

2023 Caregiver's Conference – About the Presenters

Workshop A - WRITING THROUGH CAREGIVING

Sarah Kilch Gaffney, CBIS

Sarah Kilch Gaffney is a writer, caregiver, and brain injury advocate living in central Maine. She has been offering community workshops on the power of writing and journaling through difficult times for nearly a decade, and her writing on grief and caregiving has been published widely. You can find her work at www.sarahkilchgaffney.com.

Workshop B - CREATING CALM IN CHAOS: SIMPLE SUSTAINABLE SELF CARE

Victoria Kirby, APRN

Victoria has practiced for over 20 years, she runs Victoria Kirby Wellness practice with a specialty in stress management and self-care. She is a reformed people pleaser and living the “sandwich generation” currently with teenagers and a mother who has Alzheimer's disease.

Workshop C - SOCIAL ASSISTIVE ROBOT FOR CAREGIVERS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA

Sajay Arthanat, Ph.D. OTR/L, ATP, Professor, Department of Occupational Therapy, Graduate Coordinator, Assistive Technology Certificate Program

Professor Arthanat teaches coursework in the occupational therapy program related to neurologically-based function and dysfunction, provision of assistive technology services, technology design for disability, and research engagement. His research interests include optimizing interaction of people with disabilities and assistive technology (AT) in wide ranging contexts, measuring outcomes of assistive technology interventions, usability testing of AT, and consumer product designs for persons with disabilities, cross-cultural models of disability, and community based rehabilitation.

Workshop D -HEALING RHYTHMS & SONGS: WEST AFRICAN STYLING DRUMMING TO BUILD COMMUNITY, Limited Seating

Lindsey Schust, Percussionist & Singer, Grace Schust, Percussionist & Singer

Concord Community Music School & NH State Council on the Arts Artists in Heath Roster

Grace Schust has been drumming since the early 80's and has studied with some of the great master drummers. She founded the Songweaver Drumming program at the Concord Community Music School and has been directing the drummers and teaching drumming at the school for over 25 years. She co-teaches workshops around New Hampshire with her daughter Lindsey. Grace is also a singer and visual artist and has a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Colby-Sawyer College.

Lindsey Schust grew up with African drums because of her mother's passion for West African drumming and singing traditions. She started to learn the drums at age 8 from Grace. She continued to learn drumming with master drummers from West Africa and the Caribbean in high school and college and beyond. She is also a composer and singer-songwriter. She co-directs the Songweaver Drumming program with Grace, runs her family band "The Ragged Mt. Band", is an international recording artist and an ADHD coach.

Workshop E - CANDLE LIGHT GUIDED MEDITATION AND RELAXATION TO HELP EASE TENSION AND STRESS, Jeannine Romeo, Monadnock Regional School District Wellness Integrationist

Throughout Jeannine's 29 years of teaching in the elementary, middle and high school, after school programs, staff, and community members, she has integrated the practice of yoga and mindful practices to reduce stress and anxiety and to increase focus and attention. Connecting to our brain, body, and breath, gives students, parents, educators and community members meaningful and practical tools to apply to their lives in and out of the classroom, work, and homes.

Workshop F - LIVING YOUR STORY – A PERSON CENTERED APPROACH TO LIFE PLANNING! Lesley Blecharczyk, Certified PCT (Person Centered Thinking) Trainer through the Learning

Lesley Blecharczyk has worked in the developmental services system for over 25 years, holding numerous roles with Community Bridges from Family Support Specialist to Director of Operations. Her current role in Training and Program Development allows Lesley to promote the implementation of person-centered practices to assist people and families all across the lifespan to develop their vision for a good life, and access necessary supports and resources. Her parents, and a sibling with a developmental disability, fostered a passion for engaging and empowering families, and impacting organizational and systems change to promote family capacity, choice and direction. Lesley is a nationally certified trainer for Person Centered Thinking, and Ambassador and national Coach with the Charting the Lifecourse™ Nexus.

Kelly Erhart is the current president of People First of NH and a disability justice activist. She is a believer in using person centered practices to determine what she wants in her future, to express what she appreciates and needs for support, and to decide how to manage her own services. Hear her thoughts and ideas about family and caregiver role and needs for support.

Devin Girard is the founder of Concord NH Self Advocates. A personal dream of hers is to share her story and "...be a role model for other women with disabilities." Devin and her family will share how over the years they have collaborated to support Devin to reach her goals, no matter how scary it may be for her family, or how long it takes. Hers is a story of vision, tenacity and reliance on those around you to reach your dreams.

Workshop G - CARING FOR YOURSELF: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN AND HOW CAN IT BE DONE?

John Richards, MSW, LICSW

John Richards is a lifelong resident of New Hampshire who has worked in human services for over 30 years; most of which have been involved in supporting people with a variety of disabilities. He has also been on the receiving end of caregiving at a couple points in his life. He has been actively involved in the Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire for 25 years where he was Board President. He presently works for the Association on a variety of special projects.

Workshop H

HEALING RHYTHMS & SONGS: WEST AFRICAN STYLING DRUMMING TO BUILD COMMUNITY, Limited Seating

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