



# The Advocate

A Resource for Families

## Sonya Remembered

The OLMR family has organized a memorial to celebrate the life and contributions of former Director Sonya Mawhorter. The longtime director worked tirelessly as an advocate for families across Ohio.

Please join OLMR Board Members in the Dedication of the Sonya Mawhorter Garden :

**When: Saturday Sept 26, 2009**

**Where: Mount Vernon Dev. Center  
1250 Vernonview Drive, Mount Vernon,  
Ohio, 43050**

**Time: 2:00pm to 4:00pm**

A reception will be held on Mount Vernon Dev. Center grounds after the ceremony.

[You can get directions to Mount Vernon Dev. Center by using the above address in \[www.mapsonus.com\]\(http://www.mapsonus.com\) or in a map program of your choosing in your home or at a public library computer. Please attend for this is the time we can honor our beloved friend and leader Sonya. R S V P to \[dplaza@columbus.rr.com\]\(mailto:dplaza@columbus.rr.com\) or to 614 565 6469.](#)

## We Serve You!

Our mission is to help families in any way that we can. If you are in need of assistance and you don't know where to turn please contact...

**Deb Plaza**  
**OLMR Executive Director**  
**614-565-6469**  
**[dplaza@columbus.rr.com](mailto:dplaza@columbus.rr.com)**

## A Note from the Director

It's hard to believe August is here and summer is almost over. Soon, we will be bundled up in boots and winter coats counting the days until spring arrives once again. Of course, I lost two whole months last spring as my family went through numerous changes. In November 2008, my husband and I found out we were pregnant with twins. As many of you know, we just had our first child, who, at the time wasn't even a year old, so the news of adding two more children to our family seemed a bit scary and exciting at the same time. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, 23 weeks into my pregnancy, I experienced major complications and was placed in the hospital on strict bed rest. My husband and I were told the likelihood of both twins surviving was less than 50% and if both did survive, both would have severe disabilities. The long days and ever longer nights of laying flat on my back, never leaving my room and praying for the birth of my twins began. Each day slightly increased our girl's survival odds. My computer became my very close friend and I watched different bills work their way through the legislative process. One such bill I followed, S.B.79, the proposal to eliminate the words Mental Retardation from our system. (see further info about S.B. 79 inside) I realize there is still much debate, even within our own organization, about eliminating Mental retardation from our state and local governments and agencies. Many feel that the words are appropriate based on their son/daughter's diagnosis, and others feel that the words are archaic and are no longer politically correct. For awhile, I remained ambivalent, seeing both sides until one "special" day during my hospital stay. Frequently, numerous nurses

## *Director's Note cont.*

were in my room checking my progress, and helping me along. On this particular day, two nurses were bantering back and forth and one nurse exclaimed to the other "you are so retarded" and both laughed at the joke. As a mom fighting for the survival of her girls, and knowing that with an early delivery the girls would potentially have significant disabilities including mental retardation, I became extremely offended at the callous use of the words and I no longer remained ambivalent. Having a family member diagnosis with mental retardation is not a joke, and we should not allow our society to use the term as one. Having a family member diagnosis with mental retardation is difficult, challenging and emotional. But, it is also an exhilarating, tremendous gift that should never be belittled or passed off as a quick joke. Regardless of what new buzz words our Government suggests, when we talk about the importance of human life we should not put it in terms of a label or allow derogatory phrases to be commonly accepted. Our focus needs to be on individuals, on people, on our loved ones not words. "We must become the change we want to see". Mahatma Gandhi Note: To date both girls are doing well and mom and dad have not slept weeks!!

## **\$BUDGET TALKS**

**O**n July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Governor Strickland signed Ohio's 2010 – 2011 \$50.5 billion dollar Biennium Budget Bill, HB 1. The department's budget was once again cut, but relative to other state agencies and programs, appropriation reductions to the Department of Developmental Disabilities (Department), and subsequently to the subsidies of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (CBDD), were less devastating than feared at the beginning of the biennium budget process.

According to John Martin Director, "The strength of the collaborative effort within the statewide stakeholder group was an important element in working through the biennial budget process. While there are many challenges in terms of

reduced available funding, we are now positioned to make the most of the available resources, as we work in partnership with service providers across the state."

Budget items of note include: (Per Pipelines Wednesday, July 22, 2009 Volume 3, Issue 15)

☛As a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Medicaid programs are receiving enhanced federal reimbursement through December 2010. This decreased the reliance on General Revenue Funds (GRF) for those programs, which in turn caused the appearance of a decrease from fiscal year 2009 levels ... however the same number of services can be supplied at a lower state match. Example: The state match for the waivers funded by the Martin Settlement was reduced by the offsetting amount of federal reimbursement, but will continue to pay for 1,500 waivers.

☛Subsidies paid to County Boards increased 12% from the fiscal year 2009 level after reductions, but is significantly lower than what was paid in fiscal year 2008.

☛New language was included in the bill and a new GRF line item was created for state operated Developmental Centers to begin paying the ICFMR franchise fee. The payment of this fee will allow the Department to begin receiving additional federal reimbursement in fiscal year 2012.

☛The Central Office GRF line item was reduced by 15% from the fiscal year 2009 level after reductions. This represents a 52% reduction from 2008 GRF appropriation level. The Department is in the midst of restructuring certain areas in an effort to gain administrative efficiencies.

☛The line item that supplies a portion of the payment to Advocacy and Protective Services Inc. (APSI) for guardianship services was reduced by 15%.

According to Sally Meckling, OLMR Secretary, "the department is decreasing census in the developmental centers by 200 for this biennium, and it's anticipated that the budget could potentially be worse in 2012, because the increase F-MAP (money from the government) will go away. With the decrease in census and decreased funding in 2012, there is a potential of closing a building during the next budget cycle".

## Mark Your Calendar

GREAT opportunities to learn!

PAR Convention  
Embassy Suites, Dublin OH  
October 14-16, 2009

OPRA's Fall Conference  
Embassy Suites, Dublin OH  
October 27-28, 2009

## HB 1255:

## We need your support

**H**B 1255 would require that before federally-financed class action lawsuits against certified ICFs/MR can proceed, residents and their legal representatives must receive notice of the proposed class action and be given a time-limited opportunity to opt out of it, or do nothing and become part of a consenting class.

What can you do?

From August 3 - September 4, Members of the U.S. House of Representatives will be working from their District offices near your home. This is an incredible opportunity for you to meet with your Representative, explain the importance of H.R. 1255, and ask him/her directly to COSPONSOR H.R. 1255.

If you are not able to meet with your Representative in his/her District office, calls are important and effective too. Call the District or the D.C. office and ask to speak with the Health LA - this is the staff person that will mostly likely handle request relating to H.R. 1255.

Visit <http://www.congress.org>. Enter your zip code (near top right of screen) to identify your U.S. Representative. Click on his/her name. Choose the "Contact" tab, and then the link to "More District Offices."

VISTS: Call the District office number and ask to speak with the Scheduler to request a meeting with your Representative.

CALLS: To speak to the Health LA, call the District or Washington, D.C. phone number.

### FOLLOW-UP

At least weekly, place a follow-up phone call to inquire as to the status of your request. Be polite, but persistent.

### TEMPLATE MESSAGE

The following is your basic "please support H.R. 1255" letter. It can be used as part of a written request for a meeting, if necessary; as a template for your phone call to Representative's office, or as follow-up communication. It can be changed and personalized.

#### **Template:**

*I am your constituent and am writing to ask that you cosponsor H.R. 1255.*

*Introduced by Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA), as of July 27, H.R. 1255 had 58 cosponsors, with nearly equal Democrats and Republicans. This strong bipartisan support is not surprising. H.R. 1255 will advance the civil rights of individuals with profound cognitive disabilities whose care needs are often best provided for in Medicaid-licensed homes where high quality, compassionate supports are provided.*

*H.R. 1255 will require that before federally-funded class action lawsuits can be filed on behalf of the profoundly disabled residents, they and their legal guardians (usually close relatives) must receive notice of the lawsuit and be given a time-limited opportunity to opt out of the lawsuit. As it now stands, the attorneys filing these actions have never met the majority of class members and could do not know their individual needs. When these lawsuits force the closure of the residents' specialized homes, tragedy often (predictably) follows because these vulnerable people are separated from the services they require for their survival.*

*The injustice and resulting tragedies will be addressed by passage of H.R. 1255. Please contact Pilar Falo, Legislative Counsel to Rep. Barney Frank at 225-5931 to support H.R. 1255 as a COSPONSOR. Thank you very much for your prompt consideration and action.*

*Sincerely,*

*NAME, CONTACT INFO*

## The “Name Change” Bill: Senate Bill 79

**O**n July 7<sup>th</sup> 2009, Governor Strickland signed SB 79, which legally changes state and county agencies names, dropping the words mental retardation from their titles. The bill was introduced by Sen. Jimmy Stewart of Athens county, and unanimously passed by both the House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate in June. The bill will take affect on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 90 days after the signing. Other county boards within the state didn't wait for a law to change their name and already dropped the words “mental retardation”, some as early as the 90's. Delaware county dropped “mental retardation” from it's name in November of 1990. A total of 9 counties made the name change prior to the law being passed. Director John Martin states “The Department is hopeful that with a gradual, common sense approach to the rollout, the name change will be fairly seamless at the state level, and will provide an opportunity to educate the enterprise-wide community regarding developmental disabilities in general.” To read the entire bill, please go to: [http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText128/128\\_SB\\_79\\_EN\\_N.html](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText128/128_SB_79_EN_N.html)

*On the surface “A Positive Culture Initiative” may sound kind of silly, of course we are going to be positive and treat people with respect, we should be doing that already...right? Well as we all know the act of being 'positive' takes a daily effort. Over the years I have seen many families and caregivers struggle with maintaining an upbeat and positive attitude. The Department is reminding us, “DON'T GIVE UP!” Your effort to remain positive will be rewarded. –Pete Moore, Behavior Support Consultant*

The Department is providing support by offering training and consultation services to help guide individuals, families and facilities through the process of promoting a positive culture.

You can read more about the initiative by visiting the ODMRDD web site at the following link:

<http://odmrdd.state.oh.us/futuresmore/CreatingaPositiveCulture.htm>

or for assistance in your community you can contact:

Pam Berry

Senior Policy Advisor

Positive Culture Initiative

(614) 301-2992

[Pam.Berry@dmr.state.oh.us](mailto:Pam.Berry@dmr.state.oh.us)

or

Peter Moore, Behavior Support Consultant

(567)278-1286

[coachmoore@udata.com](mailto:coachmoore@udata.com)

## Promoting a Positive Culture

**O**hio's Department of MRDD is heading up the effort to promote “positive cultures” across the state. This Positive Culture Initiative (PCI) encourages those who provide care and services to move beyond a focus simply on health and safety and towards equality in relationships so that all can reach their full potential and achieve their dreams.

*“A positive culture is an intentional way of supporting all people within our communities that focuses on creating healthy relationships and acknowledging the unique gifts that each brings to those relationships. It is about making the shift in thinking away from power, control and coercion in language and actions, and toward affirmation, unconditional acceptance and encouragement.”—ODMRDD*

Please take the time to visit our new and improved web site.

[www.ohioleague.org](http://www.ohioleague.org)

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