

# FEBRUARY 2025 | NEWSLETTER



UNIVERSITY OF  
South Carolina



CAROLINA  
AUTISM & NEURODEVELOPMENT  
CENTER

## February Events

- **Snacks'n'Science**
  - Feb. 18
  - Home Team BBQ, Five Points
  - Theme: Let's Celebrate, share your accomplishments, both big and small!  
See page 3.
- **Elevator Pitch Workshop with Dr. Lisa Cantrell**
  - Feb. 25
  - 1800 Gervais Street
  - Registration info on page 5.

## In this Newsletter

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## SCAND Consortium Research Symposium



Friday, March 7rd, 2025  
9am-5pm  
Furman University  
Greenville, SC

- Poster abstracts due **2/15/25**
- Register by **2/24/25!**

**See more pg. 10!**



Drs. Kristy Welshhans and Rob Hock accepting their **CAN-dies** awards! See all winners pg. 3!



Welcome to Spring 2025! We had a great time celebrating at the CAN holiday party in December - check out the first annual CAN-dies Awards on the next page! January was quite busy:

- Thank you for joining meetings and Psychology talks for our upcoming hire -- we are excited about potential growth in CAN neuroscience.
- Settling into a new semester and watching everyone navigate “snow days” was eye-opening!
- We finalized the review process and are excited to announce the next round of CAN Pilot Grant recipients -- 8 research grants and 3 community projects were awarded, spanning across 6 colleges and 25 investigators!

Text

Caitlin Hudac  
CAN Steering Director  
[chudac@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:chudac@mailbox.sc.edu)

Cheers,

*Caitlin*

We are excited about the upcoming program for the semester.

- Next month, we are hosting a professional development event with Dr. Lisa Cantrell on curating a **90 second “Elevator Pitch” (2/25 4pm)**. I am particularly excited about the opportunity to practice science communication across the many disciplines represented in CAN.
- Dr. Rob Hock is hosting Dr. Sandy Magaña, Ph.D, MSW (3/18-19) whose work addresses clinical care within a cultural lens. More details soon!
- April will be busy with **autism-related programming**, including our 2nd annual AutismConnect (4/2) and Neurodiversity Among Us (4/6) events, and another year of Autism’s Got Talent.

## Upcoming CAN Science

- 2/5 - Overview from several Pilot grant awardees
- 2/12 - Alex Ewing, Prisma Health Data Repository
- 2/19 Ashley Kalinski, Immune cell mediated neural repair
- NO SCIENCE 3/5, SCAND @ Furman Uni 3/7
- 3/19 - Kimaya Sarmukadam, Sensory impairments and anxiety in autistic preschoolers
- 4/9 - Tentative: Community grant awardees
- 4/16 - Christian O’Reilly, Misophonia in ASD

## Exec updates

- Discussed trainee events and ways to engage folks across disciplines
- Hiring updates in Psych, SOM, SPED: searches all progressing
- Spring 2025 programming - spreading awareness about events, esp. SCAND 3/7 in Greenville (71 registrants already)
- Almost complete with FY24 annual report which will serve as a template for each year
- Will be resubmitting T32 application in May
- Starting to set plans for May ‘25 strategic planning meeting

# The Inaugural CAN-dies Awards

We see the hard work and heart you put in, everyday!

faculty - staff - trainee



**Whatchamacallit:** A person who has an impact on you that is hard to classify (or doesn't fit into the other categories)

**Sydney Arsenault**



**Mike and Ike:** Your favorite CAN duo -- when they get together, anything is possible!

**Jane Roberts,  
Jeff Twiss**



**Junior Mint:** An undergraduate student that really made an impact

**Sarai Deese**



**Almond Joy:** A person that may be a bit nutty but brings you joy

**Kristy Welshans, Axie Acosta,  
Rob Hock Kim Tena**



**Nerd:** A person who is extremely enthusiastic and knowledgeable about science

**Abby Hogan  
Kim Sarmukadam**



**Red Hots:** A person who has a really "hot" year

**Jessica Bradshaw,  
Ana Pocivavsek, Cailee Nelson  
Jessie Fu**



**SweetARTS:** A person who supports you, even when it's tough news to hear

**Sarah Edmunds,  
Mansi Upadhyay**

**Lifesaver:** A person who saves the lives on a daily basis

**Jenna Smith**



# Spring 2025 Events



**FEB.**

## **2/18: Snacks'n'Science**

Join us at Home Team for a casual get-together with faculty, staff, and trainees to discuss our accomplishments, both big and small, this academic year!

## **2/25: Elevator Pitch Workshop**

Dr. Lisa Cantrell is facilitating an elevator pitch workshop for faculty and trainees. Registration information included on page 5!

**MARCH**

## **3/5: Disability Advocacy Day**

Join us at the Statehouse for a statewide grassroots initiative led by advocacy groups, aims to inform our governor and legislators about the realities, struggles, and needs of individuals with disabilities and their families. More info pg. 10!

## **3/7: SCAND**

An informal gathering of scientists studying autism and neurodevelopmental disorders in the state of South Carolina. This year's meeting is in-person in Greenville, SC. More info pg. 11!

## **3/18-3/19: Visiting Scholar Series**

Dr. Sandra Magana will be visiting us from the University of Texas at Austin to provide a seminar, meet with faculty and trainees, and learn about CAN. Details to come!

**APRIL**

## **4/2 AutismConnect 2025**

A **FREE** conference for self-advocates, families, caregivers, providers, ANYONE interested in learning more about autism and available resources! Informational flyer included on page 12!

## **4/5 Neurodiversity Among Us**

Save the date! An event to celebrate kids with autism and neurodevelopmental disorders will take place at 1800 Gervais Street on April 5th with a "Be Your Own Superhero" theme. Stay tuned for event details!

## **4/23 Research Roundup**

Join CAN faculty and trainees (undergraduate and graduate students, staff, post-docs) in an event to showcase our research and learn from one another! Review posters from throughout the year and listen to flashtalks from faculty and trainees. More details to come!

## **4/25 Discover USC**

Discover USC brings the university's research and scholarly community together in a new way, unifying celebrations of undergraduate and graduate student, postdoctoral and medical scholar innovation and scholarship into a single full-day extravaganza. More information to come!

# ELEVATOR PITCH WORKSHOP

This **FREE** event is open to:

- Undergraduate students
- Graduate students
- Post-docs
- Faculty
- Staff



FROM LISA CANTRELL, PHD  
[STORIESOFSCIENCE.ORG](http://STORIESOFSCIENCE.ORG)

This workshop is intended to guide participants step by step through building their own **compelling, clear, and focused** elevator pitch—specifically around their research—and then honing it to **90 seconds**. By the end of the session, participants will have a draft of a 90-second elevator pitch and 1-2 short anecdotes that they can use to **illustrate their research**.

## 2/25/25

1800 GERVAIS STREET | 4-6 PM



CAROLINA  
AUTISM & NEURODEVELOPMENT  
RESEARCH CENTER

**REGISTER TODAY!**



# CONGRATULATIONS!!!

## Pilot Grant Recipients

THANK YOU! To everyone who submitted a pilot grant proposal. We had a large number of competitive applications. See some fast facts about the funded grants and read their titles below!

**8** Research Grants

**2** Community Projects

**6** Colleges

**25** Total Investigators

	Project Title	Investigator(s)
Research	Pharmacological Modulation of Repetitive Behaviors in Mice with Genetic Mutations Associated with Neurodevelopmental Disorders	Dan Foster (PPN), Deanna Smith (BIOL.), Christian O'Reilly (CSE)
	Using Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) to Better Support Caregivers in Using Evidence-Based Parenting Skills with Their Autistic Children	Sarah Edmunds (Psych.), Rob Hock (Social Work), Chih-Hsiang Jason Yang (Exercise Science)
	An Initial Examination of the Association Between Physical Activity and Academic Functioning in College Students With and Without ADHD	Kate Flory (Psych.), Glenn Weaver (Exercise Science), Donna Coffman (Psych.)
	Characterizing the Behavioral Phenotype of Mothers with the Fragile X Full Mutation	Jessica Klusek (COMD), Abigail Hogan (COMD), Rob Hock (Social Work), Jane Roberts (Psych.)
	State of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD) in South Carolina: Assessing the Impact of Early Detection of ASD and NDD in South Carolina Using Linked Administrative Data	Orgul Ozturk (Econ.), Sarah Edmunds (Psych.)
	Misophonia in Autism Spectrum Disorder	Svetlana Shinkareva (Psych.), Christian O'Reilly (CSE)
	Auditory Function and its Relation to Cognitive-Developmental Abilities in Infants and Toddlers with Down syndrome: A Pilot Study	Liz Will (COMD), Sam McQuillin (Psych.), Jessie Klusek (COMD), Laura Droge (COMD)
	Characterizing the Micro Context and Its Impact on Language Development in Preterm and Full-Term Infants	Xiaoxue (Jessie) Fu (Psych), Meisam Arjmandi (COMD), Julia Yurkovic-Harding (Psych.)
Community	Support Groups for Parents of Children with ASD	Rob Hock (Social Work), Abigail Mojica (Social Work)
	Towards a Community of Care: An Evidence-Based Respite Program for Autistic Individuals	Maya Renaud (Psych.), Sarah Edmunds (Psych.), Alexandra Tyner (Public Health)

# PRETEEN SPECTRUM CONNECTION

SPRING 2025

\$35

**WHAT**

Do you have a neurodivergent preteen aged 10-13 years old?

A fun and supportive group designed to help preteens develop social communication, self-advocacy, and emotion regulation skills!

Topics tailored to your preteen's needs!

The group will be held **IN PERSON** on **Tuesdays from 6-7:30PM** from February 18th-April 22nd.

**WHEN**

**WHERE**

Psychological Services Center  
1331 Elmwood Ave, Suite 140  
Columbia, SC 29201



**MORE INFO:**

EMAIL: [KTENA@EMAIL.SC.EDU](mailto:KTENA@EMAIL.SC.EDU)  
CALL/TEXT: 803-807-2580

**OR**

COMPLETE SURVEY



# Teen Spectrum Connection Group

Psychology Services Center

**VIRTUAL**

**Wednesdays  
4:30pm–5:45pm**

**Starts 2/19/25**

**Who: 14–18 year old neurodivergent adolescents**

**What: 9 group sessions**

- Topics based on adolescents' interest and need (e.g., social skills, adaptive skills, post-high school planning, self-advocacy)

**Where: Zoom**

**Cost: \$35**



**To learn more, please contact the Psychology Services Center (PSC)  
at 803-777-7302 or [PSYCPSC@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:PSYCPSC@mailbox.sc.edu)**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**South Carolina**



# STUDY OPPORTUNITY

*Do you want help managing your child's difficult behaviors or teaching them life skills?*

## Family Training and Support Services Study



### Why participate?

- Learn strategies for supporting your loved one.
- Receive 1:1 guidance from a trained interventionist for 12 weeks.
  - 1-3 sessions per week, 1-3 hours per session
  - Number and length of sessions based on your preference and needs!
- We'll come to you! **No travel required.**
- Earn up to \$150 for participating.

### You may be eligible if you:

- Care for an **individual ages 6-21** with autism, intellectual disability, or developmental delay. Are not currently receiving ABA services or
- Behavior Support services.
- Live within 45 minutes of Columbia.

For more info, email us at [FTSS@sc.edu](mailto:FTSS@sc.edu) or scan:



# Disability Advocacy Day

Wednesday, March 5th | 9am - 12pm

South Carolina State House North Grounds



*Legislate for Change,  
Advocate for All!*

The South Carolina Partnership of Disability Organizations (SCPDO) will be hosting the Annual Disability Advocacy Day event on Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

Join us at 9 a.m. on the North grounds of the South Carolina State House to unite to impact change and celebrate the contributions made by people of all abilities.



Events include a walk, a rally, and speeches by community partners, self-advocates, and others. Be sure to make appointments to speak with your legislators about the issues that mean the most to you. Let your voice be heard!

Visit [scpdo.org](http://scpdo.org) to learn more about Disability Advocacy Day and how you can get involved!



# SCAND SYMPOSIUM 2025

## 3/7/2025



Keynote Speaker:  
**Ben Philpot, PhD**

Symposium 2025 will be held **in-person** at **Furman University** in Greenville, SC. This research conference is **free**.

For information on registration, keynote speaker, and poster submissions:



[scandconsortium.org](http://scandconsortium.org)

**Trainees: Present your work! Poster abstracts are due by 2/15.**

Abstracts (300 page word limit) can be uploaded as a PDF or DOC. Submissions are encouraged for all stages of work including preliminary findings.



South Carolina  
Department of Disabilities  
and Special Needs



THE  
CAN  
CENTER



SOUTH CAROLINA  
Developmental Disabilities Council

# AUTISM CONNECT

**APRIL 2, 2025**

CHECK-IN BEGINS AT 8AM | SESSIONS FROM 9-3PM

***Bringing together the autism community for a day filled with connections, support, and understanding!***

## **Location:**

**Brookland Banquet & Conference Center**  
1066 Sunset Blvd, West Columbia SC 29169

**Exhibitor tiers  
start at \$50**

Half-price for nonprofits

## **CALL FOR EXHIBITORS & PRESENTERS**

- Continuing Education.
- A limited number of exhibitor tables and sponsorship opportunities.
- Connect directly with families and other providers.
- Extend your reach beyond your current audience.
- Share best practices, research, and knowledge with professionals and caregivers at AutismConnect.
- **Deadline for presenters/exhibitors is January 31, 2025.**

**To register, scan QR code or  
visit the AutismConnect webpage:**

<https://ddsn.sc.gov/ddsn-divisions/autism/autismconnect>

SCAN TO REGISTER

