

2013 Champions for Equality and Justice

presented by



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Hilton North Raleigh/Midtown
Raleigh, NC

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ROBERT BULLOCK - *IN MEMORY*

In her nomination of Robert for the Champions Award, Ann Akland said, "Robert has worked tirelessly to increase awareness about mental illness, to decrease stigma and to advocate for those who cannot represent themselves. He is a role model whose actions inspire others to advocate for people with disabilities in NC."



Robert's caring and advocacy for others began when he was a patient at Dorothea Dix Hospital. As his mental health condition improved, he joined the Learning Court Quality Council, which advocated for residents and brought concerns to the standards committee. After being released from Dix, Robert chose to live in a supervised living group home in Cary and to attend the Fellowship Health Services clubhouse. Both the home and psychosocial program played an important role in Robert's recovery. In turn, Robert enriched the lives of his peers by helping them understand their illnesses and advocate for themselves.

In addition to his role within his home and clubhouse, Robert was an active public figure. In 2010, he published an article in the Independent Weekly about his experiences at Dorothea Dix Hospital and the importance of the care he received in his recovery. Robert frequently presented his story of illness and recovery at area hospitals, churches, and organizations. These presentations opened the eyes of many people in the community about the need to embrace and support people with disabilities.

Robert was well-known and respected in the halls of the NC General Assembly. He was a tireless legislative advocate for people with mental illness, particularly those who cannot advocate for themselves. He wrote countless emails and made hundreds of calls to members of both the House and Senate. One issue that motivated Robert recently was the need for adequate funding for group homes. Robert's advocacy was an important factor in obtaining legislative action to keep emergency funding available for people who choose to live in group homes. Robert was a

member of the NAMI NC Consumer Council and the NAMI Wake County Board of Directors. He helped NAMI Wake organize rallies by getting people to participate, and he was interviewed on many newscasts within the past year. He also was featured on the NAMI Wake website as a spokesperson for people living in group homes.

Robert died unexpectedly on September 13, 2013. He was a good friend and supporter of Disability Rights NC. We will all miss Robert's caring and helpful nature as well as his unwavering advocacy for people with disabilities.

LEANNA GEORGE

Like many parents who have a child with a disability, Leanna was frustrated and unconfident when she first contacted Disability Rights NC two years ago. Rather than lose herself in those emotions, Leanna harnessed them. She has become a confident, articulate leader who advocates for her child and others, using passion to bolster her concrete factual arguments.



In the fall of 2011, Leanna participated in Disability Rights NC's Disability Advocacy Training Exchange program, better known as DATE. Through the DATE program, Disability Rights NC trains volunteers across the state to support self-advocacy by people with disabilities and their families. Each DATE volunteer completes a two-part training on effective advocacy and supporting the self-advocacy efforts of people with disabilities. During her participation in the DATE training, Leanna shared her concerns about the Johnston County Schools' use of mechanical restraint on her daughter, Serenity. She was encouraged to contact Disability Rights NC's intake team.

Leanna followed that suggestion and Disability Rights NC ultimately began an investigation. Through its investigation, Disability Rights NC determined that Serenity had been subjected to illegal and inappropriate re-

straint by school staff. It also identified at least nine other students with disabilities who were similarly restrained. Leanna permitted Disability Rights NC to use Serenity as the main focus for a systemic complaint to the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). She worked directly with OCR representatives to provide important information for OCR's investigation.

In August 2012, OCR issued its findings, determining that Johnston County Schools violated the rights of 18 students, including Serenity, by using mechanical restraint without adhering to certain procedures under federal law. OCR ordered Johnston County Schools to provide extensive training to its staff, to hold IEP meetings to determine whether the use of restraint was necessary and appropriate for each student, and to provide compensatory education to the students, if necessary. By having the courage to share her story, Leanna successfully advocated for Serenity and helped 17 additional students avoid inappropriate and illegal restraint.

During the investigative process, Leanna learned to channel her emotions into an organized, positive approach to advocacy. She completed the DATE training and has volunteered her time to provide self-advocacy support and assistance to people with disabilities. She also graduated from Partners in Policymaking, a program funded by the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities that teaches individuals to advocate for policy change and build partnerships with elected officials, legislators, and the media.

Leanna continues to advocate tirelessly for Serenity. She is active in the disability community, constantly attending events and establishing connections with other advocates, legislators, and leaders. She serves as a lay advocate for other parents in Johnston County, attending IEP meetings and supporting her peers as only another parent can.

Leanna's transformation from "seemingly powerless" to "powerhouse" has inspired other parents and reminds all of us why we do this work.

SALLY AND DAVID SLOOP

Sally and David have spent over 25 years working to enrich the lives of individuals with disabilities. David is the founding pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Raleigh and, together with Sally, has worked to make support for individuals with disabilities a mission both within the church and through Sally's work outside the church. They are the parents of two children, one with special needs.

In 1992, under David's leadership, the church established a Sunday school class specifically for adults with special needs. In 1997, in response to one of the class member's limited social opportunities, the church started a community-wide Coffeehouse for individuals with disabilities and their care-



givers. It has grown over the years and current attendance routinely exceeds 200 people per month. Two other churches in the Triangle, a church in Wilmington, NC and the YMCA in Lexington, VA all started Coffeehouses modeled after the one at Good Shepherd.

Through the Coffeehouses, the church congregation learned about the dearth of community living options for people with disabilities. Sally and David led the discussion within the church community and, in 2000, a nonprofit organization called The Serving Cup was established to help meet those housing needs. In 2010, The Serving Cup opened apartments in Cary for 12 adults with developmental disabilities. David continues to serve on the board of The Serving Cup.

In 2012, again under Sally and David's leadership, the church started an additional adapted church service called Shine. It is designed for children with developmental disabilities and their families. It is held once a month and is open to all.

Outside of Good Shepherd, Sally has spent her career advocating for people with special needs and their families. Beginning as a preschool teacher, and later through her work and involvement in Partnerships for Inclusion at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, the NC Partnership for Children, Family Support Network, and Smart Start, Sally has continually been an advocate for early intervention to ensure that every family has access to family support.

Sally co-developed "Rock Soup: Parents Making Dreams Out of Life's Hard Places," an engaging and informative presentation educating others about the realities of raising a child with special needs and dealing with the service system. Twenty-five years later, this presentation has been updated as "Rock Soup Reheated" and takes a look at parenting roles

and experiences with the service system.

In 1998, Sally was instrumental in campaigning to pass the NC State Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP). Passage of this legislation impacted thousands of uninsured children in North Carolina who have disabilities. She has advocated for those with special needs and spread the word about the importance of early intervention by being the keynote or conference speaker at over 400 conferences in 25 states, speaking to the NC General Assembly, and educated our local representatives.

In June 2012, Sally retired from her professional career and, in June 2013, David retired as Senior Pastor at Good Shepherd. Their combined efforts have not only established support for individuals with disabilities as a mission in Good Shepherd Lutheran Church but increased awareness of issues impacting those with disabilities in the greater community.

In supporting the Sloops' nomination for the Champions Award, Virginia Poston said, "The Sloops' influence has positively changed the collective conversation about inclusion. . . . Their legacy is entrenched and will continue because of the seeds they planted and the attitudes they gracefully nurtured in others."



NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2014 CHAMPIONS FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE AWARDS WILL OPEN IN LATE MARCH 2014. WHO WILL YOU NOMINATE NEXT YEAR?

Disability Rights NC

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Kathy Boyd - *Chair*
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Janna Shisler - *Chair-Elect*
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Lewiston Woodville

Jack Register
Greensboro

Mary Skov
Leland

Kimberly Taylor
Statesville

Charles Walker
Raleigh

Deborah Whitfield
Charlotte

Previous Award Recipients

2008

The Honorable William Creech

Lockhart Follin-Mace

Jo Anne Jeffries

Robert Reilly - *In Memory*

2009

Marian Hartman

Greg McGrew

NC IOLTA

2010

(No award given)

2011

Julia Bick - *In Memory*

Michael Maybee

Dr. Charles Walker

2012

Jeremy Donohue

Ellen Russell

Stephen Webster



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