

A Visit to the Capital

On February 4, the People First Steering Committee met with key officials at the state capitol. We met as a group with Mayme Miller from the governor's office, Representative Jeff Grisamore, Kelly Schulz from Representative Sara Lampe's office, and Tec Chapman from the Department of Mental Health. Representatives Charlie Norr and Senator Joan Bray visited briefly. We also spent time meeting separately with our own legislators in their offices.

What was the point? We decided to focus on Medicaid eligibility. To live in poverty is hard enough, but to live at less than poverty is what you have to do in order to qualify for regular Medicaid in Missouri. We spread the message that we want Missouri to raise the



Jason Mize joined about 30 others representing People First at the capital.

eligibility limit to 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.

What does this mean? Well, the Federal Poverty Level is \$902.50 per month. In Missouri you can't earn more than \$767 per month and still qualify for Medicaid. Unless, that is, you give anything over \$767 back to the state.

The visits with the legislators went real well. Most of them. They seemed to be very receptive to the idea of raising eligibility limits. Several told me that if legislation came they would sign it. Although no one said they would sponsor it. There is a feeling of cooperation and, yep, here's THE word - "bipartisanship." There is an air of goodwill in the capitol. I'm expecting great things this session. See ya at the capitol.

by Patti Goss

LEGISLATIVE ALERT FROM GARY STEPHENS: When we were at the capitol, it seemed legislators were all for services in the community for people with disabilities and their families. In Missouri, thousands of people with developmental disabilities are waiting for services. The governor's budget for the Department of Mental Health included funding to help some of these people and their families. But the House Budget Committee took out that funding and I would like to know why. At the time of this writing, the funding (called DD Medicaid Caseload Growth) has not been restored to the budget. We're counting on legislators on the House floor and in the Senate to restore funding for services to people who need help but are forced to wait.

If you are concerned for people who need supports and services but are forced to wait, call or email your representatives and senators today, I did. If you need help in knowing what to say, email me, garystevens41@yahoo.com.

Message from the President

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In January,

the power changed hands in Missouri and in our nation's Capital. This can be a good or bad thing depending on the party affiliation. Beyond all this, however, I was proud of our nation. For far too long, our country has looked at differences. In this Presidential election, I believe that people looked at the person, and whether we are talking about race, disability, economic background or gender, the message of People First is look at the person first. So, it makes me proud to see that the shift toward inclusion is happening even though we sometimes only see the frustration. It makes me proud to live in a country that does not limit our potential. We have the freedom to dream and the opportunity to accomplish those dreams if we are willing to put the work into it.

This leads me to another freedom I am proud that we still have...the freedom of speech. We are going to be at the Capital at the end of March advocating for the things that are important to us. I received an alert yesterday that the house budget committee is proposing cuts to funding for people with developmental disabilities. My understanding is that they are recommending no funding for case load growth which means that the waiting list for services is just going to get longer. Also, they are recommending a cut of \$1 million for community services. This means that if you are receiving services in the community, you could see a reduction of hours. If you combine this with the fact that the Governor is

recommending millions of dollars be spent on building new buildings on the grounds of the habilitation centers, it is obvious that all they are seeing is numbers on a page. We need to put a face in front of these numbers. They need to understand that we need the help and community services are more important than investing in institutions. The last thing on this issue I want you to think about before you visit your legislators is this. The state legislature is wanting to pass a law called TABOR. This law will create a cap on how much money the state can have in Revenue and caps spending. My understanding is that it also limits the ability of future legislators to move money around to accommodate for need. This means that there will not be anything in place to protect against the waiting list growing to an unbelievably high level. As healthcare costs increase, less people will be able to receive healthcare and less services will be available for those who can get the healthcare. If the money goes away and TABOR passes, it is likely that it will not come back.

This is an important time in our state, and it is important for us to exercise our freedom of speech. Most bad ideas come from good intentions and I think that our legislators are truly trying to do what they think is best for our state. The problem is that they are looking at a small part of the picture. We are the ones whose lives are impacted by these decisions, and we must call, write and visit with our legislators until they understand our position. Believe in yourself. Believe in your dreams. Believe that YOU are the expert. Believe in the power of your voice.

Thank you,

Roger Crome
President, People First of Missouri

People First

← of Missouri

People First is a self-advocacy organization formed by, run by, and which exists for people with disabilities.

People First Core Value: Freedom

Have you ever thought about freedom and what it means to you?

I hope you have freedom in your life.

Freedom is a word used to tell someone that they're free from being labeled or put down or taken advantage of because of their race or disability or gender.

Freedom is our right and privilege. Without it we have nothing.

Freedom can also be sung, or it can be yelled across the nation.

Freedom is my life and it helps me to be happy for who I am.

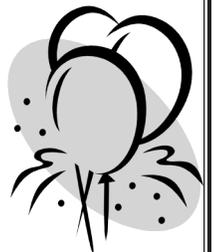
Freedom lets me go places. It helps me get things done.

So be proud to have freedom on your side. Make freedom a daily thing in your life.

by Jason Mize

Mission

People First of Missouri is a statewide organization that promotes equality for people with disabilities so they can live the life they want in the community. People First members:



- Teach and empower people to understand their rights and responsibilities and to speak up for themselves (self-advocacy);
- Stand up for one another to help people live the life they want with the supports they need (advocacy for one another);
- Advocate for community services that allow people to have choices and control over their supports and lives (advocacy at the systems level);
- Create change in communities to ensure opportunity and full, meaningful participation for all people (advocacy within the community).

How do YOU feel about the Name Change?

In October 2008, the governor signed an executive order dropping “MR” from the Division of MRDD title. We asked some steering committee members how they feel, now that “MR” has been dropped. Here’s what people said:

- Mike: I felt good when I saw that email about the governor ordering them to remove the R word.
- Charles: I’m proud of the name change.
- Amanda: I think it’s a good idea. Names can hurt people.
- Kelly: I’m glad it’s done. It was time to change it. We are not in the dark ages anymore. It’s time to look to the future.
- Joe: I feel like everyone in the government listened to us. For over 10 years we’ve wanted to change the name. I’m one of the testifiers to have the name change.
- Kathy: I’m happy; it’s about time it changed.
- John: Good. It needed to be done a long time ago. I hope it stays.
- Curtus: I’m glad it’s gone.
- Jason: People with disabilities should be seen as people and not labels.
- Chris: I feel positive about it. No more hurting peoples’ feelings.
- Lizzie: I love the name change! It means people with disabilities are not labeled with the R word.
- Johanna: It’s a good thing. It gives people with disabilities more respect.
- Becky: When it happened I was there. When he signed the order I cried and was very happy.
- Kit: It means freedom from being labeled.
- Gary: ALL PEOPLE ARE THE SAME.
- Marilyn: It means I’m a person without a label in front of my name.
- Tim: It means turning something negative into something positive.
- Troy: It makes me feel more respected.
- Roger: Finally we’ve been listened to and the disrespect is gone.

by Marilyn & Lizzie

Freedom

People First Self-Advocacy Conference

Don't Miss Out!

Register now for the...

14th Annual Self-Advocacy Spring Conference

April 24-26, 2009: Tan-Tar-A Resort, Lake of the Ozarks

1. Make your hotel reservations WITH the Hotel:
 - Tan-Tar-A Resort, Lake of the Ozarks
 - www.tan-tar-a.com or Reservation number: 800-826-8272
 - guest room, \$89 one bedroom suite, \$149 two bedroom suite, \$238
 - Reservations due to hotel by MARCH 26, 2009

2. Make your reservation for the conference by returning a registration form to PeopleFirst.
 - To receive a form, call (800) 558-8652 or e-mail at mopeoplefirst@hotmail.com
 - Registration Fees: (DOES NOT INCLUDE HOTEL COSTS)

Self Advocate, \$110	PF Advisor, \$110
Family Member, \$110	Direct Care Staff, \$110
Professional, \$140	
 - Registration forms MAY NOT be submitted by email or fax. All forms must be accompanied by payment of fees due!
 - Registration forms due to People First by March 26. No refunds after April 4.

Conference Key-note Speaker & Topic

Rebecca Cokley will be presenting a message of "Moving from Hope to Change: Creating a National Self-Advocacy Agenda for the 21st Century." This will be an interactive dialogue about the possibilities and opportunities being made available to the self-advocacy community in the 21st Century. She will discuss tools, tips, and techniques to bring aboard, engage, and invest in the next generation of self-advocates. It's time for this community to pro-active and take an in-depth look at how we organize, how we mentor, how we educate, how we train, and how we lead!

Rebecca Cokley is the Project Coordinator for the National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington DC. NCLD-Y is one of the most promising one-stop shops for information on best practices in youth development and leadership programming for youth with disabilities. She is also the co-founder of the Disability History Education Network- a growing movement of youth led coalitions around the country working to have disability history and awareness integrated into K-12 public education.

To receive a registration form,
call (800) 558-8652 or e-mail at mopeoplefirst@hotmail.com



Chapter Updates

Take the time to read about the wonderful work of our local People First chapters. These are GREAT examples of People First chapters making opportunities!

Boone County



In November we had a float in Columbia's Holiday Parade. The theme was "I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas". Everything used to build the float was recycled after the parade. Out of hundreds of floats, we won 2nd prize! (We were amazed.)

In December we co-sponsored a dance with Columbia Parks & Recreation. It was fun and it was also a good fund raiser.

We are planning to do some training in "People First Language" for local tv and radio stations and newspapers. We hope to get meetings with editors, and we'll let you know how it goes.

We look forward to the Disability Rights Legislative Day on March 25 and the conference April 24 -26.

Boonslick People First

We are working hard right now to raise money to help send members to the Spring Conference in April. We have a bake sale planned in February and a spaghetti dinner planned for March.

Our new president had to step down for personal reasons, so for now our vice president, Shelia Bader, is acting as the president.

Our group just keeps growing. At our February meeting we moved over to the Knights of Columbus Hall. We are still looking for a place that is big enough for our group to meet every month. Right now we have 32 members, 4 advisors, and the support staff that come along. That means our group usually averages between 40 and 45 people at each meeting.

We can't wait to see you all at Disability Rights Legislative Day and the Spring Conference!

Independence

The October meeting of Independence People First was a difficult one for us. We enjoyed an early Halloween party with treats and good fun but we also had to deal with the news that our long time advisor and friend Karen Conner was stepping down as Chapter Advisor. Karen had been our advisor for almost nine years and she will be greatly missed but we know that her family needs and that she is doing what she wants to do and we are happy for her. We have officially begun our search for a new advisor for the Independence Chapter

We did not have a meeting in November but we were represented at Steering Committee at TanTarA by Joe Wrinkle and Cathy Enfield.

We had a combination business meeting and Christmas Party in December. We discussed the future of the Chapter and also made plans for the State Conference in April, 2009. After the meeting we exchanged gifts, enjoyed treats and shared the holiday spirit. We resolved to do our best to make 2009 the best year ever for People First of Missouri. Happy New Year!

Lebanon

We've been busy here in Lebanon. We've gone bowling a few times. Had a couple of BBQ and picnics. The part we've really enjoyed is our game night, we've had some great poker games, and then we have had a movie night with lots of goodies. We had our big Christmas dinner and it was well attended with our friends from other chapters. We're now in the process of planning our Valentine party which is on the 14th of February. All are welcome. You can call our President Scott Howe, phone # 417-588-9623 for further detail. The more the merrier. We're planning some fund raisers but haven't decided which ones we're doing yet. Any suggestions, you can call Scott and let him know. He is also our newest member to graduate from Partners. Way to go Scott. For a blind guy, he's really pretty good. If you don't believe me, just ask him. (you know I'm teasing).

Chapter updates, Continued!

Rolla

The Rolla chapter has been limited in their activities this past three months due to lack of funds, member illness and weather. However the chapter did put together a large donation of food before Thanksgiving for our local food pantry, and plan to do a cleaning product donation in April.

Some of our members have done SAFE Home visits this winter and two Money Follows the Person Quality of life surveys. We are proud to report that both of the people surveyed are living successfully in the community at this time. The chapter's focus now is preparing for Rally Day.



Sikeston

We had a busy fall. We set up an information table in the community during October and gave out information about People First. We had a Halloween Party on Halloween at the Shriners Club.

In November we had a Thanksgiving Bring-A-Dish dinner at our chapter meeting and we made nominations for new chapter officers for 2009 and 2010. In December we had our annual Xmas Party at the Eagles Club and we elected new officers. They are: Curtis Elrod - President. Barry Grissom - Vice President, Tim Beussink - Secretary, Glenda Cherry - Treasurer, Carl Taylor - Sargent at Arms. Curtis Elrod & Tim Beussink were elected as MPF Steering Committee Representatives and Barry Grissom was elected as the Alternate.

The Sikeston Regional Office gave us a new office with our very own key to it. It is the best office space we have ever had as it is very accessible and very roomy. The chapter officers are very pleased and very grateful.

Our funding from the SB40 Board for 2009 was approved and we are also very happy about this. We are planning on attending the Steering Committee meeting in January and have started making plans for attending the statewide conference.

Steve Brasser, Self-Advocate at the Poplar Bluff Regional Office has been attending our last 2 chapter meetings and is trying to get a People First chapter started again in Poplar Bluff and then one again in Kennett. We are helping him with our materials and will provide speakers for him. We are excited about seeing chapters restarted in these areas. We would like to see one started up in Cape Girardeau again too.

Our chapter is looking forward to a great 2009 and wish all the other chapters in Missouri a Happy New Year.

People First of Springfield

We've got new members. We're having our next meeting February 21. We're still recovering from winter. See ya in April at the conference!

People First of St. Charles

We had a busy winter. Our first Holiday Party was a resounding success. The members made all of the arrangements from securing the venue, to decorations, to ordering the food. We hope to make it even bigger and better next year. PF St. Charles has started holding monthly events to give existing members a chance to socialize with each other and to attract new members to our chapter. Our January event was a trip to the bowling alley and in February we will be attending a Valentine's Day dance being held by another organization in our area. Upcoming events include shopping, movies, and a trip to the art museum.

In the past few months our chapter has lost a few members but added even more. We have also elected a new president and executive committee. We are excited about what we have done in the past several months and look forward to building on our successes in the New Year!

St. Louis

Some counties in Missouri that have SB40 Boards do not yet have People First chapters. Part of the reason we gave this presentation was to reach out to directors from those counties. Another reason was to talk about the different ways County Boards support PF chapters - and how supporting PF is a win-win situation. Some Boards are more supportive than others, so we shared stories about some of the great things that happen where partnerships are tight.

People First Getting Involved



Presentation to Partners in Policy Making

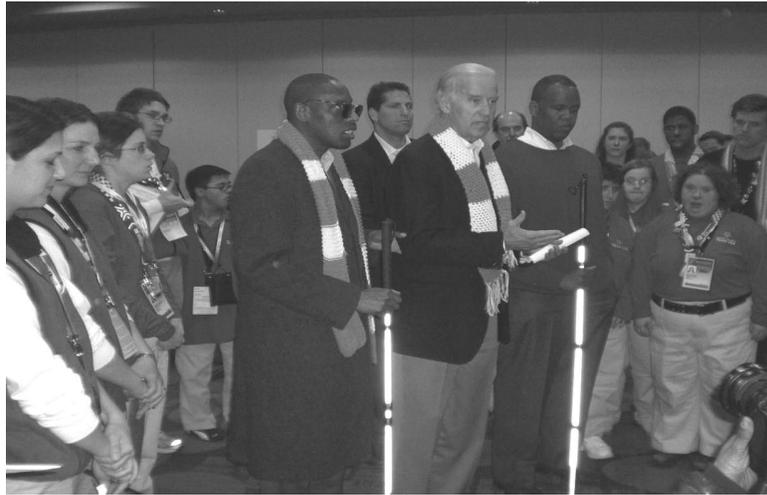
In February, Roger Crome, Cathy Enfield, Kelly Ray, John Burris and Mark Satterwhite gave a Power Point presentation to Partners in Policy Making. We're getting word out about the history of self-advocacy, and People First. We spoke to a room full of parents, youth, and others. We were honored to be invited.



Don't Miss Out!

Spread the word about Self-Advocacy

Chester Finn, a special assistant to Commissioner Diana Jones Ritter of the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), took part in a presidential delegation on February 12, headed up by United States Vice President Joseph Biden, to the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho.



advocates presenting workshops and sharing their passion for speaking up. He learned about our number one goal to get federal legislation to set up Self-Advocacy Training and Information Centers run by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Kareem heard us describe what is needed to get employment for people with developmental disabilities.

Finn traveled in his capacity as president of the national board of Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), after receiving an invitation from Kareem Dale, President Barack Obama's Special Assistant for Disability Policy, who also traveled to Idaho. Finn worked with President Obama's Transition Team on disability issues. Here are comments from Chester Finn about his experience as a member of this presidential delegation.

I would like to thank the Vice President's staff for inviting me and Karen Topper for accompanying me to participate in the wonderful festivities and getting to meet and network with some of the athletes.

On behalf of Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered, our board of directors and all of our organizations across the country, I would like to congratulate Kareem Dale for being appointed as Special Assistant to the President on Disability Policy. It is a great honor to have him working and advocating for people with disabilities. And I also would like to publically thank him for making it possible for me to be part of the delegation.

From the beginning Kareem has shown his commitment in working with us by coming to the Ohio Presidential Disability Forum and most importantly for attending the September 2008 national self-advocacy conference held in Indiana. Being at our national conference Kareem saw self-

On a state level self-advocacy groups continue to address a wide range of issues. We are speaking up to close institutions and put community services in place by building supports that a person wants, around that person. We want employment for people with intellectual disabilities by putting money towards building the supports around a person on the job and not in sheltered workshops. In New York I work for Governor Paterson, Commissioner Ritter and Max Chamora and Tracy Durfee. They make it possible for me to do the things that I do like advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in New York State and across the country. It is so important for people to be able to speak for themselves or communicate with support from their family members or other allies, about their goals and wishes to be independent.

I would like to challenge state agencies, providers and businesses in the community across the country to duplicate what President Obama and Governor Paterson have done for people with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities by allowing Kareem Dale and myself to do the things that we do for people. I challenge you to create jobs for people with disabilities to make changes. Also to support with financial resources your state self-advocacy and people first organizations to work for freedom for people with intellectual disabilities.

Email responses to: Chester.Finn@omr.state.ny.us

Guardianship Project

The Guardianship Project provides information on alternatives to guardianship to individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and key supporters. The Project also links people with developmental disabilities to services that can aid them in modifying their guardianship status so that they can maximize their independence. Missouri People First, Missouri Protection & Advocacy Services (Mo P&A), and the UMKC-Institute on Human Development (IHD) collaborate together as part of the Project. These three agencies are looking for individuals who would like to participate in the Project.

The Guardianship Project is the result of research done by Missouri's Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities (MPCDD). "The Project was developed from grassroots input when individuals with disabilities, family members, and others identified guardianship as an issue many needed help with," says Delores Sparks, the MPCDD coordinator.

Roger Crome, President of Missouri People First, thinks that MO P&A set up a great coalition for the Project. "The partnership on this project is an awesome opportunity to collaborate on a project that will have real impact on people's lives," Crome said.

A Guardianship Resource Guide is currently in development, and the IHD is working to connect self-advocates to the information they need. Sheli Reynolds, who works in the IHD, says, "the Project will allow us to disseminate a good deal of resource material to people so that they understand the issues with guardianship."

"Guardianship is not the only option," Sheli says, "this project is about educating and training people about alternatives to guardianship that are less restrictive."



Elizabeth Moran gives presentation on the Guardianship Project.

chapters, Independent Living Centers, and many other agencies.

Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services hopes to reach over 200 self-advocates, counselors, teachers, service providers, and family members of persons with disabilities at the Guardianship Project trainings. Mo P&A has made it one of their goals to modify the guardianship status of at least twenty-five (25) individuals.

"The Project goes hand-in-hand with our support of disability rights," says Staff Attorney Lisa Sutherland, who is organizing the Guardianship Project for Mo P&A. "With the training and information everyone will be receiving, attorneys, advocates, and consumers will be able to continue their work on guardianship issues with a greater expertise," added Lisa.

Elizabeth Moran, an Attorney working with IHD, states, "we've created trainings that seek not only to improve the capacity of self-advocates, their families, and key supporters to make informed decisions as they consider and pursue options and alternatives for themselves and those they care about, but also to assist with making informed decisions related to their current guardianship status and how to navigate systems to make desired guardianship changes."

If you are interested in being a part of the Guardianship Project, you should call Mo P&A's Application Unit at 800-392-8667.

Training sessions are core component of the Project, and a calendar of scheduled trainings will be available once training locations are confirmed. The Project will host a number of "Re-Determining Guardianship Status" trainings in eleven (11) different locations around the state. Information regarding the sessions will be publicized by Missouri People First

This and That



Advice for Advisors from People First of Boone County

At their February meeting PF of BC were asked the question, what advice do you have for advisors?

The first thing that popped out was, "How do you get rid of them?"

Really though, here's some advice for advisors:

- Relax; let us learn from our mistakes;
- Never control the group's decisions;
- We want advice when we need advice, please advise us when we ask for it;
- Let every person speak for themselves;
- Share your ideas about how the group can help itself;
- Share things you learn about that we should know;
- We need your help with transportation, finding a place to meet, making copies for us;
- Remember, as an advisor, you're not "staff";
- Let us be who we are.



Call it what it is...
using respectful language.

People First of Missouri

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www.missouripeoplefirst.org

People First: Self-Advocates Determined to be All for One and One for All

Very Important Reminders!

Apr 24-26, 2009

PF of Missouri Statewide Conference, Tan-Tar-A, Lake Ozarks

May 15, 2009

Articles due for the next "Message from the People"

P.O. Box 30142

Kansas City, MO 64112