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The
Arc

Pennsylvania
SYSTEMS ADVOCACY-GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Suite 8 – Executive House
101 South Second Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101
(717) 234-2621 • 234-7615 (fax)
www.thearcpa.org

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The Arc of Pennsylvania is
affiliated with The Arc of the
United States and 39 local
chapters of The Arc across PA.

The
Arc

January 11, 2009

Ms. Jean Searle & Mr. Jim Conroy
Co-Presidents
Pennhurst Memorial and Preservation Alliance
61 Cassatt Avenue
Berwyn, Pennsylvania 19312

Dear Ms. Searle & Mr. Conroy:

This letter is written in support of your **Grassroots Advocacy Grant** application to the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, which, if funded, would support your organization's effort to identify and contact members of the Pennhurst Class and their families for the purpose of helping the Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance achieve its goal.

The Arc of Pennsylvania's mission is to work to include all citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities in every community. As it was known then, the "Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children" (or "PARC") was an organizational plaintiff in the litigation that closed Pennhurst and guaranteed Pennhurst class members appropriate services in the community. A year ago, The Arc of Pennsylvania Board of Directors passed a resolution conceptually supporting your effort to preserve the Pennhurst property "so that we never forget and never go back." Institutions are, and unfortunately continue to be, places where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are segregated from and devalued by society. The Arc of PA supports the idea of creating a museum at the Pennhurst property akin to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C.

A valuable **systemic change/systems advocacy objective** will be achieved if your organization is successful. A Pennhurst museum and/or memorial will serve as a permanent reminder to society about how poorly it once treated – on a massive scale - an entire group of citizens who had intellectual disabilities. It should also serve as a wake-up call to public policy makers in Pennsylvania, hopefully forcing them to answer the question, "Why are we still funding and operating 5 state institutions for people with intellectual disabilities when museums and memorials are being built to show how dehumanizing and isolating such facilities are?"

Good luck with your project. Please let us know how else we can assist your organization in achieving its goal.

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Surovick
Executive Director

Advocacy & resources for citizens with
cognitive, intellectual and developmental disabilities



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October 1, 2009

Ms. Jean Searle & Dr. James Conroy
Co-Presidents
Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance
61 Cassatt Avenue
Berwyn, Pennsylvania 19132

Dear Ms. Searle & Dr. Conroy:

The Arc of Pennsylvania is writing this letter to acknowledge the work of the Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance. The Alliance has stated its motive to preserve Pennhurst is to remember the past, challenge the present, and define the future.

As you know, The Arc of Pennsylvania's mission is to work to include all citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities in every community. As it was known then, the "Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children" was an organizational plaintiff in the litigation that closed Pennhurst and guaranteed Pennhurst class members appropriate services in the community. This event, along with numerous acts of courage by individuals with intellectual disabilities, their families, and other advocacy organizations, was largely responsible for igniting the institution-closure movement of the 70's and 80's.

At its January 2009 meeting, The Arc of Pennsylvania Board of Directors passed a resolution conceptually supporting your effort to preserve the Pennhurst property "so that we never forget and never go back." The resolution made it absolutely clear preservation efforts should not be done to commercialize or glorify the property, or suggest in any way institutions were ever an acceptable model of care no matter what the times were and no matter how many individual acts of kindness may have occurred on the grounds from time to time. To the extent that anything positive can be said about institutions, it would relate solely to the human spirit displayed by the thousands of individuals forced to live in such places. Despite the circumstance of being isolated in an institution and unwanted by society, these individuals demonstrated a kind of perseverance and will to live worthy of society's formal praise and remembrance.

Institutions are, and unfortunately continue to be, places where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are segregated from and devalued by society. The Arc of Pennsylvania supports the idea of creating a museum at the Pennhurst property akin to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. And, while we understand the need to make preservation projects like this economically viable, we believe only tasteful and appropriate uses of the property should be considered, such as the placement of a university, health care facility, or community park, as examples.

On behalf of The Arc of Pennsylvania Board of Directors, its chapters, and its members, good luck and best wishes in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Paul Conway
President