

N A D E



THE ADVOCATE

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ASSOCIATION OF
DISABILITY
EXAMINERS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message.....	3
NADE's Top Issues.....	4
SAAB Thanks NADE.....	5
NADE Award Winners.....	6
Remembering Stan Ross.....	11
Remembering Sam Johnson.....	12
OKADE Celebrates Juneteenth.....	13
SSA Proposed Changes to CDR Diaries....	14
Fraudbusters.....	15
Advertisement.....	16
Communication Director's Message.....	18
NADE merchandise.....	19
NADE officers.....	20
NADE committee chairs.....	21



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<http://www.nade.org/about-nade/nade-corporate-members/>

for information about becoming a corporate member.

President's Message

Dear NADE family,

I would first like to thank the current board members for the continuous support during this non-traditional year. I appreciate the dedication to NADE during this challenging time. While I definitely missed seeing all my NADE people this year at the National Training Conference, but we are looking forward to NTC 2021 in Helena MT. Please work with your chapters to ensure that members will be able to attend when we are able to meet again. Details for registration will be on the website soon.

Membership continues to struggle due to the pandemic. Please encourage members to renew and remain motivated. Chapters are reminded to hold their version of National Professional Disability week prior to Sept 30th. Please submit your activities to Marcia Golden at Marcia.golden@ssa.gov, the top two chapters will win an award!

Congratulations to all the NADE award winners. A huge thank you to all the chapters that nominated dedicated members. Each nominee will receive a certificate and winners will receive their awards in the mail.

A conference call was held with SSA in July to discuss the workload challenges in the DDS. NADE was invited to provide feedback to the Social Security Advisory Board during a video conference call about the impacts of the pandemic on our workload. Since the last advocate, DCPS has officially become the processing system for SSA. While many offices are already processing claims on DCPS, more offices will be rolling out DCPS soon. NADE is excited to transition to DCPS as a national processing system. We are fortunate that SSA has allowed many offices to work from home during this pandemic. Please continue to do the best job possible to ensure that customer service is at the same level of excellence we have always delivered.

Marjorie Garcia and I are working closely together to ensure a smooth transition for next year. We will be releasing previous trainings from conferences in the past to all members. We also hope to have a NADE member video soon! Please submit articles, photos, and anything that you would like to see included in The Advocate to our Communication Director at Korin.M.Gary@ssa.gov.

As always, we welcome your feedback and encourage you to contact your President, your Regional director, or any board member. Wishing you all continuous health and prosperity.

"In a world where you can be anything, be kind!"

Sincerely,

Sara Winn

NADE President



NADE's Top Issues for 2020

- **Staffing:** Continued funding to achieve and maintain adequate staffing levels
- **Training:** Investment in quality training and materials is critical for timely and accurate determinations
- **CDRs:** Continued investment in timely Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs)
- **DCPS:** Continued development of the Disability Case Processing System
- **IT Modernization:** Investment in technology to make reviewing and obtaining evidence more efficient
- **CDI:** Continued support for Cooperative Disability Investigation (CDI) units and expansion efforts to decrease fraud and abuse
- **Telework:** Expand upon telework pilots, which can be a staffing and recruitment incentive
- **Customer Service Improvements:** NADE encourages efforts to build upon customer service improvements. There has been an obvious impact from hiring freezes and inability to keep up with attrition. Having adequate funding for hiring, training and overtime will help with processing time and improve decisional accuracy. Supporting DDSs to have competitive salaries will help retain experienced personnel.
- **Reconsideration Reviews:** NADE supports the reconsideration review level. The reconsideration decisions are more time and cost efficient than ALJ decisions.
- **Reduction in 15 Year Work History:** NADE supports the reduction in the 15 year work history to prevent claimants from being denied for work that no longer exists in the national economy or they would no longer recognize
- **Evaluation of Vocational Regulations and Processes:** NADE suggests a review of the vocational regulations and business process to ensure that processes are consistent between the DDS and ALJs. Vocational business processes need to be streamlined and consider the impact of transferable skills.
- **Medical Improvement Review Standard (MIRS):** NADE supports a careful re-examination of the Medical Improvement Review Standard (MIRS) and its impact on the disability program.
- **Timely Revision of the Listings:** NADE supports SSA's ongoing efforts to make timely revisions to the Listings of Impairments to reflect technological advancements and current medical research

*****These were discussed and agreed upon at the mid-year NADE meeting 2/2020, pre-pandemic*****



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August 24, 2020

Sarah Winn
President, National Association of Disability Examiners
Program Specialist, Disability Determination Services
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Sara and the NADE Leadership,

On behalf of the Social Security Advisory Board (Board) and its staff, thank you for taking the time to speak with us and outlining the challenges confronting you and your membership. It was helpful to hear the update since we last connected, especially related to how examiners' jobs have changed as a result of the pandemic. This informative conversation served as a virtual site visit for the Board.

As you indicated, difficulties obtaining needed evidence and the escalating number of unworked cases will challenge efficient case processing and service to the public. We appreciate your perspectives on telehealth and training and helping the Board to understand areas of progress and those needing improvement.

Board staff, in particular, look forward to continuing our dialog with you. Your incredible commitment to public service inspired the Board to recognize SSA's federal and state employees in commemoration of SSA's 85th anniversary (<https://www.ssab.gov/announcements/social-security-85-years-of-dedicated-service/>).

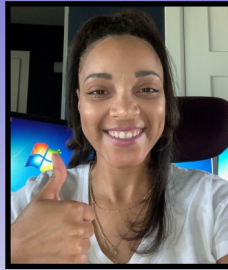
Again, thank you for taking the time to speak to the Board and for everything you do for the American public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "CG", is located below the "Sincerely," text.

Claire Green

Marty Blum Award Winner - Kaneasha Baker



This award, also known as “Rookie of the Year Award,” recognizes a professional who’s been a member for under two years, who makes a significant contribution to NADE at the local, regional or national level.

Kaneasha joined NADE in January, 2020. She is innovative and dedicated to recognizing employees in the workplace year ‘round. While collaborating with a leadership group, she became a founding member of Resilient, Accomplished, Great Employees (R.A.G.E). RAGE encourages and invigorates employees by providing weekly activities, prizes and recognition. Some of the activities she’s spearheaded include full breakfast options for employees, basketball tournaments, scavenger hunts, karaoke and themed game shows. During COVID, the committee continues to support employees virtually. Kaneasha has contributed to fresh approaches to employee engagement, contributing significantly to her chapter’s growth in NADE membership;

NADE Award Winner - Michelle Perscell



This award recognizes a disability professional who makes outstanding contributions to serve of the claimant and promotes harmonious, effective working relationships among her immediate professional community.

Michelle served as co-chair of her chapter's Ways and Means Committee 2017-2019, the Social Committee 2016-2020, Employee Appreciation Week 2018-2019, Organ Donation Committee 2017-2019, NDPW committee 2018-2020 and Community Service Committee 2016-2020. In that last role, she organized charitable events that provided over 2,000 meals for hungry people in the chapter’s community. She is a vital member of her chapter and of her case processing unit where she is much beloved and respected. She is a consummate professional and maintains excellent case production and quality statistics in service of claimants. She is the epitome of a team player, working on others’ caseloads daily, jumping in to help in any way she can. She finds joy in helping others while shunning the spotlight.

Frank Barclay Award Winner - Patricia Morgan



This award recognizes an individual who shows exceptional ability to motivate and challenge others to grow both personally and professionally.

Patti has worked as a trainer for 13 years. Her responsibilities are immense, including promoting a positive, effective learning environment for claim adjudicators, clerical staff, vocational specialists, supervisors and medical consultants. During the COVID crisis, she returned to the office to help adjudicators working remotely. She conducted a remote training on initial case development for OQR personnel and hearings officers in her DDS office. She also trains new medical consultants in the office during the pandemic, including updating the MC training manuals, reviewing policy and hand-picking cases for new MCs' review. She trained classes of new adjudicators in February and June, 2020. Patti is patient, empathetic, compassionate and upbeat. She is an invaluable asset to her DDS.

Earl B. Thomas Award Winner - Jay Minten



This award recognizes a DDS administrator who exceeds the responsibilities of his/her position in contributions to the disability program, and who actively supports the advancement of NADE.

Jay has been a NADE member since 2015. He provides dedicated time and space for all his chapter's activities and monthly meetings, recognizing the value of camaraderie and stress management. He worked closely with a NADE Regional Director from 2015 to 2019 to improve consistency between DDS offices, always listening to local issues and communicating with NCDDD and other agency leaders on behalf of shared interests. His chapter has had three or more members serving NADE at the regional or national level since 2015, and he has encouraged and supported each one. He never fails to invite chapter representatives to discuss goals, ideas and issues with him. He proudly reinforces his commitment to NADE and conducts himself in a way that reflects NADE's values and mission.

President's Award Winner—Tar Heel Association of Disability Examiners



This award is presented in recognition of an outstanding chapter.

After returning from the 2019 National Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, the seven members of THADE who attended were refreshed and ready to promote NADE to all the agency staff. THADE's Agency Director gave every opportunity for staff to hear all about NADE and the benefits of membership. THADE's leadership planned a THADE/NADE Showcase event. Each of the chapter's committees were represented with a booth. Agency staff were invited to learn what NADE does on a national level, and what THADE does on a local level. Each committee distributed information about its work and the chapter provided refreshments and fun. At the beginning of the year, THADE had 41 members. At the end of the January Membership drive, they had 81 members! THADE has always been very active at the National Level in service to NADE. This year they had members serve as Committee Chairs and Committee Members on several national committees.

John Gordon Award Winner - Jenny Angelo



This award recognizes the superior performance of a supervisor.

Jenny comes to work daily with enthusiasm and motivation which is very contagious to her unit and her agency. She served as Supervisor I for seven years with a highly positive attitude and a determination to help her examiners get back in control over their caseloads, reduce their pending caseloads and reduce aged cases. As a result of her incentive plans, the unit successfully decreased the number of aged cases over 230 days old from 58 cases to none by March 2020. She was promoted to Supervisor II the same month, and her new unit's quality rose from 88% to 97% by April. She listens to her staff's concerns and addresses them with humility and true concern. They describe her as an excellent teacher, always accessible, helpful and kind. She leads by example. She is so genuine and capable that her team members trust and do not want to disappoint her. She was one of the masterminds behind the THADE/NADE Showcase, above.

Charles O. Blalock Award Winner - Ayanna Conley



This award, named after the founder of NADE, is presented in recognition of an individual who makes major contributions toward the organizational advancement of NADE.

Ayanna joined NADE in 2010, and her commitment and dedication to the organization only grown over the years. She served as the Southeast Regional Director for NADE, and participated on the Southeast Regional Awards Committee. She served on NADE's Board as the Chair for the Council of Chapter Presidents, and as president of her local chapter from 2018-2019. She is currently serving out her term as Past President. Ayanna established a Cash App account for her chapter, utilized quite successfully to facilitate fundraising transactions. Most notably, Ayanna worked tirelessly to spearhead NADE's 2019 National Training Conference. Despite the enormity of this task, her determination, vision, and confidence in the conference committee team never wavered. She brings great energy and enthusiasm to all that she does. Several members of the Quality Assurance and Training Units joined NADE or renewed their memberships between 2017 and 2020 thanks to her contagious spirit.

Medical Consultant Award Winner - Winifred Ju

The Medical Consultant Award recognizes a consultant who has made outstanding contributions to service of claimants, and promotes harmonious and effecting working relationships in their professional community.

Dr. Ju has been an active and inspirational member of the chapter for over 3 years. She is always ready to volunteer for each and every event and make personal donations to ensure the chapter's activities are sustainable. During the last 1.5 years, she helped to organize the chapter's "healthy option" snack shop, shopped for supplies, loaned equipment and personally appealed to DDS Administrators to provide low calorie, low fat, organic, and nutritional options for staff. She helps her local chapter organize and recruit presenters for their semi-monthly Medical Moments presentations Dr. Ju demonstrates balance of work and play. She is always the first to volunteer for the "dirty work related to her chapter's social events including the Fall Costume Contest and Domestic Violence fund-raiser; NDPW Chili Cook-off and picnic; and Membership Drives.



Director's Award Winner - Crystal Bach



The Director's Award recognizes an outstanding member of the support staff who contributes to the efficiency of the unit and the morale of coworkers.

Crystal Bach has worked in the positions of Secretary, Examiner Aide, Claim Examiner, and Senior Claim Examiner. She has helped with training of new examiners and support staff, worked on caseloads of other examiners, and has worked on out-of-state caseloads. Currently, Crystal serves as her office's only scheduler for Disability Hearings and Consultative Examinations. She joined NADE 2003 and has served as an officer in her local chapter nearly every year since. She's served on NADE's Professional Development Committee, the National Disability Professionals Week Committee, the Awards Committee, the Support Staff and Systems Committee, and Constitution and Bylaws Committee. During the COVID-19 pandemic Crystal was the only staff member in the office full-time while others worked remotely from home. She did this cheerfully and outstandingly even though her duties changed quite a bit.



Remembering Stan Ross



Stan Ross embodied the phrase, “public servant.” His remarkable career included serving at the U.S. Treasury Department, on the White House domestic policy staff, and as a Public Trustee of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds.

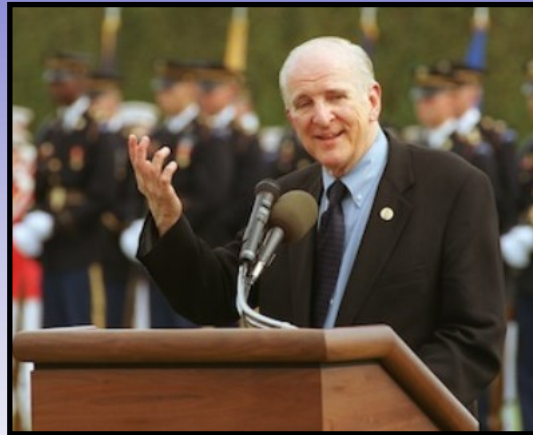
Stan also served as the seventh Commissioner of Social Security during President Carter’s term of office from 1977 to 1981, and Chairman of the Social Security Advisory Board from 1997 to 2002. He was a very good friend of NADE, always eager to meet with us during our visits to Capitol Hill.

From former NADE president, Jeff Price:

“When I became President-elect in 1997-98, NADE was only meeting with the House Social Security Subcommittee and GAO. When I became President in 1998-99, we added the Senate Finance Committee to the list and, the following year, I added the Social Security Advisory Board. Stan asked if we were meeting with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and, when we said we were not, he said we should and he called to arrange an appointment. He also suggested that we should start meeting with some of the other congressional committees for we added a couple of others to the list the following year. By the time I came back in as President in 2001-2002, we expanded our time in Washington for the Capitol Hill visits to a full week and we were running around like crazy, often having to divide our group to cover all of the appointments.”

Stan was a remarkable person in his private life as well. After he recovered from a burn injury in 2010, he volunteered regularly at the Burn Unit at Northern Colorado Medical Center in Greeley, encouraging burn patients and their families and telling his story. Those who knew Stan remember him fondly for his sense of humor, his willingness to lend a hand, and the way he always had a story to tell. In his later years, he was known for the bandana he always wore, jokingly called a “Stan”dana.

Remembering Sam Johnson



Sam Johnson, U.S. Representative from Texas, passed away on May 27, 2020. He had recently retired from Congress after serving as the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security.

Mr. Johnson served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He survived nearly seven years in captivity as a prisoner of war, with a large portion of that time spent in solitary confinement. He was released and returned to the United States in 1973. He finished his Master's degree in International Affairs and retired from the military in 1979. He began his career in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1991 and served until he retired in 2018.

As the chairman, Johnson took a strong interest in the disability program. He was especially dedicated to protecting disability benefits recipients from fraud. In April, 24, 2018, the President signed a bill Johnson had introduced called "The Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act. It requires the Social Security Commissioner to make annual grants of no less than \$25M directly to State Protection and Advocacy groups, and put in place specific protections for foster kids. It requires the Commissioner to report to Congress annually the results of payee reviews, including a summary of problems identified and corrective actions taken. It further allows SSA to disqualify current or prospective payees who do not consent to background checks. Finally, it ensures that people who have payees cannot serve as payees, such as in the case of an adult with intellectual disability who requires a payee acting as a payee for her/his disabled child's benefits.

Sam Johnson and his staff were consistently receptive to input and sought NADE's opinion on crucial topics. NADE was called to testify before the Subcommittee while he chaired. We will always remember him as an ally for our program and the people we serve.

Oklahoma DDS Celebrates Juneteenth

By Cynthia Thompson

People around the country have recently learned that Juneteenth is a thing, but few know what it is. According to www.juneteenth.com/history, “Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free.”

Today, Juneteenth celebrates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. Celebrations can last anywhere from a day to a month, and are marked with speakers, picnics, and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing, assessment, self-improvement, and for planning for both the individual and the community.

We are sure that everyone can agree that 2020 has been a crazy year, between the pandemic, civil unrest across the country, rapidly shifting to telework, the many changes to processes and procedures, etc. Brian Nickles, Oklahoma’s DDS Administrator, saw those difficulties and worked with OKADE’s committee Resilient, Accomplished, Great Employees (RAGE) to put on a Juneteenth celebration.



The celebration included breakfast donated by a local McDonald’s, speakers, and much needed fellowship after being apart for so long. We held the event in the parking lot to make it easier to socially distance, everyone wore facemasks, hand sanitizer stations were spread out across the parking lot, chairs were set 6’ apart, and for those who were unable to attend in person, we broadcast the presentation over Zoom. Our speakers included Mr. Cordney McClain, Director of Diversity and Inclusion with the Price College of Business at the University of Oklahoma, who shared some very powerful poetry. Mr. George Lee, Professional Development and Diversity Inclusion Professional at the University of Oklahoma, talked to us about how equality, behavior, and beliefs about various ethnicities have an effect on how we perceive and treat others. Finally, Ms. Necie Black, a certified coach, trainer, and relationship builder, worked with us to ensure that the powerful words are not wasted. The three of them led a compelling discussion and challenged DDS staff to examine their own perceptions of racial equality.

Social Security Proposes Changes to CDR Diaries

In November, 2019, the Social Security Administration submitted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to revise how often they conduct disability reviews. In addition to the MIE (medical improvement expected), the MIP diary (medical improvement possible) and the MINE diary (medical improvement not expected), SSA proposes to add a fourth diary. Cases where medical improvement is likely (MIL) would be reviewed after two years. In addition, the NPRM proposes to change MINE diaries from seven to six years. The stated goal of these changes is to identify medical improvement (MI) at the earliest point possible.

The rationale for adding a two-year MIL diary for cases like leukemia and lymphoma reads, “For many disabling impairments, the key element for MI is a person's receipt of treatment that can decrease the severity of the impairment and its effects. When people do not receive adequate treatment, any MI in the disabling impairment(s) may not occur when we would otherwise expect it. Scheduling a CDR under the MIE category (6 to 18 months) may be premature when MI does not occur as expected due to unmet health care needs. The MIL diary category will allow us to assess MI after some beneficiaries benefit from access to health care through Medicare or Medicaid .”

The rationale for changing the MINE diary from seven years points out that the rule actually reads that for conditions that are considered permanent, cases will be reviewed no more frequently than every five years, but no less than seven. “We believe that maintaining the variable period of review for permanent impairments is not necessary,” reads the NPRM. “Therefore, we propose to set the review period for permanent impairments at 6 years in order to identify improvement at its earliest point,” and to remove ambiguity about the 5-7 year window as written.

The comment period for this NPRM closed on January 31, 2020, but both NADE and the Social Security Advisory Board weighed in against the changes. NADE offered alternatives to this plan, but they were not accepted.

FRAUDBUSTERS

News from the OIG's website

August 24, 2020—United States Attorney Erica H. MacDonald today announced the guilty plea of ANNAMARIE GREEN, 60, to one count of disability fraud. GREEN, who was indicted on January 8, 2020, entered her guilty plea this afternoon before Judge Nancy E. Brasel in U.S. District Court in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

According to GREEN's guilty plea and documents filed with the court, in October of 2014, GREEN applied for disability benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA), which approved her application in August of 2015. On multiple occasions from August 2015 through 2018, GREEN intentionally failed to disclose her work activities to the SSA, because she knew these activities would impact her eligibility to receive SSA benefits. Specifically she failed to disclose that she engaged in substantial work activities for Select Home Care, Inc., a company which GREEN owned and operated. As a result, GREEN received at least \$40,000 in social security disability benefits that she knew she was not entitled to receive. As part of the plea agreement, GREEN agreed to pay restitution of the benefits she wrongfully received.



Do you love the outdoors?



Oregon's DDS is centrally located in Salem, just an hour away from the coast to the west, mountains to the east and hiking all over!

We've got 15 waterfalls and 25 lakes within half an hour of our office. We've got 15 vineyards, the gorgeous Willamette River and U-pick farmland galore!



Oregon DDS is full of friendly people from all kinds of backgrounds, and from all over the country. We have a dedicated staff of doctors available for consultations and reviews. We have an active professional organization and a Fun Committee that host activities year-round. We offer flexible hours and a great benefits package. We'd love you to join our team!

<https://www.oregon.gov/jobs/Pages/Benefits.aspx>

Follow this link to apply: [Disability Analyst 2](#)

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Each of us is absorbed in our own work, dedicated as we are to quick, efficient, accurate determinations. It takes a village to clear a case! It can be hard to see life at DDS from another's perspective.

I plan to make "A Day in the Life" a regular feature in The Advocate. I'd like to highlight a different DDS role in each issue: administrators, support staff, CDIU, medical consultants, etc. Please consider participating! It involves a 20 minute phone interview. After the piece is written but before it goes to print, you'll have an opportunity to review it and make changes. Be aware that some departments may require approval and a separate review before publication.

I also plan to make a collage of smiling NADE members' faces the cover of every issue. One of my favorite aspects of NADE membership is the chance to connect with members across the country. Please submit your photos. Goofy pictures, dress-up days, celebrations and triumphs are all big hits. Your photo could boost someone's morale! Submit one today!

To aspiring writers who've never contributed, please consider writing for The Advocate! It's a publication with a nationwide audience, and not just within the DDS community. Disability attorneys read The Advocate. Senior members in the Social Security Administration read The Advocate, too, and members of Congress! The Advocate is a great credit for your writing resume.

Even if you're not a writer, please consider submitting story ideas. We're gearing up for the next issue already! We welcome topics of interest to any member of NADE, including but not limited to medical topics, office process innovations, morale boosters and success stories.

The more of you, our readers, we have in our publication, the better The Advocate will be. I want to hear from you!

Korin Gary

Communication Director

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NADE BOARD 2019

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