



SELF ADVOCATES SPEAKING OUT

People First of
CT

July, 2006

President Notes:



Carol Grabbe

My name is Carol Grabbe and I'm the new president of People First of Connecticut. I was recently at the NEAT regional meeting in Massachusetts. At this meeting, we met with the Directors of State agencies. There were other important people at this meeting as well such as; Commissioner, Peter O'Meara, Deputy Commissioner, Kathryn duPree and Beth McArthur.

We discussed a lot of important issues concerning people with disabilities. Some of the "Hot Topic" issues we talked about were: changing

the name of DMR, the number of people still in sheltered workshops and lack of transportation. I never realized how many sheltered workshops there were until this meeting.

Sometimes it feels like people with disabilities are not listened to, but at this meeting it felt great! What I liked best about the meeting was that we had the Directors of State agencies listening to what we (people with disabilities) want from a Self Advocate's point of view. We have been waiting for this for a long time...not only to be listened to, but to also be respected.

I hope to see these types of discussions happen again, in the near future. I also hope that all of you out there feel free to contact me with any concerns that you may have or send in articles, pictures, poems, etc. for this newsletter. We want to hear from you!

Sincerely,
Carol Grabbe

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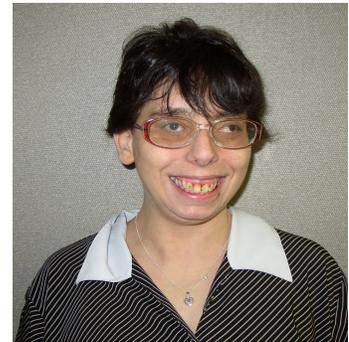
**Please contact
Thomas
McCann
Newsletter
Chairperson
at
(860) 647-9580
if you have
something you want
to put in the next
newsletter.**

People First of CT Elects New Officers!



President Carol Grabbe: My name is Carol Grabbe. I am a self advocate coordinator for DMR. I have had this job for 2 years. I really enjoy my job because I'm helping people with disabilities understand what their rights are. I am also the newly elected president of People First of CT. I am also the President of my local group, Self Advocates Unlimited in Middletown. We have been together for 3 years.

Vice President Ginger Burke: Ginger Burke is a member of Self Advocates Unlimited, Inc. She is also the newly elected Vice president of People First of CT. Ginger is also a member of the Meriden Speaker's Bureau. Ginger enjoys going bowling and to the movies.



Secretary Chad Sinanian: My name is Chad Sinanian, I'm past Secretary of People First of Connecticut and currently Treasurer of People First of Connecticut. I'm also the Region 8 Representative of SABE, and was recently elected as Secretary of SABE's national organization.

Treasurer Quentin Hughes III: I've been a WeCahr member for six years. Recently, ten of WeCahr's members were offered an opportunity to move into homes of their own, at condos in Stetson. I seized upon this opportunity with the help of my Uncle Jack and Aunt Pat.

I'm glad this opportunity came up because people with disabilities have a right to realize their dreams, just like everyone else. Today, all ten of the WeCahr members scheduled to move in to Stetson Place have now moved into Stetson Place. We're all homeowners now, and proud of it.



Legislative Committee Report

By Tom McCann

The Legislative Committee was formed in November, 2005 with members Varian Salters, Bill Berry, myself and Leslie Simoes, Advisor. It was time to have a committee so that People First could introduce bills that are important to us.

Our priority is to change the name of DMR. The committee recommended we submit legislation to the People First Board of Directors. On December 12, 2005, the Board selected a name that we feel OK about. It is the Department of Developmental Disabilities. We decided to introduce two bills; one that changes the name, and the other one that requires the use of People First, or respectful language, in all future laws.

On January 26, 2006, we met at a statewide meeting in New Britain with Senator Don DeFronzo, Representative Tim O'Brien and Representative Peter Teryak. We had a great meeting, with over 75 people attending. Our members told Don and Tim that having the name of the Department of Mental Retardation is like a label. "We are not cans," said member Eric McKernan.

Some members had questions about how to talk to legislators. Senator Don asked if we were open to the words "cognitive" or "intellectual". Tom McCann responded that we are OK with those names, but we voted on the Dept. of Developmental Disabilities. Don understood and agreed to stay in touch with us. They agreed to sponsor the bills and to champion our cause. Then we broke down into small groups and, with the help of advisors and friends, we wrote letters to our

legislators. The bills were sent to the Government Administration and Elections Committee (GAE) and were assigned numbers. SB 63 was assigned to the respectful language bill and HB 5062 was assigned to the change the name of DMR bill.

On March 13, 2006, lots of people went to the legislative hearing to testify and support these bills. The good news is that some of our advocacy was successful. The "respectful language bill" (originally SB 63) was put into a larger bill, SB 67 (sec 30).

This new bill states that "Any general statute, local law, ordinance, charter or regulation adopted by the state or any political subdivision of the state that refers to persons with disabilities shall utilize language that does not: (1) imply that such persons are disabled as a whole, (2) equate persons with their condition, or (3) have negative overtones or have a derogatory or demeaning effect. We were very hopeful that this bill would pass soon!

Unfortunately, our bills did not pass. Instead, a bill which asks DMR Commissioner O'Meara to get input on a name change and report back to the General Assembly in January was passed instead. This bill passed the senate in early May. Everyone should write to the Commissioner and their senator and legislator to say that we want DMR's name changed to the Department of Developmental Disabilities. We will also keep working on getting a People First Language bill passed.

Write your letter about the name change!

DMR Self Advocate Coordinator Update

My name is **Jossie Torres**, and I'm a Self-Advocate Coordinator in the DMR Cheshire office, which is located at 25 Creamery Road in Cheshire, CT. As a Self-Advocate Coordinator, I have the responsibility of teaching people to speak up for themselves and to feel comfortable speaking out for what they believe in. I help people understand that they can make their own decisions and choices about their life, home, friends, job, supports and future.



One way I help people to learn to speak up for themselves is by running a Speaker Bureau group in Waterbury, CT. People who attend the Speaker Bureau meetings learn about rights and how to become a better speaker.

The Speaker Bureau is a 12 week training program that teaches people with intellectual disabilities how to speak in front of others without fear. I help members of the group to have confidence by helping them to be comfortable using microphones and video cameras when they speak at conferences and in trainings. The best part of Speaker Bureau is the fun we have in learning together. We share snacks and beverages. We always look forward to the next meeting so we can learn new ways to become better advocates for ourselves. These meetings are held in 250 Freight Street Waterbury, CT, in the conference room. The meetings take place every other Monday from 5:00 p.m.-6:30 pm. If you are interested in our Speaker Bureau meetings, please contact me directly at (203) 806 -8736 or via email at Jossie.Torres@po.state.ct.us. I will be happy to assist you.

Also, there are other Speaker Bureau groups in the other regions. You can contact **Carol Grabbe** at (203) 294-5110 to get more information about Speaker Bureau meetings in the South Region; **Varian Salters** at (860) 456-6376 for information about the Speaker Bureau meetings in the North Region. We hope to hear from you soon!

Jossie Torres
Self Advocate Coordinator, DMR West Region
Self-Advocate Coordinator

Katrina Update

by Bill Berry

Helping Out Our Southern Neighbors

In September of 2005, the Gulf Coast was visited by a lady named Katrina. This was no lady!!! This Hurricane took many lives and destroyed millions of homes and businesses. New Orleans was one of the hardest hit. A lot of people had to leave and start their lives over again.



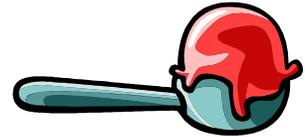
The Guardian Angels, one of the Self Advocacy groups in CT,

raised \$500.00 dollars for victims of Hurricane Katrina. This will enable victims to get food, water, clothing, etc. We mailed our check to People 1st of Louisiana. It will be a long process for these people to get back to normal. Sometimes you don't know how lucky you are until something like this happens. Sometimes it takes a tragedy like this to bring people together. It takes years to build a dream, but only seconds to destroy it.

I hope our donation will be of some help for the People 1st of Louisiana. I hope in time all their lives can get back to normal and they won't be visited by another unwelcome visitor!!

ASK

The Spicy Scoop



Dear Wise Advocate,

I have a question for you...Please help! A gentlemen caller has been calling my house repeatedly and I have no interest. I have nothing in common with him and have asked him to stop calling, but he won't. How can I get rid of him?

-Confused in Connecticut

Dear Confused in CT,

Poor you! There is nothing worse than a man who doesn't understand "no!!" Here is my advice: First, make sure he knows you mean business and want him to stop calling. If that doesn't work, try speaking to someone he lives with, or get a support person (parent, friend or staff) to tell him to stop. If the calls keep coming block his number on your phone (a monthly fee) or consider changing your number and keeping it unlisted. The last resort to use if this continues is to call the police. Hopefully, this guy will figure it out before the cops show up at his door. Good Luck!! *The Wise Advocate*

Something To Think About

Assisted Suicide Ruling Upheld by the Supreme Court

On January 17, 2006, the US Supreme Court ruled that the Oregon "Death with Dignity" law is legal. Is this discrimination against people with disabilities?

Many in the Disability Rights Movement think so. Discrimination is defined as "unfair treatment of a person or class of persons in comparison to others." If assisted suicide laws apply only to those of us who are old, ill or disabled, then isn't that discrimination? If we really want to make suicide a "medical treatment option," then why not make it available to everyone, not just those of us who are least valued by society?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are people more likely to think about assisted suicide if they feel they are burdens to their families or to society?

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PEOPLE FIRST OF CT MEETING SCHEDULE

July 27th	Statewide Meeting First Church of Christ, Middletown
August 24th	Board of Directors ARC of Southington, Southington
September 16th	Disability Collaborative Expo Center, Hartford
October 28th	People First Conference Bristol Clarion Hotel, Bristol
December 7th	Board of Directors ARC of Southington, Southington

CT SELF ADVOCATES HAVE WONDERFUL TIME AT NATIONAL SABE CONFERENCE IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

by Chad Sinanian

From May 24th thru May 28th, Chad Sinanian, Quentin Hughes III, Carol Grabbe, Christine Bysewicz, Bill Berry, Varian Salters, Jean Bowen, Dale Brown and Leslie Simoes from the SEIU union were at Atlanta, Georgia for the National Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) Conference.

Over a thousand people attended this conference, which was really fantastic. There were some great speakers and fun workshops, such as "The Dating Game". There were also some great events which took place, including a visit to the Martin Luther King memorial and singing by the choir from Ebenezer Baptist Church. During the opening ceremonies they sang, "WE SHALL OVERCOME" and "AMAZING GRACE". Quentin Hughes III carried the CT flag during opening ceremonies with pride and dignity.

Chad Sinanian ran for Secretary of SABE (unopposed) and won a four year term and his speeches during his nomination and acceptance were met with a loud ovation.

Jean Bowen, Dale Brown and Leslie Simoes are to be congratulated and commended for going out of their way to support the CT attendees and for helping at the conference.



Varian had a great time at the SABE Conference. He enjoyed the trip to the aquarium!



Everyone really enjoyed the Martin Luther King Memorial

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 advozealot@aol.com

**Speak out
 for your rights and
 dignity!**



Registration
 By 10/1/06

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

State _____

Zip _____

Phone () _____ - _____

Cost: \$25.00 Make check to:

People 1st of CT and Mail to:
 211 Main Street
 Danbury, CT 06810
 Phone (203) 792-3540

If you are 1199/SBU staff request-
 ing the Registration fee to be paid
 by the union, please check
 here

Directions

From Hartford: RT 84 West (towards
 Waterbury) to Exit 31, turn right at the
 end of the ramp...

From Danbury, Waterbury, STS: RT 84
 East (Towards Hartford) to Exit 31, turn
 left at end of ramp...

From New Britain: Route 72 West to
 RT 84 West to Exit 31, turn right off the
 exit...

From Middletown: Route 9 No. to 72
 West to TR 84 to Exit 31, turn right off
 the exit...

New London: Route 95 So. To Rt. 9
 No. to Rt. 72 West to Rt.84 West to
 Exit 31, turn right off exit...

...Hotel 3 miles down on the left.

**Annual People 1st
 of Connecticut
 Conference**

**SATURDAY 10/28/2006
 8:30 — 4:00 PM**

*The Hotel
 Address*



Cost: \$25.00