wanted to know the latest research on the powerful influence that deprivation or violent

experiences have on brain architecture. Many other issues were covered, from children on psycho-active prescription drugs to the effects of TV and videos on infants.

Nationally there has been a dramatic increase in news coverage on the topic of early brain development, environment and the future of our children. This has extended internationally, as I was interviewed recently on Ecuadorian National Radio on this same topic.

What became apparent to me that day on Capitol Hill is how utterly invaluable evidence-based practices are to our legislators who are charged with leading Tennesseans into a very competitive future.

The issues raised by our Tennessee officials ring familiarly in state capitols around the country as we decide how to invest our ever-shrinking budget.

Never has there been a greater need for translating research findings into practice, a commitment that has been at the heart of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center mission for more than 40 years.

We made a conscious decision here to intertwine our formidable research programs on child development and disabilities with our growing efforts in community outreach, clinics, and professional and parent training. Few places can claim the commitment that our scientists have made to this concept of translational research and community work. The Tennessee legislators are recognizing more and more that they have a jewel in their backyard, one that is committed to providing the best information so that those who formulate policy can do right by Tennessee children and families, and our nation's. ●

# Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

## Off to a Running Start

By Jan Rosemergy

**I**n our brief few months as a new University Center for Excellence, an amazing amount has been accomplished," said **Elisabeth Dykens**, Ph.D., director. "We had the honor of having ADD Commissioner Pat Morrissey here with us to announce our funding in September at a community celebration. We've been active in projects ranging from Tennessee assistance to Hurricane Katrina victims to statewide conferences on topics ranging from autism to family support. We've completed a



Artists of Full Circle Art and community artists worked with youth and young adults with disabilities to create art in a variety of mediums during workshops.

demonstration project working with the Hispanic community. We were represented on the Tennessee Team in the national Alliance for Full Participation."

The Center is funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD).

### Community Advisory Council

The Community Advisory Council is a full partner in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities. The chair and a majority of the members are self-advocates or family members. Representatives of Tennessee disability organizations also serve on the Council.

"The members of the Community Advisory Council have actively participated in learning about the goals and achievements of the Center for Excellence and providing recommendations for

future directions for community outreach and research," said **Doria Panvini**, Council chair. "The Council looks forward to continuing to participate in this valuable collaboration." Panvini invites individuals with disabilities or family members to share interests or concerns by emailing [vkcac@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vkcac@vanderbilt.edu).

### Training

Interdisciplinary training is a core function of a University Center for Excellence. It includes training university students, practicing professionals and direct care providers, individuals with disabilities and family members, and disability advocates and policymakers. Formats are varied: classes in degree programs, supervised clinical experiences, continuing education, conferences, workshops, and technical assistance. Training is led by **Craig Kennedy**, Ph.D., professor of special education, and **Terri Urbano**, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N., clinical professor of pediatrics.

Training efforts already have focused on a variety of topics. An April 8 day-long conference was held on improving supports and services for individuals with both Down syndrome and autism. A June 7 conference is planned on improving care coordination for people with dual diagnosis. Fall conferences will be held, one focusing on youth empowerment, to include youth with disabilities, and another on sibling relationships.

Events are developed collaboratively with Vanderbilt, community, and state partners.

Work has begun on a collaboration with staff of the Maternal Infant Health Outreach Workers (MIHOW) Project, Vanderbilt Center for Health Services, with the

aim of improving identification and intervention for children with developmental delays in the high-poverty, rural regions they serve in Appalachia and the Mississippi Delta.

### Service

Faculty and staff provide cutting-edge, evidence-based services and supports to address pressing needs of persons with disabilities. We focus on serving people in Tennessee and the Mid-South while creating model programs for national use. Some Center programs provide diagnosis and intervention for children and adults; others offer information and technical assistance to educators or direct service providers. Some programs are done in partnership with community and State agencies.

"In these initial months, we've been increasing the

number of individuals and families served in all our programs," said **Elise McMillan**, J.D., associate director. "In the coming year, we plan on expanding to new locations, especially in rural areas, and continuing to work for systems change." Examples include developing Reading Clinic sites in high-poverty communities and working with Tennessee Developmental Disabilities Network partners to expand post-secondary options for students with disabilities.

One innovative, low-cost project is Access Nashville, which involves individuals from the disability, business, government, and senior citizen communities joining together to collect "accessibility friendly" information about restaurants, hotels, meeting places, and entertainment in Nashville. Tennessee Disability Pathfinder hosts and maintains the Access Nashville website ([kc.vanderbilt.edu/accessnashville](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/accessnashville)). The project can be replicated in other locations at minimal cost. Access Nashville can assist by providing consultation and information.

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## For Adult Siblings of Persons With Disabilities

**W**e know surprisingly little about the relationship between individuals with disabilities and their adult siblings. To better understand this long-lasting relationship, the **National Sibling Research Consortium** has created the **Adult Sibling Questionnaire**.

If you are 18 or older with a sister or brother with disabilities, we invite you to complete this questionnaire online:

<https://kc.vanderbilt.edu/FamilyResearch>

Paper copies are also available. Provide contact information (Name, Address, City, State, Zip) to Family Research (1-888) 322-5339 [free] or email [FamilyResearch@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:FamilyResearch@vanderbilt.edu).

Thank you for your time and interest in this important area of family research.

Robert Hodapp, Ph.D.  
Richard Urbano, Ph.D.  
Ann Kaiser, Ph.D.

On behalf of the National Sibling Consortium and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, with support of The Arc of the U.S.





# Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders

## Making Sense of the Social World

By Stephanie Newton



A student in a TRIAD social skills group sorts pictures as a way of learning to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate social behaviors.

**S**ocial responses in young children are often taken for granted—a wave good-bye, a happy response to an unexpected toy, or a finger pointed to a familiar friend. But these common childhood responses are not taken for granted by parents of a child with autism. The absence of these types of social responses is common among young children with autism. Their importance as early markers is increasingly being recognized.

One of the hallmarks of autism is difficulty with social interactions—yet social competence is critical for successful functioning in communities and culture. Most children acquire social skills naturally. Through their everyday experiences, they learn how to “read” others’ emotions, how to play cooperatively, and how to engage in reciprocal interactions. Children with autism spectrum disorders often have difficulty with many aspects of social relating, including initiating and sustaining social interactions and forming peer friendships.

“For reasons that are yet unknown, children with autism struggle to make sense of their social world and to understand the feelings, thoughts, and perspectives of others,” said Wendy Stone, Ph.D., professor of pediatrics and psychology and director of TRIAD. “Because they don’t learn it on their own, social behavior is something that we often need to teach children with autism.”

TRIAD is dedicated to improving treatment services for children with autism spectrum disorders and their families while advancing knowledge and training. One of the key factors

in accomplishing this mission is to offer children with autism various ways to increase their social skills. TRIAD offers an annual social skills summer camp as well as a social skills group that meets periodically throughout the year.

### Social Skills Group

The social skills group includes children with an autism spectrum disorder as well as typically developing peers who meet once a week for 6 weeks.

“TRIAD’s social skills groups are designed to provide social instruction in a fun, safe atmosphere,” said Stone. “We teach and practice skills that range from greeting others, to having conversations, to understanding nonverbal behaviors such as facial expressions and gestures. We want to provide children with the tools that will enable them to have successful interactions within their families, classrooms, and communities.”

The social skills group is designed specifically for children with autism spectrum disorders who are between the ages of 6 and 18, and who have language and reading skills.

“The age of participants vary. The current group is 7- to 8-years-olds, but we have a waiting list with children up to 10-years-old and some adolescents. We wait until we have enough applicants in the same age range to put a group together,” said LaTamara Jackson, an educational consultant with TRIAD.

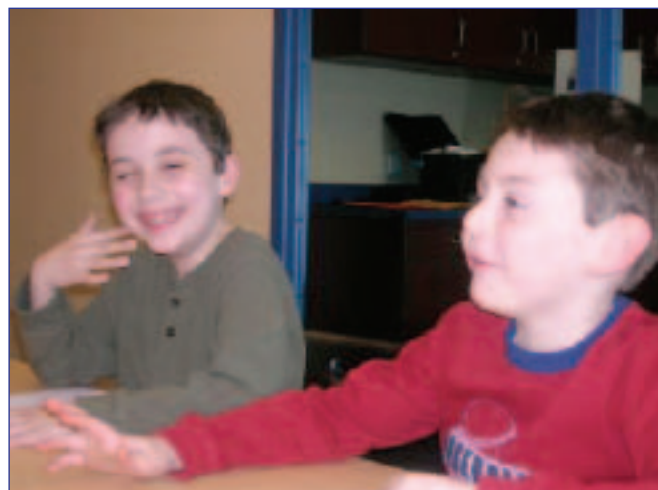


LaTamara Jackson reviews a picture script for social role playing with a TRIAD social skills group member.

### Activity-Based Training

TRIAD’s group social skills training is activity-based and is specialized for children with autism spectrum disorders. TRIAD staff members use a variety of strategies such as role-playing, games, videotape feedback, and weekly homework assignments to help children learn and practice new skills.

“In a typical meeting of the social skills group, we introduce new social skills by sorting appropriate



Children enjoy sharing during a TRIAD social skills group discussion.

and inappropriate ways to perform that skill. We also role play and give the participants opportunities to practice the social skill in imaginary scenarios,” said Jackson. “We include three activities in each session that highlight the social skill of the day. Participants have homework each week, which allows them the opportunity to practice the skill in other environments like home or school. Parents have the opportunity to observe the groups through an observation window and to assist the child with completing his or her homework.”

Although Jackson has only been involved with the social skills group for a short time, she already has seen changes in the children who take part. “They have become more socially outgoing and are exhibiting more socially appropriate behavior such as understanding emotions, perspective taking, gaining attention appropriately, and cooperative play.”

The social skills group meets on the 9th floor of the Doctor’s Office Tower, Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt. Costs are \$450 per 6-week session for children with an autism spectrum disorder and free for the typically developing peer volunteers. For information, contact Sherry Conatser, (615) 936-1705, or visit the TRIAD website at [www.TRIADatvanderbilt.com](http://www.TRIADatvanderbilt.com). ●

# Leading the Vanguard of Discovery

## LYNN WALKER, PH.D.

Professor of Pediatrics  
Director of the Division of Adolescent Medicine  
and Behavioral Science  
Professor of Psychology, Peabody College  
Associate Professor of Psychology, College of  
Arts & Science  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Investigator  
Joined Vanderbilt Kennedy Center 1988

## Research Interests

Psychosocial factors associated with the development and maintenance of chronic pain syndromes; children's cognitive and behavioral strategies for coping with pain; adjustment in families of children with chronic illness or disability

## Principal Investigator

- Illness behavior and somatization in children, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
- Computerized assessment of pediatric patients' symptoms: Development of a technology for pediatric clinical trials, Glaxo-Wellcome

## Clinical Interests

Behavioral interventions for pediatric pain management

## National Service and Awards

- Member, Behavioral Medicine Interventions and Outcomes Study Section, National Institutes of Health
- Member, Committee for Abdominal Pain Practice Guidelines, American Academy of Pediatrics
- Significant Research Contribution Award for 1998, Society of Pediatric Psychology
- Editorial Board, *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*

## Selected Publications

- Walker, L. S., Smith, C. A., Garber, J., Van Slyke, D. A., & Claar, R. (2001). The relation of daily stressors to somatic and emotional symptoms in children with recurrent abdominal pain. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 69, 85-91.
- Walker, L. S., Claar, R. L., & Garber, J. (2002). Social consequences of children's pain: When do they encourage symptom maintenance? *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 27, 689-698.
- Walker, L. S., Smith, C. A., Garber, J., & Claar, R. L. (2005). Testing a model of pain appraisal and coping in children with chronic abdominal pain. *Health Psychology*, 364-374.

## Education

B.A., Latin American Studies, Oberlin College  
M.S., Psychology, George Peabody College  
Ph.D., Clinical Psychology, Vanderbilt University  
National Research Service Award for Individual Postdoctoral Fellowship, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

## Attraction to Developmental Disabilities and Chronic Illness Research

When I began my career as a faculty member in Vanderbilt's Department of Pediatrics, my clinical practice included many pediatric patients with chronic or recurrent pain who were referred to me for psychotherapy because their medical evaluations yielded no evidence of organic disease or injury. At that time, most

health care providers believed that these patients' pain was "not real" or was "just in their heads." I was intrigued by this problem and developed a program of research aimed at identifying processes that could create disabling chronic pain in children who, according to their medical evaluation, were perfectly healthy. My interest in this area has been sustained over the years by advances in our understanding of how the mind and the body interact to influence our experience of pain.

## Reasons for Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Membership

Because a biopsychosocial perspective guides my research, I find the multidisciplinary nature of the Kennedy Center particularly attractive. The disciplines represented by the Kennedy Center offer unique and valuable insights into the nature of pain. My principal Center collaborators to date have included Steve Bruehl from Anesthesiology and Judy Garber, Craig Smith, and Bruce Compas from Psychology & Human Development. Support from Warren Lambert in the Statistics and Methodology Core and Jon Tapp in Computer Services has enabled us to use sophisticated techniques to analyze our data. Kylie Beck and others in Graphics have created wonderful figures, posters, and slides that present our findings in ways that are understandable to professional and community audiences. Finally, I can always count on Linda Dupré and her team in the Administrative Core for top-notch assistance in preparing our grant applications. The Kennedy Center is a major reason that I have spent my entire academic career at Vanderbilt. ●



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY/STEVE GREEN

# Levitt Appointed to National Advisory Council



Pat Levitt, Ph.D.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Mike Leavitt appointed Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Director Pat Levitt, Ph.D., to the National Advisory Mental Health Council.

The Council advises the HHS secretary, the assistant secretary for

health, the director of the National Institutes of Health, and the director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) on all policies and activities relating to the conduct and support of mental health research, research training, and other programs of NIMH.

The council has 18 members and 5 non-voting ex-officio members. Appointed in January 2006, Levitt will serve a 4-year term.

Levitt also is an elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of Cure Autism Now. He is a member of the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, the Scientific Advisory Board of the National Center for Toxicological Research, and the MacArthur Foundation Network on Brain Development and Development of Behavior. ●

# Memorial Tributes

**Samuel C. Ashcroft** (June 14, 2001-January 30, 2006), Ed.D., worked for over 60 years on behalf of children who were blind or visually impaired. He dedicated most of his career to education and research at Peabody College, where he was on the Special Education faculty and was a Kennedy Center investigator. In 2002, along with Helen Keller, he was inducted into the first "Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field."

**Urie Bronfenbrenner** (April 29, 1917-September 26, 2005), Ph.D., was widely regarded as one of the world's leading scholars in developmental psychology, child-rearing, and human ecology. He was the Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of Human Development and Family Studies and Psychology, Emeritus, at Cornell University. He was a member of the Kennedy Center's National Advisory Committee in the 1970s. Bronfenbrenner said, "In its broadest and deepest sense, education is, or should be, the process of making human beings human." ●



# Accolades



Jo-Anne Bachorowski, Ph.D.

**Jo-Anne Bachorowski**, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology, received the **Madison Sarratt Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching** at the Vanderbilt University Spring Faculty Assembly.



Randolph Blake, Ph.D.

joins fellow Vanderbilt Kennedy Center investigator Jon Kaas in this elite group. Most recently, Blake was elected a **fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences**, one of 195 new fellows named for the 2006 Class, which included former presidents, politicians, scientists, authors, artists, and others. Current membership includes more than 170 Nobel laureates and 50 Pulitzer Prize winners.

**Thomas Catron**, Ph.D., associate professor of psychiatry, has been appointed **director of the Tennessee Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination** by Governor Phil Bredesen. The Office was established to coordinate the wide range of services and supports available to children through state departments and the private sector.



Thomas Catron, Ph.D.

**Edward Conture**, Ph.D., professor of hearing & speech sciences, received the **National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Honor**. The highest award bestowed by NSSLHA, it recognizes those who, through work with students, have made significant contributions to both NSSLHA and the discipline. Conture also received the **Frank R. Kleffner Lifetime Clinical Career Award** in recognition of his lasting influence on the clinical practice of speech-language pathology, especially in the area of childhood stuttering, over more than three decades.

**Doug Fuchs**, Ph.D., and **Lynn Fuchs**, Ph.D., Nicholas Hobbs Chair in Special Education and Human Development, were awarded Vanderbilt's **Earl Sutherland Prize for Achievement in Research**. They also have been selected as among the **100 Distinguished Alumni to graduate from the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development in the last 100 years**.

**Craig Anne Heflinger**, Ph.D., associate professor of human & organizational development, is an **honoree of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health's 2005 Making a Difference Award**, nominated by Tennessee Voices for Children.

**Carolyn Hughes**, Ph.D., professor of special education, has been named **Reviewer of the Year for the journal *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities***. The award honors continued scholarly and thoughtful contribution to the journal and dedication and service to both RPSD and TASH, an international association for the equity, opportunity, and inclusion of people with disabilities.



Carolyn Hughes, Ph.D.

**Jon Kaas**, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of psychology, has received **sponsorship from the National Academy of Sciences to host a special research colloquium "The New Comparative Biology of Human Nature,"** November 16-18, at the Beckman Center of the National Academies in Irvine, California.



Jon Kaas, Ph.D.

**René Marois**, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology, won the **Chancellor's Research Award** in recognition of his recent discoveries revealing how the brain determines what we can see, what we can hold in our mind after we've seen something, and what we can do with these mental representations.

**Elise McMillan**, J.D., director of community outreach, **Robin McWilliam**, professor of pediatrics, and **Patricia Snyder**, Ph.D., professor of pediatrics, attended the **Early Childhood Support Summit** on January 23-24. The summit focused on how to best define and conceptualize the expansive array of family supports and services tied to policy mandates that apply to young children with developmental disabilities and their families.

**Wendy Stone**, Ph.D., professor of pediatrics, has two recently released books on autism that offer insights and information for both parents and practitioners. In ***Does My Child Have Autism? A Parent's Guide to Early Detection in Autism Spectrum Disorders*** (with



Wendy Stone, Ph.D.

Theresa Foy DiGeronimo, Jossey-Bass, 2006), Stone provides a checklist of behaviors parents can discuss with their child's pediatrician, a discussion of the various treatments available and the scientific evidence backing them up, and a discussion of behaviors that are important for early diagnosis but often missed. The second volume, ***Social and Communication Development in Autism Spectrum Disorders: Early Identification, Diagnosis and Intervention*** (Guilford Press, 2006), is a compilation of research examining how very young children with autism develop socially and communicate, and how to use key indicators to diagnose and assist these children. Tony Charman (Behavioral Science Unit, Institute of Child Health, University College London) co-edited the book with Stone.

**Anne Marie Tharpe**, Ph.D., associate professor of hearing & speech sciences, received the distinction of **American Speech-Language Hearing Association Fellow**. This award recognizes professional or scientific achievement and is given to members who have made outstanding contributions to the professions. The award is one of the highest honors that ASHA can bestow and is retained for life.

**Naomi Tyler**, Ph.D., research assistant professor of special education, has been named **co-director of the IRIS Center for Faculty Enhancement**. The IRIS Center is part of a national effort that aims to ensure that general education teachers, school administrators, school nurses, and school counselors are well-prepared to work with students who have disabilities and with their families.

**Pathfinder Hispanic Disability Outreach**, a joint program of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, received one of six **Vanderbilt Affirmative Action and Diversity Initiative Awards**. The purpose of this information and assistance program housed at Nashville's Woodbine Community Center is to assist underserved Hispanic individuals with disabilities and their families by increasing knowledge of available resources and community support. Project members recognized included **Carole Moore-Slater, Claudia Avila-Lopez, Elise McMillan, and Jan Rosemergy**. ●



## Susan Gray School *Where Knowledge Meets Nurture* Peabody College of Vanderbilt • Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

### Education and Research Working Hand-in-Hand

By Stephanie Newton



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOLT FAMILY

Renee Holt and Brandon

When the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center began in 1965, one of its key foundations was having an on-site school to serve children and families while providing cutting-edge educational research and training. Over time, the Susan Gray School (SGS) not only has been home to influential research findings and new educational tools, it also has been home to children's first days of school and exciting learning opportunities for countless families—as the Holt family recently has discovered.

Gary and Renee Holt initially placed their son Brandon in childcare at St. Mary's Villa. At 14 months, he was still in the "Baby Room," unable to walk and still taking a bottle. Through Brandon's pediatrician, the Holt family was connected with the Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS). TEIS staff suggested a variety of ways that the Holts could aid in Brandon's development, and one way mentioned was the SGS Outreach Program.

Soon after completing the Outreach Program, Brandon started at the School full-time. "It was wonderful to find a school that was experienced in handling developmentally delayed children. Brandon could get the help and attention he needed so desperately as well as get exposure to his typically developing peers," said Mrs. Holt. "All his teachers have been involved with his progress."

Families with children in the School are invited to take part in research projects appropriate to their child's needs. Researchers conducting projects provide information to families and answers parents' questions. All studies are conducted according to strict federal standards set for research and are approved by Vanderbilt

University's Institutional Review Board. Participation in research is voluntary. Parents give

written permission to take part in research, and all individual records are confidential.

Once enrolled in the School, Brandon's parents heard about the Milieu Teaching Project led by Ann Kaiser, Ph.D., professor of special education and director of the Family Research Program at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. Mrs. Holt jumped at the opportunity to participate in research.

"I have always felt that any kind of research that Brandon could take part in that might benefit him, or help benefit other children in the future, would be worthwhile. I wasn't sure the Milieu Teaching Project would work, but I thought it was worth a try. Brandon definitely needed help, and as it turned out, I needed help, too."

The Milieu Teaching Project is a research project studying the effects of the use of Enhanced Milieu Teaching—a natural, conversational language intervention used with children who have significant language and developmental delays. Sessions occur both at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and at the homes of participants. Because it is federally funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, all assessments and intervention sessions are at no charge to the participants.

Children who participate in the study are between the ages of 2 1/2 and 4 1/2, and have significant language and developmental delays. Milieu Teaching Project staff members have worked with children who have autism spectrum disorders, genetic disorders, and those who are simply diagnosed as having developmental and/or language delays.

Both participating in a research project and being in the School year-round gave Brandon the opportunity to learn new skills with the Milieu Project while using those skills in a practical manner in the classroom.

"For approximately 6 months, we see the family two times per week," said Kelly Windsor, project coordinator. "After that, we see the family periodically for 12 months to monitor the child's continued language progress. In total, the study usually lasts about 18 months."

Mrs. Holt also was selected to take part in a "parent and trainer" condition of the study, which allowed her to learn the intervention by participating in every session.

"I was selected for the parent instruction group, which helped me carry the interventions into our home and daily life. I was shocked to find that I was doing so much for Brandon and not allowing him or encouraging him to speak and to do things for himself," said Mrs. Holt.

Mrs. Holt has noticed that the combination of

the research intervention and the School, as well as Brandon's attitude, has motivated his improvement.

"He loves to see his friends and teachers every day. He really enjoys circle time. He loves for someone to read to him. Brandon wasn't walking or talking and wasn't very outgoing before attending the School," Mrs. Holt said. "Now he's running, talking non-stop, and is a social butterfly. Brandon has definitely come a long way since he started the Susan Gray School."

For information on the Milieu Teaching Project, contact Kelly Windsor, (615) 322-8160, [kelly.windsor@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:kelly.windsor@vanderbilt.edu). For information on the School, contact Tracy Tatum, (615) 322-8200, [tracy.tatum@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tracy.tatum@vanderbilt.edu).

### Holidays With a Twist

In December the Susan Gray School added a fun twist to a favorite long-standing tradition. The annual cultural event *Holidays Around the World* now is the School's primary fundraiser. As in years past, each of the classrooms represented a different country of the world—10 in all. Students learned about their countries throughout the year, and their learning culminated with the *Holidays Around the World* event. With the help of families and friends, each group of children presented information, prepared native food, and offered insight into the culture and diversity of their represented nation. Other activities included cultural entertainment, a silent auction, and a craft sale.



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY/STEVE GREEN



# Celebrating 10 Years of Training Educators

By Traci Fleischman

Every year is exciting when there are new things to learn, to teach, and to implement. The Britt Henderson Training Series for Educators promotes these acts as innovatively and effectively today as it did in its inception. The Henderson Training Series is now celebrating its 10-year anniversary.

## The Henderson Family Gift

The Robert Henderson family founded the Britt Henderson Training Series for Educators in 1996. It is made possible by an endowment from the Henderson family in memory of their son Britt. Its purpose is to provide training for general and special education teachers, in order to improve the quality of education for students with diverse learning needs.

"We were looking for a project to honor Britt," explained his mother Carol Henderson. "In the 1960s, Britt had attended the Kennedy Center's experimental school and the Bill Wilkerson Center, as well as a public school. We thought it would be beneficial to have teachers trained on how to work with his special needs. So, that is where the idea for this all began.

"Britt was a darling and funny young man. His educational needs developed into behavior problems, so educating him became quite difficult," stated Henderson. Britt's educational needs helped to inspire the Henderson Training Series, which are attended each year by teams from five or six schools in the Williamson County and Metro Nashville Public School systems and Currey-Ingram Academy.

## School Team Approach

One of the innovative features of the training is that it is directed not just toward special education teachers but at entire teams from schools. The team approach is critical to implementing a new approach or strategy, requiring broad-based support and understanding within a school. General and special education educators are able to share knowledge and to support one another during implementation.

Kathleen Lane, Ph.D., assistant professor of special education and a Vanderbilt Kennedy Center investigator, endorses this team approach. She has been directing the Henderson Training Series for the past 4 years.

"We've changed the format of the training from being a series of stand-alone workshops to having ongoing training, so that when the

teachers leave our workshops, they can now leave with a set of skills that they can then translate into permanent practice within their school," explained Lane.

"The training is a great opportunity for school staff members to come together with a common area of interests. In addition to acquiring additional information, the schools are able to share their ideas and their structures with other schools going through the training."

A student director usually works with Lane on the logistics of the Henderson Training, while Lane designs the focus and content of the training.

## Focus on Positive Behavior Support

Over the past few years, the training focus has been on Positive Behavior Support (PBS). "PBS is a three-tiered model of support designed to create a climate shift in the school," said Lane. "It's proactive in nature. It's based on providing

An example of PBS implementation within the Williamson County School System is found in Fairview Middle School. "Fairview Middle School has done a phenomenal job," Lane commented. "They have primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of support in place at their school." Fairview Middle School is now in its second year of implementation. Their team was made up of their assistant principal, a general and special education teacher, a parent, and a student.

"One of the roles of an assistant principal is to hand out punishments for bad behavior," said Gary Shrader, assistant principal of Fairview Middle School. "That gets tiresome and as a person who likes to be positive, I saw the advantage of the school-wide PBS plan."

"These teams from the schools are working on the PBS plans and they share ideas and collaborate," stated Lane. "Because we have been doing this for a number of years now, we have been able to use examples from the previous years to help train. The training has really shifted since it first started."

"PBS teaches students the social skills and behaviors they need to develop socially and do better in school," Lane said.

## Annual Poster Session

Each year the Britt Henderson Training Series hosts a poster session, which concludes the year-long workshops with a poster presentation by each participating school, to share what has been accomplished, and a reception to express appreciation for all the participants.

Many of the schools have gone on to implement the PBS models because of these workshops and the poster sessions. The Henderson family is able to see

first-hand what their endowment does for schools, students, and professionals.

"Dr. Lane has taken this program to a much more beneficial level, and we are so thrilled to support her in all that she has envisioned," stated Henderson.

"This training series allows us to collaborate with researchers and educators to put into practice strategies for students with learning differences," said Elise McMillan, J.D., director of Community Outreach. "The vision and commitment of the Henderson family has made this possible, and we are enormously grateful."

For more information, contact Elise McMillan, (615) 343-2540 or email [elise.mcmillan@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:elise.mcmillan@vanderbilt.edu).



Robert Henderson, Jr., Carol Henderson, Elise McMillan, and Kathleen Lane

students with the level of support necessary for them to be successful in the general education setting to the maximum extent possible."

Lane is experienced in working with school teams to develop and implement the PBS plans unique to their own schools. The three areas of prevention are primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary prevention is for every student in the school. With input from everyone at the school, the team clarifies what behavior is expected of all children. According to Lane, primary prevention meets the needs of about 80% of students. The next level is secondary prevention. It is designed to reduce current cases of problem behavior. The third level is tertiary prevention. It is aimed at reducing the intensity and severity of current cases of problem behavior.

## Spotlight

## Leading by Example

CATHY STEWART BROWN

By Traci Fleischman

Cathy Stewart Brown devotes much of her time to her community commitments. She is not only personally invested in the outreach of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, she is highly motivated, well-respected, and genuinely dedicated to her role as a community leader. Brown is the incoming chair of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Leadership Council.

Brown has a distinguished record of community involvement. She is a board member and past president of Saddle Up! Therapeutic Riding Program. She is this year's Honorary Chair of the Regions Bank Chukkers for Charity annual polo event benefiting Saddle Up! and the Rochelle Center (which provides support for adults with developmental disabilities and seniors with memory loss). She is a board member of Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt.

Barbara Gregg Phillips, current chair of the Center's Leadership Council, recruited Brown to join the Council. Brown had heard a Vanderbilt Medical Center symposium several years prior and had become intrigued with the research underway



PHOTO COURTESY OF BROWN FAMILY

Sara, Cathy, and Louis Brown

at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. After learning more about the Center's ongoing work, Brown joined the Council in 2004. She soon found her natural place in the Council's Outreach Committee.

"I strongly believe in connecting the practitioners and the educators with the scientists. I would like to see community and national awareness of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center research and outreach programs increase tremendously, and I would like to see the Center continue to attract the brightest minds in the country to collaborate on this important research," explained Brown.

Brown's attraction to the mission of the

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center is second nature to her. She grew up outside of Frankfort, Kentucky, at the Stewart Home School, a residential school for children and adults with special needs founded by Brown's great-great grandfather, Dr. John Stewart, in 1893. Dr. Stewart was a pioneer in the field of rehabilitation for persons with intellectual disabilities and bought the campus from the Kentucky Military Institute to open his own school for children with special needs. Today, the historic campus encompasses 850 acres and affords a magnificent setting for multiple educational, vocational, recreational, and spiritual pursuits to enrich the lives of each resident. The School presently is the home to individuals from 36 states and 3 foreign countries.

Brown's husband is Martin S. Brown, Jr., an attorney and partner at Adams & Reese LLP/Stoke Bartholomew. They have two children, 13-year-old Sara who is in the seventh grade, and 9-year old Louis who is in the second grade.

"With my family's school and my personal interest in children and adults with special needs, I have always been interested in the progress being made in human development," stated Brown. Through this special interest, Brown found a home away from home at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.

"The Kennedy Center is an enlightening and inspirational place to be where there is tremendous hope and energy to improve the quality of life for children and adults with special needs." ●

## Kennedy Center Donors

## New Nicholas Hobbs Society

Members since December 7, 2005 (\$1,000 and above). A complete list is found at [kc.vanderbilt.edu/giving/give2hobbs.html](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/giving/give2hobbs.html)

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Mrs. Helen Dougherty  
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Dr. and Mrs. James Sutcliffe

## Honor and Memorial Gifts

**In Memory of Mrs. Bettie Budwig**  
Dr. and Mrs. Pat Levitt

**In Honor of Mr. Scout Ellis**  
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**In Honor of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Guthrie, Jr.**  
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Dr. and Mrs. Pat Levitt

**In Honor of Ms. Sarah Walking**  
Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Downes

For information about joining the Nicholas Hobbs Donor Society or making honor or memorial gifts, contact (615) 343-5322.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this report, which reflects Hobbs Society membership, and honor and memorial gifts **December 7, 2005-April 5, 2006**. If an error has been made, we offer our sincerest apology and ask that you bring it to our attention by contacting (615) 343-5322. ●



# Investing in a Center Legacy for Modern Science

By Traci Fleischman



Cathy Brown, Annette Eskind, and Barbara Gregg Phillips have been devoted to supporting innovative research to help families by increasing Nicholas Hobbs Society membership to support Discovery Grants.

Nicholas Hobbs Society members are donors to the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center who give \$1,000 or more annually to the Center. They recognize the exceptional position of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center as a leader in bringing tomorrow's treatments to children and families today. Through gifts and volunteer resources, Hobbs Society members advance groundbreaking research in human development.

Donations to the Hobbs Society enable Vanderbilt Kennedy Center investigators to translate their best and most provocative ideas into reality. The purpose of the Discovery Grants program is to promote pilot studies in preparation for submitting grant applications to federal agencies or substantial applications to private foundations.

The program, which began in 1998, is perhaps the greatest example of leveraging investments at the Center. Twenty-four Discovery Grants totaling

\$290,180 have been awarded from Hobbs Society funds. Recipients have subsequently received related National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants totaling \$9,322,757—a 40-fold return on the investment.

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center researchers are indebted to our generous, far-sighted, and caring donors who travel with us on the paths of discovery. These grants, which have ranged from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for 1 year of funding, have given many researchers that extra competitive edge needed to secure larger grants (see related story, p. 1).

Nicholas Hobbs was, in the words of a colleague, a “national resource for children.” During his three decades at Peabody College and Vanderbilt University, he pioneered the field of child psychology, developing new concepts for treating children with emotional problems and children with intellectual disabilities.

“As an undergraduate student at Peabody, I had the good fortune to have two psychology classes with Nicholas Hobbs,” said Barbara Gregg Phillips, chair of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Leadership Council. “Dr. Hobbs believed that every child should be led to operate at a level where he or she can be proud of his or her successes, and he saw dignity in the achievement of children of all abilities. His remarkable ability to look to the future is an important part of his legacy that we carry on through Hobbs Society Discovery Grants.”

Pat Levitt, director of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, notes that “The awards are especially

valuable for researchers from different disciplines to work together, forging new scientific relationships and bringing cutting-edge tools to bear on complex questions regarding the causes and cures of developmental disabilities. You cannot obtain an NIH or Department of Education grant these days without preliminary findings. In today's climate of severe competition at the national level, we want to provide our investigators with an edge. This is why the Discovery Grants are so valuable to us, and why we have pushed so hard to expand our Hobbs Society membership. We need to award even more to Center faculty members.”

Discoveries resulting from these grants have included the identification of a gene involved in autism, documentation of sleep disturbances in individuals with mental retardation, and strategies for early intervention in developmental disabilities. All have led to NIH grants. Hobbs Society donors strengthen the Center in spearheading research that is both compelling and urgent. An individual gift can spark the beginning of major, novel research initiatives and allows for the Center to be a part of research that improves the lives of families everywhere.

Applications for Discovery Grants are reviewed in a rigorous fashion by an expert scientific panel, which includes nationally renowned researchers at other universities. Funding decisions are based on overall scientific merit and the likelihood that proposed projects will lead to external funding.

The legacy of Nicholas Hobbs continues through the efforts of researchers and generous supporters. As research projects demand more interdisciplinary efforts, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, through the Nicholas Hobbs Society, is poised to provide the necessary support across the Vanderbilt University campus. For information about joining the Nicholas Hobbs Donor Society or making honor or memorial gifts, contact (615) 343-5322. ●

## Off to a Running Start

Continued from page 4

### Research

Faculty and staff conduct research that aims to improve disability services and policies and to identify causes of disabilities and novel ways to intervene and provide support for persons with disabilities. We partner with our Community Advisory Council and statewide agencies to identify pressing but under-studied topics. In addition to working with families, we use existing large databases to identify research and policy issues.

“An initial planning step has been to organize a planning group to identify and prioritize efforts,” said **Robert Hodapp**, Ph.D., professor of special education and the Center's research

director. The group includes Community Advisory Council members and family members.

A major focus is the work of the National Research Consortium, led by Hodapp and Ann Kaiser, Ph.D., professor of special education and director of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Family Research Program. Working with The Arc of the U.S., the Consortium has launched a web-based survey of adult siblings of individuals with disabilities (see p. 4). A fall conference is planned on sibling research.

### Dissemination

We share what we learn through research and model programs so that others can use this information. We produce easy-to-understand brochures, booklets, videos, and web-based

materials. We provide information to persons with disabilities, families, trainees, professionals, direct service providers, advocates, and policy makers. Dissemination is led by **Jan Rosemergy**, Ph.D., director, and **Traci Fleischman**, associate director.

“Although we've accomplished a great deal in a short time, we have just begun to scratch the surface with what we can achieve as a Center for Excellence,” Dykens summarized. “In the next few years we anticipate major growth in training, service, research, and dissemination. We look forward to working with our many partners at Vanderbilt, in Tennessee, and the national network of Centers for Excellence.”

For information, visit the Center's website [kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/ucedd](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/ucedd). ●

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## Hold the Date



**Friday, June 16**  
**Waddell & Reed**  
**Financial Services**  
**Charity Golf**  
**Tournament**

Benefiting the  
Vanderbilt Kennedy  
Center  
Entry fee; contact  
(615) 343-5322

**Wednesday,**  
**November 15**  
**Vanderbilt Kennedy**  
**Center Leadership**  
**Dinner**

6:30-9 p.m.  
Loews Vanderbilt Hotel  
By invitation; contact  
(615) 343-5322

Discovery is a quarterly publication of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center designed to educate our friends and the community, from Nashville to the nation. The Center is committed to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities of thinking, learning, perception, communication, mood and emotion caused by disruption of typical development. The Center is a university-wide research, training, diagnosis, and treatment institute. It is a national Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Center funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

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Discovery

Editor/Writer: Jan Rosemergy, Ph.D.

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## 2006 Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise noted, events are free and open to the public. Events are subject to change. Please check the calendar on our website [kc.vanderbilt.edu](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu) or call (615) 322-8240. For disability-related training and other events statewide and nationally see [www.disabilitytrainingtn.org](http://www.disabilitytrainingtn.org).

### May

#### MAY 1-JULY 30

##### Arts and Disabilities Exhibits Common Ground

Co-Sponsors Full Circle Art and Metro Arts Commission  
Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.  
Lobby  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center/MRL Building

#### MAY 3

##### Developmental Disabilities Grand Rounds Caregiver Strain Among Families of Children and Adolescents with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Craig Anne Heflinger, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Human & Organizational Development, Senior Fellow of the Institute for Public Policy Studies, and Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Member  
Light breakfast provided  
Co-Sponsor Center for Child Development, Pediatrics  
Wednesday 8 a.m.  
Room 241  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center/MRL Building

#### MAY 22

##### Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Special Lecture Theoretical, Empirical, and Clinical Implications of Language Abilities and Disabilities in Autism

Cory Shulman, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, Paul Baerwald School of Social Work, Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
Monday 12 noon  
Room 241  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center/MRL Building



Get ready for June 16 Waddell & Reed Financial Services Charity Golf Tournament.

### June

#### JUNE 2

##### Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Community Advisory Council Meeting

Friday 9 a.m.-1:15 p.m.  
Peabody Library Reading Room  
Open to the public; to attend call 936-5118  
To send comments, email [vkcac@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vkcac@vanderbilt.edu)

#### JUNE 15

##### Psychiatry Grand Rounds Diagnosing and Treating Tourette Syndrome

Donald Gilbert, M.D., Associate Professor of Child Neurology, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center  
Co-sponsor Vanderbilt Kennedy Center  
Thursday 1:15 p.m.  
Wadlington Conference Room  
Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt

#### JUNE 16

##### Waddell & Reed Financial Services Charity Golf Tournament Benefiting Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Great golf, door prizes, cold beverages, lunch provided! Entry fee \$125 per player. Variety of company sponsorship opportunities at different levels available.  
Contact Jenny Alford, (615) 343-5322, [jenny.alford@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jenny.alford@vanderbilt.edu) to register.  
Friday 8 a.m. Shotgun start  
The Legends Club of Tennessee

### Conferences

#### JUNE 7

##### Conference on Improving Care Coordination for People with Dual Diagnosis

##### Keynote Address: Myths and Realities About Dual Diagnosis

Robert J. Fletcher, D.S.W., Chief Executive Officer, National Association for the Dually Diagnosed

##### Panels: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Autism Spectrum Disorders; How Special Health Care Needs Impact Behavioral Symptoms and Treatment; Transition to Adulthood: Improving Lifelong Outcomes; Accessing Tennessee Services

Sponsors Vanderbilt Kennedy Behavior Analysis Clinic's Community Inclusion Project (CIP), Mid-Tennessee Interdisciplinary Instruction in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (MIND) Training Project

For family members, advocates, residential service providers, psychiatrists, health care providers, related service providers, and behavior analysts who work with persons with a dual diagnosis of developmental disabilities and mental illness.

CIP is funded by the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services, and Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities.

Continental breakfast and lunch provided. No cost but pre-registration by May 31 required for free parking and food.

Contact [kc.vanderbilt.edu/pre-register](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/pre-register), (615) 322-8185, or email [bac@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:bac@vanderbilt.edu)

Wednesday 8 a.m.-4:15 p.m.  
Room 241  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center/MRL Building



## Conferences continued

**JUNE 15-18**

### 4th Annual Tennessee Disability Mega Conference

Sponsored by coalition of more than 50 Tennessee disability-related organizations, including the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Information [www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org](http://www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org)

Cool Springs Marriott

**SEPTEMBER Dates to be announced**

### Conference on Communication and Learning: Focus on Auditory Comprehension Abilities

Sponsors Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Research Program in Communication and Learning and Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

Room 241

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center/MRL Building

Details available soon; call (615) 322-8240



*Mandala--Collaborative Painting in Common Ground Exhibit*  
Sean Druffel, Jonathan Phillippi, Edward Nesbitt, Will McMillan, Grace Goad, Rachel Putnam, Jeanne Gavigan, Myka Campbell, Angela Elkins, Yvette Renee Parrish, Pam Francis, Massood Taj

## Family Survey

To Tennessee families of children and youth (birth to age 22) who have disabilities, chronic illnesses, or genetic conditions: Family Voices of Tennessee invites you to participate in the comprehensive Family Survey now available online at <http://webapps.nursing.vanderbilt.edu/surveys/familyvoices>

Information collected will inform researchers, policymakers, and advocates about family experiences getting health care and related services for their children. Family Voices has developed the survey in coordination with researchers at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing and the State Maternal and Child Health Division. The survey is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration.

## ASMT Events

### Autism Society of Middle Tennessee

**MAY 25, JUNE 22 & JULY 27**

#### Autism Orientation

Registration required. Child care available upon request.

Information ASMT (615) 385-2077

Thursday 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Room 241

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center/MRL Building

## Summer Camps

For students with autism ages 6-21

**June 5-June 23**

### TRIAD Social Skills Camp I

**June 26-July 18**

### TRIAD Social Skills Camp II

TRIAD camps also provide a unique volunteer opportunity for teenagers ages 14-18

For students with developmental disabilities ages 16-22

**June 12-June 30**

### Transitions Camp

For youth and young adults with Williams syndrome

**June 17-24**

### Music Camp

For students with Down syndrome

**July 5-28**

### Explorers Unlimited Academic Camp

Contact Jessica Pantino, Camps and Art Coordinator

(615) 322-8147

[kc.vanderbilt.edu/camps](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/camps)

## Adult Sibling Survey

To better understand the long-lasting relationship between individuals with disabilities and their adult siblings, the **National Sibling Research Consortium**, led by the **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center**, has created the **Adult Sibling Questionnaire**. If you are 18 or older with a sister or brother with disabilities, we invite you to complete this questionnaire online:

<https://kc.vanderbilt.edu/FamilyResearch>

To request a paper copy, contact Family Research (1-888) 322-5339 [free] or email [FamilyResearch@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:FamilyResearch@vanderbilt.edu).

## DSAMT Events

### Down Syndrome Association of Middle Tennessee

**MAY 12**

#### Caleb Thompson Memorial Golf Tournament

Casual dinner provided. Entry fee \$85 per player.

Contact DSAMT (615) 386-9002

Friday 1 p.m. Shotgun start

Forest Crossing Golf Course Franklin, TN

## Taking Part in Research

The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center welcomes the participation of children and adults, with and without disabilities, in research studies. To view a list of projects seeking participants, see [kc.vanderbilt.edu/studyfinder/](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/studyfinder/). If you have questions about finding a study or taking part in research, contact Lynnette Henderson (615) 936-0448 or tollfree (1-866) 936-VUKC [8852]