

Welcome from Our President



Welcome to our website! We hope to inspire you to help people with disabilities. As a self-advocate, and the first with a cognitive disability to be elected president of a TASH chapter, I have seen firsthand how our nation has come a long way in establishing rights for people with disabilities. But wrongs still exist. Millions of children and adults are still living in institutions, still suffering from abuse, neglect, and aversive practices, and still being denied their rightful integration in our communities. We must end this. I hope to do this in my lifetime.

When the foster care system failed me as a child, I was placed in an institution for seven years and in another for three more, robbing me of ten years of my childhood. It was like jail. School gave me little relief. I felt frustrated being isolated in Special Ed because I wanted to be with the "other kids" and learn what they were learning. Had there not been a courageous group of parents and advocates who inspired a remarkable group of attorneys, judges and legislators to fight against a horrible place called Pennhurst, I would have remained imprisoned. Finally, because of Judge Raymond P. Broderick's court order to close Pennhurst, I was able to leave Stillmeadow and move into the community. There, at age twenty-one, I began a journey toward the freedom and contentment I had never known growing up.

It's time for ALL children with disabilities to be fully included in our neighborhoods and schools. It's time for ALL adults with disabilities to be fully included as respected citizens in our communities. It's time for us to put our energies into high gear and do this! TASH's mission is our roadmap, and hopefully our website will be an inspiration.

Please join us – and join [PennTASH!](#)

Jean

Jean M. Searle
President
PennTASH

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