

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is dark, and the water is shimmering with golden light from the setting sun. In the foreground, three white birds, likely egrets or herons, are wading in the shallow water. One is in the center, another to the left, and a third to the right. Their reflections are visible in the water. In the background, a person is seen in a small boat, also reflecting in the water. The overall mood is serene and natural.

SUNSET COAST
CITIZEN
ADVOCACY

August 2017

“Bad things happen when good people stay silent”

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Donna Duncan our new coordinator

Dear friends of Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy,

Please allow me to take this opportunity to introduce myself to all of you. My name is Donna Duncan, your new Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy Program Coordinator. It is a great privilege to join an organization with such a fine reputation for Citizen Advocacy, step into the role that Bob Lee – a mentor for me for many many years – has retired from and to work alongside Les Pearce and the Board of Management. Sadly, Julie Morahan is no longer with the program. She has made a difficult decision to leave her role for personal reasons. Julie has established and supported many wonderful relationships and I know she will be missed by many people.

So a little bit of information about me. I bring with me 18 years of dedication and experience in working alongside people with a disability and their advocates, to promote and support valued roles, valued relationships and safety of people with a disability in all aspects of life. This includes working as a coordinator for a Citizen Advocacy Program.

I have already heard so many wonderful stories of the freely given commitments Citizen Advocates in the Sunshine Coast area have made for a person with a disability. I am looking forward to meeting you all and hearing about your relationships. Please feel free to contact at any time on 0418 714 695 or donna.duncan@citizenadvocacy.com for information, advice or just to share your experiences or have a chat. I can also offer advocates support and advice, or help problem solve, if you are having any difficulties in your relationship. It is always useful to talk over issues and problems with another person, and I am looking forward to hearing about the good times too!

Warmest regards -Donna



When things change!

"Things have changed, I don't have as much time as I did and I can't visit and do things with my protégé like we used to"

This is something we hear from time to time from Citizen Advocates. What does it mean?

Citizen Advocates often think that changes in their lives mean that they can no longer be involved with their Protégé. Not so. Life changes takes us in different directions all the time but we adapt and find ways to continue doing things and being with people who are important to us. We just find different ways of doing these things.

As Citizen Advocates you are more often than not the one person in the Protégé's life who really knows and understands them. You have invested time to understand behaviours, circumstances, interests, likes, dislikes and dynamics which others do not perceive in the same independent freely given context. To lose such a wealth of personal knowledge and understanding would surely be a tragedy for the Protégé. Maybe the question is really "How can I best use my knowledge and understanding to benefit my Protégé now that there have been certain changes in my life?"

Many Citizen Advocates in long term roles whose role in their Protégé's life were changing to the point that they began questioning their relevance to their Protégé. It may well be that their initial role has completed or that circumstances have changed so that the initial role is no longer required. Maybe this is a good time to review what is happening for your Protégé and to develop possible new roles that are relevant and within the changed circumstances of Protégé and Citizen Advocate.

Over the years we have seen various advocates marry, have families, change jobs, move house, enter studies, graduate from studies, travel for extensive periods, separate, divorce, battle illness, lose loved ones and continue their freely given relationship. Not always as they would have wished but still there with other informal relationships that have remained throughout the changes of life.

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So even though life changes, as it will, the Citizen Advocacy relationship can also change and adapt to whatever fits for both people.

For those of you who are experiencing changes in your life and concerned for what this means take heart. We are available and at your service to hear your concerns and help clarify how you can continue your involvement in a way that works for you and your Protégé.

Do I expect too much?

Being handicapped often means being also alone. True, I have a family that love me and cared for me, but I also very much want a friend

Do I expect too much?

A friend who understands my works and gestures, who listens at me and into me, and who sometimes has time for me

Do I expect too much?

A friend who puts his hand on my shoulder, and simply calls me up sometimes, and sometimes visits me, and perhaps occasionally goes somewhere with me.

Do I expect too much?

So far, this friend only exists in my fantasy and dreams, as I have images of the telephone or the doorbell ringing for me. When it does not, I console myself with the thought that it may be tomorrow.

Do I expect too much?

I know that probably no one will ever say to me, I love you, 'but maybe somebody will say one day I want to be your friend.

Do I expect too much?

Personal thoughts of a person with a physical disability—published by the German Cerebral Palsy Association (Das Bank 4/83, p.36)

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Citizen Advocacy promotes and protects!

Citizen Advocacy promotes and protects the needs and interests of people with disability by connecting them in one to one freely given relationships with competent, concerned citizens. Citizen Advocacy programs build long lasting relationships between ordinary citizens (citizen advocates), who are unpaid and independent, and people with disability (protégés). Citizen advocates are asked to make a commitment to represent their protégé's rights and interests as if they were their own. A citizen advocate may assume one or more advocacy roles, some of which may last for life. Having people who know and care about us, and speak out on our behalf when necessary enhances and provides security in our lives.

In today's society, it is commonly assumed that paid professionals are needed to address people's needs. Citizen Advocacy, in contrast, asks ordinary citizens to become involved with the lives of people with disability. Many people possess a variety of talents through their experience in family, work, church and community associations. This experience often makes a real difference in the life of a person with disability.

Citizen Advocacy is not a service. Rather, it is an invitation to people leading full lives in our communities to get to know people who have a disability, who have been or are at risk of being excluded from their community. Citizen advocates voluntarily enter a relationship which is independent of the Citizen Advocacy office and the human service system.

Since many people with disabilities are isolated, alone and hidden, it is important for Citizen Advocacy programs to actively seek out these individuals. Citizen Advocacy staff look for people in need of protection and representation according to the guidelines that have been established by the programme. They meet the person with the disability to discover their needs and interests and then seek out a suitable potential citizen advocate who is given extensive orientation in the principles of Citizen Advocacy. Only when the citizen agrees to take the responsibility of representing the best interests of the protégé is the match recognised. The Citizen Advocacy staff then support and offer encouragement to the relationship. Over time a Citizen Advocacy program supports a growing number of relationships.

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**COMMON LIFE EXPERIENCES FACED BY
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
AND HOW CITIZEN ADVOCACY RESPONDS**

Common Life Experiences	Citizen Advocacy response
Rejection	Makes a link to someone who cares
Isolation and segregation	An advocate helps to open doors to the community, to include the person with a disability in the life of the community
Low expectations and dependency	Citizen advocates see the potential in people and encourages and supports independence
Little or no control over decisions	Assists a person to understand options affecting their life and assist with informed decisions and choices
Few or no stable relationships	Potential for long term relationships
Subject to destructive social myths and stereotypes	Actively works to destroy the stereotypes through positive interactions in the community
Great personal insecurity	Increases person's sense of belonging, self confidence and self worth
Limited life experiences/wasted lives	Enables a person to move into the community, gain experiences, meet people
Abuse, ridicule, neglect	Provides protection from exploitation and neglect

Why do some people get involved?

How do some people find the motivation and time to welcome a marginalised person into their lives?

We have found that people get involved for a variety of reasons including:

Responding to an invitation.

"It was a statement of trust in me as a person to be asked," said one woman. Often, the potential companion had little idea what their role would entail. However, it is clear that we need not be afraid of asking people to be involved in important work such as this. Some people are at points in their lives where they are looking for fresh, new involvements or challenges.

Humanitarian concern.

"I haven't been involved in my community for a while. You have given me the opportunity to do something useful," said one man. "This gave me a way of dealing with the shame I felt from the way we treated aboriginal people in my home town," said another woman. This is a reminder to express our invitations to people in terms of righting wrongs, or dealing with injustice, or doing something at a very practical and grounded level to help someone get their life together.

Feelings of friendship.

Some people speak not of abstract motivations, but in terms of liking and enjoying the company of the person, or in terms of valuing learning from them. This sometimes becomes more of a motivation as a relationship develops and mutuality deepens.

Religious commitment.

For some people, a commitment to spiritual values is an underlying motivation for the establishment of relationships with marginalised people. We have been impressed with the way that people have drawn on their religious commitments to make compassionate and helpful responses without any expectation that the person adopts their particular religious ideology.

Personal benefit.

"I need this – it will be good for me", said one man as we invited him to be an ally for someone. He pointed out to us that he was a secure professional who moves in very comfortable middle class circles. Meeting a highly vulnerable and isolated man would be good for both of them, he hoped.

Finding People to Be There Neil Barringham, Penny Barringham 2002

A whole range of conflicts and practical dilemmas can and do arise in advocacy. While these rarely have "right" or "wrong" answers, they can usually be resolved in effective ways through common sense and through maintaining a firm focus on the basic justice issues that underpin advocacy.

No one person can change the world, but you as a Citizen Advocate can change the world for one person

Citizen Advocacy is a program that promotes, protects and defends the rights of people who have an intellectual disability. Citizen Advocacy supports a voluntary group of individuals (Citizen Advocates) to offer protection, guidance and friendship to people of all ages who are lonely and at risk.

Citizen Advocacy looks for ordinary people in the community who care about others, to offer their time freely to stand by a person with a disability and be there for them. People can either be asked by the program or can step forward of their own accord, and are matched with a person with a disability based on a good 'fit' between their needs and interests and the ability's, skills and commitment of the potential Citizen Advocate.

As a Citizen Advocate there are a number of roles such as being a mentor, adviser, protector, guardian, teacher or just a good friend. Citizen Advocates can spend time with someone to ensure that they are not left lonely and isolated and may be supported to participate and do activities of their choice. One example would be to assist a young boy to go to football training assisting him with emotional and practical support giving confidence and advice.



Being a Citizen Advocate can help build many skills including: communication skills, helping a person make decisions, listening skills, supportive skills,

relationship building skills and problem solving skills.

Citizen Advocates may also develop more confidence, self esteem, build friendships and feel comfortable with people that have varying abilities and disabilities.

Please call Donna or Les if you would like to know more.

Upcoming Events

Thursday 3rd August - Morning Tea - 10am - 12 noon
(in C.A. office)

Tuesday 15th August - Certification Surveillance Audit

August/date to be confirmed - BBQ (Botanical gardens)

Thursday 7th September - Morning Tea - 10am - 12 noon
(in C.A. office)

Thursday 5th October - Morning Tea - 10am - 12 noon
(in C.A. office)

December/date to be confirmed - AGM and Christmas Party

Top 5 tips

1. Risk more than others think is safe
2. Care more than others think is wise
3. Dream more than others think is wise
4. Expect more than others think is possible
5. And never give up!

Morning Tea!

An opportunity for us to come together, meet each other, share knowledge and experiences!



First Thursday of every month
(beginning - August 3rd) between 10am and Noon.

(For Protégés, Advocates, Advocate Associates or
any other interested party).

Call into the office for a chat, questions or just
for a drink.

Ways to be involved!

In today's society, it is commonly assumed that paid professionals are needed to address people's needs. Citizen Advocacy asks ordinary citizens to become involved in the lives of people with intellectual disability. Many people possess a variety of talents through their experience in family, work, church and community associations and it is this experience which often makes a real difference in the life of a person with disability. Citizen Advocacy is not a service. Rather, it is an invitation to people leading full lives in our communities to get to know people who have intellectual disability who have been or who are at risk of being excluded from their community.

Be an advocate

Advocates are all ages and come from a variety of backgrounds. Most citizen advocates have had no significant involvement with people with disability before. An advocate is individually matched to a protégé on the basis of the advocate's preferences, personal characteristics and commitment. Advocates are given an orientation to the common life experiences of people with intellectual disability, advocacy principles and the specific needs of the person they will be advocating for.

Be a crisis advocate - assisting, on a time-limited basis, with a specific problem or crisis as it arises in an emergency and/or critical situation.

Be an advocate associate

Advocate associates voluntarily assist advocates by providing information or expertise in their field. Some examples of areas of experience or expertise are: Health (nurse, social worker), Law, negotiation, finance.

Be a supporter

You can be part of the community network through which potential advocates could be identified and recruited.

**You may be only one person in the world,
but you may also be the world to one person!**

When speaking up!

Some protégés will at some point in their lives, need another person to vigorously represent their interests. This may be because their rights are (or are at risk of) being compromised.

Sometimes, taking on the role of Citizen Advocate will mean that you may have to enter into conflict with service providers, many of which are government run. Issues that require spokespersonship may be small and can be dealt with quite quickly, or it may be a serious issue (e.g. abuse or neglect) and may mean you will need to take a lobbying role.

There is no doubt about it, it can be a daunting prospect, one that will take tenacity, determination and PLANNING and will always mean having a meeting or conference by phone.

Here are some points that you may find useful when speaking up for your protégé.

- Think about the relative advantages of the different ways of lobbying someone.
- Try to assess how great a gap there is between your interests and the interests of the people you are wanting to influence.
- Try to imagine yourself in the other person's shoes. What would persuade them to give into your demands.
- Make use of supportive organisations in getting other people to be involved in your campaign, e.g. Suncoast Community Legal Service Inc, or other advocates fighting similar battles with the same service.
- Try to identify which people are likely to hold some sway over the people you are wanting to influence and work to get them on side.

See page 13 for Ideas!

Ideas!

- In getting people on your side to support you, be careful to present your issues honestly.
- Find out who the main decision maker is. There is no point in wasting time having a number of meetings to produce the same outcome that could be achieved in one or two.
- Confirm dates and times before the meeting .
- Remember you are dealing with bureaucracy and may get frustrated with the process
- Always have answers ready for the usual bureaucratic replies. Develop counter arguments to their response. For example:
 - We don't have the resources
 - there is nothing wrong with the way things are
 - We don't have enough data
 - I can't do anything it's not my job.
 - Staff could not cope with that
 - Other parents wouldn't want this

Remember, being brave and standing up against the services that control our protégés life can be a difficult thing. The "professionals" may ridicule, ignore or get nasty with you. Or they may totally agree with you in the very nicest way and then do nothing! BUT! Don't give up – by speaking up for your protégé you are changing the balance of power in favour of justice.

**The best way to find
yourself is to lose yourself
in the service of others.**

Ghandi

First they came for

First they came for the "black man".

They said he was a menace to society, a drug dealer, a school dropout , very violent to all humanity. But I was not a black man. I said nothing and I did nothing...

Then they came for the welfare mothers.

They said they are lazy, overweight, have too many children, a drain on society. But I was not on welfare. I was not a women. I said nothing, and I did nothing....

Then they came for the elderly. They said they were using too many of our dollars. They had too many needs, a drain on society. But I was young. I said nothing, and I did nothing....

Next they came for the people with disability. They said "these people" had nothing to give to society, they were ill, diseased, another drain on society. But I was not disabled. Again I said nothing and did nothing....

Then they came for me. They greeted me with big smiles, smiles that represented approval for my silence.

..... and by this time no one was left to speak out for me.

You're alive. Do something.

The directive in life, the moral imperative is so uncomplicated, it could be expressed in single words, not complete sentences. It sounds like this:

Look, Listen, Choose, Act!

Wheelchair Village

Imagine a town full of physically impaired people, all wheelchair users. They run everything; the shops, the factories, the schools, the television studio, the lot. There are no able bodied people, so naturally, when the town is built the community decides that it is pointless to have ceilings 10ft high and doors that are 7 feet high, "it's just a lot of wasted space that needs heating" they say. So the ceilings are built at 7 foot and doors at 5 foot. In every way they design the place the way they want it, and over the years these proportions are standardised by regulation. One day a few able bodied people come to stay. One of the first things they notice is the height of the doors. And the reason they notice this is because they keep hitting their heads. They come to stand out by the bruises they carry on their foreheads. Some doctors, psychiatrists, and social workers become involved. The doctors do extensive research and conclude in their learned reports that the disabled abled bodies suffer from 'loss of or reduction of functional ability' and the resulting handicap causes 'disadvantage for restriction of activity'. Working parties are formed. Many professionals and caring people are worried about what becomes known as the problem of the 'able bodied'.

Throughout the town there was a rapid growth of real concern. Specially strengthened helmets are distributed free to the able bodied to be worn at all times. Orthotists design braces which give support and relief while keeping the able bodied wearer bent to a normal height. Finding employment is a major problem for the able bodied. One man, for instance, applies to become a TV interviewer but he must have a special medical examination when he applies for a job. The doctor, naturally, points out in the report that it would be rather strange to have a TV interviewer with a bent back who wears a helmet all the time.

Of course the man doesn't get the job and is advised to accept the limitations of his disability. Finance, of course, becomes a major problem. Various groups of compassionate wheel chair users get-together and form registered charities.

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Twice yearly they hold a collection day, and of course there is the annual telethon, and the 'miss wheel chair village quest'.

Upturned helmets are left in pubs and shops for people to drop their small change into. There is heightening support for organisations such as 'The Society for Understanding the disabled abled bodied'. There is talk of founding special homes. But then one day it dawns on the able bodied that there is nothing actually wrong with them, just that society excludes them. They form a union to protect themselves and complain against segregation. They argue that if ceilings and doors were raised, there would be no problem. But this, of course, is a foolish suggestion. You cannot deny disability.

Adapted from the bruck, L The adventures of the disabled village Rehab. Digest, vol.10, No2 May/June 1975

Empathy Deficit

"You know there's a lot of talk in this country about the federal deficit. But I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit – the ability to put ourselves into someone else's shoes; to see the work through the eyes of those who are different from us – the child who's hungry, the steel worker who's been laid off, the family who's lost the life they built together when the storm came to town.

When you think like this – when you choose to broaden your ambit of concern and empathise with the plight of others, whether they are close friends or distant strangers – it becomes harder not to act, harder not to help"

Barak Obama, Aug 11 2006

Where, after all, do human rights begin?

In small places close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in, the school or college he attends, the factory, the farm or office where he works.

Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.

Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning elsewhere.

Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.

Society has a tendency to look out for the community at large rather than looking at an individual and their issues.

Will Campbell said that we put in a global sprinkler system while the person next to us is dying of thirst.

Citizen Advocacy is about giving a cup of water and letting others organize the sprinkler system.

Office resources of interest

BOOKS

- From behind the Piano – The building of Judith Snow's Unique Circle of Friends
- Observing, Recording, and Addressing personal Physical Appearance by means of the Appear Tool
- Suppression Stories
- A guideline on protecting the health and lives of patients in Hospitals – especially if the patient is a member of a socially devalued class
- Oliver Twist has asked for me – The politics and practice of getting justice for people with disabilities
- Duty of Care – Who's responsible?
- Social Role Valorization – Advanced issues in SRV Theory
- A brief Introduction to SRV – WW
- Public Policy Private Lives
- Talking about A series of Community Conversations
- The Homes West Experience – steps to independent living for adults with a disability
- One person at a time – How one agency changed from Group to individualised services
- The Forgotten Generation
- The Inclusion Papers – Strategies to make inclusion work
- Christmas in Purgatory
- On being the change we want to see – Volume 3
- Standing by me – stories of Citizen Advocacy

DVD's

Living a good life
Circles of Support
A history of human services, Universal Lessons, and Future implications
Advocacy for People with Disability

Please note: The Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy policies are available to anyone who would like to view them.

Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy

**Sunshine Coast Citizen
Advocacy**

Is funded by the Department
of Social Services

The program operates in
and around Maroochydore,
Nambour, Caloundra,
Mooloolaba, Buderim,
Coolum Noosa and the
Hinterland areas.

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“All disadvantaged groups
need advocacy

Privileged groups get it without
looking!”