Stories of Hope
June 2023 Newsletter

Key Coalition Legislative Session Updates

The Key Coalition had a successful legislative session with many positive outcomes regarding disability initiatives. The Coalition which includes the Alaska Association of Providers, Peer Power, Alaska Association of Direct Support Professionals in addition to family members and supporters have been working tirelessly to advocate for individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities for decades to have access to the supports they need to live full lives in the communities of their choice.

Here are some of the highlights from the most recent legislative session.

**Funding for Waitlist Eradication Plan**
Our advocacy for an increment of $647,000 to launch the waitlist eradication plan presented by SDS to the legislature has been included in the budget. This initial funding will provide SDS the resources needed to begin the first steps of the plan.

**Funds to Bridge the Gap**
Another successful outcome from the legislative session is the allocation of $7.5 million to provide a funding bridge for providers until rate restructuring is accomplished. We are very grateful for the work of Senator Cathy Giessel and Representative Andy Josephson who both brought forward to their respective bodies a $15 million dollar request. Although the House voted it down, it was approved in
the Senate and then was reduced as part of the budget negotiation process. We are grateful to the Governor for keeping it in the budget.

**Development of a Rate Restructuring Plan**
Coalition members have also been advocating for the development of a rate restructuring plan, which is a critical step in ensuring the appropriate services and supports are available and sustainable to those who need them. Currently the rates of reimbursement do not cover the cost of providing services. Legislators approved the allocation of $5 million to develop this plan, which will go a long way in addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities and elders.

**Impact of Language**
Advocacy also resulted in an important change in language from the term ‘adult care home’ to ‘adult host home.’, a new support category for those with disabilities as well as elders. Championed by the Governor and the Department of Health, the bill created an opportunity for easier access to support and transitions for youth currently in foster care. This change supports additional flexibilities and the term “host home” moves away from medical terminology.

These outcomes are positive for Hope and like providers, and for the people and families who choose our services. Many thanks to each and every person who took the time to call and write to legislators in an effort to improve the stability of community-based supports.

While we are grateful for the many people who came together in recent months for collective advocacy, there is more work to be done and our efforts cannot stop here. We encourage everyone to reach out to their local legislator this summer and fall when schedules are less hectic. Continued advocacy is essential to enhancing relationships and understanding of the disability community in Alaska, and to ensuring appropriate funds and resources are readily allocated and available. Together, our voices are loud and will be heard.

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**Jena Crafton named Chair of Governor's Council**

Congratulations to Jena Crafton for being appointed as the Chair of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. This is an important and honorable position that requires dedication and leadership skills, all of which Jena has. We wish her all the best in her new role and look forward to the impact she continues to have on the disability community in Alaska.

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**Ric Nelson becomes Executive Director of Peer Power**

Congratulations to Ric Nelson on becoming the Executive Director of Peer Power Alaska. Ric has been a thought leader in the disability community for a number of years and we’re grateful for his dedication and leadership in making a positive impact in our community. We’re excited to see what the future holds for Peer Power under his leadership.

(Photo courtesy of peerpower907.com)
We would like to announce the launch of an Ethics and Human Rights Committee webpage on Hope's website. Our commitment to ethical services and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is reflected in the creation of this valuable resource.

Staff members, support recipients, families and guardians, and members of the community who are concerned about an area of ethics or human rights at Hope are encouraged to present their concern to the committee.

Visit Page

Wellness Bulletin: Is a gym membership right for you?

Have you been thinking about getting a gym membership? Check out our latest Wellness Bulletin to help you decide if a gym fits your lifestyle, fitness goals, and budget. We've also put together a comparison guide featuring popular gyms in Alaska to help in your research and decision-making.

Read Wellness Bulletin

Scholarships still available for Hope's Summer Camp

Now - August 11

It's not too late to sign your children up for Hope's inclusive Summer Camp. Campers are heading out in the Anchorage community for themed weeks of fun and engaging activities, including art, music, sports, wildlife, cultural traditions, and more!

Sign Up for One or More Weeks
Disability Pride Month
July

The month of July celebrates Disability Pride and is an opportunity to honor the history, achievements, experiences, and struggles of the disability community.

The flag’s colors represent disability types:
- Red: physical disabilities
- Gold: cognitive and intellectual disabilities
- White: nonvisible and undiagnosed disabilities
- Blue: psychiatric disabilities
- Green: sensory disabilities

Independence Day
July 4

Hope’s main offices will be closed on Tuesday, July 4 in observance of Independence Day. If you need to speak to our administrative staff, offices will re-open at 8:00am on Wednesday, July 5.

We’d like to introduce you to Christa

Christa has been coming to Hope’s Art Studio for several years now. She is a happy young woman who finds strange and loud noises amusing. Her favorite activity in the Studio is to have staff put paint and marbles into a container that makes noise so that she can listen to the marbles clanking around. She laughs out loud the entire time. Christa loves noise and she loves the busy bustle of the Studio. She has done some painting and beading, and has participated in collaborative projects in the Studio. She is also featured on the front of our new brochure (second photo)! Christa gets extra shout outs this month for being a smiley bright light in the Studio each day she is there!