

# Self Advocates Becoming Empowered

APRIL 2016

SPRING

## What is the Disability Integration Act

That report recommended that Congress amend the ADA to clarify and strengthen the law's integration mandate in a manner that accelerates Olmstead implementation and clarifies that every individual who is eligible for LTSS under Medicaid has a federally protected right to a real choice in how they receive services and supports. The report and this recommendation were well received by the Disability Community.

Although the Disability Integration Act (S.2427) does NOT amend the ADA, the legislation, modeled on the ADA and the ADA Amendments Act, strengthens Olmstead's integration mandate and creates federal civil rights law which addresses the civil rights issue that people with disabilities who are stuck in institutions cannot benefit from many of the rights established under the ADA.

The Disability Integration Act (DIA) is civil rights legislation, introduced by Senator Schumer to address the fundamental issue that people who need Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) are forced into institutions and losing their basic civil rights. The legislation (S.2427) builds on the 25 years of work that ADAPT has done to end the institutional bias and provide seniors and people with disabilities home and community-based services (HCBS) as an alternative to institutionalization. It is the next step in our national advocacy after securing the Community First Choice (CFC) option.





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# **Bid Now for 2018 SABE Conference**

It may seem like a long way off but it's never too soon for your state to submit a bid for the next **SABE 2018 Conference**.

**SABE can be part of your conference planning committee, it is up to you to make it a grand event.**

**Location: To Be Determined**

**Dates: To Be Determined**

**Sponsor: To Be Determined**

**Theme: "To Be Determined"**

## **For more information**

<http://www.sabeusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Conference-Bid-Packet-Revised-Jul-14.doc>

# Diana Mairose: My experience as a poll worker



On Tuesday, March 15, I was honored to be a poll worker in Oakley. I wanted to help because I felt it was important to see how poll workers treated people with disabilities.

The February training had a lot to read and remember, and we had some hands-on experience on the voting machine. The training book did have some pictures for those who read differently. However, if you were visually impaired, this training would not work for you because there was no assistive technology for those who needed it.

Training for working with people who have disabilities was in a separate book and not mandatory, and only two slides covered people with disabilities—mostly curbside voting and who to contact with a problem. I passed the test, but when I left the training, I felt very confused and nervous.

The day before the election, we trained at the polling place, and my job was to cut the voting stickers and move booths to be set up.

On Election Day, we started at 5:15 a.m. My job was to check IDs, and many people were confused where to sign in to vote. One man asked why the Board of Elections keeps changing things, then voted quickly and left.

We only had one person, who was 90-years-old, who did not have any ID. Fortunately she lived at her polling place, and her caretaker helped her find the right paperwork. One person showed a Metro Ac-

cess Card for her ID, but I told her this was not a proper ID and got the deputy to assist her. Several ladies didn't believe me when I said they were not at the correct polling place. Other voters showed IDs with different addresses than their registration.

Our polling place kept running out of ballots, and we had to call several times to have more delivered. When we started running out of a specific ballot we had to use the accessible voting machine. I was surprised on how many people did not know how to use it. I was also surprised to see neighbors and caretakers help so many friends and family to vote. These issues caused some long lines and complaints from voters, but we managed.

At our location, we did not know to keep the polls open longer due to the car accident on the bridge and had one person complain that she could not cast her vote because of the traffic.

I enjoyed being a poll worker, and I do believe the poll workers and managers who do this each year have a big heart. Election Day has many people who are behind the scenes, and we have to trust and work with each other. All of us could not do everything, but we worked as a team. Respect for poll workers and voters is important, and I was happy to serve Hamilton County and Ohio.

*Diana Mairose is an advocacy support adviser for Hamilton County Developmental Disabilities Services. She lives in Oakley.*

# SABE 2014 Voter Experience Election Results

## Voters with disabilities share their voting accessibility experience

A new study shows that having a disability is not the problem with voting, it is having the accessible equipment, accessible locations and respect to do so.

*Cincinnati, Ohio November 30, 2015 –* As the country prepares for the 2016 Presidential Election, how prepared are Election Officials to meet the voting needs of people with disabilities? A survey conducted by Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), a national organization lead by people with disabilities for people with disabilities, on the accessibility of the 2014 Election found:

**27%** of voters, who used wheelchairs, had problems moving around the voting area

**11%** of the voters reported poll workers treated them like they were NOT able to vote

**17%** of the voters said the accessible voting machines were not up and running when they arrived at the polling location

**11%** of the voters self-reported they did not know how to operate the accessible equipment

**21%** of the poll workers did not provide clear instructions on how to use the accessible voting equipment

**19%** of voters, who used Absentee

Ballots, did so because they felt they could not vote privately at the polling location



The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) passed in 2000 outlines specific regulations that all Elections must follow:

- be held in accessible locations
- use ballots that encourage people to vote rather than discourage
- allow voters to cast their ballot privately and independently

This study finds the greatest barrier to voting for people with disabilities is the lack of knowledge of poll workers.

For more information, visit [www.sabeusa.org](http://www.sabeusa.org) website for the link of the 2014 Election Report.



# SABE AT WORK



# Spotlight Self-Advocates

By John Britton, Carrie Varner, and Chaqueta Stuckey



## Teresa Coleman

**How long have you been involved in self-advocacy?**

I've been involved with self-advocacy for 7 years.

**What makes a good self-advocate?**

A self-advocate makes others feel strong, independent, and gets others inspired to do things on their own.

**What are your talents and hobbies?**

I love to sing! I'm a member of a chorus, I like to plan events, I'm a twelve master board member, I participate in People's First of Atlanta, I'm working on setting up a non-profit organization called An-

gel & Friends, I go to church, help others through grief, take care of children, shop, travel, I participate in ADAPT, OCSS, and many committees. I also make a point of helping others.

**What is missing in the self-advocacy movement?**

Better technology and more accessibility.

**How do you get people involved in self-advocacy?**

I tell people about SABE and give them the website address so they can get the latest information from SABE. I also go to conferences and my local self-advocacy chapters and tell people about self-advocacy; especially the youth as they are the next generation of self-advocates.



The self-advocates of South Carolina may all be known for their smiling faces, positive attitudes, and our spirit of determination.

However, in the world of advocacy, you may not see those smiles if our voices are not heard. It is important that advocates not only in South Carolina but in every state speak up for themselves and for what they believe. As advocates, speaking up for ourselves gives us a sense of empowerment, independence, and confidence to achieve any goal that we set for ourselves.

The South Carolina self-advocacy Council also known as IMPACT South Carolina believes that we as individuals motivate people to achieve change together. One issue in the state of South Carolina is

a lack of education about voting. The members of IMPACT felt that it was important to us to gain more knowledge about voting, so along with "Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities, Inc (P&A), the members of IMPACT participated in the project vote training sponsored by SABE.

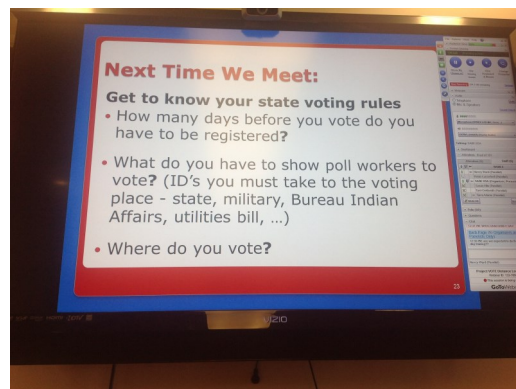
South Carolina was one of six states that participated in the training. The training was designed to educate the advocates about voting using a voting toolkit. The toolkit was designed to train advocates on how to register to vote, identifying where to vote, voting rights, and the importance of knowing candidates just to name a few. The overall goal of the training was to bring awareness to the voting issue and ensure advocates that they

# SABE Voter Project in Alabama

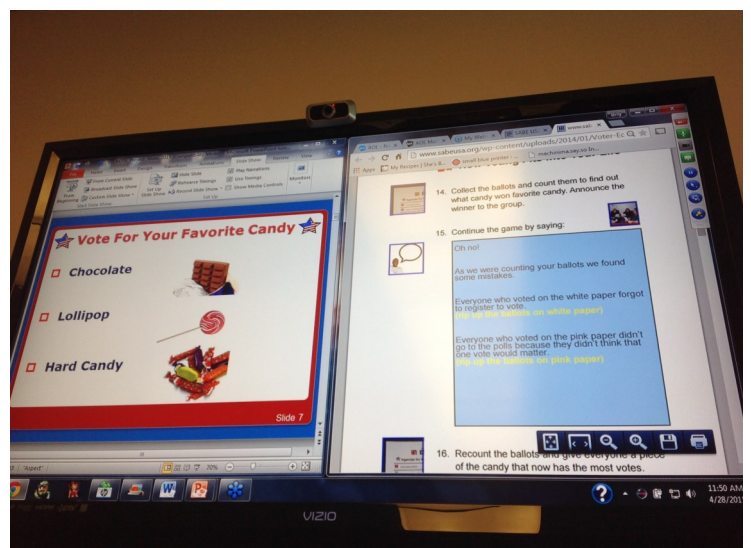
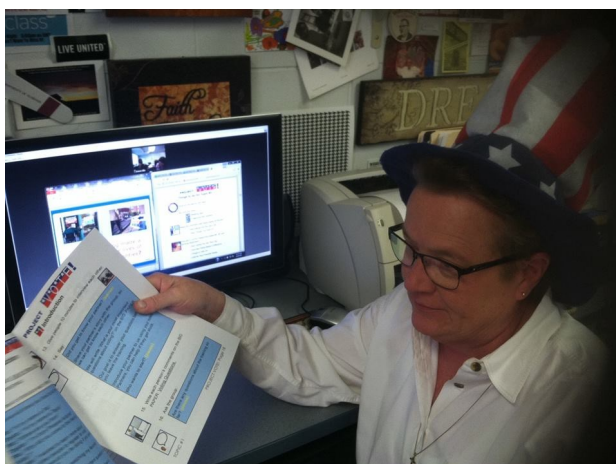
On July 10, 2015 People First of Alabama and Alabama Disability Advocacy Program (ADAP) presented a Project Vote program at a community center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The panelists included a representative of the Tuscaloosa League of Women Voters, an attorney from ADAP, a team of self-advocates and staff from People First of Alabama. More than 100 people from several counties in western Alabama attended the event.

Participants were involved in an interactive discussion on accessible polling places, registration rules, how to be informed voters and more. Participants had an opportunity to register and around 5 actually turned in completed forms. The presentation was the result of a collaboration with the **SABE Voter Project: Distance Training**. Lead-

ers of both ADAP and People First participated in three webinars on the topic of voting rights and responsibilities.



The webinars prepared self-advocates and allies to train others in our state to inspire more self-advocates to become informed and involved voters. The event was reported on in the Tuscaloosa News newspaper. People First and ADAP are looking forward to more presentations around the state on this topic.



# JEFF RIDGEWAY ADVOCACY AWARD



Alabama Disability Advocacy Program launched a statewide award in honor of Jeff Ridgeway who was a central leader of SABE and People First of Alabama for several decades. Jeff's life was dedicated to enriching the lives of people with disabilities and the award is meant to recognize those in Alabama who carry on the traditions of determination advocacy for people with disabilities.

This year's recipients, recognized at the recent ADAP annual meeting, are Kent Crenshaw, Executive Director of the Montgomery Center for Independent Living and long time Alabama self advocate and SABE leader, Eloise Woods. Eloise has been state president of People First of Alabama four times and currently serves on our executive committee and state board of directors.

Kent is a recognized across the state and nationally as an advocate for individuals with disabilities. One supporter described Kent as a tireless advocate for individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities, utilizing his personal experience as well as his background in paralegal

and rehabilitation counseling. Kent serves on local, state and national leadership board and councils. We are grateful for Kent's contributions and inspiration.

Eloise Woods has served on the Alabama Department of Mental Health Board of Trustees, the AI Council on Developmental Disabilities and the ADAP advisory council. She has been a leader in our state for three decades working to end segregation in employment, residential, and community participation. Eloise was a central leader in our state to close the institutions which was finally achieved in 2012!

Thank you Eloise for all your dedication and work.



# 25 years of ADA: Did you know that the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) turned 25 last year? Wow!

When the law was passed in 1990, there was a lot of discrimination towards people with disabilities; the ADA was put in place to change that. Before the ADA, cities and businesses were not required to make places accessible for people with disabilities.

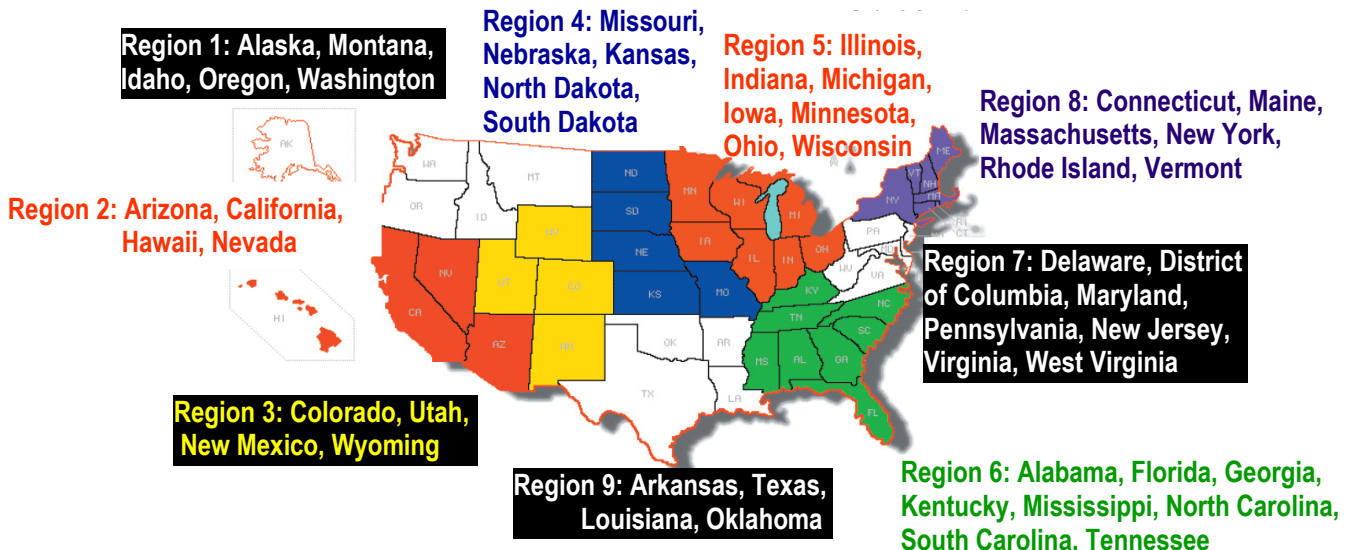
Public transportation was not equipped with the tools needed to make it possible for everyone to access public transportation to get around in their communities. But now, newly acquired public transportation is now required to have things like ramps, disability seating, and an area for people who use wheelchairs. That is what makes the ADA such a vital tool in making sure that everyone has access to the community and that everyone is able to participate in the community.



While there are a lot of great things that are happening, there are still many places throughout the country that either lack the funding to be in compliance with ADA or they simply refuse to be in compliance with ADA and that is unacceptable. We need to work together so that every place is ADA compliant!


There are many people who do not know what the ADA is or they assume that the ADA will always be there and that they do not need to worry about it. For those who do not know what the ADA is, here is the link to the ADA website: [www.ada.gov/title1.htm](http://www.ada.gov/title1.htm) The ADA website will explain what the ADA is and how you can get involved. We need everyone to work together so that ADA will remain strong!

There were also a lot of celebrations to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the ADA. We'd love to hear how your state celebrated the 25th anniversary of the ADA! You can go to our SABE self advocates becoming empowered Facebook page to share your story.

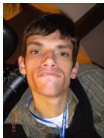


**Having trouble remembering which region you are in  
or do you need to get in contact with your regional representative?  
Here is a quick and easy way to get connected!**

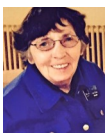

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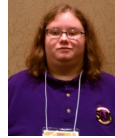
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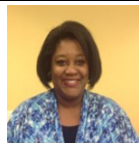


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## Technology handbook

I want to share how my relationship with technology began? I was so afraid of it; my first couple of computers were given to me when someone was getting a new one. I was told how to turn it on and about some programs or games on it.

I wish we could all learn from a friend who had hundreds of hours to give to us but that is hard to come by. Next best thing is a book that you can look at that doesn't rush you. Or expect you to remember but, The **My Technology Handbook** will ask you make notes to help you remember.

Most of us are not satisfied with a phone that just makes phone calls or a computer that types letters anymore. We want computers or phones to help us build on personal goals or group goals. Before you can decide what you want the technology to help you with, you might like to understand how things work and what is possible. The **My Technology Handbook** will help you understand the very basic words or terms to prepare you for the discussion about what you need.

After reading this I hope you have an experience like I did. Understanding technology and how to use the tools like social media safely to connect with your friends in self advocacy and grow your organization's partnerships.

The SABE **My Technology Handbook** answers questions that most of us who are new or just learning about technology ask. This Handbook uses easy to understand directions and step by step pictures to teach these skills. Remember it was written by people with disabilities for people with disabilities.

