

COMMUNITY NOW!

...promoting inclusive communities for all people marginalized because of a disability



MISSION

Community Now! is a statewide nonprofit organization passionately committed to promoting inclusive communities for all Texans often marginalized because of a disability

WE BELIEVE...

Our loved ones with disabilities should have the option to live in their communities and not languish on long waiting lists for services or forced to live in a dangerous, dehumanizing segregated institution.

The services for our citizens with disabilities must be nothing short of exceptional and that those responsible for providing these services must be held accountable.

Public policy and tax dollars must be aligned to support Texans with disabilities who want to live in smaller, more cost efficient settings in their communities and no longer support the waist and abuse of a failed institutional system.

‘TOGETHER’

March – I/DD Awareness Month Theme

The 2011 theme: ‘TOGETHER’ encourages people to recognize and understand that when individuals who have a disability are an integral part of their local neighborhoods, workplaces, houses of worship, and schools everyone wins.

If you would like to share this message with Texas decision makers, please join us at the “**Texans March for Independence**” – **March 1st**. In a state that appears to make decisions about long-term care supports and services based on an institutional bias we have our work cut out for us. When community-based supports and services are funded and Texas institutions are closed Texas citizens who live with or without a disability will benefit:

- People who live in a State Supported Living Center against their will be allowed to leave and receive the supports and services needed to live in the community. A place many would rather live at a 3rd of the cost, increasing fiscal responsibility.
- “Interest lists” will decrease when funds saved through consolidation and closures of the State Support Living Centers are designated to funding community-based supports and services for people waiting on an “interest list”- some 7-9 years or longer.
- Funding designated for Facility maintenance would decrease saving tax-payer dollars.

If you can’t make it to Austin, please send a letter. Need help writing and sending a letter, visit the **Help Texas Kids** website: <http://helptexaskids.com/>. They can send it for you! **Our message: NO CUTS - LONG-TERM CARE SYSTEMS REFORM NEEDED!** It is a win-win situation. Together we *CAN* make a difference!

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Independence from waiting. Freedom from institutions



What are *Natural Supports*?

By Dee Blose - 2005

Natural supports refer to the support and assistance that naturally flows from the associations and relationships typically developed in natural environments such as the family, school, work and community. These relationships and the support and assistance they offer, maintain and enhance the quality and security of life for people with disabilities.

A natural support is something that you or your family can access for fun, for encouragement, or for assistance because it has already been established through natural relationships or typical routines. This support is available to you, regardless of any "disability" issue, just like it is available to others!

Everyone has interdependent relationships in life. Natural supports are already there! They might not be especially "helpful" at this moment. They might not be especially "attractive" at this moment, but nevertheless, they are there for you just like they are there for other people in this world.

You WILL have to put more energy into their development than others do. You may have to be patient, persistent, and maybe even insistent on your right to access.

Why would I want to access natural supports?

Using natural supports promote feelings of belonging and participation in LIFE! They draw on people's natural inclination to care for others and form relationships that last. They do NOT contribute to artificial relationships, but rather people are together because they desire to be together. They have longer staying power!

Developing and using natural supports makes more sense for your long-term sanity! They are not dependent upon "funding" or "eligibility".

They do depend upon YOU though and your persistence to find them and make them fit into your life.

Natural Supports can be a "who."

- Friends
- Family
- Neighbors
- Acquaintances
- Co-workers
- Volunteers
- Peers
- Community group members Church members

Natural Supports can be a "what."

- Family events Holiday celebrations
- Community events
- Community group activities
- Recreation activities
- Churches
- Community locations
- Volunteer experiences
- Social events
- School time and activities

Tips for accessing natural supports:

- **Don't limit your options to specialized programs.** - Explore a variety of resources and programs in your community. Options need not be limited to specialized or segregated programs for individuals with disabilities. While participation in special programs is at times beneficial, regular programs offer a wider range of opportunities and are offered at more locations.
- **Move toward inclusion.** - If special programs are chosen, consider transitioning at some point into a program of similar nature where skills

can be carried over. For example, participation in Special Olympics swim training can lead to taking a swim class at the local community center.

- **Tell others WHY this is important for your child.** - Remind others that your child wants to participate in his community just like all of his friends and other children. Let them know how important this is for his self-confidence and self-esteem.
- **Resistance to participation.** - Sometimes others don't understand why you would want to participate and will direct you to programs with special supports. You may have to spend more time explaining why it is so important to your child and family that you participate. Ask the question, "What will it take?" You may have to assist with "modifications", give suggestions, or even be willing to model assisting your child to participate.
- **Ask your support program to help you.** - When you do access special support services (therapies, special education, etc.) ask for goals that will directly work toward community participation. If family and friends are not comfortable around your child, ask for services to include them, so that more folks know about your child than just you! If you are not able to go out in your community, ask for your therapist to go with you and give suggestions for participation.
- **Fight the isolation.** - Too many families become isolated when they have a child with a disability. It is a progression in our culture that you must FIGHT! You are not doing your child any favors to isolate him. While you may feel that it is a temporary solution due to overwhelming environments, you CANNOT make isolation be your long-term solution. That is no solution and will only

create new problems.

- **Get emotional support.** - Find somebody (possibly another parent in a similar situation) that can give you moral and emotional support when you reach out and get bit! There is a lot to be said for talking to somebody that has been there or is experiencing similar feelings. It is natural to need emotional support when life throws you curve balls.
- **Think long-term.** - What you do everyday is your child's "program". LIFE is your program! Get out, get about, and get on with your life! Don't let today's problems keep you and your children from experiencing life and all it holds. Make sure you have developed a set of supporters that care about your child like you do, so that he will have lots of opportunities in the future.
- **Be patient.** - None of this happens overnight. You will have setbacks. Some people will never understand, don't let them get you down. Keep your eye on the goal. Cut yourself a break now and then. But...
- **Don't give up!** - Think of the long-term benefits for your child to have the opportunity to participate and for your family to HAVE A LIFE!

"When people cease waiting for great leaders or prophets to solve entrenched problems and look, instead, within themselves – trusting their own thinking, believing in their own power – and to their families and communities for solutions, change will follow... Our lives play themselves out within a set of reciprocal relationships. If each human being could understand that we are all interdependent and responsible for one another, it would save the world."

- Wilma Mankiller,
Former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation

Community Now!

Texas 82nd Legislative Recommendations for Long Term Care Reform

- 1) Direct the Health and Human Services Commission to develop a long range plan to re-balance long term care services for Texans with Disabilities. This plan should include the following components:
 - Develop a diversely represented Task Force to guide plan development.
 - Close and consolidate State Supportive Living Centers (SSLC) as the population decreases. The closure process must include the choices of those choosing to remain in these facilities and ensure those who wish to leave have every opportunity to do so.
 - Ensure supports and services for people living in the community are available, exceptional and accountable.
 - People transitioning from SSLC's to community settings should develop a Person Directed Plan to ensure the successful transition in order to meet individual needs.
 - Money Follow the Person protocols utilized for people with disabilities exiting nursing homes and private ICF-MR facilities should be incorporated to support people exiting SSLCs.
 - Designate all funding saved through consolidation and closure of SSLCs to fund people with disabilities on Waiting Lists for community services and supports.
- 2) Consolidate Medicaid Waivers into a system that determines services based on needs generated through Person Centered Planning.
- 3) Personal Care Attendants and other Direct Support Professionals must be paid a living wage of plus appropriate benefits.
- 4) Expand Consumer Directed Services (CDS) options to all waiver services and ensure information on how to access these services is readily available and accessible.

For more information, send an Email to Joe Tate at: tate392@gmail.com or the Community Now@ email address: communitynowfreedom@gmail.com.

To learn more about Community Now! visit us online at:
www.communitynowfreedom.org.



In the News...

Fort Worth couple with disabilities fear effect of Texas budget cuts

By Alex Branch | Ft. Worth Star Telegram | 1-26-2011

<http://www.star-telegram.com/2011/01/26/2800538/fort-worth-couple-with-disabilities.html#ixzz1CFGXNKtV>

Hundreds Speak Out About Proposed State Budget Cuts

By Karina Kling | Your News Network | 2-2-2011

Jody Farris, mom and visionary behind the Help Texas Kids website:

<http://helptexaskids.com/> provided testimony during the Senate

Finance Hearings. To hear her testimony, visit:

http://austin.ynn.com/content/2011_legislature/legislature_stories/276427/hundreds-speak-out-about-proposed-state-budget-cuts



Health Care Advocates Offer Emotional Pleas

By Becca Aaronson | The Texas Tribune | 2-2-2011

<http://www.texastribune.org/texas-state-agencies/health-and-human-services-commission/health-care-advocates-offer-emotional-pleas/>

Reports of Interest...

Children's Policy Council – Recommendations for Improving Services for Children with Disabilities in Texas | http://www.hpsc.state.tx.us/si/C-LTC/CPC_SeptemberReport2010.pdf

Legislative Budget Board – Summary of Legislative Budget Estimates for the 2012-2013 Biennium

http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/LBE/2012-2013/LBE_HOUSE_SUMMARY_2012-2013.pdf

Report Update for State Supported Living Centers – Fiscal Years 2010 - 2011

http://cfoweb.dads.state.tx.us/lar/2012_13/Volumelll/ReportofStateSupportedLivingCenters.pdf

The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) - Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) for the 2012-2013 Biennium | <http://cfoweb.dads.state.tx.us/lar/default.asp>

DisABILITY Awareness Video's

A Credo for Support – People 1st Version | To view the video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wunHdfZFxXw&feature=mfu_in_order&list=UL

I am NORM, Redefining Normal. Promoting Inclusion. | To view the video: <http://www.iamnorm.org/home.aspx>.

I'm Tyler, Don't be surprised! | A peek into a real kid's life where people just like you have realized what a kid CAN do is much more important than what he can't. | To view the video: <http://www.imtyler.org/>.

Including Samuel – A documentary film by Photojournalist Dan Habib | Including Samuel examines the educational and social inclusion of youth with disabilities as a civil rights issue. | To view the 12 minute trailer, visit: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8893323604894846060#>.

When the Moon Come Up – A Video by Norman | Norman Kunc was born with Cerebral Palsy. Although the doctors recommended his family place him in an institution, they took him home. | To view the video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2OxpzPybT4>



Around the State

13th Annual Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates Conference

March 3-6, 2011 | San Antonio, Texas
For more information or to register:

<http://www.copaa.org/conference-training/conference/>

Scholars-in-Residence Weekend

YACHAD for N. American Inclusion Month & the Special Needs Partnership of Jewish Family Service

March 4-6, 2011 | Dallas, Texas

For more information or to register:

www.JFSDallas.org or tkachur@jfsdallas.org

The Big Picture, Connecting the Dots

Texas Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired – Conference

March 24-26, 2011 | Dallas, Texas

For more information or to register, visit:

<http://www.txaer.org/default.htm>

The Screening Room – Critics Choice

The Learning Together Workshop Series
Facilitator: Charlene Comstock-Galagan

March 25, 2011 | 9 – 11 |

For more information or to RSVP:

(817) 834-7700 or arcnetc@att.net

Special Education – The ARD/IEP Process

The Learning Together Workshop Series

Speaker: Charlene Comstock-Galagan

March 25, 2011 | 12:30 - 4 |

For more information or to RSVP:

(817) 834-7700 or arcnetc@att.net

March for Respect 2011

A one-mile walk through downtown Dallas.

March 26, 2011 | Dallas, Texas

For more information or to register:

<http://www.marchforrespect.org/>

Employment for ALL! – Customized Employment & Discovery, the Process

The Learning Together Workshop Series
Speaker: Michael Callahan – International Consultant on Employment & Transition

April 2, 2011 | 9 - 4 |

For more information or to RSVP:

(817) 834-7700 or arcnetc@att.net.

Community Living:

It's My Choice Conference

Coalition for Texans with Disabilities (CTD) 33rd Annual Conference & the Texas State Independent Living Council's (SILC's) 2011 Statewide Independent Living Conference

April 3-5, 2011 | Austin, Texas

For more information or to register, visit:

<http://www.txsilc.org/>, <http://www.cotwd.org/>

“Coming Together”

27th Annual State Wide Conference

Brain Injury Association of Texas

April 14-17 | Austin, Texas

For more information or to register, visit:

<http://www.biatx.org/index.html>

Person Centered Thinking & Plan Facilitation

The Learning Together Workshop Series & the Institute for Person Centered Thinking

Person Centered Thinking | **May 9-10, 2011**

Plan Facilitation | **May 11-12, 2011**

Both sessions will be held at TCU in Ft. Worth, Texas

Registration REQUIRED for both sessions.

Early registration deadline – April 1st.

For more information, visit: www.arcnetc.org

Community Now! Coalition Activities...

Austin Coalition

- **Weekly Legislative Visits** – All are welcome to participate. If interested, meet us in the Capital Cafeteria at noon.
- **Monthly Meetings** – held the 1st Thursday of the month at ADAPT Offices 1640A East 2nd Street, Suite 100 ▪ Austin, Texas 78702.

For more info. about the Austin Coalition:

Joe Tate: (830) 305-0613, tate392@gmail.com

D/FW Area Coalition

Greater Lewisville SEPTSA – 4th Annual Special Needs Activities and Resources Fair – the D/FW Area Coalition will participate in this event and look forward to seeing you there.

March 5, 2011 | 10 – 2 | Lewisville, Texas

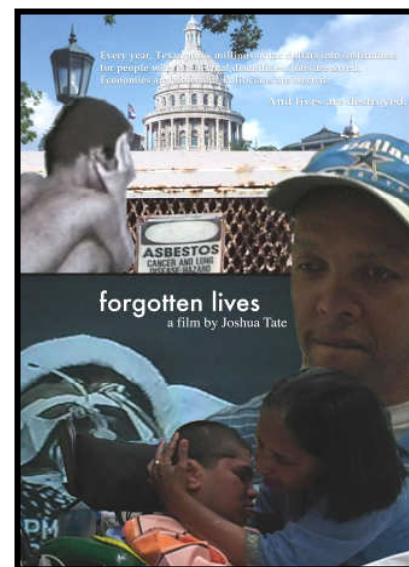
For more info: <http://lisdseptsa.txpta.org/>.



Community Now!
2316 Bristol
Bryan, Texas 77802
www.communitynowfreedom.org

Forgotten Lives, A film by Joshua Tate

Forgotten Lives is a 44 minute award winning film that chronicles the horror and abuse perpetrated against Texas' most vulnerable citizens inside state institutions and offers hope for a future of freedom and dignity in the community.



Partners in Policymaking E-Learning Courses

In today's political climate of change, individuals who have a disability and families must work harder than ever to prevent the loss of basic rights for people with disabilities. For more information, visit: <http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/online.html>.

Partners in Living - The course focuses on helping people with DD, their family and friends explore four important elements (self-determination, family support, community living, and assistive technology) that, together, can help them create a meaningful life that is independent, inclusive, productive, self-determined and integrated.

Partners in Time - The course focuses on the way that people with disabilities lived, learned and worked throughout history and growth of the Disability Rights Movement. The course also introduces some of the individuals and groups whose efforts resulted in new ways of thinking about people with disabilities and their rights.

Partners in Education - created to help parents of children with developmental disabilities understand and maximize the special education system. The course focuses on a child's right to a free appropriate public education, the laws that protect those rights and offers practical ways that parents can ensure that their children benefit from an inclusive education. The course reviews IDEA 2004 and includes current thinking on educational

reform and the importance of teaching children to use digital technology to improve educational outcomes and better prepare children to work in the future.

Making Your Case - designed to help people with disabilities and their families create positive change through advocacy. The course helps participants understand the legislative process, the essential elements of good advocacy, identify and research personal issues, then advocate for systems change as individuals and as part of larger community efforts. The course includes opportunities to put what has been learned into practice through a series of interactive exercises.

Partners in Employment - designed to help people with DD find meaningful jobs and plan a career. In this course, participants will create a resume or portfolio of their strengths, skills, and interests; learn how to network and identify potential employers; prepare for an interview; and understand the hiring process.

All courses were updated in 2011.