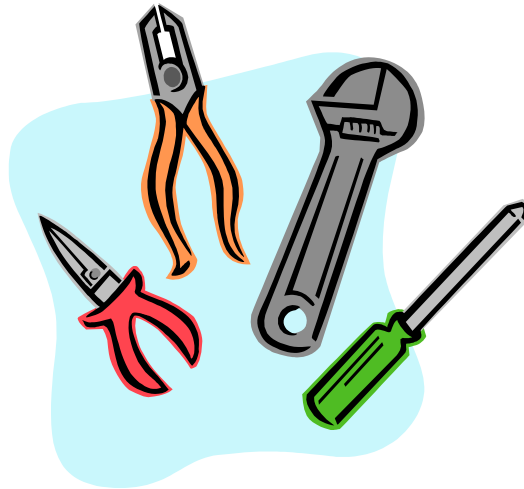


Seventh Annual Tools for Life: Secondary Transition and Technology Fair

March 7-8, 2011
Shilo Inn – Idaho Falls, ID



POST-CONFERENCE REPORT

*Tools for Life is sponsored by:
The Idaho State Department of Education
The Idaho Assistive Technology Project
The Center on Disabilities and Human Development
The Interagency Council on Secondary Transition
The Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities
The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare*

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Introduction

The 7th Annual Tools for Life: Secondary Transition and Technology Fair held March 7-8, at the Shilo Inn, Idaho Falls, was a full house with record number of attending high school students and all those who support them. Tools for Life is an annual statewide transition and technology fair which highlights the cumulative work of the Idaho Interagency Council on Secondary Transition (IICST). The IICST is made up of members representing K-12 special education, higher education disability services, professional technical education, employment, Medicaid, and rehabilitation, all working towards improving the outcomes of students with disabilities. To kick off the event, keynote speakers inspire and motivate the whole assembly, while breakout sessions provide the choice of needed areas of information and skill-building. Besides the work of learning, new friendships are forged at the evening pizza social and dance. Attendees head for home loaded with new friends, information, resources, and pride in themselves and their part in the disability movement.

Keynotes

Mayor Jared Fuhriman welcomed Tools for Life attendees to Idaho Falls. After the welcome of Mayor Furhiman, Miss Idaho Falls, **Kelsie Roper**, introduced the Day One keynote speaker, Roberto Rivera. Ms. Roper also joined students for the evening social.



*Idaho Falls Mayor –
Jared Fuhriman*



*Monday Keynote Speaker, Roberto Rivera (right),
with Student Attendee.*

New to the Tools for Life conference was keynote speaker **Roberto Rivera** from Chicago. From disengaged student with learning disabilities, teenage runaway, and drug dealer, to graduating from college with honors and successful businessman, Roberto inspired the Tools for Life audience with his personal story and *Fulfill the Dream Program*. Roberto continued to engage youth with a breakout session following his keynote address. At lunch, Roberto facilitated the lunch panel of young adult self-advocates including **Stephanie Reed, Adam Sweetland, Aliysha Bare, and**

Erica Tijeria. Roberto went above and beyond his conference obligations by attending the conference as well, engaging youth, educators, and parents alike.

Day two morning keynote speaker was **Michael Beers**, comedian, Montana Independent Living Center employee, and Montana Youth Leadership Forum staff. Mike kept his audience in stitches but also shared his pride and knowledge of the disability rights movement.



*Tuesday Keynote Speaker,
Michael Beers*



Tools for Life attendees received a special treat with the appearance of **Ali and Christina Christensen**, two young women from Idaho Falls who made it to the finals of *America's Got Talent* with their singing and songwriting talents. This accomplishment is all the more incredible since they both have cystic fibrosis. Ali and Christina treated us all to an amazing hour of music. The last song had everyone up and dancing, energized and ready for the afternoon sessions.

Tuesday Lunch Special Guests: Ali (left) and Christina (right) Christensen

Breakout Sessions

In addition to keynote addresses, 51 breakout sessions were offered to Tools for Life attendees on transition, self-determination, self-advocacy, assistive technology, independent living, higher education, employment, relationships, and recreation. Sessions geared toward parents were held in the evening of Day One and offered to local parents free of charge if they could not attend sessions during the day. Breakout sessions included:

Self Advocacy-Self Determination

- ❖ *Hip Hop(e) Education Workshop* – Roberto Rivera
- ❖ *Integration of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing into a Postsecondary Setting* – Timothy Chevalier and Ann Flannery
- ❖ *You're at Tools for Life! Now What?* – Irene Jones, Beth Eloë-Reep
- ❖ *That's Life Financial Literacy* – Luke Erickson
- ❖ *Idaho Youth Leadership Forum* – Beau Stiles, Tanner Traugher, Tara Smith
- ❖ *Person Centered Planning is for Everyone* – Dawn Sauve, Trina Balanoff
- ❖ *Be a Self-Advocate* – Joe Raiden
- ❖ *Can Those Labels* – Lana Kirkham, Bird Derrick
- ❖ *Affirmative Life Planning* – Charlene Quade
- ❖ *Self-Directed IEPs* – Colleen Henderson
- ❖ *Legal Planning for Life After 18* – Charlene Quade
- ❖ *Idaho Falls Self-Advocate Leadership Chapter* – Shiloh Blackburn and Sandra Abend
- ❖ *The STRIVE Program for 18-21 Year Old Students Developing the Courage To Be* – Curtis Johnson
- ❖ *Credit Jeopardy* – Luke Erickson
- ❖ *My Voice My Choice, an Introduction to Self Direction* – Daniel Lloyd, Pete Bennett, Lisa Monahan
- ❖ *Spend More Time with Michael Beers* – Michael Beers
- ❖ *The Moving On Binder – A Tools for Transition Planning* – Tracy Warren and Michelle Doty
- ❖ *How to be a Public Speaker* – Erick Yeary
- ❖ *Parent, What to Look for in the Transition Process* – Kevin Jones



One of many sessions focusing on the needs of transitioning students

Assistive Technology

- ❖ *Project Search* – Coeur d' Alene – Gary Chiaravalli
- ❖ *Vocational Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology – Two Resources to Help the Transition Process* – Dan Dyer, Alan Aamodt, and Brooke Miller
- ❖ *Free and Low-Cost Software Options* – Kathy Griffin
- ❖ *What's New with WYNN?* – Steve Boyle
- ❖ *Just What are Accessible Instructional Materials and Where do I Get Them* – Janice Carson
- ❖ *Empowering Students with Accessible Technology that Enables Personalized Learning* – Michele Paley
- ❖ *A Smorgasbord of Assistive Technology Software and Resources* – Dan Dyer and Ed Chilgren
- ❖ *Harnessing iPods and iPads for Learning* – Kathy Griffin and Nora Jehn
- ❖ *Transition with Bookshare* – Cherie Miller

Employment

- ❖ *Life Changes: What Happens to Your Benefits?* – Corinna Stiles
- ❖ *Transition from School to Work: What Happens Next?* – Gabriela Serna and Therese Varela
- ❖ *Today's Youth, Tomorrow's Workforce* – Detra Bannister
- ❖ *Vocational Rehabilitation: From School to Work* – Sheila Hadden
- ❖ *Social Scripts and Stories* – Sheila Hadden
- ❖ *Job Placement Accommodations for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing* – Timothy Chevalier, Steven Birkby
- ❖ *Getting Hired and Moving Ahead in a Job When Working with a Disability* – ADA Task Force



Windy Melgaard presents
"Interview Tips"

Community Living

- ❖ *D.O.T.S.: Don't Own The Sext* – Sarah Zohner, Sarah McAllister, Edith Resendiz
- ❖ *Sexuality and Sexual Boundary Setting* – Christina Low
- ❖ *A Parent Toolbox of Hands-on Activities and Strategies for Building Life Skills* – Parents and the Idaho Falls Community Transition Team
- ❖ *Connecting the Dots* – Alisha Passey and Becky Leatham
- ❖ *The Journey to Adulthood – What Parents Need to Know (Sexuality)* – Lorisa Wellock and Angela Lindig
- ❖ *Project Unify* – Shanna Endow
- ❖ *Social Networking & Safety – What You Need to Know* – Michelle Ziel

Post Secondary Education

- ❖ *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly – Stories from University Land* – Todd DeVries and Panel
- ❖ *Students: Going to College* – Brenda Kotewa
- ❖ *Transitioning from High School* – Timothy Chevalier, Ann Flannery, Steven Birkby
- ❖ *Parents, Your Children are Going to College* – Brenda Kotewa
- ❖ *3,2,1, Go* – Todd DeVries and Lori Warren
- ❖ *Successful Transition from High School to College* – Rhonda Wallen

Exhibitors/Vendors

Over 30 exhibitors and vendors were on hand to share information with attendees including, ACCESS Idaho; ADA Task Force; Bookshare/Benetech; C.K. Quade Law, PLLC; Children’s Special Health Program; Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Disability Rights Idaho; Eastern Idaho Technical College; EnableMart; Freedom Scientific Learning Systems Group; Health & Welfare, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services; Humanware; Idaho Assistive Technology Project; UI Center on Disabilities and Human Development; Idaho Center for Assistive Technology; Idaho Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired; Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities; Idaho Department of Labor; Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind; Idaho Self-Advocacy Leadership Network; Idaho Families of Adults with DisAbilities; Idaho Parents Unlimited; Idaho Relay; Idaho State University; State Department of Education – Special Education Division; Living Independently for Everyone – LIFE, Inc.; Idaho Youth Leadership Forum; PEPNet; Sawtooth Rehab; and Special Olympics Idaho.



Evening Social



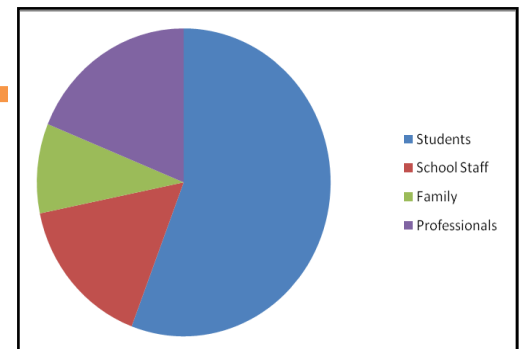
Sheila Hadden provided irresistible ice breaking activities as a transition from pizza to the evening dance. Within a half-hour of fun-filled activities, students had new friends and were ready to dance to live country music provided by the **Country Boys, Chase Doty and Randy Doty**.

New friendships are formed at the Monday night social

Attendees

The Tools for Life organizers are restricted by available space in southeast Idaho. Regardless of space, a record number of students attended this year’s Tools for Life conference. A breakdown of attendees is as follows:

- ✓ 237 Students
- ✓ 68 Educators
- ✓ 40 Family Members
- ✓ 80 Professionals
- ❖ Total 425



Graph showing ratio of attendees by type

Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction remains stable and high. Of the 107 respondents, 61% rated themselves as **highly satisfied** with the event, 29% were **satisfied**, and 8% were **somewhat satisfied**.

"Tools for Life was a blast. I learned a lot and I had a lot of fun."
Student

"This conference has taught me about transition, financial, and job opportunities."
Student

"The speakers are awesome; they will answer your questions and be happy to try and help you understand what you can do."
Student

"Tools is top notch! And this was one of the best Tools ever! I leave here re-energized, re-inspired, and thankful."

Special Educator

"We love the high quality of workshops and amazing keynote speakers you provide. You accommodate and educate so well. Your hard work and joyful faces bring self advocacy and joy."

Professional

"Very inspiring for my students. An eye opening bunch of information for them to process."

Special Educator

"Highly enlightening; was very interesting; I didn't know about all the info out there."

Parent

"Thanks to all the agencies for being here!!! It was wonderful to receive so much information in one place."

Parent

Constructive praise and criticism are always considered and welcome. Keynote speakers continue to reap the highest praise and seem well worth the expense. The chance to socialize and meet new people at the evening social continues to be a favorite. Having so many resources in one setting is important to professionals and parents alike. On the other hand, the Shilo Inn, our largest hotel meeting space in southeast Idaho, is less space than optimum. Suggestions also reflected the recession and economy. More sessions on obtaining employment and living independently are needed.

Financial, Moral, and Physical Support

It continues to take a lot of financial, organizational, and physical help to put on the Tools for Life conference. The cost of the Tools for Life 2011 conference was over \$64,000.00. The Idaho Assistive Technology Project staff provides the year-to-year planning, fundraising, and organization for the Tools



The group gathers waiting to be seated for lunch

for Life conference. This year, the Idaho Falls Community Transition Team raised almost \$6,000.00 for this event and provided much of the planning and conference support. Sponsors include:

- State Department of Education
- Idaho Assistive Technology Project
- Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Mountain West Bank
- Key Bank
- Idaho National Laboratory
- Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center
- Cherry Glass and Aluminum
- The Bank of Commerce
- The Idaho Falls Civitan Group
- C.K. Quade Law, PLLC



Tools staff and IATP members (top left to right): Irene Lunsford, Wendy Kizer, Michelle Doty, Irene Jones, Nora Jehn, and Sue House. (Bottom left to right): Roberto Rivera and Brenda Kotewa

Tools for Life 2012

Tools for Life 2012 will be held at the Wallace Jr. /Sr. High School (pending conference planning group tour of area accommodations) on March 5-6, 2012. Fundraising for the Tools for Life conference is a year-long effort. With budget cuts and the recession, the Tools for Life: Secondary Transition and Technology Fair is as important as ever for our students, families, educators, and professionals!