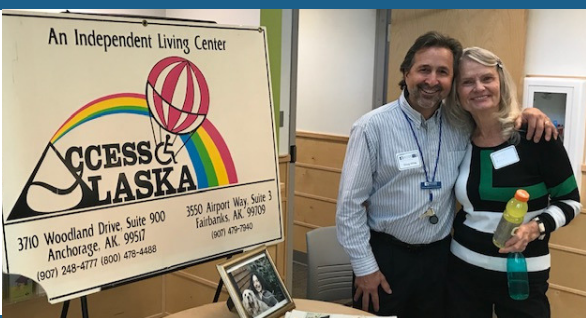




## Celebrating 35 Years of Independent Living in Alaska



# A Long Look Back



It brings me great pleasure to introduce the first Executive Director of Access Alaska – Audrey Aanes. As an Anchorage School District – School Teacher for the “Orthopedically Handicapped” Audrey met many young people and their families that were compelled to live lives with dignity and choice. However, in the late '70' and early '80's many barriers existed that made community inclusion challenging but also spurred the disability rights movement. Please read Audrey's article to find out more about the founding of Access Alaska.

**- Doug White, Executive Director**

## Access Alaska: Back in the Day

**By Audrey Aanes, 1st Executive Director**

It was an exciting and challenging time when Access Alaska emerged on the scene in 1983. Two fairly new, vibrant organizations merged together with one common mission to provide broader opportunities for people experiencing substantial disabilities across our expansive and diverse state. A rich new culture supporting disability pride, self-advocacy and new-found independence resulted from blending these diverse approaches.

Marc Garrand was an active 15-year-old when he went over his bicycle handlebars in an abandoned parking lot in New York state resulting in his C-1 spinal cord injury. By 17, he was outfitted with a motorized wheelchair with a pneumatic breath-operated wheelchair and placed at Nakoyia Nursing Home in Anchorage. Marc inspired many in the formation of Independent Options Now (ION) and the acquisition of local and state funding. Prototype programs were developed as needed as Marc and seven others in similar situations transitioned to greater freedom in accessible apartments at 9th and Karluk in 1982.

The advocacy surrounding the Independent Living (IL) Movement in the Lower 48, headed up by Ed Roberts in Berkeley, provided new federal funding to Alaska at this same time. IQLC (Independent Quality of Living Center) was incorporated to take on the broader challenge of performing an Alaskan IL Needs Assessment and providing information and referral to those in need.

Access Alaska was built on this foundation of local and national advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities. These seeds of change were planted in fertile Alaskan soil and nurtured as a labor of love by many board and staff members through the years. Their perseverance, skills and passion have carried this vision forward now for decades.

**"These seeds of change  
were planted in fertile  
Alaskan soil and  
nurtured as a labor of  
love..."**

People with disabilities continue to be inspired to find their own way and are often even brave enough to take risks beyond their dreams. Be joyous and proud of what part you have played in this Access Alaska vision. I am!!!



# Board Member Spotlight

## Meet our Board Member: Sara Cheney



Sara Cheney, Board Member with her service dog Hannah

Who is Sara Cheney? I will tell you that I am a work in progress! I deal with mental health challenges; I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I developed that because of child abuse and domestic violence. In the USA we need to have real conversations around mental health. The facts are one in four people deal with mental health challenges. Mental health is just as important as physical health, if not more. Without good mental health

every aspect of your life will feel the effect of it. The stigma around seeking help for your mental health needs to stop. I am more than my mental health challenges. I came to Access Alaska six years ago as a consumer. One of the many things that I learned is that I have rights. Not only rights, but I also have disability rights. Because of the dramatic affect that partnering with Access Alaska has had on my life I wanted to be a part of the Board of Directors.

I am very passionate when it comes to self-advocacy, mental health, service dogs, housing and transportation,

**"The stigma around seeking help for your mental health needs to stop. I am more than my mental health challenges."**

just to name few. I advocate and lobby for myself and others. I will be an author and motivational speaker one day. Look out because with a lot of hard work life can and will change!

# From Around the Agency

## Disability Pride Celebration



Disability Pride Celebration in Kenai

For the first time ever, Disability Pride events were celebrated throughout Alaska on July 21st commemorating the 28th Anniversary of the American's with Disability Act.

In Fairbanks, Anchorage, Kenai and Juneau, the events were lively celebrations with information booths, food and entertainment. In Anchorage the event was held at the new South Anchorage Park recognizing the latest inclusive playground. In Fairbanks Disability Pride t-shirts were made and in Kenai a slippery slide was set up for the occasion.

Envisioning inclusive communities and celebrating individual and collective progress in the Disability Right's Movement was a focal point of the event. We look forward to 2nd Annual Disability Pride Celebration next summer and hope you will too.

## Southwest

Southwest had a successful fall trip. We were able to visit 16 out of the 20 villages we had planned. Southwest received the Senior In-Home Grant for Southwest. The Senior In-Home Grant provides Chore Services, Case Management, Respite & Extended Respite Care Services, and Supplemental Services to assist in maintaining a safe and healthy environment to avoid a crisis that would jeopardize their ability to remain independent in her/his own home. Between the Personal Care Service Program and the Senior In-Home Grant for Southwest, we will be able to meet the needs for individuals and communities in rural Alaska to receive services to continue to live independently in their homes, to be close to their families and their community.



Southwest Consumer Sophie Pete & CDPCS Program Manager Shannon Eastwood

## Every Vote Counts

We just had a statewide election and that means wanted or unwanted change in programs that impact people with disabilities.

To prepare to advocate for the “right” changes here are a few things you can do:

- If you aren’t registered, **REGISTER TO VOTE!** As I write this, one Fairbanks candidate is ahead by 10 votes, your vote counts!
- Know who represents you and how to contact them.
- Create your story. Legislators want to hear **YOUR** story. How do state programs impact your life, positively or negatively. What changes would help you become more independent.
- Read the news.

Then be prepared to contact your legislators about your concerns and praises.

Doug Toelle  
Advocacy Director



Doug Toelle,  
Photo by Anya Toelle

"If you aren't  
registered,  
**REGISTER TO  
VOTE!**"

## MISSION

Alaska is a place where every elder and person with a disability is empowered to advocate for full integration in their community of choice as an active, engaged, and valued member.

## VISION

Access Alaska encourages and promotes the total integration of people who experience a disability and elder Alaskans to live independently in the community of their choice.

## VALUES

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Choice
- Consumer Control
- Advocacy
- Empowerment
- Dignity
- Community-Based





# Thank you to all our 2018 donors

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