



DEPARTMENT OF  
ECONOMIC SECURITY

*Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona*



# Self-Care 2024 for Caregivers Conference

presented by The Department of Economic Security  
Division of Developmental Disabilities

**October 3, 2024**

**Casino Del Sol Hotel and Conference Center  
Tucson, Arizona**

**Speaker Biographies**



## Speaker Biographies

*Alphabetical order by last name*



**Susanne Arnold, Ph.D.** | Susanne Arnold, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist and the DDD Behavioral Health Administrator. In that role, she supervises Behavioral Complex Care as well as the Division's Behavior Analysts and Program Review Committee team. Prior to joining DDD, she worked in leadership roles for behavioral health outpatient providers as well as inpatient and justice system settings. She is passionate about enhancing behavioral health services offered to Division members.



**Tracy Carroll, PT, MPH** | Tracy Carroll has been a practicing Physical Therapist for almost 40 years. Her clinical practice and personal interests have focused on persons with I/DD to help maximize independence and overall well-being of individuals and their caregivers to help navigate aging and health-related concerns with guidance and resources.



**Kathy Gray-Mangerson, MBA** | Kathy lives in Southern Arizona and is Raising Special Kid's Education Systems Administrator. She has been assisting parents with special education, understanding state programs, and getting connected to resources in their community for the past 16 years. Eleven of those years have been with Raising Special Kids. She also worked for five years with the Arizona Department of Education as a Parent Information Network Specialist. Kathy has a bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's Degree in Business Administration. She has an adult son with a Specific Learning Disability in Auditory Processing. She has 3 grandchildren who are the loves of her life. Her oldest granddaughter, who is 7, has an IEP in the DD category and is currently attending 2nd grade. Her middle granddaughter has an IEP in the SLI category and is in 1st grade. Kathy's personal involvement with special education and IEPs will continue through this next generation of family members. Kathy is a recipient of the Diane Lynn Anderson award for her work with people with disabilities and is very happy to be here today to present this information.



**Christina Hedges** | Christina Hedges serves as the Office of Individual and Family Affairs Administrator for the Division of Developmental Disabilities. She has been with the Division since 2016 as both a support coordinator and behavioral health advocate supervisor. Christina has over a decade of experience working with children, youth, and families throughout the state. As a native Tucsonan, she is passionate about serving her community and ensuring Arizonans have access to the resources needed to thrive. Christina is the proud mother of three children who have behavioral health needs including one child on the autism spectrum. In advocating for her children, Christina has navigated the various systems including the behavioral health system and the DDD system.



**Sey In, Esq** | Sey In is a staff attorney with Disability Rights Arizona (DRAZ). His practice focuses on civil rights and healthcare matters. He has provided many trainings on supported decision-making (SDM) to families, self-advocates, medical providers, and social service providers. He has also presented on the topic of SDM at the Arizona State Bar Convention and in a panel moderated by Arizona Supreme Court Vice Chief Justice Ann Timmer. He is a graduate of the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University where he was a Gitenstein Health Law and Policy Fellow and the recipient of the Honorable David A. Patterson Award for Public Service and the Citation of Excellence in Political Asylum.



**Heather Joy Magdeleno** | Heather Joy is the primary caregiver to her 2 teenagers born with the same rare genetic syndrome. In October 2016, Heather Joy founded Journey into Joy (JIJ), a unique support group for parents who have a child with a disability. JIJ supports parent caregivers to learn to care for themselves, while also caring for their child.



**Dawn McReynolds** | Dawn originally from Detroit, Michigan where she transitioned from working for a non-profit organization to founding one in 2003 - a crisis resource center for women. She brings her personal experience and deep understanding of receiving services in the behavioral health system as a member to all she does. In 2010 Dawn was chosen to serve as a SAMHSA National Representative for Behavioral Health agencies of Arizona. Dawn has worked in the behavioral and advocacy field for over 30 years. In 2012 Dawn authored Collaborative Communication and became the first “Trainer” of her curriculum to be independently approved by the Department of Behavioral Health Services to deliver the curriculum throughout Arizona. In 2018 Dawn joined the team at UnitedHealthcare Community Plan in the Office of Individual and Family Affairs as the Administrator. She leads the OIFA team in working collaboratively with members/family members and providers to gather the voice and experience of our community.



**Melanie Mills** | Melanie Mills is the State Director for The Arc of Arizona. Previously she held the role of Executive Director for Y.E.S. The Arc in Cottonwood Arizona. Her professional career in the disability community has spanned over 21 years. Dedication to this line of work was first inspired by her family members who were diagnosed with intellectual disability. Melanie currently serves on the National Council of Executives as the Regional Representative for the western portion of the United States through The Arc of the United States. Previous volunteerism includes The Arizona Trauma Intervention Program and serving on the Verde Valley Humane Society Board of Directors. She is a current member of the Arizona Disability Sexual Violence Network which works to educate individuals on the prevention of sexual violence against individuals with disabilities and ensure proper care and investigation is available through her work with the Grand Canyon Collaborative when someone with a disability is a victim of sexual violence. She has served on various advisory committees and coalitions including those focused on guardianship & supported decision-making training and supports. The Arc of Arizona advocates for the rights and full community participation of all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Melanie and the network of members and affiliated chapters work to improve systems of supports and services, connect families, inspire communication and influence public policy in Arizona and Federally.



**Janna Murrell** | Janna Murrell became a volunteer with Raising Special Kids in 1998, after experiencing firsthand the value of Parent to Parent support when her son was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. After working with families in the nonprofit arena for 12 years Janna joined the staff at Raising Special Kids in 2008 and has worn several hats; Family Support Specialist, Director of Family Support and Education and now Assistant Executive Director. Janna is a Credentialed Peer Parent Support Partner; and BHT, Certified Trainer of the ASQ 3 and ASQ se, Accredited Provider of Level 4 Group Stepping Stones Triple P, Certified Trainer for Serving on Groups That Make Decisions and Certified completion of the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening & Support.



**Deborah North** | A native of Arizona, Deborah North was under the delusion that she was a good gardener during the 25+ years she lived and worked in Silicon Valley as an engineer and project manager. Returning to Arizona in 2003, she rapidly learned that to enjoy gardening in Tucson required significant re-training. She entered the Master Gardener program through the University of Arizona in 2004 and has never looked back. The desire to grow things, learn about best practices, and teach others how to garden developed into a passionate endeavor. Armed with a second round of degrees she began working in agriculture specializing in integrated pest management (IPM). IPM is focused on proactive cultural and biorational approaches to preventing issues in the growing environment. Now retired, Deborah remains committed to helping people learn how to garden safely and sustainably in the Sonoran Desert. She is a subject matter expert in citrus, deciduous fruit trees, and IPM.



**Penny Ratzan**

**Carol Schneiderman**





**Michele Thorne, MS, LAS** | Michele is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Care 4 the Caregivers. Michele gave up working in the field of genetics when both of her children were diagnosed with autism. Since then, she has been focused on providing critical care to those who are raising children with disabilities. Michele has a BS, MBio, and Nonprofit Management Certification from Arizona State University and is a Stepping Stone Triple P and Protective Factors Framework facilitator



**Angie Venne** | Angie is the Customer Service Administrator for the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). She has been with The Arizona Department of Economic Security for over 27 years, 20 of those years with DDD, where she has served in Support Coordination, Training, and the CARES Administration. Growing up in Tucson, Angie has a strong sense of community and seizes every opportunity to volunteer to make Tucson an inclusive home to all. She is the proud mom of two adult daughters, both who will be graduating from the University of Arizona in 2025.



**Amy Ward** | Amy is the mother of 5 children, 4 with varying disabilities. Amy has worked as a caregiver mentor for medical students and genetic counselors. She is the Community Relations Director for Care 4 the Caregivers helping to plan and execute community events, organize volunteers, and conduct training for therapists and caregivers.



**Ehren Werntz, Ph.D** | Dr. Ehren Werntz is the Vice President of Family and Community Services at AZA United. His work over the past 20+ years has focused on improving the lives of people with autism as well as the families and communities that support them. These days his work focuses on supporting the treatment and care of complex behavior among individuals with co-occurring DD and SMI diagnoses.







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