



Season For Change Conference a Success

Self-advocates from across Missouri gathered together this spring to be a part of the 2015 People First of Missouri statewide self-advocacy conference. *A Season For Change: Springing into a New Era of Self-Advocacy* took place March 24-26, 2015, in Osage Beach, Missouri. Over 165 people attended as participants, speakers, exhibitors, and supporters.

All who came heard from speakers who brought empowering messages of success in self-advocacy. Tim Harris started things off by talking about his life story. He excited the crowd with his energy and explained how he made his dream of owning a restaurant become reality. He encouraged all self-advocates to reach for their own dreams by building on their own social capital.

Next, conference attendees heard from Valerie Huhn. Huhn is the new Director of the Missouri Division

of Developmental Disabilities. She explained changes that are happening in Missouri, including new federal rules about services, new money being released, provider rate increases, and the closing of the Marshall Habilitation Center in 2015.

Kathie and Benjamin Snow gave the endnote presentation. They explained how they were able to push past stereotypes and break the imaginary rules of what some people think people with a disability can and can't do.

On top of these three big talks, conference attendees got to go to three breakout sessions and choose from 15 topics. There was something for everyone.

PFMO received great feedback about the conference from attendees. You can find two full pages of pictures on pages six and seven and comments from attendees on page eight.

People First of Missouri is Strong and Active

People First members and chapters are busy learning, giving and growing. We make a positive difference in our communities.

In this Issue

- Season for Change Conference A Success, p. 1
- President's Message, p. 2
- Disability Rights Legislative Day & ADA Legacy Tour, p. 3
- PFMO Steering Committee Report, p. 4
- Chapter Winter Updates, p. 5
- Memories from A Season for Change, pp. 6-7
- What I learned at the 2015 Conference, p. 8





Message From the President

by Roger Crome, President

I would like to thank all those who attended our 2015 conference. Also, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the planning and coordinating of the conference. The conference went well because of your contribution.

As our legislative session comes to an end, we, as advocates, must keep an eye on what is going through and

where bills that impact our lives are in the process. If you see something that is important to you, please contact the decision makers who are handling that issue and voice your opinion. It is extremely important that we make our voices heard over and over again.

Lastly, I hope that everyone has a wonderful summer.

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Disability Rights Legislative Day and the ADA Legacy Tour

by Mark Satterwhite and Jason Mize, photos by Mark Satterwhite

March 31, 2015 was a big day for disability rights in Missouri. Hundreds of people with disabilities and their allies gathered at the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City for two events: Disability Rights Legislative Day, and The ADA Legacy Tour. Many members of local People First chapters were there.

The day before, People First of Missouri held a special meeting to prepare. An important part of Disability Rights Legislative Day is taking time to meet with our legislators, so we practiced talking about issues that are important to us. Andrew Lackey from the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council and Derek Wetherell from Parquad led role play exercises. We talked about how legislators are people like us, and it's important that they get to know us.

The 14th annual Disability Rights Legislative Day started with a rally in the Capitol rotunda. Columbia attorney Max Lewis emceed the rally,

which was focused on "Lives Without Limits." The event was sponsored by a coalition of advocacy organizations from across the state. Key leaders, legislators and self-advocates talked about legislation that would allow people on Medicaid to set aside savings to cover necessities Medicaid will not cover. Medicaid asset limits haven't changed since the 1960's when they were established.

Event organizers and participants, including People First members, believe that disability rights are civil rights and are committed to full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Rally Presenters included Attorney General Chris Koster, Department of Mental Health Director Keith Schafer, Senate Pro Tem Tom Dempsey, Senator Eric Schmitt, Representative Kevin Engler, Senate Minority Leader Joe Keaveny, and advocates Megan Layton, Colleen Starkloff, Chris Gray, and Cathy Enfield.

The ADA Legacy Tour is a traveling exhibit designed to raise awareness and build excitement about ADA25 - the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The "Road to Freedom Bus" stopped at the Capitol, sponsored by 15 disability-related organizations serving Columbia and surrounding areas. The bus comes with displays and information about the disability rights movement and the momentous boost the ADA gave with its passage 25 years ago.

The Jefferson City Chamber of Commerce helped organize a bus ribbon cutting ceremony. After the rally and the ribbon cutting, we dispersed in order to meet with our district legislators.

Photos below, left to right: ribbon cutting ceremony at the Road to Freedom bus; PFMO member Jeff Johnson meeting with Rep. Kip Kendrick, district 45; audience members at the rotunda rally.



PFMO Steering Committee Report

Bad winter weather made the People First Steering Committee call off its February meeting. The group changed plans to meet on March 29 and 30 instead. It turned out to be a good thing, because the new dates were right before the Missouri Disability Rights Legislative Day.

Like past years, the group used the meeting to get ready to talk with their legislators the next day. The Steering Committee learned about this year's proposed laws that might change the way people with

disabilities live their lives in Missouri. They also learned the best ways to share their own thoughts about the changes with their legislators.

Andrew Lackey, Director of Public Policy for Missouri DD Council, talked with the group about what he has learned about important bills that could become laws this year. Andrew and Derek Wetherell (People First Advisor, St. Louis Chapter) role-played how self-advocates can talk with their legislators so they show respect and make a good impression.

Valerie Huhn, Director of the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities, also came and talked. She shared news about the Division and explained what is happening with the budget in the legislature.

Later on, the group met to role-play and practice to get comfortable with talking to their legislators. After the meeting, many members and advisors helped make fact packets to hand out on Legislative Day.

At left: People First of Missouri Statewide officers and supporters meet to prepare before the Steering Committee Meeting.



At right: The People First Steering Committee listens to Valerie Huhn, Director, Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities.



PFMO Chapter Winter Activity Updates

Boone County

People First of Boone County hosted a potluck gathering in November and a holiday dance in December. Over a hundred people attended the dance, which was a great fundraiser for the group.

At the potluck, Boone County members had the opportunity to visit with freshman Representative Kip Kendrick of Columbia. We continue to feel it is very important to get to know legislators who represent us.

In October we helped Columbia's Show Me Careers pilot group present awards to three local employers. This was for Disability Employment Awareness Month. We presented at two classes about People First of Boone County and the disability rights movement. One was at Columbia College. The other was at the University of Missouri.

We have been setting chapter goals for 2015. One of our 2014 goals was to create a website. You can check it out at: peoplefirstofboonecountymo.wordpress.com.

Boonville

This winter, we had elections for our chapter officers. The chapter voted for Katie Kinder as its new President, Sheila Bader as Vice-President, Shanna Fuller as Treasurer, Alicia Meyers as Secretary, Linda Sturton



Above: People First of Boone County gathered for a holiday dance in December. Over 100 people attended the event, which also raised money for the chapter.

as Sergeant-at-Arms, Historian, and Louis as Hospitality. We have also decided to have board officers. That means we have other members that will sit in on our officers' meeting and help with other items. They act like officers if needed.

North Kansas City

Three new members joined the North Kansas City People First family: David Wills, Walter Baucom, and Sandra Brownsberger. We brainstormed ideas for 2015. Among other ideas, meeting with members from other People First chapters was suggested. We discussed with our new members what People First of North Kansas City does for activities, such as our annual picnic, trips to Disability Rights Day in Jefferson City, and the August trip to the Real Voices, Real Choices

conference at Tan-Tar-A Resort at the Lake Of The Ozarks.

Tiger Country

The Tiger Country chapter has a new meeting place and is now meeting on the second Wednesday of each month. We are getting more members and held our first fundraising event. We also were happy to welcome our new advisor, Rhonda McMillen.

Randolph County

(Moberly Chapter) Randolph County hosted a "NOT a Valentine's Day Dance" on Friday February 13, 2015. The dance was 7-9 pm at the Moberly Area Community College Activity Center. Tickets were \$8 at the door and food was provided.



Memories from People First of Missouri Conference 2015



People First of Missouri

A Season for Change: Springing into a New Era of Self-Advocacy



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facebook.com/missouripeoplefirst

Message From the People Newsletter



What I learned at the 2015 Conference:

“The Developing Assets (breakout session) was an eye opener.”

“How to meet new people.”

“Lots of good info from the Division Director (Valerie Huhn).”

“How to support people with planning for what they consider a good life.”

“Kathy Snow always teaches me something new.”

“Lots of ways to reach out to community and networking skills.”

“That we have a long way to go to educate people across the state.”

“About housing options for getting a better life.”

“I learned a lot through the survey. In our group, the consumers rated their service higher than the professionals.”

“I learned ideas to take back to my chapter for running our meetings.”

“How parents have to fight for services for their child.”

“How to make a plan of action and have it ready in the time of trouble.”

“I learned that there are other ways of having a guardian.”

“We still have a lot to do.”

“How to get a job.”

“I learned about Guardianship.”

“About Project Stir.”

“Ways police are training to work better with folks with disabilities.”

“How close the Habilitation Centers are to closing.”

“More about technology and safety for our people.”

“I learned a lot of interesting information about everything I needed to learn.”

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