11th Annual Disability Rights Legislative Day

The 11th Annual Disability Rights Legislative Day was held April 4, 2012 at the state capital. There were over 550 in attendance. They rocked the rotunda with their chants of “Take Note, We Vote”, which was the theme of this year’s rally. There were two rallies during the day: one from 11:15 AM-12:00 PM and the other from 2:30 PM-3:00 PM. The time in between the rallies was spent making visits to legislators. Both rallies were emceed by BJ Davis.

The morning rally featured speeches by Representative Jeff Grisamore, Representative Rick Stream, Senator Eric Schmitt and Senator Scott Rupp, as well as advocates Shawn D’Abreu and Kathie Kearbie.

The afternoon rally was kicked off with a speech from Governor Jay Nixon followed by speeches from Representatives Zach Wyatt, Sara Lampe and Jason Kander, along with Senator Jolie Justus and advocate Roger Crome.

Our self-advocates visited many of the legislators to remind them that Disability Rights are Civil Rights and that there are nearly one million people in Missouri with a disability and WE VOTE!! We left information sheets with our legislators to remind them of our priorities, which include: getting people out of institutions and into the community, getting people with disabilities REAL jobs for REAL wages, supporting programs that improve the transition process and outcomes for high school graduates with disabilities, to protect all students from bullying, to support restoration of funding for medical benefits for the blind, and to support budget items that help us to live in the community. Those who attended were enthusiastic and very positive. We went home feeling it had been a very good day!
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).

Mission

Does your chapter have important events or fundraisers that you would like to include in upcoming issues of the Message from the People newsletter? If so, please email Krystle at missouripeoplefirst@gmail.com so that we can add it to upcoming newsletters.

Do you have a great example of how your chapter or an individual member showed great self-advocacy? If so, please contact Krystle at missouripeoplefirst@gmail.com to tell your story and it could be included in an upcoming issue of the Message from the People newsletter.
Message from the President

During this last legislative session, People First Members from across the state made a difference. Your calls, legislative visits, letters and emails always bring a story to the numbers that our legislators deal with daily. These stories help mold how they see things as they are brought to the floor. So, I would like to commend you on advocating so strongly on the issues that matter to you. Be sure to continue your advocacy now that your legislators are back in their home district. An informal lunch or a short meeting could make all the difference in how they advocate in the future.

As you are making these contacts, please remember the priorities that have been identified for People First of Missouri. We identified that we want to work on stopping the discriminating practice of sheltered workshops being allowed to pay below minimum wage. We believe in equal work for equal pay. If you do a job, you deserve the respect of being paid for that work. This model of practice is antiquated and needs to be abolished.

Also, remember that too many people still are imprisoned in institutions because of the outdated mentality that institutions are the only place that people can get quality supports. We know this is not true, and it is time that the Olmstead Decision be enforced to the fullest extent. Let’s get our voices heard. This is a Civil Rights issue! Segregation is wrong and should not be tolerated!

Finally, with the election approaching, do not forget to do your homework on those who are running for office. You always want to make sure the person you are voting for best fits your personal beliefs. Be sure to get out and vote!!!

Submitted by Roger Crome, President, People First of Missouri
Some of our members attended the Power Up 2012 Conference in Columbia on April 2 & 3. The conference was presented by Missouri Assistive Technology and was sponsored by a number of organizations that People First of Missouri works closely with including: Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, Missouri Protection and Advocacy and Department of Mental Health.

There were several excellent presenters that helped those attending to better understand how to use Assistive Technology to make life better for people with disabilities and the people that assist them. While much of the information focused on utilizing these technologies to improve communication there was also a lot of information offered on utilizing new technology to improve physical access to home, work and school environments. The information that was available, about the potential uses of iPads, iPhones and all of the apps available for them, made it clear that these will be tools that can have a great deal of positive effect on the lives of people with disabilities. The biggest problem may be getting them into the hands of the people who can benefit from them.

Join us every month for our

Brown Bag Lunch Webinars!

There are 3 ways to watch the webinars!

- Attend the trainings at a local site
- Watch from your computer at www.mofamilytofamily.org
- View archived webinars on the MOF2F website.

For more information,
visit www.mofamilytofamily.org
or call 800-444-0821.
Madison County

Madison County recently had elections because bad weather made us miss a few meetings. The President is Roger Crome, the Vice President is Charlie Starks, and steering committee reps are Kit Stahlberg and Charlie Starks. We are hoping to grow and expand. We had the Azalea festival in May in Fredericktown.

Independence

People First of Independence has continued to work on learning about self-determination and growing as self-advocates. We spend part of each meeting discussing legislation and other events in the Legislature that may have a direct effect on our lives and our future. We discuss and learn from the information our Steering Committee Representatives bring to us from these meetings.

The flu bug hit our Chapter in February and March causing several of our members to miss our monthly meetings; but everyone is back in good health now. We are excited about the upcoming SABE National Conference in St. Paul this August and everyone is starting to make plans to find a way to attend. We are all very grateful there will be scholarships available again for this conference.

Several of our members were able to attend the Disability Rights Legislative Day on April 4 at the State Capital. They enjoyed the enthusiasm of the group and seeing old friends. We spoke with our Legislators about our issues and we talked with each other about the importance of voting in the upcoming election later this year. We know Justin Dart was right when he said: “Vote as if your life depended on it…because it does”.

Pulaski County

The Pulaski County chapter is doing really well. We have started our dues finally and we had a fundraiser March 13 through April 10. We are selling dry cookie dough mix.
Jefferson City

Jefferson City People First attended the February 2012 Steering Committee Meeting. At the meeting, they met with their legislators and gave them a flower pot as a thank you. We have been at the Capitol attending hearings and educating our reps and senators about our issues. In January we elected new officers. They are President Becky Dickey, Vice-President Billie-Jean Brown, Secretary Judy Butler, Treasurer Tom Pohlman, Sergeants of Arms, Stanley Lueckenotte. We made Valentine’s cards for our legislators.

We did a mail out with our SB 40 Board about Disability Rights Legislative Day. We also attended a Red Cross Community Disaster Relief day at First Baptist Church on March 3, 2012.

Macon

Representative Tom Shively visited the Macon chapter’s March meeting. Here are some pictures from his visit.

Rolla

Over the winter, the Rolla Chapter did a presentation for the Independent Living Center, on the history of People First of Missouri and the Rolla Chapter. The quest for new members is an ongoing event. The Rolla People First March business meeting also honored those members having March birthdays with cake and ice cream.

Christa Frost and Gary Stevens and his staff grieve for the sudden death of Christa’s mother and Gary’s staff member of seven years, Marie Lebbing.
People First of Saint Charles has been quite busy lately!! Our membership has grown to over 40 very active members who are all very passionate about the Disability Awareness campaign and truly enjoy spreading their message. So far this year they have presented the 3rd annual Clean Up Your Language Campaign to nine city/county alderman board meetings, all 5 of the school boards in Saint Charles County, two board meetings of local agencies, as well as been asked by the Saint Louis area Boy Scout Council to assist local troops earn their Disability Awareness Merit Badges. Presenting to the Boy Scouts has been a wonderful experience and has allowed those boys to get questions answered on Disability Awareness they might otherwise been afraid to ask.

The members of People First of Saint Charles also focused on building a relationship with their local legislators and were the main focus of Senator Dempsey Capitol Report February 10, 2012 entitled - Citizens from St. Charles County Advocate at the State Capitol. This was an amazing honor, and the members were very happy that Senator Dempsey helped share Disability Awareness. The members are excited to be part of the committee to plan the next Disability Awareness campaign and are already starting to add more community groups to next year’s presentation schedule. People First of Saint Charles members are very grateful to have the support of the DDRB (Developmental Disability Resource Board) and F.A.C.T. (Family Advocacy & Community Training), with their support and encouragement the members are confident that their voices will be heard and they will continue to be successful in making a difference in their community.

Nevada

Billy Evans reports that everything is going great in Nevada! They are still working on getting their chapter up and running and looking for locations to have their meetings. Billy has been participating in the Special Olympics for basketball and track.

Saint Charles

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Saint Joseph

People First of St. Joseph has been working on two big things. The first is our Legislative Forum. We have partnered with the Disability Voter Task Force at Midland Empire Resources for Independent Living (MERIL) to set up a Forum. It will be held in St. Joseph on August 16, 2012 from 6-8 PM.

Our big fundraiser that is going to a Live Auction on August 24, 2012. The chapter members are collecting items for the auction and we have a great auctioneer that will also be helping with the items. With this fundraiser, we have invited some other groups to set up for food and fun and they will be able to keep 50% of the profit.

There are six of us that attended the Real Voices, Real Choices Conference at Tan-Tar-A.

Missouri Legislative Update

The legislative session (the Second Regular Session of the 96th General Assembly) officially ended Friday May 18th at 6pm. Below is an overview and some information regarding legislation that did and did not pass that may be of interest to you. We hope these updates helped you become better informed - and ready to act - regarding legislation of interest to people with developmental disabilities, their families and allies.

Budget:

The Fiscal Year 2013 Budget passed by the General Assembly included items important to people with developmental disabilities including:

—“Utilization Increase” dollars for the Division of Developmental Disabilities which will allow an additional 1100 people to participate in the Partnership for Hope, an additional 115 children with developmental disabilities to access services through the Sarah Lopez Waiver and the ability to serve an additional 180 people who are currently on the waiting list and have priority of need scores of 10, 11 or 12.

—An additional $750,000 for Autism.

—The State also estimates a savings of $903,000 by closing one campus of Northwest Habilitation Center, an institution for people with developmental disabilities that was housing approximately 50 people.
HB 1900 was vetoed by Governor Nixon and would have included provisions involved with: youth with disabilities and transition work group, changes regarding service dogs, employment security laws and SB40 boards, accessible parking, and brain injury services. In his veto message, Gov. Nixon specifically stated that House Bill 1900 violated constitutional mandates which ensure that the public can understand the specific purpose of a bill and participate in the legislative process. These requirements limit the scope of a bill to its original purpose and to a single subject that is clearly expressed in its title. So HB1900 just had too much different stuff in it when it was passed.

SB 449 & HB 1077 were bills that did not pass this session. This legislation would have required the Department of Mental Health to create a plan exploring how they would serve people in the community who are currently living in state institutions. During the hearings on these bills advocates representing providers, self-advocates, parents and professionals lined up in both the House and Senate to share information in support of passage. Those testifying in support of HB 1077 and SB449 talked about contemporary families’ preferences for services, best practice in the field of supporting people with disabilities, fiscal impacts of running institutions, legal challenges being waged in other states and trends of closure and downsizing across the nation. Despite the support of virtually every disability related organization in the State, this legislation did not pass.

HB 1049, which would change the laws regarding bullying in schools and establishes specific components that a district must include in its anti bullying policy did not pass.

Everyone please remember that your voice DOES count and to be sure to make it to the polls for every election! If you want to be sure to register to vote in order to vote in November, the last day to register is October 10 so please do so by then. Also, if you have moved, be sure to change your address too!
“The Future is Now: Supporting Real Lives, Real People”

More than 500 people from across the state took advantage of an opportunity in March to talk openly and honestly about developmental disabilities. “The Future is Now: Supporting Real Lives, Real People” was the first state-wide conference hosted by the Missouri Department of Mental Health Division of Developmental Disabilities.

The purpose of the gathering was to bring together people served as well as family members, providers and state and local government officials to talk about the issues facing Missourians with developmental disabilities. By all accounts, the conference was a big success.

“Times are changing,” said presenter Michelle “Sheli” Reynolds, M.O.T., Ph.D. from the University of Missouri, Kansas City – Institute for Human Development. “We think differently about people with disabilities now.”

“They aren’t medical models to be fixed but rather people with rights to be supported,” she added. “Our service systems, policies, funding and programs need to change to become ‘supports for real life.’”

Mark Satterwhite, BCFR’s Director of Life & Work Connections, was impressed with the broad gathering of stakeholders who participated in the event, including representatives of People First, SABE and others from the self-advocacy movement in the state.

Jason Mize, President of People First of Boone County, was on a panel of self-advocates and encouraged listeners to get involved. “Don’t let anybody tell you ‘no – you can’t be part of the community’, because you can be,” he said.

Former BCFR Executive Director Les Wagner, along with Norma Anderson, Fern Anderson, Sandy Sims, Mitchell Sims and Nathan Sims updated listeners on the Partnership for Hope program which has helped 83 individuals and their families in Boone County (over 1,200 across the state). The Anderson and Sims families shared their experience of how supports through the program have changed their lives.

Bernie Simons, Director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, hoped the conference would encourage others to get involved and be a part of a movement to change perceptions as well as realities.

“For too long people with disabilities have been passengers rather than pilots with regard to their futures,” he said. “People want real jobs, real relationships, real lives – nothing more, nothing less.”

Governor Jay Nixon made a special appearance toward the end of the conference and conveyed his intention to further expand the Partnership for Hope, citing its compassionate focus on preventing crisis, and its fiscal logic during tough economic times.

Continued on Page 11
Topics of the conference included family supports, self-determination, employment, shared living and accessible housing. Presenters from across the country included: Sharon Lewis, Commissioner of the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (now known as the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) at the Administration for Children and Families; Steve Eidelman, Co-director of the National Leadership Consortium; Nancy Thaler, Director of the National Association of Directors of DD Services; and Rachel Simon, author of “The Story of Beautiful Girl” and “Riding the Bus with My Sister,” which later was made into a movie of the same name.

Contributed by: Mark Satterwhite

Project STIR Team Comes to Missouri

Advocates from The University of North Carolina’s Center for Development and Learning came to Missouri July 23-24, 2012 to facilitate Project STIR (Step Towards Independence and Responsibility) peer training for twenty-five advocates and their supporters. Advocates participating in the training are from Senate Bill 40 Boards, DMH Regional Offices, service providers, educational institutions, and People First of Missouri. Advocates will be bringing the training back to their areas to share with other advocates.

Project STIR is a training and technical assistance project. It is designed to empower people with developmental disabilities. It provides the practical, “how to” tools necessary for anyone who is interested in being a self-advocate and leader in making choices and decisions about how they live their lives. The model supports the development and strengthening of local self-advocacy groups through leadership training.

The Speak Up Guide includes slide shows which can be used to help present information for each chapter, including training scripts for two activities to assist self-advocates in providing and leading their own training groups.

The training was hosted by Missouri Self-Determination Association www.mo-sda.org/ partnering with The National Gateway for Self-Determination http://www.aucd.org/ngsd/template/index.cfm.

For more information visit http://www.self-advocate.org/
National Federation of the Blind Urges Boycott of Goodwill Industries

Condemns Practice of Paying Subminimum Wages to Workers with Disabilities

Baltimore, Maryland (June 7, 2012): The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), one of the oldest and largest organizations of Americans with disabilities, today called for a boycott of Goodwill Industries International, Inc., the nonprofit manufacturer and retailer, for its payment of subminimum wages to many of its workers with disabilities. Freedom of information requests filed by the NFB confirmed that Goodwill Industries employees have been paid as low as $1.44 an hour. The NFB and over forty-five other organizations support legislation, the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act (H.R. 3086), which would phase out and then repeal the nearly seventy-five-year-old provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act that permits special certificate holders to pay subminimum wages to workers with disabilities.

Dr. Marc Maurer, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: “Goodwill Industries is one of the most well-known and lucrative charitable organizations in the United States, yet it chooses to pay its workers with disabilities less than the federal minimum wage. While this practice is currently legal and many entities engage in it, many other nonprofit organizations have successfully transitioned to paying their employees the minimum wage or higher. That Goodwill Industries exploits many of its workers in this way is ironic, because its president and chief executive officer is blind. Goodwill cannot credibly argue that workers with disabilities are incapable of doing productive work while paying its blind CEO over half a million dollars a year. Goodwill should be ashamed of such blatant hypocrisy. We are calling upon all Americans to refuse to do business with Goodwill Industries, to refuse to make donations to the subminimum-wage exploiter, and to refuse to shop in its retail stores until it exercises true leadership and sound moral judgment by fairly compensating its workers with disabilities.”

For more information on this critically important issue, please visit www.nfb.org/fairwages.
The SABE Board held its first meeting of 2012 on February 9 through 12 in Henderson, Nevada which is a suburb of Las Vegas. The agenda included reports for the Go-Voter Project and the Autism Now and Gateway to Self-Determination Grants. There was discussion about the upcoming National Conference in St. Paul, MN and the four additional Self-Advocacy Summits that are being held this year for the states that did not get to participate in 2011.

SABE Report
Submitted by Cathy Enfield, Region 4 SABE Representative

Advising through Self-Determination: An Information Guide for Advisors
Now Available at http://www.aucd.org/docs/Advising-Through-SD.pdf
Statewide Candidates Forum

Spread the Word!
A large turnout is important!
We want candidates
to know that

People with Disabilities Count!

Candidates for Governor, Lt. Governor,
Attorney General and Secretary of State
will be invited!

When: September 15, 2012
Time: 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Where: Hilton Garden Inn
3300 Vandiver Drive
Columbia, Missouri 65202

Citizens with Disabilities Vote!
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!

The NEW and IMPROVED Project Vote! Toolkit will be available for FREE DOWNLOAD in Summer 2012.

Please check www.govoter.org to get updates on when the Toolkit will be available!

Topics of the Toolkit include:

◊ How Voting Fits into Your Life
◊ Registering to Vote
◊ Rights and Responsibilities
◊ Ways to Learn About Candidates and Issues
◊ How Do You Vote and Cast a Ballot
◊ Ways to Get Around Voting Problems
◊ Framing the Voting Process and Building Community Connections
◊ Best Practices for Partnering
Upcoming Events

- SABE National Conference-August 30-September 2, 2012-St. Paul, Minnesota

- Statewide Candidate Forum-September 15, 2012-Columbia, MO

- Last Day to REGISTER TO VOTE in November Elections-October 10, 2012

- Next Steering Committee Meeting-October 27-28, 2012, Tan-Tar-A, Lake Ozark, MO

- Election Day-November 6, 2012-BE SURE TO GET OUT AND VOTE!!