

WRITE YOUR STORY

No matter who you are, you have a story worth telling. Tell people the important things you do for others. Sharing your story will help people understand the experiences of people with disabilities. Your story shows how you can accomplish your dreams.



1. Use pictures of yourself. Our message is that people with disabilities are just like everyone else. Pick out no more than 5 pictures of:



- You working at your job,
- You volunteering or helping out in your town
- You with your nieces or nephews, babysitting or helping a neighbor
- You as part of a team or club or at your church

2. Talk about your struggles:

- Not being able to find a job,
- Living with parents who are elderly
- People putting you down, using the “r” word
- Needing help to take care of yourself, take medicine, get to the doctors

3. Talk about the people who support you, and explain how they help you out.



4. Talk about self-advocacy and speaking up for yourself. It will make you feel good to have someone listen to your story. In the past self-advocates did not have a voice. For many years, we were ignored, silenced and dismissed. We were hidden away at Brandon and in sheltered workshops.

Today self-advocates have found their voices.

Pull Together A Newsletter Committee

- Ask your board to come up with a list of interesting topics to get Self-Advocates to write about in their newsletter.
- Put out a call for articles. (See the sample flyer at the end of this handout.) Be real clear about how long articles should be. Encourage people to take pictures that go with their article.
- Some groups find it helpful to have a newsletter committee to make decisions.
- Assign roles, for example "writer," "editor," "researcher," or "graphic artist."
- Committee members can work alone or together in a small group
- In VT we use a program called publisher to put together the newsletter. If you have money you can hire someone to format it. Another option
- Get members to share the newsletter with family members, friends and co-workers.

How to Write a Good Newsletter

1. The way it looks is important. But the #1 key to success is you need articles that are interesting and easy to be read.
2. Think about who will be reading the newsletter. Pick topics that connect with your readers on a personal level.
3. Your newsletter can have different sections (poems, cartoons, a photo page, letters to the editor, tips, break it up by putting information in boxes etc.)
4. The best articles ask and answer 6 questions: who, what, when, where, why and how.
5. Check your facts. Don't make things up.
6. Come up with a catchy title. Use action words. Be mysterious, get the reader curious.
7. If the article is more than 3 paragraphs – come up with what is called a subheading to break up the text.
8. Get a few people to look over the articles. NEVER just rely on spell check. You really need people who are not afraid to cut things out. Some people are too shy and do not want to make changes. But really, you can't edit enough. You really do not want long and boring articles. When you think you are done – get someone to go over it one more time.