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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Local and national advocates join forces in disabilities conferences**

**Nevada Disabilities Conference and National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities Conference both will be at JA Nugget during the week of July 20**

**Sparks, NV**— Members of the disability community have their own approaches to common goals.

Some want to “Break Barriers – Open Doors,” which is the theme of this year’s Nevada Disabilities Conference, set for July 20-21 at the JA Nugget.

Others are “Impacting Communities Side by Side,” the theme of the conference of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), being held in the same location in the same week.

Or, as artist, activist and northern Nevada native Connor Fogal says, some work to overcome perceptions of disabled persons by changing the world one mind at a time.

The Nevada Disabilities Conference 2015 (NDC 2015) is presented by the Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (NGCDD), and by the nonprofit Family TIES of Nevada. NDC 2015 will focus on new trends and best practices in transitioning youth with disabilities from school to work, advocacy, health care and independence. An exciting feature of this conference is the high number of individuals with disabilities who will be giving presentations in addition to attending them.

“This conference celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and will highlight self-advocacy initiatives and the importance of continuing to have a voice that says ‘nothing about us without us,’” said Sherry Manning, executive director of the NGCDD.

This year’s conference will be held in conjunction with the annual conference of the NACDD, the national association for the 56 state and territorial councils on developmental disabilities. This conference will be July 21-23 (combining with the NDC on the 21st) at the Nugget, bringing together national experts in the disability field.

“NACDD is very pleased to be hosting our 2015 annual conference this year in Sparks, Nevada in conjunction with the Nevada Disabilities Council,” said Donna Meltzer, CEO of the NACDD. “Together we are stronger and more of our members will be able to partake in exciting learning opportunities at each conference.”

Keynote speaker Aaron Bishop, commissioner for the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, will highlight a joint NDC/NACDD luncheon at noon on Tuesday. Other guests include:

- Josh Hanagarne, aka “The World’s Strongest Librarian,” who will speak at 9:30 a.m. Monday. A native of Spring Creek, Nevada, Hanagarne was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome when he was a freshman in high school and today is a librarian at Salt Lake City’s public library and founder of a popular blog about books and weight lifting. He has written a memoir, “The World’s Strongest Librarian, A Memoir of Tourette’s, Faith, Strength, and the Power of Family.”
- University of Nevada, Reno student Connor Fogal, an artist with cerebral palsy who is a prolific painter and adventurer. Fogal provided the artwork for the conference’s program, and he will meet attendees and sign autographs during a reception from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Nugget’s Poolside Terrace (5th floor).
- Performances by the Note-Ables, a Reno nonprofit providing inclusive music programs and music therapy services for children and adults of all ages and abilities; and by 14-year-old self-taught, Michael Jackson-inspired singer/dancer Falyne Lewing. Performances start at 12:00 p.m. Monday in the Celebrity Showroom.
- Dr. Robert Naseef, who will give a talk at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday entitled, “911 First Aid for Relationships When Raising a Child with Disabilities.” Naseef is a psychologist specializing in families of children with disabilities. He has published the book, “Special Children, Challenged Parents: The Struggles and Rewards of Raising a Child With a Disability.”

The NDC event begins at 9 a.m. Monday, July 20, and closes at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 21. The national conference’s events begin Tuesday and conclude Thursday, July 23. For more information about the Nevada conference, visit <http://nvdisabilitiesconference.org> or [www.nevadaddcouncil.org](http://www.nevadaddcouncil.org). For information about the national conference, visit [www.nacdd.org](http://www.nacdd.org).

For additional information at the event, contact:

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