

# ADVOCACY

*People First of Toledo Monthly Newsletter*

## Disabled Figures: JoRita Fox

*By Quinn Thomas*

An outstanding local disability advocate is JoRita Fox, one of the founding members of People First of Toledo.

JoRita regularly made the Dean's List and graduated with honors in college. She was a teacher in a small private school in 1981 but was quickly fired for her disability. Several parents threatened to pull their children from the school unless she was gone. They did not want their kids being taught by someone who had seizures. JoRita's church community was helping her through this time so she could still afford rent and food and medicine.

But being fired six months into her contract meant she still had money she was owed that she wasn't given. So she went to ACLU and sued for it. During the investigation, it came out that the school and the principal in charge during her tenure weren't properly credentialed. The school was then shut down.

JoRita credits her faith and her community for getting her through this time. She still

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **TOLEDO ADULT AUTISM TABLETOP GROUP**

July 7, 7:30 in the Toledo Game Room at 3001 W. Sylvania Ave. The group will resume meeting regularly on Fridays.

#### **DEMENTIA FRIEND & CHAMPION TRAINING**

The 2nd Thursday of every month from 12:00-2:30 and the 4th Tuesday of every month from 6:00-8:30. On Zoom. Registration required.

#### **DISABLED & PROUD FEST**

July 8, 9:00-6:00, at Levis Square, 435 North Saint Clair Street, Toledo.

#### **FREE DANCE CLASSES**

July 10 & 12, 5:30-6:30, at Ottawa Park the first day and Smith Park the second. For neurodivergent people ages 10+. Caregivers must stay.

#### **SUMMER PICNIC**

July 14, 4:00-7:00, at Courageous Acres-- 12701 Waterville-Swanton Road. Celebrating our chapter's 25th anniversary!

#### **SALUTE STORYTELLERS**

July 15, 3:00, at the Toledo Museum of Art. Hear stories of disability pride.

attends that same church to this day.

People First of Toledo was started in 1998 by dedicated advocates, including JoRita Fox, Frank Spinelli, Ruben Garcia, and Tim Tyrese. "I was bound and determined that I was going to show people [...] JoRita Fox was *not* complex partial epilepsy and CP. I was capable of doing things, and doing them well. I wanted to make a difference."

The group started out meeting at Lott Industries (now called Manahan), before outgrowing that location. We moved to the Ability Center, where we are still hosted even now. People First



of Toledo initially focused a lot on discussing waivers, disability benefits, direct care workers, and our rights and responsibilities as citizens.

JoRita was involved in the statewide movement in the 90's to get the r-slur removed from the names of all the county boards, and in getting the more recent TARTA levy passed. She served as President of our chapter for two terms and has served in every other position of the officers' corps except Sergeant At Arms. She is the Secretary of SALUTE and represents them in advocacy presentations. She teaches STIR training and financial literacy to others. She was a board member of CCS for over twenty years.

And now, JoRita has been nominated to be President of the Arc of Ohio. She will be receiving the lifetime achievement in advocacy award from Lucas County Board of DD, called the Spirit Award. We are proud to have her as a member.

## OUR NEXT MEETING

Thursday, July 20th, at the Ability Center at 5605 Monroe Street, Sylvania. The meeting will run from 6:00-7:30 and the fee is \$5, or \$50 for twelve months.

People First's President Phillis Schmidbauer and Vice President Darius Cunningham will teach the group about being Athlete Leaders in the Special Olympics.