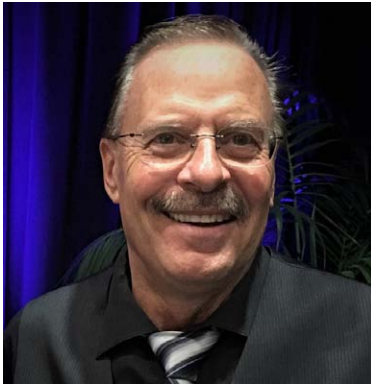




Monthly E-Newsletter

February 2021



A Message from the Executive Director

Our Team Keeps Growing

During the last few months we have witnessed a major influx of volunteers. We now have a team of 37 people supporting the projects and activities of Spectrum Institute.

There is a five-member board of trustees governing the organization. Four volunteers work with the executive director to handle our research, technology, development, and outreach activities. A website developer is in the process of creating a new website. The Disability and Guardianship Project has two legal advisors who are periodically consulted. It also has 12 advisors on an Attorney Fee Review Team. The director of the Mental Health Project has 10 mental health advisors with whom she is sharing information and seeking advice about the project's activities. The organization also has four student interns. Three are developing a new podcast scheduled to premiere on May 1. Another is helping to operationalize our recently created Mental Health Project. We have already started to receive applications from law students at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles who will have summer internships with us. The board of trustees is grateful for the assistance from such diverse group of individuals to help us promote conservatorship reform, mental health access, and disability rights. We invite everyone who supports these goals to make a financial contribution to Spectrum Institute. Although we are an organization of volunteers, we do need donations to help defray our basic operating expenses. Since we are an IRS-approved 501c(3) nonprofit, donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

With warm regards and much appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas F. Coleman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Thomas F. Coleman
Executive Director
Spectrum Institute

Mental Health Project Increases Advocacy Efforts



MHP Releases Advice on Right to a Support Person

The Mental Health Project created a [brochure](#) explaining the right of people with disabilities to a support person as an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The brochure emphasized the right for the support person to be chosen by the individual requesting support. This accommodation can be more difficult to receive in some establishments compared to others. The brochure will be shared with additional disability organizations via social media.



MHP Connects with Officials in Idaho and Washington State

Tina Baldwin, project director of the Mental Health Project, presented to the Certified Professional Guardian Board of the State of Washington on January 11th. Baldwin requested the board notify all guardians of the increased risk COVID-19 poses to people with Down syndrome. [Studies](#) show that COVID-19 can be 10x deadlier to this population. Her entire remarks can be found [here](#).

Baldwin also reached out to Idaho's state senator to emphasize the rights of people with developmental disabilities to mental health services. It is a guardian's legal duty to provide these services for those in their care, Baldwin said. Baldwin also offered guidance about how to ensure ADA compliance in the mental health system.

Mental Health Project Adds Advisors



Dr. Gary LaVigna



Dr. Matthew P. Janicki



William C. Gaventa



Dr. Biza Stenfert Kroese



Dr. Thomas Buckley

The Mental Health project was created in November 2020 with the purpose of promoting access to mental health therapy for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The project seeks to inform guardians, conservators, and care providers of their responsibility to provide these services for those in their care. The project, directed by Tina Baldwin, has gained five new advisors this month. "Our group of advisors is composed of national and internal professionals who are active in the delivery of mental health services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. All have stellar reputations in their field. All are authors. All are creative thinkers. All are dedicated to the goal of making a full range of mental health services accessible to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities," Baldwin said. The team will continue to grow and Baldwin expects much to come from the team in the next few months.

Dr. Janicki is co-chair of the National Task Group on Intellectual Disability and Dementia Practices and an associate professor in the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Buckley is Director of the Health Population at YAI, an organization offering a range of services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and serves on the board of directors of the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities.

Dr. LaVinga is the Clinical Director of the Institute for Applied Behavior Analysis in Los Angeles and coauthor of several papers whose work is cited in numerous articles.

Reverend Gaventa is the chair of the National Collaborative on Theology and Disability and has worked as a writer and editor for several disability publications.

Dr. Stenfert Kroese is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and a Senior Researcher in the School of Psychology at the University of Birmingham, UK. She is also chair of CanDo, an organization that breaks down barriers for people with disabilities.

Read more about the project and find each advisor's biography [here](#).

Spectrum Institute to Be More Visible Through Social Media



With the addition of a social media volunteers, Spectrum Institute plans to increase their online presence and outreach. Brent Druding will serve as social media coordinator and bring Spectrum Institute's content to [Facebook](#), Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Attorney Fee Review Team Adds Members and Research Associate



Dr. Gloria Duffy



John Adam Di
Pietro



Stephen Lachs



Brendon Woods

Spectrum Institute's Attorney Fee Review team was formed in December 2020 to examine the practices and policies behind authorization and payment of fees to attorneys involved in probate conservatorship cases in California. The team was formed due to an initial analysis conducted by Spectrum Institute's legal director, Tom Coleman, which found that fees are not being determined objectively and thus often do not comply with due process. The findings of the team will be published in a report later this year that will be distributed to political officials.

Recently, the review team, gained four new members.

Stephen Lachs is a retired Superior Court judge who served for 20 years.

Brendon Woods is a public defender for Alameda County who recently joined the Attorney Fee Review Team. Woods has named the chief public defender in 2012 and has served as president of the California Public Defender's Association.

Dr. Duffy has been president and CEO for the Commonwealth Club of California, the nation's largest and oldest public affairs forum, since 1996. Recently, she published a [commentary](#) detailing how her mother's assets were depleted by attorney fees and calling for reform.

John Adam Di Pietro is an attorney with a background in municipal law. He will work with Spectrum Institute's legal director, Tom Coleman, as a research associate.

New Member Added to Board of Trustees of Spectrum Institute



Brooke Changala, a civil law attorney, joined Spectrum Institute's board of directors this January. Changala was previously represented Spectrum Institute in a California Supreme Court Amicus Curiae brief. Changala felt motivated to become a board member because unlike other civil rights movements, people with cognitive disabilities may not be able to advocate for their own rights. "Being an ally is simply not enough. Under the circumstances, I did not feel I could turn my back on those individuals facing discrimination and abuse in the conservatorship system," Changala said. He currently serves on the Attorney Fee Review team and looks forward to helping out with initiatives to drive change.

Guardianship Project Reaches Out to California Judicial Council

Spectrum Institute sent a letter to California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, Chairperson of the Judicial Council, on January 1st. The letter asked the council to permit the development of approved jury instructions for probate conservatorship proceedings which are absent in the current jury instruction manual.

Click [here](#) to read the correspondence.



College Students Become Interns with Spectrum Institute



Tanner Coe



Emmi Deckard



Trinity Pierce



Maia Gyskiewicz

Spectrum Institute gained four college interns in January who will assist in the development of various projects. Tanner Coe and Emmi Deckard are third-year students from UCLA who are involved in the Disability Studies department. Trinity Pierce and Maia Gyskiewicz are third-year journalism students at Washington State University. Coe will work on the Mental Health Project while Deckard, Pierce, and Gyskiewicz will develop Spectrum Institute's cosponsored podcast, *The Freedom Files*.

Please show your support for our work by making a donation. Since we are an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) charitable private foundation, donations to Spectrum Institute are tax-deductible as allowed by federal law.

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