

2014 –WSFN State Conference-Speakers & Bios

Dads Panel

Three great dads will discuss their own situations, adjustments to a challenging world, the joys of being a dad, and share their perspectives on being a father of a child with special needs.

Keynote Speaker: Robert Naseef, Ph.D.

Dr. Naseef speaks and writes in a singular voice as a psychologist & father of an adult son with autism. His latest book, *Autism in the Family: Caring and Coping Together* (2013) integrates professional and personal perspectives focusing on helping families navigate the emotional landscape and controversial issues of raising a child with special needs through the lifespan. He has a special interest in the psychology of men and fatherhood. As a regular participant over the past year on Dr. Naseef's once-a-month blog regarding topics of deep interest to dads having children with special needs, WSFN appreciates and confirms his passion for fathers and families. WSFN is thrilled to him headline our conference!

Morning Breakout Sessions

Housing-Options & Actions-Pam Blanton

Pam Blanton, Partners4Housing founder and consultant, has 20 years' experience working in affordable housing. During her 17 years in King Co. government, Pam worked with HUD and other affordable housing programs and services. She developed the Housing Coordinator position at King Co. Developmental Disabilities Division (KCDDD). In this position she collaborated with families, housing providers, case managers, and community-based organizations to ensure people with disabilities had access to affordable housing and the supports they need to live independently. Pam has demonstrated ability to successfully work at the systems level to build collaborative partnerships to increase housing opportunities for people with disabilities. During her seven years at KCDDD, her program successfully supported more than 450 people with disabilities in their moves to affordable housing. For the past couple of years, Pam has been developing a new housing model involving families "clustering" together to share housing and coordinated services. Partners4Housing's Comprehensive Profile Questionnaire is designed to one with important information when planning for future housing. And this is only the beginning of what Pam has to offer in discussing housing options.

Foster Dads Panel-Julie Fisher, Family Support Program Manager-Kindering, CHERISH Trainer, Panel Moderator

Being a father is challenging, being a father having a child with special needs adds another dimension, and being the father of a foster child with special needs can add a lot more. The dads on this panel will inform us of the very unique role they play in their families, particularly as fathers of foster children with special needs. WSFN appreciates all dads caring and loving their children. Our appreciation for dads choosing to go the extra miles required in many situations, like foster and adoptive fathers, is magnified many times over.

IEP's: Practical Approaches to Complicated Issues-Larry Davis

An Educational Advocate since 1998, Larry has developed special expertise in negotiating Special Education IEPs and 504 Plans, while also consulting in complex casework. His background as a teacher and principal contributes to his understanding of many of these issues. In 2009 Larry was the recipient of the *Puget Sound Super Hero Award* presented by Parent Map Magazine for his work in advocacy. He has appeared as a guest on local radio, and produced his own show, "The Advocate" on KKNW in Seattle. Larry has written: *The Insider's Guide to Special Education Advocacy*; & *The New School of Thought on IEP & 504 Plans*. He can be reached at: specialeducationadvocacy.org . Larry also keynoted our 2011 conference.

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Stress: Identifying, Managing, and Using It Effectively-Laurie Slater, Ph.D. & Greg Schell

Dads often times experience stress differently than moms. Knowing more about this may be important to how one chooses to manage this complicated emotion. Identifying stress is only the beginning, but an interesting and important part of the management process. Is it possible to use stress to make your life better? We believe it may be an important catalyst to do just that! Laurie and Greg have worked together before at Kindering as facilitators of a class for parents adjusting to the challenging world of disability. Laurie is in private practice as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Greg is Director, WSNF.

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

Sibling Panel-Sharissa Aromi, Panel Moderator

Siblings know a lot about being a brother or sister to a family member with special needs. In order to find out about their perspectives you have to ask. So we are asking! Get the inside look at the awareness of siblings, their challenges, their life altering perspectives about themselves, their brother or sister, and their parents. A powerful experience! Sharissa is an outstanding educator at Kindering & has conducted SibShops, so is well aware of the uniqueness of siblings.

Trusts, Wills, & Guardianships-Christine Thompson Ibrahim - Lawyer

Christine comes well prepared to discuss these important topics, as her brother was born with Down syndrome, her mother is a powerful advocate for individuals with disabilities and their families, and has been for over 20 years, and her father is a well-known geneticist. Christine adds to this deep and incredible family experience by concentrating on legal issues related to disability in her law practice. Learning about ways to protect your loved ones and doing it correctly is a very important step for every family. This session will provide vital information whether you already have done some planning or are just beginning. It is never too early or too late to put a plan in place!

Improving Family Relationships, Robert Naseef, Ph.D.

Join Dr. Naseef to learn more about strengthening relationships within the family, particularly when disability is part of it. It is well known that when one person has special needs in the family, it requires a lot of adjustment by all the other family members. Adjusting to the unique conditions inherent in any family can be both challenging and rewarding. Add to your own understanding of your family and some possible ways of making relationships work as well as possible.

