



Michigan Partners For Freedom

Winter 2011

A Letter From the MPF Project Coordinator...

Greetings Partners,

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) recently published a report titled, *Segregated and Exploited: The Failure of the Disability Service System to Provide Quality Work (2011)*. According to Curt Decker, NDRN Executive Director, “For decades we have worked to ensure federal

“Contributing to one’s community is fundamental to the principles of Self-Determination”

laws guarantee the right of people with disabilities to live and work in their chosen communities. Yet our investigation found that many people with disabilities are still being segregated and financially exploited” (NDRN Press Release on 1/18/11). “The report calls for: ending segregated employment and the subminimum wage by restricting all federal and state money that is spent on employers who segregate employees with disabilities from the general workforce; strengthening current and create new tax incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities in integrated workplaces

at comparable wages; and increasing labor protections and enforcement of existing law.” (NDRN Press Release on 1/18/11). Although Michigan has made many strides in reducing its segregated living arrangements, segregated, low-wage employment continues to be an obstacle for many citizens with disabilities.

Contributing to one’s community is fundamental to the principles of Self-Determination. It can be accomplished in many ways including paid full or part-time work, volunteer opportunities, voting, or membership in a community group. If individuals with disabilities are not given useful tools to build their employment skills or are insufficiently supported to be successful employees or entrepreneurs, citizens with disabilities will continue to be at risk of poverty and will experience an unfulfilled “American dream”.

If you are interested in reading the NDRN report, please visit the NDR website at <http://www.napas.org/images/Documents/Resources/Publications/Reports/Segregated-and-Exploited.pdf>. Consider using this document to advocate for your personal transition from segregated, subminimum wage work to community-based, meaningful employment building on your personal strengths and career interests. If you work for an organization that provides employment supports, consider using this document to transform your agency towards best practice employment services.

Best regards,
Angela Martin

Mt. Pleasant Celebration of Freedom - March 24



Please join The Arc Michigan in celebration of Michigan's Freedom from institutions for persons with developmental disabilities.

The time to celebrate is now!

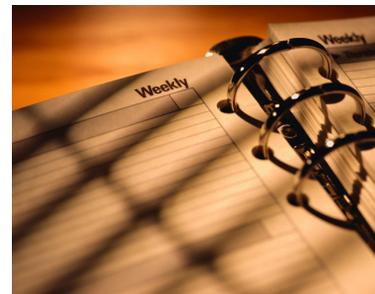
"Amidst uncertainty and challenges, we must take the time and the effort to recognize and memorialize this momentous achievement, and to thank you those who made it possible and helped the way" invites Dohn Hoyle, Executive Director, The Arc Michigan.

Planning for the Future

MPF Local Leaders will be presenting at The Arc Michigan upcoming "Planning for the Future" series in Oakland, Alpena, Marquette, Kent, Calhoun and Sanilac. Self-Determination will be one in a series of topics which include Person Centered Planning, an overview of Michigan Department of Community Health and Area Agencies on Aging, Social Security and Estate Planning. The target audience of these trainings are "aging" caregivers/parents and parents of adult sons and daughters who have never received any support. For more information, call (800) 292-7851.

Local Leaders: Save the Date!

MPF Local Leader 4th Annual Summit will be held on Friday and Saturday, June 17-18, 2011 at The Arc Michigan Annual Conference at the Soaring Eagle Resort in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.



Self-Determination Local Coordinator Says: I Believe that...

My friend, Laura, recently told me that she cannot take for granted that her Personal Assistants (PA) will know what she wants them to do. Laura didn't realize when she began hiring help (sometimes referred to as "staff" or "workers") that she must define and structure her daily support needs. At first, Laura was just plain frustrated because her worker did not readily anticipate her needs and get to some things she needed done. Laura didn't realize how much she and her PA would need to discuss job tasks and match skills to duties. I had never thought of this. *(Why would I? I don't have a person that I have hired for my personal assistance and experience builds knowledge.)*

I think it might be beneficial to do some "getting to know you" activities when people hire new staff. A good place to start might be: What are the person's hobbies? Favorite activities/past times? Music? Movies? Games? Sports? Colors? Foods? Vacation experience? What do they/you not like? What is very hard for them/you?

Once Laura spoke up and offered clear expectations about what she needed done, instead of fuming, Laura and her staff started to work as a team and the relationship became cohesive. As the Self-Determination Coordinator/Project Manager for Northeast Michigan Community Mental Health, I may need to help the employer (in this situation, Laura) figure out the employee's strengths and ways

around their weaknesses. Some people are not good with paperwork and reading, but they might be a good driver, fun companions when running routine errands and/or an excellent cook. Others are great at getting someone involved with their community, but may have no patience for waiting around. Some staff may lack energy/stamina and might be the people who assist for only a few hours at a time. If you have a PA who can physically move you around but she/he is not so good with keeping your kitchen clean enough to meet your standards, then have him/her help you with mobility and have someone else do a task she/he does not do well. My point is this, you might develop each of your staff's strengths and have them work to those. If paperwork is not his/her strength, you might want him/her working evenings and weekends when paperwork duties come up less frequently.

I believe that time and effort must be made to bond and build a team whose efforts are for the self-determination of the person we are serving. HOWEVER, the focus must always be on the person we are serving. The mutuality in this relationship of employer and employee is that they both can grow. This approach can create a win-win situation for the person served and PA. It builds relationships and offers flexibility that we might not have thought of otherwise.



Deb Hemgesberg

Deb Hemgesberg is the Self-Determination Coordinator for Northeast Michigan Community Mental Health and has 20 years of experience serving people who have or love others with disabilities.

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Oakland

Oakland County Local Leader Sarah Vinnay, with Angela Martin and Tammy Finn, participated in the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) Strategic Planning Session on Community Supports this winter. They joined other Council project participants, grantees, and community members to assist MDDC as it prepares to draft its next five-year state plan.

Genesee

The MPF Local Leaders continue to meet every month with the students in the graduating class at the Genesee Intermediate School District Transition Center. The Leaders participate in educational sessions by sharing how they lead successful, self-determined lives. By the time this class graduates, they all should know about their option to arrange services based on self-determination.

Way to go St. Joseph County!



Students attending the February 17 MPF General Community Training

It was a great turnout and a wonderful example of promotion/recruiting for the MPF general community training on February 17. This training was coordinated by Heather Kerr, Clinical Director of Developmental Disabilities services, Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services of St. Joseph County. In the picture at the left, please see the students from the Intermediate School District Programs who attended this general MPF session. Attendance reached fifty plus and the majority were citizens who receive support from the local community mental health services. Of the participants surveyed, 99% of the respondents were “satisfied” or “highly satisfied” with the presentation.

Describing the Future

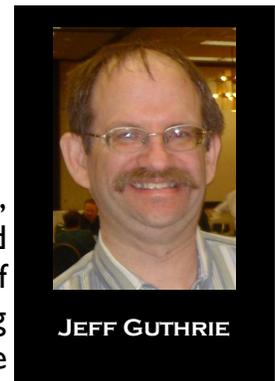
Late last year, five Michigan Partners for Freedom Local Leaders from Oakland and Wayne Counties presented testimony at the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD), *Envisioning the Future Series*. These events were convened to assist ADD in prioritizing its activities and funding by describing what they expect for the future. ADD Commissioner, Sharon Lewis, commented that the testimony of the MPF Local Leaders was efficient, powerful and effective. Especially powerful was Oakland County Local Leader Jeff Guthrie's testimony regarding self-determination which was followed by his mother's testimony of her role in her son's freedom. Here are excerpts from both testimonies:

Jeff Says...

At one time, my mom and my support worker made goals for me. I like it now. Now I can make my own goals. I am thankful for person centered planning and self-determination, and I am in control of my services and my life now. I have also learned how to budget and how the money for my services is spent. This gives me empowerment over what services that I utilize

and to help me reach my goals in life. After arranging my services through self-determination, I was excited to say that I could save the country some money. And more importantly, I got support that I wouldn't normally have without self-determination and as a result my quality of life has improved dramatically. I live in an apartment with a roommate and have a job that I love and

co-workers that I care about, and I volunteer at the zoo and am very active in the community. I recommend self-determination for everyone and hope you will support more and more policies that shift decision-making about supports and services to people who rely on their services.



JEFF GUTHRIE

Sharon Says...

My title, which I love, is I'm Jeff Guthrie's mom. I share with you on how self-determination has made a difference, a huge difference, in Jeff's life. And his family's life. We wanted to support Jeff's desire to move out and be more independent, but we knew he would need support to be successful. When I learned more about self-determination and participated in his person-centered planning meetings, I could tell that the focus was different. Jeff was being asked what he wanted. His wishes and choices were being heard and respected. This is what every mother wants for their child. Pursuing a life of self-determination has helped Jeff develop a

higher level of confidence, a sense of purpose, and an expanded circle of support. As an aging parent, this gives me peace of mind. Because

we worry about what's going to happen to our children when we no longer can care for them, it is very important for parents to understand self-determination and supported independence. This can help assure that our sons and daughters will have a quality of life after we are no longer there to support them.

The **Arc** Michigan

1325 S. Washington Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48910

Phone: 1-800-292-7851
www.mifreedom.org



Michigan Partners for Freedom is a grassroots coalition of people with disabilities, family members, advocates, organizations and other allies working together to build statewide demand for self-determination



**Building Statewide Demand
For Self-Determination**

Celebration of Freedom Mt. Pleasant

**March 24, 2011
1:30 - 4:00 PM**

**Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center
55 S. Harrison Road
East Lansing, MI 48824**