

# **REHABILITATION COUNSELORS AND PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION OF ARKANSAS**



## **2025 CONFERENCE REHABILITATION: BETTING ON THE FUTURE!**



May 21-23, 2025



OAKLAWN  
Hot Springs, AR



# About RCPAA

We are the first state chapter of the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association and our association has roots dating back over 30 years. Our mission is to promote social justice, advocacy, and inclusion throughout Arkansas by empowering our members with the best practices to effectively serve others. Our membership includes counselors, administrators, students, support staff, researchers, therapists, and educators from across the disability service community.

## Our Board Members are:

Keondra Hampton- President  
Carrie Woodall- Past President  
Rob Stevens- President Elect  
Tina Shores- Vice-President  
Shane Bronson- Treasurer  
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Laura Allen- 3-year board member

Ashley Tougaw-McCutcheon- 3 -year board member  
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Niketa Nash- 2-year board member  
Katie Barger- 2- year board member  
Stacy McKisick- 2-year board member  
Andrew LeVoir- 2-year board member



## Scholarship Winners 2025

**Harold Thomas Scholarship:** Brandon Thurman.- Brandon has been working for the past ten years with children, adolescents and young adults with autism. He is currently in his practicum experience at EMPOWER. Brandon's goals include earning licensure as a BCBA, CRC and LPC to cover gaps in mental health services to underserved populations.

**R. Lewis Urton Scholarship:** Morgen Burgess. Morgen is a junior at Arkansas Tech University with a double major in Psychology and Rehabilitation Sciences with a minor in Disability Studies. She is a volunteer with Community Connections where she discovered her passion for therapy. Her goal is to become a speech-language pathologist.

**Vincent H. Bond Scholarship:** Dorcas Masila. Dorcas is a graduate student at the U of A pursuing a degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. She is passionate about making a positive difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Her goal is to support and advocate for those with disabilities. She works at Lifestyles Inc where she has the privilege of working with individuals with disabilities.



## Scholarship Winners 2025

**Rick Fleetwood Scholarship:** Brooke Weber. Brooke is in the Rehabilitation Counseling program at the U of A where she will begin her internship in the fall 2025. Brooke has had opportunities to work in programs such as Arkansas Special Olympics, Lifestyles and with the Children's Therapy Team. Her future goals are to bring more mental health resources to Arkansans in need including veterans and adults with intellectual disabilities.

**Butch Barnes Scholarship:** Brigit Ritchie. Brigit is pursuing her Master of Arts in Counseling with a focus on psychiatric rehabilitation at the U of A. Her passion in this field is both personal and professional. Her goal is to provide counseling for caregivers and support systems for people with disabilities especially focused on populations that struggle to access holistic mental health care.



## **Wednesday, May 21, 2025**

**9:00-9:15 AM** – Welcome – Keondra Hampton (Ballroom A & B)

**9:15-10:15 AM** – Finding Joy and Excitement in Our Practice – Micheal O'Brien (Ballroom A & B)

**Break** – Visit vendors

**10:40-11:40 AM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- Neuropsychology and Neurorehabilitation of Acquired Brain Injury – Hannah Schweitzer, Brittany Abdelsalam (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)
- SET for Success Pre-ETS, ACCE Program, Hire, Phase 2 Program, and BxW (CSSPP) – John Baldwin, Chelsea Loy, Ali Miller, Billy Shuburte (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- Recovery Centers of Arkansas: Understanding Substance Abuse – Randy Melton, Adam Reynolds (Ballroom C)
- ETHICS SESSION: Intersection of Poverty and Disability – Dr. John Sassin (Ballroom A & B)

**11:45 AM - 1:00 PM** – Networking Lunch / Visit Vendors

# **PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS**

## **KEYNOTE SESSION:**

“Finding Joy and Excitement in Our Practice” by Micheal O’Brien- Dr. Micheal O’Brien is currently a strategic account manager for Alliance Enterprises. He has over 47 years of experience in the field of vocational rehabilitation as a clinician, professor and state VR administrator. He is a four-time National Institute of Rehabilitation Issues Scholar (twice as chair). He is currently an adjunct professor at Western New Mexico University in the graduate School of counseling. He is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and a Certified Vocational Evaluation Specialist. He has served as a commissioner for the CRCC, Executive Board member for CSAVR, Commissioner and Chair of CCWAVES, board member for the Consortia of Administrators of Native American Rehabilitation, and a Commissioner for CORE. He is a former NRCA board member. Mike has been married to his bride, Jan for 47 years. This keynote presentation will focus on how to get the joy and excitement back for our practice and how to maintain it over time. Our work is worthy of passion and excitement. We make a difference worth celebrating.

## **CONCURRENT SESSIONS:**

“Neuropsychology and Neurorehabilitation of Acquired Brain Injury” by Dr. Hannah Schweitzer and Brittany Abdelsalam. This presentation is to offer a neuropsychological lens into rehabilitation in acquired brain injuries. Education, interventions, and resources are the key take aways.

# PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS:

“SET for Success Pre-ETS, ACCE Program, HIRE, Phase 2 Program and BxW (CSSP)” by John Baldwin, Chelsea Loy, Ali Miller, and Billy Scuburte. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of each program listed and will have the opportunity to ask questions about how these programs can be replicated in their communities. We will discuss strategies to increase individual’s choice, building capacity, and developing a referral base for future locations across the state. Additionally, we welcome input from attendees on unmet needs in their communities.

“Recovery Centers of Arkansas- Understanding Substance Abuse” by Randy Melton and Adam Reynolds. Goal is to educate professionals about the individuals served, the treatment options available, how we deliver those services, the importance of continuing care and long-term recovery.

Ethics- “The Intersection of Poverty and Disability” by Dr. John Sassin. Today’s political climate of division can affect people with disability in many ways. Shrinking resources erode the ability of rehabilitation professionals to carry out essential functions of their jobs, increased market volatility and unemployment creates an environment that may be inhospitable to people with disabilities who need support to transition into work. Rehabilitation students who will be entering the field need to understand how social justice concepts are transferable into advocacy and practice.



## Wednesday, May 21, 2025

### **1:00-2:00 PM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- The Power of Partnerships: Navigating the Path to Employment – Melinda Davis, Lauren Satterfield, Jana Treat, Yvonne Rowland (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)
- Preparing for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Exam: Tips for Success – Julie Hill (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- Resilient Futures: Embracing Trauma-Informed Practices for Youth Support – Cynthia Bullard (Ballroom C)
- Operation Saturation/Naloxone Training – Justin Works, Michael Springer (Ballroom A & B)

### **2:20-3:20 PM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- Auditory Health: Understanding Hearing Loss, Implications of Untreated Hearing Loss, and Options for Treating It – Kim McAllister (Ballroom A & B)
- Unlocking Accessibility: Practice Tips for Accessible Presentations – Melanie Thornton (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)
- VIBE - Visually Impaired and Blindness Empowerment – Cheryl Snow, Magan Rowan (Ballroom C)
- Schizophrenia: Symptoms, Treatment, and Vocational Implications – Paul Hickerson, Keelee Allen, Sunny Stephens (Catherine/DeGray Room)

**Break–** Refreshments Provided Ballroom A & B. Visit vendors and network.





**Wednesday, May 21, 2025**

**3:40-4:40 PM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- I Have One Nerve Left, and Work is Getting on It! Practical Strategies for Stress Management – Penny Willmering (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)
- Rubber Bands, Zip Top Bags, and Other Everyday Blindness Hacks – Rita Reese-Whiting, Quinn Whiting (Ballroom C)
- Changing Outcomes: CBT Intervention Using SMART Goals – Christina Crawford (Catherine/DeGray Room)

**JOIN US FOR OUR EVENING RECEPTION!**

5:00pm with light appetizers

This is a ticketed event!

# PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

“The Power of Partnerships: Navigating the Path to Employment” by Melinda Davis, Lauren Satterfield, Jana Treat and Yvonne Rowland. Exploring how occupational therapists can be partners and bring their expertise to the process. The Stay-At-Work process will be reviewed. A video presentation is a part of this presentation.

“Preparing for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Exam: Tips for Success” by Dr. Julie Hill. This presentation will provide an overview of the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam. We will go over the 12 content domains and then provide tips and strategies to succeed in taking and passing the examination.

“Resilient Futures: Embracing Trauma-Informed Practices for Youth Support” by Cynthia Bullard. This presentation provides vocational rehabilitation counselors, transition counselors, mental health professionals, educators, and caregivers with a foundational understanding of trauma-informed care, specifically for youth who have experienced trauma. The presentation will focus on understanding the unique needs of trauma-affected youth and implementing sensitive, informed counseling practices to support their mental health and development.

“Operation Saturation/Naloxone Training” by Justin Works. The objectives of this training are threefold: first, to educate attendees on the signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose; second, to provide hands-on instructions on the proper administration of Naloxone in its various forms; and third, to emphasize the importance of community involvement and peer-driven recovery support.

# PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

“Unlocking Accessibility: Practice Tips for Accessible Presentations” by Melanie Thornton. As rehabilitation professionals and disability service providers, others look to us for guidance on access and inclusion. It is essential that we model practices that include people with disabilities. This workshop will provide you with the techniques for creating accessible PowerPoint presentations and other strategies for delivering to advancing access and inclusion.

“Schizophrenia: Symptoms, Treatment and Vocational Implications” by Dr. Paul Hickerson, Keelee Allen and Sunny Stephens. The goal of this presentation is to improve the knowledge base of rehabilitation professionals working with clients with schizophrenia by exploring symptomology, current clinical approaches to treatment, and vocational challenges.

“Vibe- Visually Impaired and Blindness Empowerment” by Cheryl Snow and Magan Rowan. The VIBE program assists clients in gaining skills and techniques to promote independence and employment success. After completion of the program, counselors report a higher level of client confidence, motivation and determination to achieve their employment goals.

“Auditory Health: Understanding Hearing Loss, Implications of Untreated Hearing Loss, and Options for Treating It” by Kim McAllister. Attendees will learn and understand how the ear works, what contributes to hearing loss, how to recognize hearing loss, dangers of untreated hearing loss, and options for treating hearing loss.

# PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS CONT.

“I have one nerve left, and work is getting on it! Practical strategies for Stress Management” by Dr. Penny Willmering. During this workshop, participants will learn about types of stress, including positive, negative, chronic, and acute. Participants will gain an in-depth understanding of the consequences of unchecked stress and will explore practical and fun techniques to prevent and mitigate the effects of this phenomenon.

“Rubber bands, zip top bags, and other everyday blindness hacks” by Rita Reese-Whiting and Quinn Whiting. This presentation aims to demonstrate quick accessibility modifications of daily living tasks using everyday items. There will also be a focus on quick adaptations for others who live with the newly blind individual.

“Changing Outcomes: CBT intervention using SMART Goals” by Christina Crawford. This presentation aims to promote psychosocial intervention and assessment through clinical demonstration project reports and literature reviews.



**Thursday, May 22, 2025**

**9:00-10:00 AM** – Keynote: The Future is Now! Using Assistive Technology to Level the Playing Field – Mike Marotta (Ballroom A & B)

**10:20-11:20 AM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- “IEP” in the Workplace: Using AT to Promote Inclusive Employment Practices – Mike Marotta (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)
- Clinical Considerations for Power Wheelchair Application – Andrea Lewis (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- Championing Certification: The Steps to Become a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and the Credential’s Growing Impact – Taylor Bauer (Ballroom C)

**11:30 AM - 1:00 PM** – Awards Luncheon: Please join us for award presentations-  
Lunch Provided. Ballroom A & B) \*This is a ticketed event\*

**1:00-2:00 PM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- AI & AT – Mike Marotta (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)
- The Case for Wheels: An Overview for Selecting the Clinically Appropriate Power Wheelchair Base – Andrea Lewis (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- Unlocking Opportunities: Registered Apprenticeships, Non-Profit Partnerships, and Funding Incentives – Lonnie Emard (Ballroom C)

# PRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTERS

## KEYNOTE

“The Future Is Now! Using Assistive Technology to Level the Playing Field” by Mike Marotta. This session is designed to inspire action and empower the audience to explore the range of technology tools available today in order to facilitate success and independence for people with disabilities.

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

“IEP in the Workplace: Using AT to Promote Inclusive Employment Practices” by Mike Marotta. This session will focus on how to utilize the Principles of Universal Design to promote an inclusive employment environment. Real world examples will be shared to highlight ways businesses of all sizes can create a more inclusive environment. These accommodation solutions will be no-tech, low tech and high tech and across all areas of disability.

“Clinical Considerations for Power Wheelchair Application” by Andrea Lewis. This presentation aims to discuss the clinical reasoning behind device selection and options available based on criteria. Participants will be given the hands-on experience of driving a group 3 power wheelchair with the goal to education on the more complex rehabilitation power mobility options available for those who are appropriate and users per coverage criteria.

“Championing Certification: The Stages to Become a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and the Credential’s Growing Impact” by Taylor Bauer. This presentation includes information on becoming a CRC, CVE and CRL. The objective will be to inform those who are not certified about the benefits and value of certification, as well as detail the process through which to become certified.

## **PRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTERS**

“AI and AT” by Mike Marotta. This session is designed to explore three big areas related to AI tools. Resources will be provided to participants via a web based resource document that will include session resources along with space for all participants to contribute to shared notes. This will promote a sense of community and hopefully continue the conversation even after the sessions ends.

“The Case for Wheels: An Overview for Selecting the Clinically Appropriate Power Wheelchair Base” by Andrea Lewis. This session will cover the perception of different drive-wheel configurations, the advantages and disadvantages of Rear-Wheel, Mid-Wheel and Front-Wheel drive configurations and the drivability considerations for each base.

“Unlocking Opportunities: Registered Apprenticeships Non-Profit Partnerships, and Funding Incentives” By Lonnie Emard. This presentation explores the essentials of registered apprenticeships, offering a clear understanding of their structure and benefits for employers and apprentices alike.



**Thursday, May 22, 2025**

**2:15-3:15 PM – Concurrent Sessions:**

- Clinical Considerations for Power Wheelchair Application – Andrea Lewis (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- ETHICS SESSION: Effective Case Management to Free Up Our Time for Great Counseling – Micheal O'Brien (Ballroom C)
- Surviving Their Stripes: The Diagnostic Odyssey and Impact for Individuals with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome – Julie Hill, Julianna Breazeale (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)

**Break–** Visit vendors

**3:30-4:30 PM – Concurrent Sessions:**

- The Case for Wheels: An Overview for Selecting the Clinically Appropriate Power Wheelchair Base – Andrea Lewis (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- Disability Etiquette in the Workplace – Trenton Cowling, Gretchen Newton (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)



# PRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTERS

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

“Clinical Considerations for Power Wheelchair Application” by Andrea Lewis. This presentation aims to discuss the clinical reasoning behind device selection and options available based on criteria. Participants will be given the hands-on experience of driving a group 3 power wheelchair with the goal to education on the more complex rehabilitation power mobility options available for those who are appropriate and users per coverage criteria.

ETHICS SESSION: “Effective Case Management to Free Up Our Time for Great Counseling” by Micheal O’Brien. Even with challenges, it is possible to improve our case management skills. It is possible to gain back the time we value most- time with the people we want to serve. We can make choices and changes that give us opportunity to provide more and better counseling services. We can truly provide great counseling!

“Surviving Their Stripes: The Diagnostic Odyssey and Impact for Individuals with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome” by Dr. Julie Hill and Julianna Breazeale. This presentation will provide an overview of a research study conducted to look at the impact of the EDG/HSD diagnostic odyssey on coping and quality of life.

“The Case for Wheels: An Overview for Selecting the Clinically Appropriate Power Wheelchair Base” by Andrea Lewis. This session will cover the perception of different drive-wheel configurations, the advantages and disadvantages of Rear-Wheel, Mid-Wheel and Front-Wheel drive configurations and the drivability considerations for each base.

## **PRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTERS**

“Disability Etiquette in the Workplace” by Trenton Cowling and Gretchen Newton. The content of disability etiquette training includes practical strategies for engaging with people who have various types of disabilities. Aim is to train vocational rehabilitation professionals and industry partners with the knowledge and skills to engage with clients in ways that respect their dignity, autonomy, and unique needs.



**Friday, May 23, 2025**

**8:30-9:30 AM** – Keynote: Building College Pathways to Employment: Collaboration Between Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs – Russell Thelin (Ballroom A & B)

**9:45-10:45 AM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- Creating Rapid Assistive Technology Solutions in the Workplace to Increase Employability and Productivity – Dr. Therese Willkomm (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)
- Living Life to the Fullest with Chronic Illness – Robert Stevens (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- Project First: Scoping Review – Chrisann Schiro-Geist (Ballroom C)

**Break**

**11:00 AM - 12:00 PM** – Concurrent Sessions:

- Political and Post-Election Trauma: Helping Vulnerable Clients Navigate an Uncertain Sociopolitical Landscape – Erica Wondolowski, Felicity West (Ballroom C)
- Brain Injury: Be Getting It On Your Mind – Shelia Beck, Dianne Campbell (Catherine/DeGray Room)
- Enhancing Employment Opportunities Through Assistive Technology – Brad Marsh (Ouachita/Hamilton Room)

**12:15-1:15 PM** – Closing Keynote – ETHICS SESSION: Stories of Survival: The Lived Experiences of Black Women Living with Chronic Pain in the United States – Dr. Julie Hill, Dr. Lindsay Stokes, Dr. Lyn Laye, Diana Cascante (Ballroom A & B)

**Closing Remarks** – Keondra Hampton (Ballroom A & B)

# PRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTERS

## KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

“Building College Pathways to Employment: Collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs” by Russell Thelin. An orientation to Think College. Addressing the options available for individuals with intellectual disabilities who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for employment through participation in inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs.

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS

“Creating Rapid Assistive Technology Solutions in the Workplace to Increase Employability and Productivity” by Dr. Therese Willkomm. Session discusses and demonstrates innovative approaches to creating over 50 assistive technology solutions that can be made in minutes to accommodate workers.

“Living Life to the Fullest with Chronic Illness” by Dr. Rob Stevens. A review of current research from the field of rehabilitation counseling and other related fields of study about how to support and advocate for our clients as they adjust to life with a chronic illness/disability (CID).

“Project First: Scoping Review” by Dr. Chrisann Schiro-Geist and others. A review of Project First highlighting the importance of outcome perspective in designing training materials for VR counselors and addressing the role of VR counselors to mitigate discrepancies in employment outcomes. How education and training work together to provide employment outcomes for clients regardless of barriers.

## PRESENTATIONS AND PRESENTERS

“Political and Post-Election Trauma: Helping Vulnerable Clients Navigate an Uncertain Sociopolitical Landscape” by Dr. Erica Wondolowski and Felicity West. Drawing from research on the political and post-election trauma, this presentation will involve discussion regarding how certain identities have been treated historically and today, and how we can best serve them as rehabilitation and other helping professionals.

“Brain Injury: Be Getting It On Your Mind” by Sheila Beck and Dianne Campbell. This presentation covers what is considered brain injury. The difference in how a brain injury affects adults vs. children. Includes information regarding the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recognizing brain injury as a chronic illness.

“Enhancing Employment Opportunities Through Assistive Technology” by Brad Marsh. This presentation explores the latest assistive technology and workplace accommodations that support employees with disabilities across various industries.

ETHICS SESSION: “Stories of Survival: The Lived Experiences of Black Women Living with Chronic Pain in the United States” by Dr. Julie Hill, Dr. Lindsay Stokes, Dr. Lyn Laye and Diana Cascante. This presentation will specifically talk about Black women living with chronic pain and there are ethical implications when working within a multicultural counseling relationship.







## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS!

