

Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance

The Alliance News

Issue #130

February 2023



WE NEED YOU!
TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

The Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance, Inc. is self-advocates and self-advocacy groups who are working together. We need you to make it happen!

Here are two ways:

- Contribute to The Alliance newsletter each month. Share your ideas, hopes, dreams, success stories and challenges with The Alliance. You can send an article, a poem, a piece of artwork, photography, write a column, or ask a question.
- Got an idea for a presentation? We want to know about it!

Send your newsletter contributions and your presentation ideas to info@selfadvocacyalliance.org.

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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



In partnership with the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. This communication is supported in part by grant number CFDA 93.630 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance

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Find us on Facebook at Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance



"I've been a self-advocate all my life and I never realized it."

Tavarus Wesley, Advocacy Coordinator

Tavarus is not new to the advocacy community in Illinois and beyond. He was the past president of the Possibility Partners self-advocacy group at New Star (Chicago Heights) as well as the past president of The Alliance's Board of Directors. He has presented at local, state and national conferences.

Tavarus has also worked on increasing his self-advocacy and leadership skills over the years. He completed The Alliance's Ambassador Leadership Program (AALP). He also is a 2018 graduate of Illinois Partners in Policymaking where his final project was on customized employment.

Tavarus believes that advocacy is important because it's not just about him. It's about helping others who don't have words or can't express themselves. He lists his biggest accomplishments as putting a smile on someone's face; seeing others happy; people trusting him; and people respecting him.

As the Advocacy Coordinator, Tavarus will lead in many ways including

- Reaching out to engage with self-advocates, families, educators, and professionals to ask for and receive topics for potential learning opportunities and resources
- Assisting in the development of a schedule of monthly learning and advocacy opportunities, regional events, statewide rallies, and training and resources

Tavarus shared what he hopes to accomplish as the Advocacy Coordinator: get The Alliance's image out there; help strengthen The Alliance; make an impact; and help peers as best as possible.

In his free time, Tavarus enjoys grilling and traveling. You can email Tavarus at tavarus@selfadvocacyalliance.org.

Hello, I am Chris Lenart, and I am the Policy Coordinator. I am introducing myself and telling you a little about myself and what you can expect from me as the Policy Coordinator. I have Cerebral Palsy and am nonverbal. To communicate, I use an iPad that has an app called Proloquo4Text which speaks what I type.



I grew up in Bensenville, Illinois, which is right by O'Hare Airport, and yes, I could see the people's faces in the airplanes from the ground. It was scary, but you would ignore the planes as you got used to it. I currently live in Naperville, Illinois. I have my bachelor's in Computer Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After college, I worked for HSBC for fourteen years and loved it. However, as the economy worsened, HSBC shut down the business I supported, so I was let go. After that I co-wrote a book called "They Said We Couldn't" with a friend who also has Cerebral Palsy. It is about the struggles that we face throughout our lives. After the book was done, I had a feeling of doing more, so I started a YouTube channel and website about disability topics. The website is Disability Awareness.us. Check it out!

In 2019, I was in a program called Illinois Partners in Policymaking. If you want to learn the history of disability and how to be a great advocate for people with disabilities, you may want to check it out! Illinois Partners in Policymaking is starting again this year. The Alliance will share information on applying when it is available.

As the Policy Coordinator, I have several responsibilities to make sure you get information on the policies in Illinois and beyond that affect people

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with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) disabilities. These responsibilities include:

- Engaging with statewide entities relating to public policy that impacts people with IDD.
- Researching and monitoring public policy issues affecting people with IDD.
- Assist in developing The Alliance's policy agenda through discussion and input from people with IDD.
- Meet with elected officials and decision-makers relating to public policy that impacts people with IDD.
- Share information about public policy and legislative advocacy opportunities.

Elected officials and decision-makers don't always know what will help people with IDD; as self-advocates we must "speak up and speak out" to educate them.

Let's work together to make changes in 2023 and beyond! You can contact me at chris@selfadvocacyalliance.org.

The Alliance is on YouTube!
Find and subscribe by searching for
Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance



Join The Alliance for The February 2023 Webinar!

You Be The Judge

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

10am Central Time

Join Zoom meeting [here](#)

Meeting ID: 822 2405 0502

Passcode: 931710



During "You Be the Judge", participants will acquire an understanding of the basic principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through discussing and deciding whether discrimination has occurred in cases that are reviewed. The names in the cases have been changed to protect the innocent and the guilty.

Consuelo Puente is a multicultural training with Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center (FMPTIC). She is a retired attorney and has many years of experience in disability related matters.

Join The Alliance for The March 2023 Webinar!

It's My Right!

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

10am Central Time

Join Zoom meeting [here](#)

Meeting ID: 898 3061 3190

Passcode: 261966

Let's work together to learn about our rights and our responsibilities as self-advocates. Join Vincent Smith as we learn about our rights from global, national, statewide, and service perspectives.



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In Case You Missed It!

Alliance Membership Webinar

Recorded Live on Tuesday, January 17, 2023

View the recording [here](#).

Interested in starting a self-advocacy group? Wanting to reinvigorate your current group? Join us and learn about joining or re-signing as an Alliance member group chapter!

Membership will look a bit different during this grant cycle. During our time together, we will discuss what services The Alliance will offer to self-advocacy groups, what expectations for member group chapters will be and answer your questions!



Self-Advocacy Meetings
Every Thursday at
12noon Central Time

Join on computer, tablet or
smartphone

<https://zoom.us/j/324815633> or
call 1-929-436-2866

Meeting ID: 324 815 633

[Click Here](#) for handouts shared during
Meetings



Thursday, February 23 - The Power of Language

A session about Person First vs Identity First language. What is the difference? Presenters Mike Rogers and Sophia Roberts from SANYS (Self-Advocates of New York State) will share ways to think about how you want to be defined.