

# MASS NEWS

Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong

Fall 2009



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

John Anton

THANK YOU TO COMMISSIONER ELIN HOWE AND ALL OF OUR FELLOW SELF-ADVOCATES AND SUPPORTERS FOR YOUR MANY HOURS OF PHONE CALLS, LETTERS, AND VISITS TO THE STATE HOUSE. YOU HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE 9C CUTS TO SERVICES!!

Even though we have not had cuts which were as severe as we thought, this can change from day to day. Agencies still face many hours of trying to figure out how they can still serve the people who need services in the most creative way. Legislators and senators need the voices of self-advocates to be strong and unified along with other agencies about what is needed and how it will affect all of us and our families.

Join us by becoming more involved as a self-advocate and learn about self-determination and person-centered planning. This can enable you to have the money follow you from one program or residence to another. Your local self-advocacy group or area office can also assist you in learning more about what's available to meet your goals and dreams.

By becoming a paid member of M.A.S.S. and inviting your friends as new members to the local and regional group meetings, we will have a stronger voice in what will happen to services in the future. Let's start today!!!!!!

Please contact your Board Members or call Ed or Lesley at 617-624-7549 for more information.



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# Dear Abby,

(1) At the end of our local meeting, our advisor always reminds when the next meeting is. Last time, I asked him to call my house manager and tell her the date so she could get me a ride. He said no, it was my responsibility. Why do I always have to be responsible for my own life?

*Confused and Concerned*

*Dear C&C,  
You should do it for yourself if you really want something,  
because if you don't do it, no one is going to do it for you.  
You want to be independent for yourself.  
You want to learn how to do things for yourself.*

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(2) I do a lot for MASS. I am an officer on my local group and on my regional group. Also, I help people at my agency with their problems. I think MASS should pay me, don't you? Maybe even just \$20?

*Busy and Broke*

*Dear B&B,  
We're fighting to help ourselves so we shouldn't get paid for it.  
We agree it would be nice to get money. There are many,  
many self-advocates in MASS. MASS can't afford to pay  
them all to fight for their rights.*

\* Note: Dear Abbee letters are answered by the newsletter committee of MASS Karen Kitner, John Mims, and Joe O'Connell. Write us if you have a problem about self-advocacy, or if you have something to say about someone else's letter.



# MAKE A DDS DIFFERENCE BY APPLYING TO YOUR CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD (CAB)

I am writing you because you are a self advocate who speaks up on issues important to your life and the lives of others. Congratulations on your part in Changing the Name of the Department of Mental Retardation to The Department of Developmental Services(DDS). You made this change happen by educating your communities and legislators about why labels hurt and limit us all. So congratulations, and keep up the good work in making our communities places that see people first and respect the values of choice. Because of your leadership, I am asking you to consider becoming more involved in improving the quality and delivery of services by applying to your local Citizen Advisory Board(CAB).

Citizen Advisory Boards do important work: legislative advocacy, quality assurance, and community education. Commissioner Elin Howe has told us that she wants to hear more voices of self advocates on the CABS since you are the experts on your lives and the services of DDS. Your participation is needed for this work. CABS typically meet once a month at the Area DDS Office near you. If you are interested in making a positive difference, please apply to be on a CAB. Address your application to your area director who will review and pass along to Ralph Edwards in the Office of Citizen Leadership. He will review and process your application and forward to Commissioner Howe. She must appoint all new members. Please explain on your application what type of support you need to be part of the board(if you need support). If you would like more information or assistance in applying, contact the MASS Office at 1-866-lamable(426-2253). You can also download the application from the DDS website at: <http://www.ma.gov/dds> and follow the link to "The Role of Volunteers and Citizen Advisory Boards."

Thank you for making this world a better place for all of us by making your voice count.

## *About Me*

### **JEANNE FITZGERALD, CONCORD**

I applied for the Gopen Fellowship. I want to write a book about people living in the nursing home too many years when they're too young. They shouldn't be there, they should be with their families. If they don't have a family, they can get Community Living. I wrote a resume. I never did that before. I like helping people. I go to MASS meetings once a month.

# MASSACHUSETTS STATE BUDGET NEWS



The state budget 9C cuts for this fiscal year (FY10) were a lot less than expected thanks to so many of you making calls, participating at the vigil at the State House and writing letters. Our thanks to ARCMASS and MFOFC for leading the charge...

However, there are still cuts that will be affecting many which are added to earlier cuts this year. They include:

A \$7.7 million reduction at the Department of Developmental Services

Administration and Operations: \$1,388,429

Community Programs (**transportation**): \$1,500,000

Community and State Operated Residential Services (community residential): \$4,870,369

Also, family support and the turning 22 programs are at very minimal amounts due to earlier cuts as well as transportation.

## **What can you do?**

*Continue to call the Governor at 1-617-725-4005. Call, write and visit your state representative and senator. Work with your local self-advocacy group, agency and people in your community to continue to let them know how this is affecting you and others...*

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## **SABE MEETING IN SUNAPEE NH**

### **SABE NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN SEPT 2010**

The regional Self Advocates Becoming Empowered Meeting was held in Sunapee NH on October 8 and 9th. This meeting is also known as NEAT (Northeast Advocates Together) It includes self-advocates from all the New England states and New York and meets at least once a year to share projects, concerns and what we are working on for issues.

John Anton, MaryEllen Grelle, Anne Fracht, Craig Smith and Ed Bielecki attended. We presented a state report and Charles Pina and Joan Low made an hour long presentation on the Awareness and Action Project: Educating persons with disabilities to recognize, report and respond to abuse.

There were many presentations including New Hampshire speaking about their national project to close all institutions in the United States. (Check it out at [www.peoplefirstofnh.org](http://www.peoplefirstofnh.org)). Chester Finn, SABE Chair spoke about the fight to renew the DD Act in the US Congress and that the *SABE national conference will be in Kansas City, Missouri in September 2010.*

Our next meeting will be in May 2010.

## DISABLED PERSONS PROTECTION COMMISSION (DPPC) AND MASS PRESENT IN DENVER COLORADO



Anne Fracht, Ed Bielecki, Colleen Ryan (DDS), Nancy Alterio and others went to Denver in early October to attend a national conference on Abuse of Persons with Disabilities. The conference was funded by the Office of Victims of Crime of the US Attorney General's Office.

Anne (and Ed) presented on the importance of including self-advocates in projects, boards committees and how to do so. It also included a section on using People First Language. It was well received.

Anne, Ed, Colleen and others presented on the **Awareness and Action Project: Educating person to Recognize, Report and Respond to abuse.** It also included information on the Learning Tool using cards to discuss and learn about types of abuse and what to do.

Nancy Alterio and Betsy Scheibel (DA in NW MA) presented on the Building Partnerships Initiative (BPI) which is made up of various agencies in MA to communicate and act effectively around abuse and abuse issues for people in MA. Some of their activities include training police, district attorneys and providers about abuse and person with developmental and other disabilities, legislative advocacy and social justice issues. Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong is a member of the Steering Committee.

It was a tough conference to attend, but good to see so many people working on stopping and preventing abuse in so many states. We look forward to another conference in the future.

## *Poetry By Julie Morris*

People with autism  
may be weird  
But they are unique.  
They have very special minds  
And like to live in their thoughts.  
They might not fit in this world  
And may have weird behaviors.

Intellectually or Spiritually  
They are deeper than most  
people think.  
It is hard to put in words of what  
people think.  
Each thought has a reason and a  
place.

# HUMAN RIGHTS FORUMS

## METRO HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

by Joe O'Connell and John Mims

Elin Howe was good. We had pastries. Judy Rogers and Karen Carpenter were on the panel.

We talked about how we should respect people. Like give them their space, then ask how their day went at work. Self-advocates and staff. We have to respect other people's rights – give them their space.

## SOUTHEAST HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

by Nicole Cummings

I brought up the point about how People with disabilities (PWD) aren't given the respect that they should have. Everybody agreed with me and how PWD can't get married without losing some of their SSI benefits.

Other people brought up some problems with guardianship, when there are problems of power and control issues. We also talked about physical access and how the lack of sidewalks make trouble for people who live near the highway. There was someone at the meeting who said they could help us with that.

## NORTHEAST HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

By Craig Powers

The Northeast Region Human Rights forum was attended by self advocates, staff and families from around the region. I talked about how the Name Change inspired us. Joe Canto and myself both talked about our personal history and our human rights. I also mentioned that we are lucky to have Elin Howe at the head of DDS because she really is interested in individuals. She looks you in the eye -- no head bobbling-- when you are talking with her so you know she is interested in you in particular. Elin Howe then ran a town meeting to hear everyone's concerns. One of the issues people were very concerned about were jobs. MASS had a table at the event to let people know who we are.

## HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM – WEST REGION

by Karen Kitner

Some people wanted to talk in private about their feelings and their rights. Some people talked about transportation. The meeting space for the forum was not wheelchair accessible.





# **MASSACHUSETTS ADVOCATES STANDING STRONG**

*Our Mission is to empower self-advocates through education so we make choices that improve and enrich our lives.*

## *What we believe:*

- Everyone has the same rights.  
Rights and responsibilities go together.
- Everyone should be treated equally.
- People should have the same opportunities to make their own decisions and choices.
- People should have the support they need.
- Everyone is important.
- We speak out for ourselves and each other.
- We stand by each other and make things better in our lives.



Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

