



## Together We Learn, Lead, & Thrive—Empowering Every Voice

### Location:

**Park Event Center**

**500 Division Street Waite Park, MN 56387**

Monday - June 1, 2026

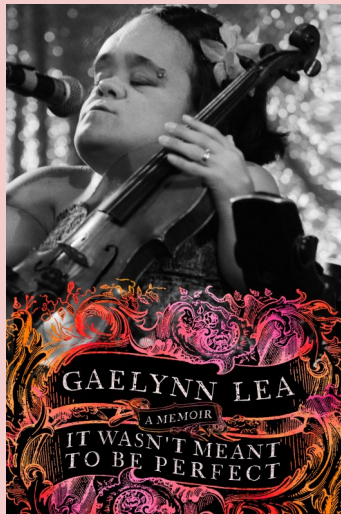
**10:00 am to 1:15 pm:** General Conference Registration

**1:15 pm to 1:30 pm:** Welcome, Announcements, and Conference Kick-off! Heidi Smith, Training Committee Chair

### Welcome Keynote Address: *Gaelynn Lea*

**Violinist, Singer-Songwriter and Broadway Composer**

1:30 pm to 2:30 pm



Gaelynn Lea got her big break when she won NPR Music's Tiny Desk Contest in 2016. Since then, she has been captivating audiences around the world with her haunting original songs and traditional fiddle tunes, and has collaborated with Michael Stipe, The Decemberists, and even Pigface. In 2022, Gaelynn Lea composed and recorded the original score for *Macbeth* on Broadway, starring Daniel Craig and Ruth Negga. (For an extended biography, refer to the enclosed Conference Bios)

**2:30 to 3:00:** Major Sponsors Acknowledgement and Introductions: MTI, Star Services, SetWorks and Kibu

**Kibu:** Offers AI-assisted software supports provider documentation, compliance, and reporting through an easy-to-use interface. Plus, they offer over 570 video classes for your participants on topics such as life skills, job development, nutrition, fitness, and more! Get ready to move!

**3:00 to 4:45: Artist & Crafters & Makers Market:** Join us in celebrating the talents of people across our membership selling original arts and crafts.

**4:45pm to 6:00 pm:** Happy Hour. Appetizers sponsored by MTI

**6:00 and beyond:** Dinner on your own

Tuesday, June 2

7:30 am to 8:45 am— Breakfast

### Morning Sessions

8:45 am to 9:45 am

- **How to Engage Effectively With Legislators:** Learn practical tips and effective ways to connect with and Legislators. Speaker: Speaker, Tami Reuter, MRCI
- **Reimagining the Internship: A Partnership-Driven Model with Businesses:** This session introduces an innovative internship model built on deep, intentional collaboration with businesses that redefines how providers support competitive employment for people with disabilities. Unlike traditional internships, this approach begins with intensive employer engagement before placements occur. While businesses are not required to hire, many choose to do so after seeing individuals succeed on the job. The presenters will share how this model works, why the business partnership strategy is central to its success, and how these principles, not just the structure, can inform replication efforts that lead to meaningful, competitive employment outcomes. Speakers: Amy Gessert & Don Lavin, MTI, Ann Dahl & Jo Bittner, Udac
- **Principles of Therapeutic Intervention—Proactive and Reactive Strategies (Part 1 of 2):** Therapeutic interventions are purposeful, planned actions designed to promote positive, lasting change, modify destructive behaviors, and support personal growth. Key approaches focus on safety, empathy, collaboration, goal setting, and enhancing self-understanding. Speaker: Tracy Ullmann, MLCDAC
- **Respect in Representation: Best Practices for Social Media:** In this session, participants will explore how everyday photos and videos shape public perception—and how support staff can ensure the people they support are portrayed with professionalism and care. Speaker: Sonia Lindgaard, ILO

10:00 am to 11:00 am

- **Building A Successful Social Enterprise In Rural Minnesota:** Learn from those who have successfully built and sustained a business within their organization. Speakers: Tammy Jo Johnson-Aitkin County DAC, Lisa Lassen-ILO, Dawn Lamping—Floodwood Services & Training, facilitated by Kristie Buchman, CHOICE, unlimited
- **Continuous Improvement In Action:** In this session, participants will hear about the five core disciplines that define a learning organization. Explore how to embed continuous improvement into the fabric of your organization by strengthening feedback loops and using data in meaningful ways. MTI staff presenters will also discuss how to create a collaborative organizational culture, where everyone has a role in learning, innovation, and knowledge sharing. Speakers: Bryn Peterson & Staci Jones, MTI
- **Principles Of Therapeutic Intervention-Proactive and Reactive Strategies (Part 2 Of 2):** During the second half of this presentation we will continue to learn about key approaches which focus on safety, empathy, collaboration, goal setting, and enhancing self-understanding. Speaker: Tracy Ullmann, MLCDAC
- **Nao, A Socially Assistive Robot – Creating New Pathways To Meaningful Work:** Technology innovation, robotics, and AI (artificial intelligence) have rarely intersected with employment services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Nao is technology in service to the individual. As a socially assistive humanoid robot, Nao is being designed to work *with* and *for* each person, adapting to their unique needs through individualized, person-centered programming. Speaker: John Skiba

Tuesday, June 2

Morning Sessions, continued

**Assistive Technology Demo Room – Open All Day!**

Explore a hands-on showcase of assistive technology tools designed to support diverse learners and enhance accessibility in your program. Throughout the day, you can try out a wide range of devices, software, and adaptive solutions at your own pace. Knowledgeable experts will be on-site to answer questions, offer personalized guidance, and help you identify practical ways to integrate these technologies into your work. Whether you're new to assistive tech or looking to expand your toolkit, this drop-in space is the perfect place to get inspired and informed.

**11:15 am to 12:15 pm**

- **Hippotherapy, How Horses Can Add Value To People's Lives:** In this one hour session, attendees will learn how horses are used in this therapy by physical, occupational, and speech therapists to treat individuals with neurological, physical, or sensory impairments, such as autism, cerebral palsy, stroke, and multiple sclerosis using the rhythmic, three-dimensional movement of a horse to improve balance, coordination, strength, posture, and speech. Speakers: Shari Mangas & Molly Heller
- **Advancing Employment First: Addressing Benefits Concerns at All Levels:** Through the DHS Lead Agency Employment First Capacity Building Grant, six counties are strengthening their focus on employment. As case managers and assessors initiate more conversations about work, individuals are asking more questions about how employment impacts their benefits — a top concern in some counties. This session will highlight the counties' two-pronged approach to addressing benefits and work, and share early successes and lessons learned. Speakers: Molly Sullivan, Jodi Steinhofer, Angela Nelson
- **Setting People Up for Success: Supporting Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD):** This session will provide the audience with a basic understanding of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and a variety of tips and strategies to support and help individuals succeed in at work and in the community. Speaker: Sara Swan, Looking Forward Life Coaching
- **Guiding Individuals Along the Pathway to Employment:** Have you ever felt like the resources you're given to support your program participants are scattered all over the place? Do you wish they were laid out in one continuous pathway? Look no further! Join Unified Work for an interactive, one-hour workshop where you will learn about our research-backed pathway to employment, discover new curriculum, and explore new tools to help your participants thrive in the workplace. Attendees will leave with free, actionable tools and strategies designed to support folks with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in achieving meaningful, sustainable employment. Speaker: Dan Struck, MDI

**12:15 pm to 1:15 pm — Lunch**

## Afternoon Sessions –Tuesday, June 2

### 1:15 pm to 2:15 pm

- **Programming with Purpose: Practical Strategies for Creating Engaging Activity Calendars to organize and enrich day support services:** This session offers practical tips for purposeful activity planning and discusses the time and effort involved in building meaningful activity calendars and lesson plans. Through an interactive calendar-building activity, participants will explore strategies for engagement, discuss common obstacles in activity coordination, and identify solutions for creating cohesive and high-quality calendars, with the goal of supporting meaningful experiences for the people we support. Speakers: Gabbie Rodriguez & Melody Kosbab, Rise
- **Employment Strategies for Individuals with Higher Support Needs—Lessons Learned:** Supporting individuals with higher support needs to achieve competitive, integrated employment requires equal parts creativity, persistence, and partnership. In this panel discussion, MTI facilitators and provider leaders share practical strategies and "lessons learned" from the field to help you navigate the unknown, design individualized supports, and build the staff capacity necessary for meaningful outcomes. Central to this discussion are the insights gained from a recent pilot program specifically designed to challenge the status quo. By focusing on individuals who have historically been overlooked for competitive employment, this pilot integrated Community Life Engagement (CLE) to ensure that vocational goals were paired with a holistic, person-centered "good life." Attendees will explore how this approach led to significant life outcomes for all six participants, leaving with actionable ideas and renewed confidence in what is truly possible for every individual. Participants will leave with practical ideas they can use right away and greater confidence in what's possible. Speakers: Sherry Healey, Don Lavin, and Bryn Peterson, MTI
- **Minnesota STAR Program – Minnesota's Free Assistive Technology Resource Center (Session 1 of 3):** An overview of Minnesota's state Assistive Technology program and the free services it offers, including device demonstrations, device loans, and guidance on identifying technology that can support employment success. Speaker: Jamis Wehrenberg, MN STAR Program
- **245D Licensing Visits –Before, During and After with a Look at What is Trending (Session 1 of 3):** Preparing for a visit from DHS Licensing? This three part training series will help you understand what happens before, during, and after a licensing visit. Whether you are still waiting to hear when you will have one, or maybe it is coming soon, this course will be valuable! Speaker: Sarah Stein, STAR Services

## Afternoon Sessions –Tuesday, June 2, continued

### 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm

- **The Role of Peer Mentorship in Improving Employment Outcomes:** Speakers: Olivia Lape, and Katie McDermott, The ARC, MN
- **Better Together: What’s Changing In Counties—And Why It Matters For Employment Providers:** In this session, MTI and county staff will share an honest look at the work counties are doing behind the scenes: investing in staff training, rethinking long-standing practices, addressing internal culture and expectations, improving how employment is discussed with people and families, and strengthening relationships with providers, employers, and community partners. You’ll hear what counties are learning, where they’ve stumbled, and where they’ve seen success. Speakers: Andrea Zuber & Bob Wagner - MTI, Tayja Mackedanz, Angela Nelson, Luis Tellez, April Toeben
- **Working with AT – Accessing Assistive Technology for Employment (Session 2 of 3):** An introduction to the *Working with AT* grant program, which helps individuals obtain assistive technology assessments and equipment related to employment. The session will also include examples of Assistive Technology for Employment. Speaker: Sue Redepenning, LiveLife Therapy Solutions
- **245D Licensing Visits – Before, During and After with A Look At What Is Trending (Session 2 of 3):** Join this second session in this series to learn about what to expect with an upcoming licensing visit. Speaker: Sarah Stein, STAR Services

### 3:45 pm to 4:45 pm

- **It’s Messy: Generational Lessons Learned in Organizational Transformation:** Organizational transformation is not always linear or tidy. Instead, it’s impacted by workforce and funding constraints, and unpredictable external pressures. Join MTI staff for a panel discussion with three Minnesota organizations who have or who are shifting their business models to support competitive integrated employment and community life engagement outcomes. From early adopters to emerging leaders, these organizations represent different generational stages of the transformation journey. This session will explore how to move vision to practice, navigate the “mess in the middle” and how to sustain meaningful change over time. Speakers: Staci Jones, Cassy Beckman, Beth Wike, MTI
- **Getting Started With Assistive Technology – A Guide For Providers (Session 3 of 3):** A practical overview for providers on identifying appropriate tools and technology needs to help a person be more independent, how to talk with individuals and families about assistive technology, and support in helping individuals pursue funding through their waivers and other available resources. Speaker: Alaina Gallagher, Technology for Independence Consulting
- **245D Licensing Visits – Before, During and After with a Look at What is Trending (Session 3 of 3):** Join us for the final session in this series focused on licensing visits. Speaker: Sarah Stein, STAR Services

4:45 pm to 6:30 pm – Networking & Appetizer & Drinks & Basket Giveaways

6:30 and beyond: Dinner on your own

## Wednesday, June 3

### **7:30 am to 8:30 am - Breakfast**

### **8:30 am to 9:30 am**

- **Using Microsoft Copilot Safely & Practically (Session 1 of 2):** Join us for an accessible, plain-language introduction to AI and Microsoft Copilot designed for all comfort levels. We'll break down core AI concepts, explain how Copilot keeps your data private and secure, and share simple prompting techniques that help you get better results. Speaker: Robert Reedy, Rise
- **Rural Perspectives on Organizational Transformation:** Rural communities may face unique challenges during organizational transformation. In this panel discussion, rural leaders will share what's working, what's been difficult, and how they are adapting their service models to fit their local realities, while staying focused on supporting people to obtain employment and community membership. Speakers: Don Lavin and Bryn Peterson, MTI
- **Paid Leave in Practice, Federal Trends and Minnesota Realities:** This presentation brings together legal, advisory, carrier, and employer perspectives to examine national paid leave trends and what Minnesota's Paid Family and Medical Leave program means in practice for HR, benefits, and operations teams. Speaker: Jeni Cleveland, Brown & Brown
- **Designated Coordinator and Designated Manager Job Duties (Session 1 of 2):** This session will discuss the job duties for both Designated Coordinators and Designated Managers and weave in to those job duties aspects of compliance to 245D and how it relates to those job descriptions. Speaker: Sarah Stein, STAR Services.

### **9:45 am to 10:45 am**

- **Hands-On Copilot—Using Your Real-Life Examples (Session 2 of 2):** The session includes a quick live demo with hands-on practice so you can try out prompts in real time. We'll also highlight key risks, guardrails, and best practices to ensure safe, responsible use across your work. Perfect for anyone looking to confidently and effectively integrate AI into their daily tasks. Speaker: Robert Reedy, Rise
- **Using Training to Build and Retain Your Workforce:** This session explores how competency-based training and structured professional development can strengthen retention and support a more stable, skilled workforce. Participants will learn practical strategies for implementing training systems that go beyond compliance to build real competencies aligned with national standards such as the NADSP competencies. The session will also highlight approaches for developing emerging leaders within organizations, fostering a culture of learning and professional growth. Speaker: Claire Benway, UMN
- **Designated Coordinator and Designated Manager Job Duties (Session 2 of 2):** This session continues to review job duties for both Designated Coordinators and Designated Managers and weave in to those job duties aspects of compliance to 245D and how it relates to those job descriptions. Speaker: Sarah Stein, STAR Services.

### **Closing Keynote:**

*Brian Hiljus & John Kellas & Amber Kram*

**More Than A Job: How Inclusion & Friendship Drive Success At The Landfill**

Facilitated by Don Lavin and Sherry Healey



## Registration Details

Conference Registration **begins on Friday March 27, 2026.** MOHR members pay \$275.00 . Non-MOHR members are welcome to attend the conference for \$300.00.

Conference registration **closes on May 11, 2026**

**To register for the conference click [HERE](#)**

To pay by check, make checks payable to **MOHR** and mail to: MOHR—C/O Shirley Halgrimson, TSE, Inc., 2027 Rice Street, Roseville, MN 55113.

**Please note:** Conference Registration does not include hotel reservations. A block of rooms is reserved for conference attendees at the hotels listed below:

### **Hotel: Hilton Garden Inn St. Cloud**

Booking Link: [HERE for Garden Inn](#)

Arrival/ Departure Dates: Monday, June 01 / Wednesday, June 03, 2026

Block Cutoff Date: May 11, 2026

Guests can also call the hotel directly at 320-640-7990 and use GROUP CODE: 91E to get the same discounted rooms!

- **Early bird rate of \$159 until 04/20.**
- Rate if booking 04/21-05/11 is \$169.

### **Hotel: Residence Inn by Marriott**

Booking Link: [HERE for Residence Inn](#)

Arrival/ Departure Dates: Monday, June 01/Wednesday, June 03, 2026

Last Day to Book: May 11, 2026

Guests can also call the hotel directly at 320-640-0200 and request GROUP CODE: MOC to get the same discounted rooms!

- **Early bird rate of \$169 until 04/20.**
- Rate if booking 04/21-05/11 is \$182.

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