



American Association
on Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities

Dear AAIDD members:

As the year winds down, I wanted to take a moment to update you on activities at AAIDD since I assumed the presidency. I had intended to write sooner, but quite honestly, it's been fast-paced and hectic six months and I'm only now catching my breath! I want to reiterate the sentiments of past AAIDD presidents by saying that it is an honor and privilege to serve as AAIDD president, and even more so during this critical period in the association's history.

Let me begin my comments with reflections on an event that occurred just before my term began; the 134th AAIDD Annual Meeting, *Imagining the Future, Celebrating the Past*, held in Providence, Rhode Island June 8 to 11, 2010. If you were not able to join us, you were missed! I mentioned that this is a critical time in the history of the association, and the annual meeting reflected that: we said bon voyage to our long-serving executive director, Doreen Croser; welcomed our new executive director, Dr. Margaret Nygren; commemorated the contributions of Eunice Kennedy Shriver and Senator Edward Kennedy to our field; thanked Past-President Dr. Joanna Pierson for her service to AAIDD for more than a decade; and introduced the 11th Edition of AAIDD's flagship text, *Terminology and Classification Manual on Intellectual Disability*. We are grateful to the RI AAIDD chapter, AAIDD Region X, local arrangements committee and chairs, planning committee, and national staff for their efforts. What I took away from that busy week was a new sense of vibrancy, promise, and possibility for AAIDD.

We hope you will join us June 6 to 9, 2011 in St. Paul, Minnesota for the 135th Annual Meeting. President-elect Sharon Gomez and a dedicated planning committee and local arrangements committee are working hard to ensure that your time is well spent during that week. In fact, the call for proposals, which closed December 15, brought in a record number of responses, so there is every reason to believe that the program will live up to the high expectations held for AAIDD meetings.

As you might presume, the transition from a long-standing executive to a new executive requires a lot of work and the learning curve, for the new executive director and the president alike, is steep! I can say with complete confidence that Dr. Nygren has met and exceeded every expectation we had for a new executive director. That is reflected in several ways. First, this is an important time in the history of the association for reasons beyond just the changing of the guard; these are difficult economic times for most volunteer member organizations. While AAIDD has not been immune from the challenges introduced by the economic conditions, we are fortunate to be on solid footing with regard to the association's financial well-being and long-term stability. The reasons for this are myriad: Dr. Nygren and the national staff have worked hard to ensure that the association's finances are used judiciously and to streamline office operations; the board of directors has maintained oversight and worked closely with Dr. Nygren and key national staff to ensure that the association can meet its mission and support its members within its budget—unlike many associations, we ended this year under budget; the previous board, under the leadership of Dr. Pierson, did an excellent job of working through the association's mission, strategic plan, and business model before hiring Dr. Nygren, providing a clear

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vision and direction for our new executive; and, finally, the AAIDD's most visible products, the *Supports Intensity Scale* and the *T&C Manual*, continue not only to provide tools to lead the field, but also to provide revenue to support the association's work.

In fact, instead of remaining stagnant and raising dues, AAIDD has done just the opposite. We've introduced a new membership dues structure (you can see it online at http://aaid.org/content_120.cfm if you missed my letter to the membership) that provides greater flexibility for members to select the level and type of membership package they want and, in many cases, provides the same or comparable benefits at a lower cost than did the previous membership options. How many associations do you know of in this day and age that are lowering dues? Of course, we're hoping that a byproduct of this is that more members will chose to join AAIDD, and we're counting on you to get the word out. In addition, the association made a significant investment in our commitment to members by purchasing a new membership software program, called *MemberSuite*. All you really need to know about it is that it provides greater functionality and flexibility to enable our national office staff to meet the needs of and communicate with members.

Those achievements alone are significant for a six month period, but there are yet more. The association has undertaken a search, under the leadership of Dr. Charlie Lakin, for the next editor of *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. As with Doreen Croser's departure, we find ourselves with insufficient words to express our gratitude to the outgoing editor, Dr. Steven Taylor, who, over his tenure as editor, built *IDD* into the well regarded, highly ranked journal that it is today! We will take the time to honor and thank Steve for his significant contributions to the association and the field when we meet in St. Paul in June; yet another reason that you need to be there! Looking ahead, we're holding a Mid-Winter Leadership Meeting for the first time in several years. That meeting, open to the leaders of the association's Assembly of Geographical Regions and Conference of Professional Interests, will be held in Orlando, Florida in early February. In addition to the traditional leadership and board meetings, we're providing a daylong session for the association's leaders titled "Strategies for Leaders in Tight Economic Times."

And, there's more... but I'm guessing I've gone on too long for one communication, so will save some of that (activities of the Presidential Task Forces, collaborations with other national and international associations, a new adaptive behavior measure, and much more) for my next letter, and will try to be more punctual with that!

Finally, don't forget that the nominations for the association's awards and for Fellow status are open until December 31 (http://aaid.org/content_448.cfm?navID=133). Please, take a moment to nominate a deserving colleague for one of these awards.

Thank you for all you do for AAIDD and from all of us on the board of directors and the National Office Staff, happy holidays and best wishes for the new year.



Michael L. Wehmeyer
AAIDD President