

# THE SAAL CONNECTION

formerly *People First Connection*



## The Voice of Self-Advocacy in Oregon

Published by Self Advocates As Leaders

Fall 2009 #59

Welcome, Judy Cunio, the new editor of The SAAL Connection! Our magazine has a new name and a fresh new style which includes not only people's stories, but also community information previously published in the SAAL newsletter. Expect to receive The SAAL Connection three times each year and tell your family and friends to sign up for a free subscription.

Happy Holidays, Jerry Pattee

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### **My Now and My Future**

By Jill Nortell, Milwaukie

I like my job because I like the employees I work with. They are friendly and nice. They tell me they are happy for my help. I keep floors and tables clean, do dishes. I sweep and do the trash run, I restock the condiment table (sugars, napkins, straws, coffee stirring sticks). I check the bathrooms to make sure they are stocked. I hate checking the men's room; I always knock first because I don't want to open the door on someone.

My job at Starbucks has great benefits, including sampling coffee, pastries and breakfast sandwiches. Once a week I buy myself a cinnamon roll.

I work every Friday. I'd love to do more, it's really not enough.

There are some regular customers who know who I am. We say, "Good Morning" to each other. I don't know how they would describe me, but I think they appreciate the work I do.

I also volunteer at the Lake Oswego Public Library. I do odds and ends, doing library work they need done. I remove bar codes on DVDs, I shred paper, I sharpen those small library pencils, and I stock the scratch paper. Everyone there is really friendly, librarians and volunteers. It's a nice library.

Sometimes I think about moving into a new apartment building one day. I don't think it will happen any time soon. I'm in a one-year lease, but I like to think about it. I wonder about having a roommate some day, but I would have to trust them. I'm not sure how my Mom would feel about this. I don't think she'd like it. A roommate could cause troubles. These are things I'm thinking about for my future.

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## From the Editor

Judy Cunio

*I would like to dedicate the following article to Scott Lay for all of the many years of hard work that he did to make the Employed Person with Disabilities program such a success here in Oregon. Scott passed away on July 31, 2009. He will be missed by all.*

**I want to work but don't want to lose my benefits.** How many of you have ever felt that way or even said it out loud to someone, "I would love to work but if I do I will lose all my benefits?" Or I might even lose the services that I really need.

I remember feeling that way for many years. It is pretty bad when you can't afford to work! For the most part, the more money that you make, the less you get to keep. That does not seem fair at all.

About 10 years ago, I heard about the (EPD) Employed Person with Disabilities Program.

The EPD Program is a Medicaid program that allows people with disabilities to work and buy-in to the Medicaid program. It is kind of like paying for health insurance. Even if you get insurance through work, Medicaid will cover what work insurance or even private insurance won't.

The purpose of the EPD Program is to help people with disabilities to go to work and feel like they are productive and are giving back to their community. Plus, maybe have a little bit of money to show for it.

There are some requirements and rules to be in the EPD program. In order to be eligible for the EPD program, you must be determined to have a disability by the standards set by the Social Security.

The disability can be physical, cognitive mental, developmental, or legally blind. You have to be able to work and make enough money that can be taxed.

To be on the EPD program, you cannot have over \$5,000 in a savings account or in assets - that is a Medicaid rule. However, there is a way around it by creating a separate savings account for things you need to be independent. For most people with disabilities, it costs more for them to live independently than it does for people without disabilities because they often need to buy things that will help them become more independent.

For example, something that people think of as a luxury might be necessary for a person with a disability, (Like an electric toothbrush). But for someone who has limited use of their hands, an electric toothbrush gives them more independence. That may sound pretty simple to most people but when it comes to having a job, grooming is very important. So if you need something like that, you can buy it using dollars from your special account. You can do that with anything that would help you become more independent at work and home.

Not only does the EPD Program help you to be able to support yourself, but because you become a tax payer, you will also help support the State of Oregon.

## Life is Puzzling

By Mary DeBock, Mt. Angel

I work at Mt. Angel Training Center. I enjoy the work I do here. We make baby kits for new babies. We help them get

a good start in life. During our break times I really enjoy doing word puzzles. I love doing “framework” puzzles. I fill in the letters or numbers in the right blocks. Sometimes I have to peek at the answers in back of the book. And that’s OK! I also like to do “find a word” puzzles. I am the only person in Mt. Angel who does puzzles. I have 16 different puzzle books. I never get bored doing puzzles.



## Helping Out

By Sherri A. Osburn, Portland

I went to see my kids and grandkids and a good friend of mine for three days in March. My birthday was March 24<sup>th</sup>.

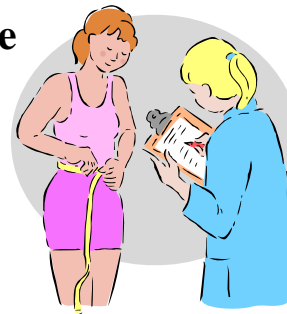
I helped my son and his family move. They are getting a house because their apartment is too small for five kids. They need a lot of bedrooms.

I was Advocate of the Quarter for Self-Advocates As Leaders. They nominated me because I volunteer a lot and help the staff. I like helping a lot. My friend, Mike, lives down in California and he works at a disability office. Even when I travel, I will help Mike. I will give him brochures and papers from Self-Advocates As Leaders.

I help peers and my landlord clean every week. I help out with things like feeding the kitty, cleaning windows and floors, vacuuming, dusting, doing dishes. I help my friends clean, too. I’m good at it. People say, “Good job, Sherri!”

## Women's Health Care

By Kristi Tester,  
Baker City



I am concerned about women's health and the care they need. I feel that we should have more women doctors take care of our certain health issues. They have a much better understanding and are more dedicated to "those" needs. They are much more gentle, and do a good job without hurting a patient.

Health care is the number one priority for EVERYONE. We need to keep our health insurance whether we work or not. It helps us get the care we need whether it is surgery or another medical procedure. Our lives could depend on it.



Starting in 2010, Oregon Office on Disability and Health (OODH) and its partners, are hoping to offer free, fun and educational Breast Health events for women with developmental disabilities. If you are interested in learning more about the event and possibly bringing it to your community, please contact Angela Weaver at 503-494-1205 or [weaverro@ohsu.edu](mailto:weaverro@ohsu.edu)

## **My Cat Snickers**

By Andy Owens, Portland

My family brought home Snickers when I was 15 years old. He was only a few months old and black and



white and cute as could be. He was very playful as a kitten and liked to take rides on my lap. He learned his name quickly, and would come whenever someone called his name. After he had been in our family for a while, he would sit in the driveway, waiting for my dad to come home every night.

When I brought home my birds, Snickers was very curious about them. He would sit on my lap and stare at the birdcage. He never tried to attack my birds though. He was a very well behaved cat.

Last year, our family noticed that Snickers was starting to walk slower, and was having trouble getting up after sleeping. He would sleep a lot more and would not go outside as much as he used to. Eventually he started refusing to eat. That is when we decided to take him to the veterinarian's office. The doctor did some tests, and we learned that Snickers had cancer. The doctor gave Snickers some medicine, but it did not help. Snickers went to heaven a few weeks after that.

Snickers was a very important part of our family and we loved him very much. After he died we buried him in our backyard and put a rock with his name over it. That way whenever I miss him, I can go outside and say hello.

## **Health Insurance:**

### **Ups and Downs**

By Charlie Hammett, Pendleton

My name is Charlie Hammett and I live in Pendleton, Oregon at an adult foster home with two other guys, Lance and Junior. My caregiver's name is Shelly and her husband's name is Franklin. I am very, very happy here. Shelly is an angel. Her foster home name is "Angel of Love." She helps me take care of my money and many other things. Not too long ago, I went to California and Franklin took me to the airport in Portland and then came to pick me up. We do things together. In July we are going to the coast. Shelly helps me when I ask. Because of my health problems, it is very hard for me to do things for myself. She helps me with my pills. I have a mental disability, so it is hard to know what pills I take.

I don't think that some people with disabilities are as lucky as I am with the health insurance I have. I had to go to the hospital a few times last year and I don't have to worry about it. I like my health insurance, but there are a few things that bother me. Sometimes my doctor changes because of the insurance I have. I found a doctor that I liked but he decided not to take my insurance anymore. I have not been able to go to the doctor for the past couple of months because there are no doctors in Pendleton who are on the list for my insurance plan. I did find a doctor in Hermiston, which is about 30 to 45 minutes away.

## **Abusive Caregivers**

By Kristin Nichols, Lincoln City

The word caregiver is a very powerful word. A caregiver is a person who is a helper and should understand the meaning of the job. A caregiver takes care of the person who has a disability, takes the person to places like appointments, helps him or her get medications, helps the person go shopping for food, and helps make the person's home safe. A caregiver is a friend to talk to sometimes. A caregiver is not someone who is abusive to the person who has a disability.

Research by the Oregonian newspaper found that between the years 2000 and 2006, more than 2000 people were abused by caregivers. We need caregivers we can trust—not dishonest or abusive ones. We need help knowing who not to trust. Parents and directors of group homes need to know who not to trust. Abusive caregivers must be kept away from people with disabilities.

I have Down Syndrome. There are many others like me who have different kinds of disabilities. Some of us will need caregivers to help us have safe, healthy, and happy lives. There are over 4,000 people who live in foster homes and group homes in Oregon.

I have read really horrible information about people with disabilities who have been abused and neglected by caregivers. We want to know who these bad caregivers are. We don't want to depend on caregivers who have histories of bad behavior.

People like me deserve a healthy, happy, and safe life just like everyone else.

## **Taking Pride in Your Work**

By Shana Stubbs, Beaverton

I work for Maryville Nursing Home. This October I take great pride in saying that I have been there for 17 years. I work in the laundry room folding laundry, bringing laundry downstairs to be washed, and taking the clean laundry upstairs to be distributed among the residents. Every Sunday through Wednesday I walk to work. Sometimes it's sunny, raining, and sometimes it's snowing. They have given me two awards for doing a good job. I really like my job.

## **The Artist**

By Jeanne Petshow,  
Mt. Angel



My name is Jeanne and I work at Mt. Angel Training Center. One thing that I do besides work is art. We have a very good art teacher named Olga, she is tiny and talks very softly. She teaches us about colors and shapes and paint and clay. She helps me be a better artist. We get to do art about two times a week and I wish we could do more. My favorite art projects are collages. We cut out small pictures from magazines and glue them together to make one big picture. The other thing I like to do is embroidering. That's where we sew yarn on special material and make nice things. Art is beautiful and it makes me feel good to do art. Everyone should get to do art and my favorite color is pink.

## **The Melero Life Change**

By Susan Melero, Corvallis

I've been seeing a young man from Corvallis, Oregon named Jon. He has been living in Corvallis 46 years, since 1962. I'm involved with Integrated Services Network (ISN) Local Council, People First and SAAL committee. I graduated from Partners in Policymaking on October 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 in Salem, Oregon with a speech in my hand. My family came to see me graduate up there including my close friends and my wonderful and caring boyfriend too.

Jon and I have been dating since August 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2008 we had our first date at Dutch Brothers coffee shop in Corvallis Oregon. We have lunch and dinner out and we also walk all over town as well. I got him lost from my place where I lived 2 times and I tested him the second time but now he knows the way to my house and he showed me where he lives as well. So I know where to see him and pick him up there as well.

Sometimes we walked to my work place and meet my co-workers and boss and supervisors at Taylor Street Ovens. I introduced my neighbors to him and my father and my stepsister Maddie. I also met Jon's family over the phone, his stepmother and Miss Tripp, his real mother.

I showed John where I work, my volunteering job at Saint Mary's Catholic Church. He can meet my other close friends as well when they come back for college. OSU starts at September 22<sup>nd</sup>. I will take Jon to my OSU Beavers games for fun. I will go to his church at Calvary Chapel as well for fun and see his friends there and also he will come to my bowling practices from Special

Olympics, and with my church at Saint Mary's here in Corvallis on Saturday nights.

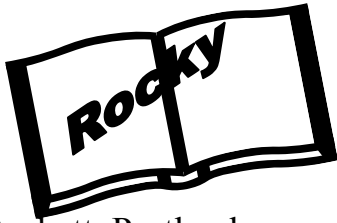
I will be taking a class called RCIA though Saint Mary Catholic Church, starting in October of 2008. I want to receive my first communion at Easter mass this year and I will be looking forward to doing that. My family is raised Catholic; my father Larry and my grandparents were Catholic and my mother Verlene went to school there when she was a young girl; she also got married there.

I went to my first wedding when they got married in Bend, Oregon May 8<sup>th</sup>. The time was 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon and I was the scripture reader in the wedding. Also my nephew Phillip was baptized in a Catholic church in Portland, Oregon.

We will be working on our relationship one step at a time with our dating and The Arc of Benton dances together. I received an award of Benton County First Citizen on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2008. Jon nominated me as First Citizen and I have letters to prove it.



## My Story



By Rita R. Beckett, Portland

I live here in Portland, Oregon all my life. I have three older sisters and one young brother. Me and my brother are very together. We are very close, we help each other out. We are good friends. We don't get along with our sisters at all, that means the older sister.

I'm on Four Boards and I play Basketball and Bocce and Volleyball, too. And with Special Olympics, there are many teams I'm on with Special Olympics and it relaxes everybody.

And I make homemade soap and I go sell them. I like Sunday; it's Rita time I am on four boards. They are Oregon Mentor Brokerage and Independence Northwest Brokerage and Ridewise and I am on the DD Employment Task Force with Dan Peccia and Bill Lynch, too. In 2003, I was the chairperson for Oregon Mentor Brokerage; I am the President for the Independence Northwest Brokerage. I don't know how I'm doing it. I am a person with disabilities, I live by myself I am very glad of it. I will find out more about The Arc and events, too. I am having fun with my brother today.

## Relationships of the Washington County Self-Advocates

By Bill Gilbert, Forest Grove

I am the facilitator of the Washington County Self-Advocates, which is a group of people who either have disabilities or are

friends and family members of someone with some kind of disability.

Now we have all kinds of relationships that have formed from the many years of the Washington County Self-Advocates Groups. One of our members, Shana, has been a member for six years now. Shana has a parakeet, his name is Sunshine and his feathers are green and yellow. Now Shana met a wonderful person about 2 1/2 years ago. Her name is Trisha, she is Shana's skills trainer and Trisha also hangs out and really gets to know Shana on a friendly level. They hang out and do activities such as baking and Shana's all-time favorite thing to do with Trisha is going fishing.

The Washington County Self-Advocates meet on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 3700 SW Murray Boulevard in our new room, room 195. We meet from 2:30 to 4:30 pm. New members are welcome!

## About Pam

By Pam White,  
McMinnville

My name is Pam White and I am 50 years old. I like making hand crocheted

blankets for kids & adults. I make them six sided. I live in an apartment in McMinnville, Oregon. I like waterfalls because they make me feel relaxed and comfortable. I have two kids whom I love with all my heart.



## Who I Am

By Ashley Lee, McMinnville

I am a unique individual.

I own and embrace who I have become my whole life. I have fought and conquered many different challenges, some physical and some emotional, but all equally hard.

Learning to never give up is what leads me to success.

I've had my critics telling me you can't -- it's too hard.

Well, I am proud to say I have proven them wrong, but never short of cheerleaders cheering me to Victory.

At times pondering "Why me" but always concluding that I am so blessed to be the unique individual that I am.



## Country Music Band

By Robert Lee, McMinnville

I like singing. I have friends, and I have a bunch of family. I like to build houses, like log cabins. I might start my own band. It would be a country music band. I would be the lead singer of the band.

We'd have a manager and go on tour. We would travel across the whole United States. I would want a tour bus. It would be big and my friends and some family would ride on the tour bus with me. We would eat and sleep on the tour bus.

We would have instruments like drums, keyboard and guitars.

We'd all wear western shirts, cowboy hats and jeans, and boots.

Each person would have a different colored shirt. My shirt would be red white and blue. I would wear black and white boots.



We would hire our own bus driver. We would sell our CDs at the concerts. They would cost \$25 each. I want to be famous. I would put my name on the CDs so people would know who I am. People would say, "Bobby Lee is like Garth Brooks!"

I would have two girls in my band. They would be my background singers. I would get some guys for my band, too. They would play the instruments.

We would perform at the state fair and the county fair. We would surprise people by going caroling. I want everyone to come see me with my band someday.

## Life Stories Workshop

For information

Contact Marcie at SAAL

1-866-835-0659

or

503-725-8129

alvarezm@pdx.edu

## Transportation

By Mark Knecht, Salem



My name is Mark Knecht. I am an advocate. As many of you know, our Transit System in Salem is a real mess.

I have managed to save the transportation service to the Marion County jail with the help of the Administrative Law Judge, the Honorable Judge Joseph V. Ochoa. We are working on something for the 2011 Legislative session. I hope to get more training for Law Enforcement Officers on how to deal with people with mental illness and people with disabilities when they get in trouble with the law. I feel that there is room for improvement in this area. Margaret Carter is working on getting a Civil Rights decision within the Oregon Attorney General's office. I was able to write her a letter of support. I am an advocate for prison fellowship.

## Oregon School for the Blind

By Cathy Davis, Lebanon

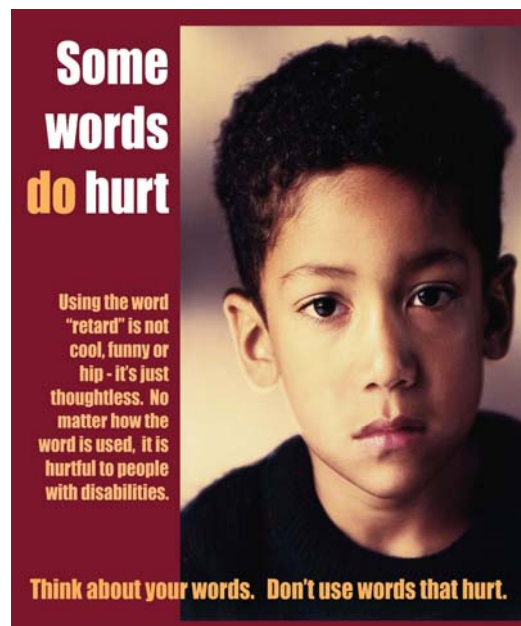
I'm sorry to hear that they closed the Oregon School for the Blind. They taught me many things that have helped me to navigate in the world as a blind person.

They taught me how to cross the street safely. Since I can't see the do not walk sign, they taught me a different way.

They taught me how to use public transportation such as Yellow cab, Wheels, and the Cherriots system. They taught me job experience such as Humane Society thrift shop, Food Share, and put me through a food handler's class, as well as babysitting class. They taught me how to use talking books and how to read Braille.

The staff there was wonderful. Even the janitor taught us (hand over hand) how to build a remote controlled boat. I sure do miss all the staff there.

I really hope that they reopen the school because they really do help us blind kids to get around safe.



### "Some Words Do Hurt"

Now available as a postcard!  
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Disabilities

503-945-9941 or 1-800-292-4154

[ocdd@ocdd.org](mailto:ocdd@ocdd.org)

# Self Advocates As Leaders News

## ADVOCATES OF THE QUARTER



### Jerry Pattee

Jerry is the Chair of SAAL's Editorial Board, a member of SAAL's

Board of Directors, and Chair of SAAL's Non-Profit subcommittee. He is also Chair of the Community Partnerships Council through OHSU, and current Secretary for United Cerebral Palsy of Oregon and SW Washington. Jerry has been involved with SAAL since 2004. He has been serving in various positions, including Past President, with UCP for nearly 25 years. Jerry volunteers most of his time to helping make the lives of people with developmental disabilities better. Thank you, Jerry, for your guidance, expertise, commitment and leadership!



### Sally Kramer

Sally is the Treasurer of People First of Multnomah County, and a member of SAAL's Editorial Board.

Sally has been advocating for people with developmental disabilities for many years, and she always brings a smile to the work she does. Sally was nominated for Advocate of the Quarter because she is devoted to improving people's lives and is dedicated and invested in making things better for people, especially in her local community. Thank you, Sally, for your hard work and dedication!

### **Keep up the awesome advocacy**



### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**SAAL office will be closed  
Dec. 21, 2009 through Jan. 4, 2010**

**Juntos Podemos is seeking a  
Self Advocate to serve on their  
Advisory Committee.  
Contract Luz Rivera at  
503-566-7727**



### **Contact Us!**

Self Advocates As Leaders  
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Salem, Oregon 97301

### **NEW PHONE NUMBERS**

503-589-0659  
1-866-835-0659

**WEBSITE**  
[www.asksaal.org](http://www.asksaal.org)

# **National Disability Employment Awareness Month, 2009**

## **A Proclamation**

By **BARACK OBAMA**, President of the United States of America

Fair access to employment is a fundamental right of every American, including the 54 million people in this country living with disabilities. A job can provide financial stability, help maximize our potential, and allow us to achieve our dreams. As Americans, we possess a range of vocational opportunities to make the most of our talents and succeed in a chosen career; those with disabilities are entitled to the same opportunities. During National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we recommit ourselves to implementing effective policies and practices that increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

In the past half-century, we have made great strides toward providing equal employment opportunities in America, but much work remains to be done. As part of that continuing effort, we must seek to provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Only then can Americans with disabilities achieve full participation in the workforce and reach the height of their ambition.

My Administration is committed to promoting positive change for every American, including those with disabilities. The Federal Government and its contractors can lead the way by implementing effective employment policies and practices that increase opportunities and help workers achieve their full potential. Across this country, millions of people with disabilities are working or want to work. We must ensure they have access to the support and services they need to succeed.

Recognizing the need for equal employment opportunities, we must also strengthen and expand the educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act substantially increased funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and provided more than \$500 million for vocational rehabilitation services, including job training, education, and placement. If we are to build a world free from unnecessary barriers, stereotypes, and discrimination, we must ensure that every American receives an education that prepares him or her for future success.

Each day, Americans with disabilities play a critical role in forging and shaping the identity of our Nation. Their contributions touch us all through personal experience or through that of a family member, neighbor, friend, or colleague. We grow stronger as a Nation when Americans feel the dignity conferred by having the ability to support themselves and their families through productive work. This month, we rededicate ourselves to fostering an inclusive work culture that welcomes the skills and talents of all qualified employees.

The SAAL Connection  
540 24<sup>th</sup> Place NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Self-Advocates As Leaders is funded in part by the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities

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