

Welcome from Our President



Welcome to PennTASH! We invite you to join us in advocating for people with disabilities. TASH has been a national leader in advocacy since 1975, and we're their Pennsylvania chapter.

As a longtime self-advocate, and the first with a cognitive disability to be elected president of a TASH chapter, I have witnessed firsthand how our nation has come a long way in securing rights for people with disabilities. But wrongs still exist. Tens of thousands of children and adults are still segregated in institutions, still suffering from abuse, neglect, and aversive practices, and still being denied their rightful places in our schools, workplaces, communities – and our lives. We must end this!

When the foster care system failed me as a child, I was placed in an institution for seven years and another for three more, robbing me of ten years of my childhood. It was like jail. Family visits never existed for most of us. School gave little refuge and kept my special ed classmates and me segregated miles away from typical kids.

Had there not been a group of courageous parents and advocates who inspired a group of remarkable attorneys, judges and legislators to fight against a horrible place called Pennhurst, I would have remained imprisoned. But because of Judge Raymond P. Broderick's court order that led to Pennhurst's closure, I was finally able to leave my institution, Stillmeadow, and move to the community. There, at age twenty-one, I began a journey toward the freedom and contentment I had never known growing up.

No matter what their stories are, ALL children with disabilities should be fully included and welcomed in our neighborhoods and schools. ALL adults with disabilities should be fully included and respected as citizens of our communities. It's time for all of us to put our energies into high gear and make this happen. TASH's mission is our best roadmap!

Enjoy our website, visit it often – and join [PennTASH!](#)

Jean

Jean M. Searle
President
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("PennTASH")

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