Youth and Young Adults in Transition (YAiT, pronounced “Wyatt”) is a statewide group of students who encourage and facilitate the development of self-determination in youth and young adults with disabilities. YAiT members mentor other students within Alabama and collaborate with other states that share the vision of promoting self-determination and youth leadership activities.

This year at the Alabama Transition Conference we held a mini YAiT conference specifically designed for the YAiT students in attendance. The students attended sessions about the role of self-determination, strategies for academic success, disclosure of disability, starting your own YAiT group, reality of having a job and paying bills, and using social media for positive results. The YAiT members also took various leadership roles throughout the larger transition conference, including introducing speakers. Taking part in leadership roles and attending sessions like the ones offered at the YAiT mini conference will help these YAiT members to fulfill their goals including having more successful Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), decreased dropout rates, improved rates of graduation, increased college attendance, and higher employment rates.

YAiT Goals:
(a) increase communication among service providers; (b) increase disability awareness in the community; and
(c) increase resources to provide better transition services for the state
The 22nd annual Alabama Transition Conference was held at the Marriott at Grand National Opelika, Alabama on March 5th and 6th of 2012. Over 700 people, including education, rehabilitation and mental health professionals, as well as students in transition and their family members, came together for this event, sharing new ideas and receiving updates on the topic of transition. The Auburn Transition Leadership Institute (ATLI) is proud of the dedication shown by each transition stakeholder and the state of Alabama for making transition a priority.

The Youth & Young Adults in Transition (YAiT) were a significant presence at this year’s conference, introducing speakers and participating in concurrent sessions designed to provide information specific to their transition process. These sessions included activities designed to promote self-determination and the building of life skills. People First of Alabama sponsored a ‘Meet and Greet’ during the conference, providing the YAiT conference attendees an opportunity to meet other YAiT students from across Alabama. ATLI would like to express appreciation to each YAiT member who participated in the conference, as well as People First for graciously providing the networking opportunity.

This year’s keynote speaker was Shari Rusch of Sumner, Washington, who shared her personal story of self-determination and moving beyond the trajectory that others had expected given the multiple “disabilities” she was diagnosed with as a young child. Shari ultimately graduated with honors and successfully completed a master’s degree in special education. As a current special education teacher, Shari was able to share her unique perspective as someone who has been on two sides of the transition process – as a student and as a teacher. Shari’s story also exemplified this year’s conference theme, “Transition – Endless Horizons.”

The “Transition Update,” often a highly-anticipated portion of the conference, featured addresses by panel members Ms. Zelia Baugh of the Alabama Department of Mental Health, Dr. Thomas Bice, Superintendent with the Alabama Department of Education, Dr. Cary Boswell of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Ms. Crystal Richardson of the Alabama Department of Education. These individuals, each with their unique background and perspective, discussed the latest updates in transition relevant to their fields of service.

Other featured speakers at the conference included Dr. Paul Bates of Southern Illinois University, Dr. Carol Schall of the Virginia Autism Resource Center at Virginia Commonwealth University, and Dr. Ginger Blalock of the University of New Mexico. Dr. Blalock also hosted the 3rd annual Local Transition Planning Summit, assisting teams of transition professionals from across Alabama in determining their area’s transition needs and setting meaningful goals and objectives.

The success of the Alabama Transition Conference XXII was a cumulative effort of presenters, volunteers, state agencies and attendees, all working toward the common mission of supporting students in transition to achieve positive outcomes. ATLI is pleased to have coordinated 22 years of the Alabama Transition Conference in support of this mission. Plans for Alabama Transition Conference XXIII, March 4-5th 2013 are underway! For information regarding next year’s conference, please visit ATLI’s website for updates by clicking on ATC 2013 at auburn.edu/atli.
ATLI CONGRATULATES AND HONORS DR. KAREN RABREN

On the road to best practices...
by Eric M. Crumley

The transition from adolescence to young adulthood can be challenging for everyone, but for those with disabilities this time is all too often filled with additional challenges to their desired independence and engagement in their communities. Transition services were first mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1990. Since that time researchers and other transition stakeholders have sought to identify practices that result in meaningful post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.

One goal of ATLI is to engage in research relevant to identifying successful transition practices. During the Spring 2012 semester, Dr. Karen Rabren utilized a research sabbatical conducting research throughout the U.S., as part of a mixed methods study designed to look at the transition practices of selected states. Over the last 4 months, Dr. Rabren logged over 3,000 miles as she drove and flew to interview state directors of special education and state transition specialists, and also launched a qualitative data collection process in each state. This ambitious cross-country trek took her to Northeast, Midwest, and West.

While the landscapes changed (along with the weather), Dr. Rabren noticed similarities between the different states and communities she visited. The goal of providing transition services with meaningful post-school outcomes seems to prevail, irrespective of region. Congratulations and thank you to Dr. Rabren for embarking on this journey towards identifying a common set of best practices in transition preparedness!
ATLI WELCOMES NEW FACES!

The Summer semester at the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute always brings a flurry of activity in the Graduate Assistant offices. Students run to and from classes, meetings, and other activities. This Summer ATLI welcomes three new Graduate Research Assistants! Joshua Turchan and Sadie Fox are current doctoral students representing the Counseling Psychology program and Serey Bright is a doctoral student from the Counselor Education & Supervision program. Please join us in welcoming these new students to our team! Be sure to check our website auburn.edu/atli for updated information.

CONGRATULATIONS FROM ATLI
SPRING & SUMMER GRADUATES!

Carolyn Finley
Courtney Ingalls
Kasey Kaschak

~Building Brighter Futures for Youth and Young Adults~

Newsletter Notes
Do you have an interesting personal story to share about the transition process? Our newsletter staff would like to hear from you!

Call 334.844.5927
Archived issues of ATLI “Directions” are saved at auburn.edu/atli (click on “Publications”).

Guest Editor
Eric M. Crumley
ATLI Graduate Assistant

2013 Alabama Transition Conference
March 4th & 5th, 2013
For updates, visit auburn.edu/atli

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