



VOICES & VISIONS

A VOICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: A PROMISING VISION FOR TOMORROW

Board Awards \$446,100 for New Grant Projects

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Appointment of new Board members will be announced shortly. Please visit the Board's website for more information.

In June, the Board approved funding of four projects scheduled to begin July 1. Three reflect sustained Board support for community living, self-determination, and advocacy for and by people with developmental disabilities. The fourth will enable the Board to better serve as an informed and persuasive voice for its constituents.

To build on the success of its previous partnership with the Board, the **Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission** will receive **\$150,000**, from **July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2009**, for the **Transportation & Housing Alliance II**. This continuation project will further influence changes in transportation and housing public policy that improve community infrastructure locally and statewide. It will also promote and support expanded use of the community planning "Toolkit" developed under the previous grant. The Toolkit enables localities to more effectively and efficiently integrate the needs of people of all abilities with local housing and transportation solutions.



VACIL representative
Maureen Hollowell

The **Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living** was awarded **\$100,000**, from **July 1, 2007 to July 31, 2008**, for **Outreach to Families of Children at Risk of Institutional Placement or Currently Residing in Institutions**.

This project will ensure that parents and guardians of children with developmental disabilities are fully informed about available community based services and supports that could enable them to divert

placements into institutions or to assist children already residing in institutions with moving home or into a community setting.

A separate, successful Board collaboration with VACIL to identify, inform, and assist people of all ages with disabilities living in nursing homes but desiring to reside in community settings is currently drawing to a close. Resources and best practices from the nursing home outreach project may be applicable to the children's project as well.



PPD representative
Dana Yarbrough

Similarly building on past collaborations and accomplishments, the **Virginia Commonwealth University Partnership for People with Disabilities** was granted **\$100,000**, from **July 1,**

2007 to June 30, 2009, to mobilize individuals with disabilities to effect systems change at the local, regional, and statewide levels. The **Self-Advocacy Mobilization** project will establish a statewide committee linking teams of self-advocates in selected communities, ensuring that self-advocates continue to occupy a lead role in directing their own lives and shaping disability policy and practice through promotion of self-determination and community inclusion at a local level.

This project addresses the Board's mandate under the federal Developmental Disabilities Act to promote and support self-advocacy by individuals with developmental disabilities. It builds on the work of the New Voices I & II initiatives

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Message from the Chair: Disability Culture and Disability Pride

Lisbet Ward

You may have heard of advocacy, of independent living. But have you heard of disability culture? Is there a common bond that connects the disability community, that empowers us to create a society free of barriers to our participation? You may have heard of people first language and self determination, but have you heard of disability pride? Is there something unique and valuable that our disability heritage brings to our communities as we forge a new future together?



In a 2001 editorial for the Independent Living Institute's newsletter, Steven E. Brown, Ph.D., Co-Founder, Institute on Disability Culture stated:

"People with disabilities have forged a group identity. We share a common history of oppression and a common

bond of resilience. We generate art, music, literature, and other expressions of our lives and our culture, infused from our experience of disability. Most importantly, we are proud of ourselves as people with disabilities. We claim our disabilities with pride as part of our identity. We are who we are; we are people with disabilities." [www.independentliving.org/newsletter/12-01.html]

Disability is not a negative; it is not something to be fixed or to hide. Disability is part of diversity, one part of who we are, one positive that we share with the world.

As author Joseph Shapiro subtitled his essay, "The New Civil Rights", on the history of the disability rights movement, "The Americans with Disabilities Act has unlocked the door; now it's time to open it." [www.disabilityculture.org/course/article3.htm]

Today, we stand on ground made much more level by advocates who went before us and fought for equal rights and access. It is now our turn to bring our skills, talents, vision, and life experiences to the movement, to take our place in our communities. People with disabilities no longer stand beside the bus, unable to ride. People with disabilities no longer sit at home; they work, go to school, marry, and pursue active lives.

Disability culture and disability pride, today's youth tell us, are real and important to them. Their roots stem back to the early days of disability advocacy. In his essay, Shapiro profiled Ed Roberts, "father of

the Independent Living movement", who stated, "Each of us has to define our own limits." Roberts was a quadriplegic who used a ventilator and motorized wheelchair, but he also enjoyed sports and recreation, earned a Master's degree, married, and raised a son, belying the expectations of others. In his own words: "In the beginning, it was, 'Why me?' Now, it's 'Why not?' "



Why not? The only limits are in society, not in our disabilities, and the Independent Living movement is removing those barriers. Virginia recently received "Money Follows the Person" funds from the federal Medicaid program. Now, Virginians with disabilities who live in nursing homes and other institutions but want to design a different life of opportunities for themselves can do so. All



across the Commonwealth, people with disabilities, their families, and fellow advocates are carving out a new day for Virginia. We celebrate our disability culture and heritage, and with pride, we continue to open the doors of access across Virginia to every citizen. ♻

Let Your Voice Be Heard!

Constituent input is vital to improving the Board's activities. Public comments guided the development of its 2007-2011 State Plan and will significantly influence the 2008 revision of the *Biennial Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia*.

The Board encourages individuals with disabilities, their families, service providers, policymakers, advocates, and other concerned citizens to complete its annual **Consumer Satisfaction and Stakeholder Feedback Survey** at www.VBPDfeedback.com. For those without internet access or who would prefer to complete the survey by other means, copies in printed and other accessible formats are also available.

Your completion of this survey will be greatly appreciated! Results are reported to federal and state authorities overseeing and funding the Board's activities, and your feedback will ensure continuing support for the Board's mission on behalf of Virginians with disabilities. ♻

DD Network Update: DD Act Under Attack

Colleen Miller, Executive Director, Virginia Office for Protection & Advocacy (VOPA)

A group self named the "**Voice of the Retarded**" (VOR, www.vor.net) opposes Congressional reauthorization of the Developmental Disabilities Act that establishes and supports state DD Networks such as the Virginia Board, the Partnership for People with Disabilities at VCU, and VOPA in the Commonwealth. VOR's membership includes employees of institutions where individuals with developmental disabilities reside and some parents of those individuals. VOR disagrees fundamentally on DD Act reauthorization and other issues with disability advocates who strongly favor community integration and see the DD Act as vital to its achievement.

In opposing reauthorization, VOR wants Congress to halt all future DD Act funding and to create obstacles to the protection of legal rights created under the Act for people with developmental disabilities. For example, VOR urges a ban on any litigation against facilities that have been certified for funding as Intermediate Care Facilities for Mental Retardation (ICF-MR). They also urge Congress to prohibit bringing an action to protect the rights of an individual with developmental disabilities without permission from a family member or guardian, even if the proposed action is to protect against exploitation by the guardian or abuse by that family member. They are asking Congress to place limita-



tions on the rights of people with developmental disabilities that do not exist for any other kind of disability.

The **Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities** (CCD, www.c-c-d.org), representing more than 100 national advocacy groups, believes that VOR's proposals to Congress will limit the personal rights of individuals with developmental disabilities to speak for themselves in favor of the rights of others who would prefer to speak on their behalf. In its public statements, CCD notes, "a regrettable part of the history of people with developmental disabilities . . . is that too often the public and private systems that serve them do not serve them well—even engaging in neglect and abuse of individuals—while families, guardians, or 'other legal representatives' remain clueless, relying on the very abusers themselves to assure them that all is well . . ."

Virginia's DD Network, through its national organizations, supports the position of the CCD and believes that the proposals by VOR pose a serious threat to the rights of all people with disabilities and would be a serious step backwards. To learn more about these issues, we urge you to visit www.vopa.state.va.us or contact VOPA directly at general.vopa@vopa.virginia.gov or 1-800-552-3962. ♡

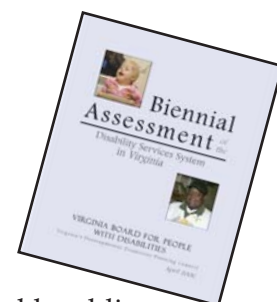
2008 Biennial Assessment Well Underway

Work to update the *Board's Biennial Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia* is progressing well toward its projected publication date of April 2008. This new edition will revise and up-date the original report released in April of last year that has quickly become an essential reference and resource guide.

The update process began during the spring with a series of stakeholder roundtables and public comment forums in Petersburg, Fairfax, Winchester, Hampton, St. Paul, and Danville. Attendance at these twelve events broadly represented participants in Virginia's services system and encompassed individuals with disabilities, their family

members, service-providers, state and local agency staff, elected and appointed officials, advocates, and other concerned citizens. Considerable additional public comment was submitted by mail, telephone, and e-mail.

The Board is very pleased with the volume of comment received, which speaks to the value and utility of the *Biennial Assessment*. Individual comments featured personal experiences, specific suggestions for revisions to the 2006 edition, and identification of new and unresolved issues. The Board greatly appreciates the interest and support of the many



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YLF 2007: Learn -- Empower -- Achieve -- Demonstrate → LEAD

Teri Barker-Morgan

This July's Youth Leadership Forum cultivated a dedicated group of young Virginians eager to discover their leadership strengths. The first step of their journey, in recognition of their abilities, was selection for the outstanding opportunity to be a 2007 YLF student delegate.

During their week at Christopher Newport University in Newport News and on Capitol Hill in Richmond, the delegates discussed the importance that a leader learn, empower, achieve, and demonstrate in order to lead, the theme of this year's Forum. Developing Personal Leadership Plans, providing testimony on issues of importance at a mock committee hearing in the General Assembly Building, and creating and presenting skits on assistive technology topics were just a few of the activities that reinforced their learning and growth.

Congratulations to this year's student delegates! An outstanding team of young leaders who gave it their all at the 2007 YLF! ♡



YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM Class of 2007

Adam Amick, Chesapeake
 Sarah Bailey, Chesterfield
 Julia Blitz, Herndon
 Emerald Dean, Fulks Run
 Robert Dielman, Arlington
 Katarina Gathro, Arlington
 Josh Harbour, Martinsville
 Parveen Kaur, Ashburn
 Mercedes Key, Fredericksburg
 Emily Lambert, Fairfax
 Meghan Lamson, Springfield
 Amanda Marchiano, Colonial Heights
 Jacqueline Nova, Roanoke
 Elizabeth Pappas, Charlottesville
 Chandler Pascale, Fredericksburg
 Steve Phillips, Reston
 Rose Pleskow, Reston
 Macy Rucker, Newport News
 Matthew Shapiro, Glen Allen
 Alexander Snyder, Linden
 Taylor Werner, Ashburn
 Charlotte Woodward, Fairfax

Announcing the Virginia Special Education Network

Obtaining accurate and timely information about special education issues in Virginia is often frustrating. To address this challenge, the Board and State Special Education Advisory Committee are collaborating to create a grassroots communications network to more effectively and efficiently distribute this information.

The network's formation is particularly timely and urgent. Early this fall, revised Virginia Special Education Regulations will be presented for public comment. The Board and SSEAC want to ensure that their constituents are fully informed of this process and have every opportunity to contribute.

To participate in the network, visit www.vaboard.org, and under What's New, click on "Join the Virginia Special Education Network!" Fill in your contact

information, especially your e-mail address, on the linked form and return it by e-mail, fax, or mail as indicated to begin receiving special education and other related disability information. We also encourage you to share this announcement with parents, transition-aged students, educators, and others in your community who might wish to participate.

Be assured that your contact information will not be shared without your expressed permission. The Board and SSEAC share your concerns about privacy and unwanted correspondence, especially junk e-mail, and will carefully limit their communications to the information you need to be a knowledgeable and effective participant in Virginia's special education system. ♡

Partners in Policymaking Celebrates Its 20th Anniversary

Teri Barker-Morgan

Nationally, Partners in Policymaking celebrates a major milestone this year. On its website, the founding program takes a look back at its beginnings and accomplishments:

"Twenty years ago, the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities created a ground-breaking, innovative training program called Partners in Policymaking to teach parents and self-advocates the power of advocacy to change the way people with disabilities are supported, viewed, taught, live, and work. During the past two decades, important issues have been confronted and dramatic changes have been made.

"As Partners in Policymaking celebrates 20 years, it's important to remember that the work is not finished and, in fact, never will be. At the first Partners class, Ed Roberts, a well-known disability rights activist, urged participants to take up the fight for the rights of people with disabilities. His words have stood

the test of time and are as relevant today as two decades ago. [Visit www.partnersinpolicymaking.com for video & text.]

"Since 1987, Partners programs have been implemented nationally and internationally. More than 15,000 Partners graduates are part of a growing national and international network of community leaders serving on policymaking committees, commissions, and boards at all levels of government." The first Board-sponsored PIP class graduated in 1995. Today, over 280 Virginia Partners are at work on systems-change in healthcare, education, housing, transportation, employment, recreation, and other areas of public policy and action. The PIP Class of 2008 will hold its first session on September 14 & 15. We congratulate the new class participants and look forward to their journey and to their contributions to Ed Robert's vision. ♡♡



Eric Clark, A Voice Stilled



On Thursday, June 21, 2007, with the passing of Board member Eric Clark, our community lost a soft-spoken but articulate and forceful voice on behalf of independence and self-determination for all Virginians.

At a memorial service in his hometown of South Hill, Virginia, Eric's family and friends described his lifelong determination never to let muscular dystrophy confine his dreams. Ruth Randolph, his Sunday School teacher for many years, said she could always count on Eric for correct and well thought out answers to her questions, even if she did sometimes have to prompt him a bit to share them. His best friend, Cedric Merritt, talked about Eric's love of sports, first as an athlete himself then as a fan, and how as kids he needed his bicycle to keep up with Eric's motorized wheelchair as they roamed throughout South Hill. Later, visiting Eric in Richmond during and after college, Cedric found that he navigated the much busier streets of the bigger city with equal ease and enthusiasm.

At Virginia Commonwealth University, Eric earned a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Sociology, with a minor in African-American Studies. The VCU Athletics Department proclaimed Eric and his late roommate Ryan Moser, who also had muscular dystrophy, to be their #1 fans. So much so, that they took Eric and Ryan along to cheer for them courtside in the 2004 NCAA basketball tournament. During his memorial service, friend and Board staff member, Tom Driscoll, described how Eric could be counted on at Richmond Braves games to keep both the umpires and his friends behind homeplate "honest" in calling balls and strikes by signaling back and forth with fans along the first base line.

A 1999 graduate of Partners in Policymaking, Eric was a member of the "New Voices" Planning Committee at the Partnership for People with Disabilities and the Health Promotion for People with Disabilities Task Force of the Virginia Department of Health. He worked to recruit personal assistants for the state's PAS program and volunteered with the United Way and Muscular Dystrophy Association.

In 2005, then Governor Warner appointed Eric to the Board to finish the term of the late Barbara Gilley, another determined self-advocate. Governor Kaine reappointed Eric in 2006, and over the next year, he served as Chair of the Community Living and Transportation Committee. At the June 2007 Board meeting, Eric was elected to serve on the Executive Committee for the coming year.

Eric's friendship, good cheer, and intelligent and passionate advocacy and leadership on employment opportunities, quality personal assistance services, housing, transportation, and all aspects of community integration for people with disabilities will be greatly missed. ♡♡

EasyLiving^{CM} Home Program Coming to Virginia!

Teri Barker-Morgan

To make new homes welcoming to residents and visitors of all ages, sizes, and abilities, a coalition of public and private organizations in Georgia has developed the EasyLiving Home program. The concept has since spread to New Hampshire, Texas, and West Virginia.

This voluntary certification for everyday construction encourages inclusion of cost-effective features that improve accessibility and convenience for everyone without sacrificing style or substantially increasing construction costs. Key features of an EasyLiving Home include a step-free entrance no more than a half-inch higher than a driveway, sidewalk, or other firm route into a step-free central living area with ample clear passage space between rooms, including bathrooms. The main floor of an EasyLiving Home

Endorsement from Millard Fuller, President, Habitat for Humanity International

"The EasyLiving Home concept gives all of us an opportunity to take housing designs to the next level at a very minimal cost. At the same time, it provides a more livable and more visitable home for everyone. I would encourage all of those who work to provide housing for the citizens of the world to incorporate these life-enhancing design features in their homes."

also includes no less than one bedroom, a kitchen, some entertainment area, and at least one full bathroom with sufficient maneuvering space.

The Board and the Virginia Housing and Development Authority are collaborating to develop an EasyLiving Home Coalition for the Commonwealth. A **Virginia EasyLiving Home Summit** on Wednesday, October 3, 2007, in Richmond will formally kick-off this effort.

The Executive Director of the Georgia Home Builders Association and the Director of the Georgia EasyLiving Home program will attend to share their state's experiences. Other invited participants will represent the Virginia Home Builders Association, Area Agencies on Aging, the State Independent Living Council,

Habitat for Humanity, and many more potential community partners.

Visit www.easylivinghome.org to learn more about Georgia's program and view EasyLiving Home designs and features. For more information on the up-coming Virginia EasyLiving Home Summit, contact Teri Barker-Morgan at teri.barker@vbpd.virginia.gov or 804-786-9381. ♡♡

2008 Biennial Assessment Well Underway

(cont'd from page 3)

groups and individuals, including members of the General Assembly, who shared their thoughts and assisted in publicizing the public comment opportunities.

In the coming months, an ad hoc committee of Board members will review the public comment and identify critical issues. Concurrently, Board staff will review and update content on the service system, incorporating the most up-to-date data available. This will require extensive collaboration with state agency partners who will provide and verify information related to their services.

At its March 2008 quarterly meeting, the Board will complete its review process and approve the final draft of the 2008 *Biennial Assessment* for public release. That draft, to be posted to the Board's website and widely distributed in accessible formats, will include the Board's specific recommendations for needed changes and improvements to the Commonwealth's disability services system.

The 2006 *Biennial Assessment* is available at www.vaboard.org/biennial.htm, by e-mailing INFO@VBPD.virginia.gov, or calling 1-800-846-4464. ♡♡

Nominees Sought for Leadership and Achievement Awards

Each year, the Board presents two awards recognizing leadership and achievement in disability advocacy and service. The **Jackie Crews Award for Excellence in Leadership** recognizes a self-advocate whose work exemplifies the goals of the award's namesake: independence, productivity, inclusion, and self-determination. The **Outstanding Achievement Award** recognizes an individual or organization for service on behalf of people with disabilities that has had a significant and lasting impact on their quality of life and improved the disability services system.

Nominations for the 2007 awards will be accepted between September 1 and October 19. For nomination criteria, procedures, and forms as well as information about past award recipients, visit www.vaboard.org/awards.htm, e-mail INFO@VBPD.virginia.gov, or call 1-800-846-4464. ♡♡

Policy Fellowship: Commencement Season

Linda Redmond

Summer is both a time to celebrate achievements and begin new challenges for participants in the Board's Disability Policy Fellowship program.

In May, while completing her **2006-2007 Fellowship** with the Board, **Margaret "Meg" Hardt Brown** received her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University. Meg's principal fellowship project evaluated the impact of the Board's Partners in Policymaking program. In addition, she participated in Board and Education Committee meetings, interviewed Board members, up-dated research on poverty rates in localities served by Board-funded activities, and received an introduction to the animal-assisted therapy program at VCU Health Systems' Department of Psychiatry.

Meg's study of Partners in Policymaking involved tabulation and review of demographics and advocacy experiences for the 165 graduates in the classes of 2001 to 2006. In collaboration with other Board staff, Meg developed and conducted a telephone survey identifying the types and levels of advocacy by Partners over the previous year. She also asked them to rate the helpfulness of their

Partners training and how it could be improved. Seventy-two percent responded "extremely helpful". Training in practical "know-how" (identifying what you want, how to ask for it, and whom to contact) and confidence-building were identified as most helpful to their current advocacy efforts.

Asked what she found most meaningful from her research, Meg cited, ". . . the personal stories . . . the obstacles in their advocacy paths, their collective determination to facilitate positive change despite moments of discouragement produced by significant setbacks. I was struck by their willingness to share themselves with me and their eagerness to talk about their efforts. Partners is an important program, well worth the time, energy, and money it requires."

Previously a teacher and administrator with the West Point school system, Meg is embarking on a second career with the completion of her fellowship and achievement of her degree. She has accepted a position with the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority as a counselor in their day treatment program for students in Richmond Public Schools. She is also collaborating with Dr. Allen Lewis of the VCU Department of Rehabilitation Counseling to publish her Partners findings in a peer-reviewed journal. The Board wishes Meg much success! ♡♡

Board Awards \$446,100 for New Grant Projects *(cont'd from page 1)*

which assembled a planning committee of self-advocates who developed the "Our Lives, Our Voices" statewide conference in 2005 and subsequent regional events in 2006 where self-advocates identified tools and resources needed to build effective advocacy networks.



*BrandSync
representatives
Rob Martin &
Dixie Alexander*

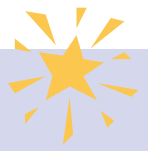
The Board's fourth new project involves a **\$96,100** award, from **July 1 to December 31, 2007**, to the Virginia Association of Community Rehabilitation Programs, also known as **vaACCSES**. The **Public Awareness Campaign Part 1: Advocacy Message Development** will assess Virginians' current attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs regarding people with disabilities. vaACCSES will partner with **BrandSync**, an industry leader in branding and communications strategy, to conduct primary quantitative research utilizing a demographically and geographically diverse and representative sample of Virginians. Using the research results, the Board will craft messages and strategies for broadening awareness and understanding of the critical issues affecting people with disabilities, the state's disability services system, and opportunities for all Virginians to live independently in communities of their own choice.

On July 17, 2007, the new grantees' program and fiscal coordinators attended an orientation workshop in Richmond where they learned more about the Board and its administrative, programmatic, and fiscal requirements. It was also an opportunity to network with each other and get to know their program managers on the Board's staff.

For additional information on the Board's funding opportunities, its current and past grant initiatives, and how to receive future Request for Proposal (RFP) announcements, visit www.vaboard.org/grants.htm, e-mail INFO@VBPD.virginia.gov, or call **1-800-846-4464**. ♡♡



Meetings & Events of Interest



Board of Medical Assistance Services

09/11/2007 10:00am
Department of Medical Assistance Services, 600 E. Broad Street,
13th Floor Conference Room, Richmond, VA 23219

Virginia Public Guardianship & Conservator Advisory Board

09/20/2007 10:00am
Virginia Department for the Aging, 1610 Forest Avenue, Suite 100,
Richmond, VA 23229

VOPA Board of Directors

09/25/2007 9:00am
Virginia Office for Protection and Advocacy, 1910 Byrd Avenue,
Suite 5, Richmond, VA 23230

Board Meeting

10/09/2007 9:00am
Board of Long-Term Care Administrators, Department of Health
Professions, Alcoa Building, 6603 West Broad Street, 5th Floor,
Conference Room 1, Richmond, VA

Virginia Brain Injury Council Quarterly Meeting

10/26/2007 1:00pm
Department of Rehabilitative Services, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive,
Richmond, VA 23229 - Conference Rooms 101/103/105

Board Meeting

11/14/2007 9:00am
Board for Hearing Aid Specialists, Department of Professional and
Occupational Regulation, 3600 West Broad Street, 4th Floor
Richmond, VA

State Rehabilitation Council

11/14/2007 10:00am
Department of Rehabilitative Services, Woodrow Wilson
Rehabilitation Center, Fishersville, VA 22939

Mental Health Planning Council

12/05/2007 10:00am
Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance
Abuse Services, DRS Office, 8004 Franklin Farms Drive,
Richmond, VA 23229

Virginia Public Guardianship & Conservator Advisory Board

12/06/2007 10:00am
Virginia Department for the Aging, 1610 Forest Avenue, Suite 100,
Richmond, VA 23229

Board of Medical Assistance Services

12/11/2007 10:00am
Department of Medical Assistance Services, 600 E. Broad Street,
13th Floor Conference Room, Richmond, VA 23219

For more Meetings & Events of Interest, visit our website at www.vaboard.org/meetings.htm

Next Board Meeting
September 21, 2007
Wyndham Richmond Airport Hotel
4700 S. Laburnum Avenue
Richmond, VA



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VIRGINIA BOARD FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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