

Summer 2021

Possibilities

in Education and Training



AIMING HIGH

Mia Peterson's Lifelong Advocacy Legacy

By Mike Hoenig, *Project Director, Conner Training Connection*

Mia Peterson, a world pioneer in the self-advocacy civil rights movement, passed away on June 8, 2021 at the age of 47 from Alzheimer's disease.

I'll always remember the first time I met Mia. I was serving on the management team of the Systems Change Project, an initiative funded by the Iowa DD Council to create a statewide organization of advocates with disabilities. A recent Webster City High School graduate, Mia came with her mother, Carol, to observe our statewide retreat and decide if she wanted to get involved with our work.

Though blindness prevented me from seeing Mia's face, I had no problem perceiving her infectious smile as she eagerly greeted everyone. As we broke for dinner, I asked Mia if she wanted to get involved with our project. I got a resounding "Yes!"

In her sweet, unassuming way, Mia taught me some valuable lessons during our service together on the management team. After patiently listening and taking things in for a couple of meetings, she pulled me aside and said, "I wish people would treat me like an adult. I might be short and I'm young, but I don't want people talking to me like I'm a little kid." I took that message to heart and share it to this day whenever I train medical and nursing students.

As Mia gained confidence with our group, she taught us to present information in "plain language" before most of us knew that term's meaning. Gentle prompts



Left: Mia with co-editors of the *Community Advocacy Press* newsletter. Left to Right: Mia Peterson, Tia Nelis, fellow Iowan Michelle Pettitt, and Mitchell Levitz.

Aiming High, Mia Peterson's Lifelong Advocacy Legacy

like, "I don't understand what you mean," helped us add an entirely new form of accessibility. Mia, we still have a long way to go in this area, but you'd be proud to know that we're working hard on it!

I've always believed that serving on the Systems Change Project (later Systems Change Network) management team jump-started Mia's advocacy career. Before moving to Cincinnati in 1997, four short years after joining our management team, Mia had been appointed by then Governor Terry Branstad (pictured with her above) to serve on the Iowa DD Council.

At the ripe age of 24, Mia accepted a job with Capabilities Unlimited in Cincinnati. Thanks to community supports which we routinely describe in this newsletter, she was able to move into her own apartment. Mia never forgot her Iowa roots, regularly updating us about her ever-growing list of accomplishments and responsibilities. She became the first person with Down syndrome to deliver a plenary address at the National Down Syndrome Association Congress and to be elected to the Association's Board of Directors. She began co-authoring a quarterly newsletter, The Community Advocacy Press. She testified before Congress at an ADA 10th anniversary celebration. She started her own organization, Aiming High, to further her work in the self-advocacy civil rights movement. Her serving as a founding member and later president of People First of Ohio prompted me to stop complaining about the decline of Iowa's self-advocacy movement and start doing something about it!

The first "something" was attending the Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) national conference in Buffalo, where Mia welcomed me with open arms (literally). She showed me the



ropes, introduced me to countless friends and colleagues (most notably her longtime boyfriend, Joseph Buchroeder), and carried the Iowa flag with me during opening ceremonies. It was then that I realized that roles had reversed. Mia was now my mentor!

Mia and I continued to work together over the years. Shortly after returning to Iowa, she helped our

disability and health grant team by presenting on the benefits of exercise for people with disabilities, citing her experience training at her local Y. Our last collaboration was a presentation on the history of self-advocacy and independent living in Iowa for the four-state Heartland Self-Advocacy Resource Network (HSRN). While preparing for that presentation, Mia shared her wit with me for what turned out to be the last time. Commenting on her parents' move to an apartment a floor above hers, she quipped: "It looks like Webster City up there!"

I'll close this tribute with an "Iowaronic" twist. Iowa DD Council Executive Director Brooke Lovelace was a close childhood friend of Mia's sister Missy.

"I never even thought of Mia as having a disability," says Brooke. "She was just Mia to me. I think I got into this field because of her. She showed us how everything is possible for everyone."

Inspired by Mia to pursue a career in serving persons with disabilities, Brooke now directs the very agency which funded the Systems Change Project and recognized Mia's talents all those years ago.

Momentum is growing once again to form a self-advocacy movement in Iowa. We owe it to Mia to make that happen. If you'd like to learn more and help us build that momentum, please email me at: michael-hoenig@uiowa.edu.

Honoring Mia

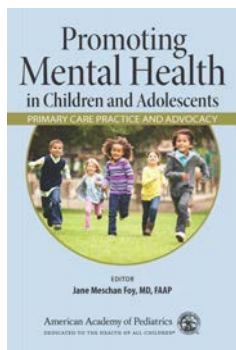
Mitch DeFauw, *Disability Resource Librarian*

In honor of Mia Peterson, the Disability Resource Library would like to share a few books on disability empowerment and advocacy. Finding your voice takes an immense amount of courage, and even more so when it is for a cause or individuals you cherish. Mia Peterson's life was an embodiment of that courage, and we hope that her accomplishments will inspire those who follow her same vision.

If you have any questions, please contact Mitch DeFauw at mitchell-defauw@uiowa.edu. To find out more about the DRL, you can visit: <http://uichildrens.org/cdd/drl>, or search the online catalog at <http://uichildrens.org/drl-catalog>.

Promoting Mental Health in Children and Adolescents: Primary Care Practice and Advocacy, 1st Edition

by Dr. Jane Meschan Foy (Editor)



This groundbreaking resource focuses on primary and secondary prevention, guiding pediatric care

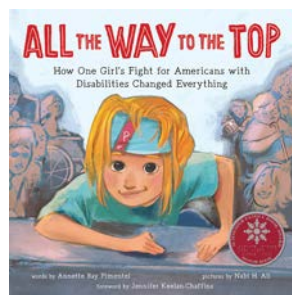
clinicians in incorporating mental health screening and surveillance into well child visits and provides evidence-based interventions to care for children and adolescents with mental health issues.

Gain in-depth guidance on the care of special populations of children who may be at increased risk for mental health problems: those exposed to adverse childhood experiences; children in military

families; lesbian, gay and bisexual youth; children with gender expression and identity issues; children affected by racism; adolescents who are pregnant or parenting, and much more.

All the Way to the Top: how One Girl's Fight for Americans with Disabilities Changed Everything

by Annette Bay Pimentel



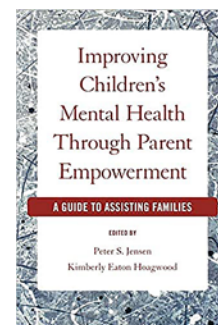
Jennifer Keelan was just an ordinary girl who happened to use a

wheelchair. But she knew her life would be a lot easier if people would think about what people with disabilities needed – like cuts in a curb, lifts and elevators, and most importantly, acceptance from others. She joined adult activists in the disability rights movement, and on March 12, 1990, as Congress

contemplated the Americans with Disabilities Act—a law that would make public spaces accessible—she got out of her wheelchair at the bottom of the steps to the Capitol Building and climbed—all the way to the top. This inspiring picture book reminds young readers that anyone, no matter their age, can make an impact.

Improving Children's Mental Health Through Parent Empowerment: A Guide to Assisting Families, 1st Edition

by Peter S. Jensen and Kimberly Hoagwood



Whether you call yourself a parent advisor, advocate, coordinator, support specialist, liaison, mentor, coach, or another term, this guide

provides the essential information you need as a parent helping parents. The book is divided into four parts for easy reference:

Part One addresses important skills such as priority setting, listening, collaboration, and group management.

Part Two describes the mental health system and gives guidance to help parents obtain appropriate treatment for their child.

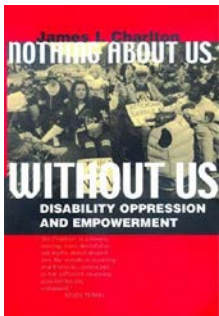
Part Three covers working with the school system and

the different special education options families should consider.

Part Four explains education laws and how they should be used to ensure children receive all the appropriate services they need.

Helping parents “take charge” of their children’s mental health care is a rewarding job. It is also a challenging one. This guide will become an invaluable resource of the knowledge you require to succeed.

Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment, 1st Edition
by James I. Charlton



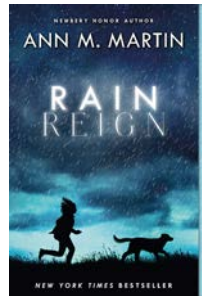
James Charlton has produced a ringing indictment of disability oppression, which, he says, is rooted in

degradation, dependency, and powerlessness and is experienced in some form by five hundred million persons throughout the world who have physical, sensory, cognitive, or developmental disabilities. *Nothing About Us Without Us* is the first book in the literature on disability to provide a theoretical overview of disability oppression that shows its similarities to, and differences from, racism, sexism, and colonialism. Charlton’s analysis

is illuminated by interviews he conducted over a ten-year period with disability rights activists throughout the Third World, Europe, and the United States.

Rain Reign

by Ann M. Martin



Rose Howard is obsessed with homonyms. She’s thrilled that her own name is a homonym, and she purposely

gave her dog Rain a name with two homonyms (Reign, Rein), which, according to Rose’s rules of homonyms, is very special. Not everyone understands Rose’s obsessions, her rules, and the other things that make her different—not her teachers, not other kids, and not her single father.

When a storm hits their rural town, rivers overflow, the roads are flooded, and Rain goes missing. Rose’s father shouldn’t have let Rain out. Now Rose has to find her dog, even if it means leaving her routines and safe places to search.

Self Advocacy Skills for Students with Learning Disabilities: Making it Happen in College and Beyond

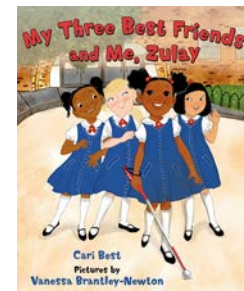
by Henry B. Reiff

Filled with strategies, and resources, this book uses the author’s groundbreaking research about successful adults

with learning disabilities, to promote self-advocacy. This work is brimming with useful and practical information. It is easily understood and embraced by students with learning disabilities, their parents, guidance counselors, and stakeholders in the fields of both higher education and special education.

My Three Best Friends and Me, Zulay

by Cari Best



Zulay and her three best friends are in the same first grade class, even though Zulay is blind.

She uses a Braille typewriter and manipulatives for math, so she rarely feels like she stands out -- except when she gets pulled out of class to practice using a cane, something that still makes her self-conscious. When her teacher announces the upcoming Field Day, Zulay decides she wants to run a race, and her peers fall silent, not sure how she can. Fortunately, her understanding and determined teacher assures her, and then, that the class can definitely find a way for Zulay to cross the finish line! Encouraging and optimistic, this book reminds young readers that a little creativity goes a long way when it comes to including peers with disabilities.

Possibilities in Education and Training is a quarterly publication of University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital Center for Disabilities and Development, Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities. It is an outreach initiative of the Conner Training Connection, a program funded by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) to support the transition of individuals with disabilities from congregate to community-based settings.

Aim high for
the stars, because
we are the stars.

~Mia Peterson

How to get in touch with *Possibilities*:

EMAIL: michael-hoenig@uiowa.edu

FAX: 319-384-6241 **PHONE:** 319-353-6448

MAIL:

University of Iowa Health Care
Center for Disabilities and Development
100 Hawkins Dr., Rm. S277
Iowa City IA 52242-1011

Disability Resource Library

PHONE: 800-272-7713

EMAIL: disability-library@uiowa.edu

WEBSITE: uichildrens.org/cdd/drl/

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