

Midwest Explorer Vol 3, No. 4 Winter 2010

First Five Years at Midwest Alliance Focus on Outreach and Support for STEM Students with Disabilities

In 2005, the Midwest Alliance joined the National Science Foundation's (NSF) growing network of regional alliances dedicated to increasing the participation and achievement of people with disabilities in all fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). This network, which works under the umbrella of the NSF's Research in Disabilities Education program, strives to close accessibility gaps in STEM by successfully disseminating findings, project evaluation results and proven good practices and products to the public.

Midwest Alliance efforts in support of these goals have centered on direct student interventions such as internships, mentorships and immersion/enrichment experiences; indirect student interventions such as teacher or disability service provider training; and systems interventions such as defining strategies for supporting students with disabilities in postsecondary education. Accomplishments in these areas include:

- Establishment of active collaboration for all Midwest Alliance programs among three postsecondary institutions representing Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin, including joint leadership, joint planning and multi-campus implementation.
- Comprehensive programming to assist students with disabilities to succeed in STEM through mentoring, internships, enrichment activities and immersion experiences.
- Exponential growth in success recruiting students to Midwest Alliance programs.
- Participation by over 2,400 educators, staff members and pre-service education students in more than 80 workshops to improve their ability to teach STEM subjects inclusively.
- Publication of 15 journal articles, electronic publications, conference proceedings, books and book chapters discussing topics related to opportunities and challenges for students with disabilities in STEM such as comprehensive transitional support services, STEM educator attitudes toward students with disabilities, strategies for inclusive teaching and assistive technology issues and impacts.
- More than 180 presentations at national, regional, state, and local conferences and workshops given by Midwest Alliance staff, often as co-presenters.
- A quarterly newsletter distributed to more than 2,700 subscribers.
- Continuous evolution of a web presence, including a website and social networking sites to recruit students with disabilities to Midwest programs.
- Distribution and analysis of two national surveys through the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) to evaluate the state of comprehensive postsecondary services for students with severe physical disabilities and students with psychiatric disabilities.
- National workshops about Personal Assistant Services for Students with Severe Physical Disabilities and STEM, and Students with Psychiatric Disabilities in STEM. Work continues in these areas with publications, presentations and online presence.

- Development of assistive technologies to enable students with severe physical disabilities to be successful in both their living and learning environments.
- Establishment of critical collaborations, including public school systems, other Alliances and two-year technical and community college systems in the three-state area.
- Ongoing formative and summative evaluation using an educative, values-engaged approach for the improvement and evolution of Midwest Alliance programs.

Planning for the next five years at the Midwest Alliance is underway and builds on these significant achievements. Dissemination of these efforts will be greatly enhanced through the addition of Purdue University and Iowa State University as partner institutions and collaborations with far-reaching organizations such as Science Olympiad. Check stemmidwest.org often for updates about exciting programming and new opportunities already in development.

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PI's Corner

It has been nearly five years since the National Science Foundation (NSF) generously provided funds for the Midwest Alliance. The current support from NSF will continue through the end of August 2010. We have submitted a proposal to NSF to continue the Midwest Alliance for another five years.

It is appropriate at this point to take a moment to look at what has been accomplished in the Midwest Alliance. We share some of this in this edition of *The Midwest Explorer*.

Our cover story outlines our most significant accomplishments, all of which involved collaborations both with our formal partners and countless others who share our mission to serve individuals with disabilities. We're very happy with what we've achieved and hope that you realize that your involvement has been key to our success.

Increased accessibility is one of our fundamental goals. I'm fortunate that my dual roles as Principal Investigator at the Midwest Alliance and as professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Wisconsin allow me to direct some of our brightest students' efforts to developing technology that can greatly benefit people with disabilities. This issue's articles about the 2009 Assistive Technology Expo and the ARTe (Assistive and Rehabilitative Technology) Design class highlight two such efforts on this front. I am constantly amazed by the natural affinity and enthusiasm our students show for working on assistive technology.

Finally, the three featured profiles of students who have taken advantage of Midwest Alliance programs and services and thrived are emblematic of what the Midwest Alliance is all about.

Of course, we also are looking ahead to the next five years and ways we can continue to support students in STEM. This newsletter is packed with opportunities for students—please use our resources for assistance with pursuing these. In particular, we want to make certain you are aware of some upcoming Midwest Alliance events. This summer, we will host three immersion camps for students in grades 9-12. Two of the camps focus on engineering design and the third centers on three-dimensional modeling. More details about each are available at stemmidwest.org.

Again, a heartfelt thank you for learning and working with the Midwest Alliance. We greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Jay K. Martin
Principal Investigator





ARTe Design students give a progress report on a project that makes reading documents easier for people with disabilities.

Engineering Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities

Accessibility = Opportunity

On its surface, it's not the most difficult equation that senior mechanical engineering students grapple with at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. But infuse "accessibility" with engineering principles and you come up with "assistive technology (AT)." Suddenly the significance of the equation becomes much more profound.

AT allows individuals with disabilities to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. The term applies to mobility devices such as wheelchairs and walkers, as well as hardware and software that make computers, communication and other information technology more accessible.

Students first encounter the concepts behind AT in the ARTe Design course sequence, a capstone program Professor Jay Martin created for the University's College of Engineering. Capstone courses require students to apply creative and mechanical engineering skills and knowledge, along with learned knowledge and understanding of the design process, to identify, solve and document the solution in a real engineering design problem.

The ARTe Design classes are one of several collaborations the Midwest Alliance has with regional institutions; in addition to his work at the university, Professor Martin serves as Principal Investigator for the Alliance.

ARTe Design combines assistive and rehabilitative technology—the ART in ARTe—with innovative design and product development and support. Objectives for this two-semester course include:

- Provide an authentic design experience for senior mechanical engineering students;
- Provide an experiential learning environment in assistive technology, design of assistive technology and disability;
- Contribute assistive technology designs and systems that lead to more independence and choice for individuals with disabilities.

“Successful AT design relies on solid engineering and a thorough understanding of end-user needs and capabilities,” Martin points out. “ARTE Design provides a master apprenticeship environment that allows these skills and qualities to emerge within our students.”

Classes simulate activities in real-world firms, with projects directed at assistive and rehabilitative technology and all work performed for “clients” pro bono. Projects are either suggested by individuals with disabilities looking to solve accessibility problems or by Martin himself when he sees an issue that can be addressed through AT.



The advanced chair project holds promise as the “next generation” power wheelchair.

Several current projects aim to improve the functionality of wheelchairs. For example, tables and desks are often not the right height for electric wheelchair users; ARTE Design students are creating a stowable work surface so users can study or work right from their chairs. Accessible storage with manual wheelchairs is another problem for some. Many use backpacks, which can cause damage when hung on the back of the chair, and are heavy and hard to reach. A team of students is evaluating a frameless pannier design with adjustable height and width features, and the Madison Spinal Cord Injury Group is assisting with prototype testing.

For engineering students who relish working on souped-up engines and hot rods, the advanced chair project holds lots of appeal. Slated to be the “next generation” power wheelchair, don’t be put off by the prototype’s propane engine and curve-hugging fat tires. The students have loaded it with high-tech design features that make the chair more stable and adjustable.

Students working on an air sling project point out that product improvements could prevent injuries in both individuals with disabilities and their caregivers, as back injuries are common with current products. The design students’ system improves the caregiver’s body positioning to reduce back stress and minimize lifting required to transfer individuals.

The ultimate goal in ARTE Design is to develop AT that has impact and that will get used by individuals with disabilities. The program’s sit ski design has met with the most success so far.

Most recreational activities are difficult and/or expensive for people with limited mobility to enjoy. Cross-country skiing can be accessible, but early equipment was custom made, expensive and not adjustable. Students set out to design an accessible cross-country ski system with flexibility and manufacturability so that more people could have access to this sport. The result is an award-winning design that is easily adjustable to virtually any body type, disability and desired seating position. Thanks to a creative distribution plan, the skis are being distributed across the country to recreational and ski centers.

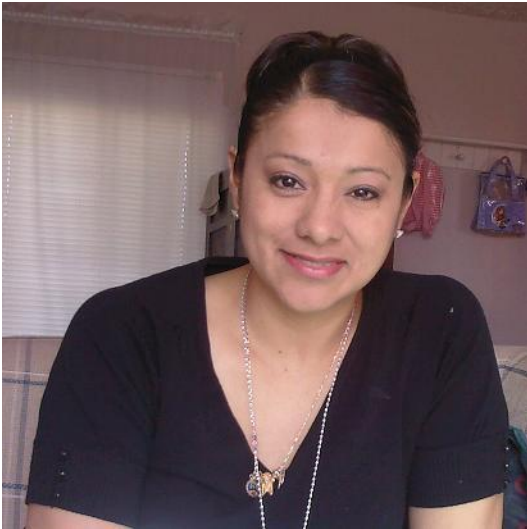
Martin hopes that the sit ski production and distribution model will translate to the other ARTe Design products and is working on a website to showcase the classes' works in progress.

“We know these products don't have huge target markets or profit margins,” he said. “But some of them might be good product extensions for the right company.”

For Martin, seeing some of the University's brightest minds at work on AT solutions is encouraging.

“It's a small field, so there aren't a lot of jobs focused on AT,” he said. “But ARTe Design may inspire them to look at whatever design projects they work on as professional engineers with an eye toward improved accessibility for all users. And if that results in improved accessibility for students with disabilities in particular, then we've done our job.”

Making a Difference



Elsa Krishnaswamy



Jeremiah Swisher



Matt Ward

The Midwest Alliance Mentorship Program matches mentors who are college or university students or alumni with disabilities with high school or undeclared college-level mentees who have similar interests and backgrounds. Face-to-face or Internet discussions focus on self advocacy, transitioning to higher education, academic accommodations and study skills.

The Alliance's Internship Program supports high school, professional and technical college and university undergraduate and graduate students who wish to pursue STEM or social science learning experiences or internships at enrichment camps, businesses and research facilities. Interns learn real-life skills, interact with scientists and professionals and gain practical experience in the fields of their choice.

Meet three participants who used these programs to leverage postsecondary and career opportunities in STEM:

As a Midwest Alliance intern in Dr. Kevin Edward's lab at Illinois State University (ISU) last spring, Elsa Krishnaswamy conducted genetic research on *Drosophila melanogaster*, the common fruit fly. Elsa is currently a graduate student in biotechnology at ISU and

continues to work in Dr. Edwards' lab. She plans to use the results from her lab research in her master's thesis. Elsa also serves as a Midwest Alliance mentor to a freshman with disabilities at the University of Illinois. Together they are exploring ways to ensure a successful first year of college both inside and outside the science laboratory.

Jeremiah Swisher took advantage of both Midwest Alliance programs to successfully transition from high school to college. Prior to enrolling at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater last fall, the Midwest Alliance helped Jeremiah secure an internship at Disability Voice, a project based in Appleton, Wisconsin. At the same time, he worked with Mike Jones, a Midwest Alliance mentor and Eastern Illinois University graduate who has a background working with computer databases. Thanks to these experiences, Jeremiah is now pursuing his interests in computers and web design as well as advocating for people with disabilities. Mike and Jeremiah continue to stay in touch.

Matt Ward recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Despite his amazing gifts in math, Matt found it difficult to find regular employment after graduation. A Midwest Alliance internship last summer provided Matt with the opportunity to work in Dr. Morton Ann Gernsbacher's research laboratory at his alma mater. Following completion of his internship, Matt was offered a position as a research assistant and he continues to work in the lab.

Midwest Alliance Guide to Summer Opportunities for Students

Summer jobs don't have to mean fast food or retail. Make the most of your summer by getting real work experience as you earn money, explore science, technology, engineering and math and have fun. Many summer programs are designed to increase opportunities and involvement for students with diverse backgrounds, including income-status, disability, race and ethnicity.

The following programs provide housing, food and, in most cases, travel funding. Additional funding potential is available through Midwest Alliance stipends that offer high school students up to \$500 (minimum participation length of 40 hours) and college and university students up to \$1,000 (minimum length of 80 hours) for internships. Contact the Midwest Alliance at stemmidwest.org with questions or for application assistance.

Summer Opportunities for High School Students:

Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth Accelerated Learning Program
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Deadline: May 8, 2010

Three-week academic program for students in grades 9-12 that provides the opportunity to take one high school or college-level course at an accelerated pace and earn credit, with school approval, upon successful program completion. Cost: \$1,600 (nonresidential) or \$2,250 (includes housing). Financial assistance available. More information: wcaty.org

Independence First Youth Leadership Summit

Milwaukee, WI

Deadline: May 8, 2010

Weeklong day camps for high school students or recent graduates. Food, transportation and a daily stipend is provided (housing not provided). More Information: Alie Kriofske Mainella, AKriofske@independencefirst.org or 414-226-8112

People Program

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Deadline: April 2010

Three- to six-week, all-expenses-paid residential summer program. Students must be in either 6th grade (enrolled in the Madison public or Menominee Indian school districts) or 9th grade (enrolled in the Madison, Milwaukee, Racine and Waukesha public school districts or the Ho–Chunk, Menominee, and Lac Courte Oreilles, Lac du Flambeau and Bad River Nations Indian Nations). More information: peopleprogram.wisc.edu

Summer Collegiate Experience

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Deadline: Spring 2010

Summer bridge program designed to help incoming first-year students make a successful transition from high school to college. SCE participants attend three Summer Session classes and receive a total of 8 degree credits. Cost for tuition, books and room and board in a residence hall is covered for all participants. If you plan to attend UW-Madison this fall as a first-year student, you are eligible to apply for the program. More information: lssaa.wisc.edu/sce/

Engineering Summer Program

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Deadline: April 9, 2010

Six-week residential experience in which students gain a better understanding of engineering, prepare for the rigors of undergraduate academics and learn about college life. Cost: \$30 non-refundable application fee, but there is no cost to participate in the program. Room, board, books and materials are provided. More information: diversity.engr.wisc.edu/esp

Summer Science Institute

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Deadline: April 2010

Seven-week, all-expenses-paid residential experience in which students gain an understanding of biological/physical research while learning about college life. More information: cbe.wisc.edu/ssi/

Milwaukee School of Engineering Summer Programs

Milwaukee School of Engineering

No deadline but space is limited

Five-day residential summer camps in a variety of engineering fields for high school sophomores, juniors and seniors. Fee to attend; scholarships and Midwest Alliance funding assistance are available. More information: msoe.edu/admiss/summer.html

Engineering Tomorrow's Careers
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Deadline: March 27, 2010

Weeklong event that aims to stimulate interest in engineering and the sciences among high school girls who have just completed their junior year. More information: enr.wisc.edu/studentorgs/swe/Webpage/ETC.shtml

Discover Engineering

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Deadline: April 15, 2010

Camp for high school sophomores interested in science, engineering and mathematics. Cost: \$700. More information: enr.uiuc.edu/wyse/EYO/index.html

Exploring Your Options (EYO)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Deadline: April 15, 2010

Weeklong residential camp for high school juniors and seniors interested in engineering. Cost: \$700. More information: enr.uiuc.edu/wyse/EYO/index.html

Illinois Aerospace Institute

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Deadline: April 15, 2010

Weeklong residential summer camp for students entering grades 9-12 who are interested in learning about the fields of aerospace engineering and aviation through classroom sessions, laboratories, demonstrations and hands-on activities. Cost: \$700. More information: ae.uiuc.edu/IAI/program.html

Young Scholars Program

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Deadline: Spring 2010

Summer and academic-year program for incoming freshman to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. There is no cost; benefits include tuition and books, up to nine credit hours and competitive performance-based scholarships. More information: students.aces.illinois.edu/ysp

Paid Research Opportunities For College and University Students:

AAAS EntryPoint!

Deadline: Spring 2010

Full-paid summer internship opportunities throughout the United States. Eligibility: Full-time undergraduate or graduate student with a disability majoring in a science or

engineering field and a B average or higher. More information:
ehrweb.aaas.org/entrypoint/

Midwest Alliance Offers New Options for Exploration by Design Summer Camps in 2010

Two Sites for Exploration by Design: How Stuff Works

Attention tinkerers and dismantlers! If figuring out the inner workings of things is something you enjoy, don't miss "Exploration by Design: How Stuff Works," a three-day immersion experience for students with disabilities who are interested in science, social sciences, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Instructors from the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin will guide participants in hands-on activities, experiments and discussions to unlock the mysteries behind how everyday objects function. Participants also will gain valuable insights about careers, postsecondary transition, accommodations and assistive technology.

Campers can attend one of two sessions; session one takes place at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana on July 20-22 followed by session two at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on July 27-29. Each site can accommodate up to 20 students and their parents or guardians.

Participants must be current or graduating high school students in grades 9-12, U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents and must have a verifiable disability. All expenses, including food, housing and transportation within Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin will be provided for students and up to two parents or guardians.

New! Exploration by Design: How CAD Works

Have you ever wondered how three-dimensional objects are made? Do you like to work on computers? Then come join Professor Hazel Marie from Youngstown State University to learn how Computer Aided Design or CAD is used to design and produce products. At "Exploration by Design: How CAD Works," you'll use CAD to design your own product and then actually produce it using a rapid prototype machine.

This five-day immersion day camp takes place from 8 a.m.—noon on August 9-13 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Space is limited to 15 participants.

Hurry—registration is underway and filling fast!

Register for each camp online at the Midwest Alliance website, stemmidwest.org.

For more information, visit stemmidwest.org or contact Midwest Alliance outreach coordinators Dan Nordstrom, (608) 890-0992 or dnordstrom@wisc.edu, or Michelle Priddy, (217) 244-1571 or mpriddy@illinois.edu.



Students work together to figure out how everyday objects operate during the Midwest Alliance's two-day camp last summer.



Midwest Alliance Joins Forces with Science Olympiad

A recently formed partnership with Science Olympiad (SO) gives the Midwest Alliance a new avenue for reaching and supporting students with disabilities in science, technology, engineering and math.

SO offers enhanced standards-based science learning for students in kindergarten through grade 12 and their teachers. Last year, nearly 6,000 middle and high school teams from 47 states participated in Science Olympiad tournaments throughout the United States.

The collaboration, which helps both organizations meet goals for increased participation in STEM among students with disabilities, will launch when the 2010 Science Olympiad National Tournament is held at the University of Illinois on May 21-22.

Following the event, Midwest Alliance staff will work with SO state directors to discuss ways to recruit, accommodate and coach students with disabilities during programs and events. Midwest Alliance will offer direct support for students with disabilities who participate in Science Olympiad and also provide outreach to their teammates.

Access to Science Olympiad students and programming provides yet another way for the Midwest Alliance to nurture interest in STEM among younger students with disabilities. Many SO alumni who have pursued STEM careers after college indicate that their participation in SO programming played a key role in choosing these paths.

Midwest Alliance Broadens Reach with I-STEM Partnership

One of the Midwest Alliance's key goals is system impact through the creation and dissemination of successful practices in disability service provision and assistive technology. The Alliance achieves this goal through collaborations with other organizations similarly focused on improving STEM education and participation. A new partnership with the I-STEM Education Initiative at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is designed to further enhance the scalability of Midwest Alliance initiatives.

Midwest Alliance representatives recently met with Professor Lizanne DeStephano, Director of the I-STEM Education Initiative, and other members of the staff. I-STEM is a campus coalition created by the University of Illinois chancellor to:

- improve STEM educational outreach across the spectrum from preschool to postsecondary;
- improve STEM teacher training and professional development;
- promote undergraduate and graduate STEM education reform;
- enhance participation of diverse students; and
- shape educational policy and advocate for STEM education.

Current I-STEM collaborators include the Colleges of Education, Liberal Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Applied Health Sciences, Medicine, Library and Information Sciences and Social Work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The National Center for Supercomputing Applications, Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology and the Institute for Genomic Biology are also I-STEM partners. For more information, visit istem.illinois.edu.

Assistive Tech Expo Showcases Possibilities for Persons with Disabilities



Monica KamalRossa

Monica KamalRossa emphasizes the importance of assistive technologies (AT) for persons with disabilities by asking a question: “How many of you can live without your shoes every day, every season—yes, even in winter?”

KamalRossa, coordinator of the Spinal Cord Injury Group in Madison, WI, explains, "Our canes, wheelchairs and computers are how we navigate to get to school, work and places of worship."

"Assistive technology is a foundation to the quality of life that almost all persons with disabilities require," says KamalRossa, who injured her spinal cord in a 2001 skiing accident and uses wheelchairs to get around. Such technologies enable more people to participate in their communities, which benefits the entire community, she adds.

KamalRossa organized the 25th annual Assistive Technology Expo last November, which was held on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. The Expo showcased some of the latest advances in technology that can offer people with disabilities new opportunities to participate in school, employment and community life.

"We were very excited to have UW students from different departments showcasing their projects," says KamalRossa. "This year we added a Health and Wellness panel with four people with disabilities discussing adaptive kayaking, sit skiing with the Birkebeiner last year, hand cycling and adaptive camping."

The Expo debuted in 1985 when the Southwest Wisconsin Rehabilitation Association (SWRA) and the Rehabilitation Psychology Program in UW-Madison's Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education (RPSE) launched the event to benefit rehabilitation professionals, people with disabilities and the community in general, says Norm Berven, UW-Madison professor of rehabilitation psychology.

Berven, who coordinated the Expo for 20 years, says about two dozen organizations that marketed or used technology related to disability and rehabilitation participated in the inaugural event. More organizations have participated since then, and the number of sponsors has grown, he says.

"Technology has changed dramatically since 1985, when Apple IIe computers were among the most widely used, and cell phones, the Internet, and GPS technology were still years away," Berven says. "Advances in technology have opened many possibilities for people with disabilities, and it is these advances that are highlighted at the Expo."

He credits the active participation of UW-Madison's College of Engineering for taking the expo to a new level, especially Jay Martin, a professor in Mechanical Engineering and Biomedical Engineering. Martin directs UW-CRETe (Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology), which engages in engineering research, design and education to help provide additional independence to individuals with disabilities.

"Professor Martin has involved a number of faculty and programs in Engineering and has also organized poster presentations by his students, demonstrating innovations that they have been involved in developing," Berven says. "He has also brought some important keynote speakers and panels to give presentations at the Expo."

KamalRossa became acquainted with Martin and other members of the Expo's planning committee through her active involvement in adaptive fitness and recreation and assistive technology projects.

"I have attended a few AT Expos over the years because it is such an important event," she says. "I am always curious about what is new and I want to try out the 'solutions' and ask questions."

"The Expo has always sought to attract a diverse audience, and several hundred people typically attend each year," Berven says. Attendees include many faculty, staff and students from rehabilitation-related majors and engineering, computer science and technology.

The Expo also attracts entire classes from other postsecondary institutions from the Madison area and University of Wisconsin System, as well as professionals from rehabilitation agencies, health organizations and elementary and secondary schools.

"We have had elementary school classes attend as a disability-awareness activity, and we once had a high school class that was working on projects to design accessible spaces to accommodate people with disabilities," Berven says.

From the general public, many people with disabilities and their family members come to learn about advances in technology that might be of benefit to them.

The 2010 AT Expo will take place in October at UW-Madison. Visit stemmidwest.org for updates about this event.

Adapted from an article by Kerry G. Hill that originally appeared on the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Education website. Used with permission.

Midwest Alliance Advisory Board

Midwest Alliance staff convenes a meeting of its Advisory Board at least once a year to discuss Alliance operations with stakeholders. The meetings also provide disability service providers and others on the Board with a venue to offer suggestions and guidance to Midwest's personnel. On October 23, 2009, the Advisory Board met in Madison or via teleconference to share highlights from Year 4 operations and hear from participants.

Highlights included the Exploration By Design: How Stuff Works camp held in Champaign, Illinois last June for high school students. Camp instructors from the University of Wisconsin-Madison presented instructional strategies, content and student discoveries and experiences; the Board also heard about evaluation results from the event. Board members encouraged the continuation and expansion of the camp for this coming summer (see Calendar in this issue of the Midwest Explorer for dates), made suggestions about how to target outreach and recruitment and suggested ways to maximize benefits gained by students and families.

To help Advisory Board members learn about the Alliance's student participant opportunities, current Midwest interns and mentors discussed their experiences. Students candidly discussed the challenges they have faced and overcome, and ways in which Midwest internship and mentorship opportunities have allowed them to contribute (and help others succeed in STEM) and encouraged them to continue on their educational journey. Advisory Board members appreciated the focus on "ability" and "difference in ability" and the idea that a student diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, for example, could turn what might be seen as a liability (i.e., careful attention to patterns and details) into an asset in a work situation, such as a research laboratory needing to make corrections to the labeling of different brain parts in an MRI scan.

When asked by Board members if more of the barriers in the transition from high school to postsecondary education are *perceived* or *actual*, one Midwest participant said "Actual," one replied "50/50" and one said, "Not sure!" What better evidence for the need for the individualized support services the Midwest Alliance offers?

Mark Your Calendar!

Join the Midwest Alliance for informative programs for students, parents and academic personnel and other opportunities benefiting students with disabilities. Click on the links below or call for more information.

Wisconsin State Tournament of Odyssey of the Mind

March 27, 2010

Madison Area Technical College

Madison, WI

More information: wi.odysseyofthemind.org

Badger State Science & Engineering Fair

March 27, 2010

Marquette University

Milwaukee, WI

More information: bssef.org/

Midwest Alliance Offices Closed for University of Wisconsin-Madison Furlough Day

April 2, 2010

Illinois/Iowa Association on Higher Education and Disability (ILLOWA AHEAD) Conference

April 15-16, 2010

Hawthorn Suites

Champaign, IL

More information: ahead.org/affiliates/illinois-iowa

Opening Horizons Conference

May 7, 2010

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Whitewater, WI

More information: uww.edu/csd.conf2010.html

Exploration by Design: How Stuff Works*Session 1

July 20-22, 2010

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Urbana, IL

More information: Michelle Priddy, mpriddy@illinois.edu or (217) 244-1571

Exploration by Design: How Stuff Works*Session 2

July 27-29, 2010

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI

More information: Dan Nordstrom, dnordstrom@wisc.edu or (608) 890-0992

Exploration by Design: How CAD Works*

August 9-13, 2010

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI

More information: Dan Nordstrom, dnordstrom@wisc.edu or (608) 890-0992



Senior mechanical engineering students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison designed an improved wheelchair storage system as part of a capstone course focused on assistive technology. See page 3 for the full story.