



July 8, 2013

Dear AAIDD Colleagues and Friends,

It is my sincere pleasure to begin my term as the Association's 137th President. I'm very grateful to all of you who have offered me encouragement and good wishes. The Association is poised to have a grand year, and it is privilege to be a part of it.

I don't believe I could have picked a better time to serve as President of AAIDD. The financial health of the Association is excellent, the Executive Director (Maggie Nygren) is a highly accomplished administrator who oversees a very competent and efficient staff, and my fellow Board members are a thoughtful and positive group. Most importantly, today's AAIDD members are a dynamic group of professionals whose share a passion for work that enhances the quality of life of people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families. AAIDD contributes to this greater cause by focusing its efforts on promoting and disseminating valid information relevant to people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities that is based on scientific research, encouraging best practices and innovation in the field, and influencing public policy through strategic partnerships with other organizations.

The conference in Pittsburgh in June was a huge success by anyone's definition. The attendance exceeded expectations, and the feedback has been outstanding in regard to the quality of the plenary, concurrent, and poster sessions. Perhaps most importantly, several members reported that they sensed a particularly strong spirit of community permeating the conference. I definitely felt this vibrancy as well, and I sincerely appreciate the efforts of everyone who contributed to the event. Next year's conference in Orlando promises to be even better, so mark your calendar now (June 23-26, 2014).

The first issue of the Association's newest journal, *Inclusion*, came out in June. But, don't look for it in your mailbox. This is an e-journal and it can only be accessed through the Association's website (<http://aaiddjournals.org/toc/incl/1/1>). *Inclusion* is a peer-reviewed journal that features articles intended to be directly relevant to practicing professionals working with children and adults with ID/DD. It is an integral part of the AAIDD's effort to bridge the gap between research and practice. I strongly encourage members to read the current issue, and to consider submitting a manuscript for publication in a future issue.

In the coming months the Association will be releasing six new books that address several of the most critical and relevant topics in the intellectual and related developmental disabilities field. Specifically, look for the release of new titles from AAIDD focusing on

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clinical judgment, employment, death penalty issues, neurobehavioral-based interventions with youth with Autism, reflections on Willowbrook and its historical significance, and implementing national policy at the local level.

Also noteworthy is the recent launch of AAIDD's new website. Although it is still under construction, it is getting closer to "full bloom" every day. The new website makes accessing member benefits quite easy. For example, after logging in members can access their journal articles, online communities of Divisions and SIGs, and discounts to bookstore purchases and online courses.

The status and influence of AAIDD will always be partially tied to the number of members it can claim. Therefore, it is important for AAIDD's membership numbers continue to grow in the coming year. Be sure to renew your membership and encourage your colleagues who are not members to join (dues start at only \$75).

Each AAIDD member has contributions to make. There are opportunities for everyone to become active, and there is no reason for someone to sit on sidelines that would like to become more engaged in the Association. I am interested in hearing from members regarding any ideas to strengthen the Association. Therefore, please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to become more involved or have ideas you would like to share. The best way to reach me is through e-mail, and my address is jrthomp@ilstu.edu.

Thank you for your interest and involvement in AAIDD.

My very best regards,


Jim

James R. Thompson, PhD, FAAIDD
President, AAIDD Board of Directors

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