The ABLE Act

On April 16, 2015, Kansas became the 8th state with signed legislation approving the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2014.

The ABLE Act allows many people with disabilities and their families the opportunity to save money in much the same way as parents and grandparents have been able to utilize the Internal Revenue’s 529 plan to save for college education. Creating an ABLE account allows for deposits of up to $14,000 per year with a cap of $100,000 without the risk of losing eligibility for Social Security, Medicaid, and other government benefits.

Previously, people with disabilities who received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) could not have more than $2,000 in assets and remain SSI eligible. The ABLE Act changes that. And more than that, the interest earned on the person’s ABLE contributions will be tax-free if used for expenses such as: education; housing; transportation; employment, training, and support; assistive technology; health, prevention, and wellness; financial management; administrative services; funeral and burial expenses.

So who is eligible? You are, if your disability manifested before you turned age 26 and if you are already receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). We won’t know the exact regulations until they’ve been written, however, it is estimated that 5.8 million U.S. citizens may be eligible for an ABLE account. The resource for this information about the ABLE Act is at this link: www.allsup.com/media/files/ABLE-infographic.pdf

An example of how an account will work was provided in the June 2015 AT Program News. Susan Tachau, executive director of the …continued on page 2
Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation wrote about the ABLE Act in her article, *The best thing since the ADA*. To help others understand the potential, Ms. Tachau envisioned AT purchase strategies using ABLE accounts in a variety of scenarios.

One example:
Nathan has Down Syndrome and lives in his own apartment in a small town. He also has a significant hearing loss and needs hearing aids. Because Nathan's household income is below 250% of the federal poverty level, he is eligible for the Audient hearing aid program. Audient provides dual digital hearing aids for $1,400, including: (1) a fitting, (2) three adjustments, (3) ear mold(s), (4) fully digital hearing aid(s), and (5) a one-year manufacturer's warranty.

- Nathan opens an ABLE account to save money and receive gifts while maintaining his SSI and Medicaid.
- Once Nathan has $1,400, he applies directly to Audient to receive dual digital hearing aids.
- Nathan continues to save in his ABLE account beyond the hearing aid purchase for other qualified needs and wants. ABLE accounts have low or no fees and are consumer directed to serve this purpose.

For more scenarios, read Ms. Tachau’s article, at this link, [http://atprogramnews.typepad.com/files/2015_spring_the-able-act-for-funding-4.5.html](http://atprogramnews.typepad.com/files/2015_spring_the-able-act-for-funding-a.t..html)

If you, or someone you know, would benefit from an ABLE account, contact the Assistive Technology for Kansans’ AT Access Site in your region by calling 800-KAN DO IT or 800-526-3648. Ask to talk to an AT Specialist and start saving.

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**Just the “STATS”** FY 2015 results for training and technical assistance provided by University of Kansas, Life Span Institute at Parsons’ faculty and staff include: 413 in-state activities impacted 16,702 participants and 30 out-of-state activities impacted 1,673 participants.

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**KITS Project**

The Kansas Inservice Training System (KITS) staff met at LSI-Parsons on Monday, June 29, 2015, for their annual planning meeting.

**The Business Office:**

**HR News**

While the Parsons’ Business Office staff (from left, Laura Hanigan and Tammy Schoenhofer) are happy to provide others with an array of work related information, they only work five days a week and that’s where the KU Human Resource Management website comes in handy.

Do you have questions about the HealthQuest Savings Discount, want information about job benefits, need a detailed explanation about the different components of pay and compensation, or any other human resource related issue including the popular HR Pay calendar? Then check out the KU Human Resources website at this link, [http://humanresources.drupal.ku.edu/](http://humanresources.drupal.ku.edu/).

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**PRESENTATIONS**

Carlin, K. (2015, June). *Safety First: A set of guidelines and procedures for maintaining a safe environment.* Workshop presentation at Northwest Kansas Educational Services Center, Oakley, KS.

Espe-Sherwindt, M. (2015, June). *Powerful partnerships with families: Linked lives - Families and our use of family practices.* Paper presented at the KITS 2015 Summer Institute, Lawrence, KS.

Kemp, P. (2015, April). *Individualized family service plan (IFSP) outcome training.* Presentation at Sedgwick County Infant-Toddler Services, Wichita, KS.

Jones, S. (2015, February). *Telecommunication Access Program (TAP): Intro to new materials, demonstration practices, and applications.* Presentation for regional TAP demonstration center (RCIL, Inc.), Topeka, KS.

Jones, S. (2015, February). *Telecommunication Access Program (TAP): Intro to new materials, demonstration practices, and applications.* Presentation for regional TAP demonstration centers (RCIL, SKIL, Families Together, PILR, OCCK), Wichita, KS.

Jones, S. (2015, February). *Telecommunication Access Program (TAP): Intro to new materials, demonstration practices, and applications.* Presentation for regional TAP demonstration center (Three Rivers), Wamego, KS.

Jones, S. (2015, March). *Telecommunication Access Program (TAP): Intro to new materials, demonstration practices, and applications.* Presentation for regional TAP demonstration center (CFI, Inc.), Kansas City, KS.


Jones, S. (2015, May). *Introduction to the Kansas Telecommunications Access Program (TAP).* Presentation at Deaf Culture Center, Olathe, KS.


Sack, S. (2015, June). New technologies, barriers to their development, and unmet needs. Presentation at KU Research: Science Speed Dating in partnership with Nerd Night Lawrence, Lawrence, KS.

KITS 2015 Summer Institute: Powerful Partnerships

Engagement is at the center of learning. Engagement is also the catalyst for creating powerful partnerships. Fifty-seven early childhood professionals gathered at the KU Adams Alumni Center in Lawrence the second week of June to participate in the 22nd annual Kansas Inservice Training System (KITS) Summer Institute: Powerful Partnerships.

During the KITS 2015 Summer Institute, nationally recognized experts examined the importance of those positive partnerships, not only for young learners, but also for those adults who work together on their behalf. Daily presentations focused on how early childhood professionals engage and create partnerships with the children they serve, their families, other educational partners and coworkers, and even within themselves.

As a result of attending this year’s KITS Summer Institute, participants are able to establish partnerships utilizing specific intentional practices that have an evidence base to promote learning, to empower families, to support community partners, and to build upon their own personal strengths. This year’s schedule included the following presentations:

- **Tuesday, June 9:** Powerful Partnerships with Team Members – Dathan D. Rush, Ed.D., CCC-SLP and M’Lisa Shelden, PT, Ph.D., Morganton, NC.
- **Wednesday, June 10:** Powerful Partnerships Promoting Child Engagement – Robin McWilliam, Ph.D., Nashville, TN.

...continued on page 6
**KITS Summer Institute, from page 5**

- Thursday, June 11: *Powerful Partnerships with Families: Linked Lives – Families and Our Use of Family Practices* – Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt, Ph.D., Tallmadge, OH.
- Friday, June 12: *Powerful Partnerships for Effective Practices* – Kristie Pretti-Frontczak, Ph.D., Hinckley, OH.

The KITS Summer Institute is open to all people working with children in Kansas; but priority is given to those professionals working with children, birth to eight, who have disabilities. To attend the Summer Institute, participants must submit an online registration and enroll for college credit with one of the six partnering universities: Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, Kansas State University, Pittsburg State University, Wichita State University, and University of Kansas.

*Submitted by Karen Rowland, KITS Program Assistant*

More information is available at [http://kskits.org/training/KITSSummerInst.shtml](http://kskits.org/training/KITSSummerInst.shtml)

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**YEARS OF SERVICE Recognized at Parsons**

The Life Span Institute at Parsons’ staff celebrated their colleagues’ Years of Service with a party at the Parsons Research Center, June 16, 2015. We used to call it a reception, we’ve even called it a ceremony, but the truth is we’re friends, have been for years, and getting together to recognize the accomplishments and longevity of Parsons’ staff is a very good reason to have a party.

Really, this year we owe it all to our own Laura Hanigan, pictured standing in the many of the pictures on page 7-8. She emceed, mixed, baked, decorated, and hosted the... continued on page 7
Here’s the edited version of the program.

Alan Engels, (pictured above, left) IT support technician, received his ten-year pin and was reminded by our emcee that even though he tries hard to get us to understand the how and why of computers, all we really want is for them to work! And our IT department excels at that.

Laura Doyle-Colvin, (pictured above, center) accounting specialist, who ten years ago was a bank teller, took on the job of payee with Southeast Kansas Respite Service, and her colleagues agree she was the right candidate for the job. She received her ten-year pin.

Debbie Moody, (pictured above, right) administrative assistant, joined the LSI/Parsons 15 years ago as the receptionist at the UCDD building. She supports the projects in a plethora of ways including ordering supplies, processing travel, and more unique roles such as makeup artist for a project’s video shoot. She received her 15-year pin.

Sandy Hill, (pictured left with Laura Hanigan) office assistant, began her career as the receptionist at the Research Center in 1999. She collects data, orders supplies, directs phone calls, and many other activities that are required to maintain a smooth operation. She has assisted students and international visitors in obtaining a place to stay, furnishings for their home, and introducing them to the southeast Kansas area. She appears relieved to receive her 15-year pin.

... continued on page 8
Patty Black Moore, (from left: Laura Hanigan, Patty; seated from left, Tony Grady, Diane Salyers) communications coordinator, took a position with a community disability organization, taught a training course developed by Kathy Olson, a former Parsons’ project director, and soon after joined the Parsons’ crew. She creates public awareness materials, conducts video interviews, produces the quarterly newsletter, and the Parsons’ annual report. She received her 20-year pin and KU certificate of appreciation.

Sheila Simmons, (pictured right) research project manager, visited Kansas to waterski at Big Hill Lake near Parsons more than 25 years ago. She manages the Assistive Technology for Kansans program as well as related ATK projects and is co-coordinator of the Kansas AgrAbility program, in collaboration with Kansas State University. Additionally, she co-founded the Parsons Community Garden. She received her 25-year pin and KU decorative pen and holder.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

KU Research Speed Dating: Another way to network

Dozens of people gathered at the Cider Gallery in Lawrence on June 22 “for a night of rapid research conversations with KU experts”. People who paid $10 each had 10 minutes to hear a short presentation of the researcher’s area of expertise, take the opportunity to ask a few questions, and then quickly, move on to the next table. KU Life Span Institute at Parsons’ senior scientist, Sara Sack, “an expert in technology...continued on page 9
that helps people who have speech-language disorders” talked about 3-D printed prosthetics (an example is pictured left), communication and speech output technologies, assistive listening technologies, and promising research.

Following the event, Dr. Sack said, “The event was fantastic! It was fun and had such an amazing turnout: Lots of young researchers and software developers; Six rounds of tables with 10 participants and extras, changing every 10 minutes. It was really intense! I met several people that I’m sure we’ll continue to have contact with and one participant wanted to have her picture taken with me. Now I just wonder where that picture will turn up.”

The event was held in partnership with Nerd Nite Lawrence and supported by the KU Natural History Museum, the Spencer Museum of Art, the Life Span Institute, KU Libraries, and the KU Office of Research. For more, follow this link [http://biodiversity.ku.edu/visit/events/research-speed-dating](http://biodiversity.ku.edu/visit/events/research-speed-dating)

Visit the KU Life Span Institute (LSI) at Parsons website at [http://parsons.lsi.ku.edu/](http://parsons.lsi.ku.edu/)

Additionally, The Insider is archived online at [http://www.parsons.lsi.ku.edu/newsletters](http://www.parsons.lsi.ku.edu/newsletters)

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