

# *Welcome from Our President*



Welcome to our website! We hope to inspire you to join us and help 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 gaining rights for people with disabilities. But there are still wrongs to be fixed. Millions of children and adults are still living in institutions, still suffering from abuse, neglect, and aversive practices, and still being denied their rightful place as citizens. We must end this. TASH's mission is to end it with no compromises. That's why I admire TASH.

When the foster care system failed me as a child, I was placed in an institution for seven years and another for three more, robbing me of ten years of my childhood. It was like jail. I was frightened and school gave little relief. I felt frustrated in special ed because I wanted to be with the other kids and learn what they were learning. Had it not been for the courageous group of parents and advocates who enlisted attorneys, judges and legislators to fight against a horrible place called Pennhurst, I would have remained imprisoned simply because I was "disabled." It was Judge William Broderick's court order to finally close Pennhurst that allowed me to leave Stillmeadow and move into the community. From there, at age twenty-one, I began a long journey toward freedom and contentment. These were feelings I had never known growing up.

It is our moral and legal obligation to fully include all children with disabilities in our neighborhoods and schools and welcome all adults with disabilities as fully included citizens. Prejudices need deposed. Let's put our knowledge and experience into high gear and fix this!

Please join us! Join [PennTASH!](#)

*Jean*

Jean M. Searle  
President  
PennTASH

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