

The Power of Peers:

How to Advocate Effectively

on the Individual and

Systems Level

Joseph Rogers, Exec. Dir.

**National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help
Clearinghouse**

1211 Chestnut St., 11th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107

800-553-4539, ext. 3844, 267-507-3844 (direct)

jrogers@nhasp.org



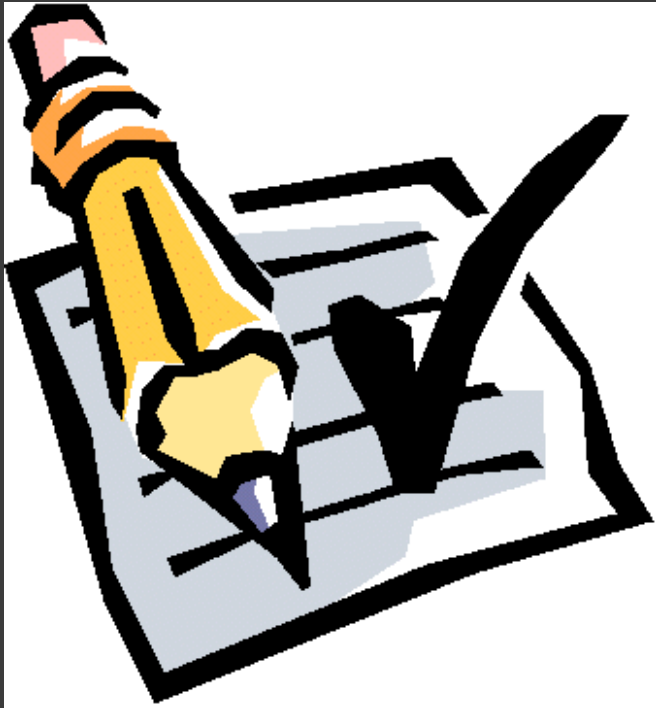
Alternatives 2013 . . . December 4, 2013

Three *kinds of advocacy:*

- ◆ **Self-advocacy**
- ◆ **Individual advocacy**
- ◆ **Systems advocacy**



Similar tactics for all three:



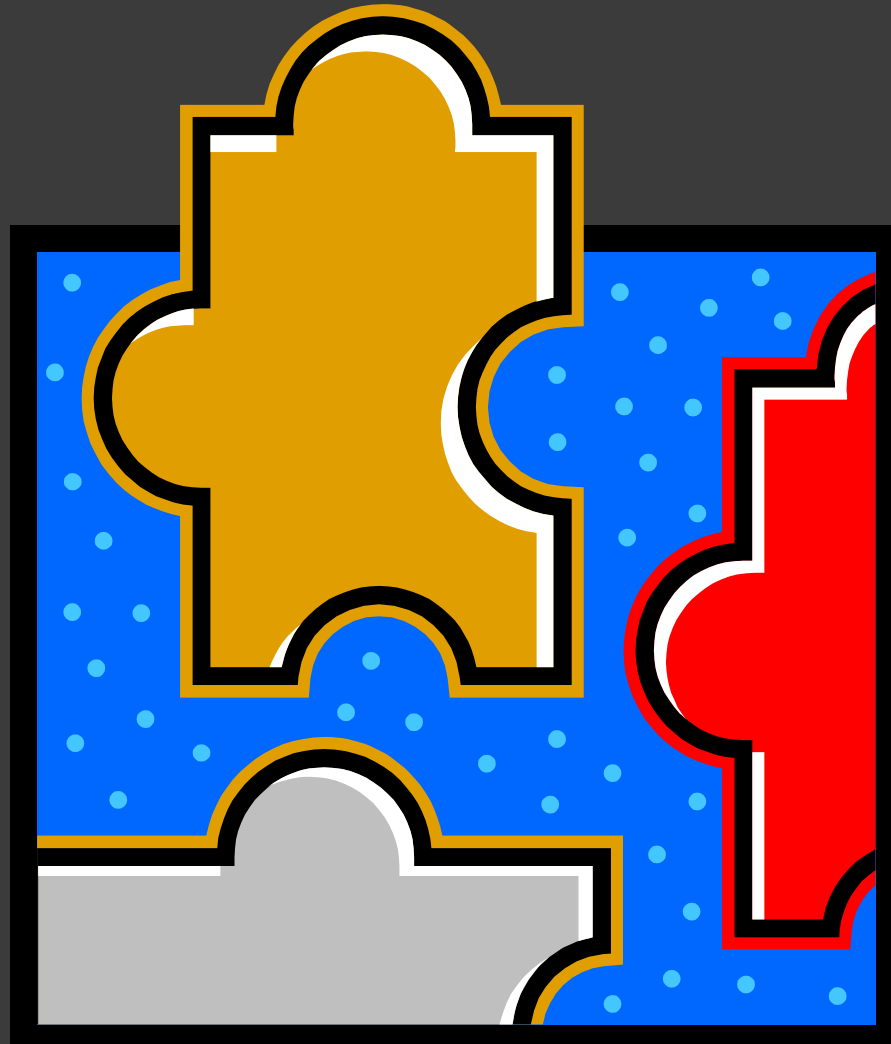
- ◆ **Decide what you want.**
- ◆ **Get the facts.**
- ◆ **Plan your strategy**
- ◆ **Gather your support.**
- ◆ **Be firm and persistent.**
- ◆ **Maintain your credibility.**

Example of Individual Advocacy?

- Does anyone have an example of something he or she needed to advocate around and was able to solve?
- What was the problem?
- Who was able to solve it?
- How did you proceed in order to solve it?



What skills help us to solve problems?



Problem-Solving Skills

- ① Identify the problem.
- ② Break the problem into manageable pieces; it's easier to solve that way.
- ③ Identify who is causing the problem.
- ④ Set a goal.
- ⑤ Identify who can solve the problem.
- ⑥ Develop an action plan.

Developing an Action Plan

- ✎ Decide what you want to happen.
- ✎ Show what the other side has to gain, such as:
 - Avoiding liability in case of harm
 - Saving money by avoiding hospitalization
 - Avoiding bad publicity



Developing an Action Plan (*cont'd*)

- ✎ Decide what you're willing to accept, but don't disclose this at the start of the negotiations.
- ✎ Ask if there are special procedures for filing grievances or appeals.

HOW DO WE DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN?



Developing an Action Plan

- ☞ Think through a problem
- ☞ Identify important facts.
- ☞ Break down the problem to identify who is responsible.
- ☞ Is there a violation of law, policy, procedure?



Developing an Action Plan

Step 1. What is the problem?

Fact



Why is this fact important?





Developing an Action Plan

Step 2. What will solve the problem?

- ⦿ What do I want to happen?
- ⦿ What would I be willing to accept?

Developing an Action Plan

Step 3. Building a Case

- ⦿ What documentation do I need?
- ⦿ Who can help me with my problem?



Developing an Action Plan

Step 4. Initial Strategy

- Who can resolve my problem for me?
- I will call/meet with/write to this person by __/__/__.
- If my problem is not solved by __/__/__, then I will follow up with this person.



Developing an Action Plan



Step 5. Appeal Strategy

- How do I appeal this decision?
- I will appeal by phone/in person/in writing by __/__/__.

What are some face-to-face communication skills?



Do be:

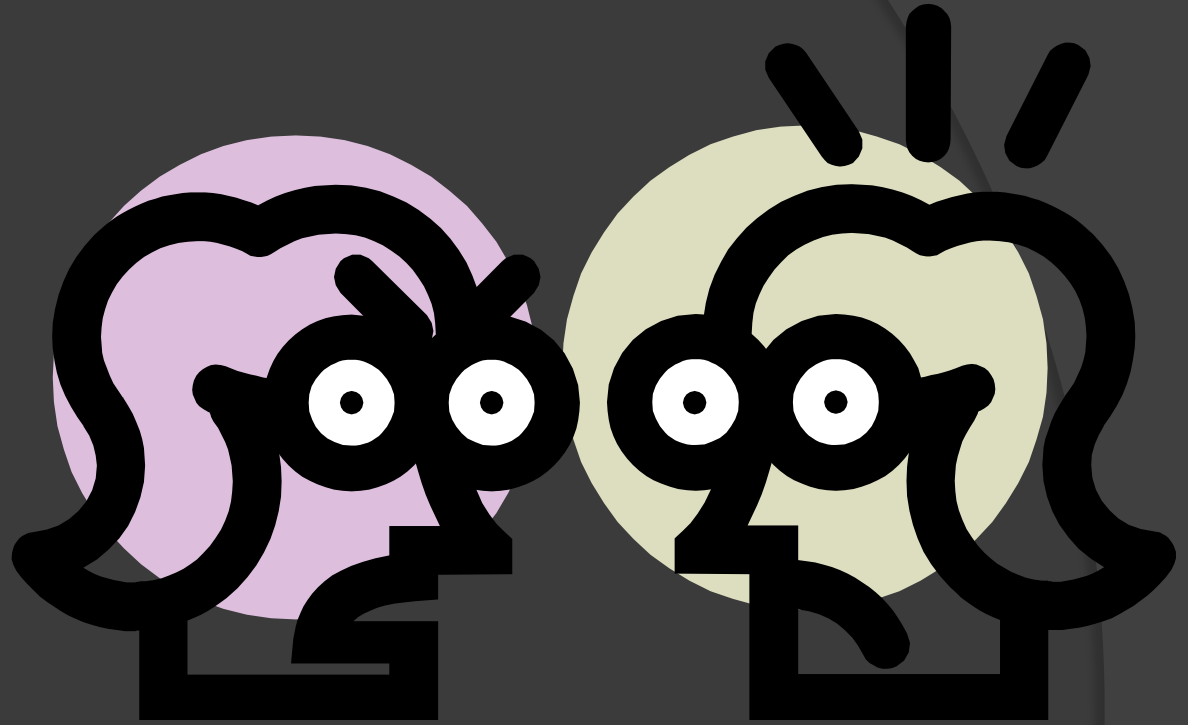
- ★ **Brief**
- ★ **Prepared**
- ★ **Clear**
- ★ **Honest**
- ★ **Accurate**



- ★ **Persuasive**
- ★ **Timely**
- ★ **Persistent**
- ★ **Grateful**

DON'T:

- Be argumentative
- Be demanding
- Bluff
- Promise rewards you can't deliver
- Knock the opposition



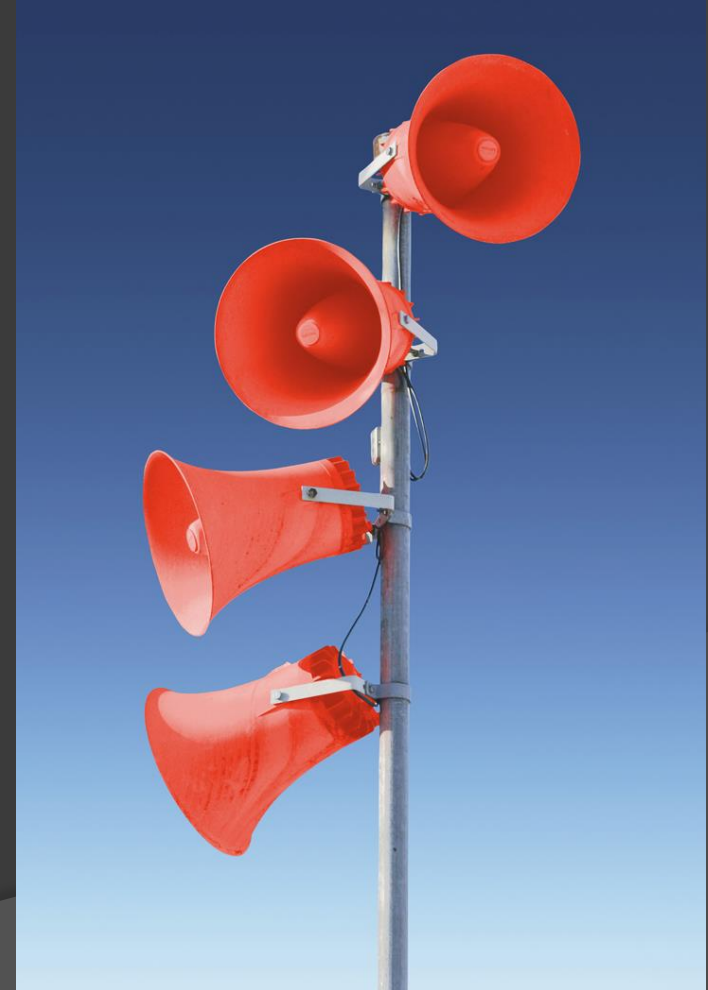
IMPROVE YOUR VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

- Outline what you want to say.
- Practice saying it.
- Have a support person with you.
- Be assertive (but not aggressive): advocate for what you want.



More Verbal Communication Skills:

- ◎ Don't attack or insult.
- ◎ Listen actively to the other person.
- ◎ Negotiate for what you want.
- ◎ Keep records.
- ◎ Follow up.



Face-to-Face Communication Skills

- ◎ Be on time.
- ◎ Sit up straight.
- ◎ Don't fidget.
- ◎ Dress and groom neatly.
- ◎ Maintain eye contact.
Note: In certain cultures, eye contact is not appropriate. See: <http://tinyurl.com/m3thrku>



Attracting and Motivating Supporters

For systems advocacy, outreach is essential. There is strength in numbers!



People join a movement one at a time:

- 80 percent of community volunteers began because they were asked by a friend, family member or neighbor.*
- Ask your members to invite others.
- People respond to a personal approach.

**“The Citizen’s Handbook,” Vancouver
Citizen’s Committee*



Why do you need more members?



Why do you need more members?

- ◎ The more different types of people you have in your organization, the more representative it is of your target community. This will ensure greater community support for your organization.
- ◎ Members bring skills and experience that they can use to benefit the organization.
- ◎ More members mean that you can do more work as an organization.
- ◎ The more members you have, the more different ideas and opinions are expressed and discussed, this will lead to better decisions being taken.
- ◎ More members? More **POWER!**

You need to find others who:

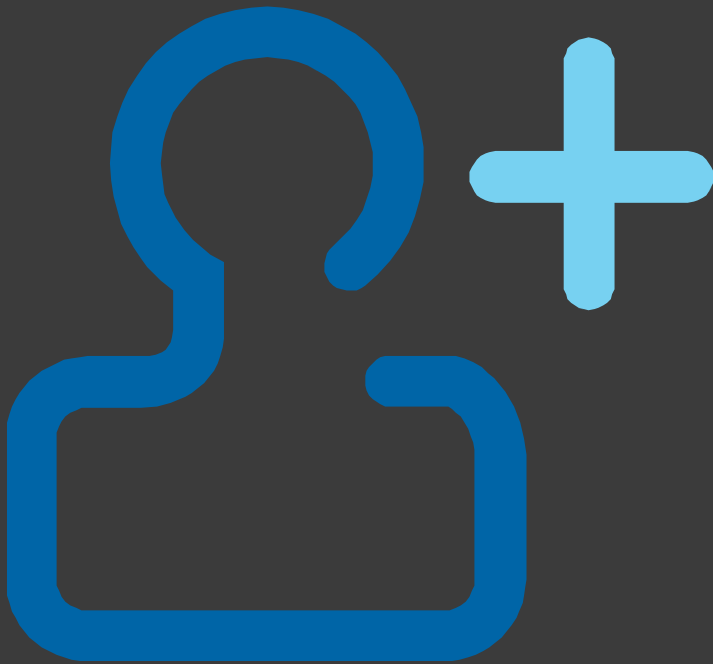
- ◎ . . . are experiencing the same situation or problem that you are.
- ◎ . . . agree on the nature of the problem.
- ◎ . . . are committed to an effort to change the situation (if that is your purpose).
- ◎ The group does not need to be large – at least at the beginning.
 - A small core group can involve others later.

Make it easy for people to get involved:

- ◎ Create a sense of purpose.
- ◎ Define clear and specific goals:
 - . . . that are achievable in a reasonable time period.
 - . . . whose achievement will improve people's lives.
- ◎ If you build it, they will come.



Have a positive attitude:



- ⦿ Assume people want to get involved, to contribute to the goals of your group.
- ⦿ Let people know how they can make a difference.
 - Giving people responsibility gets them involved.

Engaging Members

- Ask members where their interests lie, and assign them tasks accordingly.
- Express appreciation to volunteers for the time that they give.



THANK YOU

Show Appreciation

- Create certificates and hold a ceremony for volunteers.
- Verbally express your appreciation for their hard work often and in front of other people.
- Delegate responsibility to willing group members.



Create newsletters, leaflets, and other outreach materials

- ◎ Ask mental health programs and other likely places (libraries, laundromats, grocery stores, bookstores, places of worship) if you can leave stacks of materials.
- ◎ Other materials:
 - “Fringed” flyers for bulletin boards
 - Bookmarks with your name and contact info
 - Paper placemats to use in diners
- ◎ Highlight information about getting involved.

Facebook, Twitter, and Other Social Media

A good way to reach out to people!



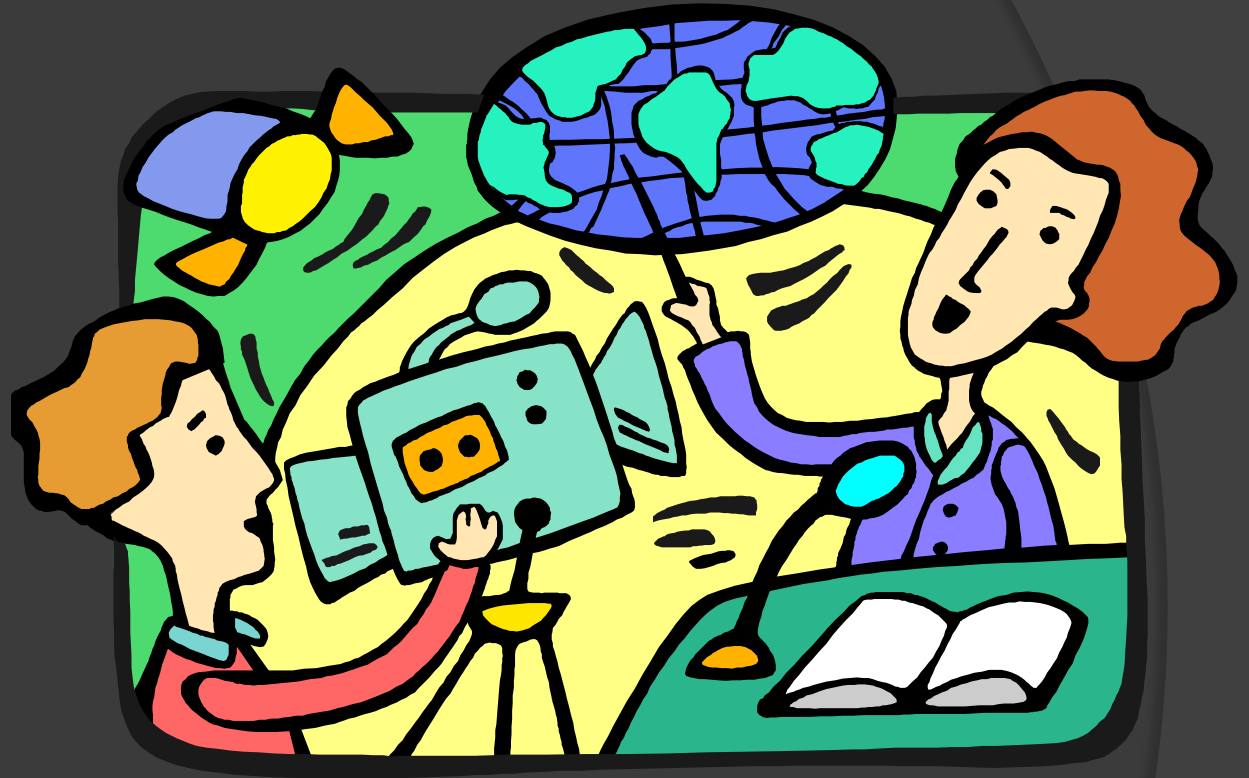
Effective Online Networking

- ⦿ Gather e-mail addresses.
- ⦿ Establish broadcast e-mail lists:
 - Send action alerts.
 - Inform your membership.
- ⦿ Establish discussion lists.
- ⦿ Create a website.



Facebook and Other Social Media

70 percent
of
journalists
use social
networks
to assist in
reporting:



<http://blog.journalistics.com/2009/70-percent-of-journalists-use-social-networks-to-assist-in-reporting/>

Twitter

According to the Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank, Twitter can help you promote your cause.



http://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/2009/07/twitter_tips.html

Go to where the people are:

- Meetings of groups with similar interests
- Rallies and demonstrations
- Other places where likely members gather:
 - Drop-in centers
 - Similar programs



Reach the public through the press:

- ◉ **Letters to the editor**
- ◉ **Op-eds**
- ◉ **Craig's List**
- ◉ **Newspaper “bulletin boards”**
- ◉ **PSAs**
- ◉ **Public access cable TV**
- ◉ **Social media**



How Are Changes Made?



- ◉ Who has power?
- ◉ How would those in power benefit by the change?
 - Create positive incentives that make the change attractive to those in power.

How do we begin?

- Achievable goals to build constituency
- Lay groundwork



Prioritize Goals

- ◎ Start with the goal that has the greatest potential for achievement:
 - Success will bind the group.
 - Success will create motivation for continued efforts.
 - Stick with it.

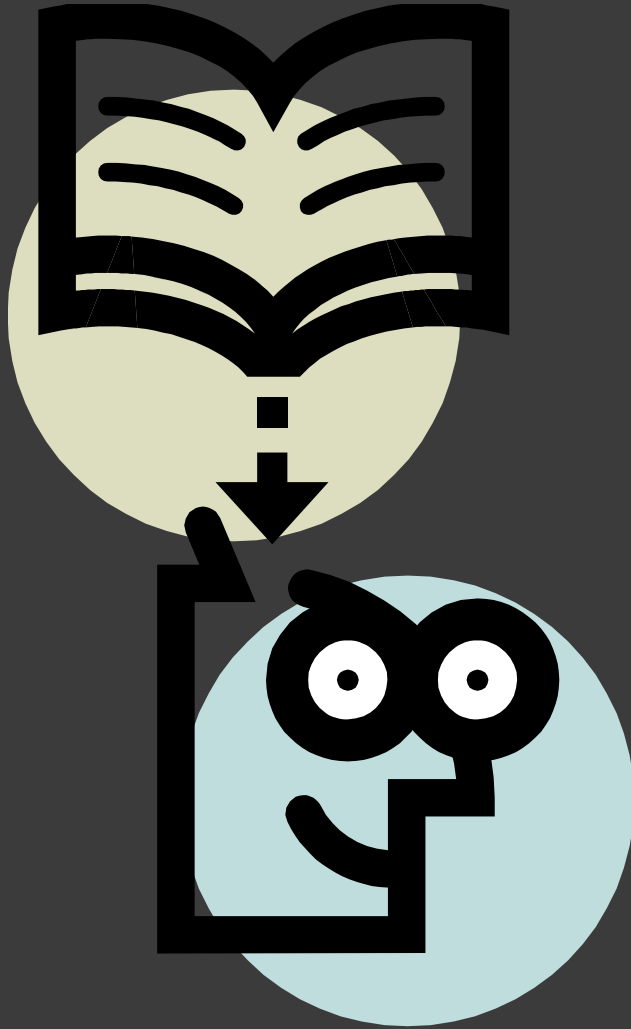


Gather Information

- ① Who has authority to make needed changes?
- ① What laws, rules and policies are in place that affect the situation?
- ① What rights and complaint procedures exist?
- ① What facts support the need for change?



Knowledge Is Power



- Learn as much as you can about the government/ non-government organization or agency you're trying to change.
- Attend meetings, public hearings and conferences.
- Acquaint yourself with staff.

Strategy Development

- ◎ What do the powers-that-be need to hear?
 - Tailor message to audience.



Two components:

- * Appeal to what is right.
- * Appeal to audience's self-interest.

Whom do they need to hear it from?

- Experts
- Authentic voices



How can we get them to hear it?

- Phone calls
- Letters
- Meetings
- Direct action



Regional Rally for Recovery Rights, organized by MHASP at Philadelphia's City Hall, May 11, 2006. Funding for peer support was one of many issues on the agenda.

What are our resources?

- Related past advocacy work.
- Existing alliances.
- Staff and volunteers.
- Information, wisdom and skills.



Staff and volunteers of 100,000 Homes Campaign, Philadelphia

What are the gaps?

- Alliances?
- Research?
- Media?



Create an Advocacy Plan



- Determine your goal(s).
- Frame your goal(s) in positive terms.
- Research what it will take to achieve your goal(s).

Petitions and Letter-Writing Campaigns

When SAMHSA red tape delayed funding, a petition initiative launched by Sandy Goodwick garnered 500 signatures and was sent to HHS. Many people had also written to HHS about the conference.





We helped close Byberry (PSH) and ensure that the dollars followed the patients into the community (1990).



Successful demonstrations:

“Chain-in” at PHA (1985) (left)

Sleepout at State Office Building (1987) led to creation of Homeward Bound and other housing for homeless individuals with mental health conditions (below).

Linked voices

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
Saturday, May 11, 1985

Group protests PHA proposal for mentally ill

By Janet McMillan
Inquirer Staff Writer

Five advocates for the mentally ill chained themselves to the gates of the Philadelphia Housing Authority office yesterday, while others picketed the agency for an hour to protest proposed housing policies that they said were discriminatory.

About 25 people, led by staff members from the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, marched in front of PHA's office at 1012 Chestnut St. in opposition to a proposed screening of tenants' mental health histories.

Wearing signs and chanting slogans, the group, which announced the demonstration earlier, arrived shortly after 10 a.m. and demanded that five of its representatives be allowed to meet with housing officials.

But the wrought-iron gates of the housing authority had been locked, and plainclothed and uniformed PHA security guards were stationed inside and outside the building.

"The five representatives of the group then chained themselves to the gates." About 45 minutes later they were allowed inside the housing authority and met briefly with Garfield Harris, PHA's executive director. Afterward, they said that they had made little progress and that they would meet with their lawyers to discuss suing the authority.

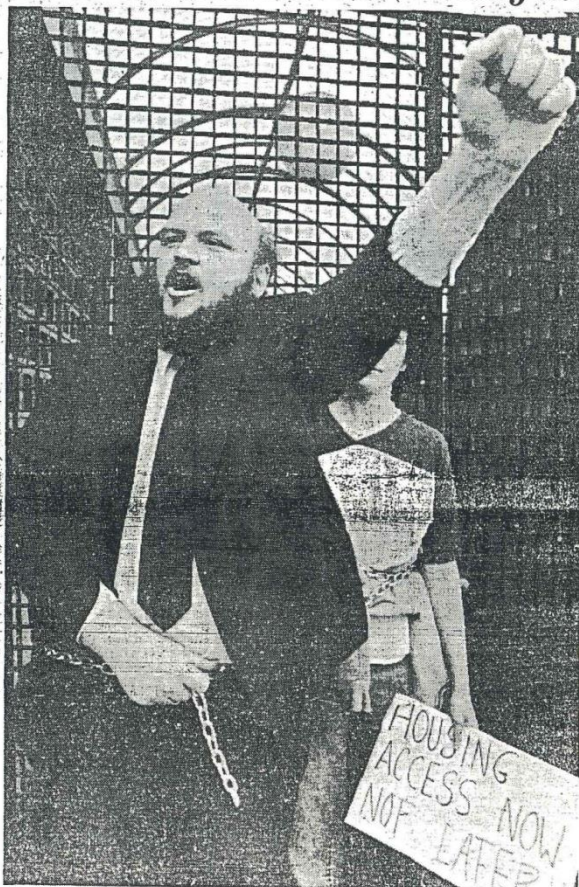
"I demand that you listen to us. Listen to our demands," Joseph Rogers, an associate director of the mental health group, shouted through the gates at PHA officials who stood watching the demonstration. "We want equality!"

Alicia Christian, the mental health association's director of public information and education, held up a length of chain for protesters to see. "These are the chains of discrimination that are keeping the mentally ill from public housing," she said. "Those most in need of low-income housing are denied access. . . . We protest, and we protest grievously."

Officials of PHA said they were not discriminating against the mentally ill.

Association members said they were opposed to proposed housing regulations that would require a review of applicants' backgrounds for such things as mental instability, criminal records, drug abuse and poor credit ratings.

Rogers said the admissions policy would require that a person's ability



Rogers, chained to the gate; 'I demand that you listen to us. . . . We want equality!' —turn over—



Enlist Allies in Your Effort

Citizen advocates and family members pitched in to help with successful effort outside Philadelphia Public Housing Authority to protest planned discriminatory policies ('85)



MHASP staffers protest PHA admissions policies. Depicted left to right are Susan Rogers, Alicia Christian, Glenda Fine, and Mark Davis.

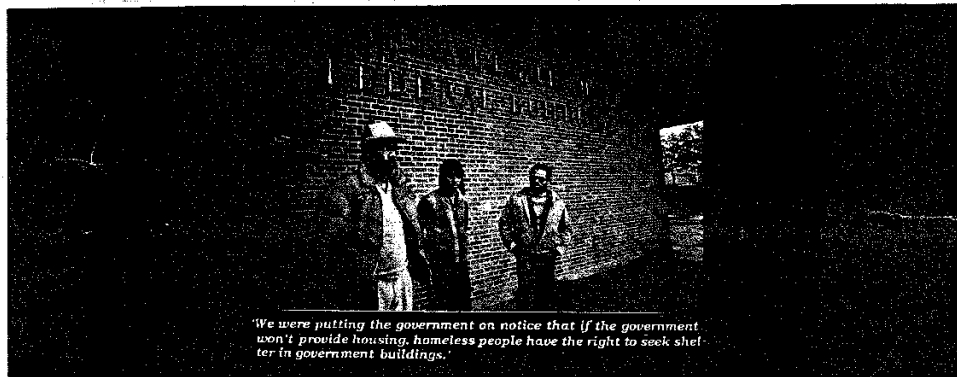
photo by Michael Viola, Philadelphia Inquirer



Occupy
the APA
in
Phila.,
May 5,
2012.
(The
poster
was
created
by Amy
Smith.)

Demonstrations sometimes only educate the public, raise consciousness, create solidarity.

ON THE STEPS OF THE COURTHOUSE



'We were putting the government on notice that if the government won't provide housing, homeless people have the right to seek shelter in government buildings.'

by Susan Rogers

On Monday, November 7th, at 2:45 p.m., I found myself locked up in an eight-by-ten-foot cell on the basement level of the Federal Courthouse at Sixth and Market Streets. The cell had white cinderblock walls with grey plastic benches running along two of them, and a very public toilet with a sink in the corner. The cell did not provide toilet paper or soap. Although spartan, the cell seemed remarkably clean. But I had nothing to compare it to, since this was my first arrest.

I, my five cellmates and 29 other people had been arrested at a protest against federal housing policies—a continuation of a similar demonstration held November 1st at the same Federal Building, in which I also participated. Both events were part of a coalition effort by groups of homeless people and their advocates around the country to gain more

'My husband had the foresight to bring along his chains and padlocks, which he'd been using at demonstrations for years.'

federal dollars for decent, affordable housing. On November 1st we in Philadelphia had issued a statement demanding that the U.S. government restore the \$25 billion cut from housing programs by the Reagan administration. We were putting the government on notice that until decent, affordable housing became available for every U.S. citizen, homeless people would seek shelter

in federal and state government buildings, since these buildings are the property of the American people. This statement was signed by residents of the Women of Hope shelter and the Mercy Hospice Shelter, and members of the Union of the Homeless, the Committee for Dignity and Fairness for the Homeless, the Philadelphia Catholic Worker, Philadelphia Jobs with Peace, Jeremiah House and Project SHARE.

I am a member of Project SHARE, a self-help organizing project of mental health consumers (a term we prefer to the more colloquial 'mental patients,' since it is less stigmatizing). Having been hospitalized a couple of times in a psychiatric ward, I was no stranger to the sound of the key turning in the lock. The main difference between jail and the hospital seemed to be that, in jail, everyone was in a
(Continued on page 30)

Sit-in at Federal Office Building (Phila. 1988) focused public attention on \$25 billion in cuts to low-income housing, which resulted in homelessness.

Mental patients rally in search of a fair chance and fewer labels

By Steve Twedt

The Pittsburgh Press

Twenty-five years after being diagnosed as having paranoid schizophrenia, Nelson Hawthorne believes his biggest roadblock to a normal life is society, not sickness.

Carrying a sign that read "Label jars, not people," the 48-year-old Norristown, Montgomery County, resident and about 60 other current or former mental patients and friends rallied at Market Square yesterday to protest discrimination against people who have undergone psychiatric treatment.

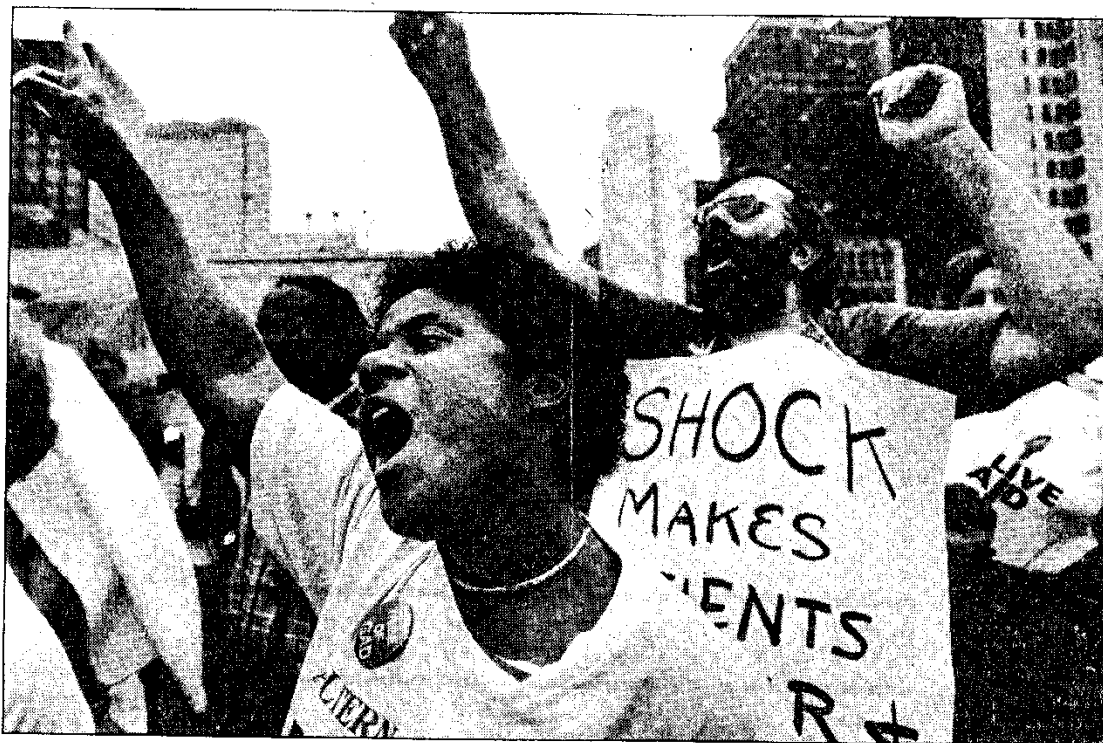
"The mental health system produces an artificial dependence and we're not allowed to be productive citizens," he said.

Hawthorne last held a job five years ago and, while he still applies for work occasionally, "one of the questions on the application is always, 'Have you been hospitalized for psychiatric treatment?' They don't say anything. They can't really say anything. You just never get an interview."

Stacey Pope, 31, of Jacksonville, Fla., said she lost her retail sales job when she was hospitalized for five days. She was diagnosed as severely depressed three years ago, but doctors now think she is schizophrenic.

"When you're going through it, you just feel hopeless," she said.

The rally was part of Alternatives '90, a five-day national conference concluding today at Duquesne University that was organized by people who have had psychiatric problems. About 1,000 people attended.



Robin Rombach/The Pittsburgh Press

Erin Newland, front, of Connecticut, and John Fijalek of Maine took part in mental health rally.

The group hopes to fight the stigma of mental illness, to improve the quality of life for the mentally ill and to develop alternatives to the mental health system.

Madeleine Maehl, 39, a rape counselor from Big Spring, Texas, who has been both a patient and a staff development coordinator at a state hospital, said, "Society needs to see the mentally ill not as weirdos, not as freaks, but as people with needs, like someone who has heart problems or kidney problems. It's just affecting us in a different area."

During the past 13 years, she has witnessed hospital aides who "have no perception of what a schizophrenic is, or what a psychotic is, or how to communicate with that person. So they have to resort to the physical."

At the same time, she added, mental patients have their own responsibility for removing the stigma they face by not using their illness to manipulate others or to shirk difficult tasks.

Mental health professionals and mental health patients, or consumers, have to meet halfway, she said.

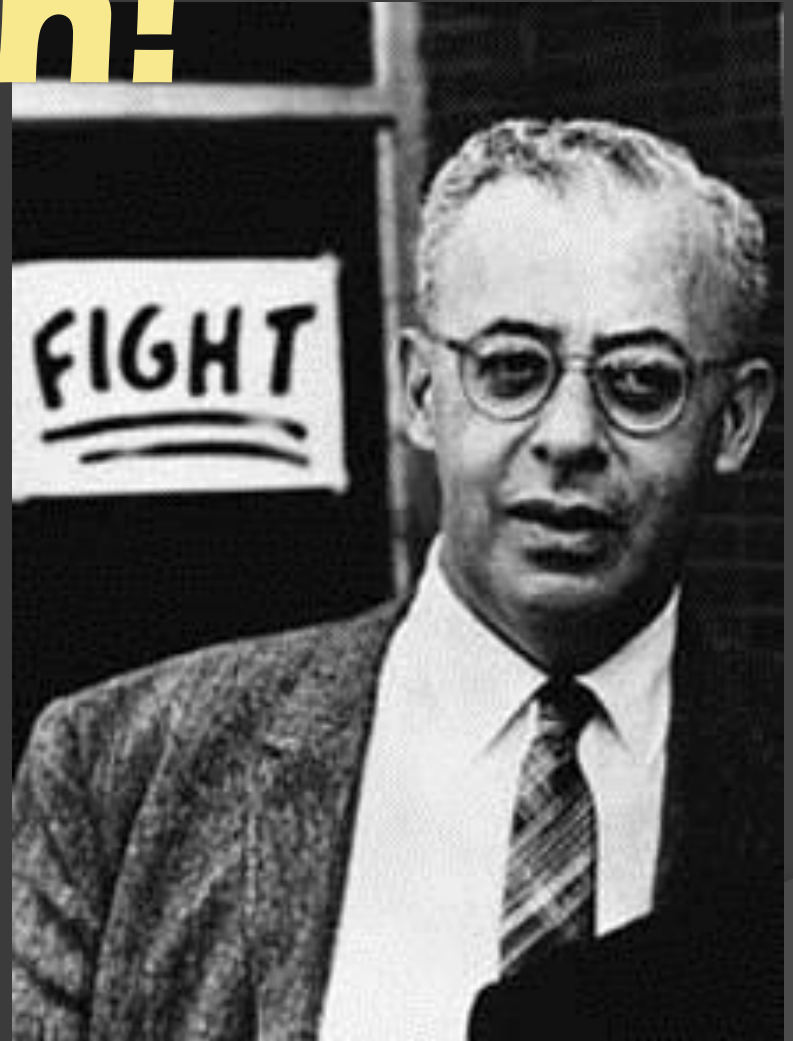
"The professionals want complete control and the consumers want complete control. There's got to be some compromise."

Yesterday was designated National Mental Patients' Rights Day and the conference theme, "Together, Tearing Down the Walls," was designed with yesterday's celebration of Bastille Day in mind. Bastille Day is the French holiday marking the anniversary of the 1789 freeing of prisoners - some of whom were mentally ill - from the Bastille prison.

Bastille Day Rally (1990) created public awareness of prejudice and discrimination.

Make it fun!

***"A good tactic
is one that
your
people enjoy."***



**Saul Alinsky
(1909-1972)**

How can we tell if it's working?

- Evaluate what we've done.
- Make mid-course strategy corrections.



Be Ready to Negotiate

- ◎ Study the offer.
- ◎ Don't accept an initially offered solution too quickly.
 - It may be designed to appease rather than create real change.
- ◎ Be ready to suggest an alternative.

“You cannot risk being trapped by the enemy in his sudden agreement with your demand and saying, “You’re right—we don’t know what to do about this issue. Now you tell us.”

—Saul Alinsky

Consider accepting the offer on a trial basis.

- ⦿ Establish criteria to assess success.
- ⦿ Establish a time frame for reviewing outcomes.



“I am only one. But still I am one. I cannot do everything. But still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

-Helen Keller (1880-1968)

**Anna Jennings (1960-92)
Key to closing of Byberry**



Resources:

- National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse:
<http://www.mhselfhelp.org>
- Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion:
<http://www.tucollaborative.org>

Resources:

- ◎ Google:
 - 43,400 websites for “advocacy tips” in a quarter of a second
 - Not all of the sites will be useful, but many will. (See slides at the end of this presentation for some useful sites.)
- ◎ Public library

Resources:

- “Tips for Legislative Advocacy,”
Justice for Immigrants:
<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/documents/advocacy-tips.pdf>

Resources:

- ◎ “An Activists’ (sic) Strategy for Effective Online Networking,” One Northwest:
http://www.geocities.ws/s7ss/Effective_Online_Networking.html
- ◎ “Systems Advocacy,” Brain Injury Resource Center:
<http://www.headinjury.com/advosystem.html>

Resources:

- “A Guide to Disability Rights Laws,” U.S. Department of Justice:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cguide.htm>

Resources:

- ◎ “Ten Reasons to Lobby for Your Cause”

<http://ahha.org/Lobby.asp>