

SELF-ADVOCACY NATION

BY SELF ADVOCATES BECOMING EMPOWERED

June 2010

Summer Edition



SABE is your national self-advocacy organization. Self advocates are people with disabilities who speak up for themselves.

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SHOW ME FREEDOM: Closing the Nevada Hab Center



People First members have been working hard with advocates from the Missouri Planning Council, the Missouri Arc and many others to fight segregation! People First of Missouri is part of a coalition to address a plan to rebuild the Nevada Habilitation Center, one of Missouri's six institutions open in the state.

Advocacy started in April when plans to close the habilitation center were announced. Advocates across the state rejoiced at this news. The coalition, including SABE secretary Cathy Enfield, educated legislators about the plan. They told legislators that people would have a chance at a real life in the community and that the plan had their support! Advocates from all over Missouri called their legislators and the Governor's office to announce their support for the transition of people with disabilities to the community.

Soon after the announcement, the Missouri Department of Mental Health flip-flopped the plan. They announced a new proposal to build nine eight-bed group homes on the campus of Nevada. It was like a cruel April Fool's joke and advocates from across the state were gravely disappointed.

The new plan promotes the segregation of people with disabilities from the community and supports a model of living that has been out of demand since the 1980s. People First and its allies on the coalition joined together to testify at the Mental Health Commission, the governor appointed group that oversees DMH, in May. PFMO testified at this meeting during open comment, explaining to the Commission that people with disabilities want to live real lives in the community!

People First of Missouri sent a letter to the governor explaining our view on the plan to build the group home campus. PFMO also signed on to letters expressing our support for transition to the community. People First met with Governor Jay Nixon's staff to ask them not to support this outdated model of service and educate them on the positives of living in the community for people with disabilities.

Building the group homes would reinforce the unnecessary segregation of people with disabilities who want to live real lives in the community.

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SABE’s Mission

To ensure that people with disabilities are treated as equals and that they are given the same decisions, choices, rights, responsibilities, and chances to speak up to empower themselves; opportunities to make new friends; and to learn from their mistakes.

**The President Speaks
Chester Finn**

Greetings from SABE,

Hope you are having a great summer. We are looking forward to the lazy days of summer, as our spring has been full of a lot of projects. We have been very, very busy working on our family support conference calls. We have had some really great speakers who talked about the “r” word and health care. We had over 200 people signed up on our call in June.

Tia Nelis, Cathy Enfield, and I attended the National Disability Policy Seminar April 11-14, 2010 in Washington D.C. We attended the workshops and I was able to facilitate a workshop. We networked with other participants and met with our legislators. We had a great time.

While in Washington, I met with Commissioner Sharon Lewis of Administration on Developmental Disabilities and I talked with her about working with SABE. We scheduled a phone call with the SABE Board. We held call on June 2 and talked about collaboration with ADD on self advocacy and working with families. ADD will work with SABE to support the 2010 conference in Kansas City. They will be taking photos of self advocates, to use in ADD publications and materials. ADD is encouraging self advocates to be included in regional meeting held by the DD Network.

Our Board Meeting for the quarter was held June 22 -27, 2010 in Cincinnati, Ohio. We have invited self advocacy leaders and members of the DD network from surrounding states to join us for the meeting and reception on Friday June 25th.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the National Conference in Kansas City in September. Please visit the Conference website for updates. www.sabekc2010.org

Chester Finn

SHOW ME FREEDOM (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Some things still need to happen to allow Missouri to rebuild this institution:



The bill to build the group homes on the campus of Nevada sits on Governor Jay Nixon's desk. If he doesn't sign it or veto it by July 15, it will go into effect August 28. Meanwhile, CMS has to make the decision whether they will approve these proposed group homes through the Medicaid waiver. People First of Missouri thinks a bunch of group homes on the campus of an institution are not HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES. We also wonder why CMS would allow home and community based waivers to be used for a segregated, institutional setting! CMS will make a decision by August 8. We think they should say "NO!"

Advocates, if the waiver is approved to fund services on the campus of the Nevada Habilitation Center in Missouri, what does that mean for your state? Soon little "group home campus institutions" (funded by the home and community based waiver, no less!) may start popping up all over the country, erasing all the advocacy efforts SABE and statewide advocacy groups have accomplished to get services in the community. Do YOU want to live on an institutional campus? With eight other people just because you all happen to have a disability? Separate from the rest of society? Should state and federal money intended to get people out of institutions be used to fund services in a segregated institutional setting???

If you believe that people are best supported in the community and deserve the opportunity to live real lives, now is the time to act! Call Cindy Mann, Director of the Center for Medicaid and State Operations (CMSO) at 1-877-696-6775 or email her at Cynthia.Mann@CMS.hhs.gov and ask that CMS not allow the approval of the waiver for the purpose of building group homes campuses on the grounds of institutions!

Position Statement on Closing Institutions

We believe that all institutions, both private and public should be closed. All people, regardless of the severity of their disability, should live in the community with the support they need.

by Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered
Adopted April 1995

Current States with NO Institutions!

- Alaska
- DC
- Hawaii
- Indiana
- Maine
- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- West Virginia
- Oregon

CLOSE THE DOORS: NEWS FROM ACROSS THE US

DOJ calls out states for failing to provide community living



May 6, 2010

DOJ (Department of Justice) has filed a lawsuit alleging that the state of Arkansas is systemically violating the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). According to the DOJ, over 1,000 people are currently being served in institutions in the state and nearly 1,500 people with disabilities in the state are being offered the “draconian choice” of living in institutions or remaining on the waitlist and receiving no assistance whatsoever. (DOJ, Office of Public Affairs, May 6, 2010)

May 25, 2010

DOJ filed three suits at the end of May against the states of Illinois, New Jersey, and Florida “as part of its continuing effort to enforce civil rights laws that require states to end discrimination against and unnecessary segregation of persons with disabilities.”



Disability History Exhibit http://www.hss.state.ak.us/gcdse/history/HTML_Content_Main.htm

Denied the dignity that every person deserves: Minnesota offers apology to people who lived in institutions

In May, Minnesota followed the example of Virginia, Oregon, South Carolina, California, and North Carolina by issuing a public apology to people with disabilities who had been forced to live in their state institutions. Senator John Marty, who authored the Minnesota Apology Bill passed on May 26, 2010, acknowledged his remorse for the unlawful incarceration of people with disabilities behind institution doors in his state.

“For over 100 years Minnesota had public policies that took people with mental illness and disabilities away from their families and communities and committed them to state institutions. In those institutions, some were forced to work without pay, some were subjected to medical experiments and procedures without their consent, some were subjected to punitive shock treatments, aversive treatments and isolation. The Senate Health Committee heard from adults who spent their childhood locked in an institution, away from their families, sometimes being cruelly punished for things beyond their control. They were denied the dignity that every person deserves. This is a shameful part of Minnesota’s history.”

See the full story at <http://www.northlandsnewscenter.com/news/local/94960234.html>

States' efforts to close institutions

Alabama

People First of Alabama is actively involved in the ID Coordinating subcommittee, which advises the DMH on policy. PF has pushed hard both at public meetings and behind the scenes for closure and has repeatedly made motions to close Partlow which have been passed by the committee.



New Jersey

The Seeking Ways Out Together (SWOT) Team was formed to help people leaving during the closing of two New Jersey developmental centers. Most members have lived in developmental centers, nursing homes and mental health hospitals.



We work with any group like New Jersey DD Council, who wants to get people out of institutions, close and downsize centers. We also work on issues like restraints and voting rights for people in institutions.

Georgia

People First of Georgia members are providing peer support and role modeling for how to live successfully in the community. We have been involved with Money Follows the Person by serving on the stakeholders committee and are hosting a pilot project called Welcome Home. Welcome Home is a meeting every month, after the People First of Atlanta meeting, where people who have gotten out through Money Follows the Person can come make friends, receive peer support and role modeling, as well as connect with the disability community. They also get a chance to work on their social skills since the lack of social skills after being locked away for so long can be one the biggest barriers to building community and natural supports.



The SWOT Team of New Jersey is a member of the New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Coalition. The coalition was formed to address closing developmental centers and community waiting list and services provided by New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities. Other members include New Jersey Arc, Disability Rights New Jersey, the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, Autism New Jersey, and Family Support Network. Last year members of our team suggested closing admissions to New Jersey's seven developmental centers and not putting one person back in a developmental center if the person had problems adjusting to community living. The Coalition decided this was a good idea and has been working to make it happen.

Arkansas

Arkansas has 6 state institutions called Human Development Centers. In early May, one of our institutions lost its Medicaid funding because of abuse that was reported. Now they're trying to figure out what they're going to do with all the residents and we're hoping that they don't shuffle them off to one of the other institutions. AR People First president stated, "We're working on helping people transition from the institutions." AR PF also collaborated with other organizations to have a press conference about choices.



This year the SWOT Team signed a letter with other members from the Coalition to our new governor, Chris Christie. The letter requested closing one developmental center and offered the Coalition's assistance. This May at hearings about our developmental centers two of our members, who once lived in developmental centers, testified about life in an institution and life on the outside in the community. This year the team will help people on the New Jersey Olmstead Plan prepare to move into the community.

States' efforts to close institutions

Vermont

Beware! The Evil Talk Of Segregation Still Exists *By Max Barrows and Nicole LeBlanc*

Vermont is 1 of 10 states that are institution-free. Vermont closed its only institution in 1993, but freedom beware! Even though you reach your goal of closing institutions, the evil talk of segregation still exists. It continues to be a tough battle. One example is the talk of separate schools or centers or systems for people with autism. This is unacceptable. Why will people not listen to adults and youth who have autism?



Recently a few of us were in San Francisco and we visited Alcatraz, the famous prison where the most notorious criminals were sent. Here is a sign we saw hanging on the wall in Alcatraz.



Sound familiar?

It sounds like the same excuses we are hearing for service cutbacks. State officials say, "We are in an economic recession. We can only focus on people getting food and shelter."

What is up with that? Even the prisoners in Alcatraz got clothing and medical attention. Does the world think it is a crime to have a disability?

For the past 6 months we have been overloading our state house with self-advocates. We have been crowding out the politicians with emails, phone calls, personal visits and meetings. At every turn our message has been inclusion is here to stay and we are NOT going away!

The real charge comes from involving high school students with disabilities. They know that there is more to life than food and shelter. A future without a job is NOT an option.

CLOSE THE DOORS CAMPAIGN UPDATE

For Close the Doors, the major focus has been to help states when they need support to close their institutions. Also, to encourage people to speak up on the importance of getting people out of institutions and making sure they have a reasonable transition plan to be successful in the community. If you want support from the Close the Doors committee, contact sabenation@gmail.com!

“Forced Institutionalization of People With Disabilities Is Illegal”

DOJ and Federal Court Ruling

Jun 25, 2010 reprinted from DiversityInc.

The U.S. District Court in Jacksonville, Fla., ruled this week that Michele Haddad must be provided with services that will allow her to stay in her home. Haddad, who has a spinal-cord injury caused by a motorcycle accident with a drunk driver three years ago, was at risk of being forced into a nursing home because of changes in her caregiver situation. Although the 49-year-old woman has been on the waiting list for Medicaid community-based waiver services for two years and had alerted the state of her need, she was told that the requested services would only be available if she was admitted to a nursing home for 60 days.

In *Haddad v. Arnold*, the plaintiff argued that she would suffer irreparable harm if forced to enter a nursing home.

The court agreed, ordering the state to offer Haddad community-based services. The reason: Segregating people with disabilities is a form of discrimination, as found in *Olmstead v. L.C.* This landmark disability-rights decision determined that isolating people with disabilities in institutional settings deprives them of the opportunity to participate in their communities, interact with individuals who don't have disabilities and make daily choices. The ruling also acknowledged that unnecessary institutionalization stigmatizes people with disabilities.

The *Olmstead* decision, which marks its 11th anniversary this week, is not the first such case that the U.S. Department of Justice has filed briefs. The DOJ is involved in several other cases in Illinois and New Jersey, as part of its mission to end discrimination against people with disabilities.

“In the *Olmstead* case, the court recognized that the unnecessary segregation of individuals with disabilities stigmatizes those individuals as unworthy of participation in community life,” stated Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Thomas E. Perez. “By supporting Ms. Haddad in this case, we seek to ensure that individuals with disabilities can receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate, where they can participate in their communities, interact with individuals who do not have disabilities and make their own day-to-day choices.”

The Department of Justice's involvement in these cases reinforce the Obama administration's national efforts to protect the rights of all people.

“This work is a priority for the Civil Rights Division, and we are committed to aggressive enforcement of *Olmstead* so that we can build upon progress made over the last 11 years,” said Perez earlier this week. “But our work is only one piece of a larger, administration-wide effort to make the promise of *Olmstead* a reality for individuals with disabilities nationwide. Real reform requires a holistic approach. As a lifelong public servant, I recognize that the most vexing problems a government faces are those that require unprecedented interagency collaboration and coordination. The unnecessary and illegal institutionalization of individuals with disabilities who would be better served, and better able to contribute to their communities, if they were provided services in integrated settings, is one of those problems.”

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE and GETTING RID OF THE “R” WORD?

Current list of states that have passed respectful language bills:

1. Alabama
2. Alaska
3. Arkansas
4. Connecticut
5. Indiana
6. Louisiana
7. Maine
8. Maryland
9. Massachusetts
10. Minnesota
11. New York
12. New Hampshire
13. North Carolina
14. Ohio
15. Oklahoma
16. Oregon
17. Pennsylvania
18. South Dakota
19. Vermont
20. Wyoming
21. Washington
22. Washington DC
23. Utah



News flash!

All 50 states have removed the “R” word from their state agency! Congratulations self advocates!

Update on Rosa’s Law

Rosa’s Law, the bill to remove the R-word and replace it with “intellectual disability” in federal legislation, was passed by a senate committee in late May. The bill will now go to the full senate for them to vote. If you believe that the “R” would should be removed from federal legislation, make sure your senators know right away!



ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST!

Our state developmental disabilities services department has a new name change which both houses of the legislature passed last week! The name changed from Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) to the New York State Office For People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)! I’m glad the name is going to be changed and we’re planning a huge celebration. Commissioner Ritter was instrumental in pushing this through; she was the first commissioner to really help push the name change.



R-WORD COMMITTEE UPDATE

The R-Word group is working on a letter to the First Lady, Michelle Obama, to get her to join SABE’s campaign to eliminate the R-Word. She has talked about wanting to support different projects to help make change, so we are asking her to help us make change by eliminating the R-Word. We have sent her an eliminate the R-Word pin and t-shirt to have her help support our cause.

SABE committee reports

SELF-DETERMINATION COMMITTEE

SABE wants to know what self determination looks like in your state!

The SABE Self-Determination Committee has been working with a project funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities called a National Training Initiative to Scale-Up Self-Determination in the United States. The Self Determination committee has developed a survey for states to fill out about self determination in their own states to help SABE gather information about self determination. To fill out this survey, go to <http://sabeusa.org>!

The Self Determination committee also is planning skits to perform SABE 2010 National Self Advocacy Conference in Kansas City, MO.

We plan to have the Self Determination Project website go live by the time of the conference, which will be a place where self advocates can learn about self determination and share their successes and challenges about living a self determined life.

FAMILY SUPPORT COMMITTEE

SABE Scores Top Reviews For Monthly Conference Calls!

So what are you doing the afternoon of the 3rd Wednesday of each month? Many of our members along with their families and allies are calling in and speaking up on SABE's monthly conference calls. Here are topics we covered recently:



"Let's Get Rid of the R word" gave advice on what to say to a stranger when you hear them use the "r" word. Check out the SABE website for practical tips and tools to use when presenting to groups about treating people with disabilities with respect.



The New Healthcare Law: Great News For People With Disabilities! We discussed details about this new program and its many benefits. In case you were not able to join the call you can get notes by going to www.sabeusa.org.



Social Security and You provided helpful information on how you can work and still maintain some of your benefits. You can listen to the recording of the call until July 16th by dialing 800-642-1687 and using ID number 80358938.

To sign up for future monthly calls check our website! www.sabeusa.org

SABE committee reports, continued

PROJECT VOTE

Project Vote has had an exciting year so far. We have held two voting trainings, one in Ohio and the other in Maine. Soon we will do training in Philadelphia. We have hosted two “conference call trainings” with Protection and Advocacy organizations across the US on the topic of voting they have selected. During Project Vote trainings and conference calls, P & A’s have reported that they have learned how to more effectively collaborate with people with disabilities and people with disabilities have said the same about the P&As.

INTERNATIONAL

sibling
CONFERENCE



EXPLORING THE REWARDS AND CHALLENGES OF HAVING A FAMILY MEMBER WITH DISABILITIES
PRESENTED BY ARI OF CONNECTICUT, THE SIBLING LEADERSHIP NETWORK, & THE KENNEDY CENTER
AUGUST 7 – 8, 2010 • HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT

International Sibling Conference:
Exploring the Rewards and Challenges of Having Family Members with Disabilities

The longest lasting relationships we have in life are with our siblings. As families age, siblings often step into the role of advocating for their brothers and sisters with disabilities, but without adequate information and support to do so effectively.

Bryon Murray, SABE Board Member for Region 3 serves as SABE’s Liaison to the Sibling Leadership Network. He is a part of the national network coordinating and presenting at this International Conference on Siblings of People With Disabilities. SABE is a supporting sponsor of this event and Tia Nelis, SABE Vice President, will be one of the keynote speakers presenting on “Self Determination: what siblings need to know and understand to support their sibling with a disability to lead a self-determined life”. The conference will be at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 1800 East Putnam Avenue, Old Greenwich, CT on August 7-8, 2010.

Other keynote speakers include Don Meyer, Director of the Sibling Support Project; Chris Burke, best known for his role as Charles “Corky” Thatcher on the hit ABC-TV show “Life Goes On;” Cheryl Wills, anchor and reporter, NY1 News and her brother, Clarence Wills, a talented artist who has autism; Dr. Tamar Heller, Professor and Director, Institute on Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) who will be presenting with Tia Nelis. For more information, visit www.siblingconference.org.

To register for the International Sibling Conference or for more information, please visit www.siblingconference.org or contact Dr. Robert J. DiDomenico, Conference Coordinator, at 203-324-9258 ext 3014, or didomenicor@arict.org.

Chester Finn introduced as a new Board Member on the National Council on Disability!

from NCD's Press Release on June 24, 2010

WASHINGTON—The National Council on Disability (NCD) is proud to introduce eight new Board Members who were nominated by President Barack Obama on December 17, 2009, confirmed by the U.S. Senate, and duly appointed as Members. President Obama has further designated Jonathan Young as Chairman. The new Members are: Jonathan Young (Chairman), Gary Blumenthal, **Chester Finn**, Sara Gelser, Ari Ne'eman, Dongwoo Joseph "Joe" Pak, Carol Jean Reynolds, and Fernando M. Torres-Gil. Individual biographies for each new Council Member are located at the end of this release.

"I am honored to serve as Chairman of the National Council on Disability and pleased to be joined by an outstanding group of Council Members," stated NCD's new Chairman Jonathan Young. "I also want to thank former Chairperson Linda Wetters and NCD Executive Director Joan Durocher for working tirelessly to ensure a smooth transition."

NCD is an independent federal agency charged with advising the President, Congress, and other federal officials and entities on all policies, programs, practices and procedures affecting people with disabilities. NCD's mission is to further the goals enshrined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990: equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities.

"NCD has a proud legacy, which includes calling for the enactment of the ADA and later offering the first draft in 1988," said Chairman Young. "NCD Members and staff, past and present, have been tireless public servants, working to enact and improve public policies that give people with disabilities a chance to risk, succeed, and fail like everyone else. I am grateful for the Council's past work, and look forward to working closely with my fellow Council Members, staff, and NCD's many stakeholders to further our collective mission in the years ahead."

The full Board now consists of: Jonathan Young, Ph.D., Gary Blumenthal, Victoria Ray Carlson, Chester Finn, Sara Gelser, Marylyn Howe, Heather McCallum, Lonnie Moore, Ari Ne'eman, Joe Pak, Carol Reynolds, Dr. Fernando Torres-Gill, Linda Wetters, and there are two vacancies.

Congratulations, Chester, for this outstanding achievement!

SABE is now accepting nominations for the 2010 Roland Johnson Award!

Roland Johnson was an outspoken person and leader in our national self-advocacy movement. SABE gives the Roland Johnson Award to honor a self-advocate for his or her hard work in the self-advocacy movement.

Visit the website (<http://sabeusa.org>) to download the form or to submit the form online!





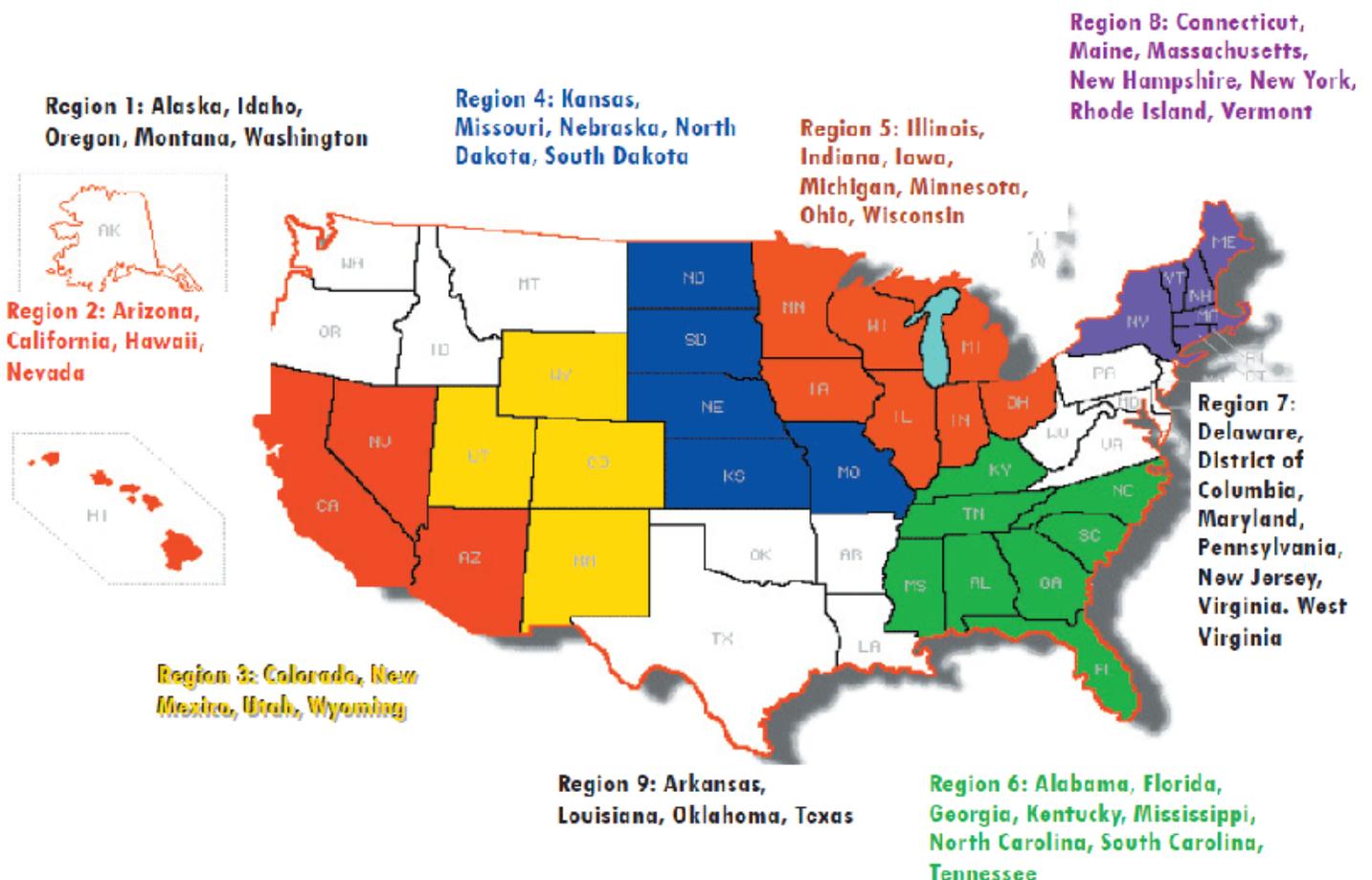
what you need to know about....

SABE ELECTIONS!

A regional representative is elected as a member of the Self Advocates Becoming Empowered Board of Directors. Regional representatives will be nominated during regional meetings at the conference in September for states whose representatives' terms are expiring. Executive officers are voted in at each national conference.

If you think you or someone in your region want to run for a SABE position, you must bring a letter of reference to the regional meeting when the election is held. This letter may be typed or written by hand and include only one sentence saying you have been an active member of a local or statewide self-advocacy organization for at least two (2) years and you will continue that participation. The letter must be signed by an officer or advisor of your local or state self-advocacy group.

This is a very important and responsible position. A lot is expected of each representative. SABE's by-laws describe the duties of a regional representative. Therefore, if you or anyone you know is thinking about running for the office of regional representative, he or she should know what the SABE by-laws require. To view the positions that will be open or the SABE by-laws relating to regional representative nominations and qualifications can be found on the conference website -- <http://sabekc2010.org>!



SABE KC 2010

Jazz It Up: Feeling the Music of Self Advocacy



Registration for the conference is now open! The registration fee for self advocates, family members of self advocates, and professionals is \$375. Registration for PCAs is \$375. Don't hesitate-- register today and make your reservations directly with the hotel! Any information you need about registration, lodging, and transportation as well as conference activities and the SABE KC 2010 brochure can be found on the conference website <http://sabekc2010.org>

SABE KC 2010 will have over 75 breakout sessions for you to learn about what speaks to you, including breakouts on self advocacy, sexuality, and employment. In addition, the SABE KC 2010 Self Determination Showcase will allow you to visit with pioneers in the self advocacy field from across the country about the innovative projects they have created to highlight self determination in the lives of people with developmental disabilities!

The opening ceremony this year will consist of a huge celebration of the self advocacy movement and the ADA. We will highlight personal stories and testimonies of the leaders of the movement. Sharon Lewis, the new ADD Commissioner, and Jim Gardner, the president and CEO of the Council on Quality & Leadership have been confirmed as keynote speakers for the Friday morning general session. The SABE board will present a skit about how they envision Self Determination in 2020 and host a World Cafe activity where you will have a chance to help SABE to build an agenda for the next ten years of the movement! Sunday morning, the conference will send you off with a call to arms from the youth of our movement!

Don't miss these other exciting features of the conference!

SABE KC 2010 No Talent Show

Do you have a special talent that you would like to share with self advocates from all over the country? Be part of our celebration of ability and accomplishment and sign up below for the chance to shine at the SABE 2010 National Self Advocacy Conference today!



Sign up at

www.surveymonkey.com/s/sabenotalent

Introducing the SABE KC 2010 Flag Contest



This year, in addition to each official flag, each state is encouraged to create a state flag illustrating part of the conference theme: "Feeling the Music of Self Advocacy". Attendees will vote on the flags, which will be displayed the first two days of the conference and the top winner will be announced on the third day!

More info at <http://sabekc2010.org>!

**SELF
ADVOCATES
BECOMING
EMPOWERED**

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Visit us online
www.sabeusa.org

The Loss of a Great Leader



*In honor of Craig Smith,
Self-Advocate Leader from Mass Advocates Standing Strong*

Craig Smith passed away quietly Thursday May 27, 2010, surrounded by loved ones, at the Dana Farber Brigham and Women's Cancer Center in Boston, after a long struggle with cancer.

I've know Craig for a long time, way before SABE. I've known him from the days when we were on a self-advocacy committee for AAIDD. Well now they are called American Association for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. But back in those days they used the MR word. Craig and I tried to get them to change the name back in those days and get more self-advocates on their board. But back then they would not put people on the board they had that self-advocacy committee instead.

Craig and I used to talk about sports and things besides self-advocacy. He was a friend. But he loved his Boston team and that was fine with me as long they were beating the Yankees.

I remember one time I came to a MASS conference and Craig, Liz, and Ann met me at the station and helped me get to the hotel. They were very supportive.

Craig was a great leader. He wanted to make sure that the voice of self-advocates was heard on a national level as well as in the states. Craig was not afraid to speak up to authority and question what was going on. I don't think Mass Advocates Standing Strong would be where they are today without Craig's leadership. Craig was always telling a joke and lifting people's spirits. We are going to miss him and his leadership.

On behalf of SABE we want all self-advocates and their families to know we are sorry for your loss.

Chester Finn, President of Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered

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