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# NYSABA NEWS

New York State Association for Behavior Analysis, Inc.

*Paving the Way for ABA*

**Winter 2016**

## State of NYSABA

Frank Cicero, PhD, BCBA, LBA, NYSABA President

Is it 2016 already?? This year has certainly been a busy and exciting one for NYSABA and we are excited about carrying our momentum into the new year. This newsletter edition features highlights from our 26<sup>th</sup> annual conference, which welcomed more than 453 attendees to Albany this past October. For those who attended, I know you would agree that it was highly informative on topics related to clinical practices and developments in our field as well as legislative issues affecting practice in New York. We brought together behavior analysts from across the country to discuss their current work and visions for the future. Be sure to put our 27<sup>th</sup> annual conference on your calendar!

At this point, everyone should be aware that New York State has created and enacted a license for Behavior Analysts. This is something that behavior analysts in the state have been waiting for for a long time; however, with every new advance comes confusion and challenges. Grandfathering of BCBAs into the new license ended in early January 2016. Students in behavior analysis and recently certified BCBAs must now meet additional state requirements in order to obtain a state license. All professionals seeking licensure are urged to contact the NYS Office of the Professions before planning education and experience hours to ensure compliance with state regulations. The board of NYSABA is actively providing guidance to the state on issues pertaining to these licensure requirements.

On another legislative front, licensed behavior analysts need to be aware of the limitations related to the scope of practice within the state. According to licensing laws, behavior analysts in nonexempt settings can only provide service for individuals with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum or related conditions. Regrettably, this restriction currently prevents us from providing services to a large number of consumers who could benefit greatly from behavior analysis. It also puts behavior analysts practicing outside this scope in a very difficult position. It will be unfortunate for the profession, locally, if behavior analysts choose to leave New York in order to conduct their work in neighboring states. The NYSABA legislative committee continues to work tirelessly to stay up-to-date on all issues related to scope of practice and provide influence to legislators where needed.

We have many more exciting initiatives underway across all NYSABA committees, a few of which I'd like to highlight. In the coming year, the marketing committee will be working on improvements to the website and increasing the frequency of member newsletters. They will also be organizing several local networking events across the state. You can read about our first two events that kicked off in 2015 in this newsletter. The membership committee will be looking into creating more members-only benefits to bring more value to NYSABA supporters and to increase our reach to students and practitioners in our field. The student committee is always looking for student members who would like to increase their involvement in NYSABA and would like to hear from you regarding how we can help students in their career development. Be on the lookout for one-day workshops and mini conferences throughout the state being developed by our education committee. And, as always at this time of year, the conference committee is in full swing planning for our 2016 conference which will be held in Albany on October 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Be on the lookout for details!

Wishing you all a great 2016!

Sincerely,

Frank Cicero, President

**Save the Date! Join us for the 27th Annual Conference in Albany October 27—28, 2016**

# NYSABA NEWS

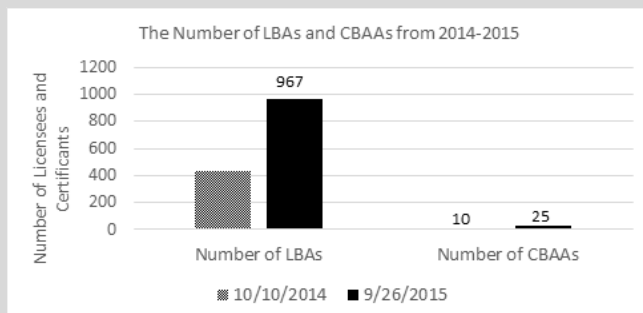
## Legislative Committee Update—2015 in Review

Kim Shamoun, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA, Legislative Committee Co-Chair and

Debbi Napolitano, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA, Past President and Legislative Committee Co-Chair

At the 26<sup>th</sup> annual conference, the legislative committee presented updates on the current status of licensure as well as the work plan for the 2015-2016 year. While the previous year proved to be a busy one for the legislative committee, with lobbying for and obtaining licensure, we still have a lot of work ahead of us! Brief summaries of the updates are as follows:

1. The growth in the number of LBAs and CBAAAs from 2014 to 2015:



2. Objectives regarding state licensure: Outreach efforts are underway to BCBAAs who are non-licensees and new certificants (certified in August and November) regarding the end of the grandfathering option - **January 9, 2016 – course, exam, and experience requirements have changed as of this date.** Also, we are making efforts to connect with BCaBAs – about one half of the BCaBAs in NY are state certified, compared to more than three-quarters of the BCBAAs who are state licensed.
3. Work plan updates: We continue to work on establishing relationships with state agencies to get LBAs and CBAAAs included in regulations and job descriptions, pursue eligibility for reimbursement of ABA through Medicaid, and begin strategic work and advocacy for the removal of current restriction of scope of practice – this is a huge undertaking and will require a lot of effort by the legislative committee, constituents, and NYSABA members. NYSABA board members continue strong attendance at each LBA board meeting.
4. Updates from LBA board meetings: Regulations were developed in March of 2015. Practice guidelines/alerts are being developed by the Board and will be made available on the SED website once completed. We discussed the best way to share updates from board meetings: including the NYSABA newsletter or post the information on NYSABA website and NY page of CalAHIP. Currently, notes are not available from SED, only the agenda from each meeting is posted.

If you are interested in assisting the legislative committee on any of the tasks described above, please contact us at: [info@nysaba.org](mailto:info@nysaba.org).

## NYSABA 2015-2016 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Heather Walker, MS, BCBA  
**Marketing Co-Chair**

## NYSABA Mission Statement

**NYSABA is the official representative for behavior analysis across New York. NYSABA is the state affiliate of the Association for Behavior Analysis International, an international organization devoted to the study of the experimental analysis of behavior. NYSABA also is an affiliate organization of the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts whose mission is to promote and advance the science and practice of applied behavior analysis.**

**NYSABA represents scientists, scholars, and practitioners in behavior analysis and related fields. NYSABA hosts statewide and local conferences, offers resources, provides social networking and communication to support behavior analysis. NYSABA supports the ethical, humane, and effective application of behavior analysis.**

## Behavior Analysts Delivering Reinforcers: The 2015 Conference Awards

Dana Reinecke, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA, President Elect and Conference Committee Co-Chair

It has become a long-standing tradition for NYSABA to hold an awards ceremony during lunch at the annual conference. Board members nominate and vote for award recipients across a number of categories. Awards for student research are given based on the Student Activities Committee members' evaluation of poster submissions to the student research competition, and include cash awards for first and second place winners.

This year, we were pleased to offer the **John Jacobson Award for Consistent and Long Lasting Contributions to Behavior Analysis** to one of our distinguished keynotes, **Dr. James M. Johnston**. This award was presented during lunch on Thursday, October 1, by Dr. David Roll. Dr. Johnston was recognized for his many contributions to the field of behavior analysis, from his faculty positions at Georgia State University, the University of Florida, and Auburn University, to his many publications and service as editor of *The Behavior Analyst* and on the editorial boards of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* and the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*. Dr. Johnston also served as President of the Association for Behavior Analysis International, as well as for Florida, Alabama, and Southeastern behavior analysis organizations, and was the first president of the Behavior Analysis Certification Board and the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts. Dr. Johnston co-authored the seminal text, *Strategies and Tactics of Behavioral Research*, now in its third edition, with H. S. Pennypacker, and most recently published *Radical Behaviorism for ABA Practitioners*.

The **New York State Association for Behavior Analysis Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Behavior Analysis in New York** was awarded to **Debora Thivierge** in recognition of her tireless efforts and commitment to the responsible application of behavior analysis within New York State. The award was presented at lunch on Friday, October 2, by Dr. Bobby Newman. One of the NYSABA Board members eloquently described Deb as an "Uber-Mom" who works to constantly improve education and support for all children who benefit from ABA, not just her own son. She is the Executive Director of the ELIJA Foundation and School, and coordinated the effort to bring Long Island behavior analysts together as the Long Island Behavior Analyst Group (LIBAG). She runs an annual conference for the Long Island community that attracts prestigious speakers and large attendance (Long Island Behavior Analysis Conference, or LIBAC). A BCaBA, Deb served as a member of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board for many years before resigning to become a member of the NYS Behavior Analyst Licensing Board as a representative of Certified Behavior Analyst Assistants.

Student awards are designated as the **Jeffery P. Hamelin Student Research Award for Effective Dissemination of Behavior Analysis in Research**, for demonstration of excellence in behavior analytic research at the student level. This year's first place winner was **Julia Brodsky** of Queens College for her research titled, "Teaching Neuroanatomy to College Students Using Fading in Equivalence-Based Instruction." The second place award was given to **Mirela Cengher**, also of Queens College, for her research titled, "Comparison of the Effects of Two Prompt-Fading Strategies on Skill Acquisition in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders." Both student researchers presented their work at the conference. On behalf of NYSABA, we congratulate all of our award recipients and thank you for your valuable contributions to our field!



Jim Johnston and Dave Roll



Deb Thivierge



Tricia Moss and Julia Brodsky



Tricia Moss and Mirela Cengher



## Inaugural NYC Behavior Analyst Networking Series Kicks Off in Staten Island

Niall Toner, MA, BCBA, LBA, Membership Committee Chair

NYSABA hosted its first local networking event for behavior analysts in New York City on November 17<sup>th</sup>. The event was graciously hosted by the Eden II Programs at their new location in Staten Island. Close to 20 local behavior analysts joined NYSABA board members, Frank Cicero (Board President) and Niall Toner (Membership Chair) for an evening of networking and discussion. Attendees had the opportunity to introduce themselves to the group and get to know fellow practitioners in the area. Networking was followed by an information session led by Frank and Niall who discussed recent developments in the field and the implications for behavior analysts practicing in New York State. Given the success of this inaugural event, planning for a second networking event is underway and will be held in Brooklyn in early spring. Hope to see you there!

Anyone interested in joining future events should send an email to [networking@nysaba.org](mailto:networking@nysaba.org) to receive updates about events in their area. Be sure to include your name, where you currently work and if you're interested in the Buffalo or NYC area networking events.

## 26th Annual Conference—Keynote Speaker Recap

Heather Walker, MS, BCBA, LBA, Marketing Committee Co-Chair

NYSABA's conference committee works diligently year after year to bring us outstanding Keynote speakers and this year was no exception. Dr. V. Mark Durand, Professor of Psychology at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, opened the conference with his address titled, "An Optimistic Approach to Helping Students with Challenging Behaviors." Dr. Durand focused on obstacles to reducing problem behaviors and insights on how families, teachers, and professionals can overcome them. He described how advances in positive psychology can help families identify themes in their self talk about their child and related behavioral challenges. Through identification of pessimistic self talk that focuses on a fatalistic perspective of their child's problem behavior, professionals can help parents shift their focus from pessimism to optimism while changing the way they interact with their child. A 2013 research study conducted by Durand, Hieneman, Clarke, Wang, and Rinaldi yielded data to support this approach as a promising intervention for families struggling to manage challenging behavior.



Durand, V. M. (2011). *Optimistic parenting: Hope and help for you and your challenging child*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Durand, V. M., Hieneman, M., Clarke, S., Wang, M., & Rinaldi, M. L. (2013). Positive family intervention for severe challenging behavior I: a multisite randomized clinical trial. *Journal of positive behavior interventions*, 15(3) 133-143.



Dr. Jim Johnston, retired Professor of Applied Behavior Analysis in Developmental Disabilities at Auburn University, opened the second day of the conference with an address titled, "What Do ABA Practitioners Need to Know About Radical Behaviorism...and Why?" Dr. Johnston took us back to our theoretical roots and reminded us that being skilled in ABA practices requires expertise in the basic science of operant behavior. A strong commitment to practicing conceptually systematic ABA that adheres to the science of behavior analysis is the root of radical behaviorism. Dr. Johnston argues that this focus is integral to applied practice and without it a practitioner's orientation can lead in different therapeutic directions. Dr. Johnston wrapped up his address by discussing the key concepts that ABA professionals must master and use in their daily work. For more information on radical behaviorism for practitioners, check out Dr. Johnston's book on the topic.

Johnston, J. M. (2013). *Radical Behaviorism for ABA Practitioners*. Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY: Sloan Educational Publishing.

## 26th Annual Conference—Invited Speaker Highlights

Nicole Pearson, PsyD, BCBA-D, LBA, Marketing Committee Co-Chair

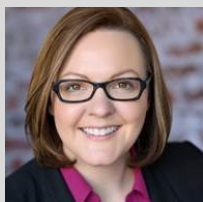
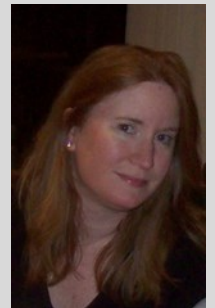
At this year's conference, NYSABA welcomed a host of accomplished behavior analysts and practitioners who shared their research and their knowledge during invited talks. Following is a brief summary of highlights from each invited speaker's presentation.

The ABA practice landscape continues to evolve rapidly, resulting in an equally rapid proliferation of public policies affecting those practices. In her presentation, "Public Policies on the Practice of ABA: Status and Lessons Learned", Dr. Gina Green, Executive Director of Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA) provided an overview of laws, regulations and policies that currently inform practice and discussed their implications for both current and future ABA practitioners; specifically, public policies relating to ABA licensure and other credentialing as well as private and public health plan coverage of ABA services. Combining her clinical expertise with her policy knowledge, Dr. Green also offered attendees suggestions on how to pursue training and work in the public policy arena.



Choice making is an important but complex factor when working with individuals with ASD. As Dr. Robert LaRue, Director of Behavioral and Research Services at Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center discussed in his invited presentation, "The Use of Economic Principles to Influence Choice in Individuals with ASD," issues such as limited, poor or impulsive choice making can impede the success of individuals with ASD in achieving greater independence and become increasingly difficult to intervene on as they age. Dr. LaRue educated attendees about the ethical considerations and many variables that influence choice making in individuals with ASD. Through highlights from his own research studies on the subject, Dr. LaRue illustrated how the use of temporal discounting and economic manipulations could affect choice making to help achieve important habilitation goals and shared some strategies to help practitioners incorporate such considerations into their work.

For many individuals with ASD, difficulties with transitions between settings, activities or people can result in disruptive and sometimes, severe, challenging behavior. If not addressed, such behavior can greatly interfere with an individual's ability to participate in home, school and community activities. In her presentation, "From Assessment to Intervention: Enhancing Transition Behavior in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders," Dr. Mary McDonald, Director of Outreach and Consultation Programs, Eden II Programs, discussed the myriad of factors contributing to the difficulty with transitions in individuals with ASD and how functional assessment and analysis can be used to not only enhance understanding of these behaviors but also the development of effective interventions to treat them. Dr. McDonald specifically addressed the role of consistency vs. predictability, the use of priming and visual preparation, and the promotion of behavioral flexibility.



Dr. Melissa R. Nosik PhD., BCBA-D, Coordinator of Executive Initiatives, Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) provided NYSABA attendees with the latest developments related to credentialing in her address, "An Update on the Behavior Analyst Certification Board." Dr. Nosik shared the most current data on the BACB's credentialing programs for BCBAs, BCaBAs and RBTs, as well as their growing international program development efforts. Other topics discussed included revisions to the BACB's ethics code and disciplinary system, practice guidelines for ASD, eligibility standards, and BCaBA supervision requirements.

Discrimination training is a key practice of practitioners working with individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities. The ability to discriminate is critical for all aspects of learning, whether it be responding to a simple instruction or acquiring a more complex skill such as reading or receptively identifying objects. Failure to acquire discrimination skills can significantly impede an individual's overall ability to learn. In his presentation, "From the Lab to Direct Intervention: Potential Contributions of Translational Stimulus-Control Research for Improving ABA-Based Teaching", Dr. Richard Serna, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Massachusetts Lowell shared how advances in translational stimulus-control research could be applied to teach discrimination skills when more commonly used methods (e.g., discrete trial teaching, incidental teaching) fail. Through examples of his own lab research investigating methods and procedures to expand discrimination training with individuals for whom typical teaching is not effective, Dr. Serna offered practitioners ways to apply his findings to their everyday work to help improve client performance in this area.



*Continued on page 7*



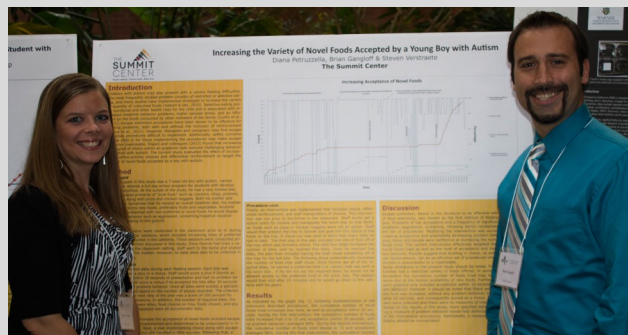
## Conference Poster Presentations and IGNITE

Sam Blanco, MSEd, BCBA, LBA, Membership Committee Member

It was exciting to see the wealth of research presented at this year's NYSABA conference. There were forty-seven poster presentations representing a diverse range of topics, including everything from addressing widespread social problems (such as texting while driving), to animal behavior (such as using functional analysis to treat problem behaviors in shelter dogs), and educational issues (such as teaching sight words). This wide array of topics demonstrated the range of social and educational issues behavior analysis is capable of addressing, and it is wonderful to see so many of our students and practitioners disseminating research and making valuable contributions to our field.



**Jessica Fuller—Poster Presenter**



**Diana Petruzzella and Brian Gangloff—Poster Presenters**



**Theresa Fiani—Poster Presenter**

This year's conference also had an IGNITE session, which allowed students and professionals to present their posters and served to bring students and professionals together to discuss current topics in the field. IGNITE presenters and their topics are listed below:

- Rika Ortega—Teaching Tummy Time to a Child with Down Syndrome
- Theresa Fiani—Generalization of Gaze Shift Across Context
- Susan McHugh—Nurturing the Relationships of Children with Autism and their Sisters: Improving Reciprocal Social Interactions
- Emily Greenawalt—Texting While Driving as Impulsive Choice: Potential Mechanism and Intervention
- Holly Weisberg—Decreasing Stereotypy in a Child with a Dual Diagnosis of Down Syndrome and Autism
- Doug Kupferman—Self-management Techniques Increase Productive Study Skills
- Colleen Kocher—The Effects of Work-Reinforcer Schedules on Skill Acquisition for Children with Autism: An Examination of Edibles as Reinforcers
- Alyson Bonura—Using a Teacher and Self-monitored DRL with Behavior Contract to Reduce Self-injury and Stereotypy in an Adolescent with Autism
- Rachael Goeler—Using Self-monitoring to Reduce Vocal Stereotypy in a High School Student with Autism
- Linda Matons—Training Staff to Implement Social Skills Instruction Using Behavioral Skills Training in Residential Care with Specialized Foster Care Treatment
- Makenzie Sandler—Reduction of Adult Maladaptive Behaviors using Durand's Optimistic Training Model with DSPs



**Louise Kolz & Linda Matons**



**Holly Weisberg**



**Alyson Bonura**



**Rachael Goeler**

## Inaugural Buffalo Behavior Analyst Networking Series Kicks Off in Amherst

Jennifer Rumfola, MA, CCC/SLP, BCBA, LBA, Marketing Committee Member



On the 1st of December 2015, during the 1st snow drought in Buffalo in over 100 years, the 1st Buffalo-Niagara BCBA Social Event took place at the Brick House Tavern and Tap in Amherst, NY. The gathering was hosted by Marketing Committee Co-Chair, Heather Walker, and Committee member, Jennifer Rumfola. The happy hour attracted just the right number of people to answer the question of: Are the ABA professionals in WNY interested in getting together outside of work to mingle, collaborate and support the field in our corner of the state? Upon arrival, guests were greeted, asked to sign in, and create a name tag with their undergraduate alma mater as a discussion point. Conversations about current work environment, backgrounds, family, and personal interests quickly followed.

In attendance were individuals with diverse work experience from those who have been certified for more than 7 years to those just entering the field, as students. The social achieved its initial goal of building camaraderie among professionals in the Buffalo area (from the private sector, BOCES, Cradle Beach, Pacific Child and Family Associates, People Inc., The Summit Center, and the University at Buffalo's Special Education Doctorate program) by providing a forum to meet and get to know a little about one another personally, and professionally. Coordinators knew the first of hopefully many social events was a success when many of the guests asked if this was going to be a monthly gathering and when some lingered past the scheduled time! Look for another local event to be scheduled for Spring 2016.



Jennifer Rumfola, Anna Castonguay, Jennifer James, Rachael Schneider

## Continued...26th Annual Conference—Invited Speaker Highlights



As NYSABA members know, the landscape of healthcare delivery in New York state specific to applied behavior analysis is evolving at a rapid pace. Despite mandates for coverage of ABA under private health insurance and Medicaid, legislation guidelines are complex, leaving many wondering what it all means from a practical perspective for families and providers. Judith Ursitti, Director of State Government Affairs for Autism Speaks, shed some much needed light on the subject in her presentation, "Accessing Healthcare for Applied Behavior Analysis in New York State." Having been actively involved in the passage, implementation and enforcement of autism insurance legislation in more than a dozen states, including New York, Ms. Ursitti provided NYSABA members with clear guidelines on the implementation and enforcement of current healthcare law specific to ABA.

Dr. Jill Pettinger is Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Statewide Services in the Division of Service Delivery for the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). In New York State, OPWDD oversees the coordination of services for more than 128,000 individuals with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, and other neurological impairments. In her presentation, "The Behavior Analyst's Role in the Regulation of Person-Centered Behavioral Interventions" Dr. Pettinger shared the various plans, approaches and strategies that are employed to address challenging behavior among individuals within the OPWDD system in New York State. She also discussed the roles that behavior analysts can potentially play as treatment providers, specifically as it relates to serving as Behavior Intervention Specialists within OPWDD.



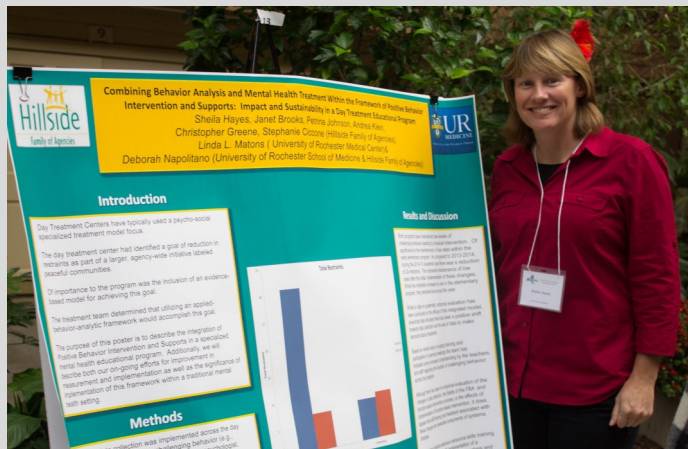
Shari Schatzman and Jill Pettinger



## 26th Annual Conference Snapshots



**Susan McHugh—IGNITE speaker**



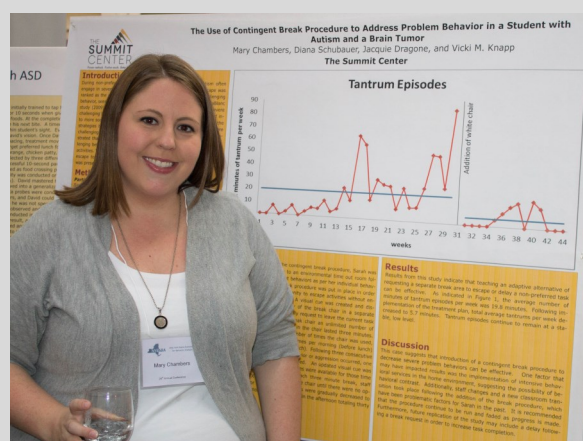
**Sheila Hayes—Poster Presenter**



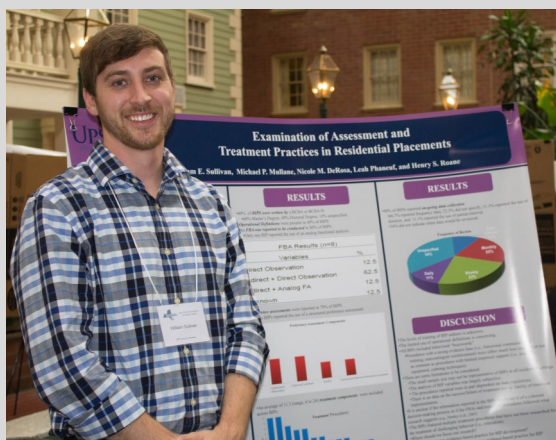
**Douglas Kupferman—IGNITE speaker**



**First Annual Conference Social!!!**



**Mary Chambers—Poster Presenter**



**William Sullivan—Poster Presenter**



**Behavior analysts enjoying the DJ and a little dancing...**