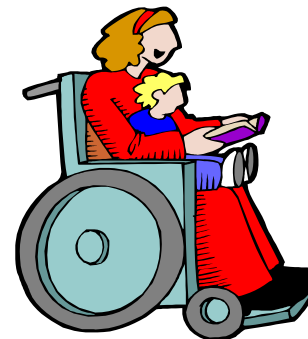


The People First Connection

The Voice of Self-Advocacy in Oregon
Published by Community Partnerships and
Self-Advocates As Leaders



A Person, Not A Disability

Gayle B. Gardner
Portland

We are people; we are not disabilities. Ask yourself this question: "What is a disability?"

What do you see when you look at a person with a disability?

I am angry with people who treat us like we don't have intelligence. I walk slowly. I talk slowly. I write slowly.

My life has changed drastically from years ago. Take some advice from me.

Look up to us!

Speak to us!

Treat us like people!

I am educating myself more about the whole spectrum of advocacy. I want to train our whole

community in advocacy. It may take longer than I wish it to.

I have dreams and expectations for myself.

I have special dreams for our world.

Who are we? We are people.

I see my friends looking at me when I tell them I want to become a National Self-Advocacy leader. They tell me to go slow. Slowing down my personal development and ambitions is not easy for me.

Here are my ideas for our community.

1. Look honestly at your own progress as a free person.
2. Think about all the talent you have.
3. Fight for what you believe in.
4. Remember your priorities.
5. Remember that sometimes you will learn more if you listen to others.

I know in my heart that I will achieve all of my goals.

A Person, Not A Disability (cont.)

I wish to thank everyone who has known me for an excruciatingly long time. Thank you for listening to me even when you don't agree with me.

I enjoy writing articles. I think it is my responsibility to write a book about my life. I have gone from a passive victim of a sheltered workshop to an independent woman and a leader.

Life is full of pain as well as joy. We have to adjust. The pain will not easily go away. But we must endure it and we must overcome it.



All articles published in *The People First Connection* are subject to editing for spelling, grammar and length.

Haiku

Eleanor Bailey
Portland

Down Syndrome

*I have Down syndrome.
I am Eleanor Bailey.
I was born with it.*

I Can't Count By Threes

*I am frustrated.
I can't do what the class does.
I have Down syndrome.*

I Do Work Hard

*Some things I can do.
A few things I cannot do.
I work very hard.*

My Room

*I like my room.
I play my Beatles music.
I dance by myself.*

Younger Sister

*My younger sister.
Wonder how she feels about me?
Down syndrome and me.*

I Can

*I can do great things.
I can write articles too.
Being me is great!*

The author is in sixth grade at the Portland Family Cooperative School.

A Crippled S.O.B.

Russell Bonesteel
Salem

My name is Russell. I have cerebral palsy.

I have learned that one must have a sense of humor to cope with the many ugly and often absurd things insensitive or ignorant people say and do.

For example, I was a treatment aid in a facility for adolescents being treated for drug addiction. The kids were hormonal and going through drug withdrawal.

Adolescent hormones PLUS drug withdrawal EQUALS gargoyles!

I care about gargoyles but they are sometimes less than pleasant.

My first night, five minutes into graveyard shift, a gargoyle saunters up and retorts, **“You are a crippled S.O.B.”** He did not use the initials.

We are now nose-to-nose and toe-to-toe.

I replied: **“You know that was very creative and original too! That is the very first time I have ever heard that crap ---TODAY!!!**

Gargoyle shrivels up – goes away!

The gargoyle wanted me to storm out of the front door. Not a chance!

I found the counselor a moment later weeping in the office. In spasmodic gasps she said, **“You’ll work out just fine here”**.



Writer’s Workshop

Russell Bonesteel’s article was written with supports at a Writer’s Workshop put on by *The People First Connection* staff at the annual Developmental Disabilities In-Service at Oregon State University.

Other participants included **Kathy Smith, Marcia Stevens, Ann Blackburn, Bruce Bennett, Dwight Brown, Neil Jay Yocum, Edna Landers, Carol Easter, Charlotte Moison, Kathy Mills, Ronnie Feik and Sheri Koeff.**

Thanks to our wonderful volunteer support people!

All of the articles will be published in this or a later edition of *The People First Connection*.

Cooking

Sheri Koeff
Baker City

My name is Sheri Koeff. I live in Baker City, Oregon with my family. I am 29. My favorite hobby is cooking although I also enjoy visiting with **Stacy Ann Ward**, my best friend.

My mom taught me how to cook after I started to learn to cook in school. In school I learned about safety skills.

Don't touch the fire!

I learned utensils. I like to look through the recipes in my cookbook from school. I still need some supervision.

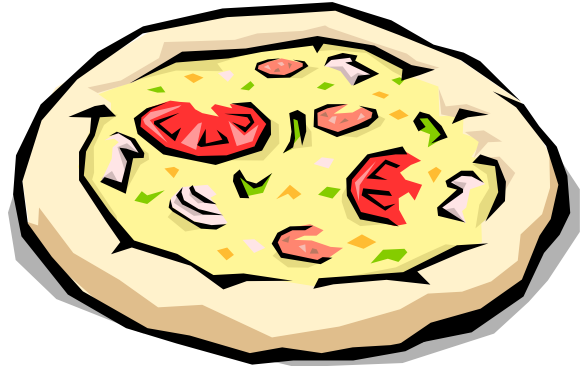
I love to cook fresh-baked pizza. I taste it while I am cooking. That helps with the seasonings. The ingredients for that are sauce, olives, mushrooms, green peppers, onions and meat.

I cook different kinds of cookies too, especially peanut butter cookies. Yum!

I listen to country music while I am cooking. Once I made a meal for my family and they enjoyed it.

I have two parents and an older brother, Ben, who lives with us. He works with my father at Feth Manufacturing, which sells farm equipment.

Stacy Ann is my friend. She's 38 years old, older than I. I will be 30 next year.



I have Stacy over for dinner a lot. She doesn't cook with me but we visit. Sometimes we play games like Air Hockey, Pictionary, Trouble or checkers. I own all of those games.

Jackie Fritz from North Powder gives me advice in case I decide to live on my own. I am thinking of doing that. I think my parents would be sort of sad if I moved out. I would be sad too.

I could go shopping for food and Christmas and birthday presents to surprise them.

I would like to buy a computer and learn more about money. My cousin Teri has a computer and I play bowling and solitaire on it.

“In the end, it is not the words of our enemies that we remember: it is the silence of our friends.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Colleagues in People First,

Thank you for printing our article in *The People First Connection*.

You are leading the charge for justice in the world.

We are so proud to participate with you in the struggle.

We love you so much.

Lead on!

Justin and Yoshiko Dart
Washington, DC

Dear *People First Connection*,

Thank you for printing my poem and adding Marsha Forest's "Celebration of Life" to it.

Yes, I sent some copies to my Mum in England.

Thank you for your leadership.

Angela Jarvis-Holland
Portland

Plans

Marcia Stevens
Albany

When I was 18 months old I was crippled in an accident. It affected my speech. When I was 3 years old my mom and dad moved to Lebanon, Oregon.

In 1953 I went to the Children's Hospital School. I was there for two years.

I have been living on my own for over 25 years. Lebanon, that's my hometown. But I live in Albany.

I live in my own apartment.

Ever since I have been on my own I have wanted to leave Oregon and start a new life. I want to move to California.

I know that bad things happen in the world but I believe there is a place for me in it.

Sometimes I don't understand what people are saying. There are a lot of things I don't understand.



Pay Me For a Change

Bruce Bennett
Baker City, Oregon

I'd like to be paid to sing the songs that I really like.

The songs that I like the most are from back in the forties and fifties. I especially like Country and Western songs.



I really like **Hank Williams, Sr.** and his songs “Cold, Cold Heart”, “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry”, and “Your Cheatin Heart”.

I also like **Charlie Pride’s** song “Kiss An Angel Good Morning”. Another favorite of mine is **Don Williams** “I Believe In You”.

What I like about the old songs is that they have a lot of feeling in them and sometimes they make people cry when I sing them.

When I sing these songs for people I feel like I’m expressing a lot of love.

People really get a kick out of the way I perform my favorite songs.

I sang “Your Cheatin’ Heart” at the state conference Gong Show. When I was done everybody came up to me and said “congratulations”.

Me and About Me

Neil Jay Yokum
La Grande

*My name is Neil Yokum and
What I have learned right here
Is what I have been writing of
and gives me lots of cheer.*

*The ideas that you present
Give me much more ideas.
This makes me so very happy
To have the ideas sent.*

*Where I live is in LaGrande
and I work at New Day.
At New Day I do often hem.
Though not too well, as lots say.*

**The People First Connection
is available in alternative formats.**

My Turn To Talk

Steven Whittenburg
Yamhill

My name is Steve Whittenburg and I am learning to be a self-advocate. I am a member of the Self-Directed Supports Committee for the County of Yamhill.

We make suggestions to County officials who in turn make suggestions to State officials for the self-advocates of Yamhill County.

I share the position of vice-chair of our group with another person who is a self-advocate. When the Chair is unable to attend meetings my friend and I conduct the meetings in his absence.

We listen to what others have to say and sometimes make suggestions of our own.

I am still learning but I am getting better all the time.

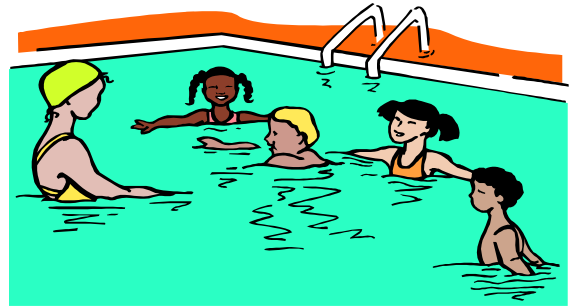
Some are even beginning to say that I talk too much sometimes.

To them I say thank you for your time and letting me have my say.

Disneyland

Charlotte Moison
Portland

I flew to Disneyland on a plane with four of my friends. We stayed in a nice hotel. There was a phone, television and shower in the room. Outside there was a swimming pool and a hot tub. I used the hot tub but the swimming pool was too cold.



The weather was hot and there were lots of people.

I rode on the Tea Cup ride, the Peter Pan ride, the Roger Rabbit ride and the Elephant ride.

I saw Mickey and Minnie Mouse and Cinderella.

I stayed for five days and had a good time.

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Mail your article to us
The People First Connection
3886 Beverly Ave. NE I-21
Salem, OR. 97305

A Plan of Action

This statement was written by members of Self-Advocates As Leaders and People 1st of Oregon at Oregon State University in June. It was read aloud by Ruth Morris, Partners In Policy Making, Class of 1998, to the assembled participants at the annual In-Service.

What are our demands as self-advocates and what needs to change in Oregon to get what we are asking for?

Listen to us when we stand up for our rights.

Treat us with respect, with dignity, with kindness, and as equals.

Support a self-advocate on each board where rules are made – there should be at least one self-advocate in every legislative session and/or meeting.

Make laws easier to understand.

Change laws so we can make and keep more money.

Get the information we need to hire our own staff.

We want people in this field, not just for money or just for a job, but because they like working with us.



How can we, self-advocates, work together with parents, staff and professionals to get our needs met?

Support self-advocates to help us be more independent in our lives, yet keep a balance and let us do things for ourselves.

Get larger groups working together using teamwork and cooperation.

Take classes to get more training.

We want to know how to work with you in the system. Work with us to know how to get to the top without making you mad.

Treat us as adults, as you want to be treated, with dignity and respect.

Be trustworthy and do what you say you're going to do.

A Plan of Action (cont.)

This is what we will do to work for what we need.

We will show respect, as we want to be respected, by being willing to listen and hear.

We will help each other (keep people informed and share resources.)

We will put our demands into newspapers or newsletters.

We will speak up, and stand up for what we think is important.

We will speak out on disability issues.

We will stay until we are heard completely and get what we need.

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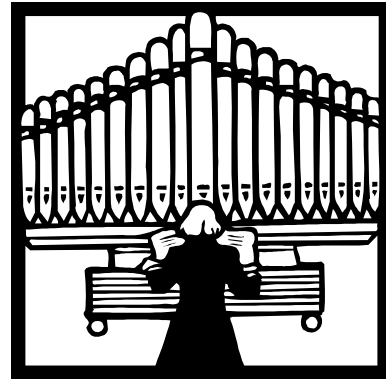
***Cautious, careful people
always casting about to
preserve their reputation
and social standing,
can never bring about a reform.***

Susan B. Anthony

My Favorite Hobbies

**Dwight Brown
LaGrande**

I first learned about ceramics when I lived in Tillamook. I was about 20 years old. I like feeling creative and keeping busy with my hands. I like working with bright colors.



I also love music. I play the keyboard and the organ. I took Organ lessons as a young man. I have an Organ in my home and I like playing lots of different music.

Singing along is fun also. My favorite music is Christian music. It brings me closer to God and I like that feeling.

Some Things We Can't Do

Carol Easter
Gresham

Okay, so how am I supposed to react, or feel?

I can't teach Lindsay's father to be a parent.

Back to the beginning. Lindsay was five years old and went to Burns, Oregon to spend what was expected to be her last Christmas with her parental grandmother.

Lindsay was loved dearly by her grandmother. Lindsay's cerebral palsy was not an issue for her "grandmother Jacqi".

This Christmas was different. Grandmother Jacqi was terminally ill and very weak. So Grandma asked her son, Lindsay's dad, to care for her.

After Christmas Lindsay returned home. She did not have any of the presents she had opened for Christmas.

So, being Lindsay's friend, I called from Gresham to Burns and asked Lindsay's dad where all the presents were.

He told me that she didn't want them and added, "she is a brat".

So I went to Lindsay, a very shy child, and asked for enlightenment.

Lindsay said that she could not put her Quillo away the way "Daddy wanted it". (A Quillo is a blanket that folds into a pillow.)



She said she asked for help. That is something she rarely does. Lindsay doesn't ask for help on anything. She has the "I can do it" attitude.

So Daddy's response to her was that if she couldn't fold her Quillo she couldn't keep her Christmas presents.

Lindsay's response was unexpected. She told him he could keep the presents and that she never wanted to see him again. Right after that Lindsay's grandmother died.

Guess what? Two years later "Daddy" has not attempted any contact with her including her birthday, Christmas and no presents. No phone calls or letters.

How can you teach a man like that to be a Daddy?

I'm a Valuable Employee

Ronnie Feik
LaGrande

It makes me happy that I have a job helping people at the retirement center in LaGrande.

Here is the letter that the administrator sent me. This letter made me feel real good.

“Ronnie is an incredible asset to our residents and frequently is observed helping some that use wheelchairs. He is always asking to help our activities director.

Ronnie, with his friendly personality and willingness to help, has endeared himself to both staff and residents.

He has often been described as a “saint”. He is a wonderful friend, neighbor and resident of Grande Ronde Retirement Residence.

Some Thoughts

“The history of an oppressed people is hidden in the lies and the agreed upon myths of its conquerors.”

Meridel LeSueur

“The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived, and dishonest, but the myth - persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.”

John F. Kennedy

“The hearts of small children are delicate organs. A cruel beginning in this world can twist them into curious shapes.”

Carson McCullers

“Act as though it were impossible to fail.”

Dorothea Brand

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightening and the lightening bug.”

Mark Twain

Get on the mailing list for *The People First Connection*
YES! Sign me up!

Name: _____

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The People First Connection
540 24th Pl. NE
Salem, OR. 97301

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The People First Connection

SAAL Communications Committee

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Theresa White
Virginia Bennett
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Gayle B. Gardner
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Dayna Davis

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