Moving Forward ...Together

A Guide For People First Groups In Ontario ...and the People Who Support Them

People First of Ontario

© Copyright 2009

Moving Forward ...Together

A Guide For People First Groups In Ontario ...and the People Who Support Them

People First of Ontario

© Copyright 2009
All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the
prior permission of the copyright owner

This book is made possible by the support and resources we have received from:

People First of Canada

The Passport Mentoring Initiative
(Community Living Ontario)

The Community Inclusion Initiative
(www.communityinclusion.ca)

Thanks!

Who Is This Book For?

This book is created for people who would like to keep the movement of People First alive!

First, this book is for:

- people who know the experience of being labeled disabled and want to ...
- people who want to speak out, be heard, and create changes in the communities where they live

This book is also for:

- the people who want to help and support the movement of People First

Who Are We?

We are people...FIRST!

- We were born into a families...even if we did not stay with them for long.
- We all had a mother who gave birth to us.
- We are HUMAN.
- We have feelings.
- We have thoughts.
- We have hopes.
- We have dreams...just like everybody else.
- We see ourselves as "citizens".
- We deserve the SAME RIGHTS as everybody else.

And we are people who know what it is like to be labeled "disabled". We know what it is like:

- to be treated as "different" and "strange"
- to be left out
- to be "put away"
- to be poor

...and WE WANT CHANGE!

Why Did People First Get Started?

Our Experience of Being Labeled as DIFFERENT...

When most of us were very young, someone in charge thought we were "different". It might have been our parents, an aunt or uncle, or a doctor, a social worker, or a teacher.

They thought that there was something wrong with us. "Different" came to mean "a problem". People thought something about us was "just not right".

So they started to treat us differently...

- Doctors looked to find out what was wrong with us
- Therapists tried to "fix" us
- School boards put us in "special" schools and classes ... away from our brothers and sisters and the kids in our neighbourhood.
- Social workers and doctors convinced some of our families to send us away to live in institutions
- They said we couldn't learn
- They told us that we would never be able to do things
- They said we would never grow up

Adults in charge labeled us when we were children.

They used big words to label us like "developmentally delayed", "developmentally disabled", "intellectually disabled", "cognitively impaired", and the "R word".

...BUT We are really more the SAME than different



But we grew up. We watched everyone else.

We felt the same things that everyone else did -- happy, sad, excited, angry, frustrated, hurt, confused...

We wanted to do the same things --

- learn
- play
- work
- love
- grow up
- get a job
- live in our own home
- have friends
- fall in love
- have sex
- and some of us wanted to have our own children that we can raise and take care of.

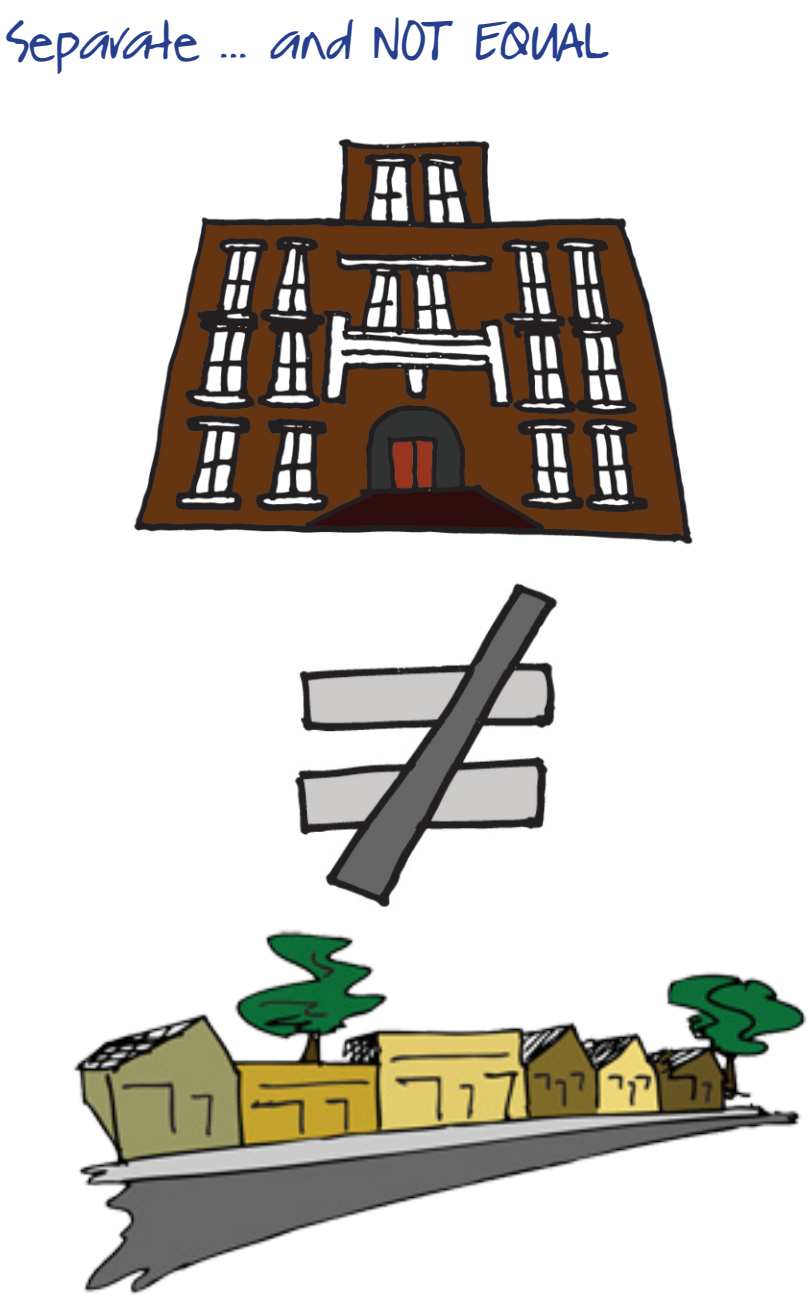
We are not really different from everyone else.

In the 1970's many of us experienced all of the things that happened to people who were "labeled"...

- We lived in institutions and group homes.
- We went to special schools.
- IF we worked, we worked in sheltered workshops with no pay...
- We were separated from our families.

We did not have the same rights as everyone else.

- We were not allowed to vote.
- We were not allowed to get married, or have sex.
- We had no control over everyday decisions in our lives.
- We could not decide where we would live, or who we would live with.
- Some of us were abused and hurt by people who worked in the institutions, schools, and group homes.
- We were left out, made fun of, and called names.



...and So PEOPLE FIRST Began!

It hurt. It made us sad... and ANGRY!

At the end of the 1970's we decided to do something about it.

We got together at conferences. We met with other people from all across Canada and the United States.

And then we started to form small groups of people in communities all across the country.

We would get together to share our stories and experiences. We would learn about other people's experiences.

We talked about what was important to us.

We talked about what we could do to change things.

We talked about how important it was to be able to:

- speak for ourselves
- make decisions for ourselves
- educate other people (including the government) about our rights to live as citizens

We stood up together and began to take charge of our own lives!

And in the **early 1980's People First of Ontario was formed!**

A History of Standing UP For Each Other!

During the 1980's local People First groups formed across Ontario and Canada. It was an exciting time.

We were speaking up and being heard.

We shared our stories with each other.

We began to feel that "we are not alone any more". There were other people who knew what we had been through.

Many stories were sad and painful. But there was a difference.

Now we could help each other.

Together we could speak out against the injustices that we experienced.

And speak out we did:

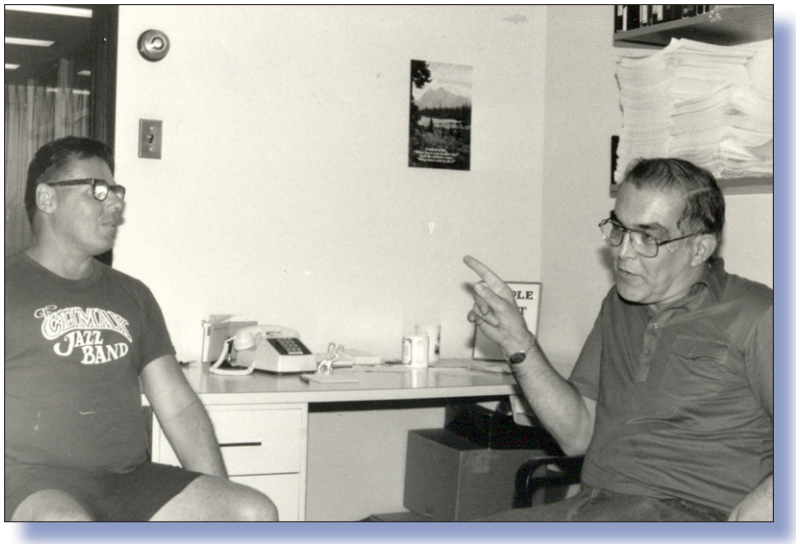
- **The Name Change**:

  One of the things that people shared was how painful the "R" word had been in their lives.

  In the 1980's People First spoke out to demand that the Associations for the "Mentally Retarded" change their name to Associations for "Community Living".

- **The "Eve" Case:**

  Eve was a young woman who had been labeled. Her



mother wanted her to be "sterilized" - this would mean she would have an operation to prevent her from being able to be pregnant.

It is a basic human right to be able control what happens to our own bodies.

People First spoke out to protect Eve's right to have control of decisions that affect her body.

- **Getting People Out of Institutions:**

  We spoke out and worked with other people to close all institutions.

  We have worked to move people into the community where they belong.

  The last large institution in Ontario closed in 2009!

- **Work and Fair Wages:**

  The history of sheltered workshops has meant that we worked for little or no pay.

  ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Payment) is designed to keep us poor.

  For many years People First has spoken out about employment and fair living wages--REAL JOBS...REAL PAY.

- **Stopping Abuse and Neglect:**

  There have been many of us who have been hurt by

the people who are supposed to support and help us.

Many of us have been punished and hurt to change our behaviour.

People First has spoken out in court about our rights to be SAFE from harm.

People First has been the place where we feel **safe** enough to speak about what is really happening in our lives.

Our stories and experiences are important. They are powerful.

We have learned that we are powerful when we stand together and speak out.

We know that **TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

A Safe Place To Make A Difference



We Need
To Keep
Moving...

We have come a long way but we are not done yet.

Too many of us still are not treated as citizens.

We still do not have the same rights as everyone else.

We are still poor.

Many of us still are not in charge of our lives. We still do not get to make our own decisions.

And too many of us still get hurt by people who are supposed to support us.

People First is a **movement**.

We are not just a social group.

We celebrate and have fun, but we work hard to make a difference.

We want to change things where we live.

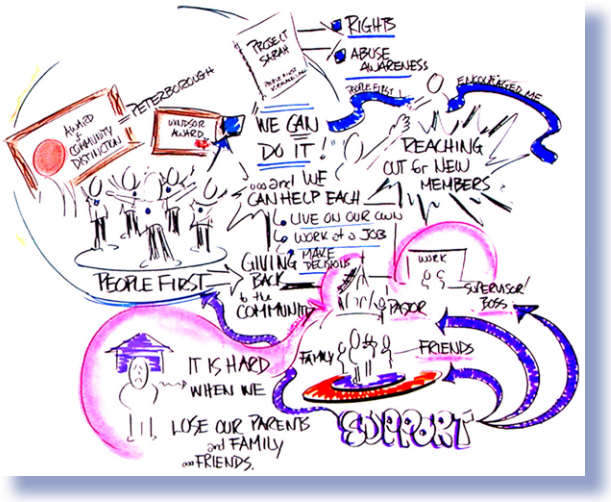
We want "our people" to be able to live like everyone else. We want to live as citizens.

That is why the most important groups in People First are the people who get together in local communities where we live and work.

We Still Need People First

People First Is...

A Grass Roots Movement



The Reason We Get Together as People First

We come together as People First to:

- to help each other to **SPEAK UP FOR OURSELVES**
- to help each other to **MAKE DECISIONS FOR OURSELVES**
- to **EDUCATE OUR COMMUNITIES** about **OUR RIGHTS**, and **OUR ABILITIES** to live as **CITIZENS** and community members
- to **CREATE LOCAL GROUPS** to do these things

People First is... "Autonomous"

People First is autonomous. **"Autonomous"** is a word that means we are **FREE.** We are **NOT CONTROLLED** by other people and other organizations.

It is important that when we speak it is **our voices** that people hear.

It is important that the decisions that we make are **our decisions.**

What is important to us may be different than what is important to:

- our parents
- the agencies that provide services to us
- the government

We need our message and our choices to be clear.

How is People First Organized In Canada?

In Canada there are a few parts that make up the movement of People First. All of the individuals and groups that make up this movement must support the purpose of People First:

Members of People First are individual people who support the purpose of People First.

There are two kinds of People First members in Ontario:

- **Voting Members** are people who have lived the experience of being labeled with a "disability".

  Voting Members get to vote in People First elections. They can be elected.

- **Non-Voting Members** are supporters of People First.

  They do not get to vote. They cannot be elected.

A **People First Group** or **Chapter** is made up of individual People First members in a local community.

The local group is where people get together to support each other. We help each other to speak up. We share our stories and experiences. We help each other to make decisions. And we make decisions together to do things and take action together to make a difference in their lives and their community.

The local group is the **HEART** of People First.

1. Members of People First



2. People First Local Groups or Chapters



3. Provincial People First Organizations



4. People First of Canada



Each province and territory has a People First organization.

Some of the things that **People First of Ontario** does:

- Host conferences and learning events for People First local groups and individual People First Members.
- Share information and resources with local groups
- Connect local People First groups to each other
- Speak out and take action about issues that are important to People First members in Ontario.

People First of Ontario is run by a Board of Directors. They are elected by the Voting Members at an Annual General Meeting each year.

People First of Canada was created to:

- Provide information and resources to People First organizations and members in the provinces and territories.
- Connect People First organizations to each other.
- Speak out to the Government of Canada about issues that are important to People First in the provinces and territories.

Each provincial Board of People First selects people to represent the province at People First of Canada.

What Is Important Now?

What Do We Stand For NOW?

We want **EQUALITY for ALL!**

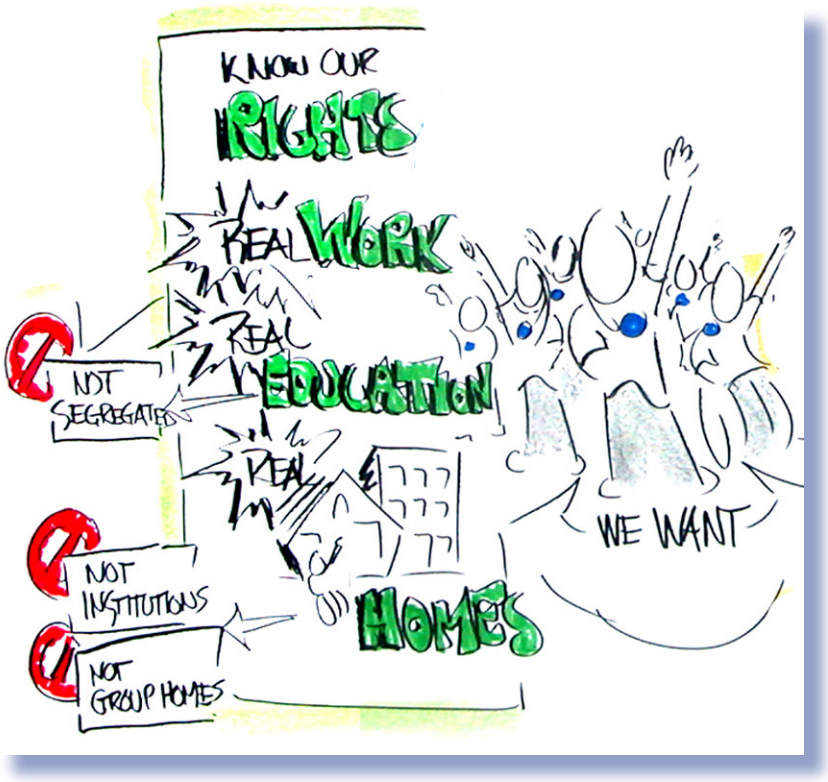
We want to be treated fairly. We want to be citizens. We want to have the same rights as everyone else.

We want to be community members.

We want to live in our own homes, work, and give something back to our community, friends, and families.

We want:

- **REAL HOMES …**
  - We want to choose where we live and who we live with (if we want to live with anybody).
  - We want to have control of our homes.
  - We want to decide who comes into our homes and what they do there.
- **REAL JOBS …**
  - We want to work on real jobs.
  - We want to be paid fairly for the work we do.
  - We want to earn a living wage so we can take of ourselves and move toward our dreams.
- **REAL EDUCATION …**
  - We want to learn what we need to know to take care of ourselves and the people we love.
  - We want to learn skills that we can use to get



Some Big Issues That We Face Today



jobs that we will be paid for.

- We want to learn how to be a respected and valued citizen, a volunteer, and a community member.

One of the things that we learned over the last 30 years is that WE ARE NOT ALONE. We share many experiences in common.

We have learned that many of the difficult and bad things that happen to us are designed to happen to people who are LABELED disabled.

Some examples are:

- **Poverty**

  Poverty means that we do not have enough money to get the basic things we need to live. We want to be able to take care of ourselves, but...

  - most of us receive ODSP because we have been labeled "disabled".
  - people did not think that we would be able to work enough to pay for our lives.
  - the amount that we receive in our monthly cheque from ODSP means that we are living below the poverty line.

- **No Plain Language...**

  It is important that we get information that we can understand.

  We need information to be able to make decisions.

  But...

  - The government and agencies that support us use language that is not easy to understand.
  - When people use confusing language we are not able to participate...we are left out.

- **Education and Citizenship**

  Most people go to school to learn what they need to know to live as an **adult citizen**.

  A **citizen** is a member of a country or community who has the same rights and responsibilities as all of the rest of the members.

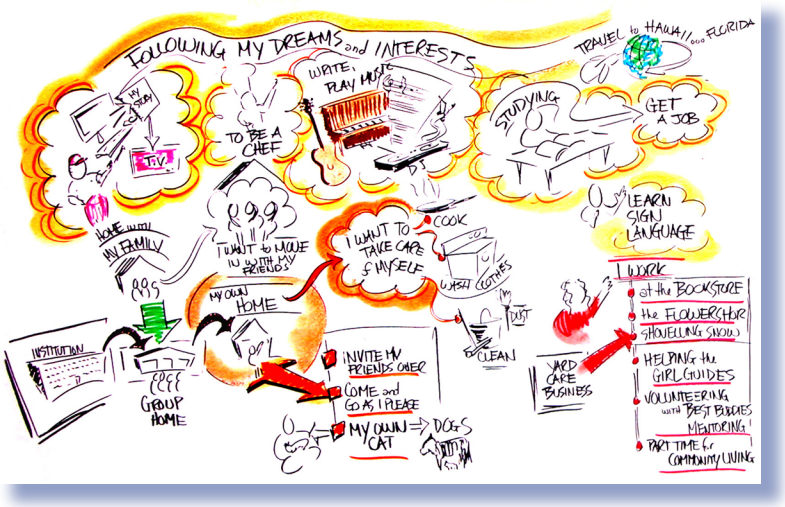
  Citizens contribute to the country and community where they live. To **"contribute"** means that we do things that other people value and think is important.

  Citizens can vote and can have a say about who is elected in the government.

  Being a citizen means that we will be treated fairly and we will treat others fairly.

  It means that we will be protected by the laws of the







country.

But people did not think that...

- we would become citizens
- we could learn enough to be able to take care of our lives.
- we could make a contribution to the country or the community.
- we could be responsible.
- we could make decisions for ourselves.
- and so we were not prepared to:
  - have a full-time job
  - have a home of our own
  - raise our own family
  - make a contribution to other people

People expected that we would have to be taken care of.

Most of us cannot go to college or university to learn what we need to know. We are not accepted there.

- **Work, Unemployment, and Underemployment**

  Many of us want to have a job that we get paid for.

  We want to be able to take care of ourselves.

  But most of us are **unemployed** or **underemployed**...

  - Being **unemployed** means that we do not have

a job that we get paid a legal wage for. **We have no paid work.**

- Being **underemployed** means that **we do not have enough paid work** to pay for the things we need to live. We only have part-time paid work.
- Most of us do not have enough paid work to take care of our own lives.

- **Home**

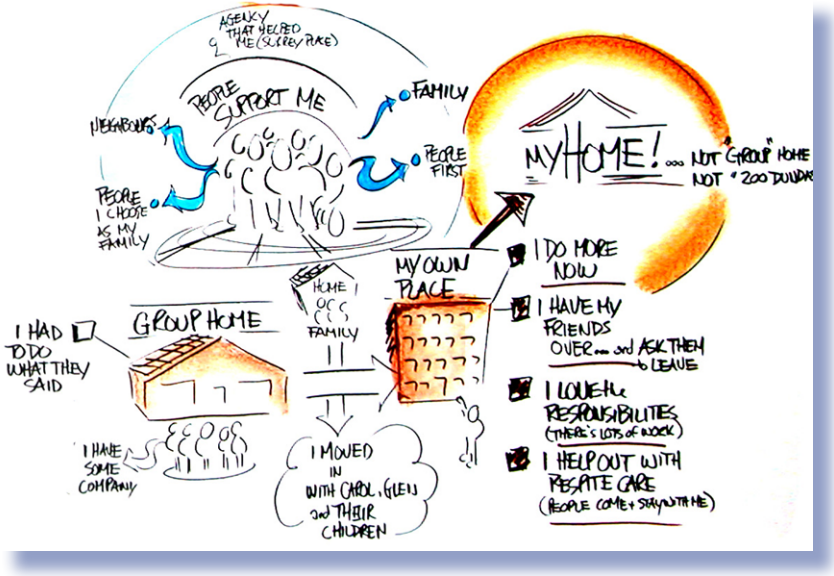
It is important to have a place that we can call **home**.

Home is a place where we can feel safe.

It is a place where we get to be in charge.

But...

- Many of us did not get to choose where we live.
- Many of us did not get to choose who we live with.
- We may have a place to live but it does not feel like our "home".
- We don't feel that we are in charge of our own home.
- We don't get to decide who comes into our homes, and who does not get to come in.





- **Transportation**

  We need to be able to get around our community so that we can work, shop, meet friends, and participate in our community.

  But...

  - Many of us do not have transportation to get around on our own.
  - Most of us cannot afford to have our own car or van to get around to the places that are important to us.
  - There are lots of places in Ontario that do not have public transportation.
  - There are even more places that do not have "accessible" public transportation.

- **Out of Control of Decisions That Affect Us**

  There are many really important things in our lives that we don't get to make decisions about.

  Someone else makes decisions about things that affect our lives.

  It could be staff, our parents, the government, but...

  - Many of us don't get to decide about things like what we eat or when we eat, or where we go and when we go.
  - Many of us don't get to decide what kind of

support that we need and who will support us.

- Some of us have people who are paid to support us, but they don't treat us well, or even like us.
- Some of us have even been hurt by people who are paid to support us...but we don't get to decide who supports us.

- **Isolation and Loneliness**

  We want to have friends.

  We want to fall in love. Some of us want to get married and have children.

  We want to be a part of our community and neighbourhood.

  But because of all of the things we have talked about..

  - poverty...
  - a lack of transportation...
  - a poor education...
  - no "home" that is a part of a neighbourhood...
  - no paid job (or not enough paid work)...
  - a lack of control over decisions...

  We end up **"isolated"** -- that means that means we are separated from other people. It feels lonely.

Getting Support... A Role For Advisors

Everybody needs support.

Even Prime Ministers, Presidents, and big business leaders need support.

All good leaders have people who they trust that support them.

People First asks for help and support from people who we call **Advisors.**

There are a few things to know about the role of Advisors:

- We need to feel that we are **RESPECTED** by our Advisors.
- We need to feel that we can **TRUST** our Advisors.
- An Advisor helps us **DO WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US**:
  - speak for ourselves
  - make decisions for ourselves
  - educate our communities about our rights and abilities to be citizens
  - create groups to do these things
- We want to **LEARN HOW TO DO MORE** for ourselves.

We ALLL Need Support

Advisors ...
A Relationship of Trust and Respect

RESPECT... Things to Think About

It is important to remember that People First was created because **we did not get respect**.

People either treated us like children, or they treated us as if we were not human.

So it is important that we feel respected by people who support us. We will not accept anything less than respect.

So some things that help us feel respected:

- speak **DIRECTLY TO US** -- not the other people who are with us
- use **PLAIN LANGUAGE**
- don't talk down to us -- we are **ADULTS**
- **BE PATIENT** -- give us time to say what we want to say
- Let us know what you hear us saying -- **ASK US** if you heard us correctly -- "Is that what you are saying?"
- **ASK US if we need help** -- don't assume that we do
- **ASK US HOW** you can help
- **BE HONEST** with us. Let us know if you don't know something, or don't understand.

Advisors Help Us To Learn...

We want to be in charge of our lives. We want to be able to do as much as we can.

There are many things that we did not get to learn when we went to school.

So we want Advisors to help us to learn what we don't already know.

We want to:

- understand information that affects our lives
- learn how to do things that can help our lives

To help us learn, sometimes an Advisor will:

- show us how to do something
- coach and guide us when we try to do something
- explain things in plain language that we can understand

Some Words About PLAIN LANGUAGE

Language is powerful.

When people use language that is hard to understand, they have power...and we do not.

This happens a lot.

We need help and support to understand what other people are saying.

We need an Advisor to "translate". To **translate** means to listen to, or read complicated language, and explain it to us in PLAIN LANGUAGE.

PLAIN LANGUAGE:

- is direct and to the point
- is clear
- is organized to make sense
- says what it means

This can be a hard job, but it is really important.

We need **GOOD INFORMATION** so that we can **MAKE GOOD DECISIONS.**

And of course we need Advisors to always speak to us in plain language.

There are four things that People First is created for:

- Helping each other to **SPEAK AND BE HEARD**
- Helping each other to **MAKE DECISIONS FOR OURSELVES**
- **EDUCATE** other people about our **RIGHTS and ABILITIES TO BE CITIZENS**
- **CREATE GROUPS** to do these things

Advisors can help us as individuals and they can help us as a group.

Some things that an Advisor can do to help a group are:

- Organize a meeting
  - find a place to meet
  - find a way to invite people to come
  - create an "agenda" for the meeting with the group -- an **agenda** is a schedule of what the group will do when they get together
  - make sure there is a way for everyone to be able to speak and participate in making decisions
- Record what people are saying
  - write
  - record
  - video

Help Us To Do
What Is Important To Us

A Group Advisor

- find information that helps us to make decisions
- help the group think about options when they are making choices and decisions
- help the group create a presentation to educate people about what is important to them
- help the group find a way to deal with conflict in the group
- help organize practical things like:
    - places to meet
    - finding ways for the group members to travel
    - setting up a group bank account (if it is needed)
    - advertise events
    - finding "guest speakers" that can help the group to learn about things that are important to them
    - find ways for the group to speak with politicians and community leaders

These are just a few things that an Advisor can do. And Advisors can help our group to learn how we can do these things for ourselves.

Every group is different. Different groups will need different things.

Advisors are very important to us.

Advisors for An Individual Member

An Advisor can help an individual Member or Leader by:

- Going to meetings and:
  - thinking and talking about the meeting before they go
  - explaining what the meeting is about in Plain Language
  - sitting beside them during the meeting
  - quietly explaining what is happening and being said in the meeting in Plain Language
  - talking after the meeting to help the member understand what was said
- Helping them think about what they want to say
- Helping members identify what kind of support they need to be able to participate. These supports are called **"accommodations".**

People First Groups and Chapters

Local groups are where the action is.

The local group or chapter is the place where we live out the purpose of People First.

It is where we practice **SPEAKING** and **LISTENING** to each other.

It is where we think and learn about **MAKING DECISIONS**. We learn about **"options"** and **"choices".**

We think about what we want **to do** that will **make a difference**. And we decide to **take action.**

The local group is where we think about the things that we want our communities to know. We want to **EDUCATE** people about:

- who we are
- what happens in our lives
- our rights
- how we want to participate in the community.

And it is where we make **good friends.**

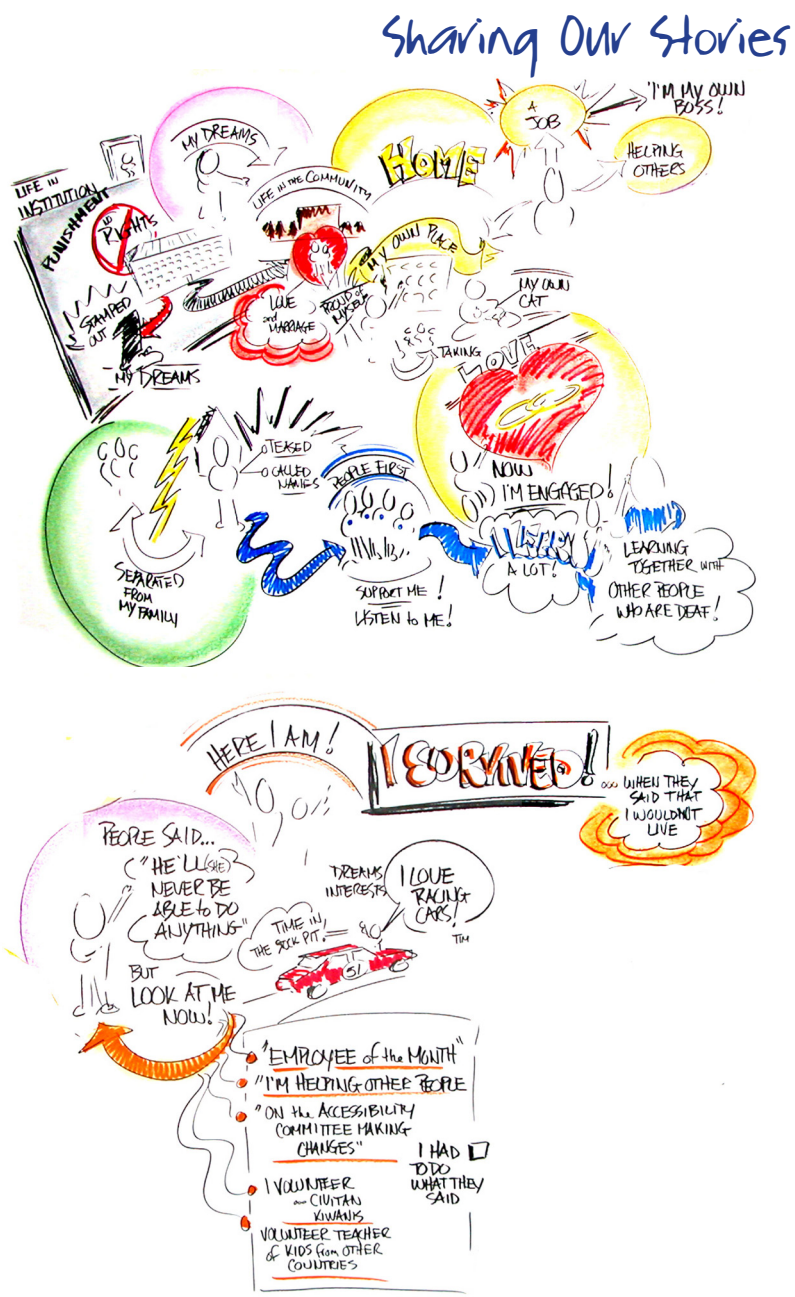
We become good friends because we care about helping each other to have a better life.

We become good friends because we **do things together** to make life better for us all.

People First Groups... Where the Action Is!







Since People First began our stories have been really important.

When we listen to each other's stories we learn.

When we speak about our stories we learn.

We learn about what is important to us. We learn about what needs to change.

When we know what is important and what needs to change, we can decide to do something about it.

Stories that we share from a long time ago help us to understand who we are.

Stories about what is happening now can help us decide what we want and need to do next.

It is good to make time in our group meetings to listen to what is happening in our lives.

We can give everyone in our group a chance to speak.

After we listen to each other we can talk about:

- Did we hear anything that we share in common?
- Is there something that needs to change?
- What can we do about it?
- What kinds of support do we need to be able to do something about it?

Making Decisions

It is really important that we can make **DECISIONS** about our own lives.

We need to be able to make decisions about:

- things that we want to make happen.
- things that we want to stop from happening

That is why it is so important that we share our stories. Our stories tell us about:

- what is happening now
- what we would like to make happen
- what we want to stop from happening

Making decisions is about **CHOICES**. It is about choosing one thing to do, or another.

Options and Choices

Choices are about **"options"**. **Options** are the things that we can choose from. For example --

- "Do I want to live in:
  - a house?
  - an apartment?
- "Do I want to live:
  - alone?
  - with a friend?

There are usually many options.

Consequences– What Happens When We Make A Decision?

But many of us are used to being told:

- we have no options to choose from --
  for example, "There is only one place that you can live."
- or we have limited options --
  for example, "You can live at home with your parents, or in this group home."

Our local group is the place where we can learn about our options.

Together we can learn about what can happen when we make a decision to choose. A **CONSEQUENCE** is the thing that happens when I choose to do something.

We can help each other to think about the options that we can choose from.

We can help each other to think about what can happen when we make a decision or choice.

Some of us have experiences about options and choices that we can share. For example some of us may have:

- already moved into our house or apartment
- or moved in with a friend

Making Informed Decisions

We have learned about some of the things that can happen when we make a choice.

Sharing our experiences can help us all to make **INFORMED DECISIONS.** Making an "informed decision" just means that:

- we have information about what our options are
- we have thought about what can happen when we choose an "option"
- we have decided which option we choose to do something about

Our group can be the place where we find information that can help us make decisions. We can:

- share with each other about what we learned when we tried to do something
- invite a guest speaker
- agree on what we want to do
- talk about what kind of support we will need to do it

Just DO Something





Talking in our groups is very important.

But if we want to change the way things are now, then we have to **DO SOMETHING** about it.

Our group is the place where we can think about what we want to do, and then do it.

We can decide to do something that:

- **Supports one of our members**
  - **for example...**Go to a meeting with them to support them to speak about what they would like to see happen with the agency that provides services.
- **Supports all of us**
  - **for example...**Write a letter to a politician about what we think about something important to us like ODSP.
- **Educates the community**
  - **for example...**Make a presentation to a community group of parents, or at a conference.

Doing something together helps us:

- to feel powerful...it shows that we CAN do things
- to learn...
- to feel closer together as a group...

People First
of Ontario

People First of Ontario is a legal organization (a non-profit corporation). This means that we can receive money and spend money for things that help OUR PURPOSE.

The PURPOSE of People First of Ontario is to support people who have been labeled "developmentally disabled" to:

- Speak Up For Ourselves
- Make Decisions For Ourselves
- Educate Our Communities About Our Rights and Abilities To LIve As Citizens and Community Members
- Create and Support Local People First Groups
- Buy or Acquire Things That Help Us To Do These Things

Some of the things that **People First of Ontario** does are:

- Host conferences and learning events for People First local groups and individual People First Members.
- Create and share information and resources with local groups
- Connect local People First groups to each other
- Speak out and take action about issues that are important to People First members in Ontario.

What is People First of Ontario?



What We Do



The "Business" Part of People First of Ontario

Since People First of Ontario is a legal non-profit corporation ... a kind of business ... we have:

- some rules to gude our work
- some people who will be responsible and make sure that we are doing what we have said we are organized to do

People First of Ontario has to follow the Government rules for all non-profit corporations. This can be complicated and so we ask for help from Advisors.

The Board of Directors

The people who are responsible for the work and business of People First of Ontario (PFO) are called the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors:

- are people who are chosen by the Voting Members (see page 20) of People First in Ontario in an election each year at the Annual General Meeting.
- can be made up of 10 to 15 people
- has two kinds of Board members:
  - **OFFICERS**
    - President, Vice President, 1st Vice President, Past President, and Treasurer
  - **DIRECTORS**
    - 4 Regional Representatives, and Member at Large

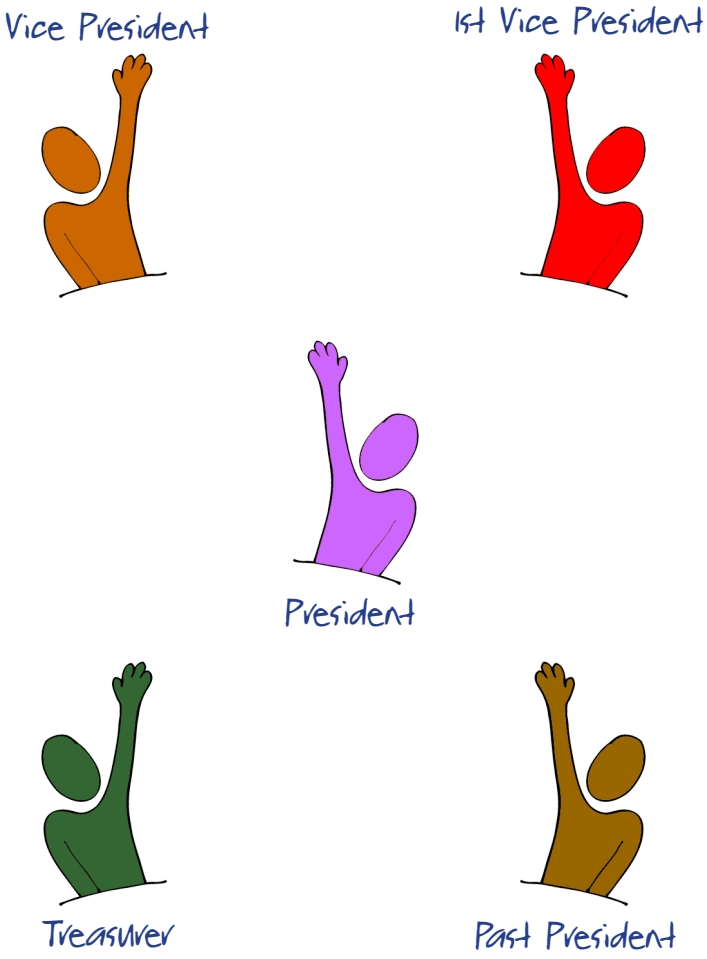
The Role of Officers

Officers are the people who are responsible for making sure that the business of People First of Ontario happens.

There are two parts to this:

1. Making sure that People First of Ontario is doing things that the members feel is important
2. Making sure that People First of Ontario's money is used properly...
    - this means that we can **ACCOUNT** for the money -- we can show the Board, People First Members, and the Government:
        - what the money was used for
        - how much we used

Who are the Officers of People First of Ontario



The Officers of People First of Ontario are:

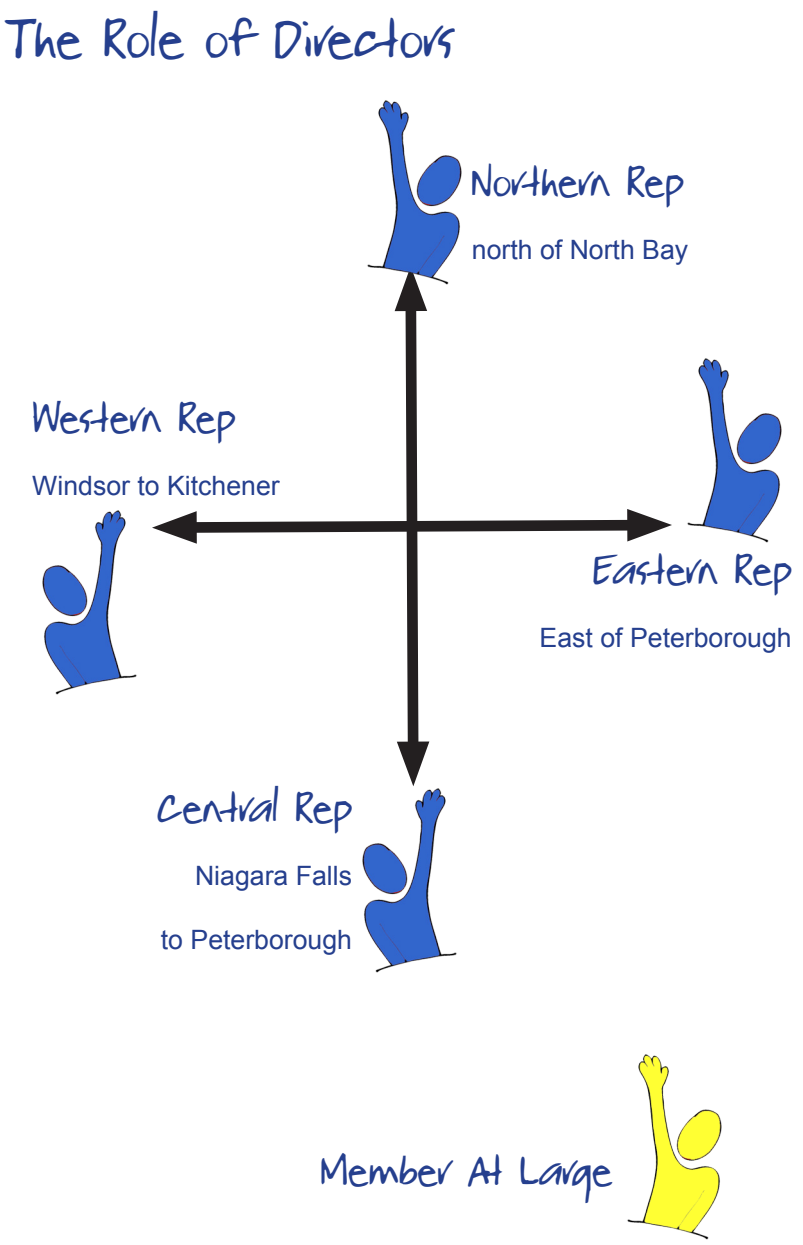
- The **PRESIDENT**
  The President's job is to make sure that the business and purpose of People First of Ontario happen. It is the President's job to:
  - run meetings of the Members and Board of Directors
  - make sure that the decisions that the Board makes are followed up and completed
  - speak on behalf of the Board when asked to do so
- The **VICE PRESIDENT and 1st VICE PRESIDENT**
  The job of the Vice Presidents is to do the job of the President if the President is not available.
- The **TREASURER**
  The job of the Trreasurer is to make sure that the Board of Directors knows:
  - how much money PFO has available
  - what the money has been spent on
- The **PAST PRESIDENT**
  It is the job of the Past President to support the new President and the Board of Directors. The Past President has experience that can help the new President.

The Directors are:

- People First of Ontario is divided into **4 REGIONS**
  - **West** - from Windsor to Ktichener/Waterloo
  - **Central** - from Fort Erie to Peterborough
  - **East** - east of Peterborough
  - **North** - north of North Bay
- Each Region elects a **REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE.**
  It is the Regional Reps job to:
  - contact all of the local chapters in their region
  - listen to what is happening in the local groups
  - find out what is important to the local group
  - share with the local group what is happening with People First of Ontario
- There can be 1 to 5 **MEMBERS AT LARGE**
  - It is the job of a Member at Large to help the Board remember what is important to individual Members of People First.

The **REGIONAL REPS** and **MEMBER AT LARGE** help set the **DIRECTION** for People First of Ontario.

They let the Board know what is **IMPORTANT** to the **MEMBERS** of People First.

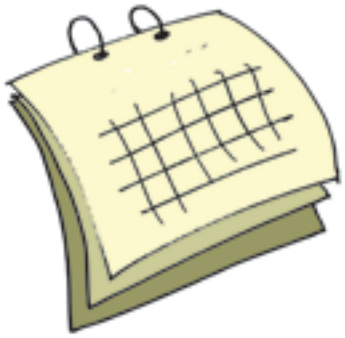


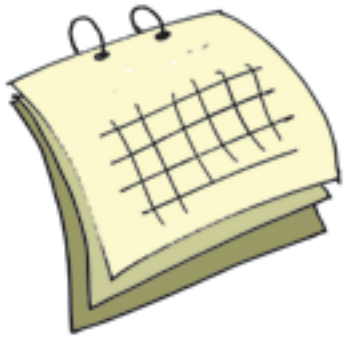
Elections of the Board of Directors

Odd Years

2009, 2011, 2013...

President
Vice President & 1st VP
Treasurer
Member at Large





Even Years

2008, 2010, 2012...

Regional Reps

Elections happen each year at the Annual General Meeting of People First of Ontario.

A Member who is elected to be on the Board of Directors stay on the Board for a **TERM** of **2 years.**

ODD YEAR Elections:

- An ODD Year is a year that ends in an odd number -- for example 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009...
- In ODD years **ALL** of the **Voting Members** of People First of Ontario elect and vote for:
  - **President**
  - **Vice President**
  - **1st Vice President**
  - **Treasurer**
  - **Member at Large**

EVEN YEAR Elections:

- An EVEN Year is a year that ends in an even number -- for example 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008...
- In EVEN years the **Voting Members in EACH Region** of People First of Ontario elect and vote for:
  - a **Regional Reprepresentative for their Region** -- for example, if you live in the Central Region you will vote for somone in Central Region to be the Central Region Rep.

Some Rules About Who Can Be Elected

There are some rules that are called By-laws.

By-laws help everyone know how People First of Ontario does its business.

You can get a copy of the People First of Ontario By-laws by contacting People First of Ontario (see page 60).

WHO CAN BE ELECTED FOR?:

- **Regional Rep** and **Member At Large**
  - any Voting Member
- **Officer Positions**
  - any Voting Member who has already served on the Board of Directors for **at least 1 year**

WHO CANNOT BE ELECTED?

- non-Voting members
- a Voting member who has been elected to be on the Board of Directors for the **maximum number of terms** in a row:
  - **3 terms** (6 years =2yrs + 2yrs + 2yrs)
  - after you have been elected to serve on the Board for 3 terms in a row (6 years) **you must wait for 4 years (2 terms)** before you can be elected again

Being Nominated To Be Elected

Every Voting Member who can be elected has to be nominated.

To be **nominated** means that other Voting Members have chosen you as a person that they think will listen and act on things that are important to them.

Someone who is chosen by Voting Members to run in an election is called a **CANDIDATE.**

So before you can be a candidate, someone else who is a Voting Member must give your name (nominate you) to the Board of Directors before the election.

You cannot nominate yourself.

Voting

Voting happens at the Annual General Meeting.

Each Candidate has an opportunity to speak and let the Members know why they think they are the person that Members should vote for.

Every Voting Member has **ONE** vote for each position that is being elected -- one vote for President, one vote for Vice President...

When all of the voting is done, the votes are counted. The Candidate who has the most votes is elected to that position.

Board Meetings

The Board of Directors meets together 3 or 4 times each year.

When the Board of Directors meet we speak and listen to each other so we can make decisions together that help the members of People First.

In a Board meeting there is time for:

- **Getting Information**
  It is important that we make informed decisions for that help the Members of People First.

  We listen to people who can help us to get information that we need:
  - Each other - Board members share personal experiences and information.
  - Regional Reps share information from local groups
  - Advisors help us us to understand in PLAIN LANGUAGE information about government and service providers that affect us.
  - Guest Speakers bring information about issues that affect us .

- **Talking To Each Other**
  We spend time talking with each other about what we have heard.

We listen to our questions. We listen to what we agree about and what we disagree about.

- **Making Sure That We Have Done What We Said We Would Do**

  The Board makes sure that we remember the things that we have said we will do at earlier Board meetings.

  We make time to learn about what has happened so that we learn:

  - How can we do better?
  - What else needs to be done?

- **Making Decisions**

  After we have gathered information and talked with each other, we make decisions about what we are going to do.

  We make decisions by:

  - Making a **MOTION**
    - A **Motion** is a suggestion of something that we can do.
    - A Board Member makes a motion. - for example *"I make a motion that we write a letter to government to let them know that ODSP does not give us enough money to live"*

- The person keeping **MINUTES** of the meeting writes down the Motion. Minutes are just notes to help us remember what we talked about. An Advisor or volunteer supporter can write the minutes.

- Another Board Member **SECONDS the MOTION --** this means that they think it is a good thing for the Board to make a decision about.

- **Discuss and ask questions**
  The President invites all of the Board Members to participate in a discussion about the Motion. It is a time to make sure that everyone understands.

- **VOTE** on a Motion
  After the discussion the President asks the Board Members 3 things:

  - **"All in favor of the Motion -- raise your hand."**
    To be **"in favor"** means you agree.
  - **"All opposed to the Motion -- raise your hand."**
    To be **"opposed"** means you disagree.
  - **"All who abstain -- raise your hand."**
    To **"abstain"** means that you choose not to vote.
  - The person keeping MINUTES of the meeting



Running An Organization... is A LOT of Work!





writes down how many people are in favor, opposed, and abstain.

- The Motion is **CARRIED** if more than 1/2 of the Board votes in favor. To be CARRIED means that the Board agrees to follow and act on this motion.

Running an organization like People First of Ontario is:

- a lot of hard WORK
- a BIG responsibility

We need to support each other.

We need to make decisions to DO things that WE CAN DO.

Just like most of us who have been labeled "disabled" have very little money...so does our organization.

People First of Ontario has very little money.

We need people to help. We need members, local groups, advisors, and supporters to chip in.

Everyone one can do something that can help.

We **NEED ALL OF US** to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** and change the world so thal our lives can be better.

Come join us in the work!

Canada Resources

- **People First of Ontario**

  2495 Parkedale Avenue, Unit #4
  Brockville, Ontario
  K6V 3H2

  Web: www.peoplefirstontario.com

- **People First of Canada**

  Suite 5, 120 Maryland Street
  Winnipeg, Manitoba
  R3G 1L1

  Phone: (204) 784-7362

  Members' Phone: 1-866-854-8915

  Fax: (204) 784-7364

  Email: info@peoplefirstofcanada.ca

  Web: www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca

International Resources

- **Advocating Change Together (ACT)**
  1821 University Ave West,
  Suite 306-S
  St. Paul, MN 55104

  Phone: 651-641-0297

  Email: act@selfadvocacy.org

  Web: www.selfadvocacy.org

- **People First U.K.**
  Central England People First Limited
  Eskdaill House
  Eskdaill Street
  Kettering
  Northants, U.K.
  NN16 8RA

  Phone: 01536 515548

  E-mail: northants@peoplefirst.org.uk

  Web: www.peoplefirst.org.uk