**Together We Can Conference**

The conference was held on Saturday, May 4, 2019 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds and presented by ASK Resource in partnership with The Arc of Iowa, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council, University of Iowa Center for Disabilities & Development.

Opening remarks & keynote introduction was given by a family with three children, one who is deaf. It was inspiring to hear of their goal to make sign language classes available to families in their community held at public libraries. During the lunch break an option to sit in on a discussion of how those interested could make this an option in their community and network as parents of children with hearing loss.

Keynote speaker was LeDerick Horne who spoke of his own learning disability diagnosed in the third grade. He presented Seven Tips to Support and Empower Each Other. He shared moving verses, funny stories, and information to prepare the audience to challenge stereotypes and support the needs of people with disabilities.

Breakout sessions are put in four categories: self-advocacy, family advocacy, health & well-being, and disability law. Those attended by myself and husband, while we took advantage of our daughter being in the day care so we could focus on the various topics, were:

* Self-Advocacy: What Is It and How Does it Work? LeDerick Horne, Public Speaker & Poet This workshop introduces participants to the concept of self-advocacy. A set of core principles will be shared to help students communicate to others what they want and what they need. Through small group work, participants will see how self-advocacy works in a variety of settings such as college, the work place, and at home.
* Sensory Kids: Making Sense of Sensory Processing Teresa Grueter, Occupational Therapist Kids with Sensory Processing Disorder experience too much or too little stimulation through their senses. How do you know if a child is experiencing “too much” or “too little” sensory stimulation? Join this session to gain knowledge and understanding about kids with Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). Practical sensory tips will be shared and your questions are welcome!
* It's Your Story! Own It John Derryberry, Public Speaker & Storyteller Everyone has a story with the potential to inspire others. The question becomes “how do we craft a story revealing our powerful authentic self?” *Not a traditional speaker that gave you tips, but a reminder to tell your story your way!*
* Cultivating Mindfulness at Home Amy Jenkins, Educator & Yoga Instructor During this session, staff from Challenge To Change Inc. will share five parts of practice on how to use yoga and mindfulness with children at home.
* Managed Care: Lessons from Across the States Rachel Patterson, Senior Director, Government Relations & Advocacy This session will provide an overview of managed care across the states and perspectives on how lessons learned can inform work in Iowa. *I appreciated the honesty of this speaker and how Iowa really is in bad shape and how going forward we can focus on making sure that we tell our stories and document as the road ahead will be rough.*

My family has attended this conference for at least the past five years and appreciate the topics and having a chance to learn in an environment that has our family as the focus and how to better advocate for our daughter.

Provided by Lonnie Polok, Parent and Board Secretary of The Arc of Cedar Valley