

YOUTH POWER!



The Movement

October 2008

A United Journey

By Eva Dech and Dally Sanchez

UNITY

UNDERSTANDING

EMPOWERMENT

In The Beginning

✱ 1992 Coming Together

★ What helps/What harms

- Having a Purpose
- Influencing Systems Change
- Peer Support

1993 Youth Forum is Born

- **Peer Support and Empowerment**
- **Peer Advocacy and Self-Advocacy**
- **Changing Systems**

Peer Support and Empowerment

- ★ Connecting to others that understand
- ★ Believing and valuing each others' abilities to succeed
- ★ Having an accepting and safe environment

Peer Advocacy and Self-Advocacy

- ★ Knowing your rights-Knowledge is power
- ★ Valuing each others knowledge and learning from each other
- ★ Truly representing another person's expressed interests

Changing Systems

- ★ Being instrumental in changing and developing youth services
- ★ Education of parents and providers of what helps/what harms
- ★ Youth involvement on all levels

National Youth Movement

★ Connecting to other youth groups across the country

✦ SAMHSA-System of Care

- Youth speak out nationally-Surgeon general's report 1999
- Youth take action-Puerto Rico Conference 2001
- Youth are recognized- 17th Annual Roslynn Carter Symposium 2001
- Every SAMHSA system of care national conferences have a youth track
- Positive System changes-First full-time national youth coordinator
- All systems of care grant communities mandated to have youth coordinators
- Youth Involvement Guide Developed for all system of care grants

What We Learned

- ★ Find true allies and mentors
- ★ Money isn't everything
- ★ Stay true to your principles and purpose
- ★ Don't let others steer you away from your common goals and vision
- ★ Fight for what you believe in-Don't take no for an answer
- ★ Organize

Remember What It's About

★ Unity

- ✦ Common purpose
- ✦ Connectedness
- ✦ Having a community

★ Understanding

- ✦ Accepting everyone
- ✦ Validating each other's experiences
- ✦ Mutual support

★ Empowerment

- ✦ Believing in each other
- ✦ Supporting each others strengths and dreams
- ✦ Helping each other reach our goals

Paths Collide

Moving from isolated groups to a
statewide network

Stephanie Orlando

Western NY in the late 1990s

In 1998 Erie County formed a youth peer advocacy program which employed part-time youth and offered:

Peer Support ☆ Peer Groups ☆ Systems
Advocacy Opportunities ☆ Peer Advocacy
Trainings

Our Voice at the State Level 1999

In 1999 young people were getting more involved in state level advocacy and we started to connect statewide.

- ✦ The NYS Office of Mental Health created a position through the Bureau of Recipient Affairs for a Children and Youth Recipient Affairs Specialist **Lauren Tenney**
- ✦ The New York State Youth Advisory Council to the office of Mental Health was formed to advise the commissioner and the bureau of children and families **S. Orlando** was the first chairperson



NY State Youth Voice

Restraint & seclusion regulations ☆ Transition to Adulthood ☆ Suicide prevention work, ☆ Give perspective into state services

We also were able to develop the Choice Thru Voice books which was recognized nationally in 2005 in SAMHSA's Roadmap to Seclusion and Restraint Free Mental Health Services (it was listed under it's first name "the Prime Directive")

We are still continuing to do a lot of the work we started then and in fact Choice Thru Voice will be finally launched in 2009.

Families Together

- In 2003 Families Together had it's first youth track during their annual conference. **Eva Dech** also received an award to honor her work as an advocate and was invited onto the Board of Directors.
- In 2005 **Stephanie Orlando** was hired as the Statewide Youth Coordinator. This was possible through funding by the NYS Office of Mental Health.



Full time staff outside the state building and in a Non-Profit

*Youth Coordinator became a constant and stable
representative in state government.*

Initial budget of \$8,000 for activities & travel.

*Assisted local youth groups in development to
build the grassroots.*

*Many organizations offered support to hold events
to promote and foster youth involvement.*

And Then There Was a New Era

- In 2006 Lauren Tenney, Eva Dech, Stephanie Orlando and Dally Sanchez came together as veterans of the Youth Movement to put on a **Youth Leadership Track** at the Families Together Annual Conference. **YOUTH POWER!** was introduced as a theme and some of the attendees became leaders of the new era of the statewide youth network.



Building it up 2006

- Regional Youth Forum
- Youth Voice events in a state children's inpatient facility
- Youth speak out for the New York State Independent living Council
- Advised the NYS Department of Health as to the development of a Youth Advisory Council
- Nationally connected to the youth disability movement through the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) and the National Council on Disability Youth Advisory Council

This work paved the way to larger numbers of youth continuing collaborations and additional funding sources.

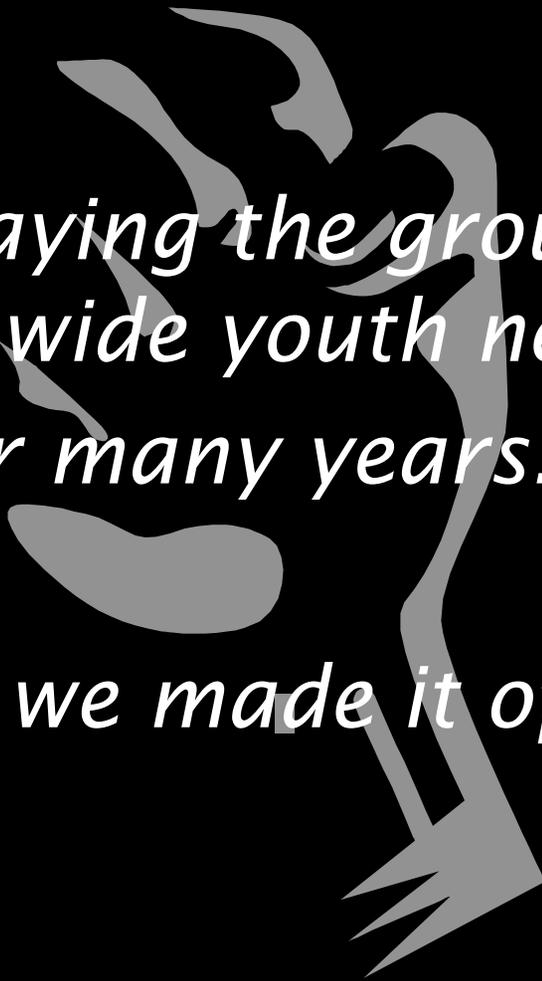
S. Orlando with the NCD YAC 2006 after being elected Chairperson.



2007 YOUTH POWER! is born

*We had been laying the ground work for
a statewide youth network
for many years.*

In 2007 we made it official.



YOUTH POWER!

2007

- Christina Felix became the first Youth Representative on the Families Together Board of Directors
- Stephanie Orlando took on the title Director of YOUTH POWER! and Dally Sanchez was hired as the YOUTH POWER! Coordinator.
- We developed a training curriculum and held our first training series in Albany NY.
- The YOUTH POWER! Advisory Board was developed.



YP! Founding Board Members

MORE!!!!

- ★ Share the “How-to’s” we have picked up along the way.
- ★ Train young people in **Empowerment, Self-Help, Peer Support, Peer Advocacy and Systems Advocacy**
- ★ Go into institutions and the community to spread the word of hope & power.
- ★ Meeting with top government officials, community leaders and possible partners about our top **policy/rights issues** to ensure **meaningful change**.
- ★ **Constant Recruitment!!**



Christina Felix

We are Young.

We are Strong.

We are

YOUTH POWER!

Annual Conference

- Our YOUTH POWER! Advisory Board worked hard to design activities that will help youth build their skills as self-advocates. When moving toward a positive future it is so important to know how to communicate, empower yourself and know your rights. In these Peer Run Youth Workshops young people will learn skills and information that will build on their strengths and help them transition into a successful adulthood.
- Annual **SPEAK OUT** during Monday's luncheon. This is an opportunity for youth to present their perspectives, opinions, concerns and hopes for the future. 2008 we opened with a stepping routine performed by members of the Families Together in Albany County's Youth Empowerment Project.



Youth Leadership Forum

We have held 2 regional Youth Forums the past 2 years. Funding for this is limited but we try to organize them when possible.

This year we held our first annual Statewide Youth Leadership Forum in Albany NY.

The theme was

Voice, Choice & Power!

- ★ Advocacy to Activism: Guest speakers that shared information on Human Rights and how to create change.
- ★ Sharing of information of local youth groups: Networking of young people who are active in their community.
- ★ Personal leadership development: Created a plan of action.
- ★ Gave direction to the YOUTH POWER! Network: What we will be doing next.
- ★ Raised our voice: Create a unified voice for the issue of our choosing and speak-out.



What do we
Want??



JOHN DONNELLY

YES

YOUTH

POWER

NO

MORE

STIGMA

THE YOUTH POWER AFFLICTION

- I have become afflicted with YOUTHPOWER! I have received a strain that has so strongly moved me not just to stand here today, but has got so serious that it even affects my daily life. Be careful though...it is highly contagious.
- After graduating High School in January, 2005, enrolled in Westchester Community College, and did horribly up until 2007, resulting in an overall GPA of 1.6
- School Year of 2007 – 2008 raised GPA from 1.6 to 3.0, as well as being accepted by the University at Albany, where I currently attend full-time classes.
- I am currently taking no psychotropic medication, using coping skills to deal with life's daily hassles. This is thanks to a belief in self that Youth Power has helped me to propitiate, as well as a proficient use of coping skills which have been easier to use because of the belief in self.
- While YOUTHPOWER! has played a major role in this, so has another important peer and mentor, Wanda Robinson.

DRILL SEARGENT WANDA

- Wanda Robinson was my counselor at Search for Change. Although it is definitely a backwards organization, she made it livable. Since day one she has been a great advocate and mentor, continuing to be so today. Wanda is also a survivor of the system, multiple systems in fact. This gave her the ability to truly relate, as well as the ability to advocate and lead others through their times of trial and tribulation. While Search for Change did not feel as homely as my mother's house, the one thing I could always count on was Wanda Robinson fighting in my corner, no matter the situation.
- Youth and Adults should all be open minded enough to be able to team up in such a manner.
- Both her and YOUTHPOWER! have helped certify the importance of Peer to Peer Interaction, Peer Advocacy, and most importantly Peer Support

YOUTH emPOWERed POLICY

- The Youth of NYS place just as much importance in Peer Advocacy, Interaction, and Support as I, showing this strongly through a Statewide Survey conducted by YOUTH POWER! over the past year.
- We conducted this survey in order to make sure our Policy Agenda appropriately reflected the views of the Youth across the state. The survey was paper format, consisting of several topic areas. Respondents were to check a box ranking from not important to extremely important in response to each question.
- Responses to this comprehensive survey, showed that out of all the topic areas **Peer Advocacy and Support and Issues Related to it are the most important issue to the Youth of our state.**
- Some of the most highly rated suggestions included funding for: PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS, LOCAL and STATE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCILS, YOUTH ADOLESCENCE TRAININGS, EXPANSION OF A STATEWIDE YOUTH NETWORK, and PEER DROP IN CENTERS.
- Another important thing to mention is the need for better transitional planning from high school to college, vocational, and technical schools.
- One thing that is also very important to mention, is how crucial it is to eliminate the use of restraint and seclusion in any type of facility. Seclusion only complicates difficulties. Restraint can not only end up in dehumanization, but also in death.

HELP!!!!!!!!!!

- When “shit hits the fan” who do you go to see first, and who do you confide in? YES or NO
- Is it therapists?
- Is it psychiatrists?
- Is it a doctor?
- Is it a psychologist?
- Is it a medical or mental health professional?

- *If you answered yes to any of the above you are most likely either a liar or a phony.*
- The first person that anyone goes to for support usually is either a family member, friend, colleague, or a combination of the above...it is human nature.
- Since this is THE TRUTH and A FACT, why do we as a society insist that our Youth are asked to confide in adults, AND why do we think that the adults are going to be best able to help them?
- Part of it has to do with human nature, because as we age we push further and further towards thinking we know a lot more than the next generation.
- The other part is that we have pushed further as a society to allow doctors to become almost a deity of sorts. THEY ARE NOT ANYTHING OTHER THAN PEOPLE JUST LIKE ME and YOU...THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THEY HAVE A PIECE OF PAPER.

Imagine waking up
One beautiful morn
To find yourself
Caught up in a storm
A storm of sickness
That won't make you blind
It's the kind of storm
That fucks the mind

Wake up feeling really sad
Maybe bad, or even mad
You're feeling overwhelmingly stressed
Because you realize you're depressed
Then the news gets a little worse
You start seeing shit
Believe you are cursed
Remember not to lose your focus
You just added on psychosis
You try to hang on for a while
No don't do it, not the dial
You figure why not?
You picked the phone up
To find yourself extremely fucked

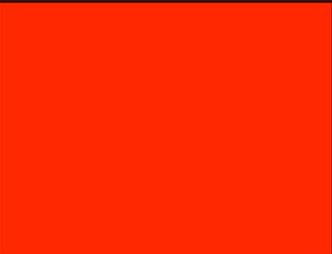
They're coming for you now
Not the demons, even worse
You fucked yourself
No you're not cursed
You start worrying
You begin to shout
Then it comes over
And you black out
They're coming and will find you
Even if you run like hell
They're gonna give it to you
The supposed help

You have entered an arena
You're world's about to get rocked
You've just realized it
And behind you the door just got locked
You close your eyes
Wishing you were blind
The storm waves crashing
Sounds run through your mind

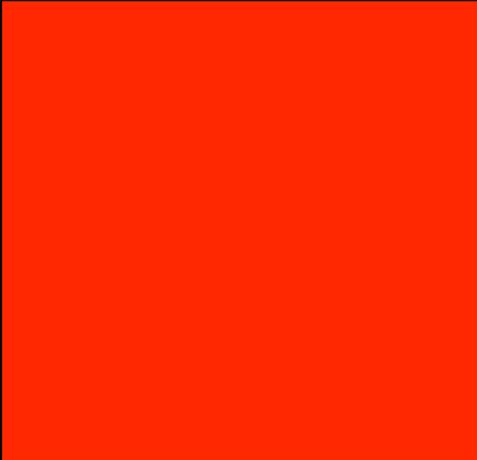
The sounds get louder
They encompass you
You have just realized
You're in a type of zoo
Everybody around you's
On a fabulous diet
You think "holy shit"
I don't want to try it
You start to realize
"Have to be tough as nails"
Or else they will make you try
One of their medicinal cocktails

But it's not just
These drinks that make
You sick as hell
Since you must take
All of this in
No it's not just
You have no options
Since they say, "you must."

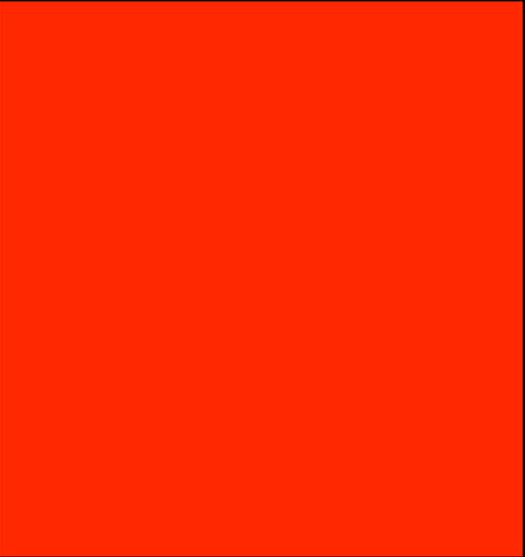
Or else we'll act
And you will faint
From this prescribed
Chemical restraint
And if you try it
You know... "acting up"
Then you will be
Really fucked
Before you'll know it
You'll hit the bed
Or else you'll be injured
Or possibly dead
We'll always win
You can bet it
Physically or chemically
We'll make sure you get it



The help that you need
You know what I mean
The kind of help
Kind of like a bad dream
The kind of help
Out of a horror scene
The kind of help
That just may seem
To help people but
They just may deem
That in the future
It was never a team



For people to heal
They must work together
The doctor and human
Must both learn to whether
The psychological storm
Whether it's on one's side
Or else people will learn
It's not safe to confide
And unless it comes soon
The stats will not lie
Without an even decision
An ever increasing number of
people will die
But the doctor's don't want this
Because anything other than
total submission
Might begin to affect their
bottom line.



Then you start thinking
Of shit that's real dumb
It pop's in your head
"I've gotta run.
I asked for help
On my own accord.
Their type of help
My mind can't afford.
I must accept this
But conditionally
Together we'll work
Or I need to be freed."

But then you realize
That it's worse than jail
Because in a hospital
There's no hope for bail
In this nationwide system
That's supposed to help you
Is it really a positive system
Or is it just medicinal monarchy
bullshit too?

The kind of system that likes to
treat you
Bad as shit and even worse too
But says they treat people
"sweet as honey"
When all they want in the end
Is more and more money
The kind of system
That before you are cured
They have to make sure
That you are insured

It's time for you to step up
For people to know
How many lives this affects
And take back control
As for the mental health system
And how they treat the brain
The patients' especially
It's fucking insane
The total control they have
Over the meek, sick, and lame
They expect their patients
To be emotionally void and tame
If you have no money
They'll get you on Medicaid so they can
maim
You for as long as they can
As long as they're still getting paid
And all of this
Is supposed to be fine
Because it helps
The hospitals bottom line
So as for the whole system
It is time they are tamed
Because as for the quality of their supposed
services
They should be extremely ashamed

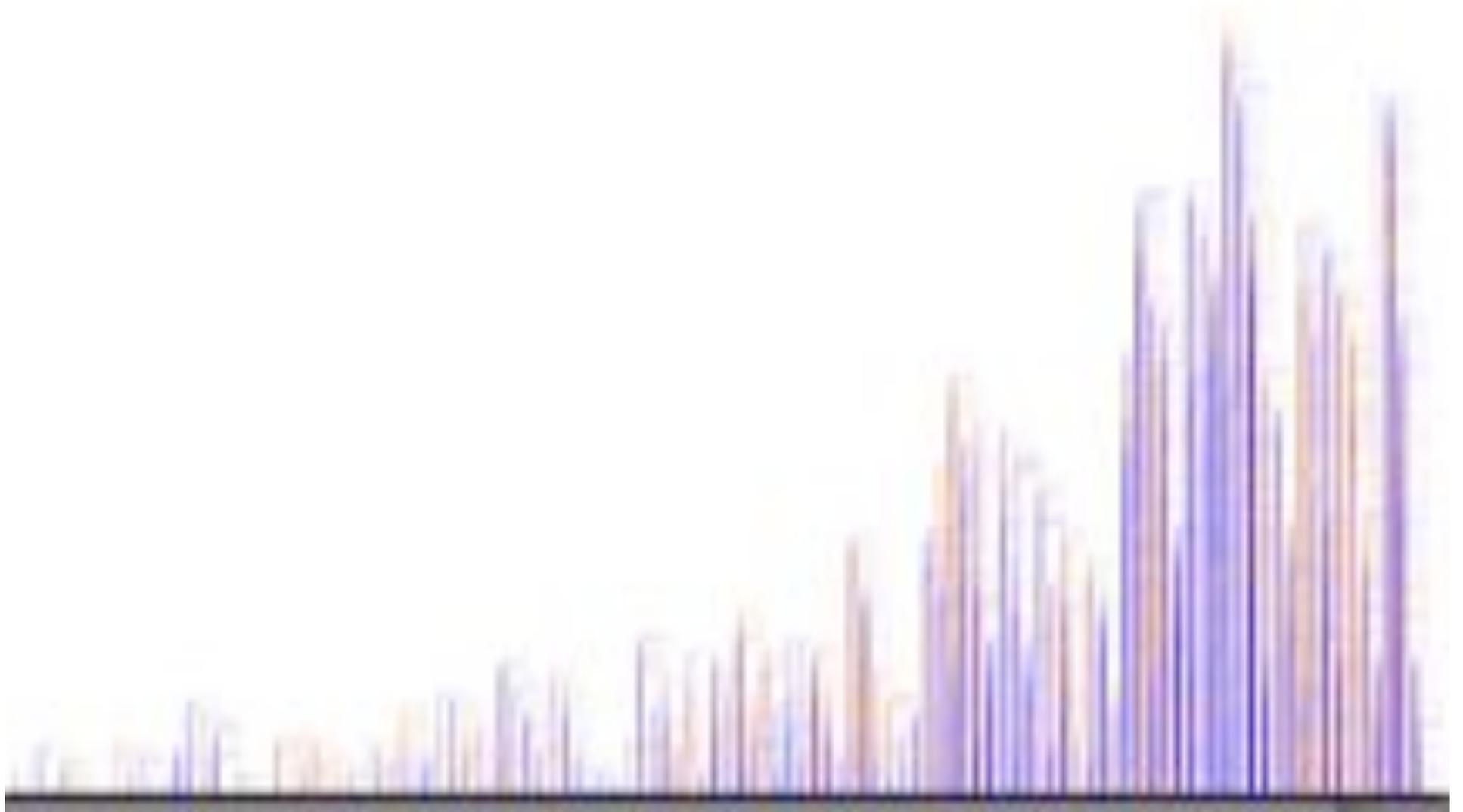
Lauren J. Tenney
(not a doctor)

Historical Evidence

THE BATTLE:

YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE
THE RIGHT TO BE
INVOLVED IN YOUR
“TREATMENT PLAN”
UNTIL YOU ARE 16.

EVIDENCE



What I have learned

- Perseverance
- Determination
- Never Forgetting
- Knowing it is still going on.
- Organize, organize, organize!

STOP FORCED TREATMENT

- Race
- Class
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Religion/Spirituality

YOUTH POWER!

A New York State Network of Young People with Disabilities and Social-Emotional Challenges

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