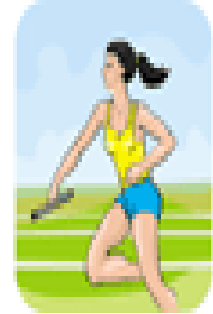


The People First Connection

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



Computers and My Life

James Bierly
Seaside

When I am at home you will most likely find me at my computer. My computer is an extension of myself: it is the link that keeps me connected to the world. I first learned to use computers in the 1980s. In the beginning I used them to play games. Ever since then computers have been a total fascination to me.

In the mid-90s I got my own Mac. It had lots of programs. I started messing around, just to see what I could do. I screwed it up royally and then I had to learn how not to screw it up.

I always had trouble with handwriting. I liked to talk, but I hated to write and I couldn't read what I wrote! It helped when I got my Mac and learned to type.

I began posting stories on the Internet. Lots of people read my stories. It was way cool. I could finally get some ideas out for the world to see. I was finding myself.

After working with it for a while I began to discover and explore. I learned that there were a lot of things my computer could not do. It ended up in the repair shop a lot. Finally I went to a repair workshop so that I could learn how to fix my own mistakes. The workshop did not really teach me that much. I knew more than I thought. It did give me confidence in my own abilities.

They started to get computers at my mom's school. For most of the teachers it was their first experience with a computer. I went around and set them up and taught people how to use them. Sometimes I could even help them to fix their problems. When the school finally got a full time computer expert he let me

Computers and My Life

help him to do adjustments, setups, basically anything.

Around the same time I started working at a place in Portland call FreeGeek. It was just starting up. It is a computer recycling place.

They take people's old computers apart and save any parts that still work. They make new computers and give them to people who can't afford to buy one. I volunteered there every Saturday for about a year, and they taught me a lot about computers.

The people at FreeGeek were very respectful of me. They took time to explain everything to me and helped me when I needed it. They treated me like an equal, a peer.

I decided to start my own business. It's called, The Set-Up Guy. I got information about how to start a business and sent in the paperwork to the city and state. Now I have my business license.

I don't do any advertising. I don't need a large workload. I set peoples' computers up and tell them how to use them. I can

answer some of the concerns people have, too. One of my

favorite things to do is to install software and hardware.

What would my life be like without computers? I use my computer for playing games, writing stories and research. I can find anything on the Internet!

Computers have given me freedom. Being on the Internet has given me a chance to meet people. I can't talk to people by going out of the house as much as I can on the Internet.

The web community I started has approximately 75 members. I feel connected with people. I can get my thoughts out. I don't have to worry about my handwriting. I have gone to a chat site that has been really helpful. The chat room lets me communicate with others.

I used to be a good talker but not a good listener. Now I have learned to listen to people. It has helped me to have conversations in person too.

On the computer people can't tell what's on the outside. They don't look at my outside, they only see the inside. People don't see me as a person with a disability.

Computers are the HUB of my life.

Fairview Trust Fund Gives Grants

Judy Cunio

In the last issue of *The People First Connection*, I told you that the new Fairview Community Housing Trust Fund would soon be giving its first round of grants. Since then, 125 families and individuals sent in applications. More than 60 will be funded. People requested money to make bathrooms accessible, build ramps, buy power door openers, etc.

When Fairview was sold, the money from the sale was put into a trust fund. 5% of the money and all of the interest can be used to help people make their homes more accessible and to promote the independence, health and safety of the person with developmental disabilities.

If you are a person with a developmental disability, you can apply for up to \$5,000. There are a

few rules you have to follow. For example:

- The person must have a developmental disability and not live in a group home.
- The money must directly benefit the person with a developmental disability.
- The person who does the work must be a certified contractor.

If you missed the first round, not to worry. The state will be taking more applications between September 15 and October 15, 2004. For an application form or more information, call the Department of Human Services at 503-945-5182 or visit their website

www.dhs.state.or.us/disabilities and then see "Hot Topics."

All articles submitted to *The People First Connection* are subject to editing for spelling, grammar and content.

You can e-mail your article to mtbclarion@comcast.net

We would love to receive your work.

A Long, Hard Road

Alisa Kerwood
Portland

I have cerebral palsy. How do I like being a person with a disability? I really don't know anything different. I have had cerebral palsy since before I was one year old. I'm not going to lie to anyone. It's been a hard road to go down. It is a hard road to go down for children and preteens to go down given all the name-calling and other stuff that they go through. It is even harder when you have a disability.

I fought. I had to. I mean I had to fight tooth and nail to get where I wanted to be, and then some. I went through years of therapies.

Two years of occupational therapy, five years of speech, eleven of physical. I did it all.

I got a lot of criticism from my family and even more from strangers.

I would think, "for goodness sakes," they don't even know how hard it is to have a disabling condition like I have.

"Go figure." But my life turned out good. At least I think so.

Keep the Fire Going

Joe Minor
Corvallis

I am a member of the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities. As a member I got to attend the national convention of DD Councils in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was the greatest meeting I have ever been to.

The highlight of the convention was meeting the girls.

We have to work hard to keep the fire going like a burning candle.

While we were there I got to visit the temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I got to hear the choir. They were great.

While at the Temple I got to walk around the Lion House and the Bee House. They were real interesting.

I got to walk around the Delta Center where the Utah professional basketball team plays. It is also where they held some of the Winter Olympic Games.

I did all these things after the work of the conference was done. That's all that I have to say about it.

Tom's Telephone Service

**Tom Crites
Eugene**

My name is Tom Crites and I'm here to tell about my job. I was born in Fairbanks, Alaska and moved to Eugene, Oregon when I was three. I have cerebral palsy and I've always been in a wheelchair.

I run Tom's Telephone Service. I make calls to remind clients about their upcoming meetings.

One part of my job is to do billings. With the assistance of Noelle Osborn, my coworker, I print invoices and send them to my clients. Some of the skills I use in my business are customer service, letter writing, computer knowledge and math. I like running my own business because it is easy to do and I like working for myself.

I had dreams of running my own business. When I was seventeen, Alternative Work Concepts got me started with my first set-up. It consisted of two tape recorders, a phone and a headset. It was hard to use this system

because I couldn't make the calls myself. This meant that I was less efficient than I am now.

I started out with one group, making 27 calls per month. I took me two days to do those calls.

My current set-up includes a computer with a phone program, head switch and a headset. Now I perform, on average, about 50 calls a week, much faster than before. I'm proud of how far I have come since starting my own business.

It wasn't easy to reach my dreams, but I did. Let me tell you about the chain of events that led to where I am now.

When I was at Sheldon High School, the receptionist asked me to answer the phone and leave messages. I did that two hours a day for two years. That gave me experience that would lead more toward my career in phone operation.

Then in 1991, I got started with Alternative Work Concepts, using space donated by The Arc of Lane County. I couldn't have started my business without this important piece.

My equipment was purchased by the Oregon Commission for the Blind. I like my equipment because it helps me to do my job faster.

Once I got settled with my new system, it was time to drum

Tom's Telephone Service

up business. Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association was my first group and their staff helped me to land them as a client.

I work at getting new clients by making presentations to prospective groups. I do Power Point presentations and pass out brochures. I talk about the importance of phone calls and how I get clients. I discuss my rates and billing and calling procedures.

This method has been important and successful in gaining new clients. I enjoy working with people and talking about what I do.

This is how I think people with disabilities should live their lives.

I think that all communities should include the disabled the way my town does.

By caring for others, we can all make a difference in our communities.

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Leaders**
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(800) 410-7069 ext. 133
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INVOLVED!**

The Potter and the Clay

Eric Barton
Seaside

For the past three years Brandi has been the bright star in my life. It has filled me with incredible joy to think of her as a sister in my life.

When I came into her life I was an angry, bitter person. I was unable to gain the tools I needed to accept my own disability, which is cerebral palsy.

I am sure that I am not the first person to tell you that living with any kind of limitation is hard enough. But, as an adult living on my own, I thought it was impossible.

The Bible tells us to allow the Lord to mold us into the loving kind of people that he wants us to be.

My life with Brandi has been a lot like that to me. She is the potter and I am the clay. Everyday, I allow myself to learn from the gifts that she is able to share.

Because I allowed her to be my potter she has been able to remold my heart in so many ways. Teaching me how to become a happier person is just one of her many spiritual gifts.

I Like My Jobs

**Brad Divish
The Dalles**

I work at St. Vincent DePaul and at the Columbia Gorge Center in The Dalles. We call the Columbia Gorge Center “China Gorge.”

I like my jobs. I work five days a week. At St. Vincent DePaul I use a broom and mop and dust pan to clean.

My mom works in The Dalles too. She gives shots, types and answers the phone. My mom helps the doctor.

My dad stays home and plants seeds.

I walk to work. I watch for cars. I do a good job. I ride the bus home.

Self-Advocates As Leaders

“We believe...

That all people should be able to speak up for themselves and make their own decisions and mistakes.”

1-800-410-7069 ext. 133
outside Portland

We Have A Relationship

**Mariah Langer
The Dalles**

I have a relationship. I work with people at the Columbia Gorge Center. I like working with them and I like what I am doing.

I have a good friend and I like working with him. I sit with this person.

He likes me and I see him just about every day.

I work out there. We hang out together every single day that we work.

I don't think it has been difficult to have a relationship just because I have a disability.

It is okay to have a relationship.

“Mainstreaming is like visiting. Inclusion is belonging.”

Dan Wilkins

My Dog Shoey

**Bryan Molesworth
The Dalles**

I want to tell you about my dog, Shoey. Shoey is a nice dog. He is a standard poodle. I got him last March. The first day I got him I had to go to the emergency room at the hospital because of kidney stones.

Mom and dad had to put him in a crate. They were worried because they didn't get home until 2 in the morning. But he still liked us.

Our old dog, Sam, barks and growls at Shoey because Shoey gets to come into the house and Sam is an outdoor dog. They were both happy when it got really cold this winter. They both got to come into the house.

I used to do volunteer work at the state office. I shredded paper in a little shredder machine that fit over the wastepaper basket. Now, I don't do that anymore and I miss doing it.

I always used to ride the CAT down there. Sometimes the van driver would take me to Acres for a coffee. I like mochas – hot mochas and iced mochas both.

I belong to a job club. Twice a month we meet on Tuesdays. We talk about lots of stuff like hygiene, getting a job out in the community, and how to get along with people when we are mad or angry.

I work at the Columbia Gorge Center and I make fire starters out of cherry pits and wax and put them into a paper cup. After the wax is on the pits, I staple the cup in a paper bag.

I have business cards. I call my business "Bryan's Firestarters."

Friends

Rita Beckett
Portland

Friends are good people to hang around with. Bad people are not good for us.

Friends can help you find things out about each other. Good friends can have fun like going to the beach.

Some bad people like to get you into trouble. Good friends would not get you into trouble. Friends help you out when you are in trouble. With friends you can talk about things.

People who are good friends can be friends for a long time.

End of School

Travis Streets
Dallas

My name is Travis Streets and I turned 21 on February 23. I am now in my last year of school. I attend the Dallas Post-High School in Dallas, Oregon.

My teacher's name is Betsy. She and I are good friends as well as student and teacher. I have another woman I work with at school whose name is Lecilia. I am also friends with her.

While at school I have also made friends with lots of other students.

My best friends are named Ashlie and Chris.

Time has gone by very fast and I will be leaving school for the very last time on June 14, 2004. I have liked going to school.

When I finish with school I will need to find a job. There are lots of jobs that interest me. I am a good worker.

I think the job I would like to have for this summer is to install satellite dishes for people.

That sounds like a nice way to spend my first summer after school.

Sometimes I Feel Hurt

Kay Sims
Seaside

I like to do things with other people. I wish I didn't have this disability because when I was in school people teased me because I was in special education. They called me names!

I hang out with people at church. They are good to me. I talk to them and they are happy to talk to me. At church services we shake hands and say hello.

I like to do things for Special Olympics. I meet new people. They are really nice people. They have the same disabilities that I have but they are from other places.

I am doing track and field this year. Track and field is my favorite.

I wish I didn't have a disability It hurts sometimes. Sometimes people downtown call me names and it makes me really mad. My friends say to ignore them.

I like my friends.

When I get really upset I go for walks. I like the ocean. It is really quiet and it always makes me feel better.

Sometimes I Feel Hurt

I like to help other people with disabilities. If people have problems they can always talk to me about them.

Many people from Special Olympics talk to me about their problems because they know that I am a good listener.

The only thing is that sometimes it gets very lonely having a disability.

The King and Queen Chase

Raven Cruz

Age 8

Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived in a castle. She was going downstairs to dinner but no one was there.

She asked softly, "Where is everybody?" The King, the Queen and the Prince were missing. She looked everywhere around the castle, and outside, and found no one!

The second look around she found Prince James in his small room. Together, they looked everywhere for the King and Queen.

After sometime, the Prince put his hand on the side of his face and said, "Oh, yes. I forgot to tell you. They went shopping."

The little girl said, "You should have told me before."

"Well, you were wandering around the castle and I couldn't find you. So I went to my room," said the Prince.

"It's too bad we can't drive. We could catch up with them," said the Princess.

The little girl and the Prince were twins. They rode their bikes into town to go to the Royal Store.

At the store they found the King and Queen. They had to look everywhere for them.

But after looking around the store they found their family and everyone went home together.

**You can do a story for
*The People First Connection***

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Call SAAL at (503) 232 9154
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To arrange a Writer's Workshop
in your town.**

The Places I Have Been

**Sherri Osburn
Portland**

I am a member of the Board of Directors of Inclusion, Inc. in Portland. Inclusion, Inc., is a service brokerage. The board makes decisions about money and hiring the Executive Director. As a member of the Board of Directors I have been able to go to lots of trainings and learn lots of different things.

When I went to a training in Salem about brokerages we got to spend the night in a hotel. I liked going out to dinner.

I also went to the “My Voice – My Choice” training in Salem. There were a lot of different people there that I had never met before. At first, I felt very shy, but I got better.

I don’t know if anyone else there besides me had ever lived at Fairview Training Center. I took a lot of pictures of people.

In April 2004 I went to a training in Keizer where a man named David Pitonyak talked. He is very funny. I had to laugh at some of the funny things he had to say. He had a great way of talking.

He talked about how it was okay for people to be different.

Also, State Representative Billy Dalto came and he talked about housing issues for poor people and people with disabilities.

When I lived at Fairview I thought it would always be there. But now the buildings are being torn down and the money from Fairview will be used to help people with housing in the community.

I would like to keep going to trainings because I learn lots of things. That is something I like a lot.

I would also like to help people with disabilities and someday I would like to be one of those people who put on those trainings.

***The People First Connection
Believes that all people have
important things to say and
that, with supports, they can
say it.***

**All articles for this publication
are written by people with
developmental disabilities, with
or without supports. We believe
that the most authentic voice of
disability comes from the people
who have disabilities.**

