

The Alliance News

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Vision

Our vision is for self-advocates to work together to get the support we need to live the life we want in the community.

Mission

Our mission is to speak up for ourselves and each other while working together to make changes in our communities and in Illinois.

An Initiative of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

It's My LIFE Rally

By Stephanie Walton



On August 31, 2010 we went to the It's My LIFE rally. "It's My LIFE" means that individuals can decide to take control of their lives by making choices about the services they want. Kara from Chicago Heights said, "the staff have the ability to make their own decisions, and so should people with disabilities."

There were over 300 people at this great event, and it was lots of fun! The reason we gathered was to ask Lilia Teninty to sign an agreement help us get self-directed support in Illinois. During the event, two self-advocates told us about self-direction. Then, there was a skit about self-directed support, that showed the difference between self-direction and the current system. Next we had a quiz and played a hot potato game—the people with the nerf balls got to answer a question. We also had a talent show with songs, poems, and cheers.

After the talent show, we saw the pictures that we made from the celebrations on a big word sign that said "LIFE". Beth, a self-advocate from Alton, asked Lilia to come up and speak. She signed the agreement saying she would help us get self-directed support! We cheered and cheered. She read part of the government plan that said they were going to start having self-direction in Illinois. At the very end, we celebrated with a balloon launch while shouting, "It's My LIFE!"





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LOCAL ISSUES

Self-Advocates of Lake County share their stories

Lake County Self-Advocates believes there is power in sharing your story. They recently presented speeches about their struggles, lessons, and successes. Below are excerpts from their stories.



Brian shared about where he has lived. He said, "I have had struggles and changes in my life. I lived with my mom, my foster mom, a group home and now in my own apartment. I was scared to leave my foster family, but I did it anyway because people told me it was the best thing for me. Leaving the group home was also scary, but other people helped me believe I could do it. I still have things I want to do to make my life better. It is difficult to make those changes alone, but with the help of other people I can make those changes."



David talked about learning how to take public transportation. He said, "The Forest Park Center wanted to teach me how to use public transportation in Chicago. I learned how to use the CTA bus and get on the red and blue line trains to go to the Cubs or Sox parks if I wanted to see the baseball games. I have been to both parks on the CTA."



Lindsay shared about her advocacy experience. She said, "I work on many advocacy projects. On a trip back from Springfield, they made us all go in one train car and locked us in for the trip. We were mad and decided to write a letter to Metra and start a petition. Then we met with Metra and told them how wrong it was to lock us in the train. I was the spokesperson for the group."

If you live in Lake County and want to join the group, email Jen at jen@selfadvocacyalliance.org and she will help you get connected!

Meet Megan Norlin



Megan Norlin is the new Local Group Coordinator for the Alliance. Megan is from Peru, Illinois, and has been active with the Illinois Valley Center for Independent Living.

Before joining the Alliance team, Megan spent the last several years getting her degree in English and Theater. She has done over 20 shows and has been part of a comedy troupe!

Megan wanted this job so she could encourage people with disabilities. She believes self-advocacy is about breaking down barriers and she is excited to work with the Alliance to break down barriers for people with disabilities. She is also interested in helping people who live in small towns get jobs. Welcome, Megan!



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AROUND ILLINOIS

Meet Terah Green

Terah Green is a new staff member of the Alliance. She is the State Action Coordinator. Terah comes from Normal, Illinois, and belongs to the CIA advocacy group. CIA stands for Changes to Independence Altogether.



You might know Terah from the Freedom Quest that happened in May of 2009. Terah sang a solo at the event in Bloomington. She has attended Speak Up and Speak Out Summits and several rallies.

Terah took the State Action Coordinator position because she loves helping people. In an interview, Green said that she hopes to help people with disabilities choose what they want to do rather than staff telling them what to do.

Some of Terah's hobbies are playing the piano and singing. Her dream is to live in her own home and help others. She'd like the readers of this newsletter to know that she is a hard worker and she's going to do the best she can in her new job. Welcome, Terah!

THANK YOU to the Alliance Leadership Team

Since March 2009, the Alliance Leadership Team worked hard developing the Alliance. They created the brochure, developed goals, organized the It's My LIFE rally, recruited Alliance member groups, given presentations, decided on issues, and much more over the past year and a half.

Starting in November, the Alliance will have a Board of Directors who will take over leadership of the Alliance. They will follow in the footsteps of the Leadership Team, guiding the Alliance into the future.

We look forward to working with the new Board, and we want to say THANK YOU to the leadership team for all your hard work, great ideas, and team effort you have put in to starting the Alliance. Thank you Elizabeth Davis, Lynn Heath, Abbey Heins, Mary Mathis, Sonia Reyes, Michelle Spurlock, and Mary Suggs!!!



Sonia
Reyes



Michelle
Spurlock



Abbey
Heins



Mary
Mathis



Elizabeth
Davis



Mary
Suggs



Lynn
Heath



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FUN PAGE

Trivia Questions...test your knowledge!

- Finish this self-advocacy slogan:
 “Nothing about us, _____”
- The farm workers’ movement of the 1960’s and 70’s used boycotts as pressure to get better working conditions. What fruit did they not want folks to buy?

- Who said, “Whatever you are, be a good one”?
 A. Ed Roberts
 B. Sandra Day O’Connor
 C. Abraham Lincoln
 D. Nancy Pelosi
- When was the eight-hour work day made the U.S. national standard for a legal day’s work?
 A. 1738
 B. 1838
 C. 1938
 D. 1991

Responses from people at the It’s My LIFE rally...



“It’s My LIFE means to me that I can be independent and make my own choices.”
 - Tresors, Champaign



“My favorite part of the day was the quiz.”
 - Lamia, Chicago Heights



“One of my dreams is to get married someday.”
 - Fred, Joliet



“Self-direction is important to be because I would like to get a job.”
 - Jennifer, Arlington Heights

“My favorite part of the day was the singing.”
 - Bill, Mendota



A huge thank you to the Alliance leaders and group reps who worked VERY hard to make the rally a success!

- Answers:
1. With out us
 2. Table grapes
 3. Abraham Lincoln
 4. 1938