



# MOVING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

MEMBER NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE MUSEUM OF DISABILITY HISTORY

WINTER 2015: VOLUME 13



## The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital Attic

By Dave Mack-Hardiman, Associate Vice President, People Inc.



The attics of our homes are filled with reminders of our past – dressers, cribs, steamer trunks and luggage. As we outgrow pieces of furniture, books or clothing, we wrap

them up and put them in the attic – a dusty collection of memories and cobwebs. It is a place of inspiration and sadness where we relive or recreate the past. It is the dimly lit, top shelf of our life experiences.

Imagine the attic of a state hospital, vast and filled with hundreds of suitcases which belonged to the patients. In 1995, at Willard State Hospital on Seneca Lake, 427 suitcases were discovered as the institution was about to close. This incredible collection of personal belongings was carefully removed and has become a tribute to the lives of those patients.

Their stories are now told through a moving exhibition called, *The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital Attic*. More than 600,000 people viewed the exhibit in 2004, and now Western New Yorkers will have an opportunity to view the exhibit as our Museum of disABILITY will host the exhibit for a limited time. A grand opening fundraiser event will be held Friday, February 27.

**“ This incredible collection of personal belongings was carefully removed and has become a tribute to the lives of those patients.”**

Our Museum of disABILITY History has proudly supported the efforts of the Willard Cemetery Memorial Project and their desire to create a monument to the patients,

in particular, Mr. Lawrence Mocha, the grave digger. Mr. Mocha meticulously dug more than 1,500 graves in the institutional cemetery.

A recent article by *New York Times* Reporter Dan Barry indicates that the State Office of Mental Health will explore “the possibility of a general memorial to honor all those buried at Willard, as well as plans for a multi-denominational ceremony to reconsecrate the cemetery grounds and dedicate the Mocha memorial.”

Mr. Mocha’s story is just one of those featured in this fascinating exhibit which is not to be missed. The Museum of disABILITY History is pleased to bring this traveling exhibition to the Buffalo/Niagara region.

See page 3 for more information

## Guest Contribution

### “Out of the Shadows: Join the Conversation” A panel discussion and reading event

By Lizz Schumer, Writer

We all know the old saying, “don’t judge a book by its cover.” In March, we’re peeling back the cover from writers with disabilities to see what’s underneath. And those pages are full of beauty, talent and promise. As a society, we’re quick to judge people by their appearances. We’re quick to dismiss those we think cannot hold talent beneath mobility challenges, speech impediments or non-mainstream bodies, because they do not fit our idea of what a scientist, an artist, a dancer looks like. That’s the society we live in. That’s wrong.

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## Message from the Director



Greetings from the Museum of disABILITY History and welcome to the latest edition of *Moving Forward, Looking Back*. I hope you are surviving the winter and looking forward to an early spring.

In our last newsletter, I was pleased to provide updates on two new exciting projects that are currently on the drawing board or in various stages of completion. Our new "Children and Family Center" is presently working its way through the permit approval process with the Town of Amherst. The Center promises to be a great hands-on addition to the educational offerings that the Museum presents, specifically geared for families with children.

Our other major project, the "Tour Room," is about 75 percent complete. Some finishing touches are being added to this theater project that will immerse our 21st century visitors into life within a mid-20th century institution for treating mental illness. Stay tuned for more good news concerning both of these new offerings as we seek to extend our reach, further into the community.

Special thanks to everyone who helped and attended our 2nd Annual Holiday Party with Universal Mind this past December. We stretched the limits of our training room with an enthusiastic crowd of holiday revelers who enjoyed the music, dancing and refreshments! Special thanks to Kathy Wood and Theresa Kolodziej who organized the basket raffle that raised funds for the Museum and allowed a lot of lucky guests to go home with neat prizes.

Please mark your calendars for some upcoming programs. We are pleased to announce a new special exhibition entitled, *The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital Attic*. This multi-media exhibit will be on site from February 27-April 11. The pictures and stories within the exhibit will connect you to the lives of individuals who had been committed to custodial care at Willard Psychiatric Center. An exhibit opening event will be Friday, February 27, at 6 p.m. Another opportunity to learn more about this exhibit will be a Dialogues on disABILITY event, featuring author Darby Penney, who will provide a lecture and book signing on Saturday, March 21, at 1 p.m. Penney authored the book (with the same name) that created the impetus for this exhibit.

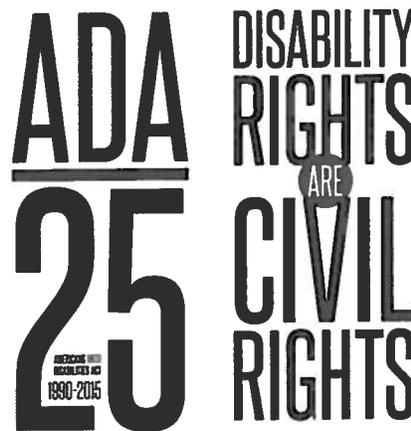
Please plan to attend our latest entry in our disABILITY Film and Speaker Series at the Museum on Wednesday, April 1, at 7 p.m. when we present the new film entitled, *FIXED*. Regan Brashear, producer/director, will be on hand to offer insights into this documentary that looks at the latest technologies that are being utilized by individuals with disabilities. Please see page 5 for more details.

Thank you all for your continued interest in the Museum of disABILITY History. We depend upon you to help us achieve our mission of increasing understanding, acceptance and independence of people with disabilities.

Please visit soon!

*Doug Farley*

Doug Farley, Museum Director



## ADA Legacy Tour

The Museum of disABILITY History, in conjunction with the University at Buffalo Center for Disability Studies, is pleased to host the ADA Legacy Tour on April 29 and 30. The tour is a traveling exhibit designed to raise awareness and build excitement about ADA25, the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). More details will be announced on our website and Facebook page. For more information about how to get involved, contact Doug Platt, curator, at [dplatt@people-inc.org](mailto:dplatt@people-inc.org) or 716.629.3608.

Read about Ivan's adventures in the "Ivan the Invacar" series.

**IVAN THE INVACAR**



Books available at

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Museum of disABILITY History  
1000 N. STATE ST.  
AMHERST, NY 14203

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The Museum of disABILITY History Presents

# The Lives They Left Behind

SUITCASES FROM A STATE HOSPITAL ATTIC

## New Exhibit and Grand Opening Event

The Museum of disABILITY History will host a limited-time traveling exhibit called, *The Lives They Left Behind: Suitcases from a State Hospital Attic*.

**Grand Opening: Friday, February 27  
6 p.m., 3826 Main Street, Buffalo**



The exhibit tells the stories of the suitcase owners and offers a patient-centered view of the history of psychiatry, and will be on display at the Museum of disABILITY History until April 11.

Grand Opening Admission: \$25.

The grand opening event is a fundraiser for the Museum of disABILITY History.

The exclusive event includes wine and hors d'oeuvres. Admissions costs may be paid online, at the event or in advance with payment over the phone by calling our Museum. For more information, visit [museumofdisability.org](http://museumofdisability.org) or call 716.629.3626. Reservations for the opening event are required.

*The exhibit was created by The Community Consortium, an organization that works to promote the full citizenship and civil rights of people with psychiatric disabilities.*



## Dancing the Night Away with Universal Mind

It was a full dance floor as the band Universal Mind played rock and holiday tunes to a full house! The Museum of disABILITY History hosted its holiday party on December 5, 2014. Everyone enjoyed the music, food and basket raffle! Universal Mind is sponsored by Aspire of WNY, comprised of musicians who are all differently-abled. The band performs rock hits and their own dynamic material.



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## Dr. Skinner Nomination

By Thomas Stearns, Museum Coordinator



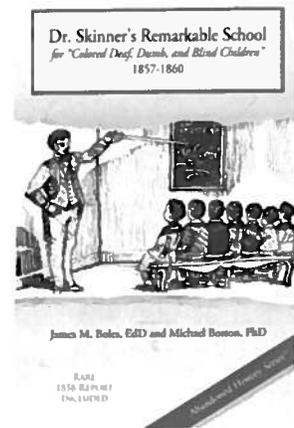
The Museum of disABILITY History recently nominated Platt H. Skinner to the National Abolition Hall of Fame (NAHOF) and Museum in Peterboro, NY. Formed in 2004, the NAHOF encourages the public to nominate abolitionists who worked in America for the immediate abolition of slavery in the United States and who made a significant impact in the abolition movement prior to 1870.

Dr. Skinner, a deeply religious white man who had progressive blindness, is remembered today as a controversial pioneer of education and an outspoken abolitionist. In the years surrounding the Civil War, he established three schools for African-American children with disabilities and constantly advocated for equality. In doing so, he incurred the wrath of pro-slavery individuals who sought to slander and vilify him. He was hounded by negative press and he and his family were always at risk of violence. Nevertheless, he remained committed to his beliefs – even in the face of extreme danger.

During the past few years, the Museum of disABILITY History has sought to honor Dr. Skinner for his courage and compassion by publishing a book that examines his school for Colored Deaf, Dumb and Blind Children in Niagara Falls, NY (then known as “Suspension Bridge”). The school was in operation from 1857-1860, and mainly admitted children from fugitive slave communities in Canada. We also created a two-panel traveling exhibit on Dr. Skinner, which is now available to rent (see: [museumofdisability.org/exhibits/traveling-exhibits](http://museumofdisability.org/exhibits/traveling-exhibits)).

The induction process for the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum will occur throughout 2015, with applications being reviewed by a panel of experts. We hope to announce Dr. Skinner’s induction in 2016. In the meantime, the Museum of disABILITY History is working on a large biography of Dr. Skinner’s life and is also expanding the aforementioned traveling exhibit.

Source: [www.nationalabolitionhalloffameandmuseum.org/hall.html](http://www.nationalabolitionhalloffameandmuseum.org/hall.html)



*“Out of the Shadows: Join the Conversation” continued from page 1*

“Let’s start a conversation; let’s contribute to the movement.”

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, four percent of all artists nationwide are disabled, compared with six percent of the labor force. At seven percent, the share of dancers and musicians with a disability is somewhat higher. Despite those statistics, artists and writers with disabilities are often not included in the national dialogue. In “Out of the Shadows: Join the Conversation,” we will hear from a panel of those working in the “Crip Lit” culture, and learn more about what that means, as well as hear the work of writers actively working in the field.

On Friday, March 6, from 7 to 9 p.m., the Museum of disABILITY History will host an evening reading and panel of writers who are disabled or writers who cover disability,

to discuss the crip lit culture, what it means to them and how it empowers writers of difference.

Beth Geyer, local disability arts educator, playwright, editor/writer and artistic director of Unique Productions UP! will speak on her involvement, as will educator and poet Lisa Cunningham. They will be joined by Sally Bittner Bonn, a Rochester-based writer, mother and disability writer, who can speak to the experience of “able” as a social construct.

On Saturday, March 7, from 1 to 3 p.m., we will open the mic to local and regional disability writers who want to share their own writing, their own stories and their own contribution to crip culture. Join me, to talk about where we sit, where we stand, where we exist within our own society and the

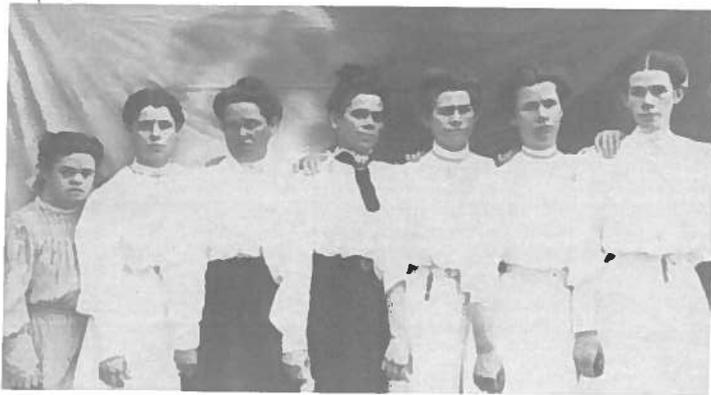


larger context. Let’s start a conversation; let’s contribute to the movement.

Applications are still being accepted for the open mic portion of the program. To be considered, please send a brief bio and a sample of your writing to Lizz Schumer at [schumeea@gmail.com](mailto:schumeea@gmail.com).

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## Curator's Corner

By Doug Platt, Curator



In the early 1900s, a family photograph was taken in or near Pocasset (then the Oklahoma and Indian Territories). The hand written notes on the back of the mounted photo reveal that the ladies in the picture are all related; it must have been a reunion. The Museum obtained the photo as the young lady on the left, Iva McMahon, has Down syndrome. Pictured L-R: Iva McMahon, Myrtle Davidson (her cousin), Cora Davidson (aunt), Callie Knight (aunt), Maud McMahon (Iva's mother), Mae McMahon (aunt) and Pearl McMahon (aunt). The note lets us know that Aunt Evalaline McMahon Reno of Denver was not present. The photo is part of our permanent gallery of the Museum of disABILITY History.



Like us on Facebook!  
facebook.com/museumofdisability

Stay up-to-date on:

- Our news and events
- Local and national news about disability topics
- Resource information
- Disability etiquette



LIKE and SHARE our posts

## Guest Contribution

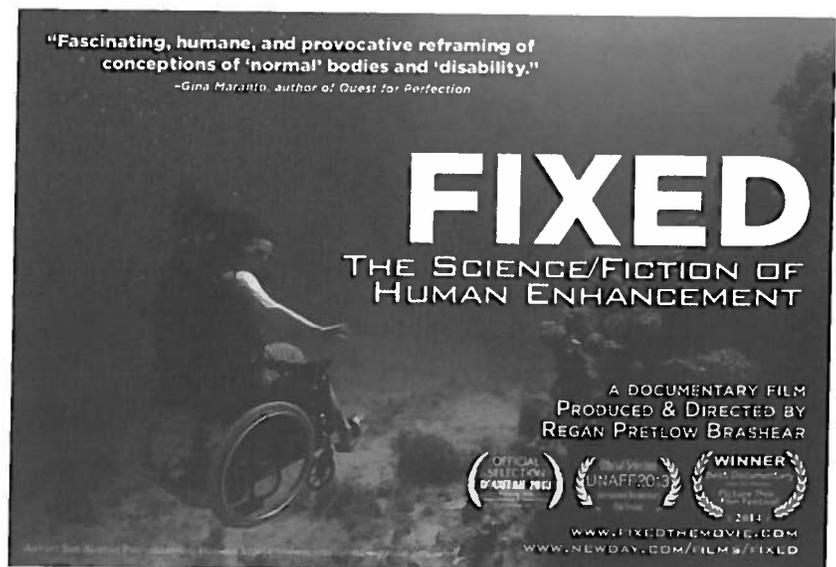
### Review: **FIXED**, the Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement

By Susan Mann Dolce, PhD, Associate Director of Accessibility Resources, University at Buffalo

Engaging, gripping, thought provoking and challenging, **FIXED**, the Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement will be screened and discussed by director Regan Brasher at the Museum of disABILITY History on Wednesday, April 1, from 7 to 9 p.m.

Focused on current questions about human variation, technology, disability, ableism and the role of society and the individual, this one-hour documentary is guaranteed to get you thinking. I have watched the movie multiple times with different groups and it consistently opens up conversation that includes different perspectives and ideas, as well as an opportunity to think about these ideas in new ways.

Multiple interviews with individuals with disabilities (or human variation) who are "first adopters" of technology, interspersed with comments from individuals about what enhancements they would like, as well as scenes from dance performances by three dance groups, provide an innovative approach for exploring what it means to be human.



For more information about the event, call 716.629.3626.

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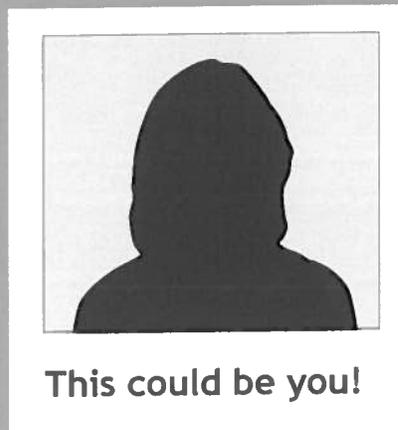
# We are Members!



State Senator Robert Ortt



Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes



## Support the Museum, Become a Member!

Want to support the Museum of disABILITY History? Membership opportunities are available! With five different levels available, you can choose the one that is right for you. All supporting membership levels are good for one year.

To become a member, please call 716.629.3626 or log on to our website at [museumofdisability.org](http://museumofdisability.org). Click on the "Support Us" tab, click on "Membership," and "Click Here to Become a Member." Thank you for your support!

## New Members!

A warm welcome to our newest members who recently joined and renewed:

### Individual/Student

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Gail Armstrong       | Karen Hoffman          |
| Kyle Aronica         | Diana Katovitch        |
| Martina Balas        | Eden Mack-Hardiman     |
| Robert Bedigian      | Eli Mack-Hardiman      |
| Dan Boles            | Esther Owens           |
| Shawna Boles         | Senator Robert Ortt    |
| Chris Boles          | Jennifer Prate         |
| David and Fran Boles | Assemblymember         |
| Mary Daley           | Crystal Peoples-Stokes |
| Bob Day              | Barry Weinstein        |
| Dawn Gibson          |                        |

### Family/Dual

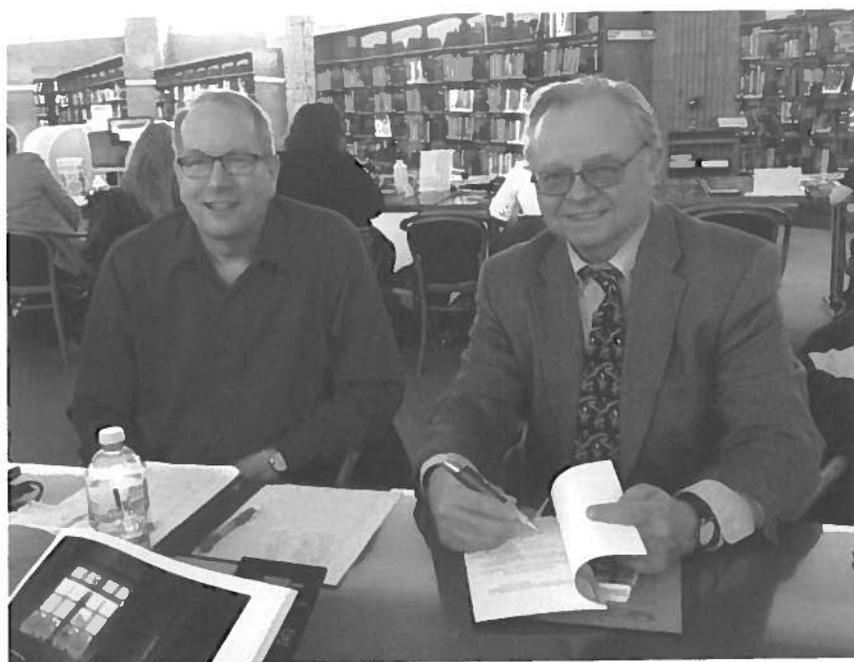
- Robert and Fran Armstrong
- Lisa and Lester Boeh
- Patricia Carrig
- Senator Patrick Gallivan
- David and Kathy Greenfield
- Suzanne Laba
- Robert Murrett
- John Paul and Mary Synor
- Char and Marcangelo Szabo-Perrcelli

### Friend

- Kathleen Wood
- Fred Zazycki

### Sustainer

- Dr. David Gerber
- Nancy Palumbo
- Robert Mayer



Museum of disABILITY History Director Doug Farley (left) accompanied the founder of the Museum, James M. Boles, EdD (right) at a book signing at the Niagara Falls Library Holiday Book Fair. Written by Dr. Boles, the book, *They Did No Harm: Alternative Medicine in Niagara Falls, NY, 1830–1930*, is for sale at our store and online, [store.museumofdisability.org](http://store.museumofdisability.org).

# Support the Museum of disABILITY History

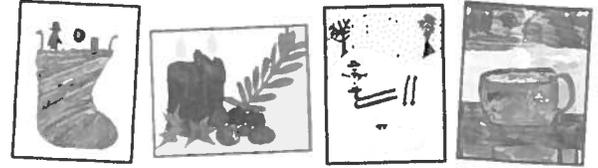
Our store is open during the Museum of disABILITY History's regular hours, Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



## On Sale!

**2015 Wall Calendar:** The Museum of disABILITY History 2015 wall calendar is now available for 50 percent off for only \$6.50 each! The calendar features twelve stunning color photographs of the Buffalo State Hospital/Richardson Towers, taken by urban archeologist Ian Ference.

**Holiday Cards:** Stock up and plan ahead! Holiday cards feature artwork created by individuals served by People Inc. A set of eight cards are on sale for \$5.50.



## PeopleMade Gifts

Show your support of individuals with developmental disabilities by purchasing PeopleMade products handmade by individuals at People Inc.'s Day Habilitation programs. Items include handcrafted wooden wine stoppers and wooden pens, silk scarves, hand-painted wine glass sets and pillows. Each item is lovingly hand-made and no two items are the same.



## Buffalo Cultural Cards

Buffalo Cultural Cards, produced by Block Club, are available at our store! Receive discounts to area arts and cultural organizations, including our own Museum of disABILITY History, as well as Aquarium of Niagara, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Explore Buffalo and more. Cards are available for \$5 per set. Proceeds benefit Arts Services Initiative of Western New York.

Can't stop in? Shop online! [store.museumofdisability.org](http://store.museumofdisability.org)



## A Visit from Students of St. Paul Lutheran School

We recently welcomed students from St. Paul Lutheran School in Batavia for a fun and educational tour. The students ranged from kindergarten to 5th grade – they enjoyed sitting in the Invacar and learning about the different types of equipment people used to help them get around. We were delighted to receive this kind note about their visit:



“The Museum was just the right size for our group. We wish we had more time to hear more stories about some of the display items. The children always enjoy hearing interesting stories like that. Thanks again for a wonderful visit.”

- Ann Werk, Principal, St. Paul Lutheran School, Batavia

We welcome students of all grade levels to visit. To schedule a tour, call 716.629.3626.

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Our first Dialogues on disABILITY Workshop, "Tourette Syndrome and Associated Disorders in the Classroom," was held January 24, with 48 professionals, educators and parents attending. The event was held in association with Learning Partners. The workshop was led by Susan Conners, MEd, president and founder of the Tourette Syndrome Association of Greater New York State. Susan shared,

**"It was a pleasure to work with the staff at the Museum. You have been the utmost of professional, on top of every detail and fantastic to work with. Several people at the workshop commented to me that the staff and the facility were wonderful. I really hope that we can continue to collaborate on future workshops."**

We look forward to offering additional workshops. If you are interested in a certain topic or would like to recommend a speaker, contact Doug Farley, director, at [dfarley@people-inc.org](mailto:dfarley@people-inc.org) or 716.629.3601.

## MUSEUM INFO

3826 Main Street, Buffalo NY 14226  
716.629.3626  
[info@museumofdisability.org](mailto:info@museumofdisability.org)  
[museumofdisability.org](http://museumofdisability.org)  
[store.museumofdisability.org](http://store.museumofdisability.org)

## MUSEUM HOURS

Monday-Saturday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Sunday: Closed

## ADMISSION

### General Admission:

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Museum Members.....                                 | FREE   |
| People Inc. employees.....                          | FREE   |
| Adults.....   | \$5.00 |
| Students, Seniors, and Human Service Employees..... | \$2.50 |
| Children ages 6-17.....                             | \$2.00 |
| Children ages 5 and under.....                      | FREE   |

### Group Tour Rates:

All groups (greater than or equal to 10 people): \$4 per person  
Rental of the KeyBank Room (1st Floor, up to 20 people): \$50  
fee added to the total amount per person  
Rental of the Main Training Room (2nd Floor w/ elevator access,  
up to 80 people): \$100 fee added to the total amount per person

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Museum of disABILITY History advances the understanding, acceptance, and independence of people with disabilities. The Museum's exhibits, collections, archives and educational programs create awareness and a platform for dialogue and discovery.

## 2015 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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State University of New York at Buffalo

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Retired, Director NYS Department  
of Mental Hygiene

## STAFF

Doug Farley - *Museum Director*  
David Mack-Hardiman - *Associate Vice President, People Inc.*  
Douglas Platt - *Museum Curator*  
Sarah Jerge - *Museum Store Manager*  
Thomas Stearns - *Museum Coordinator*

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Maria Bell - *Docent*  
Isaac Cote - *Docent*  
Israel Cruz - *Docent*  
Charles Degraffenried - *Docent*

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# BECOME A MEMBER!

## Museum of disABILITY History Membership

\*All supporting membership levels are good for 1 year (12 months from start date)

### Individual/Student

\$25

- Unlimited Free Admission
- 10% discount in the Museum Store
- Subscription to the ModH monthly newsletter and quarterly newsletter
- Museum window sticker and personalized membership card
- Two free admission passes to the annual disABILITIES Film Festival and Speaker series
- Invitations to Museum special events and exhibit openings
- **NEW:** A complimentary copy of the first book in the Abandoned History Series; *Dr. Skinners Remarkable School for Colored, Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Children* (valued at \$9.95)

### Family/Dual

\$45

*Same as Individual, and also includes:*

- One additional personalized membership card
- Free admission for up to 4 children under 18 years
- **NEW:** Your choice between a complimentary copy of *Dr. Skinners Remarkable School for Colored, Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Children* (valued at \$9.95) OR ONE of the *Ivan the Invacar* children's books (valued at \$14.95)

### Friend

\$100

*Same as Individual, and also includes:*

- Four free admission passes for guests
- 10% discount on traveling exhibit rental
- An exclusive private tour of the Museum, library and archives with the Museum Curator
- Recognition in the Museum's Annual Report
- Invitations to "Friends of the Museum" appreciation event
- **NEW:** A complimentary copy of *When There Were Poor Houses* (valued at \$24.99), another book in the Abandoned History Series

### Sustainer

\$250

*Same as Friend, and also includes:*

- Two additional free admission passes for guests (a total of 6)
- Invitations to Museum special events and exhibit openings
- Invitation to UB Center for Disability Studies events
- Recognition in the Museum lobby and website
- **NEW:** A complimentary copy of *Abandoned Asylums of New England* (valued at \$64.95), another book in the Abandoned History Series

### Corporate

\$500

- Unlimited free admission for your employees (as long as employee ID is presented)
- Six free admission passes for guests (non-employees)
- 10% discount in the Museum Store (as long as employee ID is presented)
- 15% discount on traveling exhibit rental and offsite presentations
- Invitations to "Friends of the Museum" appreciation event
- Complimentary ¼ page ad in the Museum's newsletter (complimentary design upon request)
- Recognition in the Museum lobby and website
- Subscription to the ModH monthly newsletter and quarterly newsletter
- Invitations to Museum special events and exhibit openings

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