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## NH Leadership Series' Graduation Ceremony Celebrates Inclusive and Community Spirit

LACONIA – More than 30 students will graduate from the NH Leadership Series on May 10 with skills in advocating with service providers, using the legislative process to achieve change, and organizing communities to support inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

The ceremony, which will take place at The Margate on Winnepesaukee in Laconia, celebrates the hard work graduates have demonstrated toward exploring innovative approaches to support people with disabilities and their families within their communities, and for fostering communities – where everyone belongs.

The NH Leadership Series, which began in 1988 at the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability/UCE, was modeled after Minnesota's *Partners in Policymaking Series* with later input from the *Colorado Partners in Leadership Training*. The series is eight sessions long, held from September through May, and provides parents with state-of-the-art information and strategies to effectively impact local and state organizations on issues related to people with disabilities.

More than 400 parents and adults with disabilities have graduated from the NH Leadership Series, which is updated and revised each year. These leaders are skilled in advocating with service providers, using the legislative process to achieve change, and organizing communities to support inclusion.

Families and individuals with disabilities serve on school boards, family support teams and councils, judicial benches, local and state government, community boards etc. When asked about their entrance into the world of leadership positions, many graduates point to the NH Leadership Series as a pivotal experience in their lives.

The NH Leadership Series has effectively:

- Created positive change by educating those individuals most directly affected by laws, policies, supports, and services for people with disabilities
- Paved the way for people with disabilities to speak for themselves and direct their own lives
- Advocated for two bills passed into law by the New Hampshire Legislature: one to create a comprehensive system of family support and another to reduce the waiting list for adult services
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The Institute on Disability/UAP, in collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Council, People First, the New Hampshire Division of Mental health and Developmental Services, Department of Education, and other organizations, has sponsored a Leadership Series each year since 1988.

For more information about the NH Leadership Series or the Institute on Disability, visit its Web site at <http://iod.unh.edu>.

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*The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, is a University Center for Excellence, established in 1987 with a mission to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities.*