

Thursday, May 14, 2009

OU hosts national quality of life themed autism symposium

By **Katie Land**, news editor

Oakland University played host to a national symposium focused on the quality of life for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at Meadow Brook Hall this May.

Dr. Robert L. Schalock, noted researcher on quality of life issues, gave the keynote presentation and provided an overview of the eight quality of life domains, the indicators within each domain and how quality of life is frequently measured.

Although the quality of life concept has been increasingly used in the field of intellectual disabilities, the specific factors that contribute to an improved quality of life for people with ASD are unknown.

Symposium facilitators and attendees concentrated discussions and brainstorming sessions on determining identifying factors that could lead to an improved quality of life for individuals with autism. The symposium findings will help provide information for future conferences and research.

With troubled economic times in Michigan, attendees recognized that when individuals with ASD gain independence, they rely less on services from the state, the family or the community, thereby reducing the amount of tax dollars needed for some programs.

Sponsored by the Department of Human Development and Child Studies within the School of Education and Human Services, symposium attendees represented a cross-section of professionals, researchers, parents and individuals living with ASD.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that causes problems with social interaction and communication. Health care providers consider autism a spectrum disorder, or a group of disorders with similar features. Currently, the categories include classic autism, Asperger syndrome and atypical autism, according to the National Institutes of Health Web site.

Oakland offers an autism endorsement program as a first or second special education endorsement, as well as a cohort program and graduate program. For more information, visit www.oakland.edu/autism.

To learn about additional autism events and news, visit the Oakland University Center for Autism Research, Education and Support (OUCARES) Web site at www.oakland.edu/oucares.

SUMMARY

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Created by Katherine Land - Deleted (land@oakland.edu) on Thursday, May 14, 2009

Modified by Katherine Land - Deleted (land@oakland.edu) on Thursday, May 14, 2009

Article Start Date: Thursday, May 14, 2009