



SUMMIT REGISTRATION BROCHURE

UNIFIED HEALTH SUMMIT

JOIN THE INCLUSIVE HEALTH REVOLUTION

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9TH

8:30AM - 4:30PM

**GOLISANO INSTITUTE FOR BUSINESS &
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

150 SAWGRASS DR, ROCHESTER, NY 14620

Healthcare professionals and students are invited to join Special Olympics New York for a day focused on how providers and self-advocates with intellectual disabilities can work towards a healthier world for people with IDD.



SUMMIT OVERVIEW

Join us for the inaugural Special Olympics New York Unified Health Summit

The Unified Health Summit will be made up of lecture style presentations and panels that will train current and future healthcare professionals on how to be “Inclusive Providers”.

It is crucial to involve people with IDD in discussions regarding their health, so the summit will also welcome Special Olympics athlete leaders – Athletes will participate in select unified sessions with health professionals/students and learn how to be advocates for their own health. The summit will be a space for our athletes to share their experiences and provide a unique unified opportunity for people with IDD and providers to learn together and inspire action in our health systems.

Healthcare professionals and students that attend this summit will be provided with background knowledge about the health inequities faced by people with intellectual disabilities, hear first-hand from people with IDD about their lived experience, and have the opportunity to connect with individuals with IDD from across their region resulting in increased communication skills and comfortability. **Two sessions specific to healthcare providers and students will be offered for CME and ANCC Credits.** (In process as of July 2025)

REGISTER HERE TODAY

REGISTRATION CLOSES AUGUST 1ST



**THE UNIFIED HEALTH SUMMIT
WILL BE OFFERED AT NO COST
FOR ALL REGISTERED ATTENDEES!**

SPECIAL OLYMPICS INCLUSIVE HEALTH MISSION

Special Olympics' health work has shown that people with Intellectual Disabilities are consistently left out of health systems that are ill-equipped to diagnose and treat them. This leads to massive inequities: much shorter life spans, severe pain, and inability to fully participate in society. The lack of provider training and curricula in universities to meet the health needs of people with ID, as well as diagnostic overshadowing and limited accessible prevention programming are just some of the causes of these health disparities.

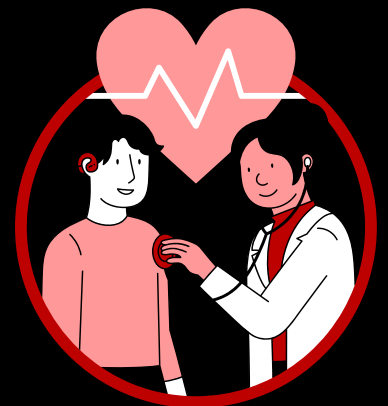
The [research](#) regarding the access and quality of healthcare that people with intellectual disabilities receive is jarring - People with ID face significant barriers. People with ID have lower rates of preventative health practices, such as dental hygiene, physical activity, preventive screening, and management of chronic conditions. Moreover, people with ID often struggle to find a doctor that knows how and is willing to treat them and, once they get to a doctor's office, challenges with communication and provider knowledge about ID can create additional barriers. The majority of health care professionals are not educated on how to treat people with ID. In one study, 56% of medical students in the United States reported that graduates were "not competent" to treat people with ID.

To impact a large scale health systems change, Special Olympics has worked to train providers and students on treating people with intellectual disabilities, and the results are encouraging. 73% of those trained expressed that they would seek out treating more patients with ID. However, more progress needs to be made. Special Olympics is committed to Inclusive Health, which means that no door is the wrong one for a person with an intellectual disability to receive quality healthcare and access to health programming and education. [Special Olympics New York](#) is working collaboratively with our athletes, families, healthcare communities, sponsors, foundations, and supporting organizations to build a healthier world for our athletes through a multifaceted approach.



Special Olympics
Health

MADE
POSSIBLE BY **Golisano**
FOUNDATION



UNIFIED INCLUSIVE HEALTH SUMMIT SCHEDULE



8 - 9am

Registration & light breakfast

9 - 9:30am

Welcome - Introduction to Special Olympics Inclusive Health

9:30 - 10:30am

Panel - Healthier Together: Building a Collaborative Care Team with Patients, Caregivers, and Providers (Unified)

10:45 - 11:45am

Breakout Rooms:

- **Ableism Curriculum for All: Developing and Implementing an Ableism Curriculum in your own Workplace (*Providers/Students, CME/ANCC Credit*)**
- **How To Be My Own Best Advocate (*Athletes*)**

11:45am - 1pm

Lunch - Opportunity to visit Exhibitors

1pm - 2pm

Breakout Rooms:

- **First Things First: The Crossroads of Primary Care and Behavioral Health (*Providers/Students, CME/ANCC Credit*)**
- **Cultivating the Champion Within: Mindfulness for Athletic Success and Self-Advocacy (*Athletes*)**

2:10 - 3pm

Unified Breakout Rooms:

- **Pathways to Wellness: Ensuring Patient Success in Healthcare**
- **Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing curriculum Presentation**

3:10 - 4pm

Unified Breakout Rooms:

- **Building an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities-Focused Curriculum for Medical Students at the University of Rochester**
- **Special Olympics' Inclusive Health Interprofessional Model: Bridging the Gap**

4:05 - 4:30pm

Summit Wrap Up & Takeaways

SESSION INFORMATION



9:30 - 10:30am

Healthier Together: Building a Collaborative Care Team with Patients, Caregivers, and Providers (Unified)

Moderators

- Taylor Mead-Patterson - *Special Olympics Senior Director of Health Programs*
- Chris Teich - *Special Olympics NY Athlete and Health Messenger*

Panelists

- Cori Piels - *Special Olympics NY Athlete and Health Messenger*
- Barbie Vartanian-DePonte – *Director of Oral Health Advocacy & Policy Initiatives, New York University College of Dentistry and Parent Advocate*
- Elizabeth Dollinger - *Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, Faculty at the Wegmans School of Nursing at St. John Fisher University*

Panel members will speak on how providers can support patients, caregivers and family members in being a combined healthcare team. The focus of this session will be on effective communication strategies, steps to prepare for an appointment for all involved and how providers can pave the way for success by working collaboratively with the patient and their support team.

10:45 - 11:45am

How To Be My Own Best Advocate (Special Olympics NY Athletes)

Presenters

- Taylor Mead-Patterson - *Special Olympics Senior Director of Health Programs*
- Emily Brushafer - *Special Olympics NY Athlete and Health Messenger*

This session will be all about how athletes can be active participants in their health journey. Emily Brushafer will speak share information about becoming an organ donor to educate her fellow athletes on the process and how it can benefit others. Athletes will also participate in a training about preparing for healthcare appointments and how to ask for reasonable accommodations.

SESSION INFORMATION



10:45 - 11:45am

**Ableism Curriculum for All: Developing and Implementing an
Ableism Curriculum in your own Workplace
(Healthcare Provider/Student offering – CME/ANCC Credit)**

Presenters

- Carrie Baker, MS
- Jeiri Flores, MS
- Kunal Gurditta, MD
- Adriana Verwey, MD, MPH

As part of the University of Rochester Medical Center pediatric resident training, senior residents complete a 1-month rotation in developmental-behavioral pediatrics to gain experience in child development and behavior through a variety of educational experiences. A focused curriculum on ableism has been developed and implemented through interdisciplinary collaboration. The curriculum uses a multimodal approach that includes experiential learning, reflection, discussion, case-based, and didactic components. In this session, curriculum models and participant feedback will be discussed.

This multifaceted teaching approach creates an opportunity for medical trainees to explore the everyday life of patients with disabilities and their families outside of the hospital setting. Trainees are exposed to the nuances of disabled life from a more humanistic view to create empathy and awareness that is not often discussed during formal educational training. These experiences provide a foundation for future healthcare providers to develop intentional practices promoting inclusion both within healthcare and community spaces, increasing the health and well-being of all people with disabilities, their families, and communities.

The goal of this conference session presentation is for participants to leave with an action plan for how they can bring ableism discussions into their workspaces through use of the presented curriculum components.

SESSION INFORMATION



1 - 2pm

Cultivating the Champion Within: Mindfulness for Athletic Success and Self-Advocacy (Special Olympics NY Athletes)

Presenter

- Kaylin McCarthy - *Owner of Mindful Tradition*

This session will highlight how mindfulness cultivates resilience and self awareness, both of which are essential when we are talking about athletics and self advocacy. There will be discussion on how professional athletes use mindfulness (mediation, breath work, yoga etc.), how those same tools can be utilized by the athletes present, and practice some of these tools together. Then we will address how these tools cultivate resilience and self awareness, while those are essential on the field they are also essential in going inward to listen to one's inner voice and advocate for oneself in the medical field or otherwise. This will give the athletes the tools they need to do the work of advocating for oneself.

The anticipated takeaways of this session are the ability to cultivate resilience and self-awareness, tools for athletic success and self-advocacy, and the understanding that mindfulness content is free, adaptable, and accessible to all.



SESSION INFORMATION



1 - 2pm

**First Things First: The Crossroads of Primary Care and
Behavioral Health
(Healthcare Provider/Student offering – CME/ANCC Credit)**

Presenters

- Dr. Benjamin Margolis, MD
- Dr. Vincent Siasoco, MD

Families and individuals often don't know where to begin when seeking mental healthcare for someone living with I/DD. The primary care setting can be the first stop in screening, mental health awareness and maintenance, and in addressing mental health challenges. In our presentation, we will discuss some of the co-occurring behavioral and mental health challenges among individuals with I/DD and how much can potentially be accomplished in a primary care setting. Dr. Vincent Siasoco will discuss the role of the interprofessional and caregiver team in addressing some of the most common behavioral health challenges. Following, Dr. Benjamin Margolis will provide education on some of the most common treatments for behavioral health challenges, what can and can't be addressed in a primary care setting, along with when and where to seek specialty care.



SESSION INFORMATION



2:10 - 3pm

Pathways to Wellness: Ensuring Patient Success in Healthcare (Unified Offering #1)

Presenter

- Kaylin McCarthy - *Owner of Mindful Tradition*

This session will explore creating an inclusive and adaptable health care experience, through a discussion of the senses, sense care, and a trauma informed lens. This information would be the foundation that patients/athletes can then identify triggers so that they can advocate from an empowered place to get a health care experience that honors their individual needs.

The conversation will then turn to practices to help health care providers and athletes set up for success by exploring learning style, and ways to bring health care practices into the home. The takeaways for this session are the ability to create an inclusive and adaptable healthcare experience, knowledge of how to identify triggers, how to advocate for oneself to get an appropriate healthcare experience, and practices to help healthcare providers and athletes set up for success



SESSION INFORMATION



2:10 - 3pm

Revisioning Nursing Curriculum with an Eye Towards Inclusion (Unified Offering #2)

Presenter

- Dr. Holly Brown, DNP, RN, PMHNP-BC, PMHCS
- Dr. Tricia Gatlin, PhD, RN, CNE

Nursing is the largest component of the healthcare workforce and, by virtue of this fact, will have the most interaction with people with IDD. Equipping nursing students' education and clinical experiences are key to making this possibility a reality.

The Quintuple Aim requires that we systematically address disparity in our healthcare delivery. For individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), this call to action is long overdue. The unique disparities experienced by this population are fueled by the dearth of health professionals with adequate education, experience, and confidence to provide quality care. This limits our healthcare systems' capability to meet the complex needs of the population. The systematic absence of this content in our nursing education has left us, as the largest sector of the healthcare workforce, unprepared to meet the needs of this population.

The Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing (GIDDN) at St. John Fisher University answered a national call to action with the development and integration of disability-specific didactic content, simulation, and clinical experiences throughout their nursing programs. GIDDN gathered an international team of experts to develop a competency-based curriculum that included clinically situated simulations. These materials provide a comprehensive approach to care for individuals diagnosed with IDD.

Individuals with IDD experience significant health disparities, some of which can be ameliorated by ensuring a knowledgeable and competent healthcare workforce.

SESSION INFORMATION



3:10 - 4pm

Building an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities-Focused Curriculum for Medical Students at the University of Rochester (Unified Offering #1)

Presenter

- Abigail LH Kroening, MD
- Kathryn Buettner, MA
- Carrie Baker, MS
- Kunal Gurditta, MD
- Emily Isenstein, PhD, MS

Medical training on the health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) is lacking. Medical students and resident physicians have limited knowledge about IDD and often feel uncomfortable or unprepared to provide care for people with IDD.

This presentation will share some background about IDD-focused training in medical education, how physicians feel about providing care for people with disabilities, and what we are doing at the University of Rochester to train medical students to be better physicians for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We will also share about the IDD-focused training we are providing to medical students across their four years of medical education. We will emphasize the importance of including people with IDD as experts in this training, and create an opportunity for athletes to share their expertise and what they want future physicians to learn.

SESSION INFORMATION



3:10 - 4pm

Special Olympics' Inclusive Health Interprofessional Model: Bridging the Gap (Unified Offering #2)

Presenter

- *Rebekah Fettekether, PharmD, MPH - Director of Clinical Education and Training, Special Olympics International*

In order to address the health disparities experienced by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Special Olympics International (SOI) developed and implemented an educational strategy, including an interprofessional inclusive health curriculum for health professionals and students using both online and in person learning. This session will discuss the educational strategy, implementation examples, and feedback from students, faculty, and athletes. Participants will leave with actionable items for engagement.



SPEAKERS



Carrie Baker, MS

Carrie Baker has a deep-rooted background in advocacy in the Rochester area. As a trained health educator, Carrie started her career in community education, focusing on women's health in the mid-90s. She then moved into HIV/AIDS prevention education, helping the community to understand how to lessen their exposure to HIV while also becoming an ally to people living with the disease. In 2003, when her oldest daughter was born with Down syndrome, Carrie entered the arena of Disability Advocacy, working as an educational advocate through The Advocacy Center, which, through a merger, is now known as Starbridge. She currently works to help shape the minds of medical students, residents, and other clinicians for the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) at the University of Rochester Medical Center as both the Advocacy Discipline Co-Coordinator for the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program and the Director for the Family Experience program.

Holly Brown, DNP, RN, PMHNP-BC, PMHCS

As a member of the Wegmans School of Nursing faculty, Holly Brown DNP, RN, PMHNP-BC, PMHCS serves as an Associate Professor and is the Executive Director of the Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing (GIDDN). Dr. Brown teaches in the Psychiatric NP and DNP programs. The work of GIDDN is to educate nurses across all academic programs about the physical and mental/behavioral health care of individuals diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This work also aims to promote nurses' skillful advocacy and leadership for the population, which has been largely underserved in healthcare settings due to multilayer inclusion challenges. Dr. Brown and her GIDDN team are developing and deploying curriculum in the undergraduate and graduate programs at SJF, including the procurement of clinical experiences to enable students to gain skills and confidence working with the population. Dr. Brown has served as the primary investigator for a variety of grant-funded programs: Special Olympics International Inclusive Health Innovation Grant, Inclusive Health Nurse Practitioner Residency Curriculum, and the Mother Cabrini Foundation: Optimizing Outcomes for Hospitalized Patients with IDD.

In addition to her academic and administrative responsibilities, she maintains an active clinical practice as Hillside's Senior Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, specializing in the care of children and adolescents dually diagnosed with intellectual/developmental disabilities and psychiatric conditions and their families in community, school-based settings. Dr. Brown holds board certification as a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and is a Child and Adolescent Clinical Specialist. She completed her Doctor of Nursing Practice at the University of Rochester in 2013 (project title: Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE): A Strategy to Promote Residential Treatment Staff Self-Efficacy).

SPEAKERS



Emily Brushafer, Health Messenger

Emily Brushafer became a Special Olympics New York athlete she was 18 years old. Emily found her love for swimming in high school where she was on the varsity team. After high school, Emily attended SUNY Geneseo and was a part of the LIVES program which is where Special Olympics was introduced to her. Since joining Special Olympics, Emily has brought home two national gold medals, ten state gold medals, and multiple regional titles. Special Olympics has been able to transform Emily's life and has taught her that anything is possible if you work hard. Now Emily is an athlete mentor for the Genesee Region Athlete Leadership Council and a Health Messenger. Emily also works at the Noyes Memorial Hospital, and volunteers with the Santa Hat Society to provide Christmas presents to families in need.

Kathryn Buettner, MA

Ms. Buettner is a member of the University of Rochester's Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities, a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). She is an experienced analyst and study coordinator with a demonstrated history of working in research & health care settings. She has an MA in Applied Psychological Research from Penn State Harrisburg. She has been with the University of Rochester for 7 years and has been working in the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics since 2023. She currently serves as Project Coordinator for the UR Family Experience Program and for our UCEDD's Rochester Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders, one of 7 New York State regional centers providing community education and technical assistance. Ms. Buettner is skilled in data analysis and dissemination of information. Ms. Buettner is skilled in diverse REDCap project design, development, and builds as well as customized reports. She maintains expert knowledge of the REDCap system and provides support to end-users. In addition to her role as Project Coordinator, Ms. Buettner also oversees data collection and analysis for the UR Family Experience Program.

Elizabeth Dollinger, PMHNP

Liz Dollinger is a psychiatric nurse practitioner and faculty member at St. John Fisher University, where she serves as the Community Clinical Coordinator and Co-Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at the Wegmans School of Nursing. She is a Healthy Athletes Health Promotion Clinical Director for Special Olympics New York and a Fellow of the Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing. Liz completed a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Fellowship through the University of Rochester and was a 2024 NorthStar Network Health Business Fellow. Her commitment to inclusive health is grounded in both professional experience and personal connection, inspiring a lifelong dedication to advocacy. Liz's work centers on advancing equity in healthcare through education, community partnerships, and preparing future nurses to become strong advocates for individuals with IDD.

SPEAKERS



Jeiri Flores, MS

Jeiri Flores is a Puerto Rican disability rights activist from Rochester, NY. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in the study of Sociology and African-American Studies at SUNY Brockport in 2014, and her master's in the study of Human Development at the University of Rochester in 2023. Jeiri serves as a resource for residents in her community by connecting them to existing services and supports. As a disability advocate, Jeiri shares her unique perspective at various colleges and conferences, where she introduces attendees to the struggles and invisibility that people with disabilities face. She provides insight regarding inclusion, citizenship, disability intersectionality, and challenges that remain unaddressed by society. She hopes to influence young disabled people to fulfill their purpose and create a new narrative for what it means to be disabled.

Rebekah Fettkether, PharmD, MPH

As the Director, Clinical Education and Training at Special Olympics International, Dr. Rebekah Fettkether oversees the professional training of health professionals and students in the US and globally in order to reduce health disparities for individuals with intellectual and development disabilities.

Dr. Fettkether is a pharmacist by training and practiced in a family medicine clinic providing anticoagulation and diabetes management for eight years, as well as taught at the affiliated College of Pharmacy in the areas of disease management and public health. She has extensive experience in higher education related to curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation while serving as a faculty member and the Assistant Dean for Educational Outcomes.

Dr. Fettkether holds a Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Michigan and a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Health Behavior, Education, and Promotion from the University of South Carolina. She also completed a Community Care Pharmacy Practice Residency at the University of Iowa.

SPEAKERS



Tricia Gatlin, PhD, RN, CNE

Dr. Tricia Gatlin joined the Wegmans School of Nursing as the dean in 2020. She came to Fisher from the School of Nursing at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) where she served as associate professor and associate dean for undergraduate affairs as well as interim associate dean for graduate affairs since 2018. Prior to those roles, she was an assistant professor at UNLV for seven years. She has also served as a lecturer and instructor at the University of Portland's School of Nursing and as a clinical instructor at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City, Oregon, and Clark College in Vancouver, Washington.

Gatlin has served as a committee member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group of the American Association of College of Nursing, secretary of the Nevada Nurses Association, member of the Nevada State Board of Nursing Education Advisory Committee, board member and director of research and development of the Nevada Obstetrical Charity Clinic, and a community member of the Clark County Diabetes Group. Currently, she serves as a board member of the Rochester Regional Health Healthcare Services Committee, NorthStar Network, and Academy of Health Sciences Charter School. In addition, she is a member of the American Nurses Association - New York, Sigma Theta Tau National Honor Society of Nursing, and American Associate of Colleges of Nursing. She also serves as a member of the New York State Council of Deans.

Gatlin's research, which primarily focuses on diabetes and support for diabetic patients, has been published in a variety of medical journals. She has also presented and lectured at several regional, national, and international professional conferences. She is also a reviewer for several nursing publications including the International Journal of Nursing Studies, Biological Research for Nursing Journal, Nursing Science Quarterly, Asian/Pacific Island Nursing Journal, and the Journal of Aging and Health.

SPEAKERS



Kunali Gurditta, MD

Kunali Gurditta graduated with her MD from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry in 2021 and is a current fourth year Internal Medicine-Pediatrics resident at the University of Rochester. She is rising Internal Medicine-Pediatrics Chief Resident for the 2025-2026 academic year and is subsequently planning on pursuing a career in primary care, focusing on caring for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her interest in disability education has stemmed from her own lived experience as a person with disability in medicine, and she is passionate about mentoring and advocating for people with disabilities in medicine.

Emily Isenstein, PhD, MS

Dr. Isenstein is a medical student in the University of Rochester Medical Scientist Training Program; she has completed the first three years of medical school and completed her PhD in the Spring of 2024. Dr. Isenstein focused her PhD work on sensory processing in autism and is passionate about improving healthcare for patients with neurodevelopmental disabilities. She has co-lead the Rochester AADMD chapter for nearly five years, and has spearheaded several projects involving disability-focused curriculum and advocacy, including several self-advocate-led lectures. She works closely with the leadership of the Rochester Medical Accessibility Coalition (RMAC) - a group by and for disabled medical students - to ensure that self-advocates are centered during disability-focused initiatives. Dr. Isenstein intends to pursue residency training in Child Neurology after she completes medical school.

Abigail LH Kroening, MD

Dr. Kroening (she/her) is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC). Dr. Kroening supports children with a variety of developmental diagnoses and their families. She is also a medical educator. She is the Director of Medication Education for the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics (DBP) and has leadership roles across the continuum of medical training. In these various training roles, Dr. Kroening provides curriculum development, support to administrative teams, and trainee mentorship.

SPEAKERS



Dr. Benjamin Margolis, MD

Benjamin Margolis, M.D. is board-certified in neurology and psychiatry, trained under the combined residency program at Brown University. He specializes in neuropsychiatric care of adults with I/DD in the New York Hudson Valley and is an attending inpatient psychiatrist at the Bronx Psychiatric Center. He completed medical school at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine after the postbaccalaureate premedical program at Columbia University, and holds a BFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. He is the prior treasurer of the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry, current co-chair of the AADMD Behavioral Health Task Group and is working to improve behavioral and mental health care of individuals with I/DD on local, state and national levels. As part of this mission, he serves on the Health Advisory Board for Special Olympics New York for the Strong Minds Program and on the Medical Advisory Task Force for the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee for New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Kaylin McCarthy, Owner of Mindful Tradition

Kaylin McCarthy is the founder of Mindful Tradition, a mindfulness based business with a focus in meeting neurodiverse needs and the needs of their caregivers and guardians. Through the tools of breath work, mindfulness, and movement Kaylin helps each individual find and connect to their authentic self.

Mindful Tradition is committed to creating safe spaces for all people, creative problem solving, advocacy, slow business practices, and the building of compassionate community.

Kaylin has received her BA from SUNY Geneseo, a 500 hr YTT from The Kripalu School of yoga, spent 9 years as a social therapist supporting the neurodivergent population and holds supplemental training in HANDLE Therapy, kids yoga, and life coaching.

Cori Piels, Health Messenger

Cori Piels has been a Special Olympics New York athlete for over 20 years. Growing up Cori felt like an outsider and did not feel included, however, once she stepped on the ice this changed. Figure skating has given Cori confidence and the ability to push through and overcome challenges both athletically and socially. Cori competed as a part of the Special Olympics USA figure skating team at the 2025 World Winter Games in Turin, Italy and brought home a Bronze medal! Cori is determined to use her experiences to educate the world on health equity and inclusion to ensure every person can live a healthy and happy life. Since becoming a Health Messenger, Cori has been able to share her story with the United Nations social development committee and legislators in Washington D.C. Due to the valuable life skills Cori has developed, she lives alone in an apartment and is continues to advocate for inclusion, diversity, and acceptance every day.

SPEAKERS



Dr. Vincent Siasoco, MD

Vincent Siasoco, MD, MBA, is a Board-certified Family Medicine Physician. He has almost 20 years of experience in caring for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities as a clinician, educator, and administrator. He is an Assistant Professor in the Departments of Family Medicine and Pediatrics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. He is the Director of Primary Care at the Rose. F. Kennedy (RFK) Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center at Montefiore and Director of Clinical Model Services Training at the RFK University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at Montefiore. He is the Medical Director at ADAPT Community Network (formally known as United Cerebral Palsy of NYC).

Dr. Siasoco is a Board member of the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry, Positive Exposure, and at Mercy Home for Children. He serves as Co-Chair of the Cerebral Palsy (CP) State Medical Director's Council and Co-Chair of their annual CP State Medical Director's Council Clinical Conference. In addition, he serves as Co-Chair of the Medical Taskforce of the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. He is a Clinical Director for Special Olympics Med Fest and Health Promotion programs and Chaired the Special Olympics New York Health Advisory Council. He was Chair of the Special Olympics International Global Faculty Advisory Panel for Health Promotion and is an appointed member of the Special Olympics International, Global Medical Advisory Committee. He was awarded the Special Olympics Golisano Health Leadership Award in 2019 and Golisano Global Health Leadership award in 2021.

Chris Teich, Health Messenger

Chris started his journey with Special Olympics at 8 years old through the Young Athletes program. He became an athlete for growth opportunities, and eventually joined Unified Sports in high school which allowed him to not only grow his skills but grow friendships. Participating in Unified Sports raised Chris's confidence to the point where he was able to give a commencement speech without fear and his confidence has continued to grow. Chris attended Nazareth College as a part of the LifePrep program, which aims to help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities both academically and socially. Chris is an athlete mentor for the Genesee region Athlete Leadership Council and an active Health Messenger and shares important information about inclusive health with his peers as well as providers and students.

SPEAKERS



Barbie Vartanian-DePonte, Director of Oral Health Advocacy & Policy Initiatives, New York University College of Dentistry

Mrs. DePonte is the inaugural Director of Oral Health Advocacy and Policy Initiatives at the New York University College of Dentistry, the country's first and only position dedicated to the advancement of comprehensive and compassionate oral healthcare for people with complex disabilities. Mrs. DePonte leverages the work of the NYU Dentistry Oral Health Center for People with Disabilities (OHCPD) to address the health disparities of this vulnerable population. She has been both an advocate and promoter of the need to introduce a clinical competency curriculum across the continuum of dental education. There is robust literature to support her conviction that a lack of provider confidence, education and experience is a major part of the reason that oral healthcare remains the number one unmet healthcare need of this marginalized population. In her current role, Mrs. DePonte also acts as mentor to the Dental Student Leadership Institute members on preparing the next generation's leaders through mock congressional hearings and the Global Healthcare Leaders DC and international offerings.

Prior to her role at NYU, Mrs. DePonte held the role of Executive Director, Project Accessible Oral Health (PAOH), a global initiative focused on improving the health equity of the more than sixty-one million individuals living with a physical or intellectual disability.

Mrs. DePonte is a contributing author on the National Inclusive Curriculum for Health Education, and the National Council on Disability: Incentivizing Oral Health Care Providers to Treat Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Furthermore, Mrs. DePonte has been instrumental in shaping policies that aim to reduce healthcare disparities for individuals with disabilities. Her work emphasizes the importance of accessible and inclusive oral healthcare, advocating for systemic changes that benefit this underserved community. In 2023, she led the change to Delta Dental's formative transformation to their insurance coverage for people with disabilities.

Her most important role is mother to her son with Autism. She understands firsthand the barriers he faces and will continue to face throughout his life. When Sam was diagnosed, she knew she needed to do something more, to be his voice, his advocate, and his champion! Mrs. DePonte understands that one of the most powerful and significant teaching tools is that of the "learned experience." As a parent sharing the everyday realities of being an "exceptional parent" she has provided invaluable learning opportunities for students to begin to appreciate that they are not treating a patient with a disability, but they are treating a family with a disability.

She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.) focused on Business Administration and Management, from Golden Gate University. After residing in Southern California for most of her life, Mrs. DePonte relocated to Short Hills, New Jersey in 2018 with her daughter, Marilee and son, Sam, after learning of the improved resources in that area to support Sam. Her passion and commitment to the community drives her unwavering quest for change.

SPEAKERS



Adriana Verwey, MD, MPH

Adriana Verwey is a Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician at the University of Rochester where she provides medical care for youth with disabilities. She is Associate Director of the Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities, a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, which focuses on developing partnerships, fostering accessibility, translating research into best practice, and promoting diversity and inclusion with and for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our community. Within this role, she also serves as Director for Inclusive Recreation focus area work, leading efforts related to utilizing a systems-level approach to enhance inclusive and accessible recreation within the community. Within medical education, she directs a clinical rotation in Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics for pediatrics and medicine-pediatrics residents, which includes an anti-ableism curriculum.

**All questions about the
summit can be sent to
Health@nyso.org**

**Interested in tabling or
sponsoring the event?
Please reach out!**