

# Developing mind symposium just the beginning

Gregg Stanwood, My View 7:59 a.m. EDT April 13, 2016



(Photo: COLIN HACKLEY)

On Friday, the Florida State University Center for Brain Repair held the Symposium on the Developing Mind. Given how successful it was, we're now referring to it as the 1st Annual Symposium on the Developing Mind!

With the Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare Foundation as our co-sponsor, we brought together brain researchers from all disciplines, health care providers, community leaders – and most important, the public – to hear about cutting-edge programs and research regarding childhood brain disorders.

We expected 50 or 60 interested people at the Turnbull Center. Instead we had more than double that number. More important than numbers, there was palpable energy, passion and excitement in that room.

Speakers included Lorraine Ausley (founding and current chair of Whole Child Leon), Amy Wetherby (director of the FSU Autism Institute) and Pradeep Bhide (director of the FSU Center for Brain Repair). A riveting keynote address featured Jill Escher, founder of the Escher Fund and president of the Autism Society of the San Francisco Bay Area. This self-described “scientist-stalker” has shown how a non-scientist can effectively and positively influence scientific directions and hypotheses.

Difficult but crucial questions were asked of the panel. I think it's safe to say that everyone in the room learned a ton and met new colleagues and friends who share a passion for healthy children.

I helped organize this symposium and got to serve as an emcee of sorts. And I'm extremely lucky to have been involved. The program and speakers, but most of all the audience, blew me away.

This is how we move science forward — all of us together, not just the scientists. The conversations I had last Friday give me resolve, energy and impatience with my own lab's research on brain development. We owe it to our children, our grandchildren and our communities.

Many of the people I talked with spoke of how they appreciated hearing about cutting-edge research. That was a large part of the symposium's intent, of course, but the conversation was just as important. The scientists need to hear about community needs and perceptions. Ivory towers just don't work.

So thank you to all who participated — you have a voice and an impact! And stay tuned for the 2nd Annual Symposium on the Developing Mind next spring. We've already begun planning.

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