

Mailman Advisory Council (MAC)

Carole Abbott, PhD, MAC Co-Chair

Carole Abbott, PhD, is a community representative on the MAC. In Miami, she completed her developmental school psychology internship with the Mailman Center and Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS). Dr. Abbott continued to work with both institutions for 22 years, assuring access to evaluations, educational placement for children with special needs, and providing resources and producing training for families, teachers and related service personnel including three statewide training series for the Florida Department of Education. Dr. Abbott served on numerous boards and committees related to children with special needs, and co-chaired the Education and Child Development Committee for the countywide Children's Initiative. Now retired, she is an advocate for early identification and intervention and the inclusion of children with special needs in the schools and community settings. She volunteers at the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) at the University of Miami.

Stephanie Preshong Brown, MAC Co-Chair

Stephanie Preshong Brown, MBA, is a parent-advocate on the MAC. Her primary focus is facilitating systemic change to ensure opportunities for all individuals with disabilities. Ms. Preshong Brown service includes numerous boards and committees, including the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, Disability Rights Florida Board, Martin County School District's Least Restrictive Environment Committee, the Exceptional Student Education Parent Advisory Council, the Elementary Student Advisory Council, and the Treasure Coast Children's Museum. She is frequently a guest speaker at educational and disability forums, including the Assistive Technology Industry Association utilizing technology to optimize learning and communication for persons with disabilities. Several organizations have recognized Ms. Preshong Brown for her contributions to the disability community, including the Florida Department of Education, Florida Inclusion Network, Florida Department of Education, and the Exceptional Students' first Family Inclusion Leadership Meeting, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has invited Ms. Preshong Brown to participate in Florida's Pediatric Medical Home Demonstration Project. Ms. Preshong Brown is also a Junior Achievement volunteer and PTA board member. In addition to her Masters in Business Administration, Ms. Preshong Brown is a graduate of the State of Florida Developmental Disabilities Partners in Policymaking Program.

Rixys Alfonso

Rixys Alfonso is an innovator in creative strategy for connecting brands with causes and consumers. She's the Founder of CauseMo Marketing and a parent advocate who has been active at the local, state and national level in a variety of organizations advocating the needs of individuals with disabilities and rare disorders. Recently named a "Hispanic Woman of Distinction" by Latina Style Magazine, Alfonso effectively leverages her leadership role at the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, along with her multi-cultural expertise, to give a greater voice to the Hispanic community on issues impacting people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Andrew Anderson

Andrew Anderson is a graduate of Florida Atlantic University (with honors), with a major in psychology. He has been active on the MAC for 10 years, and brings the perspective of an adult with an acquired disability who has extensive experience with both the healthcare and higher education systems. Andrew is an expert in the use of assistive technology in addressing disability.

Roselyne Antao

Roselyne is the mom of two premature infants, one weighing just over two pounds, so she is well acquainted with the challenges faced by families of children with special needs. Happily, both of her sons are grown and doing well.

Roselyne holds a BA in psychology from Queens College. She came to the Miami from New York where she worked at the United Nations for 13 years in the fields of Information Technology and Human Resources. She also brings her language skills of French, English, Spanish and Creole. Ever since she came to work at the Mailman Center some 5 years ago, she has been providing advocacy and support to special needs children and their families. Her first endeavor was through the Parent to Parent of Miami organization where she assisted families at the specialty clinics providing them support and services, including trainings. Now a MCCD employee, she wears several hats. She is the System Navigator for the South Florida Military Access Portal (SF MAPS) providing support to, and connecting military families who parent a child or children with special needs to community services and resources. She is also working on the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant, a study designed to prevent childhood obesity. She assists with data collection and will be doing training on nutrition and safety for parents, childcare professionals, and children. Lastly, she is working with the MCCD Education Department on the Early Reading First grant which evaluates professional development of pre-k teachers and its impact on the enhanced literacy capacity of bi-lingual four year olds

Rochelle (Shelly) Baer

Shelly Baer, LCSW, has worked as a clinical social worker for 20 years in the Miami community focusing on under-served populations. Children and families is her specialization and for 7 years she was employed at University of Miami School of Medicine in the Department of Pediatrics, Special Immunology counseling HIV+ children and their families. Her current position at the medical school is at the Mailman Center for Child Development as Coordinator of the Emerging Transformational Leadership Program and Director of Understanding the Family Perspective. She also supervises social work interns

and assists with the domestic violence program in the social work division at Mailman. Ms. Baer is an individual with a disability growing up with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis and it has never slowed her down. She has been on the board of the Center for Independent Living for 7 years and currently serves as secretary. Ms. Baer created a resource guide called **ACCESS Miami** providing social service resources for people with disabilities; the guide has a website and is currently in its third edition. Ms. Baer provides public speaking to college classes and health care professionals on sexuality, dating and disability. As a springboard for discussion, she utilizes the photography exhibit she co-created, **Uncensored Life: Raw Beauty** that showcases women with disabilities, beauty and sensuality.

Katrin Balaban

Katrin Balaban earned her Master of Education degree, with an emphasis on Inclusion, from McGill University, Montreal, Quebec. For the last twenty-one years, she has worked for Comprehensive Rehabilitation Consultants helping parents of children with disabilities plan for their children's present and future needs. She has credited her nephew, Robert for her passion for inclusive schools and communities. Robert was born with developmental delays. As an active member of the Mailman Advisory Council for many years, she has brought her perspective to the Council, both as a family member of an individual with a disability, as well as a professional, working with children, their parents, doctors, therapists and teachers on a daily basis.

Nila Benito

Nila Benito is Coordinator of Community Inclusion for the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, the University of South Florida's-University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities. Nila's primary focus is to help her sons with autism, Vincent & Joseph, be the best they can be. Through her work at USF, she promotes positive outcomes for and a greater understanding of people with developmental disabilities and their families. Before working at USF, she was a reporter for the Tampa Tribune and director of public relations at a children's hospital. Nila was appointed as chairperson of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Employment, Community Living, and School to Work Transition and served two terms as chairperson of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. She has also worked on special projects for USF's Center for Autism & Related Disabilities 1997-2005. Nila's professional journal publications and primary interests are in family/professional collaboration, inclusion, peer supports, transition, customized employment, and positive behavior supports.

Carol Brady-Simmons

Director of Client and Vision Enhancement Services, Carol Brady-Simmons has held a management position at Miami Lighthouse for over 21 years. In 2002, she started the Blind Babies Program. In the summer of 2007 she assumed responsibility for overseeing the successful acquisition of the Heiken Children's Vision Program by Miami Lighthouse. She provides management and oversight for children's, teens and adult programs. She provides leadership as Chief Program Officer at Miami Lighthouse. Ms. Brady-Simmons has an AA in Elementary Education, a BA in Visual Disabilities, as well as a BA in Leisure Services and

Studies with a minor in gerontology. She is a certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist and is also certified in INSITE and VIISA training for birth to five, and possesses master level credits in early intervention and Early Childhood Development for Blind and Visually Impaired.

Jill B. Brookner

Jill Brookner has been employed in Miami-Dade County Public Schools since 1980. She has served as a special education teacher, behavior management teacher, and educational specialist, and is currently the instructional supervisor for programs of students with intellectual disabilities, physical impairments and transition services. Ms. Brookner holds a Master's degree in Education from the University of Miami, and certificates in counseling, administration and supervision. Jill is a member of the State of Florida Alternate Assessment Advisory Council and a member of the Board of Trustees of Parent to Parent Miami. She has been an integral part of the Access Points Writing Team for the State of Florida. Under Ms. Brookner's supervision, Miami-Dade County Public Schools developed several transition programs, including Project Accept (2005), Project Bridge (2007), Project Search Programs (2008), and Project Panther Life (2011). Project Panther Life is the first fully inclusive post-secondary program for students with intellectual disabilities in Miami, and was implemented in collaboration with Parent to Parent of Miami and Florida International University.

Lileana Valdes de Moya

Lileana Valdes de Moya obtained her Masters of Science in Special Education from the University of Miami in 2008. Ms. de Moya is a registered nurse and received extensive training in the field of mental health, disabilities and advocacy. She is the mother of two sons, the youngest having emotional and intellectual disabilities. She joined Parent to Parent of Miami in 2001 and served as the Training Director until 2006. She joined the Board of Trustees in 2008 and has always been a fierce advocate for the rights of children with disabilities and their families. She was awarded the "Henry Bandier C.A.M.P for Justice Fellowship" by the University of Miami Children's Youth and Law Clinic for her work with children and young adults in foster care with disabilities. She currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the State Advisory Committee for the Education of Exceptional Students, the University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development Advisory Committee, the Florida International University Special Education Advisory Board, State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee, Florida College Collaborative, and the University of Miami's Exceptional Student Education/Pre-K Disabilities/ESOL Advisory Board. Lily is currently the director of JAG Education Consultants and has been appointed by Governor Rick Scott as a member of the Children's Trust Board.

Enrique Escallón

Enrique Escallón lives in Miami with his wife Maria Esther. He has four children: Leyvani, Dannel, Daviel, and Dariviel. Dariviel was diagnosed with total liver failure at birth, and received a liver transplant at 13 days old. Through his son's experiences, Enrique has become a devoted advocate for children with disabilities and provides a much needed father's perspective. He currently serves on the Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Advisory Panel for ESE (Exceptional Student Education); FAAST (Florida Alliance for

Assistive Services and Technology) Board; State Advisory Board for the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services; National PTA and VSA Arts of Florida. He has also chaired the FDDC (Florida Developmental Disabilities Council) and the Hurricane District for Boy Scouts of America. Enrique works as Assistant Vice-President for SunTrust Banks.

Patricia Giner

Patricia Giner earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Special Education and is an Advocate and Educational Consultant. Ms. Giner has been guiding students with special needs and families through the process of transition from high school to post secondary placement. She has over 25 years of professional and personal experience helping students with learning disabilities, psychological diagnoses, and neurological disorders advocate and practice self-determination in their academic and community environments. Ms. Giner has presented nationally on the transition from high school to post-secondary schooling. In 2006, she became the National Director of Admissions for a post-secondary transitional program for young adults with special needs. Formerly with the College Living Experience, Ms. Giner will soon be starting a private program for transition.

Susan Gold

Dr. Susan Gold received her Ed. D. in Early Childhood Education from the University of Miami and then obtained her certification in Early Childhood/Special Education. She spent two years as a post-doctoral research fellow at the Mailman Center for Child Development and has been a member of the faculty of the University of Miami Department of Pediatrics since 1988. Dr. Gold has taught preschool, elementary school and at the college level. She has made over 100 presentations at local, state and national conferences and has written over 20 articles for publication. Dr. Gold's work at the Mailman Center has focused on working with young children with disabilities and their families. She specializes in the inclusion of children with special needs in neighborhood early care and education centers. Dr. Gold is the former chair of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council.

Lolly Gonzalez

Helene Good

In 1982, Helene answered a one-line want ad, and became the director of what was then known as the Community Committee for Developmental Handicaps and Retardation (CCDHR). The only staff member, she worked from a borrowed desk in a conference room of a state office building. She has never turned back.

With a concentration in public policy, administration, and social work education, Helene earned her Master's Degree in Social Work from Florida State University. She has enjoyed teaching opportunities at Miami Dade College's Department of Social Sciences, and served as a field instructor for Florida State University, Florida International University, Barry University, and the University of Miami. Helene is the recipient of the 2009 David Lawrence Jr. Champion for Children Award from The Children's Trust honoring a lifetime of achievement and dedication to children.

Stephanie Linton

Gayle Miller

Gayle Miller is an attorney with Holland and Knight. She has been an attorney in Florida since 1982 and resides in Broward County. From 2005 – 2011, Gayle was an attorney with Disability Rights Florida, formerly known as the Advocacy Center for Persons Disabilities, Inc., Florida's federally funded protection and advocacy agency. Disability Rights Florida provides services to persons with disabilities throughout the State of Florida. Gayle focuses on disability civil rights violations within the State and handles investigations and systemic reform issues regarding access to public and private programs and services, including private businesses, transportation systems, post-secondary education, and also telecommunications and information technology and housing issues. She served as grant manager for two of the eight federal grants used to fund Disability Rights Florida, the Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology grant and the Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights grant.

Alesia Cruchley Mogul

Alesia Cruchley Mogul is the mother of two adult sons, one who has Down syndrome and the other who is gifted. As a community-volunteer, she has been active on boards and committees with a special education and job training focus for over 30 years in private schools, the Miami Dade County Public School System and humane service organizations. Presently in addition to the Mailman Advisory Council, Alesia serves on the executive committees and boards of Goodwill Industries of South Florida, and the new magnet type

private school, Our Pride Academy (OPA), both serving individuals with developmental disabilities. She is also a member of United Way of Miami's Woman's Leadership Council and the Junior League of Miami.

Margarita Montalvo

Carlos A. Saenz

Carlos was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1972. He was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy affecting mainly his motor skills. He had to overcome many obstacles throughout the school years. Carlos graduated with a regular diploma from Miami-Dade County Public Schools. He continued his schooling and graduated with a B.A. in Political Science and Communication from the University of Florida. He is studying for a Master's degree in Human Resources Management. Currently, he is working as a Patient Access Representative at the Mailman Center for Child Development, University of Miami.

Helen Scarr

Helen Scarr, MHSA, has worked in the healthcare arena for over 30 years, with a primary focus on improving patient's access to quality healthcare, the past 18 of which she has worked at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. She currently leads the UHealth Office of Patient Advocacy, and as Family Advisor for the UM Autism Programs. Prior to working for the University, Ms. Scarr worked in the healthcare payer arena for 12 years, working for 2 various insurance companies and one HMO. A social worker and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) by training, Ms. Scarr worked as an ambulance driver/attendant, ER Technician and ER Social worker. Ms. Scarr's background includes working with children with intellectual and physical disabilities as a music teacher, para-professional, and Camp Easter Seal counselor. She is the proud mother of 8-year old boy-girl twins, both graduates of the University of Miami Mailman Center for Child Development Debbie School. Her son was diagnosed with Autism just before his 5th birthday. Ms. Scarr attributes much of her son's great success in school and life to the nurturing Debbie School Inclusion experience and the guidance of University of Miami Autism Professionals. Ms. Scarr serves as a family representative on the Mailman Consumer Advisory Board and as its facilitator.

Kent Schomber

Kent Schomber is a long time faithful employee of both the University of Miami's Department of Psychology and the UM/NSU Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD). He was diagnosed with autism at an early age. He is a self-advocate representing persons with disabilities and is an important role model and asset to the disability community in general. He is helpful and responsible in carrying out his many duties, making sure tasks are done correctly and assisting his co-workers whenever he can. In his advocacy for inclusion, he works with others to make Florida's autism insurance bill a reality

in other states so that persons with autism are able to get the services they need. He is also an environmental advocate, encouraging people to “go green” in order to assure that the forests are available to all birds and animals.

Jean Sherman

Jean Sherman is a family representative on the MAC. Her oldest child is a young man with a severe intellectual disability. She is a registered nurse and holds a doctorate in adult education. A Broward resident for the past 35 years, she spent the first half of her career working exclusively in the Aging Network. For the past 21 years she has held several education and training positions in the field of developmental disabilities. Dr. Sherman has faculty appointments at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in both the Center on Aging (Dept. of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences) and the Mailman Center University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (Dept. of Pediatrics). Those dual appointments coincide with her interest in lifespan issues of individuals with developmental disabilities and their aging family caregivers. She chairs the Area 10 Family Care Council, is a member of Family Care Council Florida, and a member of the Volunteer Florida Statewide Inclusion Council. For the MAC, Jean’s particular focus areas are community inclusion and emergency preparedness.

Ann Siegel

Ann Siegel has been an advocate for children in Broward County for over seventeen years. She received her Juris Doctor from Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad Law Center. During law school, Ann was a Disability Law Fellow at the Children First organization and volunteered as a Guardian Ad Litem. For fourteen years, she has served as a surrogate parent for children in the foster system within Broward County. She gained substantial legal experience working as a staff attorney in the Education Legal Rights Project of the Children’s Advocacy Program at Legal Aid Service of Broward, Inc. from April 2001-January 2009. Her first job after law school was at the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities and then in January 2009, she returned to Disability Rights Florida (formerly the Advocacy Center) to assume the position of Managing Attorney of the Education Team. Ann is a member of the Florida Bar and is admitted to practice in the U.S. District Courts for the Southern, Middle and Northern Districts as well as in the 11th Circuit Court of Appeal.

Joe Walker