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**F A M I L Y   S U P P O R T**

## **ADVOCACY UPDATE**

May, 2012

### **Senator Susan Fargo Honored at Metro West Legislative Town Meeting**



On March 21, 2012, Beaverbrook STEP, GWArc, WCI and Eliot Community Services jointly sponsored a highly successful Legislative Town Meeting at the McArthur School in Waltham, MA. Nearly 200 individuals, family members, staff and guardians attended the event.

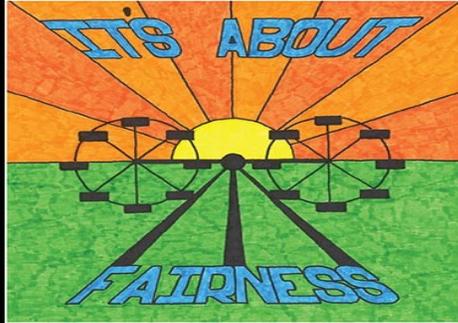
Many of the attendees spoke eloquently to our invited guests (our State Representatives and State Senators) about their concerns. They asked our legislators to provide more funds for programs and services for FY 2013 for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Advocates and self-advocates also related the importance of approving funds to give our direct service staff a much deserved cost of living adjustment (COLA), through a salary reserve allocation.

A special recognition award was also given to one of our State Senators, Susan Fargo, in honor of all of her efforts and hard work over the past 15 years on behalf of people with disabilities in our communities. Senator Fargo will retire at the close of the current legislative session.

### **Tracking the Number of Children Identified with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities has been tracking ASDs for over a decade through the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network. The latest report released by the CDC in March, 2012, indicates a 23% increase since the last report (2009) and a 78% increase since its first report (2007). Overall the CDC now estimates that 1 in 88 children (11.3 per 1,000) has been identified with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Although better awareness and increased screenings are responsible for some of the reported increases, the significance of this data is making advocates worry about maintaining services in the future for this expanding population. As Pete V. Berns, CEO of The Arc United States stated, "The data signal an impending crisis in America's safety net system for people with autism and related disorders." For more information about the CDC report visit [www.autismnow.org](http://www.autismnow.org).



## 2012 SABLE National Conference

The SABLE Conference is a bi-annual gathering of self-advocacy leaders representing over 1250 state and local groups from around the nation.

**August 30 – September 2, 2012**

Over 30 self-advocates and assistants from Beaverbrook STEP's Community Advocates Board (CAB) will attend the 2012 bi-annual Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABLE) Conference from August 30th-September 2nd, 2012, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Paul, Minnesota. The theme for the conference is "It's About Fairness: Fairness as a Foundation for Human Rights."

The conference features General Sessions, 75 Participatory Workshops, Exhibits, Activities and Entertainment. Special features include the SABLE flag ceremony, a 1,000 person sing-a-long, SABLE board elections, a Human Rights Fair, a formal dinner and dance, and a performance by Minnesota's internationally acclaimed Interact Theater.

### **The Accessible On-Ramp to the Information Highway**

The Accessible On-Ramp to the Information Highway is a set of lessons that help people with developmental disabilities use a computer and the internet. There are four sets of lessons and they are all narrated. The lessons were developed by The Arc United States. You can reach the homepage for the lessons at <http://www.on-ramp-to-the-web.org/>.

#### **Available Lesson Topics:**

Computer Basics: How to use the hardware and software for the lessons.

The Internet: A review of the common uses of the Internet, including web browsers and search engines.

Introduction to Email: A lesson in basic email use, including creating and using email accounts.

Netiquette and Safety: How to use the Internet safely and rules for politeness on line.

