

# The People First Connection

The Voice of Self-Advocacy in Oregon

Published by Self Advocates As Leaders



## Relationships

We are going to your hearts for this issue. You will read stories of friendship, family, animals, and romantic love. You will read about those who really make a difference in the lives of people who experience disabilities. We all see the world in a different way. Enjoy learning from the lives of these authors who shared their stories. And you never know, you may learn something about yourself!

**We want to  
hear from you!  
Send us a story!**

Voices in Oregon are  
getting stronger.  
Be a part of it.

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## Overcoming Hard Times

**By John Koenig, Cascade Locks**

Hello, my name is John. My hope is by telling you this story that you will be able to overcome some difficulties in your life. I was born on March 19, 1986. I was taken away when I was 3-1/2 and my younger sister was 2-1/2. My older sister was trying to take care of us. My

younger sister and I got adopted when I was four and she was three.

My older sister and the two of us got separated when we got adopted. My younger sister and I lived in Pullman, Washington, until we were around seven and six. Then we moved down to

Burns, Oregon. My adopted dad, Steven Koenig, got a job at the high school there in Burns as a special education teacher.

We lived in the country. I started acting out. Soon after, a social worker named Scott Smith from the State of Oregon came to our house repeatedly. Finally, they took me to a group home in John Day called Wind Song Heights. I lived there on and off until I was over 12 years old. From there, I went into a lot of foster homes. I have not lived with the Koenigs again. Between the ages of 14-15 years, is when I went into the state hospital. This was due to my physical aggression against the providers. I am diagnosed with intermittent explosive disorder. This means I have trouble controlling my anger and it bursts out of control sometimes. I was in the state hospital for three years. I went to Eastern Oregon Adolescent Multi-Treatment Center for two years once before the state hospital. After that, I lived with two more foster providers. I was sent back to Eastern Oregon Adolescent Multi-Treatment Center.

I was finally sent to Cascade Locks, Oregon, to Tom Johnson's adult foster home where I have currently been for five years now. I have not made it more than a year anywhere else. When I get mad, I listen to music, write stories, do word finds, relax, and draw. I sometimes laugh at inappropriate times, but will apologize later. I work full time in a sheltered workshop at the warehouse making K-pumps, resource revival which is bottle openers, and key

chains from recycled bike chains. K-pumps are one of a kind boat pumps that only we make that are sold all over the world. I am a true asset to my work. I have been all over the state of Oregon in tons of foster homes. I received a modified diploma at Tom Johnson's adult foster home from Cascade Locks High School. I don't get to see either of my sisters, no contact at all. I could if the Koenigs would let me see my younger sister, but they want no contact with me. In 2003, the Koenigs sent me a letter saying I was no longer a part of their family.

I was hurt. I regret doing any harm to anybody.



## **Pain of Justice**

**By Anonymous, The Dalles**

I see pain in a parent's eye when foster parents try to hold her child because the state and government have said, "Hands off." And the child does not understand. "Why I can't be with my parent who loves me?" Wake up state people and government! You are hurting the child and also the parent. Every time when they see each other you see pain in their eyes.

Where is the justice?

## Family

By Kim Colfax, Talent

I have a lot of family and that means a lot to me. They live in Cambodia, Roseburg, Ashland, and Medford. My brother Gary has been a missionary in Cambodia for 11 years, so my nephews live there.

My nephew Brian is 19 years old and does drywall while he is going to school. He is in California. I'd like to visit.

My brother Gary and his wife Christina are the proud parents of three sons, Brian, Chris, and Douglass.

My dad was talking about going to Brookings on Thursday and staying for two days. We would get to the beach front. My brother and his family went to that motel in Brookings and fed seagulls.

My mom and my dad are my best parents. They helped me to deliver flyers; I earned money delivering them to homes. My mom works Monday through Thursday, with Fridays off. My dad makes stuffed peppers out of elk burger.

I used to go bowling every Friday. My Aunt Pati and Uncle Gary went on a cruise and then came to visit us.

I went to Ashland High School. I was one of the Grizzlies who graduated in 1990. My brother Gary and I went to the Talent Friends Church when we were kids. He was a great teacher and group leader- he did a great job. I still go to Bible studies at friends' houses.

### Life Stories Workshops

Contact SAAL to talk about hosting a Life Stories Workshop in your area.

We can support people in your group to get their stories on paper. Then your stories can be published in the People First Connection!

## Grandfather

By Meredith Mitchell,  
Cascade Locks

I want you to know how very special you are to me.

Words cannot express the depth of my love, do you see?

You held my hand through some of life's difficult stew.

I'm all grown up today and I know sometimes I may have been a brat, But you were always there to love me and tell me I could.

I'll never forget the love that you showed me and all the good times, too. I hope I can share that special love you showed me.

And life, I learned, is the only key.

I love you, Grandpa.

## **Remembering Ed Goodman** **By Lady Goodman, The Dalles**

Ed Goodman was my adopted brother. First time I saw him was August 1961. His adoption was done August 1962.

Ed was my best friend when I was a young girl, but I lost him 20 years ago to drugs. I never knew the man, I didn't have good memories of the man, but I remember the boy who I loved dearly.

Don't do drugs.

## **Friendship Group** **By Herbie Schmoker, Hood River**

I went to the Friendship group in Hood River. We played Bingo there. I got two bingos. I won a set of pens and pencils. We had snacks and had a good visit with friends. It was fun. It will happen again. I want to be there.

## **Relationship** **By Mariah Langer, Hood River**

I have a relationship. I sit with him and work with him and eat with him. I met him at work and he was doing the dishes. I do surfboards and I do key chains at work. Sometimes I wash tables in the lunchroom. My boyfriend does the same thing I do. We met at Columbia Gorge Center around 2005, I forget when exactly.

## **Life After My Brother's Death** **By Joe Miner, Corvallis**

I lost my brother in March, 1999. In 2003 on January 28, my mother died and then my dad died on January 21, 2004. In February 2004, my aunt Ruth died, then my brother David's wife died in February 2004. It was a sad time losing them all at the same time. I miss competing against my brother in Special Olympics; I miss him being around.

My health has been up and down, but it's going well now.

I am still in People First I am the Vice President in Corvallis. We meet once a month. If you know of someone in the Corvallis area who might want to get involved, contact Bonnie Forbes at 541-908-3674.



## **Angel Dog** **By Rolando Garcia, Cascade Locks**

A dog named Scarpa is my friend. My angel dog is a Chesapeake retriever, red/brown. He knows tricks, like to sit down, and he barks. Scarpa visits Columbia Gorge Center from the neighbor's farm. He is our mascot and my friend. I like to feed him bites of food, like burritos or cookies, but never chocolate.



## ADVOCATE'S CORNER

### **Coming Soon! Oregon Support Needs Assessment!**

**By Judy Cunio,**

*Self-Advocacy Coordinator, Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities*

For people with developmental disabilities who live in group homes or supported living programs, Oregon will have a whole new way to find out what services and supports they need.

If you are someone who is in one of these programs then sooner or later you will be asked to take part in a support needs assessment interview. The information from your interview will be used to decide how much money you get to pay for the services and supports that you need.

You may wonder what a support needs assessment interview is. Well, it's a way to find out what supports you need to be successful in your everyday life. With the information they get from you and other people who know you well, they will use it to figure out how much money it will take to get the services and supports that you need.

You may ask, "How that is any different from how it has always been?" In the past, for the most part, the State of Oregon would give the county money to pay to group homes to support people with developmental disabilities. These were called slots. When a slot came open in a group home, someone could move into that home. But people with DD and their families wanted to have more control over where and how they lived their lives.

In the new way of funding services, the funding will be based on the support needs of the person, not on a "slot". Oregon is making changes so that people will have sensible, fair, and person-centered access to funding and services.

The Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities is offering orientation sessions and materials about the assessment process for individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members.

The training will go over topics such as:

- What a supports assessment interview is like
- Why Oregon is doing it
- Who will be there
- How it measures your support needs

The assessment lets people know what YOUR supports needs are. By doing that, they can figure out how

much money it takes to meet your needs, and if you want to move to a different home you will be able to take your budget with you.

When you go to the interview, you and the people who know you the best will be asked many questions about your life at home and in the community. You will talk about your job and what you would like to do for fun. It will cover every part of your life.

For a free brochure, dvd, or information about orientation sessions, contact the Council or visit our web page at: [www.ocdd.org](http://www.ocdd.org)

For information about the SIS scale: <http://www.siswebsite.org/>

## Poem in Autumn

By Alan Bergstrom, Ashland

This is a dying time of the year.  
The leaves are changing red and yellow  
and falling slowly to the ground.  
It's getting cold and storms are coming  
in.

The birds fly to a warmer land.

The doe is eating  
And the buck is hunting for food.  
Everything prepares for the great cold  
to come.

It is snowing in the mountains;

The next day,  
People are skiing

And playing in the snow.

Life will go on

For all that live on the earth.

## Sherri's Story

By Sherri Osburn,  
Portland

I first met Jill at the office on Powell, where the Inclusion brokerage is now. That's where I met Gayle, too. Gayle got me started with SAAL. She asked me to join the Outreach and Training Committee. I have stayed with SAAL a long time. I first became the Vice-Chair,

and now I am the Acting Chair. Acting Chair is a title you get when you step up to the Chair position while the Chair is away. Ann Blackburn was the Chair, but she is away in England, so they needed me to step up and be the Chair while she's gone. Whatever Marcie Alvarez and Hannah Bowen need help with at the SAAL office in Portland, I am there to help out. It's fun being the

Chair. There is a lot of stuff to do. Marcie lets me know about emails and phone calls she gets about training requests. We catch up by phone a lot, and I like to go to the office to work there every week. I really like helping with the newsletters. We fold them and send them to about 1,000 people four times a year. Maybe Rita will help us next time. Rita is a good helper. Maybe Marcie and Han-

nah will help out, too. They are good at mailings.

I am going to have a new grandson. It's coming up very soon. It's fun to be a grandparent. This will be my seventh time. All of them are too far away, though. I wish they lived closer.

Larry is my boyfriend. He's a very good man, and he helps me a lot. I think he has figured out that I'm on disability. He helps me when I need it. His mom's been in the hospital. She can't use the microwave any more because she has a pacemaker in her heart now.

## Advocacy List

By Larry Sharp,  
Portland

1. In-home care for low-income seniors
2. Cheap medical care for seniors
3. More things for seniors to do at care centers
4. Better payee services

5. Better nurses for in-home care programs
6. Better transportation for going shopping for food
7. More housing for low-income people.

### SAAL Announcement

Our staff is taking a short break. The SAAL office will close between December 20-January 5.

We will come back with energy to serve you better!

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

## My Future Visions

By Earnestine Leuschen,  
Coos Bay

I am an athlete, a swimmer. I am going on 51 years old. Can your readers help me out and make dreams come alive some day?

Can people go for their dreams by having

equal paying jobs for people all around the world? Provide people with fair jobs with Sundays off. Let people write their stories (like Days of Our Lives and Passions.)

I had a vision in my dreams. It was the year 2015. In my dream about Oregon Special Olympics, there were no more ribbons handed out; it was just medals from now on.

By George, we can clean up the world by collecting old used vehicles, weapons, tin cans, and other objects. We can take them all and melt them down and turn them into Special Olympic medals and put them on athletes, including senior masters and citizens 41 and over.

Medals will have symbols that show what kind of sport they are. After the opening ceremonies, athletes play all kinds of games. They can play to win.

Those who get participation medals will be given a second chance at

the state tournament. To win another medal, they would have to ask any of the older athletes if they can join younger relay teams. Everyone could take their complete time because there's no hurry. Everyone would go home with lots of medals, so their families would be proud of them.

State tournaments can have events every season. Summer has gymnastics, mixed track and field, and miniature golf for their relays. Winter has bobsledding, snowboarding, skiing, and ice-skating. Spring season can have: badminton, volleyball, tennis, ping-pong racquetball, and pro-wrestling. For the fall sports: bowling, swimming, and diving. Others can be football, basketball, chess, power weightlifting, karate, kickboxing, and roller derby.

Can you make my dreams come alive? Will there be no more ribbons in the future, just medals? Think about it. I hope some day Special Olympics will line people up by

age categories. I hope some day you will make my dream come true. I wanted to have my say.



### **Part of Something** By Paula Wright, Medford

We met through the brokerage. (My Personal Agent) Jill is awesome; she called me yesterday. We go bowling on Tuesdays. Tomorrow we are going to the mall. All of us do, next week we are going to the mall and a restaurant.

I went bowling with them, I went to the mall with them, we got our nails done. Me and Mary walk the mall and I call her and she calls me. It makes me feel like she cares.

That was my time to be with the group. We are

going to the mall. We made pumpkins for Halloween and we had snacks. I brought snacks a couple times. I don't go if the guys are there because I don't feel comfortable. I like Jill's son; he does things with us. It's mostly with women, but sometimes the guys come. When we go bowling the men come with us. I feel a part of something when I'm with Mary walking the mall. When I talk to her I can talk to her about the same needs I have. I feel comfortable with all of them, but especially with Mary.

When we don't have group, we do things together. I can call her anytime. I would like to play tennis or go to a park for a picnic. We were talking about a bake sale. She called today and I cried when she called, it makes me feel part of something.

I like that group, I want to do more activities because I get bored with doing nails all the time. Bowling is getting boring. She asks us if we have any feedback and to talk about it.

**Next Theme for this newsletter:**

Advocacy, Policy, and speaking up for yourself. Send us your story about a time you were an advocate for yourself or for others.

How have YOU been a self-advocate?

**Team**

**By Bill Dockham,  
Hood River**

I bowl every Monday for the Special Olympics team in Hood River. My score of 88 is my best this year. I'm waiting to bowl with the cops in November. It's fun! And we have a big party after bowling.

**People At Home**

**By Clarence Gaede,  
Mosier**

I live with my sister Sharon in Mosier. I like working in the workshop. We do different things in different parts of the year.

I like the people most. I like playing basketball at lunch. A bunch of guys play at lunch.

I also like cowboys and cowboy movies, like Roy Rogers. Gene Autry is great. I have a cowboy hat. Larry, Mo and Curly movies are favorites, too. "Nyeh, Nyeh."

Mosier has always been my home. I like it.



**Reading**

**By Kathy Webster,  
The Dalles**

I like to talk to people. I talk to people about books and airplanes. I really like books about airplanes. I go to the Hood River library every day. I sit there and read. I like doing that every day.

**Lyrics to a Song**

**By Mike Carter,  
Cascade Locks**

My eyes are blind  
my mind is on you at all times  
It's gone

I feel like everything is gone that I've worked for in my life

My life is slipping away. I have been gone for so long since you've been gone or walked out of my life.

I'm living in my grave you made me you took the very last life from me that I had. I felt like I'm suffocating on your memory is taunting me so so badly. You're treating me with your soul which is making me shiver in fear.

Which means I can't rest in peace in my casket.



**My Favorite Book!**

**By Kenny Whitwell,  
The Dalles**

Lightning McQueen says, "Ka-chow!" He is a race car. "Speed, I am speed."

He needs to "fix the road." The townsfolk tell him to "fix the road!!"

The sheriff said, "Boy, you're in a heap of trouble!"

Guido said, "On your mark, get set, Go!"

## I Like to Go Out

### By Billy Noble, Salem

I lived in Fairview many years. I was a little kid when I went there. I didn't get to go to Sunday school. Now I go to Sunday school for adults, but it's not the same, not for kids. I missed out.

I go to dances on Saturdays in Salem. When I go out to the mall I like to get a pop. I like getting my picture taken in photo booths, with funny pictures. They make me laugh.



I like going out, I just don't like cold weather, then I can't go out. I wear a hat. I like to wear suspenders and red button down shirts with pockets in them. I like hot days.

I like to feed the ducks, "Out with the

bread, on the head." I remind my staff to give me my five dollars every week. I like it in a five-dollar bill. I like to go out and spend it, get something, have a grand time.

My friend John takes me out, we visit a pet store. He's good to me. We go downtown, have lunch. I like to buy something when we go downtown. He takes me home, 3 o'clock.

I go to Camp Ravenhorse out of Sweet Home. We sleep in log cabins. I like to make pictures with colors, especially red and orange. I like my cup of water, my cup of coffee and my cup of pop.

I keep my things with me. I sleep with my hat full of special things, like my silly photos.

I like people to follow directions. Staff gives me cough medicine to keep me well when it's cold.



## China

### By Devin Ackley, Eugene

My name is Devin Ackley. I went to Shanghai China for the 2007 Special Olympics World Games. I went in for 10 days in October 2007. I got two silver medals in 25-meter backstroke and 4 by 25-meter relay. I also got a gold medal in the 25-meter freestyle.

We had Chinese food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner so I got tired of the Chinese food. They have more noodles and rice than our Chinese food.

I and three other people went to a host family and we learned how to make dumplings. To Americans, it is pot stickers.

**At Home**  
**By Shawn Stephan,**  
**Cascade Locks**

I live in Tom's house in Cascade Locks. I have lived there a long time. I like Batman and I like the joker and Robin and Cat-woman also. I went to see the Batman Returns movie this year.

I like video games. Some of my favorites are Eagle, Superbowl 21. My favorite football team is the Green Bay Packers. I also like the Broncos. I play video games at home on my Play Station Two.

Tom and I are friends. Tom and I like to play video games together. Tom helps me by helping to get my shoes on. Tom and I have fun outside. We play basketball. I'm a big Los Angeles Lakers fan. My favorite player on the Lakers is #34 (Shaquille O'Neal). I have a Lakers coat and hat.

**Calendar**

**People First Portland**

Meeting **Jan. 23, 4 p.m.**

At The Arc: 619 SW 11th Avenue, Suite 106

Contact Steve Kramer, 503-231-1054, sandkramer@comcast.net

**Life Stories Workshop**

Coming Soon: Lincoln County & Portland. Keep posted for details. Contact Marcie Alvarez 503-725-8129.

**Oregon Legislative Session**

Get ready to advocate. Make your voice heard.

**Question?**

Why is speaking up for our rights important?

How do you celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day?



**Alaska**  
**By Lisa Woodside,**  
**The Dalles**

First we went to Seattle, my caregiver and I. We saw the Space Needle and got to go inside it. Then the next day we met the Cruise ship! A big boat to sail on! And when we got to Alaska, we saw glaciers in the water.

When we got there we went shopping and we went to our hotel room and stayed on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor at the hotel in Alaska.

Then we went out to eat out at a restaurant. I liked the pasta they had.

**Word Search Puzzle**  
**By Terry Bolton,**  
**The Dalles**

Find the right clues in your puzzle books. They can be tricky. The word can be hard to find in the puzzle search as others hide it. It was not easy for me to find my clues in my puzzle book, but I did.