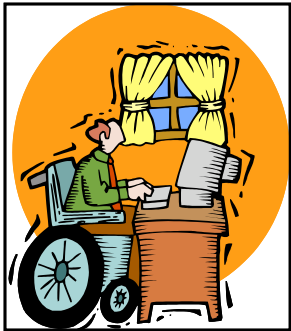


The People First Connection

The Voice of Self-Advocacy in Oregon

Published by Self Advocates As Leaders



Our Editorial Board has been busy reading all of your stories. We are glad to hear from you.

People's lives create stories. In this issue, we heard from people making lives for themselves. We heard stories of services people receive and what supports they need to be independent.

Let's start off with a story from the Advocate's Corner. It is full of information about an issue that keeps too many of us from realizing our dreams of living strong, independent lives.

Send Us Your Story!

Share your Ideas!

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

Our Address:

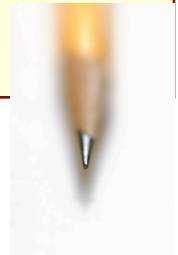
c/o Marcie Tafalla

PSU-RRI

PO Box 751

Portland OR 97207

www.asksaal.org



VIOLENCE AWARENESS: How to Protect Yourself from Abuse

**By Judy Cunio, Self-Advocacy Coordinator
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities**

There are some subjects that are very hard to talk about. Yet they are very important to have information on and to understand so you can stay safe.

One of the most difficult subjects to talk about is abuse. It can be very scary to talk about and even to think about sometimes. But there are some things about abuse that everyone

should be aware of, so we can protect ourselves.

Here are some facts about abuse:

- **Abuse is common;** people with developmental disabilities are even more at risk because they are often seen as easier targets.
- **Most victims are abused by someone they know.** It is often their caregiver or a family member. And they won't tell others about it because they are afraid they won't be taken care of any longer or the abuse may even become worse.

A lot of the time, the victim will take the blame and feel like it is their fault because they did something wrong. If you remember anything at all, please remember that **it is NEVER the victim's fault. No matter what happens, you did not ask for it and you don't deserve to be abused. No one deserves to be abused... NO ONE!**

You need to know what abuse is and how you can protect yourself. You might help someone else who is in an abusive situation. There are some things to look for and to be aware of. If a person tries to control you or gets angry easily, or if they blame other people for all of their problems, they could become an abuser.

There are different kinds of abuse.

- There is **physical abuse**. If someone hurts you on purpose, such as slapping you, kicking you, or harming you in any way, that is physical abuse.

- **Neglect** is when the person that you depend on (such as your caregiver) doesn't do their job. This could be things like taking care of your personal needs such as dressing, eating, bathing, and even giving you your medication.
- **Verbal abuse** is when someone puts you down, calls you names or threatens to harm you.
- **Sexual abuse** is when someone touches you inappropriately, and you don't want to be touched. Even tickling someone who says "don't do that" or "stop tickling me" can be considered abusive behavior.
- **Financial abuse** is when someone takes your money from you, or spends your money without your permission. If someone borrows money and does not pay you back when they say they will, that also could be considered financial abuse.

Here are a couple myths and facts about abuse. A "myth" is what some people believe to be true, and a "fact" is how it really is.

Myth: If a person does not think he or she has been abused, then it was not abuse.

Fact: People can be abused without even knowing what it is or labeling it. Abuse is abuse!

Myth: People with disabilities lie about abuse to get attention.

Fact: Most abuse stories are true. Saying the victim is lying is a way to take the blame away from the abuser.

Just because someone lied once does not mean that they are lying this time. Believe someone when they tell you they have been abused; they are probably telling you the truth this time.

If you know someone who is being abused, there are ways that you can help.

- Always believe them.
- Always tell them that it's never their fault.
- Let them know that there is help, and ask if they want help.

If you want to learn more about abuse and ways to protect yourself, Self Advocates As Leaders (SAAL) offers a Violence Awareness Training.

We are more than happy to come and host a training in your area.

For more information on the training, please call Marcie Tafalla at 503-725-8129, or toll-free 1-888-589-1664.

Resources

**The National Domestic Violence
Hotline 1-800-799-7233**

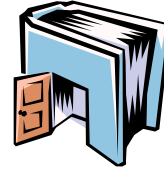
(SAFE)

**The National Sexual Assault
Hotline 1-800-656-4673**

(HOPE)

**"Nobody can hurt me without
my permission."**

- Mahatma Gandhi



My Story

By Sharon Price, Corvallis

I was born on October 27, 1947 in Snohomish, Washington. Until I became very sick this year, I lived independently in my own mobile home for many years. I even took care of the landscaping myself.

My disability was caused by not getting enough air at birth. It was called a "force birth". At eleven months old I was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. My right foot has turned in since birth.

I am the oldest of four children. My sister, Susan, is thirteen months younger than I am. I have always called her my "baby sister." I also have two younger brothers.

My schooling was different. My elementary education was like a yo-yo. My first two years were at a school for people with disabilities close to where we lived in Washington. In the second grade, I went to public school for the first time. There were two grades to a classroom, and the third and fourth grade teacher refused to let me in her classroom. When my family moved to Prineville, Oregon in 1958, I re-entered the public school system but had to repeat the fourth grade. In the sixth, I had a home-school teacher; I went to her house every afternoon.

When we moved to Corvallis in 1961, I re-entered public schools and attended Highland View and Corvallis

High School. One teacher pushed me to become a good typist. This enables me to write my stories on a computer. I also have a computer to communicate when someone doesn't understand me. I graduated in 1967.

I don't work at an actual paying job. I tried to get a job, but all people saw was my disability. I decided to be a writer. My first book was published. Just Being Sharon is the story of my life and experiences.

I was able to live by myself in a mobile home partly because I have my father's Social Security. He died in May 2002.

I write letters for The Arc of Benton County, lobbying for better services to people with disabilities. In 1998 with the help of Sen. Cliff Trow, I helped pass the "Wheelchair Protection Law." From 1995 to 1997, I was on the Disabled Services Advisory Council as part of the Albany Office of Disabilities.

Another reason I was able to live alone, is because I had a caregiver who helped me four hours each week. She made meals for me that I just took out of the refrigerator. She also took me on errands when it was necessary and helped me with my bill paying. Mostly I go to appointments in my "hot rod", a scooter that I drive myself. I paid for my scooter with the help of the Linn-Benton County Disability Services, a state agency.

If changes were made to Social Security, I could not afford to live the life I live. If changes were made to Medicare (from my father) or Medicaid/OHP,

I would be unable to have the medical care that I need. I also have chronic leukemia. If Medicaid is reduced by 40 million dollars, as President Bush suggests, the State of Oregon would be unable to support the program sufficiently. Again, I could not live as independently as I do, nor could I be a contributing member of society and have the care that I need.



Love

By Denise Welch, The Dalles

Love is like a flower.

A seed grows and flourishes

With time and with a little loving care
and watering

It grows into something wonderful and
beautiful and long lasting.

It takes root forever, that's what love is.

March is DD Awareness Month!

Awards ceremony and dedication
3 to 4 p.m., Monday, March 12
Barbara Roberts Human Services
Building / 500 Summer St., Salem

**Get involved. The Legislature
is meeting in Salem.**

Find out what is happening.

www.oregonddcoalition.org

Brain Waves

By Brandon Tipler, Medford

I love art.

Sometimes I see a picture in my head or from the movies. I feel like I am right there. It's saying paint me like it is a sign from the clouds.

I came up with one of my paintings, Brain Waves, after I had a seizure. You see, I have Epilepsy and I have many seizures.

It comes as a pattern that washes across my brain like ocean waves. It washes away my memory. Sometimes I feel like I'm stranded on an island with brain waves washing all around me.

I just like to create. If I don't have paper or a canvas, I just look for something to draw on the back of. I like using my imagination.

One of Brandon's paintings was chosen for the 2006 Expressions of Courage calendar contest. The contest began four years ago in the spirit of artists like Vincent van Gogh, who also lived with epilepsy. To view Brandon's winning entry visit www.expressionsofcourage.com and follow the link to the calendar winners.

Note: Studio Sfumato is a social enterprise of Living Opportunities, in Medford. Studio Sfumato is made up of

over a dozen artists. They express their own individuality, and the individuality in every person, through the visual arts.

Each of the member artists is provided with the tools they need to become a career artist. For more information, go to their web site:

<http://www.livingopps.org/stsfumato/studeosfumato.htm>



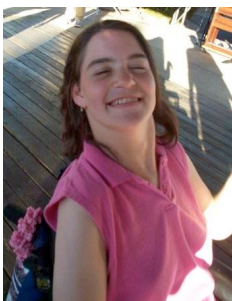
Tom's Dancing Story

By Tom Brittsan, Corvallis

I was in The Bulletin, the Bend newspaper. I liked being in the paper. I have two blue backpacks, a helicopter and a flashlight.

I have a new office downstairs. I like to play in my new office. I like to go for walks around the neighborhood. I like to go at night. It is quiet and peaceful. I have a teddy bear, Zoey. I will move Zoey to my new office.





I Love My Job

By Lorrie Cleven, Corvallis

My name is Lorrie Cleven. Most people say I have a pretty smile. My brain was injured when I was 10 weeks old. I stopped breathing for several minutes. I didn't get enough oxygen and some of my brain cells, the ones that control my movement, were damaged. Some people call my disability "Acquired Cerebral Palsy" because the injury occurred after I was born.

I spend most of my time in a sitting position. I cannot stand, sit up, walk, eat, bathe or dress myself. I love people and like to go places and do things with my friends and family. I use a motorized wheelchair that I operate myself. I need help with most activities, but I enjoy the same things other people do. I married my best friend Justin in August 2006. We have our own house and we have a couple who lives with us to help out.

I am 23 years old. I use computers, operate my motorized wheelchair and remote controls for my TV and DVD player. I can use a telephone, a cell phone and door bells.

I talk with an accent. Not everyone can understand me. I have worked as a volunteer with preschool children at Old Mill center in Corvallis for over 7 years. I like modeling and I have been

in several brochures and newsletters. I sell Mary Kay cosmetics and get paid for this.

I have support in performing the activities of life. An agency or brokerage, ISN, distributes state funds to me so that I can afford help from a caregiver. I also have Medicaid and the Oregon Health Plan. With these supports I can live a relatively normal life, earn money and contribute to society.

If the state did not provide these supports my family would not be able to care for me. They would not be able to afford a wheelchair lift van or a wheelchair accessible bathroom in a wheelchair accessible home. I would have to live in a 24-hour, staffed home, without opportunities to socialize, travel or be as independent as I am now.

I would have no medical coverage if I lost Medicaid/OHP coverage. (1) I have a hospital bed which was paid for with Medicaid. (2) My personal hygiene supplies and equipment such as bath/toilet chair are paid for with the medical card. (3) Repairs to my motorized wheel chair (over a thousand dollars) were covered. (4) Lifeline is paid with Medicaid (5) VocRehab paid for a new lift in my van so I can continue to sell Mary Kay products. (6) The brokerage (ISN) pays for up to 132 hours of caregiving monthly, for a manual chair and transportation to Old Mill School. They might pay for respite care so my mother could have a night off.

If I lost services I now receive society and I would both lose something, economically and personally.

My Time This Year

By Carol Loe, Portland

I have been busy with Bible Study and helping with the community meal at my church. In March, I was sick with pneumonia for two weeks and was on oxygen.

A friend took me to Canby on Memorial Day so I could put flowers on my parents' graves.

I went with other friends on some day trips: Cannon Beach, Seaside, Herbert Hoover's home in Newberg, The Wildlife Sanctuary and The Loma (Llama) Farm in Ridgefield, Washington, Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery, Sauvie Island, Multnomah Falls and the Edelweiss Oktoberfest.

In October, I was sick again with pneumonia and in the hospital a few days. I then went to a nursing home for a few weeks. I am better now.

I made lots to sell at the All Saints Bazaar, held the first Saturday in November. I really enjoy the bazaar and sold a lot of my handcrafts.



Dream Job

By Ashley Johnson,
The Dalles

I always wanted to run a business of my own and dreamed about how I could find a way to start it up. I talked to a lot of people who started their business and they told me that with "Mild Retardation" I would never be able to run my business.

I was very frustrated when I was going through Vocational Rehabilitation. When I went to my last meeting with them, they considered my creative gifts a hobby, not a job. They turned away my idea for a business and closed my case that day. I was very upset about it.

I went through The Dalles Columbia Gorge Center where I work and spoke with the Community Services Director Stephanie, about starting my own business. I told her my dream and how I wanted it to come true.

I started my own business here in The Dalles making creative gifts. I enjoy making items

for people who would like them. I make hats and scarves. So far, I have made \$60 and I eventually want to expand my business and hire people.

My dream of starting my own business has come true with the support of Columbia Gorge Center. I want to tell the people at the Columbia Gorge Center this: You have helped people with disabilities who want to work. You have made dreams come true.

A Work in Progress

By Cheryl Coonce,
Redmond

My dream is finally becoming a reality. It has been a very long two years. I am now working two jobs. It is very hard. I am finally getting my business up and going. I am working at the Opportunity Center two days a week.

It has been a great opportunity to work with VR (Vocational Rehabilitation.) I really like the support they have given me because they have

been behind me all the way. They have really given me a chance to prove myself.

My funding allowed me to try to open my own reminder service. I will be calling people and reminding them about appointments they have. They will pay me a fee to do this. I already have a business plan in place, and my business license.

Now I am just trying to get it up and running. I have to get business cards made, brochures made up, then I will be in the Redmond Chamber of Commerce. I want to get going as soon as possible!

Outside the Box



By Kevin Webb,
Glasgow, Kentucky

My business is horseback riding and boarding. We do riding lessons and board horses. We also break horses and do parties. I live on a farm and have been around horses for over 10 years. I love

farm life and being outdoors, working with animals. Our family owns horses ourselves, so this idea made sense.

I love what I do. I know how to take care of horses. I have freedom to do what I need to do, I am my own boss, and I love working with animals. They like me and I do not have to prove anything to them for them to like me. I also like knowing other people need me to help them learn about horseback riding and boarding.

The best part of owning my own business is the prestige of being a business owner. I am my own boss. Even though I have a disability, I never promote my business that way, I promote it like everyone else does who starts a business. I have freedom to do it my way to accommodate my clients.

I never dreamed I would have a business of my own. I worked at a workshop, where I only made \$300 for a year's work. I worked at a factory and got laid off. Then this opportunity came

about with grant money, and especially a PASS PLAN through SSA to start my own business. Never in a lifetime did I believe I would be doing this, my own business, my name in phone book: WEBB/TAYLOR HORSEBACK RIDING AND BOARDING. It is a dream of a lifetime because most businesses do not hire people with disabilities. When they did, I felt like I had to perform more than anyone else did, or stay in a workshop, my life going nowhere with little pay.

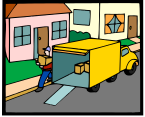
My advice: **look outside the box of employment, look at PASS PLANS** and how they work for people who get SSI or SSDI. **Everyone has dreams, gifts, and talent.** Self-employment may not be for everyone, but **everyone can do something. Start with a dream of what you want to do.** Look at Bill Gates, ebay, Amazon.com, etc. **Never underestimate yourself. Believe in yourself** in employment. Like the Nike motto says, Just do it.

<http://WebbTaylor.com>

My History

By Andrea Mykrantz,
Corvallis

In 1958 I was born in Springfield, Massachusetts. I was the third of four children. When I was four, I was diagnosed with severe epilepsy.



My dad worked for Monsanto Co. so we moved a lot. In 1965, we were transferred to St. Louis. I didn't learn much in school but enjoyed our neighbors and canoeing on the spring-fed creeks. Doctors prescribed Valium as my major anti-seizure medication. It made me dopey. I now take it to stop seizures if I have a shower or flurry (lots of seizures, one after another). This stops the seizures, but I fall asleep.

In 1969, Dad was transferred to Boulder, Colorado where I was in a special elementary school classroom. My brothers and I were together in Middle School, though I was still in a special classroom. I still had seizures; I have scars from

when I would fall hard.

In 1974, we moved to Chicago for 2 years. I was in a special classroom there, too, but didn't learn a lot. When we moved back to St. Louis in 1976, I had to take an extra year of high school to get my diploma.

After graduating, I volunteered in a childcare program. Eventually, I saw a Vocational Rehabilitation (VocRehab) person who wasn't much help. My parents heard about Life Skills, a program started by parents. It had grown and had state aid. They had just started working with companies to hire workers with disabilities to do competitive work. I worked as a childcare volunteer and was later paid at the Y. With a job mentor, I worked in a nursery growing mums and poinsettias. Since this was seasonal, they helped me get a job as a greeter at Target Stores.

Life Skills also helped me move out of my parent's home. They found an apartment, that I shared with two other women. This was hard at

first, but with a lot of help, we managed to cook and work together.

My doctor took me off Valium and gradually added two more medications to the two I was taking. I became involved with a Therapeutic Horsemanship class. I actually became a very good dressage rider on a better schedule of medications. I still had some seizures, but I was better.

Dad retired in 1997. We moved to Oregon to be closer to family. My parents bought me a condominium close to their house so I could live independently.

Here I met Jim of VocRehab. He was a big help and connected me with Work Unlimited, a program that gets state funds to support people who can't afford a Work Developer. We pay for help to do our jobs. If they did not have state funds, they could not stay in business. I also will get Medicare and SS because my dad's medical insurance would no longer cover my drugs and doctors after he dies.

If these supports were lowered or taken away, I could no longer live alone or have a job.

Please try to keep these supports for people with disabilities, so we can continue to pay taxes, add to the economy, and be a contributor to society instead of a drain.



About Special Olympics By Susan Melero, Corvallis

Special Olympics was started in the 1970's by Eunice Kennedy Shriver. Special Olympics is an athletic program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The program teaches athletes to train and compete in the sports of their choice.

Susie is the Local Program Coordinator here. She takes good care organizing the Benton County Program. We run three sports seasons: Fall, Winter and Spring/Summer. The Fall sports

are Bowling, Volleyball, Soccer, and Swimming. The Winter sports are Basketball, Powerlifting and Snowshoeing. The Spring/Summer sports are Track and field, Golf, Bocce and Softball.

There are two main competitions per sport season. Regional competitions after 5 to 6 weeks of practices help a lot to prepare us for State competitions. Competitions take place in different cities around Oregon.

Athletes compete for medals, ribbons and also sportsmanship awards. At State competitions athletes also get to participate in opening ceremonies, dinner and a dance to enjoy and celebrate their accomplishments.

Special Olympics is run by volunteers. Our program is self funded though donations, special fundraising projects and grants.

In all sport seasons we are coached by volunteers. After a sport season we recognize athletes and coaches with certificates of participation.

To find out more about Special Olympics in Benton County or to become a volunteer, contact local program coordinator Susie Peters at: 541-754-8765 or email to peters3186@comcast.net

Special Olympics Note By Ashley Johnson

Special Olympics Track-and-Field in The Dalles (Columbia Gorge area) will be starting up in April 2007.

In fact, other sports are starting up in many communities around the state. **I encourage all parents, community members, and athletes who want to be involved to sign up to participate.**

For more information, contact the Special Olympics head office in Portland.

Resources

For More information on Special Olympics in Oregon, contact them at:
503-248-0600
www.soor.org



He Makes Me Laugh
 By Donna (Newman)
 McLaughlin, Grants Pass

When I went to Purrfect Pet, I met Sammy for the first time. I got to pick him out. He is a very smart bird and he keeps me company. Sammy sings a lot. He is still in training. I make sure he gets fresh food and water.



Grandmother
 By Denise Welch,
 The Dalles

My Grandmother taught me a lot during her lifetime. I shall never forget her and what she taught me. She has gone now to a far better place. I will see her again some day, I hope, and I will never forget her as long as I live. Her name was Dora Welch and I adored her very much.

Calendar

**Advocacy Days
 Legislative Training at
 Oregon State Capitol:**

March 12, 2007
 April 13, 2007
 All sessions 9:30 am - 2:30 pm

**The Arc of Oregon
 Convention**

Pendleton, May 4 & 5, 2007

**Building Futures:
 Transition Conference
 Supports**

Tigard, May 15-16, 2007

**OR Parent Training &
 Information Conference**

Seaside, May 18-19, 2007

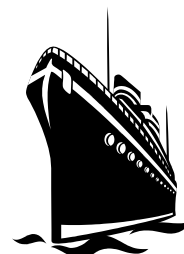
**Oregon Conference on
 Direct Supports**

Corvallis, July 24 - 26, 2007

“Every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated. This is not the case.”
 - John F. Kennedy

My Trips
 By Micki Amaral,
 Grants Pass

I like to travel around the country. I have been on many trips.



I went on a Mexican cruise once. When I was on the cruise I shopped on the boat. On a trip to Disneyland, I went on rides and shopping. I went to Ireland to kiss the Blarney Stone and I went to Las Vegas. Also, I went to Tennessee.

My next trip will be to New York City next year in October. My mom, my best friend’s mom, and my best friend will go with me. I want to see the Montel Williams Show, or John Walsh (who is from America’s Most Wanted.) I like to watch TV shows, especially the show called “COPS.”