Message from the People

People First of Missouri

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Proud to be an Advocate

A lot of people think of “pride” as a bad thing. I don’t think of it as bad at all. I’m proud to live and work in the community. I can only do so with the right support, and I have years of experience figuring out how to get the support I need. I’m a self-advocate, meaning I advocate for myself and my support needs, but I also advocate for others and share what I’ve learned. I can help others get supports they need, and I take pride in that, too.

It’s not easy for a lot of people in Missouri right now though. Times are hard. There are almost 5,000 people with developmental disabilities on a waiting list for services. Many People First members have services, like supported living, supported employment, therapies, adapted equipment and personal assistance. What would we do without those services? Imagine what it would be like without your community supports. The governor has put money in the state’s Division of Developmental Disabilities budget to help some of the people waiting – it’s called “caseload growth” funds. We need to make sure the Missouri House and Senate support caseload growth funds. Even if they do though, thousands of people will still be waiting and can use the support of our voices.

There is talk that some services might be cut back – like consumer directed personal care attendants, through the Department of Health and Senior Services. That’s a really important support for people. It’s actually life-saving for many and allows them to live in their own homes.

During hard times, our brothers and sisters with disability need us more than ever. We can be proud to stand up for those who fear losing their community support and those who are waiting for support. As self advocates, we can tell our legislators and the governor that we appreciate the supports we receive that help us to live and work in the community, and we can urge them to fund supports for others who have none. If you need help contacting your legislator or the governor, or if you have trouble knowing what to say, talk to someone who can help, like a People First officer or advisor.

I take pride in advocating for our future. There are lots of young people coming up behind us who want to live in a free and just world. We can be proud we’re preparing the way for them.

- Picture and article by Barb Griffin
I would like to thank you for electing me as president of People First of Missouri. This is such an important time for us as an organization with the national conference coming up in September. It is such an honor to be hosting the conference so close to home for all of us in Missouri and Kansas. I look forward to having many self advocates and professionals come to visit our state and share our accomplishments. Also, we need to remember to keep on promoting the clean up your language campaign.

Kelly Ray
President of PFMO

MO DISABILITY VOTE PROJECT

If you have not yet sent in your Chapter membership information for the Missouri Disability Vote Project please do so as soon as possible. This information is very important to our State organization as well as providing information which will help us to get out the vote in each of our communities in the upcoming elections in November 2010.

Cathy Enfield
People First Representative to MO Disability Vote Project

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).
There is a lot that members of People First have to be proud of in their lives. Self-advocates have made the decision to educate themselves about their right to live, work and play in the community. They have made it their goal to speak up in order to educate their communities, schools, work places and homes about this right and the responsibilities that come with it. Their determination to provide people with disabilities the rights that they deserve has had a positive impact on a countless number of lives across the world. As an organization we continue to grow and come up with new goals and ideas to improve the lives of those around us. In March, People First of Missouri will be going to the Capital to educate the legislators about who we are and what changes we think can be made in Missouri to give self-advocates equal opportunities to pursue the lives they currently dream of. There have been many great accomplishments and much progress to be proud of since People First came together and this sense of pride is what gives us such great hope for the future.

**LET’S WELCOME RACHEL!**

**Who am I?**
My name is Rachel Hiles. My role with People First of Missouri is to support PFMO as an organization to accomplish its priorities and support members to represent PFMO all over the state. I live in and consider myself a Kansas City native. I have a bachelor’s degree in Spanish and an undergraduate certificate in disability studies. I hope to return to UMKC in the fall to get my master’s degree in Public Administration with an emphasis in Non-Profit Administration.

**How did I get here?**
I started out on the frontlines as a direct support staff working at a small agency in Kansas City. During my second year of college, I began working at the Mattie Rhodes Center with the program Visions with Hope 360° as an AmeriCorps Community Support Navigator, where I started the Visionaries program for Latino youth and adults with developmental disabilities. It was when I began working at the Mattie Rhodes that I really began feeling like I had a purpose in the world and started gaining perspective about what I wanted to do in my life. I worked with the Visionaries for two years until I graduated (and became fluent in Spanish!). I also continued to work as a support staff through college, and I have worked for a few different agencies in Kansas City. I have also seen the best and (unfortunately) the worst of it all! After I graduated college, I got a job as a QDDP for Alternative Opportunities here in Kansas City. I learned tons about the waiver and DD services, the importance of community inclusion and natural supports, training and supervising support staff, and the ins and outs of running a provider agency. In September of last year, I began serving as the advisor for People First of Kansas City. I began working at the IHD in January, helping Sheli with PFMO and various other self advocacy activities.

**Now what?**
Now I hope to support PFMO in its goals to educate the community about people with disabilities, encourage and protect community services, and grow a stronger statewide organization! Having already met quite a few of you through past PFMO conferences and activities, I know you are a super cool bunch and can’t wait to meet those of you who I have missed. Working for PFMO in some capacity has always been a dream of mine and am very proud to be part of your group! I hope we can work together to make a huge difference in the state of Missouri and I know I will learn a lot from you!
WHAT ARE YOU PROUD OF?

We reached out to see what PFMO members are most proud of and here is what they said...

I am most proud of being able to stand on my own two feet and not worry about what others are going to stay or think. -Timothy, PF Joplin

I am proud to be Mental Health Champion this year. -Gary, PF Rolla

I am proud to be able to live on my own. Also, I am proud of People First being able to change things that need changing. -Tina, PF Kirksville

I am proud to be able to stand up in front of legislators and explain why they should change the parking signs for people with disabilities to accessible parking and not use the work handicapped. -Kathleen, PF Kirksville

I am proud to live in the community. -David E., PF Kirksville

I am proud to be a member of People First and am helping people to learn to help themselves and speak up for themselves. -Vernie, PF Kirksville

I am proud to help people out when they need help. -David S., PF Kirksville

I am proud to be an American and have the right to pick and choose my own friends. I am proud to live on my own and also that I have the right to vote. -Marilyn, PF Rolla

I am proud that I have been bowling in a league and have been averaging 92. I am also proud that I have been working for Gear For Sports for 8 years now as a jantior. -Mike, PF Grundy

Charles Gash of PF Grundy is proud of fighting for his right to vote and is now a registered voter.

I am proud of what my friends do in my life to support me to live my life. -John, PF Marshal

I have pride in knowing that I will finally finish college next year.
-Kelly, PF Marshal

I have pride in riding my motercycle and having fun.
-Jason, PF Columbia

I am proud of my child. -Jill, PF St. Charles

I am proud of being able to live in a place where I feel comfortable.
-Tim, PF Sikeston
On February 17, People First of Missouri Steering Committee representatives headed to the capitol building in Jefferson City to speak with their legislators about People First of Missouri’s legislative priorities. PFMO representatives testified at a hearing for House Bill 1883, which requires all new parking signs for people with disabilities put up beginning August 28, 2010 to contain the words “Accessible Parking” instead of “Handicapped Parking”. Members testified about the history of the word “handicapped” and the impact of negative language. Steering Committee reps also spoke to their legislators and had the opportunity to participate in a hearing about House Bill 1918, which proposed capping PCA hours to 60 hours a month (which would affect many people all over the state and force them into nursing homes). Self-advocates met with their Missouri house representatives and senators to encourage them to protect funding for community services and to educate them on the R-word and People First language. PFMO did an amazing job of providing their legislators with insight on how the bills that they vote on directly impact the people they represent.
**Bloomfield** People First has been busy. We had a winter wonderland dance December 19th and had about 90 people attend. We were happy to see some of the members from Sikeston People First there also. We had door prizes donated by businesses in the community, a DJ to play music, a king and queen contest, and the food was catered by Dexter Pizza Hut. We are planning to make this a yearly event. Our thanks goes out to Amber Harris. She is a supporter of People First and without her the dance would not have been possible. We are planning to have more events in the new year. We are looking forward to 2010 being our best year ever!!!

**Boone County** Our president, Jason Mize, has gone to the capitol twice to talk to legislators. He is concerned about the waiting list for services and what it might mean for his sister. His article is in this newsletter. We’re proud of him!

Our chapter held a fundraising dance in December with the Parks and Rec department and People First of Marshall. P&R told us it was the best turnout ever for a dance! We still have boxes full of People First polos. They’re $10 a piece now. They come in red, white, or blue. We’re taking a loss on the shirts. They cost us $14 each. If you want one, please email Greg Griffin at gregcg3@msn.com.

We are planning to show our “People First Language” PowerPoint to reporters and editors at the Columbia Missourian newspaper, published by the University of Missouri. Advocacy Specialist Jeff Johnson gives the presentation.

**Boonslick** We’re busy raising money for the National Self-Advocacy Conference this year. We will be hosting a men’s softball tournament in May. This will be a weekend-long event and we hope to do it every year.

We have a new advisor, Bobbie Jo Smith, who is very good at fund raising. We are hoping that she can help us with raising lots of money for the National Conference and for other opportunities to learn.

In December we had a Christmas Party at Sisters’ Supportive Living. We had a great time! The pictures from the party have been posted on our new Facebook page. We had a church group sing carols for us. We sent them a thank you card. We also got some of the food donated from Sisters’ Supportive Living and some from C&R Supermarket. We just got the thank you cards sent out last week and will see you all at the next steering committee.

**Independence** We held a Christmas party in December with treats and refreshments and guests who had not attended a People First meeting before. Everyone had a good time. Due to the weather and transportation difficulties we cancelled our meeting in January. We are looking forward to a Valentine’s party to be held with our meeting in February. We have invited some guests to this meeting and are hopeful that they can attend. We are still looking for an advisor, but we will continue to work together as a chapter until we find someone to assist us.
Iron County started the New Year off with a bang! We elected officers for 2010 and made plans for the rest of the year. We will continue to take care of one of the city’s community gardens to help beautify our town and plan to have lots of informative programs and fun activities throughout the year. We also voted to participate in the Care Package Program in support of our troops again this year to let them know we appreciate what they are doing for us and people in other countries. Our group feels it is important to be caring and give to others when we can.

We had a good program about conserving electricity in our homes at our February meeting. It taught us how to conserve energy and how to save on the cost of our electric bills for our homes. It is important for everyone to know how to save money and how to spend it wisely. We look forward to sharing news with all the other chapters and look forward to a great year.

Marshall

We held our Annual Awards Banquet along with our meeting in November. We have not been able to meet as chapter since November, but are planning to start meeting in February again. We are going to try to get a proclamation with the mayor of Marshall, to honor the month of March as disability awareness month in the city of Marshall. We would like to say to congratulations to Kelly Ray for being elected president of People First of Missouri in November. We would also like to say congratulations to John Burriss who was elected the state wide sgt. at arms for another 2 years. Carol Utterback has recently been having some health related issues so please keep her in your thoughts and prayers.

Sikeston

People First ended 2009 on a busy note! The chapter’s Christmas party was held December 13th at The Sikeston Eagles Club. Charlie’s Music Revue provided the excellent music for the afternoon! We had door prizes and also did the “Give A Gift- Get A Gift at the party as well! Everyone who attended had a fun time!

We are in the process of selling candy bars to raise money for our chapter! We are thinking of selling candles at our next fundraiser. Our Valentine’s party is scheduled for Feb. 11, 2010. We are going to decorate Valentine cupcakes after the meeting & then eat them! Our 2010 Funding from the Scott County SB40 Board has been approved & we are so grateful to them for their financial support of our chapter so we can participate in activities of People First of Missouri.

St. Charles

The members enjoyed the start of the holiday season by attending the Santa Parade on Main Street St. Charles. We had the pleasure of seeing Santa’s from all around the world. After the parade we enjoyed a short skit performed on Main Street. It was cold and raining but that didn’t stop us from celebrating the holiday season. The members took a break from normal business to have a holiday party at our December chapter meeting. There was lots of food, games, and fun with friends. Members were happy to share in the holiday spirit; cans of food were collected to donate to families who are in need this holiday season. We collected enough food for multiple families receiving support from the Parent Partner program at F.A.C.T.
People First of Missouri works closely with the DD to improve services for self-advocates. The following is an update from the Division of Developmental Disabilities, which is in the 5th and final year of a Systems Transformation Initiative funded by the Federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

**DD home ownership initiative:** Five contractors will assist up to 20 individuals or families to purchase their own homes. The contractors will provide support broker services to guide and assist the prospective buyers to negotiate all the steps toward becoming a home owner beginning with making a plan to purchase a home to closing on a purchase. Assistance will be provided to access financial counseling, to explore financing options, to make application for a home mortgage, to locate a home, and ultimately to close on a property. Contractors are the Coalition for Independence in Kansas City, On My Own in Nevada, The Center for Human Services in Sedalia, The Northeast Missouri Action Corporation in Bowling Green, and 4 Sight Counseling in Cape Girardeau.

**Positive Behavior Support Training:** A trainer credentialing course in Positive Behavior Supports was launched in October 2008. Trainers learn an advanced-level training curriculum consisting of 13 learning modules plus case studies delivered over a 3-day time period, and have two opportunities to practice teaching the course to classes of 10-15 participants under the close supervision of another credentialed trainer. The target audience for the 3-day training is direct support professionals, qualified developmental disabilities professionals, front line supervisors and others who have had at a basic course in PBS as a pre-requisite. Since October, 2008 47 trainers have completing the 11-day credentialing process and 365 direct support staff and other professionals others have completed the 3-day PBS training.

**Training for Dental Teams:** Through a partnership with the Missouri Planning Council for DD, Department of Mental Health, the Missouri Primary Care Association, and UMKC Institute for Human Development a two day training program for dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants was conducted in Kansas City last April. In November, a survey was sent to all Missouri licensed dentists to assess their experience and interest in treating people with developmental disabilities, and to identify training needs. The DD Systems Transformation grant will enable expanded training opportunities for dental teams.

**Elks Mobile Dental Program:** When the Department of Health and Senior Services was faced with the difficult decision to terminate a contract with the Elks Mobile Dental Program due to funding limitations, this important program was continued for one more year by the Division of Developmental Disabilities using funds from the Systems Transformation grant. The division is assisting the Elks Program to identify other funding sources to continue the program after September, 2010.

For more information about the DD Systems Transformation Initiative, contact: Robin Rust, Project Director (573-751-8209) Robin.Rust@dmh.mo.gov or Nancy Nickolaus, Project Coordinator (573-751-8669) Nancy.Nickolaus@dmh.mo.gov
TAX DAY IS COMING!

It is always best to try to file your taxes as early as possible because you have a better chance of getting them in a little quicker than if you wait till later in the tax season. There are many tax credits available to those who don't work, and for those who do work there is a Property Tax Credit (Mo PTC) available and Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC). The Property Tax Credit is for those who pay real estate tax or rent. If you have a Social Security Disability or SSI and are 65 or older, you can claim the credit. It is usually 20 percent of what you paid throughout the year.

There was a new law passed in August of 2009 that makes it so that those who rent from a government place, such as a Housing Authority, may not be able to claim the credit. It is best that you contact a tax professional for advice on this. Earned income is for those that work and have a qualifying child or are at least 25 years or older. These people can claim the EIC credit.

There are many ways you can file your taxes. You can file them online, which is the quickest way to file and you usually get your taxes back faster. Usually your state will not charge you to file your taxes, but sometimes there is a $10 fee to file your federal taxes. Each website is different. It is best to check out each one before you file. Check out the following website this article on where to go file online through e-file! http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118986,00.html

There are free online tax forms at the IRS’s website that let you fill them in, print off and sign. There are also free forms online that will calculate your return and you can print these off and sign and mail them in. You can check out the IRS website at www.irs.gov for many of these forms. Many tax offices, libraries and post offices have these forms free of charge.

There are many volunteers agencies that will help you fill out the form and will type it up for you. All you will have to do is sign and mail it in. You can check out this article about the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA). http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=107626,00.html

For questions regarding your taxes or to order tax forms you can call the IRS directly at 1-800-829-1040 for live assistance. Those with hearing impairments call 1-800-829-4059 (TDD).

FUNDRAISING FOR NATIONAL CONFERENCE

People First of Grundy County has a member with a very generous heart, Mary we give you a GREAT BIG THANK YOU. Mary made a beautiful red, white and blue queen size quilt. She donated the quilt to her chapter so we can sell raffle tickets to raise money for members to be able to go the SABE/People First National Convention which is in Kansas City this year on September 23-26. This may be the only opportunity many have to ever attend the National Convention. If anyone is interested in purchasing a raffle ticket they are $1 each or 6 for $5. The very lucky winner need not be present to win. Contact a People First of Grundy County member such as Mike Mynitti at 660-339-7626 or Advisor Cathie Behen at 660-359-2712.
MEMBERS IN ACTION

Missouri Can't Wait!
By Jason Mize

That’s me in the picture, at the Capitol in Jefferson City. I was talking to a group of state representatives called “The House Appropriations Committee”. They help make decisions about how the state spends money.

I want our legislators to know we have a problem in Missouri. It’s called the waiting list. Thousands of people with developmental disabilities are waiting for services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities. I was there at the capitol to share my concerns about the waiting list.

My sister and I live with my parents. She needs a lot of support in her life. She needs help in the kitchen; she would cut herself or burn herself if she tried to cook. There are some things she can do for herself, but she needs support to be safe. My parents are getting up in their years. If something happens to them or if they’re not able to care for my sister anymore, she’ll have to live somewhere with someone who can look after her. I don’t want her to go on a waiting list and to a nursing home. If there’s no funding for her support, that’s where she’ll end up. In a nursing home. She’s 42! That’s way too young for a nursing home.

Missouri needs to invest in people like my sister. She has things to offer. She can be a great friend. She can work. She could live in a more regular home with support. Putting her in an institution would be a really bad investment, for her and for the people of the state. Missouri Can't Wait!

Profiles in Freedom

Judy Brown, the treasurer of Boonslick People First, has been bowling for many years in a competitive league. This year so far her team is in second place! Judy is having a great season. In all the years she has been bowling on a league, she has only missed once. That was because she was on a cruise. She takes great pride in her bowling and in her dependability.
Clean up your language.

Words can be a taunt, a slur and an insult ... and that's unacceptable. A person with a developmental or intellectual disability is first and foremost a person. Let's use language that respects people as part of our community. Find out more at MPCDD.com

The Arc of Missouri was awarded a grant by the Missouri Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities. The title of this campaign is “Missouri Can't Wait.” The purpose of the grant is to end the wait list for services for people with developmental disabilities. People are waiting for services such as respite, personal assistance, physical therapy, and residential living. Without money to help pay for these supports, people with developmental disabilities are forced to live lives that they do not choose. Independent living is not possible because there is no money to provide the supports needed to be successful in the community. If you are waiting for services through the Department of Developmental Disabilities and want to become involved, please contact Angela Gourley at (573) 552-6748 or email her at arcofmo@yahoo.com. We are also available on Facebook. Just search for “Missouri Can't Wait.”
Please join us at the SABE: National Self-Advocacy Conference being hosted in Kansas City on September 23-26, 2010!!!

The registration cost is $375 which includes all conference activities and 8 meals (dinner on Thursday, all meals on Friday and Saturday and brunch on Sunday). Travel and hotel rooms are separate.

Sign-up at the website for updates about the speakers forms, registration forms, budget worksheet and more at http://www.sabekc2010.org. Everyone that signs up will get email updates as details are finalized for the conference.

SEE YOU THERE!!