

The Fifth Annual Disability Symposium

Perspectives

The University of Pennsylvania
Friday, April 7, 2006

2006 Disability Symposium

Plenary Speakers

Learning Disabilities; Past, Present, and Future

Doris Johnson, Ph.D.

Dr. Doris Johnson is the JoAnn and Peter Dolle Professor of Learning Disabilities, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Northwestern University. Dr. Johnson will take us on a journey from the first identification of adults with learning disabilities matriculating to college, to the present state of affairs, and predictions for the future.

The term learning disabilities was first coined in 1963 in Chicago, Illinois, by Samuel Kirk, professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois. Since that time, the understanding of learning disabilities has been greatly improved by the founding of many organizations, the writing of hundreds of books and tens of thousands of articles. Today this population makes up the majority of students receiving academic accommodations at colleges and universities. What will the future bring?

Dr. Johnson will bring her experience from years of research, teaching, and service to help participants gain a better understanding of this important topic.

Living with Tourette Syndrome

Jim Eisenreich

When Jim Eisenreich hit a home run in the 1997 World Series, few watching would remember that Tourette Syndrome had almost taken away his dream to play baseball. Jim had a normal childhood and a loving family but at age six he began to exhibit some strange symptoms. Unfortunately, no one knew what it was. He had tics and jerks and could not quit blinking his eyes. His family accepted this behavior. However, at school, where the social pressures can be enormous, he struggled.

One thing that saved Jim was sports. The same kids who had teased him were the first to pick him for the after school games. He was eventually drafted into Major League Baseball, but his struggles with the tics and jerks continued. Finally, after years of testing, a diagnosis of Tourette Syndrome was made.

Jim went on to play in two World Series – one with the National League Champions Philadelphia Phillies (1993) and then with the World Series Champion Florida Marlins (1997). Jim Eisenreich and his wife Leann founded The Jim Eisenreich Foundation for Children with Tourette Syndrome in 1996 to help children with TS achieve personal success.