



**Press Release:** *Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities* announces 2023 humanitarian award recipient

(For immediate release)

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The awards committee of the *Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities* announced today that the 2023 Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award will be posthumously presented to Dr. James (Jim) Thompson. Dr. Thompson was most recently a Professor of Special Education, Associate Director of the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities, and Senior Scientist at the Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas. In addition, he served as the Publications Chair for the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities and editor of the journal *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. Throughout his career, Dr. Thompson served in a number of other roles within the field, including Special Education Professor and Department Chair at Illinois State University, Project Coordinator at the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota, as well as a teacher and transition counselor in Illinois. This award is named in honor of the late Dr. Burton Blatt, a foundational advocate for individuals with extensive support needs to be full and valued members of society, recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the fields of autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities. Through his extensive research and publication efforts, Dr. Thompson has become internationally recognized as a leader in the supports paradigm for individuals with intellectual disability and other developmental disabilities (IDD). One nominator, Dr. Michael Wehmeyer, of Kansas University, described Dr. Thompson as "unquestionably, the most identifiable person to lead the field to adopt a supports paradigm, and those efforts, along with changing conceptualizations of disability, have led to the movement toward the adoption of strengths-based approaches in the fields of autism and IDD." Dr. Wehmeyer characterized Dr. Thomson's leadership and research as one that "will leave a lasting impression on the field and will continue to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities for years to come. Dr. Thompson was aware of the need to relate research to everyday practice as

well as to support and mentor the next generation of scholars.” Another nominator, Dr. Megan Carpenter, of Furman University, noted “Throughout his research, Jim never lost his focus on practical application of his work and supporting teachers through his research...Jim was always willing to mentor doctoral students and early career researchers and teacher educators to help them continue the work of positively impacting the lives of people with IDD.” According to Dr. Dave Edyburn, of the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, “Dr. Thompson was a contemporary leader with extraordinary impact around the world in advocating for inclusive education. His cheerful presence and encouragement will be dearly missed.” Another nominator, Dr. Emily Bouck, of Michigan State University, described Dr. Thompson as “a wonderful individual and committed advocate within the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities.” And as put by Dr. Karrie Shogren, of the Kansas University, “Jim’s work, his values, and his drive to advance the supports paradigm have indeed created something new. Something new that all of us must continue to advance, advocate for, and integrate into our research, policy, and practice. Jim’s focus on seeking out the strengths and supports of everyone around him will be missed”

This prestigious award is presented by *The Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD)*, a division within the *Council for Exceptional Children*, which is the largest international professional organization in the world dedicated to supporting the needs of students with disabilities. Originating in 1963, DADD is a leading voice in the field of education for students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities through research dissemination, active participation in the creation of nationally-recognized professional practice standards, and robust professional networking. The award ceremony will take place at DADD’s annual conference in Clearwater, Florida on January 19, 2023.

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Information on the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities:

<http://www.daddcec.com/>