

SCHOLARS WITH DIVERSE ABILITIES PROGRAM (SDAP)

SDAP

App State

Appalachian State University



SDAP News & Updates

April 2022

Welcome to our last newsletter of 2021-22. It was a busy year and this was a particularly busy month for SDAP because we celebrated our Ten Year Anniversary!

Please read on to learn about what we've been up to!

The History of The Scholars with Diverse Abilities Program

The Scholars with Diverse Abilities Program (SDAP) was founded in 2011 by several community volunteers and faculty members with children who have an intellectual disability who joined to create a proposal to present to the university.

The program was funded through the US Department of Education's Transition and Postsecondary Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grant in response to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. At that point, SDAP received a subaward from Western Carolina University.

In 2011, Dr. Melody Schwantes became the first director of SDAP and in 2012, SDAP was certified as a Comprehensive Postsecondary Transition Program (CTP), so students were eligible for financial aid. In 2015, Anna Ward became director and SDAP received the full TPSID five year grant. In 2020, Dr. Susan Hedges took over as the program director. This year, SDAP is celebrating its Ten-Year Anniversary with a total of 30 graduates and 10 current scholars. In 2023, the program will expand from a 2 year to a 4 year program and increase the number of students it enrolls.

There are more than 220 Post-Secondary Education programs on college campuses nationwide for young adults with intellectual disabilities and Appalachian State's Scholars with Diverse Abilities Program is proud to be one of them.



Scholars with Diverse Abilities Program's 10th YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Our Ten-Year Anniversary event started with a Coffee Talk, hosted in the RCOE Rotunda. Staff, current Scholars and Alum welcomed in the community with snacks provided by Stick Boy Bread Company, Cupcrazed Boone, and Krispy Kreme! Following the Coffee Talk, former students took a stroll down memory lane visiting some of their favorite spots on campus!

The main celebration was held later in the afternoon and emceed by current Scholars, Sam and Web. There were performances by Nick & The Dirty Mullets, Jack Juarez's original composition, and Anne Carol Sheely sang a Taylor Swift song. SDAP Alum attended and showcased their talents including Tyler Shore also singing Taylor Swift, Tyler LeBlanc doing a comedy skit and Emma Miller provided a video of her playing the piano.

SDAP's former directors Dr. Melody Schwantes and Anna Ward attended the celebration and gave speeches expressing how proud they are to see how far the program has come and how many lives it has changed so far.

Between speeches and presentations we also held raffle drawings for some cool merch!

Before the end of the event SDAP's current director, Dr. Susan Hedges, revealed that SDAP will become a four-year program next year allowing opportunities for off-campus housing to further the goal of building independence.



(Pictured above is Anna Ward with SDAP Alum)



(Pictured above is current SDAP students and staff)

A big thank you to everyone who joined us for our anniversary! It was a huge success!

Leadership Project

update

In the March Newsletter we introduced the leadership project between our SDAP Scholars and 5th grade scholars from the Academy at Middle Fork. The pen pals finally got the chance to meet on April 8th at Kidd Brewer Stadium where they were accompanied by a few Appalachian State football players! The Scholars enjoyed having a field day racing and getting to know the players.



After all the fun, Dr. Amie Snow, Principle of the Academy at Middle Fork, and a few of the football players started an open discussion about the importance of education and asking for help when you need it. They also reminded everyone that their teachers, families, and friends genuinely care for them and are there to support them. This project allowed the scholars to mentor the younger students, improve their leadership skills, and connect with people whom they might not have met otherwise. Both the SDAP and Middle Fork scholars had a great time meeting face-to-face. SDAP hopes to continue this project next year.



Health & Wellness Project

This month our scholars took a trip to the Food Lab at Leon Levine Hall of Health Sciences!

SDAP's leadership team is always looking for ways to build on our scholars' independent living skills. We recognize that the first step in living an independent life is taking care of your health. The purpose of this project is to give our scholars the space to feel empowered to cook for themselves as well as emphasizing that good food choices are important to living a healthy life.

A special thanks to Dr. Melissa Gutschall, Director, Graduate Program in Nutrition!



During the first week of the project, the Nutrition Program Director and graduate students went over the food triangle and plate proportions.



The second week covered meal planning, grocery budgeting, and reading food labels.



On the third week, the scholars visited the Food Lab! The Nutrition Department picked out a few simple and quick recipes for the scholars to prepare. Together they made tuna salad, salsa, mud cake, microwave eggs, and sweet potatoes. All of the scholars participated in cooking and enjoying the dishes afterwards.



SDAP Loves Literacy Cast!!!

The Anderson Reading Clinic, under the direction of Dr. Devery Ward in the Department of Reading Education and Special Education, caters to children who have difficulties with literacy and reading. In 2020, when the university closed buildings due to the pandemic, it sparked the idea to transform the reading clinic from a physical space to a virtual one. After a lot of brainstorming and planning, a group of Reading Education faculty started Literacy Cast.

Literacy Cast was conceptualized to be an interactive and intergenerational session where children, students, and educators interact and inspire one another in real-time. Their participants include SDAP Scholars, school-age children, parents, teachers, administrators, teaching assistants, and graduate students.

Throughout the Literacy Cast sessions, participants are frequently encouraged to participate, contribute ideas in the chat on zoom, to create and publish their work through the clinic blog using BookCreator library or Poetry Padlet. Literacy Cast also focuses on celebrating the different ways people engage in literacy.

SDAP Scholars especially had a lasting effect on Literacy Cast enriching the community by sharing books and poems they created. While being featured as a 'Visiting Author' Remi created a total of 6 books (and counting) since he's been attending Literacy Cast. For his 5th book premier, he read his story to the group and everyone celebrated! He had a moment to bask in his accomplishments. Sam even has his own section during Literacy Cast called 'Research with Mr.Sam' where he presents authors and activists that personally connect with the Scholars and students. Literacy Cast always ends on a fun note with a joke that anyone can present. Grace loves showcasing some of her knock-knock jokes. Having a genuine audience actively engaged in their material has influenced the Scholars to keep creating and exploring different types of literacy.

Literacy Cast has impacted the Scholars and our community in such a great way! It is unique and allows for researchers to see how virtual instruction is good for students. It is a space where everyone is heard, celebrated, and engaged in reading and writing.



BEST BUDDIES Got Talent

This spring, Best Buddies hosted the second annual Talent Show. It was a fun-filled night as students showcased their talents of all kinds!

Scholar and BB exec member Grace Carroll and future treasurer, Emma Estudillo sang "What Makes You Beautiful," complete with choreography! Scholars Bridger Robinson and Jack Juarez sang "Don't Ya Wish U Were Us?".

Scholar Nick Curry and friend Jack Dunphey played guitar and sang, along with Jack Juarez. They even named their group "The Dirty Mullets" as their debut was made. Sam Butcher and Grace Carroll both displayed their singing abilities as they sang songs by Adele.

Other members of Best Buddies, including President Jordan Kelley and Anne Carol Sheely, sang songs to showcase their talent. Who knew Michael Rapp could sing in German!

Scholars and club members alike supported and encouraged each other! Best Buddies intends to make this an annual event to celebrate everyone's individual talents.



Best Buddies is committed to creating an inclusive, loving, and caring environment where everyone feels welcome and comfortable being themselves!

Best Buddies is open to anyone to join!

 Follow us at
[@bestbuddiesappstate](https://www.instagram.com/bestbuddiesappstate)

SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT



Jack Juarez

Jack Juarez, from Asheville, NC, is a first year student with SDAP. He enjoys hanging out at Sanford Mall with friends or relaxing in his dorm. Jack is also an active member in the Best Buddies Club. Outside of class Jack loves playing basketball! When he came to Appalachian he was excited to attend the basketball games at the Convocation Center.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Kaitlyn Reda

Kaitlyn Reda is an SDAP Person-Centered Planning (PCP) Advisor and a first-year graduate student in the Masters of Social Work program. Kaitlyn is excited to be a part of SDAP because she believes in our mission to address the major inequities that are present in most higher-level academic institutions. After obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drama from New York University in 2015, she lived in New York City as a working actor. Upon returning home to the coastal plains of North Carolina in 2020, Kaitlyn decided to pursue a long-held desire to enter the social work field. She is particularly interested in arts-based therapies and interventions and how they can enhance individual and community outcomes. In her spare time, Kaitlyn works as a freelance musician and enjoys reading, exploring the outdoors, and watching movies.

GRADUATION SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to our graduating Scholars!

We are so proud of their hard work over the last two years. They have accomplished so much while with SDAP and we will miss them very much!



Bri Silva Maldonado



Grcae Carroll

Upon graduation our scholars will receive a
Collegiate Achievement Award!



GRADUATION SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to our graduating staff!

We also want to congratulate our staff members who are graduating this year. They have done so much for the program and we are so grateful. We will miss them and wish them all the best!



Leah Ferrell

Person-centered
Planning Advisor

Leah is graduating with
a Masters of Social
Work.



Renee Young

Graduate Research
Assistant Mentee

Renee is graduating
with a Masters of
Music Therapy.



Chris McPhillips

Office Assistant

Chris is graduating with a Bachelors in
Psychology of Human Services with a
minor in LGBT Studies.

GRADUATION SPOTLIGHT

cont.

Congratulations to our graduating staff!



Shana Ferguson

Social Work Intern

Shana is graduating with a Bachelors in Social Work with a minor in Child Development.



MyAsia Jarrett

Communications Intern

MyAsia is graduating with a Bachelors in Public Relations with a minor in Nonprofit Organizations.

Upcoming Campus Events



April 27th

Last day of classes



May 6th-7th

Graduation Commencement ceremonies



Enjoy your summer break!

Check out engage.appstate.edu for more upcoming events!

If you have any questions, comments, or other feedback, feel free to email us at sdap@appstate.edu.



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