

Welcome from Our President



Welcome to PennTASH! We hope we inspire you to join us in advocating for people with disabilities.

As a 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 establishing many 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, and communities. We must end this.

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 little refuge and kept my classmates and me isolated in special ed from the "other" 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. It was because of Judge Raymond P. Broderick's court order to close Pennhurst that I was able to leave Stillmeadow, my institution, and finally 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 us to put all of our energies into high gear and make this happen. TASH's mission is our best roadmap!

Enjoy our website – and join [PennTASH!](#)

Jean

Jean M. Searle
President
PennTASH

October 2015