



2021 College and Career Planning & Transition Conference
for Individuals who are Neurodiverse

PRESENTERS AND BIOGRAPHIES

Michael Aronsson, BA Marcia Brissett-Bailey, BSc (Hons), QCG (PgDip), MA Janet Barakat, MEd, MEd Rebecca Beam Niki Elliott, PhD Gilda Evans Daniel Gillman, BS, MS (student) Carrie Hall, BA Aidan Harris, BS Erin Harris, BA, MA Cole Hendricks, BA Tom Iland, CPA Tiffany Jameson, MBA, PHR, PhD (candidate)	Dina Jeorge Heather Kahler, BA Adam Lalor, PhD Bonnie Landau, PPS, APCC Jessica N. Larsen, MA Julie Loppacher, MEd John Marble James Matthias Mike McCann, BA, MDiv, MSS Bridget McElroy, MSW, LSW Bibi Pirayesh, EdD Michelle Resnick, EdM, MA Jeff Snyder Kevin Tyrrell, BARCH, MSUAD Jim Varga, MD, FAAP
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Michael Aronsson, BA | Inclusion Consultant, grit & flow

Mike started off working in marketing and assisting with neuroscience research on empathy and emotional regulation on the side. After working on electoral and issue-based campaigns for the past four years, he recently found his home as an inclusion consultant at Grit and Flow where he will work to create a more equitable and inclusive workspace. Mike embraces his ADHD and dyslexia as assets for creative problem solving and is passionate about helping organizations unleash the untapped potential of neurodiversity. He enjoys learning, working out, hiking, and video games.

Janet Barakat | MEd Special Education, MEd Secondary Transition, Transition Specialist | West San Gabriel Valley Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Instructional Specialist

Janet Barakat is committed to educating students, colleagues, families, and the community through establishing strong connections. She holds a Master's Degree in Special Education, Secondary Transition from the University of Kansas (2018), a Master's Degree in Special Education from Azusa Pacific University (2007), and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Marketing from California State University, Fullerton (1980). She worked for Hallmark Cards as a Sales Representative before she became an educator in 2007. She taught 6th-8th grade special education mathematics, science, and reading until 2014. She held the position of Special Education Department Chair from 2009-2014. In 2014 she became a Transition Specialist for Pomona Unified School District and developed a secondary transition program for students with disabilities in grades six through twelve. She has served as a professional development speaker training teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals on secondary transition, writing standards-based Individual Education Plans, Non-violent Crisis Intervention Prevention, and Behavior Intervention Plans. She has also taken an active role in the community, developing interagency partnerships. In July of 2019, she took a position as a Program Specialist for the West San Gabriel Valley Special Education Local Plan Area. In this role, she works with 14 school districts to provide policy, guidance, and training to their district staff. Janet firmly believes that success in education is about building relationships.

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Marcia Brissett-Bailey, BSc (Hons), QCG (PgDip), MA | Neurodiversity narrative changer | Forbes feature | Author | Nominated for the Stereotype Buster at the 2021 Neurodiversity Awards | Co-founder BDA Cultural Perspective Committee | WFDA trustee | Advisory Board Member of Centre for Neurodiversity at Work

Marcia Brissett-Bailey, as featured in Forbes, is a narrative changer, author, and speaker provoking the representation of Dyslexia. Nominated for the Stereotype Buster of the year category at the 2021 Celebrating Neurodiversity Awards! She is a Special Educational Needs case officer, and inspirational speaker and sees neurodiversity as a state of nature, and believes in the gift from her Dyslexia, sees picture in words and words in picture which included creating her ideas.

She is also an advocate and champion of Dyslexia and neurodiversity. A guest editor of British Dyslexia Association Contact magazine October 2021, Board Adviser Member of the Centre for Neurodiversity Research at work, judge panelist member at the 2021 Celebrating Neurodiversity Awards!

A co-founder of the BDA Cultural Perspective Committee, a trustee at the Waltham Forest Dyslexia Association, which she hopes will enable others with a Dis-Ability to find their voices, especially from a cultural perspective. Marcia has achieved a BSc in information science, postgraduate in career guidance, a certificate in person-centered counseling skills, a diploma in specialist teaching, and MA in special educational needs. She has worked in the education community sector for the last 30 years and has provided information, advice, and guidance in the primary school setting, higher and post 16 education as well as being a Careers SEND Lead.

Marcia is a blooming author with a passion for creative writing and performing arts. She is also already featured in two books, 'Dyslexia from a Cultural Perspective', and 'The Bigger Picture Book of Amazing Dyslexics and the Jobs They Do'. As a qualified careers adviser, she has a particular focus on personal development, helping others to achieve their full potential and aspirations by setting personal goals.

Rebecca Beam | CEO, Zavikon

Rebecca Beam is the Founder and CEO of Zavikon. Prior to launching Zavikon, she was a founding advisory team member launching MindSpark, Inc. whose mission was to train and employ adults on the autism spectrum in technology careers. After MindSpark's acquisition by auticon, Rebecca became President of the US operations leading the US expansion and driving growth.

As a veteran of the tech sector, Rebecca's career has included senior leadership roles sourcing and developing human capital with high-demand skillsets for the area's leading tech firms, including Fortune 100 and 500 brands. Rebecca believes there is a job out there for everyone to apply their talents and skills in a meaningful way and she is dedicated to being a bridge to an inclusive working world. She is passionate about opening doors for all individuals with disabilities or those who are neurodivergent to achieve career success. In 2019, Rebecca won the prestigious Milestones Visionary Employer Award.



Gilda Evans | Autism Resource Podcast Creator, Producer, and Host

Gilda Evans is a podcast host and writer with a strong background in media and entertainment. She has spent over 20 years researching and seeking answers for how to get her son with special needs the things he requires for his education, health, and life in general. She became her son's self-taught advocate and is the creator of the Autism Resource Podcast. Designed for the special needs community and those who support it, the podcast deals with a myriad of topics; from education to government benefits to housing and almost everything in-between. One of the biggest problems this community faces as a group is not only a lack of certain resources but also the lack of a singular place to go to discover how to access and use the resources that are out there. Her podcast offers one solution to that dilemma, by providing a one-stop knowledge base for autism and much more. Find her at www.autismresourcepodcast.com and on many of your favorite platforms.

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Niki Elliott, PhD | Director, Center for Neurodiversity, Learning and Wellness University of La Verne

Niki Elliott, PhD is a clinical professor of education at the University of La Verne's La Fetra College of Education. She currently serves as Director of the Center for Neurodiversity, Learning, and Wellness, and is an author, speaker, and trainer in the fields of neurodiversity, mindfulness, holistic education, and healing-centered engagement. An experienced educator, Dr. Niki has taught students of all ages, from elementary school through university level over the past 25 years. She presently teaches educational neurobiology, neurodiversity, and mindfulness for graduate students earning a master's degree in Special Education. She is a staunch advocate for students with special needs and learning differences.

Dr. Niki is the founder of the Mindful Leaders Project, a program designed to help teachers, school leaders, parents, and other education professionals increase their own personal well-being and social-emotional regulation skills to support children's academic success. The Mindful Leaders Project is currently in wide-scale implementation in San Bernardino City Unified School District. These groundbreaking programs focus on helping leaders access higher states of compassion, empathy, and innovative problem-solving using research-based mindfulness and breathwork techniques.

Dr. Niki earned a bachelor's degree at UC Berkeley, a master's degree and teaching credential at Teachers College, Columbia University, and a PhD in Education from UCLA. In addition, she has studied holistic wellness techniques for twenty years and has been certified to teach yoga, clinical breath work, and other mindfulness practices.

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Daniel Gillman, BS, MS (student)

Daniel is a current graduate student at the Georgia Institute of Technology and is a candidate for the Master of Science Degree in Analytics. His course of study mostly involves computing, business, statistics, or some combination. His goal is to work in sports analytics and help teams win both on and off the field.

Carrie Hall, BA | Founder, Autistic Women's Alliance

Carrie Hall was born and raised in Southern California, and currently lives in the San Francisco Bay area with her partner of 20+ years, and their cat, Timmy. She's a Senior User Assistance Developer at SAP SuccessFactors, a Human Experience Management (HXM) platform, and is the Founder/CEO of Autistic Women's Alliance, an autistic run 501(c3) non-profit organization. She's had 10+ years of experience within the Information Technology and Healthcare industries before coming to SAP SuccessFactors as an individual contributor and as a project lead. In addition to writing UI text, and product documentation, she leads an inclusive design project that helps identify gaps within the product design process by partnering with fellow SAP change-makers within SAP that belong in underrepresented groups that include age, gender, ethnicity, and disabilities. She has a wide range of interests from technical writing, to project management, design thinking, and soon, UX research to build and transform culture.

<https://www.autisticwomensalliance.com/>

Aidan Harris, BS | Design Technologist/Software Engineer for the Human-Centered Design Division of a Fortune 50 Manufacturing Company

Inventiveness and innovation have always been a driving force for me. Ever since I was a young child, making and designing have been important parts of my life. My first experiences with creating things were, as it was with most children, through drawing. Since the age of four, I have wanted to be a designer. When other kids were drawing monsters and cartoons, I was conceiving, drawing, and constructing mechanical apparatuses, world-building, and giving life to inventions derived from my wildest imaginings. When I wasn't drawing and designing, I was reading about design. In an article entitled "Space Invaders! Preparing Design for the Internet of Things and Buildings," Erin Rae Hoffer of Autodesk writes, "In the future of Internet-enabled space, the designer must incorporate both sets of skills—be both architect and interaction designer—to create meaningful places that connect people through intelligent things. This mix of methods and sensibilities can be termed "hybrid design practice." In my mind, all these creative pursuits can be seamlessly joined together by one common thread: programming.



(Aidan Harris-Tyrrell, cont.)

What I have discovered about myself is that, for me, the process of creating occurs at the intersection of my imagination, my eye for detail, my innate drive to understand how things work, and my knack for thinking outside the box. I experience the world with a sense of wonderment and excitement about what isn't but what can be. Ultimately, I realize that I am driven to create, because it allows me to summon the very best parts of who I am, to solve a problem, or to understand how someone may experience the world. I have completed a Bachelor of Science (2020) degree in Arts, Technology, and the Business of Innovation at the University of Southern California's Iovine and Young Academy. I am currently employed as a Design Technologist/Software Engineer for the Human-Centered Design Division of a Fortune 50 Manufacturing Company.

Erin Harris, BA, MA | Educational Coach, Regional Non-Profit Serving Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

My collective experiences have instilled in me a worldview and the consciousness and commitment to advance social justice, intercultural understanding, and environmental responsibility. In completing undergraduate studies (Bachelor of Arts) in Environmental Analysis, with an emphasis in Sustainability and the Built Environment, and a Master's degree (Claremont Graduate University) in Community-Engaged Education and Social Change, I believe there is tremendous potential to educate and inspire a broad audience on the increasing social and environmental challenges that affect us all. Narratives are powerful vehicles, and I want to tell stories of the powerless who disproportionately suffer the consequences of failed policies.

If you had told me two or three years ago that I would pursue and earn a Master's Degree in education, I likely wouldn't have believed you. While I have always flirted with pursuing education as a field of study, in some form or another over the course of my academic career, I've always fallen back on the conclusion that teaching in a classroom - whether K-12 or as a professor wasn't something I was interested in and that mindset held me back. This narrow-minded view of what being an educator means is ironic given that it is nontraditional educators and education settings that have shaped me into the person I am today. I realize that I don't have to sit in front of a classroom of students to teach others and help to broaden the minds of others and myself. I chose the Community-Engaged Education & Social Change track of the Master of Education Program because I feel that the interdisciplinary potential in this track is exponential. I believe that both my undergraduate and my graduate degree work will provide an excellent foundation for me to pursue my interest in being a social impact entrepreneur.



KD Harris, MA, EdD (student)

I am a social impact entrepreneur who serves as the Executive Director of the non-profit Let's Talk LD, which I co-founded with my children and husband. Our non-profit's mission is to address critically important social justice and equity of educational opportunity issues faced by those in the neurodiverse community. We do this by providing services and developing programs focused on student advocacy, parent and caregiver education, and professional learning opportunities for educators and practitioners designed to improve learning outcomes, post-secondary attainment (education and employment), and civic engagement for learners who are neurodiverse. As an educational leader, my practice has been shaped by community and youth organizing efforts that advance educational and social justice for marginalized youth.

My husband and I just celebrated our 37th anniversary and are the proud parents of two extraordinary children (son, 22, and daughter, 24). My husband is an architect whose practice focuses on sustainability. His work includes designing, re-designing, and renovating spaces for clients, including LAUSD and LACCD. Our daughter Erin is an Educational Coach who supports Adults with Developmental Disabilities in reaching their goal of college and/or career attainment. She graduated from Pitzer College with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Analysis: Sustainability and the Built Environment, and a Master's degree from Claremont Graduate University in Community-Engaged Education and Social Change. She is an avid environmentalist, specifically interested in sustainable building practices and Universal Design for Learning. My son is an Interaction Designer/Software Engineer who recently graduated from the University of Southern California's Iovine and Young Academy with a Bachelor's degree in Arts, Technology, and the Business of Innovation. He is passionate about advancing the Maker Movement and currently works as one of the Founders and Co-Owners of Superluminal Maker Studio. His full-time gig is serving as a Design Technologist/Software Engineer in Silicon Valley for a Human-Centered Design Division of a Fortune 50 Manufacturing Company. My husband, daughter, and son are individuals who are neurodiverse.

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Cole Hendricks, BA | Eye to Eye - Young Adult Impact Manager

My name is Cole Hendricks and I have ADHD! I have been working alongside young leaders with Learning Differences for almost 6 years at Eye to Eye, starting as a Mentor in college, at Purdue University, and now as a Young Adult Impact Manager on national staff. I'm drawn to this work because I strongly believe in the power of community, shared experience, and storytelling. Outside of work I love to cook, go on hikes, watch Star Wars, and dance like no one's watching!

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Thomas Iland, CPA, CHPC, AS | Owner, Come To Life Coaching

THOMAS ILAND (pronounced like “island”) was diagnosed with autism at 13 years old. Since accepting his diagnosis, Thomas has been recognized as an award-winning author and thought leader. He left his career as a certified public accountant in 2015 to become a keynote speaker, certified human potential coach, and diversity, equity & inclusion consultant.

He is now the owner of Come To Life Coaching, which is based on the title of his bestselling book, “Come to Life! Your Guide to Self-Discovery.” His mission is to empower individuals on and off the autism spectrum to live the life of their choice.

Thomas has spoken at the United Nations, gave a TEDx talk titled, “How To Come To Life,” and is the only Toastmasters International Accredited Speaker with autism in the world. He currently serves on the boards of the Uniquely Abled Academy, The Art of Autism, and the Santa Clarita Valley Mayor's Committee for Employment of Individuals with Disabilities.

Thomas currently lives in Santa Clarita, California, with his dog, Bridget, and recently received Junior Chamber International's prestigious “Ten Outstanding Young Americans” (TOYA) Award and finished his first half-Ironman triathlon!

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Tiffany Jameson, MBA, PHR, PhD (candidate) | Managing Partner, grit & flow

Tiffany Jameson holds degrees in business administration and computer information systems, a master's in business administration with an emphasis in finance, accounting, and e-business strategy. Currently writing her dissertation on autism employment, Tiffany will soon have her doctorate in organizational psychology.

Tiffany is a certified professional in Human Resources (PHR) and holds a Cornell Certified Diversity & Inclusion. Tiffany is a LinkedIn Learning Instructor, presently creating the modules for Human Resource practitioners on Neurodiversity. Tiffany is also the Neurodiversity Faculty lead at Executive Institute on Inclusion. Tiffany has spoken internationally on the topic of Neurodiversity in the workplace.



Dina George | Head of Investor Relations and Executive Assistant to Principal/Managing Director at a Privately-Held Diversified Investment Firm

Dina is a capable, hardworking financial services professional offering fresh insights, creative vision, and solid experience in investment management, broker/dealer operations, and retail industries. She has a strong background in all core business functions – finance, marketing, and operations. Dina possesses 20+ years experience in both buy- and sell-side financial services; extensive expertise in shareholder management, regulatory matters, equity compensation plan; administration, and financial operations; broad organizational experience with strong analytical and problem-solving skills. Dina is also results-focused and organized, able to systematize complex work environments, and is an empathetic team leader and mentor. Dina is a devoted mom of a young adult son who is neurodiverse.

Heather Kahler, BA | Animation Technical Director and Color Designer for a major media company

I am the proud mom of two daughters, ages 20, and a son, age 15. I am also an Animation Technical Director and Color Designer for a major media company. My hometown is Los Angeles, CA. So why am I here... My daughter Sarah was diagnosed with ADHD in her junior year of high school. I accepted the invitation to present at this conference because I believe that some parents may benefit from our family's story about our experience navigating the unexpected journey from my daughter's diagnosis to our quest to find resources and solutions to my daughter's experiences applying and transitioning to college - all in a very short period. Equally important, I want to share about the journey leading up to her diagnosis and the surprising things we learned along the way. Sarah is currently a Junior at California State University-Chico - her first choice. She is on the Dean's List and is currently studying Psychology. I want to assure you that the road ahead is paved with many possibilities for your neurodiverse child. It is my hope to be a source of encouragement to you. I truly hope that Sarah's story inspires you to work in service to your neurodiverse child(ren), always fueled by the belief that they will make positive strides and transition into adulthood, and live the lives they were intended to live.

Adam Lalor, PhD | Director, Landmark College Institute for Research and Training

Adam Lalor, Ph.D. is the Director of the Landmark College Institute for Research and Training and Co-Director of the Landmark College Center for Neurodiversity. With more than 15 years of experience in higher education administration, his research focuses on the transition of students with disabilities to and within higher education and the preparation of faculty and administrators to serve students with disabilities. Recent publications have appeared in the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability and the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education. He teaches in Landmark College's online Learning Differences and Neurodiversity certificate program and is co-author of From Disability to Diversity: College Success for Students with Learning Disabilities, ADHD, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Dr. Lalor received his doctoral degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education.

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Bonnie Landau, PPS, APCC | Crisis Care Specialist & Disability Advocate

Bonnie Landau is a Crisis Care Specialist in Santa Barbara Unified School District. Previously, she was the Transition & Retention Counselor for Disability Accommodations & Support Services (DASS) at CSU Channel Islands. Originally from Los Angeles County, Bonnie earned her Master's in Educational Counseling from the University of La Verne, a Masters in Spiritual Psychology from the University of Santa Monica, as well as a Bachelor of Architecture from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. She is currently enrolled in the clinical psychology doctorate program at California Institute for Human Science.

Bonnie has worked in both the K-12 and higher education school environments, serving as a therapist, counselor, and special education advocate. Additionally, Bonnie has authored two books, "Special Ed Mom Survival Guide" and "Same Path, Different Journey: Stories of Auditory Processing Disorder". She is currently co-authoring a third book entitled, "Special Ed Student Survival Guide for Transitioning to College: Essential Skills & Tips for Bridging the Gap". Before switching careers, Bonnie spent 25 years as a graphic/web designer. In her free time, Bonnie loves to garden, take nature walks, and hang out with her teenage boys.

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Jessica Nombrano Larsen, MA, MLIS (student) | Program Manager, Empowering Autistic Scholars Program, California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo

Jessica Nombrano Larsen (she/her/hers) is a proud, first-generation, autistic Latina. She is Program Manager of the Empowering Autistic Scholars Program at California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo and is also an MLIS student at San Jose State University. She is passionate about helping students from underserved communities obtain social justice and educational equity. Her research is focused on the development of more effective academic and socio-emotional supports and resources for autistic college students, and she would love to continue this work as an academic librarian/research professor once she obtains her degree.

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schoolblogs.sjsu.edu/info/info... (blog) |
https://laes.calpoly.edu/projects#Empowering_Autistic_Scholars_Program_2021- (company)

Julie Loppacher, MEd | University of Southern California Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity

Julie Loppacher brings nearly two decades of experience to the field of academic support in higher education. Throughout her career, Julie has worked tirelessly to ensure that structures were in place to support students with disabilities in meeting their goals. Julie currently serves as the Director of the Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity at the University of Southern California.



John Marble, Neurodiversity and Autism Employment Expert, Public Speaker, Founder at Pivot Neurodiversity

John Marble is the founder of Pivot. A seasoned strategist and communicator on workforce policy, innovation, and neurodiversity, his work has appeared in a broad spectrum of media including The New York Times, the BBC, and Rolling Stone.

He has served as an aide to two Presidents, along with advising other policymakers such as Vice President Al Gore, and Secretaries Hillary Clinton and John Kerry. In 2009, he became President Obama's first openly autistic staff member when he was appointed by the White House to the United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM). There, his portfolio included workforce development, veterans hiring, and innovation.

As a presidential appointee at OPM, Marble was part of a coordinating team tasked by the President to attract a new generation of Americans to public service and co-established a government innovation program that has saved the American taxpayer over \$2.5 Billion to date. In 2016, he was named by the Hillary for America campaign as Deputy Director for Principal Engagement for Florida. In that role, Marble managed trips to the state of Florida by Secretary Clinton, Vice President Biden, and Presidents Clinton and Obama - managing the logistics and staff of campaign events and coordinating security between the U.S. Secret Service and local law enforcement.

Having spent nearly eight years leading efforts to incorporate the best practices of Silicon Valley into the Federal Government, John Marble moved to the Bay Area in early 2017. His motivation stemmed from his frequent visits to Silicon Valley on behalf of the Obama Administration. While collaborating with the technology sector on projects of innovation, he began to map how the tech sector's significant diversity gaps and cultural parameters were creating an artificial drag on sector valuation and the national economy. Using a small amount of savings, he had set aside during government service, Marble moved to Silicon Valley and took a minimum wage job in a warehouse in order to provide himself the budget and time needed to map out patterns of additional pressure points preventing Silicon Valley from addressing its diversity gaps.

In 2017, he became a founding advisor to the Neurodiversity Pathways program of Goodwill of Silicon Valley - a bridge program to assist unemployed autistic adults as they transition to roles in the technology sector and beyond. Utilizing self-advocacy, empowerment, and the latest scientific understanding, the program's pilot project has placed 21 chronically unemployed autistic individuals into integrated work where they now generate \$1.46 Million in annual salary and benefits. As an advisor to Neurodiversity Pathways, Marble helps to shape the program's impact in addition to coaching graduates and spending time in the classroom.

John Marble additionally serves as a Bay Area Regional Advisory Committee Member for the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities and as a Board Member of Venture Bound, an organization working with public school systems to transition young people with cognitive disabilities to work. He is also a founding team member of Brightest Young Things, a creative consultancy, event production



(John Marble, cont.)

company, and online magazine. In that role, he is serving in his 10th year as the volunteer Co-Producer of Capital Pride and Brightest Young Thing's opening pride celebration in Washington, DC. In 2018, he co-founded Bay Area Queer Autistics, a connecting point for queer neurodiverse individuals in the San Francisco Bay Area.

A global traveler, his curiosity has taken him around the world to study conflict resolution and systems of impact. In that aspect, he's traveled with nomadic communities in Central Asia, joined anti-poaching patrols in the Eastern Congo, traced the history of canine domestication with scientists in Siberia, mushed dog sled teams with indigenous communities in the Arctic, and even once found himself stranded for three days on a deserted island.

John Marble remains passionate about increasing overall diversity in tech and is excited to use his work with Pivot to partner with advocates helping the technology sector realize its full potential. He is a frequent writer and speaker on autistic issues. John lives in San Francisco.

He is autistic.

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James Matthias, BS | Information Security Analyst in the Cyber Crime Solutions Team Global Information Security at a Global Banking Institution

Biography currently unavailable

Mike McCann, BA, MDiv, MSS | Adjunct Professor and Education Mentor

Biography currently unavailable

Bridget McElroy, MSW, LSW | Employment & Training Specialist at Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Bridget is a Licensed Social Worker who has focused her career on supporting autistic adults in the educational and employment sectors. In her current role, Bridget consults with companies interested in starting neurodiversity hiring initiatives and supports autistic employees as they transition to the workforce.

Previously, Bridget provided psychotherapy to children and adults in educational and non-profit settings. She also worked in college autism support programs supporting autistic students and collaborating with campus partners. Bridget currently serves as an adjunct faculty member and often speaks at conferences on the topic of autism, education, and employment.

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Bibinaz Pirayesh, EdD | One Of One Kids

Dr. Bibi Pirayesh is Director of One of One Kids, and Founder of The Difference Is Not Deficit Project, a community initiative for decolonizing the traditional model of special education to create a new vision for neurodiverse children through the power of their own lived experiences. She works with children grades 1-12 and is a sought-after speaker and workshop facilitator for educators and other professionals hoping to learn about learning disability as a social justice issue. She has developed several courses and professional development on this topic and is also adjunct faculty at Pepperdine University.

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Michelle Resnick, EdM, MA | Michelle Heinig Resnick, Director, Disability Accommodations & Support Services (DASS), CSU Channel Islands

Michelle serves as the Director of Disability Accommodations & Support Services (DASS) at the State University of California Channel Islands (CSUCI). She is the lead administrator of DASS, providing vision, planning, and implementation of a program for students with disabilities that creates equal access to the curriculum, activities, and physical campus in adherence to University, state, and federal regulations.

Before joining CSUCI, Michelle worked at Woodbury University, where she was charged with building the Office of Disabilities and Accessibility Services from the ground up, drafting new university policies and procedures to accommodate disabled students while concurrently attending to the ongoing, daily responsibilities of the department, such as developing individual accommodation plans.

Before relocating to CA from the NY metro area, Michelle spent 20 years as a learning specialist, program manager, and special education instructor. Michelle earned dual master's degrees, MA in Counseling Psychology and Master of Education, from Teacher's College-Columbia University, after first receiving her BA in Psychology from the State University of New York at Albany. She is currently pursuing her EdD at Fairleigh Dickenson University.

Michelle is an avid reader and runner. She enjoys spending time with her family, which includes her husband, two adult children, and two rescue dogs.

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Jeffrey Snyder | Autism/Neurodiversity Self-Advocate and Public Speaker

I was born on March 27, 1989, in Providence, RI, and have lived my entire life in Seekonk, MA. I was diagnosed with Autism in 1990 and ever since then, I have achieved multiple successes in my life in areas of education, long-term employment, independent living, and speaking/panel engagements. I am a public speaker who speaks on issues, including:

1. Public School Education
2. Employment Possibilities and Pitfalls
3. Independent Living Challenges/Opportunities
4. Find What you Love and Give it Your Passion

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Kevin Tyrrell, BARCH, MSUAD

Kevin is an architect, urban designer, and partner/owner with QDG Architecture, based in Los Angeles. His body of work reflects a passion for the design of projects that seek to be catalysts for positive social change, such as schools (pre-K through college), cultural facilities as well as affordable housing for non-profit organizations, with a particular focus on historically underserved communities.

Some notable projects include the headquarters for the California Department of Education as well as a Mathematics and Science Complex for Los Angeles Mission College, both of which are certified as LEED Platinum by the USGBC (United States Green Building Council). He received a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Southern California and a Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University.



Jim Varga, MD, FAAP

Jim Varga, M.D., F.A.A.P, is a board-certified physician specializing in the evaluation and treatment of children and teens with learning issues and developmental pediatrics. His primary interest and expertise are in the assessment of Attention Deficit Disorder. Over his three decades in practice, Dr. Varga has followed and treated over 2,000 individuals with ADD, some for as long as 15 years. In addition to his pediatric training, Dr. Varga completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Neuropsychiatric Institute (now the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA), where he trained with the leading child psychiatrist in the field, Dr. Deny Cantwell. Prior to his fellowship, he had the opportunity to spend time in Toronto with Marcel Kinsbourne and James Swanson, both well-known figures in the field of ADD management. He has an extensive career working closely with families, schools, and allied professionals, and has supervised medical trainees in the learning disorder clinics at UCLA and at Cedar Sinai Hospital. Due to his blended background as both a pediatrician and a mental health professional, Dr. Varga brings a unique and dynamic perspective to the field of ADD assessment and management, placing an increased emphasis on appropriate monitoring of psychotropic medications. He is well versed in a range of medical and non-medical interventions for children with attentional challenges. He recognizes the profound benefit that medications can provide for those with ADD, but also encourages families to explore other interventions such as mindfulness training, cognitive-behavioral training, and counseling where indicated. Dr. Varga is a long-time resident of Pacific Palisades, where he and his wife raised their two daughters.