

# *Welcome from Our President*



Welcome to our website! We hope to inspire you to join us and advocate for people with disabilities. As a self-advocate, and the first with a cognitive disability to be elected president of a TASH chapter, I have seen firsthand how our nation has come a long way in establishing rights for people with disabilities. But wrongs still exist. Millions of children and adults are still living in institutions, still suffering from abuse, neglect, and aversive practices, and are still being denied their rightful places in our communities. We must end this.

When the foster care system failed me as a child, I was placed in an institution for seven years and in another for three more, robbing me of ten years of my childhood. It was like jail. Our segregated school was hardly a refuge. Had there not been a courageous group of parents and advocates who inspired a remarkable group of attorneys, judges and legislators to fight against a horrible place called Pennhurst, I would have remained imprisoned. Because of Judge Raymond P. Broderick's court order to close Pennhurst, I was finally able to leave my institution, Stillmeadow, and move to the community. There, at age twenty-one, I began a journey toward the freedom and contentment I had never known growing up.

No matter what their stories are, ALL children with disabilities should be fully included and welcomed in our neighborhoods and schools. ALL adults with disabilities should be fully included and respected as citizens of our communities. It's time for all of us to put our energies into high gear and make this happen! TASH's mission is our roadmap, and we hope our website will be a source for information and inspiration.

Please join us – and join [PennTASH!](#)

*Jean*

Jean M. Searle  
President  
PennTASH

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