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Spring/Summer 2018

## Mission

**To protect and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities so that they may live the lives they choose, free from abuse, neglect, discrimination and segregation.**

## Vision

**To live in a Commonwealth where people of all abilities are equal and free.**



## Dear Friends, Donors and Supporters!!

For more than 40 years, Disability Rights Pennsylvania has been working quietly and diligently advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities. One of the stories in this issue clearly demonstrates the results of DRP staff efforts to resolve a mother's journey trying to find the appropriate community-based support services for her child. Through the intercession of the DRP team, the child's needs were met. Be sure to read the mission stories in this issue, they highlight DRP's exceptional work.

In March the world lost Dr. Stephen Hawking. His research and contributions to science are to be celebrated. DRP will continue its work to ensure that students with disabilities have opportunities, including moving into science, technology, engineering, and math programs. In 2017, DRP handled 206 special education cases. You will find a brief recap of Dr. Hawking on the outside cover.

Hopefully, spring has finally arrived. While Pennsylvania battled through a long frigid winter, Congress passed a bill to reform the representative payee process. It is known as the Representative Social Security Payee Bill H.R. 4547, Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of

2018. This bipartisan legislation will better protect Social Security beneficiaries who are unable to manage their own funds. We are pleased to announce that DRP was awarded management of this program. What does this mean? This bill will allow DRP to better safeguard those most vulnerable to financial exploitation, including nearly 400,000 Pennsylvanians, by strengthening and monitoring of payees, while reducing the administrative burdens on families caring for loved ones.

Be sure to review the "Did You Know?" facts compiled by the DRP team. A snapshot of vital statistics.

When I think about our legal and advocacy work, I think about the connection of free resources and the help we provide to people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with disabilities and their families. Without your financial support, DRP could not continue to fulfill its mission!! On behalf of our Board of Directors, DRP management & staff and especially the individuals we serve, we are grateful for your support and commitment to our organization!!

*Peri Jude Radecic*  
Peri Jude Radecic, Esq.  
Chief Executive Officer



## Stephen William Hawking, Renowned Scientist, 1942-2018

Early this winter, the world lost an incredible scientist. Stephen W. Hawking.

He was born in January 1942 (exactly 300 years after the death of Galileo) in Oxford, England. He attended St. Albans School and then went on to University College, Oxford. Stephen wanted to study mathematics. Since mathematics was not available at University College, he pursued physics instead. In October 1962, he arrived at the University of Cambridge to do research in cosmology. After gaining his PhD in 1965, he moved forward with extensive research on the basic laws which govern the universe.

Professor Stephen Hawking received thirteen honorary degrees and published several books. Among the popular books Stephen published are his best seller A Brief History of Time, Black Holes and Baby Universes and Other Essays, The Universe in a Nutshell, The Grand Design and My Brief History. He was the recipient of many awards, medals and prizes, most notably, the Fundamental Physics Prize (2013), Copley Medal (2006) and the Wolf Foundation Prize (1988). He was a Fellow of the Royal Society and a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

In 1963, Stephen was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) shortly after his 21st birthday. Stephen kept doing his research by utilizing a computerized voice system for communication. Stephen combined his family life (he has three children and three grandchildren) with his research into theoretical physics, in addition to an extensive program of travel and public lectures. Thanks to the Zero-G Corporation, he experienced weightlessness in 2007 and always hoped to make it into space one day.



## Child No Longer Lives in a Psychiatric Hospital!

Imagine your child is ready to be discharged from a psychiatric hospital. However, your child can't leave. You want your child home but your child is several hours away from you. You want and need good care for your child. Your child has complex needs, but you can't get the services you need to bring your child home.

### What do you do and where do you go for help? Disability Rights Pennsylvania!!

The family contacted DRP. Our staff did what they do best!! They stepped in and worked with the discharge planning team members to advocate for this child. Ultimately, a community-based provider of services was identified. This community-based provider could meet all of this child's behavioral and medical needs. After months of planning, this child was successfully moved into a new home. The new home was located near the family home allowing family members to visit on a regular basis and take an active role in the child's life.

This is just one of the many cases where DRP advocated for the rights of a child with disabilities and achieved a successful outcome!!

(To protect the privacy of our clients, names and other identifying details have been withheld or changed.)

## DRP introduces NEW Veterans Program

Through a collaboration with the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, DRP has established and implemented a new Veterans Advocacy Program to assist returning veterans, their families and their communities to develop competencies in assimilating and services that focus on veterans who have sustained injuries particularly before the age of 22.

Spearheading this new program for DRP is **Stephen R. Lew**, MSG USA, Retired, as Advocate/Veterans Project Leader. Stephen is located in DRP's Harrisburg Office. For more information you may contact Stephen by phone: **717-839-5232** (Direct Dial), **800-692-7443** (Main Office), **877-375-7139** (TDD), or by email: [slew@disabilityrightspa.org](mailto:slew@disabilityrightspa.org)

**Welcome Stephen to Disability Rights Pennsylvania!!!**

## Jane's Home!

Jane has been living in a housing complex for the past 10 years with the assistance of a Section 8 voucher. For many years, Jane stored most of her belongings in boxes in her living room. During those 10 years, Jane passed all of the required housing inspections. This year the inspector told Jane she needed to make her living room look more like a standard living room. Jane had limited financial resources and was unable to obtain assistance to make this change. Jane asked the inspector for two months to come back and inspect her unit. The inspector declined her request.

### What do you do and where do you go for assistance? Disability Rights Pennsylvania!!

Jane turned to DRP with questions about housing rights. She gave her permission for a DRP staff member to speak with the inspector. The inspector agreed to provide an accommodation under the fair housing laws and took into consideration Jane's limited financial resources. The inspector also suggested that Jane make a direct request to Section 8 Housing. The DRP staff assisted Jane with her letter requesting more time to rearrange and clean her apartment. DRP also helped Jane contact a local organization that assisted Jane with her cleanup.

### Success!!

Jane was able to continue living in her home in her community!!

(To protect the privacy of our clients, names and other identifying details have been withheld or changed.)

## Congratulations Carol and Gabriella!!!

On December 4, 2017, **Carol Horowitz** was presented with the **ACHIEVA Award for Excellence in Legal Services!** ACHIEVA is a national non-profit leader that strives to support and empower individuals with disabilities and their families, making their mission to create a community where disability is a distinction that makes no difference. Annually, ACHIEVA selects outstanding individuals, organizations and community groups who go above and beyond on behalf of people with disabilities.

Carol is the Managing Attorney of DRP's Pittsburgh Office.

Governor Tom Wolf has appointed **Gabriella Labella** to serve on Pennsylvania's Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP). This panel works to improve special education for the state of Pennsylvania. SEAP advises the Secretary of Education on the unmet needs of students with disabilities, funding and developing & implementing policies to improve coordination of services to these students

Gabe is a staff attorney and Project Director for Protection & Advocacy for Voter Access.



## Radecic Named to Blue Ribbon Commission On Pennsylvania Election Security!

The University of Pittsburgh Institute for Cyber Law, Policy and Security (Pitt Cyber) announced the formation of an independent, non-partisan Blue Ribbon Commission on Pennsylvania's Election Security.

This Blue Ribbon Commission is led by Pitt Cyber Founding Director David Hickton (former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania) and Grove City College President Paul McNulty. It also includes additional commissioners representing key constituencies and areas of expertise. **Peri Jude Radecic, DRP CEO**, has been named to this prestigious commission.

### The commission will conduct research surrounding three crucial issues:

1. Cybersecurity of voting machines, tabulation and storage
2. Cybersecurity of voter registration, rolls and databases
3. Resiliency and recovery of Pennsylvania's electoral system following a potential breach

A report of the findings will be presented to the public in 2019.

### The Blue Ribbon Commission on Pennsylvania's Election Security include:

**Jim Brown** – Former chief of staff to U. S. Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.; and Pennsylvania Governor Robert P. Casey

**Esther L. Bush** – President & CEO, Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

**Mary Ellen Callahan** – Former chief privacy officer, U. S. Dept. of Homeland Security

**Susan Carty** – President, League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania

**Nelson A. Diaz** - Retired Judge, Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas

**Jane Earil** – Attorney; former Pennsylvania state senator

**Douglas E. Hill** – Executive Director, County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

**Mark A. Holman** – Partner, Ridge Policy Group; former deputy assistant to the president of homeland security, former chief of staff to Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge

**Ken Lawrence** – Vice chair, Montgomery County Board of Commissioners

**Mark A. Nordenberg** – Chair of the Institute of Politics, University of Pittsburgh; Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Pittsburgh

**Grant Oliphant** – President, the Heinz Endowments

**Pedro A. Ramos** – President and CEO, The Philadelphia Foundation

**James C. Roddey** – Former Chief Executive, Allegheny County

**Marian Schneider** – President, Verified Voting; former Pennsylvania deputy secretary of state for elections and administration

**Bobbie Stempfley** – Director, CERT Division, Software Engineering Institute, Carnegie Mellon University

**David Thornburgh** – President and CEO, Committee of Seventy

**Sharon Werner** – Former chief of staff to U.S. attorneys general Eric H. Holder, Jr; and Loretta E. Lynch

**Dennis Yablonsky** – Former CEO, Allegheny Conference on Community Development; former Pennsylvania secretary of community and economic development

### Senior Advisers

**Charlie Dent** – U.S. congressman, 15th District of Pennsylvania

**Paul H. O'Neill** – former secretary of the U. S. Treasury

**Dick Thornburgh** – Former governor, Pennsylvania; former attorney general of the United States, former undersecretary general of the United States

## Did You Know?

- Advocacy Matters!! Over 70% of Americans with severe disabilities are unemployed.
- Tune into "Disability Matters" with Joyce Bender every Tuesday at 2 pm Eastern Time to hear DRP's CEO Peri June Radecic for the latest information on disability issues. [www.voice.voiceamerica.com](http://www.voice.voiceamerica.com) or use the toll-free caller/listener number: **1-866-472-5788**.
- DRP's legal advocacy work has impacted 32% of all Pennsylvanians with disabilities.
- The most recent United States Census Bureau estimates show that more than 1.7 million Pennsylvanians have a disability.
- DRP reached 547,668 people through investigations, monitoring, policy, individual advocacy, training, fair housing, employment, special education, public access discrimination litigation and so much more!
- DRP consistently works with the Pa. Department of Human Services to ensure Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities have access to prompt service.
- DRP partners with families to ensure child placement is not segregated.