Missouri self-advocates help lead the way

Steering Committee (SC) members met in November 2017 to work on a few important topics.

Wendy Witcig from the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities (MODDD) came to share information about new things happening at the Division. Wendy reported that MODDD wants to add a family service as part of the Partnership for Hope waiver as well as a peer support service. This could be an employment opportunity to help others learn skills from self-advocates who can give guidance.

In January, MODDD began looking at what rebuilding the service system could be like. They hope it can be simpler and easier for people to get what they need. They will be having community conversations and family forums to get input about what causes problems now and what people really need from their services.

MODDD will be coming to People First to help rebuild the system. They will send out an application to get more people involved in this effort. PFMO representatives will be part of the working group. People First SC members applauded the Division’s efforts to start at the beginning again.

Wendy also thanked SC for giving MODDD feedback and ideas about problems people are facing with transportation and employment.

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Message From the President
by Cathy Enfield, President

Hello again and welcome to another year of growing in self-advocacy.

First of all, I want to thank the People First Steering Committee members for reelecting me as your President and giving me the honor and opportunity to work with my People First family for another two years. There is no doubt that we, as both advocates and self-advocates, have a lot of serious challenges facing us. It is my primary objective to help us work together to protect and preserve the progress we have made together over the past several decades.

I encourage you to get to know both the Senator and the Representative that represents you and your District in the Missouri Legislature. If you cannot go to the Capitol in Jefferson City to speak with them, then make an appointment to visit with them when they are home on recess. Make them aware of who you are and talk to them about your concerns and about the issues that affect your life both as a person with a disability and also as a citizen of Missouri.

It is vitally important for all of us that each of us makes our voice heard and helps to bring awareness to our Senators and Representatives about the issues that impact our lives.

I would encourage anyone who reads this to do your best to attend Disability Rights Day at the Capitol on March 14 and be sure to make appointments to see your Legislators while you are there. We need to continue to work together to keep the rights we have worked so hard for over the years.

“BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD.” (Ghandi)

Cathy

People First of Missouri
2018 Officers

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Statewide officers elected to two-year term

New statewide officers were elected at the November Steering Committee meeting. Each candidate shared a statement for why they should be elected to office. Steering Committee members were able to ask questions and get answers before voting began. The elected officers include: President – Cathy Enfield; Vice-President – Roger Crome; Treasurer – Katie Kinder; Secretary – Kelly Ray; Sergeant at Arms – Johanna Wortmann. Also, Roger Crome was elected to be presented as Missouri’s candidate for election to the SABE national board. Kelly Ray was elected as alternate.


Missouri self-advocates help lead the way, continued

Chapters helped in this effort through the survey they were asked to complete for the Division.

SC also began working to build “Position Statements” on issues that are important to Missourians with disabilities. A position statement is a short letter a group writes to tell others what it thinks matters most.

Cathy Brown came to the meeting to lead the group discussion. She explained how position statements can be useful to an organization in setting priorities and staying focused. The group talked and chose 7 “Big Ideas” to work on: Accessibility, Respect, Making our own decisions, Opportunity, Jobs and Money, and Equal Rights. In the future, PFMO will share the statements it writes with MODDD, the DD Council, SB 40 Boards, and others, so they know what is most important to us.

Also, SC listened to candidate speeches and voted on new officers. See Statewide officers elected to two-year term article above for more info.

Photos below: Steering Committee members work in small groups to keep progress moving on priorities SC set during its time spent working on the Heartland Self-advocacy Resource Network project.
PFMO chapter updates

Boone County

Since our last update, we have been finding ways to advocate in our community. Toward the end of October, we met with Columbia Mayor Brian Treece who named October “Disability Employment Awareness Month” in the City of Columbia. We had a great time visiting with the mayor and getting to know each other. We also united with Boone County Family Resources against bullying for Bullying Prevention Month. We marched in Mizzou’s Homecoming Parade and handed out over 1,200 bracelets that say, “Create a World Without Bullying.” In November, we had a holiday potluck. We like food! In December, we partnered with Columbia Parks & Recreation and held a holiday dance. This is a big fundraiser for our group and a way to get the word out about People First.

Boonslick

Boonslick People First has been alive and well! In November, we held our officer elections. We also chose to collect 2 Thanksgiving dinners for needy families. In December, we held our annual Christmas banquet, complete with tons of food, gifts, and smiles. January was our officer inauguration. Most of our officers remained the same, however we do have a few new faces to help lead the chapter!

Independence

The Independence Chapter held its regular November meeting and reviewed material for the upcoming Steering Committee later that month. Unfortunately, due to the illness of several of our members and other scheduling issues, we were not able to have our December meeting and Christmas celebration. Our members are now getting better, and we are getting back on our regular monthly meeting schedule. We are looking forward to seeing everyone at Disability Rights Legislative Day on March 14 at the Missouri State Capitol Rotunda.

LADY JUSTICE SPEAKS

LET’S MAKE IT HAPPEN!

NATIONAL SELF ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

JUNE 7-9, 2018

Birmingham Jefferson Civic Center 2100 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd North
Birmingham, AL

Host Hotel: Sheraton Birmingham
For more information visit our website: www.sabeconference.org

Limited financial support will be available from People First of Missouri thanks to help from our friends at the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council. Watch your email and People First Facebook posts for more details soon.

Hope to see you in Birmingham!
North Kansas City

People First of North Kansas City had its Christmas meeting on December 19. We had pasta, cookies, and chips. The pasta was catered by a nearby restaurant. The January meeting was cancelled due to cold weather. We were going to have elections for chapter president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. The election was moved to the February meeting instead, where the other topic will be the upcoming Disability Rally Day at the State Capitol.

Springfield

We had our annual Thanksgiving potluck. Our January meeting was postponed due to freezing temperatures. Brrrrr! Our members continue to serve on other boards and committees and participate in disability fairs.

Congratulations to Marrissa Clary and Patty Goss for launching new businesses. Marrissa helps families navigate the system. Way to go Marrissa. Patty is a wheelchair accessibility consultant. Have a wonderful, blessed month and we’ll see ya’ll in March at Disability Rights Legislative Day.

St. Charles

Over the past few months, the St. Charles chapter has participated in a data collection project along with the St. Louis People First Chapter and the Law students at SLU University. We have elected new officers for the local chapter, for our statewide reps, and had our own Johanna Wortmann elected to serve as a statewide officer again.

We have been spending a lot of time speaking to different schools during their Tolerance and Acceptance weeks. We also spent time with staff teaching them People First Language. We have started working on holding a campaign this year called “People Talk,” which will take us out into the community to work on People First Language. Our chapter continues to grow as we are hitting the 70 members mark! Sarah, our advisor, also received the Direct Support award in our county.

St. Joseph

On December 2, People First of St. Joseph rang the bell for the Salvation Army to collect funds to help people have a better Christmas this year. The group had a great time greeting customers entering the mall as they started off with singing Christmas carols: Jingle Bells, Silent Night, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, and their favorite – Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly! Everyone had a chance to sport the apron, ring those blissful bells, and greet people with an excited, “Merry Christmas!”

Lisa Gabriel and Sharon Courter from MERIL assisted the group. They said People First is a phenomenal group, and there is nothing they would rather do than spend the day with such wonderful people.

Photos, below: St. Charles was active in the community this winter, especially talking to schools about People First language. Chapter advisor Sarah Miley received a county award for outstanding Direct Support Professional.

Photos, below left: St. Charles chapter spent time this winter helping others by giving their time, sharing their voices, and spreading holiday cheer. Photo, below right: The chapter gathered to celebrate and have fun together.

Make sure your chapter is included in the next issue!

Send an update about what your chapter has been doing by emailing underwooddm@umkc.edu. Articles and pictures are welcome!

A new kind of reminder

Steering Committee members and Chapter Advisors have a new way to get important People First reminders. It’s a text message service called “Remind.” You can sign up to receive messages delivered to your phone here: remind.com/join/pfmosc or by emailing the mobile phone number you want PFMO to use to Danielle at underwooddm@umkc.edu. PFMO sends only one or two messages a month, and you can stop Remind at any time.
What does your chapter need now?

People First of Missouri is here to support local chapters. What can we do to help your chapter grow stronger? You can let us know what training topics are most important to your group by taking a new online PFMO survey. You can even take it using your phone. We'll use the information you give us to make new plans to improve our chapter resources. You can find the survey online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PFMO-Training-Needs

Thanks!

How have you shown Self-Advocacy?

Our organization was created to help people with disabilities learn about self-determination and self-advocacy and then live it. And just like anything else, the more we practice, the better we get. It's important that we keep track of the stories of self-advocacy and self-determination in Missouri. Why? For one thing, we can teach others by sharing our own experiences. Also, it helps to show our supporters how far we've come and how their support is making a difference in the lives of Missouri self-advocates.

What has happened in your life in the last three months that gave you a chance to be a self-advocate? Please share your stories here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PFMO-SA-SD-Activities