



ParaLink

A newsletter for Paraprofessionals working in education in Minnesota

Para of the Year 2000

Lia Yang: More Than a Glassful

Is the glass half-empty or half-full? Depending upon a person's perspective, answers may vary. In Lia Yang's case, the question is moot. When faced with the glass in question, Lia is more likely to ask "How much water can be poured?" His answer: "An infinite amount." When approaching his job, Paraprofessional of the Year

Lia Yang does more than observe and analyze. He recognizes the needs of the students and pours his talents, time, and resources into the school until his influence spills out into the families and surrounding community. At Ramsey Junior High School, Lia Yang's services are a constant, generous, overwhelming flood.

In This Issue

Para/Teacher Team of the Year • 3

"But What Can I Do?" • 4

Listen to Your Language • 7

What Should You Ask the Teacher? • 8

Call for Presentations • 9-10

Workshops • 11

Resources • 12

Nomination Reminders • 13



Lia Yang takes a seat in a single-engine plane at Flying Cloud airport this summer on a field trip with students from Ramsey Junior High School.

Editorial Information

Editor • Angela Swanson
Managing Editor • Teri Wallace
Graphic Design • Connie Burkhardt

<http://ici2.umn.edu/para/>
paralink@icimail.coled.umn.edu

The *ParaLink* is a free publication. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, contact Angela Swanson, (612) 624-9893 or paralink@icimail.coled.umn.edu.

ParaLink is published by the Minnesota State Paraprofessional Project, a joint project of the Institute on Community Integration (UAP), College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning; Institute on Community Integration; or their funding sources.

The University of Minnesota and Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning are equal opportunity employers and educators.

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request. Call (612) 624-4512.



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

*Children,
Families &
Learning*

Filling the Glass - Serving the Students; Helping the School

When asked what he does, Lia Yang offered simply, "I help the people who are struggling." While the answer is short, Lia's means are extensive. Lia makes himself available to the students before, during, and after the school day. In fact, for the last 16 weeks of the school year, Lia was at school from 7:00 a.m. until at least 9:00 p.m. After school, he could be found working with small groups of students, helping them with their work and listening to their needs. As a result of the time he spent with them, two groups of Asian students made it to the state competition for History Day.

In addition to offering academic help, Lia often acts as a confidant for the students, helping them with problems related to family, friends, and personal issues. He completely immerses himself in the students' daily lives, playing volleyball and soccer with the students and being with them in the lunchroom. Natasha Fleischman, an English as a Second Language teacher who works with Lia, states, "There are no limits to what he will do. No matter what the students need, he gives it." If students are suspended, Lia collects their work and visits their families at the end of the day. "I'm

very close to the students," says Lia.

In addition to helping the students, Lia serves the entire school. On a regular basis, he acts as an interpreter for members of the administration, faculty, and staff. His proficiency in Hmong and English and ability to speak Lao-tian, Thai, and Chinese make him an invaluable resource to the diverse population of students and parents. In addition, he encourages students to be respectful to and recognize authority. Another ESL instructor, Judith Durfey, writes, "By his calm and direct manner, he has helped to make our school a more peaceful place."

When Lia Yang looks at the "glass" of student and school needs, he pours forth care, concern, time, and interest. "I want the students to know I'm there for them. Whenever they need any help, I'm there."

Spilling Onto the Table – Involving the Family and Shaping the Community

Lia Yang's dedication and enthusiasm cannot be contained within the confines of the school, but flow out into the families of the students and the surrounding community. Due to his language abilities and warm personality, Lia connects with the parents in a meaningful way that makes them feel comfortable in at-

Para/Teacher Team of the Year, 2000

Joanie Wiken and Karen Lydon: Making an Impact

Richfield High School sophomore, Aaron Baumbach, enjoys the stage, and acts in the school musicals and plays. But Baumbach, who has Down's Syndrome, needed his mother Ann to help him through rehearsals freshman year. But over the course of a year, Aaron has matured. For this spring's musical, the only assistance he needed was to be driven home after rehearsal.

Ann Baumbach credits special education teacher Karen Lydon and her paraprofessional assistant Joanie Wiken for helping him become more independent. For the past year, Aaron has been enrolled in Lydon and Wiken's Compass program, which teaches life skills to students with moderate to severe developmental disabilities.

Aaron's case is just one of many depicting the progress Lydon and Wiken's students have shown. For their exemplary service, the Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium last month honored Lydon and Wiken as the Paraprofessional/Teacher Team of the Year. This is the first time a paraprofessional and teacher team has been recognized. For the past 10 years the organization has only recognized a paraprofes-

sional of the year.

Additionally, Wiken and Lydon were awarded the Richfield Board of Education's Golden Apple Award last month for outstanding service to the Richfield schools.

"I still can hardly believe it, it's wonderful," Wiken said. "But the students deserve this honor just as much because it is through their special ability to give of themselves to me that I am here today. I really love these kids. They mean a lot to me."

Lezlie Ingvalson, the district's special education coordinator, praised Wiken and Lydon for their caring and commitment. "As individuals, they are wonderful educators. As a team, they are an out-

standing example of the staff we have in the Richfield School District," said Ingvalson, who nominated the pair for the paraprofessional award. "Upon walking into their classroom, one can immediately see that learning is occurring. It is also obvious that the students are having fun with, and care for and respect their teachers."

Through the Compass program, Lydon and Wiken use concrete examples to teach their students simple skills like cooking, cleaning and operating a can opener.

To further their sense of independence, Lydon and Wiken take students on numerous field trips during the course of the year. On one such excursion, students were



Joanie and Karen receive their awards for Paraprofessional/Teacher Team of the Year at the Annual Paraprofessional Conference in Hutchinson, Minnesota. Left to right: Joanie, Leslie Ingvalson (Special Education Coordinator at Richfield High School), and Karen.



“But What Can I Do?”

While this article provides tips and strategies for paraprofessionals addressing the needs of children engaging in challenging behavior, it is only the beginning. It is our hope that paraprofessionals will receive additional training to work with teachers in implementing these important strategies.

Frequently it is the paraprofessional who is asked to manage the needs of the child engaging in challenging behavior. This can often lead to the frustrated response, “But what can I do? This child is totally out of control and I’m not the teacher.” Although the teacher is the person responsible for the development of a behavior support plan, paraprofessionals in the classroom can have a significant influence on the instruction and education of students.

What is Challenging Behavior?

A variety of behaviors can be the cause of concern, but a child’s behavior is considered challenging if it results in injury to self or others or damages the physical environment. Behavior is also considered challenging if it interferes with learning new skills or socially isolates the students involved (Doss & Reichle, 1991). Most children engage in unruly behavior at one time or another, but when

the behavior is more frequent, has greater intensity, or lasts for longer periods of time, it becomes a challenging behavior.

Understand the Child

Why do children engage in challenging behavior? Research has shown that behavior serves a function or purpose for a child, is predicted by the events that take place before the behavior occurs, and is maintained by events that take place after the behavior occurs (Neilson, Olive, Donovan, & McEvoy, M., 1998). Children can be motivated by the desire to obtain or avoid attention, to avoid a task or activity, or to gain an object or opportunity for action. There are also behaviors that occur for non-social reasons, such as pulling on an ear to get rid of the pain from an infection or rocking to self-calm.

When we focus on the needs of the child engaging in challenging behavior, the goal becomes prevention and the focus of intervention planning shifts from what we might do to change the *child* to what we might change about *our own practices* (Strain & Hemmeter, 1999).

Consult the Behavior Support Plan

When there is a behavior support plan written for a stu-

dent, the paraprofessional should be a willing participant in its implementation, given preparation to do so, including the taking of accurate data. It may be difficult to find the time, but data will reveal the effectiveness of the intervention being implemented. When the frequency or intensity of challenging behavior decreases or desired participation increases, you’ll know the intervention is effective for the student. If there is no change or challenging behavior is increasing, it will guide instructors to understand what changes are needed in the student’s plan. If you have questions about implementing the plan or taking data, seek clarification from the teacher (see questionnaire on page 8). The plan will be more effective if all instructors are implementing it consistently.

Be Proactive: Prevent Rather Than Respond

If you know a particular activity or event frequently results in potentially challenging behavior, you can preplan activities that will stop or interfere with the behavior before it occurs.

Example: John typically likes to chat with his friends and gets angry when asked to go to his desk for the next subject. Asking John to pass out the



next subject's worksheets while others take their seats can provide a distraction, allow him to finalize conversations, and lessen his need for an outburst.

When a behavior is reinforced, it is likely to be repeated. It is important to pay attention to challenging behavior that persists over time to see if it is being unintentionally reinforced.

Example: Bill is working on his art project. He will usually work independently for about three minutes before asking Joan, the paraprofessional, to look at his work. Joan is working with another student when he says, "Joan, Joan, look at my painting." He repeats his request four times, each time a little louder and more insistently. Finally, Bill throws a marker across the table at Carol and Joan immediately responds by going to him and saying, "Stop that! You know you're not supposed to throw markers. Tell Carol you're sorry." Joan then stays in close proximity to be certain Bill stays on task. His subsequent requests for her to look at his project receive immediate attention.

The event before the behavior was an ignored request for attention. After the behavior, Bill received immediate and continued attention. Bill

received attention for his behavior even if it was not pleasant. Understanding the motivation of the behavior will help you to prevent it.

When a child's behavior is motivated by a desire for attention, intermittent positive attention (periodic eye contact and a simple "thumbs up," wink, smile, or pat on the back) during appropriate behavior may lessen the child's need to obtain your attention with a challenging behavior.

One way to build a student's tolerance for a delay in receiving attention or being released from a task is to give a delay cue. As mentioned above, Bill's critical time was three minutes. A delay cue would be given prior to the first request for attention: "Bill, I'll be right over to see your art work," followed by immediate attention: "Bill, you're really doing a nice job on your art project today."

The time between the delay cue and the release or attention can then be gradually increased. Ensure that you do not stretch the time too quickly or you will increase the potential for the challenging behavior to reoccur.

Collaboration is another good strategy for the child who wants your attention or is trying to avoid a task. When a student frequently refuses to participate in a task or activity, offering to collaborate when introducing the ac-

tivity or task may prevent a challenging behavior. Sharing the task and offering praise for participation is an opportunity to teach positive interactive skills and will also allow you to control a planned, gradual increase in the child's participation.

There are two critical keys to success with these strategies —

- Respond to the child *before* the behavior occurs.
- Increase expectations *gradually*.

Control is a topic that often surfaces when there is a discussion about behavior. The student who tells you "no," no matter what you're asking of him/her, presents a significant challenge. In some cases, the student is simply trying to obtain control over the situation or environment. Too often our focus is on controlling or managing a child rather than teaching the child problem-solving skills.

Offering choices is a strategy that allows the child to have some control. It's a win-win strategy. Choices can be offered as options in time, activities, or sequence of events. Choosing between two positive choices is especially effective for the child who will most often say "no"—

- For younger children, you can ask: "Do you want to play with the trucks or the puzzles?"



- For all ages, a choice between two negatives might be a choice of timing: “Do you want to do your math assignment now or after lunch?”

Another way to be proactive is to set children up for success. The arrangement of the environment can provide triggers for challenging behavior. Whenever possible, provide an environment where a child can be successful by anticipating situations that might cause problems —

- Seat the student who is easily distracted away from the doorway or pencil sharpener.
- When it’s time to get ready for the bus, rather than releasing the whole class to get ready in a small locker area, release small groups, providing an alternative activity for those who are waiting.

Use Distracters and Reinforcements

Most restaurants have distracters available for young children and everyone dining in the restaurant appreciates them. In the school setting, a child waiting for a late bus could be given a koosh ball to hold or a book to read. During difficult transitions, carrying objects, (i.e., a ball to Phy Ed class) can provide an effective distraction.

As discussed above, reinforcement that follows a challenging behavior maintains that behavior. In the same way, using reinforcements following appropriate behaviors can cause them to increase. In addition to items and activities (i.e., being line leader, running an errand, erasing the board, or enjoying time in an activity with a peer), interactive rewards, such as getting more of your time and attention through a special activity, can be a very effective reinforcer.

It is critical to note that, in order to be effective, items or activities used as distracters or reinforcements need to be valued and preferred by the student and saved exclusively for those purposes.

Prompts can also encourage appropriate behavior and distract attention from or stop an inappropriate behavior before it starts. Prompts can be given verbally or as gestures. Offering praise for appropriate behavior, giving instruction, putting a finger to your lips for silence, touching the chair where you want the student to sit, or pointing to a schedule are some examples. Some children are visual learners, watching for cues from peers before taking action. For this child, offering visual cues can clarify instructions. Effective cueing needs to be clearly understood by

the student and done as a natural part of the routine. Prompts and cues should never be used in frustration or anger.

Some children can view behavioral goals as insurmountable. Reinforcing any progress toward the goal is a natural way of cueing and encouraging the student to increase appropriate behavior. For example, “Walk quietly in the hallway” may be a difficult rule for some children. Rather than waiting until the end of a walk down a long hallway to reinforce appropriate behavior, frequently give a smile, nod, or “thumbs up” along the way to provide reinforcement and prompt continued success. This step-by-step shaping approach recognizes progress, offers encouragement, and provides an opportunity for a positive interaction.

Listen to Your Language

Your communication techniques can reduce challenging behavior as well. (See page 7).

Set a Positive Tone

You can have a significant influence on student behavior from the moment you walk into the room. To encourage student participation and enhance self-esteem, you should make frequent eye contact, relax, smile, ask questions, and use positive language. By



Listen to Your Language

1. Be generous with encouraging words.

“It looks like you worked very hard on that paper.”

“I like the way you handled that situation.”

2. Avoid nagging warnings.

“Get busy and get that assignment done or you’ll be in trouble again today.”

versus

“I know the assignment was difficult for you yesterday. If you need help just raise your hand and I’ll come to help.”

3. If you like a behavior, pay attention to it.

“I liked the way you did that.”

“Thanks, that really helped.”

4. Offer reasonable choices to the child when choices are available, but don’t word your directions as a choice when none is available.

“Do you want to go to Phy Ed?” or “It’s time to go to Phy Ed, okay?”

versus

“It’s time to get ready for Phy Ed.” or “We’re going to Phy Ed now.”

5. Use the child’s name in positive conversation. Frequently a child’s name is used only in addressing challenging behavior.

6. Give reasonable explanations for requests and directions.

“You need to get ready now so we have enough time to play on the playground.”

7. Signal or cue the student that an activity is about to end. This allows you to prepare the student for the end of an activity, and can also give information to prepare for the next activity.

“Your art project is really looking great! We’ll be going to the library in five minutes. I hope they have the next book in that series you’re reading. Finish what you are doing so we will all be ready to go.”

“It really looks nice outside. We’ll be going out for recess as soon as everyone is done with their assignment.”

8. Address the behavior and teach the child. How we view the child is all-important. When talking with a child about their behavior, talk about what they should be doing.

“Johnny, you aren’t in your desk. You know you’re not suppose to be out of your desk!”

versus

“Johnny, you need to be working at your desk during this assignment.”

9. When you know a particular task or activity is a difficult time and often results in challenging behavior, offer a collaboration or choice in your wording of the initial request. Again, avoid nagging.
10. Set a good example. Model the behaviors you want to see in the children. Children will often imitate the language, tone and actions of adults, whether or not it is your intent.



What Should You Ask The Teacher?

Questions to ask the Teacher When You Have Been Asked to Work With a Student With Challenging Behaviors

About the Student

- Is there a behavior support plan for this student? If yes, ask for a copy.
- What goals should I focus on with this student?
- What are the behaviors of concern?
- What past strategies have been successful or unsuccessful?
- What activities are difficult for him/her? What does he/she like/dislike? When does he/she feel successful?
- Are there medical factors that may be influencing the child's behavior, i.e., vision, hearing, medication side effects?

About Your Role/Responsibilities. . .

With the Student

- What are my specific responsibilities? (i.e., am I responsible for taking data? If

so, please explain how and when I am to take it.)

- What do I have permission to do? (i.e., if swinging calms the student, do I have permission to go to the swing or do I check with you first?)
- If needed, should I use physical guidance? What guidelines should I follow?
- What should my proximity be to the student? Do I work with other students or only this student?

With the Teacher

- What kind of cues can we use to communicate between us? (i.e., to let you know I need support, to let you know I need clarification, for you to let me know you have observed a need for change.)
- How frequently can we connect on how things are going? In what ways should I provide you with updates?

With Others

- What is my role with the parent?
- Am I on the IEP? May I attend the IEP conference?
- Are there times when other staff will be working with this child? If yes, how do I communicate with them?

Contributed by collaborating professionals in the Early Childhood Special Education program from Anoka-Hennepin District #11 and the University of Minnesota.

Jan Carlson and Shawn Collins, ECSE Paraprofessionals

Judy Klein-Pells, Cheryl Rademacher, and Janine Westlund, ECSE Teachers

Lee Rutherford, ECSE Psychologist

Judy K. Swanson, U of M Project Coordinator

Paraprofessional Week Has Been Set!

The Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium has designated the first full week in February as Minnesota's Paraprofessional Week. From this time forth, it shall be so! For the year 2001, the dates fall on February 5-9. There are a variety of activities that you can do to recognize the paraprofessionals in your schools, so be creative and start planning now. Let's take advantage of this opportunity to make this week one of appreciation and fun.





Call for Presentations

**9th Statewide
Conference for
Paraprofessionals
in Education
Ridgewater College
Hutchinson,
Minnesota.
May 4 – 5, 2001**

ici2.umn.edu/para/

A Critical Link

Each year, the Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Conference is attended by 500 participants. This includes paraprofessionals and those who support their work.

Who Can Present?

The Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium is seeking presenters to share strategies/insights which will help prepare paraprofessionals and those who support them to provide quality services to students in the new millennium. Send in your proposal today! (Presenters will receive a \$25 stipend plus a mileage reimbursement.)

Dates and Locations

This conference will be held on May 4 – 5, 2001 (Friday evening and Saturday) at Ridgewater College in Hutchinson, Minnesota, which is approximately one hour west of Minneapolis.

Conference Structure

There will be two general sessions for all participants and various presentation sessions of which participants can choose to attend. The presentations are approximately 50 minutes, and will be on both Friday evening and Saturday.

The conference is initiated by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, and sponsored by professionals and paraprofessionals from Ridgewater College, Institute on Community Integration (UAP) at the University of Minnesota, AFSCME, ECSU, MVASNP, MSEA, and Education Minnesota.



...A Critical Link Call for Presentations

Title of presentation

as it will appear in the conference program

Intended audience

- Paraprofessionals/Aides/Assistants/Direct
- Service Staff
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents
- Other _____

Brief description of content

Limit to 100 words. Please note: *Please make sure that you state the title and the objectives of the presentation. This is the description that will be printed in the program.*

Audio/visual equipment

Please check which A/V equipment you will need —

- Overhead projector
- Flipchart or Chalkboard
- VCR and Monitor
- Slide projector
- Other _____

Selection process

Presentation will be scheduled on the basis of relevance to the conference target audience and balance of topics for the indicated tracks. You will be informed of your status by March 2, 2001.

Presenter 1

Position

Place of Employment

Work Address

Phone

Presenter 2

Position

Place of Employment

Work Address

Phone

Please send presentation proposal form to —

Angela Swanson
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota
111 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Dr. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Fax: (612)624-9344
Email: paralink@icimail.coled.umn.edu
Web: ici2.umn.edu/para/

**Proposals must be submitted by
February 16 , 2001**

Thank you for your interest

Workshops



Mark Your Calendars Now for These Upcoming Conferences!

2001 Special Education Coordinators and Educators Conference, February 26-27, the Northland Inn in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. The Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning invite you to attend this year's Coordinators and Educators Conference. This year's breakout sessions provide a great opportunity to learn about areas of interest and best practices relating to special education. For more information, visit the Minnesota CEC Website at www.cpinternet.com/~mcec/Conference.htm, contact CEC, 1221 Birchwood Dr., Proctor, MN 55810 (218-624-4271), or contact Kathy Klone, CEC, 2367 Hidden Valley Lane, Stillwater, MN 55082 (651-439-6781).



The Council for Exceptional Children's Annual Convention, Kansas City, Missouri, April 18-21, 2001. In addition to the latest in professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, and related service providers, the convention and expo will also feature an address by keynote speaker Beverly Sills. Preconvention registration rates are available now. Get the latest information by visiting the CEC Website: www.cec.sped.org/conv/2001conv.html or contacting: CEC, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20181-1589 (1-888-232-7733).



The 9th Annual Statewide Conference for Paraprofessionals, Hutchinson, Minnesota, May 4-5, 2001. The goal of this conference is to provide paraprofessionals with an opportunity to learn about new and different strategies to assist in their jobs and to network with other paraprofessionals. The registration fee is \$50 per person. This includes refreshments, lunch, and materials. By attending this conference, paraprofessionals will earn Continuing Education Units. This conference was initiated by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, and is sponsored by the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) at the University of Minnesota, Ridgewater College, AFSCME, ECSU, MVASNP, MSEA, and Education Minnesota. For more information, visit the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium Website at ici2.umn.edu/para. Registration will begin in January, 2001.



The 20th National Conference on the Training and Employment of Paraprofessionals in Education, Rehabilitation, and Related Services, Madison, Wisconsin at the Monona Terrace Convention Center, May 9-12. Attendees will gain knowledge of new dimensions in the roles, preparation, supervision, and career mobility for the paraprofessional workforce. For further information regarding registration, content, or the opportunity to present, please contact: Marilyn Likins, Co-director, National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals at Utah State University, 435-797-PARA or email: mlikins@utah.uswest.net.



Resources

Positive Behavior Strategies for Paraprofessionals

This curriculum examines how different environments and situations can influence behavior, including strategies for a positive approach to behavior change. It is one of five modules published by the Institute on Community Integration as part of a curriculum entitled *Strategies for Paraprofessionals Who Support Individuals with Disabilities* and is available in a facilitator (\$15.00 each) or student version (\$10.00 each). For more information, contact 612/624-4512 (phone); 612/624-9344 (fax); Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455 or visit the publications catalogue on the Institute's website at <http://ici.umn.edu>.

Multi-Statewide Outreach Project Website ici2.umn.edu/multistate

Positive Approaches to Challenging Behavior for Young Children with Disabilities

The purpose of this website is to discuss positive behavioral supports for young children who engage in challenging be-

havior. The information on this web site is intended to —

- Help families, caregivers, and service providers to understand why a particular behavior may occur.
- Help service providers develop intervention strategies for organizing environments to decrease the possibility of challenging behaviors in young children.
- Help families and service providers to learn more about strategies to support children with challenging behaviors.

Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD)

CCBD is an international professional organization committed to promoting and facilitating the education and general welfare of children and youth with behavioral and emotional disorders. Membership includes receipt of three publications: *CCBD Newsletter*, the research journal *Behavioral Disorders*, and the practitioner journal *Beyond Behavior*. For more information visit the CCBD Website at www.ccbd.net/publications.htm or write to CCBD, c/o CEC, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589.



Do you have
an idea for an
upcoming
ParaLink?

Tell us
about it!

Fax: (612) 624-9344

paralink@icimail.coled.umn.edu



Nomination *Reminders*

Para of the Year Nomination Information

Now is your chance to nominate an outstanding person for *Para of the Year!* Please include the following information—

Part 1

1. Name of Para
2. Where employed
3. Work address/phone
4. Number of years as a para
5. Number, type, and age of students/clients served
6. Name of Nominator
7. Nominator's address/phone

Part 2

1. Exemplary work skills such as —
 - Communicating effectively
 - Listening attentively
 - Taking initiative
 - Understanding his or her role in the school community/work setting
2. Unique characteristics —
 - Contributions to the school/work environment

- Differences made in the lives of students or clients
- Professional development

3. Include statements of support from students, parents, teachers, and/or peers

Applications accepted until March 30, 2001

Mail or fax this information to —
Angela Swanson, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 111 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, Fax (612) 624-9344.

New Para/Teacher Team of the Year

Please take the time and nominate a positive instructional relationship for new *Paraprofessional/Teacher Instructional Team of the Year* award! Please include the following information —

Part 1

1. Name of the Para/Teacher Instructional Team
2. Where employed
3. Work address/phone
4. Number of years employed as a para/teacher
5. Number, type, and age of students/clients served
6. Name of Nominator
7. Nominator's address/phone

Part 2

1. How this para/teacher team exhibits a positive, effective working relationship including —
 - Clear and open communication
 - Respect for each other and students
 - Shared educational philosophy
 - Understanding of team role definition and expectations

2. Characteristics or qualities that set this team apart —
 - Contributions to the school/work environment
 - Differences made in the lives of students?
3. Include statements of support from students, parents, teachers, administration, and /or peers.

Applications accepted until March 30, 2001

Mail or fax this information to —
Angela Swanson, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 111 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, Fax (612) 624-9344.



tending conferences and special events.

To further connect with the parents and community, Lia was instrumental in the organization of a Hmong Parents' Group. Due to his organizational skills and follow-through, the meetings enjoyed a high turnout. Lia communicates information about the meetings to the parents, recruits students to host and babysit, calls speakers from the Hmong community to present on relevant topics, and acts as a facilitator and interpreter.

In addition to the Parents' Group, Lia played a key role in the organization of the Ramsey Asian Students' Club. During these meetings, students talk, share problems, help each other with homework, and play. Lia believes the club is invaluable because it provides students with a less restricted, positive alternative for after-school activities: "If there was no club, students could get into trouble." Lia recognizes that helping the students exceeds the limits of the school day. In appreciation of his efforts, one of Lia's students wrote: "Thanks for . . . making the Asian Club to be a place for kids to have fun and be a success at what they are doing."

The Glass of Financial Need – Finding the Flow

In all of his endeavors, Lia contributes more than time and effort. He also recognizes the need for financial support. When confronted with the "glass" of financial need, Lia responds by pouring his own personal resources into the school and clubs and locating sources of funding. Last year, the funds raised for the Parents' Group enabled them to recognize three of the most outstanding students in the areas of challenge, humanities, and ESL. Lia described these awards as "one of my greatest accomplishments this year."

Overflowing Appreciation

One of the best ways to summarize what Lia Yang does is to ask those who work with him. Teachers, students, and parents alike simply overflow with gratefulness, respect, and affection. To recognize his contributions, the students and teachers at Ramsey Junior High School were not content with a simple thank you, but spilled over with a deluge of appreciation.

In addition to nominating him for the honor of Paraprofessional of the Year, they also declared May 24th of this year

"Lia Yang Day." Students created a video of themselves interviewing Lia that was shown in every class, an award ceremony was held, and cards and plaques were presented. To emphasize their appreciation, the students gave Lia 1,000 pieces of candy to emulate the 1,000 cranes given to Sadako, a Japanese girl who made peace for the Japanese during World War II. For these students, Lia's contributions are truly heroic. One of his students wrote: "You have been a great role model for us." Lawrence J. Gallatin, Principal, put it best when he said, "When describing Lia Yang, he almost seems too good to be true."

Is the glass half-empty or half-full? In Lia Yang's case, it's flooded.

Contributed by Angela Swanson,
ParaLink editor.



taken to a local department store, given a list of items and required to track them down in scavenger-hunt fashion. On another occasion, students were taken to the Mall of America to request job applications from various stores.

“Because students with developmental disabilities learn in concrete ways, if you get out into a store, it becomes the classroom,” said Lydon, an Edina resident. “I try to base everything they do on whether they will need to know it and use it when they’re out in the world,” she said. “There are so many things they could learn, but we choose what is most important for them to be independent.”

Lydon and Wiken’s techniques have produced remarkable results. One student entered the Compass program completely unable to communicate. But with their help, the student can now communicate using pictures.

“I especially cherish the smiles from the accomplishments of the students that cannot speak,” Wiken said. “I will carry in my heart forever that smile of accomplishment I have seen in our students.”

Much of the students’ success can be linked to the nurturing atmosphere Lydon and Wiken create. “It’s a balance

between being very firm and very consistent, but sending the message that ‘I care about you,’” Lydon said.

Within a month of beginning the program, Ann noticed a change in her son. “He was maturing,” she said. “He’s growing up, and it’s really been wonderful. There is something in the way they work together that is really special,” Ann Baumbach beamed, noting that Lydon often calls to tell her of Aaron’s daily accomplishments. “They are really terrific.”

Reprinted courtesy of Sun Newspapers. “Teaching Tandem Recognized as Special Educators: Lydon and Wiken honored for work with developmentally disabled students,” by Michael Werner, Richfield Sun, Current/Wednesday, June 7, 2000.

focusing on the child and interacting in a meaningful way, you will have a powerful influence!

Works Cited

- Doss, L., & Reichle, J. (1991). *Replacing Excess Behavior with an Initial Communicative Repertoire*. In J. Reichle, J. York, & J. Sigafoos (Eds), *Implementing Augmentative and Alternative Communication Strategies for Learners with Severe Disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Neilsen, S., Olive, M., Donovan, A., & McEvoy, M. (1998). *Challenging behaviors in your classroom? Don’t react — teach instead*. *Young Exceptional Children*, 2, 2-10.
- Strain, P.S., & Hemmeter M. L. (1997). *Keys To Being Successful When Confronted With Challenging Behaviors*, *Young Exceptional Children*. Nov. 2-8.

Judy K. Swanson is the Project Coordinator of the *Greater Minnesota Behavior Project* and *Multi-Statewide Outreach: Technical Assistance Teams to Address Challenging Behavior* at the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota.



Training Workshop for Minnesota Paraprofessional District Contacts

The Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium is planning a workshop for the training of district contacts for paraprofessional staff development for March 19–20, 2001 at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Plymouth. Individuals identified as district contacts will be provided with information and resources needed to coordinate training and preparation for paraprofessionals in their districts. The conference will begin with an introduction to the Paraprofessional Consortium, overview of the changing role of paraprofessionals, and background information including policies, paraprofessional competencies, tools, training, etc. There will also be breakout sessions covering topics such as mentoring, strategies for the coordination and teaming among licensed staff and paraprofessionals, interactive television and its roles in information dissemination and staff development, the importance of orientation, and several models/training programs available throughout the state. Finally, there will be an opportunity for attendees to work together to devise a game plan for their respective districts.

District contacts have been identified by the Superintendents for each district and a list of these representatives will be made available on the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium's Website (<http://ici2.umn.edu/para>) by December 1, 2000.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
The College of Education
& Human Development



Bulk Rate
Third Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 171
St. Paul, MN

Paralink Newsletter
Institute on Community Integration
University of Minnesota
111 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Address Service Requested