

March 27, 2015



Speaking out for people with
intellectual & developmental
disabilities



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**Reminders:
Help VOR Grow!**

VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

VOR is a one-of-a-kind nonprofit organization. If you value our work, please help support it by [donating](#) now.

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[VOR Conference](#)

[Register now to attend our one-of-a-kind event](#)

Early Bird Registration Deadline: April 1, 2015

VOR and YOU

- 1. April 1 is deadline for “Early Bird” VOR Conference registration; [Register now](#) and save!**
2. VOR Conference Speaker Feature: Scott D. Osterfeld. M.S.
3. VOR and members submit testimony to Senate Appropriations Subcommittee seeking limits on Department of Justice appropriations that support deinstitutionalization
4. A U.S. Supreme Court decision in a Georgia case is prompting the government to pursue moving patients nationwide out of facilities, with some consequences.

STATE NEWS

5. **Georgia:** Girl's death among 500 in one year in

**2015
Conference:
Advocating for
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community care

6. New York State Senator Young Introduces Legislation Protecting Employment Opportunities for People with Developmental Disabilities

7. Maryland: New Towson School Hopes To Give Autistic Kids Good Education

8. Minnesota: Proposal for mental health sites (specialized inpatient care) opposed by some advocates

QUOTABLE, by Mahatma Gandhi

Calendar Reminders

VOR and YOU

1. April 1 is deadline for “Early Bird” VOR Conference registration; Register now and save!

**Please plan to join us.
[Register by April 1 and save.](#)**

Here are some important links:

- [Detailed Conference Flyer with printable registration form](#)
- [Online Conference Registration Link](#)
- [Hotel Conference Registration Link](#)
 - [Conference Sponsorship Opportunities - Be a Sponsor. Find a Sponsor!](#)

2. VOR Conference Speaker Feature: Scott D. Osterfeld. M.S.

Scott Osterfeld will be VOR's Dinner Keynote Speaker at its Annual Conference, Sunday, June 7 in Washington, D.C.

Scott has over 26 years of experience

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working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently he is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities in Ohio. He is also the President of Osterfeld Consulting; a principle based educational and consulting company that provides education and training in the human service field. Scott Graduated from Miami University with a B.S. degree in Individual and Family Studies in 1990 and graduated from Miami University with a M.S. degree in Family and Child Studies in 1992.

Too many of us go through our days on auto pilot reacting to events instead of proactively responding to life with the goal of making a difference. Scott's presentation will be a fun and inspirational message that will help participants discover anew that, as his presentation is titled, "A bear can't DANCE while hibernating" and neither can we. Scott will speak to five DANCE steps to living a purposeful life. Participants will walk away with an answer to the question, "Are you going to sit it out or DANCE?"

[Register for VOR's Conference by April 1 and save!](#)

3. VOR and members submit testimony to Senate Appropriations Subcommittee opposing federally-funded forced deinstitutionalization

This week VOR submitted written testimony to the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science and Related Agencies opposing the of federal Department of Justice to forcibly deinstitutionalization people from their facility homes. Many VOR members also submitted

written testimony in support of the same concerns and VOR testimony.

Thanks to all who submitted testimony. **The deadline for submitting testimony has now passed.**

[Read VOR's testimony here.](#)

4. A U.S. Supreme Court decision in a Georgia case is prompting the government to pursue moving patients nationwide out of facilities, with some consequences.

The Augusta Chronicle * March 21, 2015

"To those such as Tamie Hopp of the advocacy group VOR, it is telling that the [Department of Justice's Civil Rights] division has devoted a Web page to its actions with the headline "Olmstead: Community Integration for Everyone."

[Read more here](#)

A links to all articles in this compelling investigative series are immediately below.

STATE NEWS

5. Georgia: Girl's death among 500 in one year in community care

Augusta Chronicle * March 21, 2015

ABOUT THIS SERIES

An investigation by *The Augusta Chronicle* uncovered 500 community care deaths in 2013, including 82 classified as unexpected, and 498 in 2014, with 141 unexpected. Of the nearly 500 individuals transferred from licensed facilities to smaller settings pursuant to a Department of Justice Settlement Agreement, 62 died (12%).

[Please read this series. comment and share](#)

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March 21

- [The death of a 12-year-old developmentally disabled girl in community care sparked an investigation that revealed hundreds of those deaths in Georgia.](#)
- [A U.S. Supreme Court decision in a Georgia case is prompting the government to pursue moving patients nationwide out of facilities, with some consequences.](#)
- [A look at 'unexpected' deaths in community care homes in 2013, excluding patients described in this series and those whose family members objected](#)

March 26

- [State still not meeting care goals for disabled](#)

Coming up on Sunday, March 29:

- Patients at the Gracewood facility in Augusta are next to be moved, and family members fear their loved ones could meet a similar fate as others in Georgia.
- The mother of 18-year-old Cornelius Evans, a developmentally disabled patient who died, is still searching for answers and can't get his records from state bureaucrats.

6. New York State Senator Young Introduces Legislation Protecting

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Employment Opportunities for People with Developmental Disabilities

State Senator Catharine Young * March 18, 2015

ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean), Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, is fighting to save sheltered workshops as an employment choice for people with disabilities.

Senator Young, who has introduced Senate Bill 3893-A, says the issue is personal to her.

“For 15 years before I was elected to state office, I worked at the ReHAbilitation Center in Cattaraugus County where I saw people with disabilities thrive at the agency’s workshop, SubCon Industries. They had a deep sense of pride and self worth from working, and they loved earning a paycheck,” said Senator Young.

“Many of these individuals are unable to sustain a job in competitive employment in the community because of the nature of their disabilities. If they don’t have sheltered employment, they will be forced to sit at home with nothing to do. It’s a huge hardship for themselves and their families. They will be isolated, non-productive, and lose out on the social aspect of going to work,” she said.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

7. Maryland: New Towson School Hopes To Give Autistic Kids Good Education

CBS Baltimore * March 24, 2015

Tracie Feron is Connor’s mom. He’s 19 years old, has autism, and for years, she’s fought public school administrators to admit he needed more than his local schools could give.

“We weren’t looking for a cure. We were looking to give Connor the opportunity to be the best Connor that he can be,” she said.

Feron’s expertise in getting schools to recognize the needs of autistic students has led her to help with a new school, called Tangram, in Towson. It’s named after a Chinese puzzle.

“It’s right no matter how you do it because there’s so many different solutions, and it’s moving each piece just slightly and putting it in its own unique place,” said Jennifer Renault, Tangram vice president.

[Read more, watch video, comment and share](#)

8. Minnesota: Proposal for mental health sites (specialized inpatient care) opposed by some advocates

Star Tribune * March 22, 2015

A proposed network of facilities intended to reduce the number of mentally ill people who languish in county jails is facing resistance from mental health advocates, who say Minnesota should focus instead on a statewide expansion of proven intervention programs.

Sen. Barb Goodwin, DFL-Columbia Heights, wants Minnesota to spend \$5.5 million to establish three 16-bed “jail diversion hubs” throughout Minnesota. Her measure has the backing of law enforcement agencies, which have complained that a shortage of psychiatric beds often forces them to lock up the mentally ill, where they are less likely to get the care they need.

But Goodwin says lack of support among mental health advocates could jeopardize what she calls badly needed reform.

A 2013 Star Tribune investigation found that law enforcement agencies around the state were increasingly overwhelmed by the number of people in their jails with mental health problems. In Hennepin County, as many as a third of the inmates on any given day have a history of serious mental illness. Officials said the county spends millions of dollars annually as these people cycle through courts, cellblocks and hospital emergency rooms.

Goodwin's measure, which will get a hearing Monday morning, is modeled after a similar program in Florida.

QUOTABLE

"It's the action, not the fruit of the action that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result." Mahatma Gandhi

Calendar Reminders:

**EARLY BIRD DEADLINE FOR VOR's
CONFERENCE IS APRIL 1, 2015**

Sunday, June 7, 2015:

[VOR Annual Conference: ADVOCATING FOR CHOICE BY EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES. Registration Open.](#)

Archives:

* Thursday, March 20, 2014

[VOR's "Regional Meetings: The Need for Advocates to Act Global and Local" Webinar.](#)

***Social Media Strengths: Using Facebook and Twitter to Advance Your Cause (VOR, July 2013).** [Visit VOR's website for a copy of the powerpoint presentation and an audio of the event.](#)

* **How Congress Works Webinar: Recorded - Listen Here.** Tuesday, April 23, 2013 - 12:00 pm central / 1:00 pm eastern. How Congress Works: The Basics. Hosted by Peter

Kinzler and Larry Innis.

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