

Guilford SEPTO Membership Meeting
Monday, January 22, 2018
6:00 – 7:30 pm
Guilford High School Library
Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm.

Guest Speakers: State Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr. and State Representative Sean Scanlon. Summary and highlights of their talk:

Representative Scanlon:

- Elected in November 2014 with no background on people with intellectual disabilities.
- Was immediately put on the Public Health Committee and the I/DD Caucus so he has learned a lot. Now the Chair of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, and on the Transportation Committee, while remaining on Public Health Committee and the I/DD Caucus.
- Difficult budget climate, which greatly affects DDS (Developmental Disabilities Services) and DSS (Department of Social Services).
- Eighty percent of the entire budget is locked into state employee salaries and benefits. Twenty percent of the budget is “discretionary,” where cuts can be made. (This includes everything from funding for DDS, DSS, state parks, state universities, transportation and much more.)
- The current budget climate makes decisions very challenging, but your activism DOES matter! Please email him with your issues! Sean.scanlon@cga.ct.gov
- Please be sure to join him at his “Coffee and Conversation” meetings held in our community.

Senator Kennedy:

- Elected in November 2014.
- Vast experience with individuals with disabilities. Lost his leg at 12 years old to bone cancer. Aunt Eunice Shriver started Special Olympics, and his cousin Tim Shriver runs Special Olympics International.
- In 1990 his father Senator Ted Kennedy worked to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law with George H. W. Bush in office.
- Ted noted that public school only became available to individuals with I/DD in 1975, so laws are still relatively new.
- 3,000 bills in Connecticut last year; go to cga.ct.gov to track legislation.
- Now chairs the American Association for People with Disabilities, a national organization that fights for civil liberties and rights for I/DD.
- The Department of Education and the Department of Homeland Security are both presenting a lot of changes that will affect people with disabilities.
- The ABLE Act (Achieving a Better Life Experience) was passed in Connecticut in 2015, but the administrative structure has yet to be approved. You can open an ABLE account in another state, like Ohio, and move it to Connecticut when it gets established.
- People with mental health issues are often denied coverage by insurance companies, but Ted wants to create transparency around disclosure of facts.

- Senator Kennedy mentioned the op-ed he wrote and carried by CNN about employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. [Go to this link to read it:]
 - <http://www.cnn.com/2017/12/26/opinions/disabilities-employment-opportunity-opinion-kennedy/index.html>
- Parents are the primary source of information for him and his fellow lawmakers regarding issues for their children. Whether showing up in person to testify about an upcoming bill, or sending an email, or calling the offices of our legislators – “There is nothing more important and impactful than a parent sharing a REAL story speaking from their heart and with conviction.” No matter is too small. Parents are the greatest force of change.
- Stay informed through various online subscriptions and agencies: Disability Scoop, CPAC, The Arc CT, CT Down Syndrome Congress and the CT SEPTO Alliance.
- Research the positive models in other schools, towns and states and pass that on to your legislators.
- Check out the Disability Equality Index, a website highlighting companies offering employment opportunities to individuals with I/DD. There are 6-7 in CT including Aetna, Cigna, The Hartford.
- Ted can be reached at: Ted.kennedy@cga.ct.gov

Ted and Sean stayed to take a variety of questions from the audience.

Guilford Police Department – “EMPOWER Card,” an identification program for individuals with cognitive disabilities

- In a late addition to Guilford SEPTO's agenda tonight, Guilford police officers Det. Jakober and Sgt. Martone presented information about the new program to be launched on February 18, 2018.
- The program is offered to anyone with a cognitive disability, and sign up is voluntary.
- The GPD has named the program “EMPOWER Card.”
- The photo ID card will look similar to a driver's license, with information on the front and back, such as emergency contacts, physician, behaviors, typical or reactional. All information provided would be supplied by the family.
- GPD will offer a one-hour training session to families beginning on February 18.
- The forms will be on the GPD website and Facebook page so families can fill them out before signing up for a training session.
- GPD will take a photo and create the card.

General Announcements and Information

With the goal of providing a network of resources, the Guilford SEPTO Board has agreed to share information to and from our membership about a multitude of opportunities offered through agencies, organizations, non-profits and some for-profits without any particular endorsement or recommendation.

- A small group of us attended the **Scarlett Lewis “Choose Love Movement”** presentation hosted by Madison SEPTO. Ms. Lewis' son Jesse was a victim of the Sandy Hook School shooting in 2014. The Choose Love Formula teaches the foundational concepts and skills of social and emotional learning (SEL), and is informed by current brain research and neuroscience. The goal of the Choose Love Enrichment Program™ is to provide children with the knowledge, attitude, and skills they need to choose love in any situation.
- Another group attended the **Internet and Autism workshop hosted by Chapel Haven**. The purpose of the workshop presented by Dr. Laurie Sperry was to educate parents on the dangers on the Internet and how individuals with disabilities, especially those with autism, can fall victim to those dangers. They are easy targets for sexual predators and also targets for law enforcement possibly committing an unknown crime with the sites they visit. When the Power Point is available, Guilford SEPTO will forward it to our membership.
- Save the Date: **Clifford Beers Clinic**, a community-based mental health clinic serving children, will have their **“Builders of Hope Breakfast” on Wednesday, April 11, 2018** at 7:30 am at Cascade in Hamden. Featured speaker will be Rosie King, self-diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, starring in the BBC show *My Autism and Me*, and young ambassador for the National Autistic Society.

Approval of December meeting minutes

- Motion was made by Deb Doyle to approve the December Membership Meeting Minutes, seconded by Jaye Carlson. The vote passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.