

# ADVOCACY

*People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter*

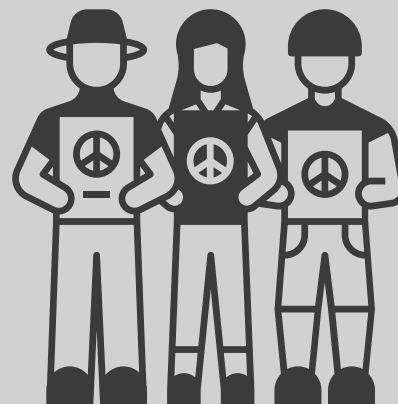
## Twice At Risk

*By Quinn Thomas*

These past few weeks have had multiple incidents which brought national attention to the problem of violence towards Black people. The most chilling example of which was violence towards a Black man with mental health disabilities. Incidents like that are more common than they should be. Often, Black people in a mental health episode are seen as a threat, rather than in need of care.

When someone is in a crisis, the people around them may try to help by calling 911. This does not always go well. The situation may escalate to violence simply because the police were not as informed about disabilities as they could have been. Many autistic traits can be read as hostility. A Deaf person may not respond to commands, and will be viewed as difficult. Someone who doesn't understand what they are being told to do right away may be seen as disobedient. Harmless behaviors or seizures are misread as someone being on drugs.

Law enforcement is known for what is called "compliance culture." This means that they expect everyone to follow all of their orders immediately. People who don't are seen as



### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **WEDNESDAY WALK**

May 17, 6:00, begins at the Glass City Pavilion at 1001 Front Street, Toledo.

#### **SELF-ADVOCACY CLASS**

Every Wednesday in May, 11:00-12:00, online. Hosted by OSDA and We Thrive Together.

#### **CHILDREN'S INCLUSION RESOURCE FAIR**

May 20, 10:00-1:00, at Perrysburg Inclusive Playground. Put together by Nationwide Children's Hospital.

#### **SPECIAL NEEDS SPRING FLING DANCE**

May 27, 6:00-8:00, at Maumee United Methodist Church. For individuals 16+.

#### **STORYTELLING WORKSHOP SERIES**

May 16 & 23, 5:30-7:00, 1155 Larc Lane Center. Hosted by SALUTE and UT.

hostile, and therefore threats. This does not mix well with disabled people who-- for whatever reason-- cannot follow their orders.

Not complying with authority figures has historically been considered a symptom of mental illness in itself, and still is today. The disorder of drapetomania was made up to describe slaves who wanted to run away.

Ableism and racism have always been connected. Today, Black people are less likely to get diagnosed and less likely to have access to quality medical care. Social determinants of health like money, water quality, access to fresh food, stress levels, and demanding jobs can contribute to disability rates. Half of disabled Black people have been arrested by the time they turn 28. Half of all people killed by police have a disability.

Disability can also be caused by violence, through permanent injury.

There is currently no data tracking how many people become disabled in police custody. Advocates have been asking for better data collection for years.

Recently, more and more programs have been created where mental health distress calls are rerouted from the police to a team of specialists. Not all of these programs are equal. Sometimes the dispatcher feels uncomfortable not sending armed officers just in case, and then the interaction ends violently. Other precincts focus on training officers in non-violent crisis intervention. There is no standard of excellence for those trainings either.

The standard police response to behavioral issues is to make an arrest. This is not always helpful. Dealing with mental health issues is not their job in the first place. If someone you know is in crisis, call a local mental health clinic's emergency line or the national hotline at 988 instead.

## OUR NEXT MEETING

Thursday, May 18th at the Ability Center on 5605 Monroe Street, Sylvania. The meeting will run from 6:00-7:30 and the fee is \$5, or \$50 for twelve months.

We will be partnering with Disability Rights Ohio for a postcard writing event to address our legislators about raising wages for direct support professionals.