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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

We want jobs NOW!

By: Tara Wickey



The last few years have brought a lot of stress for our country and its people. Jobs are harder to come by these days and people with disabilities are having a harder time than EVER finding jobs. Self-advocates always tell us they want jobs — good, well-paying jobs that make them feel like they are making a difference in their communities. We all want to enjoy our work, right?!

The Alliance board decided that employment is going to be the next big issue we take on, and we NEED YOUR HELP!

We need to decide what to work on, and here are some ideas:

1. Work with local businesses—to find ways to encourage them to hire people with disabilities
2. Change state policies—so that people are supported in community jobs
3. Train self-advocates—on exploring their gifts and talents, building skills, writing resumes, and interviewing
4. Partnering with local agencies—to support employment goals of self-advocates

What do you think? Is there an idea you want to work on? Would your group want to get involved? Do you have another idea? Let me know what you think at 773-787-9651 or tara.advocacy@gmail.com. Ta Ta for now!



The Alliance News

LOCAL ISSUES

Call to Action: I want to be a...

By: Megan Norlin

Happy New Year Self Advocates, and welcome to the first 2012 Call to Action! This year, the Alliance will be focusing our efforts on employment. To get you thinking, I've come up with a project for you all.

I would like you to think about *two* jobs you would like to have. The first job I would like you to think about should be a job you could get right now. By that I mean, you should think about the skills that you have now, and look for a potential position where you could use those skills. For example: if you have good counting skills then you could work at a warehouse counting and sorting objects. Or if you are strong, you might be a good fit as a bagger at a local store. While looking for this job, you should also consider its location. Where is the job, and can you get there? What kind of support will you need, (if any)? I've come up with a list of questions and resources to guide you in your search that I will send out via e-mail.



The second job I want you to think about is a job that you *want*. It might be something that will take some time to get. Once you have an idea

for this job, you need to do some research and answer the questions I will provide you. Some of those questions are: What are your interests? What sort of skills do you need to do this dream job? Where can you go to learn those skills? Where else could you use these new skills?

Remember that there are no wrong answers here. This is just to get you thinking about your strengths and weaknesses, and what you want and don't want in your life. Remember to read over the packet and all my questions carefully. And keep an open mind. You never know what you will find until you start to look!

Happy hunting and I'll see you next time!

Megan Norlin
Alliance Local Group Coordinator
Phone: (815) 228-9829
E-mail: hottwheelz702@yahoo.com

How can the Alliance help your group?



Over the last two months, The Alliance has made some changes in how we will support local groups. Each group now has an Alliance staff person who will serve as a support for groups in the area closest to

where they live. They will be available to come to your group as needed & provide you will help should you need it, ideas for projects or support in applying for Challenge Grants.

- Megan Norlin—northwest and central IL
- Tara Wickey—Chicagoland area
- Krescene Beck—south and central IL

Megan Norlin, Local Group Coordinator, will receive information from staff and develop tools to help all the groups. If you have any questions, contact Megan Norlin (information above).



The Alliance News

AROUND ILLINOIS

Update on Statewide Actions

By: Terah Green

What is going on with self-direction you ask? The Alliance continues to work on the proposal self-direction. At the end of November, we met with Robin Cooper (a national consultant) and state staff to develop a new self-directed service called Supported Living. Supported



Living has three parts: 1) It is for people who want to live in their own home or apartment, 2) The person can hire staff to help them with daily living, 3) The person will have a Service

Broker to help him/her with planning, managing staff, and independent living.

In December, we had three input sessions across the state to find out what self-advocates think about the new service. At the input sessions, we got a lot of great information about what self-advocates hope to see in the future. We got input on whether people should be able to hire their parents or other family members, what training staff would need, and what role agencies should play. A draft of the new service will be ready by the end of February.

The Alliance has begun working on our 2012 state action!!! We will be focusing on employment this year! We are thinking of fun ways to do this over the next several months. Our yearly rally in June will be about employment and we are totally excited about that! So, I hope that all is well with every one and I want to let you know that we are pushing forward to get things going to create a better life for people with disabilities.

Peer Mentor Project

By: Krescene Beck

The Alliance kicks off 2012 with a new project... the Peer Mentor Project! It is a series of four, one-hour classes designed for self-advocates



living at State Operated Developmental Centers (SODC's) to meet with other self-advocates and talk about choices and possibilities for the future. To prepare for their role as Peer

Mentors, self-advocates

completed a three hour training covering the Peer Mentor curriculum as well as how to share experiences and serve as a mentor to others.

Topics covered during the Peer Mentor classes include:

- Gifts and Talents
- Dreams
- Identifying people who can help you with your dreams (your support team)
- Relationship boundaries
- Bricks that stand in the way of dreams
- How to respond to the bricks
- Action planning
- Life's transitions
- Positive affirmations of self and dreams
- Celebration of self and dreams

Throughout the classes, participants engage in learning activities and create individualized worksheets that can be shared with others as they take steps to achieve their dreams.

Stay tuned for future updates on the Peer Mentor Project!



The Alliance News

FUN PAGE

Challenge Grants

Applications for 2012 now being accepted!!

Does your group have a fun project in your head but don't have the funds to make it a reality? Apply for a Challenge Grant!!

The Alliance has several **\$500 Challenge Grants** available to Illinois self-advocacy groups who are part of the Alliance. Projects must be something that you will do as a group to promote self-advocacy.

Applications for Challenge Grants can be submitted year round. To apply, your group must complete an application form that can be found on our website: <http://selfadvocacyalliance.org>. Completed applications can be sent to us via e-mail or through standard mail. Both addresses are on the form.

Need help getting started? To view a sample application, check out our website! If you have any questions, contact Tara Wickey, 773-787-9651 Tara.advocacy@gmail.com.

Pics from SUSO 2011...keep Speaking Up and Speaking Out!

