

Welcome from Our President



Welcome to PennTASH! We invite you to join us in advocating for civil rights and social justice for people with disabilities. We are the Pennsylvania members of TASH, a national leader in disability advocacy since 1975.

As a longtime self-advocate and the first with a cognitive disability to be elected president of a TASH chapter, I have watched our nation 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 neglect, abuse, restraint and aversive practices, and still being denied their rightful

places in our schools, our workplaces, our 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 apart 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 own 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, schools, and homes. 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 everywhere. *TASH's mission is our best roadmap.*

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

Jean

Jean M. Searle, President
Pennsylvania TASH ("PennTASH")
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