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NORTHERN  
CALIFORNIA

# Neurodiversity & Disability SYMPOSIUM

AT CHICO STATE



FEBRUARY 2, 2024



California State University **Chico**  
Professional & Continuing  
Education

# WELCOME TO THE

# 2024 NORTHERN CALIFORNIA NEURODIVERSITY & DISABILITY SYMPOSIUM AT CHICO STATE

Professional & Continuing Education at California State University, Chico is proud to host this event and we are pleased to welcome you to the symposium, our campus, and our community. This year brings to campus three incredible keynote speakers who provide unique perspectives on the world of Neurodiversity & Disability. Our concurrent presentation speakers are experts in their field and are excited to share their evidence-based practices so you can best support your family, students, clients, or community.

In this program you'll find the symposium schedule, keynote speakers information, and presentation descriptions. You'll also see descriptions of our resource and service providers. Please visit their tables to hear about what they do and can offer.

If you have any questions, stop by the registration tables or ask one of our event staff or volunteers.

Enjoy the symposium!



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## Important event details:

- **Paid parking** is available at a reduced daily rate in either of the campus' multi-story garages or on the streets adjacent to campus. Parking details are available at the registration tables or in the email you received confirming your attendance. Please observe signage so that you park in F/S or G spaces only.
- **Your name badge** is your identification at the conference. Please wear it at all times so we know to whom we're saying hello!
- **Wireless internet access** is available during your time on campus. Please follow these steps:
  1. Select the "csuchico-guest" wireless network
  2. Launch your device's web browser
  3. If prompted, complete the online form to receive your username and password via text message
- **Lunch** today is on your own. We are just steps from Downtown Chico and its wide variety of restaurants. In the BMU there is also a food court (Marketplace) and grab and go options (Wildcat Bookstore, Common Grounds, and Urban Roots) available.
- Please **no flash photography or video** at any time
- At the end of the event, Dr. Temple Grandin will be available for a **book signing**. Her books are for sale at the main desk of the Chico State Wildcat Store in the BMU from 8 AM-2 PM. Books will then be sold on the landing near the registration area. Titles and copies are limited so purchase early if there's a specific title you would like to have her sign. Staff will assist with the queue in order to ensure that everyone that wants a book signed has that opportunity.

*We recognize the Mechoopda Tribe on whose ancestral lands this University sits. They are our friends and our partners as we work toward a more resilient and sustainable future.*

# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: ABBEY & CHRISTINE ROMEO

## Life After 18 with Abbey and Christine Romeo

10:15–11:30 AM | BMU Auditorium

**Abbey Romeo** was diagnosed with Autism at 2.5 yrs old. She has had 20 years of speech, OT, and other interventions to be able to communicate as she does today. She earned a certificate of completion at The Bridgeport Program at The Help Group in Los Angeles in 2016. She went on to attend Miller Career and Transition Center and finished with training in Textiles, Farming, Bakery, and Retail in 2020.

Abbey was part of the award-winning Miracle Project and later Spectrum Laboratory in LA, which uses the arts to expand creativity, social skills and musical interests. Abbey has written and performed in five music videos, all on YouTube, writing and singing about autism. She has worked for two years as a volunteer in a cat rescue, has a paper shredding business, cat sits for the neighbors, and has a thriving hat business called Made By Abbey. She is a verified influencer on TikTok and Instagram and appears in the Emmy Award-winning show “Love On the Spectrum US,” on Netflix.

**Christine Romeo** is an honors graduate of the University of Massachusetts and spent part of her college years at the University of Warwick in Coventry, England. She has been a single mom to both son Benjamin and Abbey since they were 5 and 6. She has spent 22 years in the therapy rooms, IEP’s, and creating individualized interventions for Abbey. Her day job is Director of Communications and Senior Programs at the Farrah Fawcett Foundation in Los Angeles. She appears on “Love On the Spectrum US” with Abbey and is on TikTok, where she is known as Abbeysmom17, sharing her autism journey with Abbey to over 1 million followers.

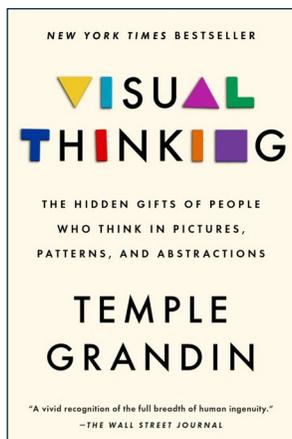
During their presentation, “Life After 18,” Abbey and Christine will share insights, experiences, and the history of Abbey’s autism journey and how it translates into the life Abbey is living today. They will share on overcoming obstacles, creating structure, thinking outside the box, and give you ideas of what to expect and how to prepare for life after 18 on the autism spectrum.



# KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN



Photo by Rosalie Winard



## Dr. Temple Grandin, *Great Minds Don't Always Think Alike* 2:15–3:15 PM | BMU Auditorium

**Dr. Temple Grandin** is a world-renowned autism spokesperson, known for her unique ability to express “an inside narrative” of the disorder. She rose to fame in the autism community as one of the first individuals with autism to share their experiences and perspectives publicly. She is a renowned advocate and expert in two very different fields: animal welfare and autism. Grandin has taught at Colorado State University (CSU) since 1990 and is a past member of the board of directors of the Autism Society of America.

As a popular inspirational speaker, she lectures to parents and teachers throughout the U.S. on her experiences with autism. Articles and interviews have appeared in *The New York Times*, *People*, *Time*, *National Public Radio*, *20/20*, *The View*, and the *BBC*. She was also honored in *Time Magazine*'s 2010 “The 100 Most Influential People in the World.” Her book, *Navigating Autism: 9 Mindsets For Helping Kids on the Spectrum*, presents nine strengths-based mindsets necessary to successfully work with young people on the autism spectrum. Examples and stories bring the approaches to life.

Other popular books authored by Dr. Grandin are *Thinking in Pictures*, *Emergence Labeled Autistic*, *The Way I See It*, *The Autistic Brain*, and her latest work, *Visual Thinking*.

A *New York Times* bestseller, *Visual Thinking* draws on cutting-edge research to take us inside the different ways that people think, and the need for all kinds of minds. Object visualizers are often talented in mechanics, photography, art, design, and working with animals. Visual spatial mathematical thinkers are good at math, physics, computer science, and thinking in patterns. Verbal thinkers think in words. Join Dr. Grandin in her keynote presentation, “Great Minds Don’t Always Think Alike,” as she dives into these “hidden gifts of people who think in pictures, patterns, and abstractions.”

Book sales and signing will be available after the keynote presentation.

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or video at any time

# SCHEDULE

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<b>Coffee and Registration</b>	<b>7:30–8:00 AM</b> Bell Memorial Union (BMU) Auditorium
<b>Welcome and Announcements</b> President Steve Perez   California State University, Chico	<b>8:00–8:15 AM</b> BMU Auditorium
<b>* Concurrent Presentations:</b>	<b>8:30–10:00 AM</b>
Chico State Student Panel—Navigating Work, Studies, and Social Life in College	BMU Auditorium
Let’s Talk About Sex: Supporting Teens and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities Through Inclusive Sex Education	BMU 203
<b>Keynote: Life After 18 with Abbey and Christine Romeo</b>	<b>10:15–11:30 AM</b> BMU Auditorium
<b>Break</b>	<b>11:30–11:45 AM</b>
<b>* Concurrent Presentations:</b>	<b>11:45 AM–1:00 PM</b>
Q&A with Abbey and Christine	BMU Auditorium
The Normalcy of Neurodiversity	BMU 203
<b>Lunch (On Your Own)</b>	<b>1:00–2:15 PM</b>
<b>Closing Keynote: Dr. Temple Grandin, Great Minds Don’t Always Think Alike</b>	<b>2:15–3:15 PM</b> BMU Auditorium
<b>Reception and Book Signing</b>	<b>3:30–4:00 PM</b> BMU Auditorium

\* Concurrent presentations are on a first-come, first-served, space-available basis. If the room is full, please attend the other presentation.

# CONCURRENT PRESENTATIONS 8:30–10:00 AM

## Chico State Student Panel—Navigating Work, Studies, and Social Life in College

Room: BMU Auditorium

### **Betina Wildhaber**

*Career Center Career Advisor*

*Neurodiversity & Disability Taskforce Chair*

*California State University, Chico*

Join us for a dynamic discussion where students share their personal successes and challenges in balancing academics, employment, and social experiences. Gain practical tips, discover student perspectives, and foster a deeper understanding of the diverse paths to life in college. There will be time for Q&A to further explore the college experience through the eyes of those who navigate it with resilience and determination.

Thank you to our student panelists! Jamie, Grace, Nathalie, Bobby, Irish, and Emma.



**Betina Wildhaber** is currently a Career Advisor and Student Employment Coordinator at Chico State. Prior to Chico State, Betina worked 12+ years primarily with nonprofit organizations providing employment and enrichment opportunities for the neurodiverse. Her education background is in Therapeutic Recreation and she has a Master's Degree in Social Science with an emphasis in Career Development. As part of completing her degree, she developed a website of employment and post-secondary resources for neurodiverse individuals, the community, and employers... [NeurodiversityNetwork.net](http://NeurodiversityNetwork.net).

## Let's Talk About Sex: Supporting Teens and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities Through Inclusive Sex Education

Room: BMU 203

### **Blake Warner, M.A.**

*Clinical Psychology Intern, Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Track*

*UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior*

This presentation will include a comprehensive exploration of the intersection of developmental disabilities and sexuality. Attendees will gain insights into the need to dispel myths surrounding individuals with developmental disabilities and their access to comprehensive sex education. This session will cover practical guidance on facilitating conversations about relationships and sexual health among teens and young adults with developmental disabilities. Delving into inclusive curriculum design and effective communication strategies that promote a respectful and empowering learning environment. This is an opportunity to deepen understanding and discover actionable strategies for fostering inclusive sex education for all.



**Blake Warner** is a Clinical Psychology Intern in the Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Treatment Track at the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. He is also a PhD candidate at the University of South Dakota, where he completed a two-year Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) traineeship. In his role at UCLA, Blake is involved with the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS™), the Child and Adult Neurodevelopmental (CAN) Clinic, and EMPWR. Blake is passionate about policy and advocacy, and his research revolves around advancing access to clinical interventions such as PEERS™ for marginalized populations, including those in rural areas and the LGBTQ+ community.

# CONCURRENT PRESENTATIONS 11:45 AM-1:00 PM

## Q&A with Abbey and Christine

Room: BMU Auditorium

What do you want to know more about from Abbey and Christine's talk? Moderator Mikayla Teeter will guide a conversation with the symposium audience, Abbey, and Christine and answer your questions related to Abbey's autism journey.

## The Normalcy of Neurodiversity

Room: BMU 203

### John Marble

Founder, Pivot Neurodiversity

Writer and Speaker on Innovation, Autism, and Neurodiversity

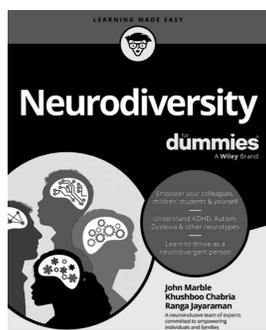
This presentation will focus on how embracing neurodiversity both in the public school system and in higher education spaces like Chico State creates a more inclusive learning environment for students, staff, and faculty, leading to innovation and improved academic outcomes. Learn how fostering neurodiversity can better prepare students for future success by promoting different ways of thinking and problem solving and help support student, faculty and staff retention and diversity practices.



**John Marble** is the founder of Pivot and is a writer and speaker on innovation, autism, and neurodiversity. In 2009, he was appointed by President Obama to the United States Office of Personnel Management. There, his work focused on workforce development, innovation, and incorporating into government services the best practices and thinking of Silicon Valley.

In addition to his White House service, he has served as an advisor and aide to Secretary Hillary Clinton, Senator John Kerry, and Vice President Al Gore. John is also co-author of *Neurodiversity for Dummies* (Wiley Publishing, March 19, 2024).

John lives in San Francisco. He is autistic.



We gratefully acknowledge the Chico State Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Neurodiversity & Disability Taskforce, College of Communication and Education, and Department of Kinesiology; as well as Far Northern Regional Center, and The Yellow Door for their support of this year's event.

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# RESOURCE & SERVICE PROVIDERS

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## The Arc of Butte County

The mission of The Arc is to ensure the opportunity for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities to choose and realize goals, which advance and enhance their quality of life. The Arc is further committed to reducing the incidence and limiting the consequences of developmental disabilities through education, advocacy, and the support of family, friends, and the community.

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## Butte College

The Occupational and Life Skills (OLS) Certificate Program at Butte College prepares students for community integrated employment. Students who successfully complete the program can present to potential employers proof of competencies through an occupation specific certification and a Butte College Certificate of Completion.

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## CAPTAIN

CAPTAIN (California Autism Professional Training and Information Network) is a statewide training and technical assistance network who work to provide and share information about supports for individuals on the autism spectrum and their families using Evidenced Based Practices.

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## Crystal Lively, IF

Independent Facilitator for Self Determination Program through the Regional Centers of California.

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## Curtis Homes, LLC

Curtis Homes, LLC is a company that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities. We exist to be the best employer and care provider possible. Curtis Homes, LLC serves a diverse population through multiple service types. From independent living to licensed care, Curtis Homes strives to maintain a reputation of being flexible, adaptable, and an excellent provider to receive services from.

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## Disability Action Center

Disability Action Center is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1980 to meet specific needs of people with disabilities living in Northern California. Our dedicated staff provides free support to help community members with disabilities achieve and/or maintain their optimal level of self-reliance and independence. We can provide support services such as information, housing assistance, and provider referrals. Our goal is to work with each individual client to eliminate barriers (physical, emotional, societal, etc.) to increase opportunities for participation in the community.

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## Far Northern Regional Center (FNRC)

Providing services and support that allow persons with developmental disabilities to live productive and valued lives.

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## FNRC Local Self-Determination Advisory Committee

A local volunteer advisory committee provides oversight of each regional center's Self-Determination Program. "Self-determination" means a voluntary delivery system consisting of a defined and comprehensive mix of services and supports, selected and directed by a participant through person-centered planning, in order to meet the objectives in his or her IPP. Self-determination services and supports are designed to assist the participant to achieve personally defined outcomes in community settings that promote inclusion. Committee members include the regional center clients' rights advocate, consumers, family members, and other advocates, and community leaders.

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## Little Red Hen Nursery, Inc.

Little Red Hen is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Chico, CA providing supportive employment to more than 175 adults with developmental disabilities. Our organization believes that everyone has a contribution to make in society and everyone deserves the dignity of a job and connection through community integration. In addition to employment, we provide choice-based community integration programs to our adults, offering different opportunities to participate in theater, gaming and various art mediums. We also serve 150 children with autism weekly through our play and socialization programs, as well as offer summer theater programs and summer camps.

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## New Beginnings Housing Foundation

New Beginnings Housing Foundation assists Far Northern Regional Center clients in finding affordable housing in Butte, Glenn, and Tehama counties. We assist with searches, lease negotiation, move in planning, utility sign ups, etc. and ongoing lease retention support. Services provided through referrals from Far Northern Regional Center.