



# It's Your Life: Building Connections Through Work

## Background

- ❑ In 2007, Maine passed a law to create a new waiver program to expand supported employment services.
- ❑ As a result, in 2008 – 2009, state funding for sheltered workshops in Maine was reduced over 18 months. This affected 7 workshops serving about 220 people.





## It's Your Life: Building Connections Through Work

### **These Partners Designed a Peer Mentoring Program to Assist People Leaving the Workshops**

- Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine
- Maine Office of Adults with Cognitive and Physical Disability
- Speaking Up for Us Maine (the state self-advocacy organizations)
- Maine Developmental Disabilities Council
- Peer Trainers





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# Goals of the Project

- Reach out to the individuals affected by the current conversion of sheltered workshops in Maine.
- Recruit self-advocates who were employed to design and deliver informational sessions to their peers who are leaving sheltered workshops for community employment.
- Provide support and mentoring to peer trainers for their presentations to peers in sheltered workshops.
- Document and evaluate the effectiveness of the project.





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# Planning Meetings to Design Overall Program

- Meetings with sheltered workshop providers
- Meeting with Maine Developmental Disabilities Council who agreed to provide funding to pay the peer trainers
- Meetings with Speaking Up For Us, the state self-advocacy organization in Maine





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## **Recruiting Peer Trainers**

### **Job Duties for Peer Trainers:**

- Go to and actively participate in planning meetings.
- Be willing to learn how to do the trainings and be a peer mentor.
- Co-train with University staff in small and large settings.





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# Recruiting Peer Trainers *cont'd.*

### Desired Qualifications of Peer Trainers:

- Personal experience with disability
- Experience working in a sheltered workshop is helpful but not required
- Currently employed in a competitive job
- Able to work independently and as part of a team
- Eager to share their story around working





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# **Learning Objectives for Peer Trainers**

- Be prepared to serve as a leader, trainer and mentor to workshop participants
- Gain a sense of confidence in their ability to present in small and large groups
- Have increased knowledge and awareness of supported employment options available and building personal networks





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# **Trainer Development and Preparation Work**

1. Brainstorm Sessions with Peer Trainers
2. Developing Sessions 1-3 with Peer Trainers
3. Sharing Employment Stories
4. Practicing Sharing Stories







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# #1 – Brainstorm Sessions with Peer Trainers

“I was fast so I got paid more than other people because the faster you made things, the more you got paid. I always felt bad at the shop because some people were slower because of their physical disability and didn't get paid as much but worked just as hard...didn't seem right to me”

- Peer Trainer





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### **Issues To Think About When Developing Training**

- Are people with all types of disabilities able to participate?
- Are the activities meaningful?
- Do the activities provide people with opportunities to learn more about supported employment?
- Do the activities provide opportunities for participants to share their concerns about leaving the workshop?





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# Session 1:    **Sharing Stories**

### **Overview:**

- This is a two-hour session in which peer trainers shared their own employment experiences. They also described the differences between sheltered work and competitive employment.
- One goal of this session is to help participants recognize that people with disabilities can be successfully employed in the community. A further goal is to acknowledge their hopes and fears about leaving sheltered workshops.





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# Session 1: Learning Objectives

### Participants will be able to...

- Describe the differences between sheltered work and competitive employment
- Identify themes from each presenter's employment story
- Recognize that individuals with disabilities who come from sheltered workshops are able to gain successful employment in the community
- Acknowledge and express their hopes and fears regarding leaving the sheltered workshop





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# Session 2: Finding the Right Fit for Me

### Overview:

This is a ninety-minute session in which trainers provided information and coaching to assist sheltered workshop participants in identifying their skills and interests. They also helped them to discover what kind of community employment settings may be good matches for them.





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### Session 2: Learning Objectives

#### Participants will be able to...

- Identify the interests, skills and abilities shared by the trainer's employment stories
- Describe and identify their own vocational interests
- Identify their strengths and skills for working in the community
- Identify at least one job in the community of interest and the skills that are required to perform that job





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### **Session 3: Networking & Putting it All Together**

#### **Overview:**

- This is a ninety-minute session provides information and coaching to learn networking skills.
- Participants identify people in their personal/professional network that could help them with the employment process.
- The session introduces interviewing skills and programs that help people find jobs.
- The session identifies next steps to take while waiting for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.





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# Session 3: Learning Objectives

### Participants will be able to...

- Define personal networks and identify who is in their current personal network
- See the benefits of having personal networks in the community
- Describe some strategies for using personal networks as a resource to obtaining employment
- Identify one action step they can take while waiting for Vocational Rehabilitation services













# It's Your Life: Building Connections Through Work

## Sample Agenda

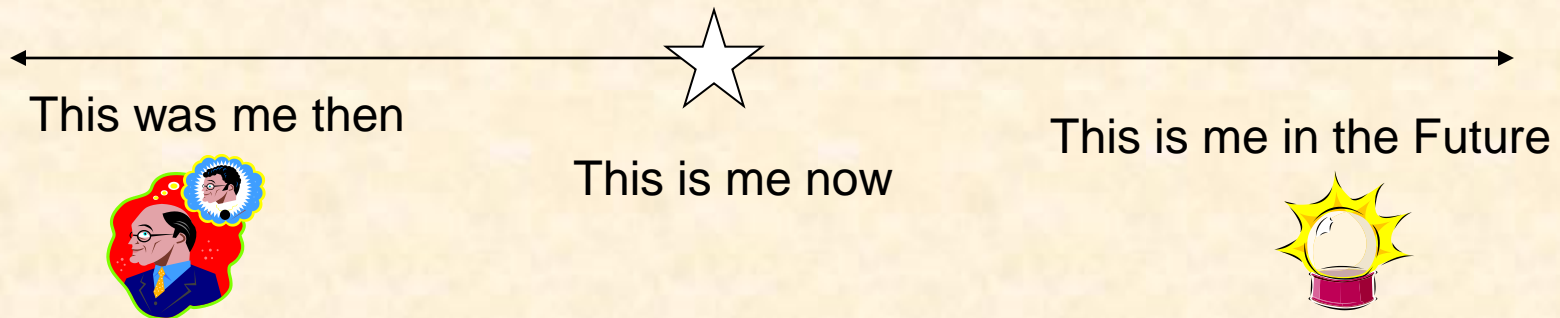
<p>15 min.</p>		<p><b>Introductions and Ice Breaker Activity:</b> If you could get paid to do anything, what would it be?</p>
<p>15 min.</p>		<p><b>Vocational Skills and Interests Game: Employment Tic/Tac/Toe</b></p>
<p>30 min.</p>		<p><b>What's Important to me in a Job?</b> <b>Group Work and Discussion</b> (see handout)</p>
<p>45 min.</p>		<p><b>Trainers Sharing Their Stories (Video and in person)</b> <b>Discussion:</b> What skills and interests does it take to do their jobs?</p>
<p>10 min.</p>		<p><b>Group discussion on today's session</b></p>
<p>5 min.</p>		<p><b>Pass in evaluation, pick up certificate and end session</b></p>





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# # 3 - Sharing Your Story: Some Questions to Consider



- What are my hopes, fears, and dreams about working?
- What is my job? Where is it located? What are my job responsibilities and job title?
- What are the things that I like about my job? What are the things that I don't like about my job?





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# Ways to Share Your Story

- Collage
- Video
- Power Point with Audio and Pictures
- Pictures and Lecture Format





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# #4 - Practicing Sharing Stories

Heidi practicing her  
PowerPoint





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# Delivering Sessions to Sheltered Workshops

- Peer trainers co-facilitated all aspects of each session
- Sessions were designed with assistance and guidance from peer trainers
- Each session offered ice breakers, interactive games, group participation and individual work.





# Sample Participant Evaluation



1) The most helpful thing about this workshop was...



2) After listening to the trainer's stories, did you learn more about the skills they need to do their jobs?

YES



NO



3) Are you able to identify at least one skill that you have that you could use on a job?

YES



NO



What is that skill?



4) After this training, can you identify at least one area of interest that you have and where you might look for a job to match that interest?

YES



NO



If yes, what is the interest and the type of job?



5) The amount of information in this workshop was...



Too Much



OK



Too Little





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# Feedback from Sheltered Workshop Participants

- 100% of participants reported that they most enjoyed hearing their Peers' employment stories
- 96% of participants reported that after listening to the trainer's stories, they learned more about the skills they need to do their jobs.
- 89% reported that they were able to identify at least one skill that they could use on the job.





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# Feedback from Sheltered Workshop Participants *cont'd.*

- 83% shared that they could identify at least one area of interest that they have and where they might look for a job to match that interest.
- 88% of participants in the third session reported that the trainer's stories helped them to learn about their personal networks and to understand why they were important.
- 100% of participants shared that they were able to identify at least one person in their network, and 75% reported that they could identify at least one person to talk with over the next month about a job in which they might be interested in.







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# Feedback from Peer Trainers

- “I liked making my story to DVD. I am happy about my life now. I didn’t feel happy when I was at the shop. I get to meet lots of people now.”
- “I like traveling around the state and meeting more friends. I’m glad that more people are getting jobs in the community.”
- “I liked teaching people and sharing my story with others.”
- “I liked telling other people about where I work and what I do.”
- “I liked sharing my collage and story about my life with my staff. I got a new job and had to stop this project, but liked being part of it.”





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# Some Recommendations

- Create a team with a solid, shared vision of community employment.
- Plan for intensive staff time, logistical support, and technical assistance before implementing similar projects.
- Meet with sheltered workshop providers to learn about their knowledge and familiarity with supported employment models.
- Prepare for creativity in scheduling to accommodate the work demands of peer trainers, as well as sheltered workshop providers.
- Plan training, activities, and materials to be targeted toward an audience with a wide range of disabilities.





# It's Your Life: Building Connections Through Work

**To Get A Copy Of This PowerPoint and  
Other Training Materials Go To:**

**[www.sabeusa.org](http://www.sabeusa.org)**

**For more information please contact:**

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DHHS-OACPD

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Vermont Conversion Institute: from Sheltered Workshops to  
Community Employment

# A Time for Change...

# Presenter



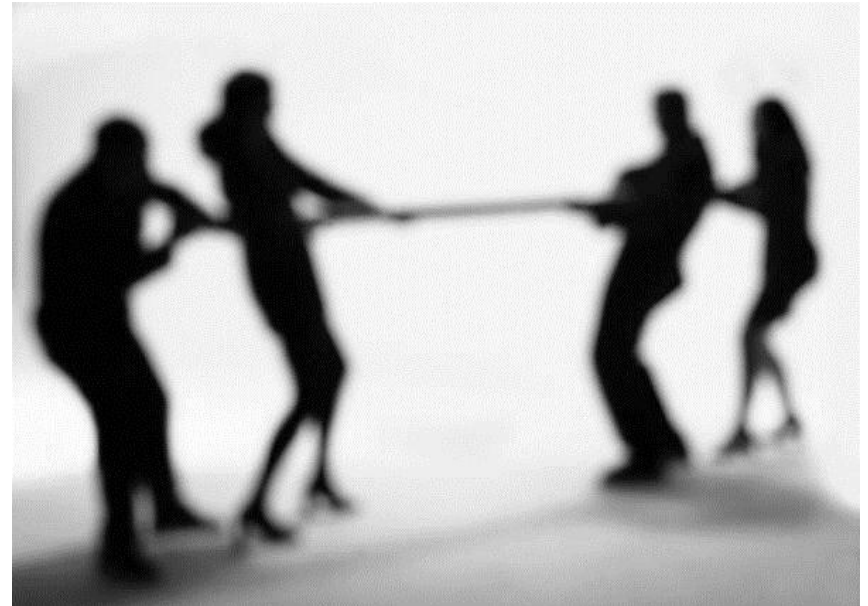
- Bryan Dague, Ed.D.
  - University of Vermont-Center on Disability & Community Inclusion
  - 802-656-1345
  - [Bryan.Dague@uvm.edu](mailto:Bryan.Dague@uvm.edu)

# Vermont Story

- 2002 Vermont closed it's last sheltered workshop
- 2007, 2009, 2011 hosted Vermont Conversion Institutes
- Participation from 35 states, Washington DC and New Brunswick, Canada
- Presentations at numerous conferences around the country
- Many agencies want to change, they just don't know how

# Sensitive Issues

- Can be a very emotional and sensitive issue
- We advocate thoughtfully planned conversion of services
- Not simply “closure”
- People often take sides and it can be contentious



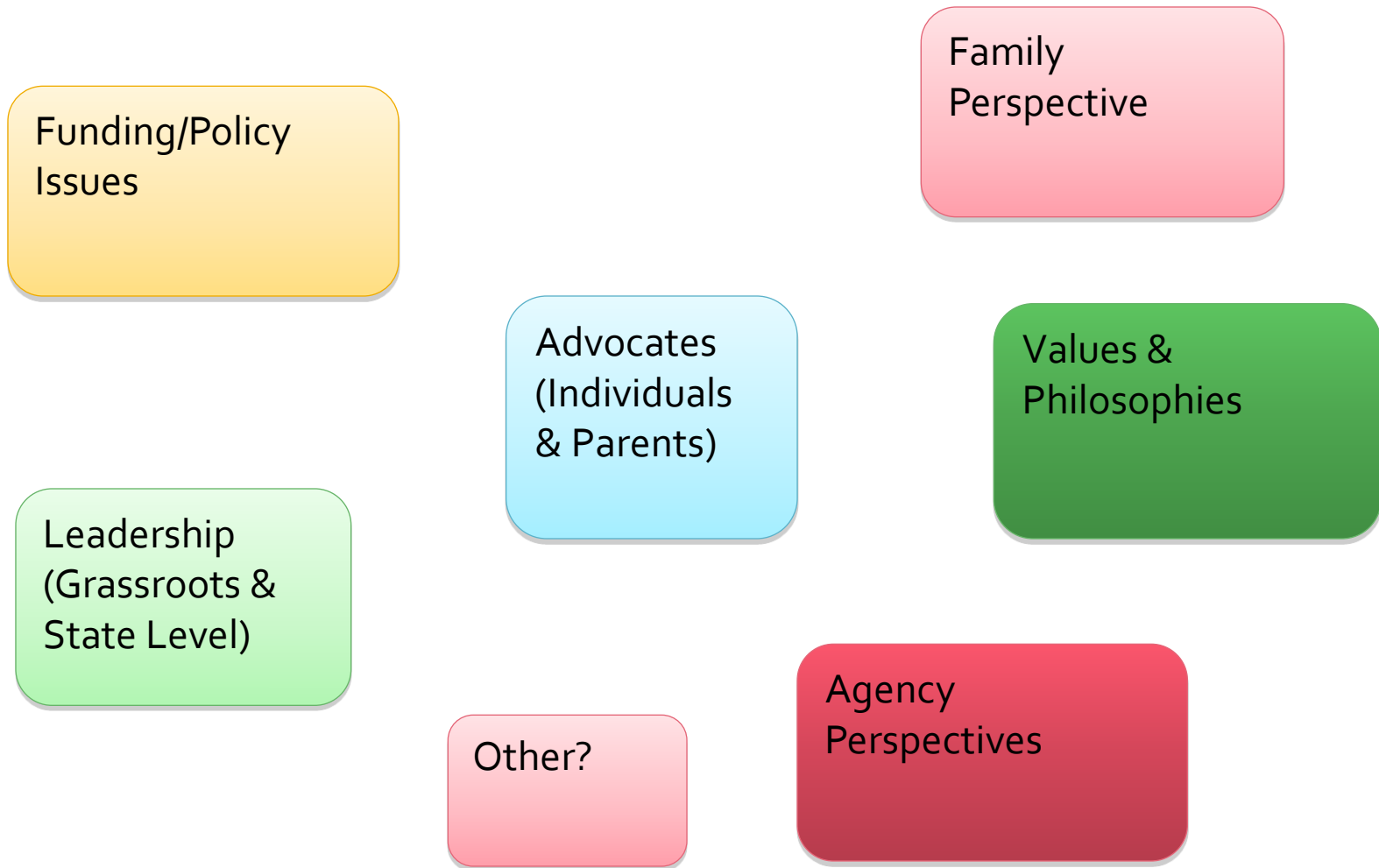
# Our Goal

- ✦ **Discussion:** The act of discussing or exchanging reasons; examination by argument; debate; disputation; agitation.
- ✦ ***Dialogue:*** *An exchange of ideas or opinions: achieving constructive dialogue with all political elements.*

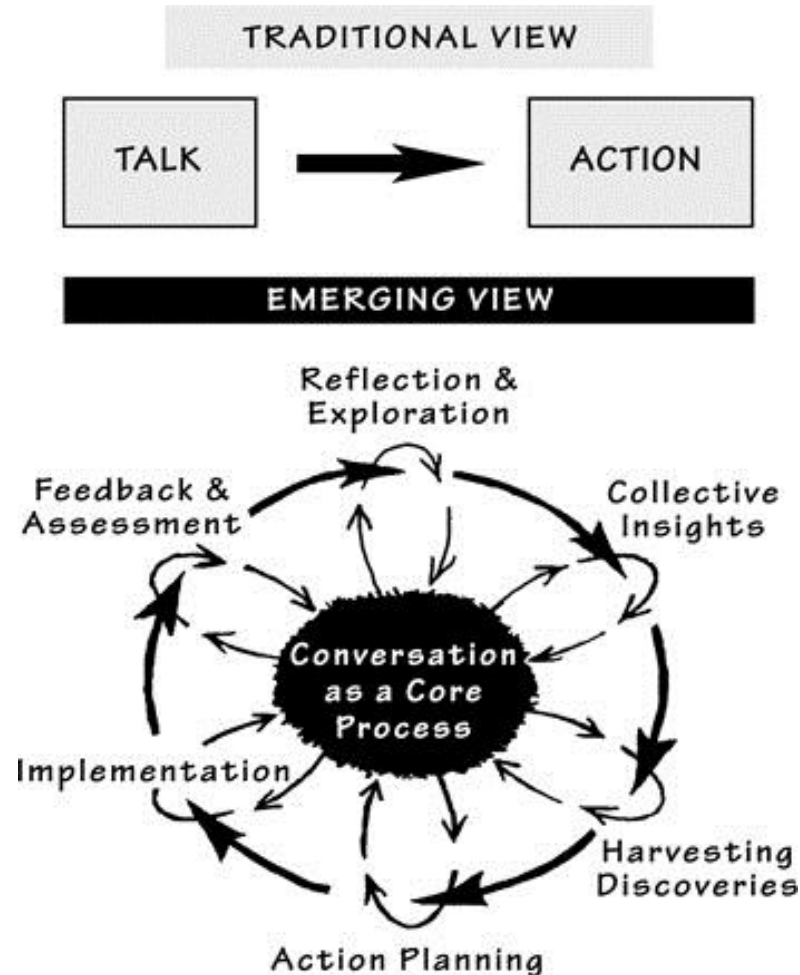




# Political Elements



# World Café (Conversations that Matter)



# All Born "In" (Northwest Down Syndrome Association)

- We are all born "in" to this world the same way-naked, new and full of potential.
- Often people with disabilities are pushed out of the community, out of schools, and in some cases out of their families, robbed of the opportunity to belong.
- All Born "In" is a movement about belonging. It is about respect, integration, and civil rights. It is about inclusion.

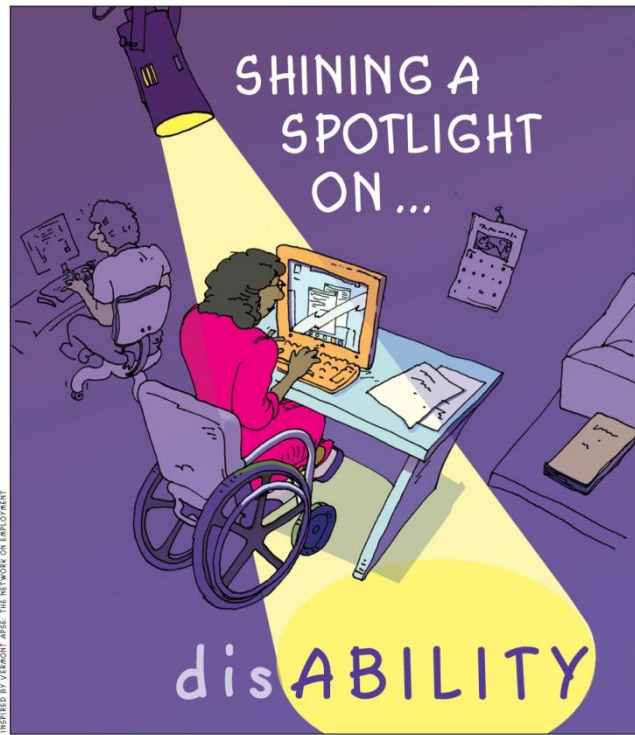


# Work and Belonging

- Margaret Mead defined an *ideal human culture*, as one in which there is a place for every human gift.
- Work: *an opportunity for discovering and shaping; the place where the self meets the world.* (David Whyte)



# Employment for All!



EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL!



Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, The University of Vermont  
[www.uvm.edu/~cdci](http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci)  
In Partnership with Vermont APSE -The Network on Employment



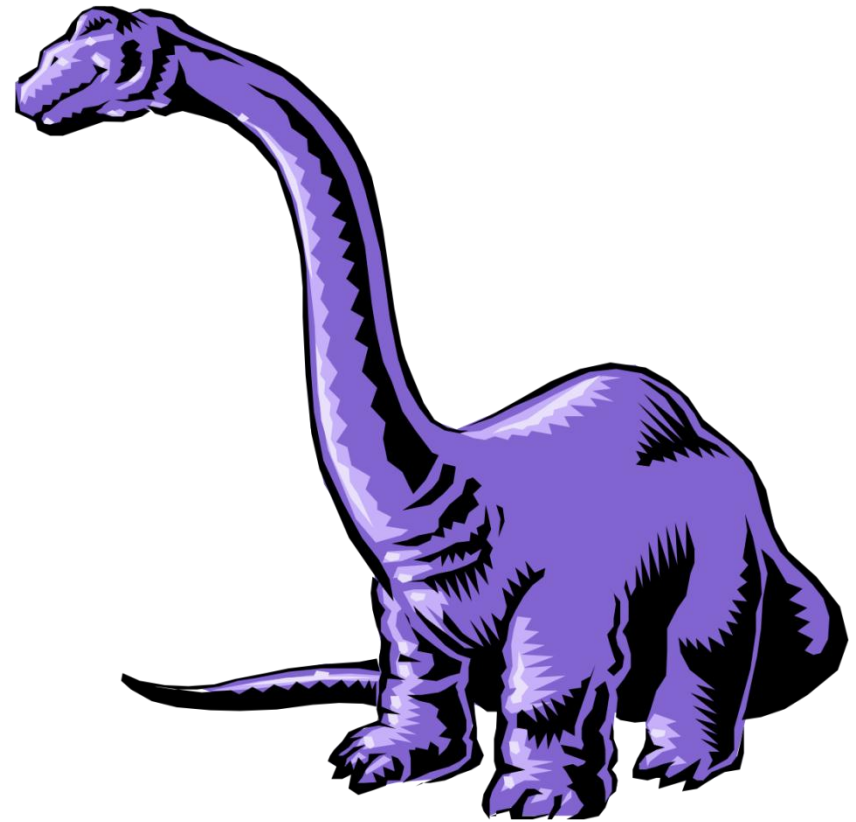
- Proclamations/Policy Statements:
  - TASH
  - APSE
  - SABE
  - CASE
  - AAIDD
  - The ARC
  - President's Committee
  - UN Convention
  - Employment First

# Failure of Our Imaginations

- "Sheltered workshops and segregated environments do not protect and empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Rather, they are a failure of our imaginations to provide better integrated opportunities."
- ADD Commissioner Sharon Lewis
- **2011**

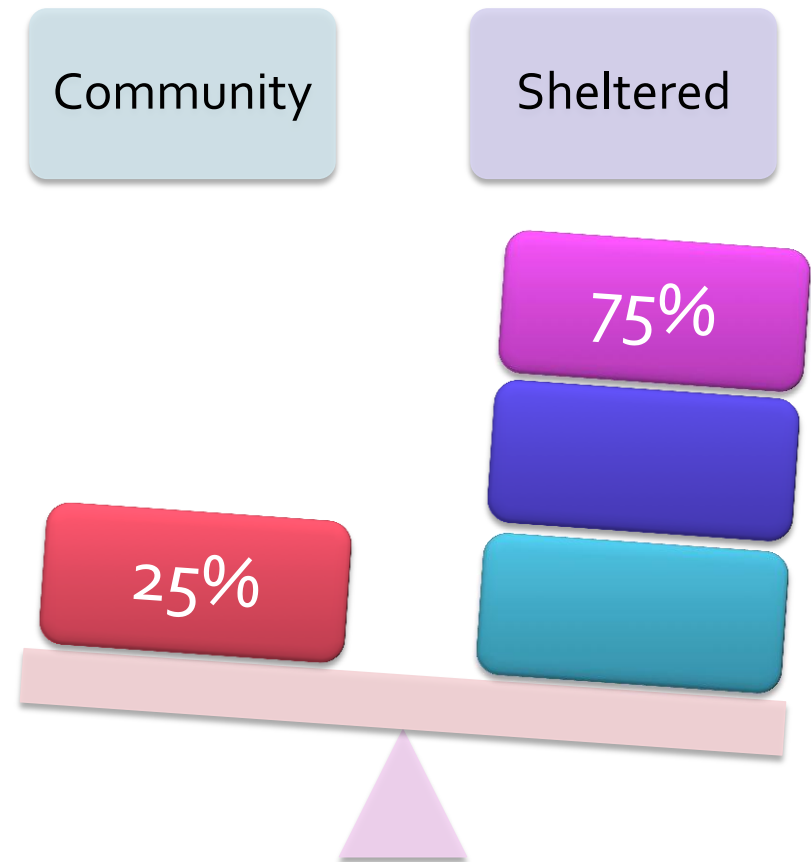
# An Outdated Model

- A Dinosaur in Our Midst?  
(Mcloughlin, Garner,  
Callahan, 1987)
- Supported Employment,  
Self-Employment, Job  
Carving, Customized  
Employment
- Yet, today 75% of ID/DD  
are still served in  
Sheltered Workshops,  
and only 25% in  
Supported Employment.



# “The Tipping Point”

- That magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire. (Malcomb Gladwell)





“Simply put, sheltered workshops are just another institution segregating people with disabilities away because of our unwillingness to accept that our perceived notions about their ability to work may be wrong.”

Curtis Decker, Executive Director

## Segregated & Exploited

### ***A Call to Action!***



**The Failure of the Disability Service System to Provide Quality Work**

# Supported Employment

- The State of Vermont contracts directly with 15 private, non profit community developmental services providers to meet the support needs of eligible people in their regions
- This network provides integrated employment services using Vermont's home and community-based services waiver
- Voc Rehab grants compliment agency Medicaid by paying for infrastructure such as job development

# Champlain Community Services

*Purpose:*

To educate, train and otherwise assist the mentally retarded person to perform, within his capabilities, useful, industrious, rewarding work in a sheltered workshop, as provided by the laws of the State of Vermont.

*History:*

This workshop is a non-profit charitable and educational corporation, non-denominational in nature.

Renovation started on November 1, 1972, the building having been a stable and storage building since World War I. The bulk of the work was accomplished by members of the Board of Directors and Volunteers. Equipment and materials for the most part were donated by local business organizations.

All work was completed on May 6 of this year and open house was held.


**RETARDED  
PEOPLE  
CAN  
BE  
HELPED**

*Please make your  
tax-deductible checks  
payable to:*

CHAMPLAIN SHELTERED  
WORKSHOPS, INC.  
JACK MACK, *Director*

**CHAMPLAIN  
SHELTERED  
WORKSHOPS  
INC.**

77 Hegeman Ave., Fort Ethan Allen  
Winooski, Vermont 05404  
Telephone: 655-0511



**FOR THE EVALUATION,  
TRAINING, AND SHELTERED  
EMPLOYMENT OF THE  
MENTALLY HANDICAPPED**

**DO IT NOW!**

**A VALUABLE  
NEW SERVICE  
FOR VERMONTERS**

# Champlain Community Services

- In 1967 group of concerned parents in VT started their agency and sheltered workshop.
- Similar workshops around the country emerged in the 1950's-60's.
- Sanctuary away from the institution and a safe haven from the community.
- Sheltered workshop built and maintained on charity.
- Developed an insular community.

# Paradigm Shift (1967-Now)

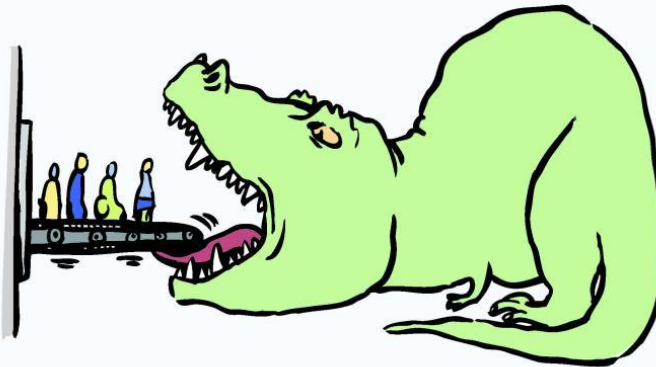
- Segregated
- Sheltered Work
- Mentally Retarded
- Uneducable
- Children
- Protected
- Parent-Determined
- Potential Untapped
- None/Spec. Ed.
- Older Parents
- Agency-Based
- Community Exclusion
- Included
- Supported Employment
- Intellectual Disability
- Having Competence
- Adults
- Dignity of Risk
- Self-Determined
- Potential Maximized
- Inclusive/Spec. Ed.
- Younger Parents
- Community-Based
- Community Acceptance

# Generational Differences

- Closing Doors of Workshop
- Letting go: Loss and Grieving
- Not ready, too late
- Ridicule and abuse
- Taking away friends and community
- 35 years of tradition and culture
- Care after parents
- Opening Doors to Community
- Opportunity, Risk, Being with non-disabled peers
- Graduating with jobs
- Community work and social life
- Same age peer group
- Social skills and daily living skills for community
- View sheltered work as reclusive & stigmatizing

# Self-Advocates Speak

The Shelteredworkasaurus



**STOP FEEDING THE DINOSAUR**

We want real jobs!

[www.theriotrocks.org](http://www.theriotrocks.org)

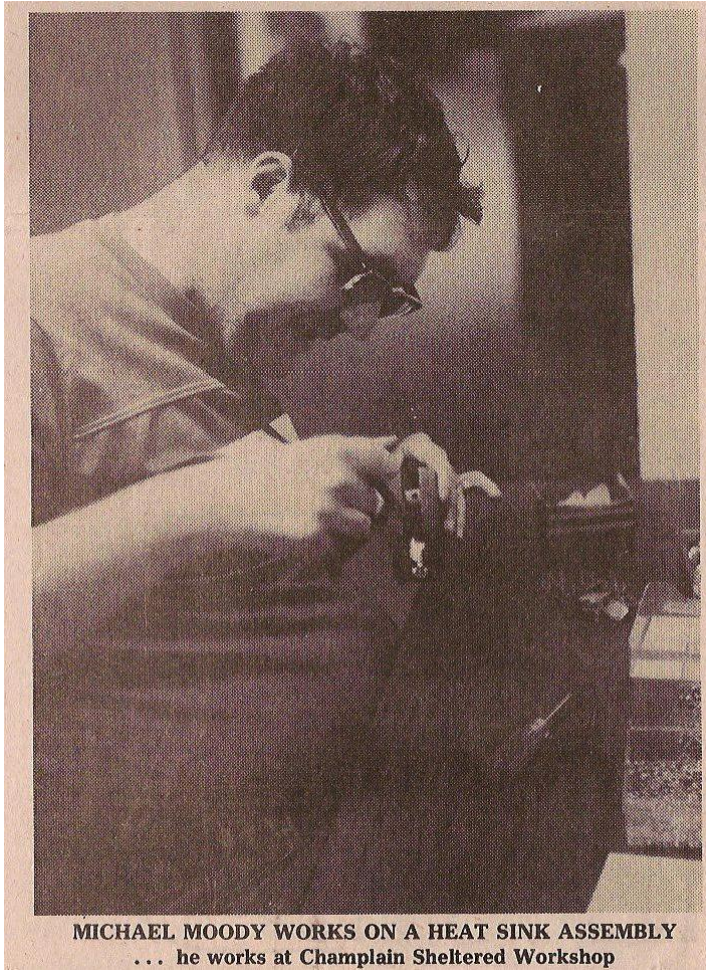
# Life After Sheltered Work



- “Trying to get out of the shadow of over-protectiveness”
- “I hope those that come after me won’t be a product of discrimination”



# Life After Sheltered Work



- "I've been making a lot of money. I'm happy."



# Strategic Planning

- What are your current demographics?
- What will they be 5 years from now? 10 years? 20 years?
- Are you preparing for that?



# Networks

- *Vermont Conversion Institute* webpage
- [Vermontapse.org](http://Vermontapse.org)



- *Vermont Conversion Institute* on Facebook

