



**SOUTH DAKOTA  
COALITION**  
OF CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES

Major Stories:

Measure to Fund Education,  
Medicaid...

National Pediatric Acquired  
Brain Injury...

Medicaid, the Budget...

People with Disabilities  
Remain Unemployed...

Department of Human  
Services Agency Review...

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# Focus on Abilities

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## Shelly Pfaff and South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities Receive 2011 Advocacy in Action Award

Shelly Pfaff and the Coalition were selected by the Center for Disabilities Staff to receive the 2011 Advocacy in Action Award. It was presented during the Center's Celebration of 40 Years of Excellence on Wednesday, August 17th, in Sioux Falls.

In presenting the award, Center Director Judy Struck said, "Shelly and the SD Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities were selected by the Center for Disabilities Staff because of their excellent work with the Disability Advocacy Network (DAN) in South Dakota. DAN is a group of disability based organizations committed to identifying issues which they agree to work on and develop a strategy for addressing those issues. It is a network through which organizations can reach many others through the state, providing them with information on issues and available services. Under Shelly's leadership and the Coalition's organizational efforts, DAN has been successful in advocating in a professional, non-partisan manner on behalf of the citizens of South Dakota regarding legislative issues. It is for Shelly's excellent leadership in advocacy efforts in South Dakota that she and the SD Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities were selected to receive the Advocacy in Action Award."

A congratulatory note was also received from Senator John Thune. An excerpt reads, "I commend you for your commitment to improving the lives of your fellow South Dakotans. Our communities are held together by individuals and organizations that dedicate their time, talent and energy to helping others. Your dedication to service and compassion in assisting those in need is truly honorable..."



**Shelly Pfaff accepts the Advocacy  
in Action Award from Judy Struck**

Coalition Board members - Dave Miller, Jenneil Watkins, Vicki Kerkvliet and Jack Mortenson - were also in attendance at the event.

Other awards presented during the Center's 40th Anniversary Celebration were the Collaboration Award to Black Hills Special Services Cooperative Autism Program and the Distinguished Service Award to Deborah Bowman, Senior Advisor to Governor Dennis Daugaard (see pictures on page 10).

## **Measure to Fund Education, Medicaid Moves Forward**

By Katie Janssen  
Published: August 1, 2011

Would you pay more in sales taxes to help fund education and Medicaid?

An initiative to do just that in South Dakota is gaining momentum. The group Moving South Dakota Forward has drafted an initiated measure that would raise sales tax one percent, and the measure now has approval from the Legislative Research Council.

The initiated measure states that beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, sales taxes would increase from four percent to five percent, and that extra revenue would go into a special fund for Moving South Dakota Forward, an estimated windfall of \$175 million dollars. From there, the money would be divided evenly between education and Medicaid.

"The state doesn't have enough revenue to pay for services it says it will provide for young people in education programs and to people who find themselves on the state's Medicaid program," said Dave Hewitt, President of the South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations.

Hewitt is one of the leaders of Moving South Dakota Forward. He's seen what cuts have done to state-funded health care services.

"Cuts to Medicaid were substantial and they really go back three years," Hewitt said. "For the first two, provider rates were frozen and haven't had updates in three years, and last year rates were cut an average of six percent."

The other head of Moving South Dakota Forward is Bryce Healy, who's the Executive Director of the South Dakota Education Association. He says if the public isn't motivated to take action yet, it will be once the school year begins and cuts become clear.

"As parents look into their kids' classrooms and see their second grader went from a classroom of 24 to now 30, and the learning environment and lack of physical space because of cuts, I think South Dakotans are more than willing to support basic services needed for citizens," Healy said.

The organization took special care to mention in the initiated measure that this money is not to reduce, supplant or replace funds that are already in place.

"If you don't make the distinction, as you remember the conversations about video lottery, the money was passed with the basis to fund education," Healy said. "It's not placed in a special fund, though, it goes to the general fund. So the public is very skeptical about what happened with video lottery and they do not want to see that happen here."

Both Hewitt and Healy say the initiative has public support, but if it's enough to take the issue to the ballot box in November 2012 remains to be seen.

Attorney General Marty Jackley still needs to review the initiated measure and give it an explanation. After that, Moving South Dakota Forward can get petition support. The group needs nearly 16,000 signatures to bring the issue to a vote.

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NOTE: A copy of the draft initiative is included as an insert in this newsletter.

### **SD United Awarded SAMSHA Grant**

SD United was awarded a grant from SAMSHA ADS Center through the 2011 Campaign for Social Inclusion Awards for Statewide Peer-Operated Projects. Included in our proposal are a year-long teleconference series, a young adult

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