

## **Doing the Right Thing** *Working to Help our DD Families*

This year, I'm once again urging the Legislature to help families who are struggling to raise a child with a developmental disability.

These families in our district have a hard battle every day just to give their child what all of us take for granted: growing up at home, getting an education, finding a job and having a chance at a rewarding life.



*At the 28th Annual Disabilities Legislative Reception, working together, from left, Rep. Larry Haler, Benton-Franklin Parents Coalition Coordinator Sharon Adolphsen, Sen. Jerome Delvin, ARC of the Tri-Cities Executive Director Judy Westik, Advocacy/Recreation Manager Donna Tracy and Sen. Mike Hewitt.*

### **Keeping Children and Families Together**

Sometimes a child with developmental disabilities has severe behavioral problems that radically disrupt family life.

If parents can't get the intensive, crisis prevention they need to alter these behavioral patterns, they often must institutionalize their child for the good of the rest of the family. This is *heartbreaking* for the entire family and extremely expensive for taxpayers – institutionalization costs \$155,000 to \$219,000 a year per child.

Sadly, more and more children are being institutionalized because of these severe behavioral issues. In the past year, there have been 44 or more children admitted to state institutions because we have so few community options available to families.

If we could develop a coordinated program of specialized training in behavioral support, we could offer a proactive, early intervention that would teach children to self-regulate destructive behaviors at an early age. That way, they can successfully remain at home, in their local schools, and in their communities.

Offering this program in our state would cost about \$54,000 per child per year – an enormous savings over institutionalization.

I am supporting Senate Bill 6448 to develop just such a program so that our parents have the help they need to deal with this problem.

The bill passed committee and was sent to Ways and Means -- and we're hopeful for passage this year. It would mean a world of difference for our DD families.



*Sen. Delvin compares notes with young ARC of the Tri-Cities visitor on their favorite candy.*

## Provider Training Requirements for Parents

Our local DD families are alarmed at the SEIU proposal to increase training requirements for individual providers of DD services.

While they support qualified and well-trained providers, the proposed measure includes dramatically increasing the training requirements for parents who care for their adult sons and daughters with developmental disabilities.

These parents have cared for their children all of their lives and feel they should be exempted from additional, time-consuming training requirements. One local DD parent, and Coordinator of the Benton Franklin Parent Coalition, said it best:

*Dear SEIU,*

*I am the parent of a 22-year-old daughter with developmental disabilities and I have been her care provider for the full 22 years. I do not agree with the union about requiring parents to get training for Medicaid Personal Care Parent Providers.*

*As parents, we have taken care of OUR children their entire lives -- we are the experts! I have no need, want or desire to care for others at this time. My daughter is my focus and my job.*

*Instead, I believe there should be THREE tracks of providers with three separate training requirements.*

- *A Career Path track for professionals could have increased training with increased pay and benefits.*
- *A Parent/Family Provider track for parents who care for only their own child. They simply continue with the current 6-hour training and safety training. There should be no continuing-education component and any additional training should be voluntary.*
- *An Intermittent Provider track could be on-the-job training for a provider who works limited hours.*

*I do not support additional training requirements that would reduce the amount of time available for parents to care for their children.*

*I do not support training that is based on caring for the elderly and is not relevant to the needs of people with developmental disabilities.*

*It is difficult -- if not impossible -- for any parent to find someone to watch their child with DD and find the time to go through senseless training at enormous cost to the state, only to re-learn what they already know very well.*

*It is in the best interests of all parent providers to continue with the 6 hours of training now in place, along with the required safety training.*

*Thank you,  
Sharon Adolphsen*

I have been working hard for a compromise between the legitimate need to give professional caregivers the advanced training they require, and the parents -- who are all too aware of what it takes to care for a child with developmental disabilities and don't need further training.

Talks are in progress with the SEIU in hopes of reducing the amount of the proposed training parents must receive. I'll let you know when I hear anything definitive.

I am also hopeful that I can get the new training regulations -- whatever they end up being -- applicable only to new parents faced with providing care to a child with developmental disabilities. I am hoping to exclude parents who are currently providing care, many of whom have provided this care for decades.

## **Other DD Priorities Must Likely Wait until 2009**

Many other vital priorities for our DD families cannot be addressed during the 2008 legislative session. Priorities like:

- Discrimination protection for all employees
- Employment opportunities for high school graduates with DD
- An ADA coordinator for the court system
- DD Land Trust
- Infant/toddler equity act
- Endowment Trust Fund.

These and many more must wait until next year because 2008 is the second year of the biennial budget. That means changes to this year's budget -- in theory -- can only be slight tweaks to last year's biennial budget.

Next year, we start fresh for a new biennial budget. If our good economy holds, I'm hopeful we will get support for more of these DD issues.

Meanwhile, this list shows at-a-glance the number of DD needs in our district and in Washington that remain unmet.

## **Developmental Disabilities Unmet Needs**

**Benton and Franklin Counties:**

Individual and Family Services Wait List **474**  
Employment for High School Graduates for 2007 – 09 Biennium **73**  
Employment for Age 21-62 not in a day program **387**  
Senior Families with Persons age 40+ living with parents **64**

**Statewide:**

Individual and Family Services Wait List **9994**  
Employment for High School Graduates for 2007-09 Biennium **1378**  
Employment for Age 21-62 not in a day program **9798**  
Senior Families with Persons age 40+ living with parents **1421**