

national down syndrome society

ADULT
SUMMIT
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FALL CONFERENCE

Learning Together,
Focusing on Possibilities

DOWN SYNDROME GUILD
OF DALLAS



Dr. Sari Bar is a board certified Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician and Assistant Professor in Pediatrics at UT Southwestern Medical Center. She received her medical degree from Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences and continued her pediatric residency and fellowship training in Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics at Hofstra-Northwell School of Medicine at Cohen Children's Medical Center in New York. Dr. Bar, who is originally from Ft. Worth, moved back to her native state of Texas in 2017. Dr. Bar is the Medical Director of the Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics clinic and Medical Director of the Down syndrome clinic at Children's Health in Dallas. Dr. Bar has a strong interest in clinical research, teaching, and resident education. She serves as the Developmental Behavioral Pediatric residency rotation-training director at UT Southwestern and serves on the physician liaison advisory board for Family Connects Texas, North Texas Region. Outside of work, Dr. Bar enjoys spending time with her husband and three daughters.



Julie Bayless is an occupational therapist and the owner of Keystone Pediatric Therapy. She earned her B.S. in Health Science degree from Baylor University in Waco, TX, and received her Masters of Occupational Therapy from Washington University in St. Louis, MO. Julie has over 20 years of O.T. experience working in a variety of settings, including early childhood intervention, rural home care, inpatient orthopedics, adult rehabilitation, and pediatric outpatient. Pediatrics was always the reason Julie studied occupational therapy and she is so happy to have landed at Keystone Pediatric Therapy 10 years ago. Julie always brings a high degree of enthusiasm to her therapy sessions to motivate the kids. She strongly believes that "play" is the "occupation" of children, and it provides the best way for them to learn and to improve in any areas of weakness. Julie enjoys working with children from newborns to late teens with a variety of diagnoses or concerns to reach their potential and improve their daily life.



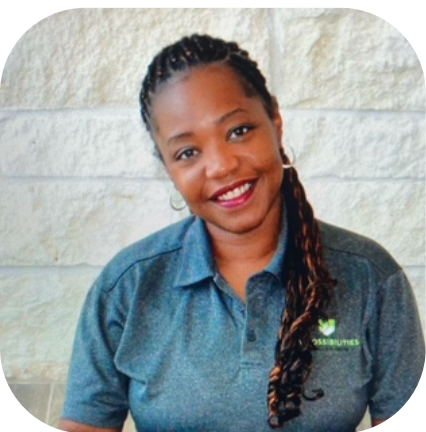
Regan Roth Fitzgerald, MEd, BCBA, LBA, graduated from the University of Texas in Austin with a degree in Psychology and Spanish. She continued her education at The Universidad de Granada in Spain and received a Masters degree in Special Education at The University of North Texas, with an emphasis in Autism Intervention and Behavior Analysis. Regan is a licensed Behavior Analyst with over 20 years of experience working with children from 18 months through adolescence who have a variety of developmental disabilities and special needs. In addition to professional expertise, Regan's has personal experience with her own daughter with special needs. Regan has provided intensive intervention, parent training, school consultations, and ARD advocacy for clients in clinic settings and in-home settings in Austin, Sacramento, and DFW. She started her own practice, Behavior & Education Specialists of Texas, LLC (BEST) in 2008. In conjunction with Studio Movie Grill, Regan developed a program where they hosted private, sensory friendly movies for children with special needs and this program has expanded across Texas. She also has initiated Behavior Analysis within the Garland and Highland Park School Districts, as well as moderating a social skills group for teens. During her free time, Regan enjoys a busy and active life with her husband and 2 daughters.



Jennifer Ford earned her Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Louisiana State University in Shreveport. Prior to relocating to the DFW area, Jennifer advocated for local families through the Northwest Louisiana Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program. It was working for CASA that allowed her to realize her passion for helping others through the non-profit sector.

Jennifer joined the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas (DSG) in 2007 as one of the organization's first staff members. Upon moving to Ft. Worth a few years later, Jennifer earned her Texas Educator Certificate and taught elementary special education in Castleberry ISD. While the opportunity to work with children and families within the district was rewarding, Jennifer still had a special connection with the DSG. Returning to the Guild in 2011, Jennifer oversaw multiple aspects of the organization's endeavors as the Operations Manager before taking the reigns as Executive Director in 2014.

Jennifer has not only been a voice for local families, but she has worked to help the efforts for those with Down syndrome across the globe by serving on the Global Down Syndrome Foundation Membership Advisory Board and committees for the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC), and Down Syndrome Affiliates in Action (DSAIA). She also holds certifications in both Non-Profit Management and Non-Profit Leadership through CNM Connect and Southern Methodist University.



Summer Gill joined My Possibilities in 2009. Summer has occupied many positions and occupations throughout the growing My Possibilities establishment. Assisting in the overall program, HIPstore work program, and finally in the classroom, Summer is a "jack-of-all-trades". Summer's current role is MProve Coaching Coordinator, in which she focuses on enriching HIPster lives by incorporating varied teaching strategies into the instruction and development of independent living skills.

Summer was born in Little Rock, Arkansas into a unique and large family within which she was later adopted and moved to Plano, Texas. There she completed high school and college and became acquainted with the world of special needs after working in-home with a variety of clientele. In her time off, Summer enjoys spending time with friends and family, and traveling. She is understanding, outspoken, lively, and nurturing, and often puts all her time and energy into improving the lives of those around her, especially the HIPsters at My Possibilities. Summer has 12+ years experience with this population and feels that it is her God-given talent. After being diagnosed with severe dyslexia, Summer has a unique understanding of what it's like to have special needs.



Tara Goodwin, DO grew up in El Paso, Texas before completing her undergraduate studies at Texas Women's University. She received her medical degree from the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Ft. Worth and completed her residency training at Methodist Hospital of Dallas. She has been board certified in Internal Medicine since 2004. Dr. Goodwin practiced hospital medicine at Baylor University Medical Center from 2004 to 2010 before working in the Emergency Room observation unit at Medical City Dallas. Since 2012, she has been working in the senior care space focusing on elderly patients, including many with dementia.

She and her husband, a fellow physician, have three wonderful children including a son with Down syndrome. As a mother of a child with Down syndrome she remains passionate about the quality of medical care for this community. She has served on the Board of Directors for the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas and is currently serving on the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee for the Highland Park Independent School District. She is a member of the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group as well as the Global Down Syndrome Foundation.



Sarah King is a Licensed Master Social Worker who has worked in the Down Syndrome Clinic at Children's since April of 2019. Sarah works with families in the clinic to provide support, education, and needed resources. Outside of work, Sarah enjoys spending time outdoors with her husband and 2 children.



Jessica Kuss, M.Ed. is the Senior Manager of Education Programs for the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), where she oversees NDSS' community focused education programs and develops high-quality supports and resources for the education and Down syndrome communities. Since 2017, Jessica has been a part of the NDSS team as a consultant and a staff member. During that time, she has supported community events for runners and contributed to resources for our education program and our health and wellness initiatives. A former elementary special education teacher, Jessica holds a bachelor's degree in K-12 special education and a master's degree in special education from James Madison University. Jessica lives in Alexandria, VA with her two children, including a son with Down syndrome.



Sara Loving is a Speech-Language Pathologist and AAC Specialist based in Dallas, Texas. She graduated with her undergraduate and graduate degree from Stephen F. Austin State University.

Sara has a variety of clinical experience but has specialized in Alternative and Augmentative Communication and literacy. Sara is licensed within Texas and holds her Certification of Clinical Competence by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association. Sara is the Chair of Texas Speech and Hearing Association within the area of AAC.

Sara is the owner of Chatterbox Therapy Center in Dallas, Texas. Chatterbox Therapy Center is the first Dallas based LAMP Center of Excellence and the only AAC forward clinic. Prior to opening Chatterbox Therapy Center, Sara worked in a variety of settings including home health, schools, and The Callier Center for Communication Disorders at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Sara lives in Plano, Texas with her husband, Luke, and their identical twin girls, Amelia and Ansley.



Kandi Pickard, President & CEO, National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) provides vision and leadership, working collaboratively with individuals and organizations to support the entire Down syndrome community. Kandi holds a degree in business administration and brings two decades of experience in operations and effective administration management to her role at NDSS. Kandi's involvement in the Down syndrome community first began as a local volunteer and advocate after her youngest son, Mason was born with Down syndrome. Eight years later, she leads NDSS with a focus on building community and keeping people with Down syndrome at the center of everything the organization does. Kandi's vision for the future of NDSS includes resources, programs, and support for individuals with Down syndrome and their families from birth to adulthood, with a special focus on caregiving, public health, and supporting aging adults.



Rose Reif, MS, LCMHC, CRC, BC-TMH

For 10 years, Rose Reif supported disabled adults as a Case Manager. In that time, she became frustrated by the lack of mental health services for adults with Down syndrome and other disabilities, and decided to do something about it. So Rose earned a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling from the Medical School at UNC-Chapel Hill, and then formed a private practice in Cary, North Carolina. In the ten years since, Rose has served disabled and neurodivergent clients and their parents throughout North Carolina as a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. You can learn more about Rose at rosereif.com.



Dana Sciullo, Research Associate, National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) engages in outreach, education, and advocacy activities in support of NDSS' health programs. Dana is a licensed and registered occupational therapist with a background in medical-based pediatric care and a special interest in research and its application to the everyday lives of families and individuals. She believes everyone benefits from having access to the most recent scientific information, especially if it is shared in a way that is easy to understand. Dana holds two degrees from the University of Pittsburgh.



Mandy Noerper Smith has been involved with My Possibilities for over ten years. She worked as direct-care staff in the educational program from 2012-2015 before leaving to learn more about the world of serving people with disabilities. She obtained her Master's degree in Psychology and worked for Vocational Rehabilitation at Texas Workforce Commission for six years. Mandy returned to My Possibilities in 2021 as the Associate Director of Support Services to continue to create pathways to inclusion through employment and independence for people with disabilities.



Heather Snook - M.S., CCC-SLP, has over 20 years of experience as an SLP. She received her B.A. degree from Louisiana Tech University and her M.S. degree in the area of Communication Disorders from the University of Louisiana. She has experience working in various settings including hospitals (ICU, acute care, and inpatient), in-home care, pediatric outpatient rehabilitation, and public schools. Heather worked with children Birth-18 years of age for 14 years at Our Children's House at Baylor. She has spent the last 8 years working for Frisco ISD with early childhood and elementary populations as well as serving in leadership roles as an Advisory SLP and Dysphagia team lead for the district.

She has extensive knowledge treating oral motor/sensory feeding disorders in pediatrics and uses training from Beckman Oral Motor, SOS approach to feeding, and Lori Overland Talk Tools. Motor planning/Apraxia disorders is also an area Heather enjoys treating and has training through PROMPTs for Restructuring Oral Muscular Phonetic Targets (PROMPT) and uses Kaufman Apraxia system. In the area of language, Heather has experience treating children with mild to severe/profound language disorders including use of various Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems to promote functional communication in a child's environment. Heather has a love for working with families and being their child's biggest cheerleader to reach their communication and feeding goals. She has a passion for relationships and feels blessed to be in a field that connects lives through communication and feeding.



Joanna Spahis is a Clinical Nurse Specialist at UT Southwestern and has been a provider in the Down Syndrome Clinic at Children's Health since it began in 1993. She especially enjoys helping teens transition to adulthood and has offered a special Transition Down Syndrome Clinic since 2014. Apart from her nursing career, Joanna enjoys playing the organ at her church, gardening, and spending time with her family and friends.



Katie Thune is an educator, author, and advocate for people with disabilities. She has her Teaching License in Health Education, and Special Education K – 12, as well as her MA in Education and worked as a teacher for Saint Paul Public Schools for 12 years. She has done extensive curriculum writing on relationships and sexuality education.



Austin Underwood is an adult living independently with Down Syndrome in Ft. Worth, Texas. Austin owns and operates his own business, Austin's Underdaws, a food truck hot dawg caterer, serving the Fort Worth-Dallas Metroplex since 2016.

Austin Underwood exemplifies the height of advocacy by pursuing his dreams, seeking people around him to support his efforts, and being a role model for those who wish to achieve success. As one of the first and oldest persons with Down syndrome to own and operate their own business, Austin shows us all how far one can go if opportunity is available. Not only does Austin manage his business, he also works as a host for an Italian restaurant located near his home.

An opportunity to meet Austin inspires most people in the community. Austin has the ability to encourage others to work hard and be independent, something he has done for the past 22 years. Austin's presence in the community speaks volumes as he lives, shops and speaks in his community not only in his business but as an advocate and a good neighbor. Austin's business, Austin's Underdaws, engages in employment opportunities for others and earned him the Lex Frieden Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the Governor's office in 2018. Austin has attended the National Down Syndrome Buddy Walk in NYC for the past two years, along with serving at the first C21 Dinner in Washington DC while lobbying for changes in employment and wage laws for adults with disabilities. Austin's photo has been on display in Times Square during Buddy Walk festivities and inspires the next generation of young families with members who have Down syndrome.

A personal message from Austin: *"I want to help people like me with disabilities to have a job like me and on their own with responsibilities."*



Jan Underwood is a married mother of 3 adult children and spouse to Joe Underwood, living in Ft. Worth, Texas. Jan is a retired business owner and currently serves as Director of The Each and Everyone Foundation, a non-profit created for the purpose of assisting with vocational training and opportunities for adults with intellectual differences.

Jan Underwood has devoted her life to helping those in the community whether it was seeking inclusion for her son in public schools, a summer camp, or after school care. Jan has never shied away from a challenge. Continuing to advocate for employment for those in the IDD community, Jan is creating a unique vocational on-the-job training setting through her non-profit and family trust for those with IDD. The setting includes a program with over 30 different job skill sets used as on-the-job training for those who wish to achieve employment within their own community. The Mingus Job Accelerator is open in for both Daily Training and Residential Training opportunities.

Jan tends to put her money where her mouth is, so to speak. If a program was needed for Austin when he was young, Jan would develop and gain support for the program, then secure funding and spin it off to the more suitable agency to continue. Jan, as President of the ARC of Greater Tarrant County, helped to create collaborations with both Camp Fire and YMCA to accept and provide support for kids with disabilities in their programs.

Jan begin battling an archaic educational system when Austin was only 3 years old, in 1981. The journey took her all the way through his public school years and on to higher education, then employment needs. When Jan tackles the system, it is never solely about securing opportunities for Austin, but seeking a service that impacts as many people as possible. The Mingus Job Accelerator is her latest venture and has the ability to train and seek employment for up to 300+ adults with IDD each year. Jan is creating a model to hopefully be used in other areas across the United States.



Dr. Claire Usala is a board-certified Pediatrician and Assistant Professor in Pediatrics at UT Southwestern Medical Center. She received her medical degree at UT Southwestern Medical Center. She went on to complete pediatric residency at New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital at Columbia University. She returned to UT Southwestern in 2021 to work at the Down Syndrome Clinic at Children's Health in Dallas. She has a strong interest in medical student education and clinical quality improvement. In her spare time she enjoys baking and spending time with her 2 children and husband.