President's Message

By Sandra Reeves

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The first time I attended a VOR Meeting in 2000 I sat in awe of the passionate and knowledgeable members and staff. Members easily bandied about information on various bills and statutes as the whys and wherefores of our discussions with representatives and their staffs were reviewed. Along with advocacy issues you discussed which member of congress would support or object to VOR's issues.

Becoming President of this esteemed organization was as likely in my mind as a trip to the moon. Yet, here I am. Thank you one and all for this opportunity to continue learn how to influence our Government.

Who I am

Just so you know little bit about me and why I advocate. My first born, my son Reuben, has intellectual an developmental disabilities (ID/DD). As a young mother in the 1960's we knew only that he had epilepsy and was not achieving his developmental milestones. I had a daughter 2 years after his birth and another daughter 7 years later. When he was 6 years old it became necessary to find a private facility where he could be cared for safely. Eventually, he qualified to live in a "State School" (an ICF/MR). I went to work to pay for his care and continued to work first in the medical field and eventually as a Certified Financial Planner in the financial services industry. While working, I did what I could for my son while raising and supporting my family, but always wishing I had more time to do more than attend meetings and visit him. My time to do more came unexpectedly in 2006 when I was asked to run for President of the Family and Friends Association where he has lived for 37 years.

Now, with the passing of Robin Sims, I am, sadly and unexpectedly, called again to serve. I am a firm believer "that the Lord never gives you more than you can handle." I hope to help make VOR known to not only those of us who advocate for our loved ones but to the thousands of families who have family members with ID/DD who have never heard about us. I hope to inform new families facing the same unknown, uncertain future I faced 53 years ago about the many choices they have for quality care for their loved one including ICFs/MR. I hope to educate families and counselors that ICF's are often wonderful places that can provide a quality and breadth of services not available elsewhere. I hope to open eyes and minds to the understanding that our loved ones deserve quality choices and no one option fits all.

I will need your help and support. Ideas of what you can do to help achieve these goals and more will be forthcoming in future newsletters and communications. I will be soliciting your help and your ideas to make VOR available to as many, many more people with ID/DD and their families.

REMEMBER YOUR DONATIONS GIVE VOR THE ABILITY TO SUCCEED