

# Speak Up! Guide

## 6: Starting a Self-Advocacy Group

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# Speak Up! Guide

## Chapter 6: Starting a Self-Advocacy Group

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# PEOPLE FIRST – NEW ULM OVERVIEW

## I. How Our Group Got Started

In 1993 MBW Company made a commitment to assist people they support in having a self-advocacy group in New Ulm. We started with staff researching what self-advocacy is and presented the idea to the people we thought would be interested. We found about ten people who said they wanted to find out more about this.

The next thing we did was to set up an information meeting. We had two speakers who were in self-advocacy come talk with us. We talked about what self-advocacy means and what would make our lives better.

In our beginning meetings we all agreed that we wanted a better transportation system and better working conditions at our sheltered workshop. These two issues helped bring people together and created the enthusiasm and commitment we have today.

## II. Election of Officers

We used the officers' handbook to help us elect officers. We talked about what officers need to do and what type of person we want as an officer. We reviewed the role of each officer. We then voted who we thought would do a good job.

(Role of officers from packet)

## III. People First Meetings

Our group meets one time each month. Before each meeting we have an officers meeting. We decide on our agenda, what announcements to make, what program we want, what old or new business to talk about. We make a lot of decisions that is why it is important to elect responsible officers.

The Big Monthly Meeting

At our self-advocacy meetings we present what is on our agenda.

What we have done:

- ❖ We like to have speakers for our program on topics of interest.
- ❖ We have speakers from our workshop, the bus and our recreation service to talk about making the services better for everyone.
- ❖ Sometimes we do a survey before the speaker comes to help us know what questions we want to ask.
- ❖ Sometimes we do social stuff such as parties, picnics, dances.

Wilbur Neushwander-Frink and People First of New Ulm, Minnesota

Speakers we have had and topics:

- ❖ Ombudsman
- ❖ Fire marshal
- ❖ Sexual harassment
- ❖ First aid
- ❖ How to vote
- ❖ Videos
- ❖ Small group discussions
- ❖ Skits – riding the bus
- ❖ Rodonna's story

#### IV. **Setting Goals**

Goals give us direction on what we want to do for the year.  
Every December we fill out a questionnaire on what we want for goals.  
We put everyone's ideas together on a big piece of paper.

- What I like about the meetings
- What I want to do
- What I want to change

We then set goals and we come up with projects from our goals.

#### V. **Committees**

After deciding on projects we set up committees to work on them. Ask for volunteers and a guide to help with each. Committee members report at the meetings.

Our committees are:

- Newsletter – puts out quarterly newsletter
- Presentation – presents history of self-advocacy to community
- Social – plans social events
- Fundraising – plans fundraisers
- Recognition committee – helps recognize people's efforts by sending cards, planning celebrations. Features an advocate in the newsletter and helps close the meeting with motivational activities
- Common vision -
- Recycling -
- Renters -

We do most of our work in our committees.

## Goals Accomplished Since 1993

### Fundraising Committee

Rummage sale  
Hot dog stands  
Candy bar sales  
organizations  
Cookbooks

Tupperware  
Bowl-A-Thon  
Letters to businesses and

### Educate Community

MNASH conference presentation on SA  
Scarecrow contest – banner  
Set up new groups  
Presentation – David Minge, MBW staff  
Conference

parades  
SA welcome booklets  
Newspaper articles and pictures

Letter to MRCI requesting changes  
ARS requesting input  
Heartland

State convention  
Educate direct care staff to SA  
needs  
Newsletter

98 presentations at AARM conference and Watonwan County

### Educate ourselves

Workshops on leadership  
Conferences  
Partners in policy making  
People First MN board membership  
Voting  
Ombudsman  
Officers training  
Sing  
Open meetings

Training on labels  
4 easy pieces  
Rights  
Sticks and Stones video  
Dance  
Retreats with ACT  
Play – Let Heaven and Nature

Work with community organizations  
ARS board membership  
Community ed committee membership  
Members of QA team  
Heartland Express  
Remembering with dignity video  
MRCI board membership

Cab service – started coupon  
system  
Work with ACT – story to close  
institutions

### Service to community

Volunteer  
Start new group – Mankato  
Walk for Justice  
German Park project  
Recycling project at Flandrau Park

Nursing home party – bingo and  
pie  
Mentoring  
Clean up Flandrau Park

# PART I

## SHARED VISION - BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION MISSION STATEMENT

What is vision? A picture that shows what the group is, where the group or a person wants to go, the “Big Picture” of Purpose and Meaning for a person or group.

For James, a vision may be a house of his own, a job and being a contributing citizen of the community.



Visions create the SPARK – the excitement that moves a person forward.

Imagine that you can achieve the things you want in life. What would that look like to you? What words would you use? Or pictures? Why do you want to do these things? Or be that kind of person?



Your own apartment or house

A Job working at the local store!

Having a pet....

Taking care of you own house plants

Going to the movie of your choice.

Shopping

Swinging at the park

Wilbur Neushwander-Frink and People First of New Ulm, Minnesota

## Personal Vision

With a partner, describe your personal vision.

Self-Image: What kind of person do you want to be? Describe these qualities.

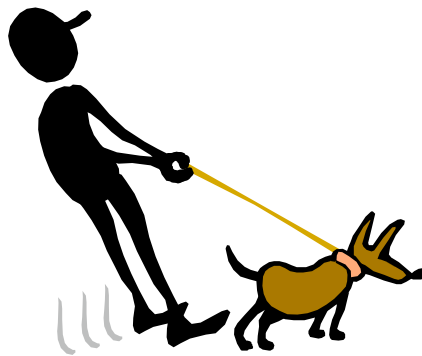
Example: James wants to be kind, hard working, and independent



How about you? Why do you want to be that kind of person?

Things you would like to own: What types of things would you like to own?

Example: James would like a dog.



How about you?

## Personal Vision

Personal learning

What would you like to learn or do?

Example: James would like to learn how to dance and travel to Las Vegas.

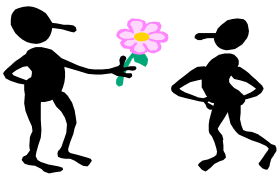


How about you?

Why would you like to do those things?

Community: What would you like your community to look like where you live?

Example: James would like to have friendly neighbors and join a musical group.



How about you? Why do you want that for your community?

## Personal Vision

Home: What would be your ideal living situation?

Example: James would like a two-bedroom home in a friendly neighborhood.



How about you? Why would that be your ideal living situation?

Health: What is your ideal desire for health and fitness.

Example: Jane would like to have fewer seizures and go to the fitness center two times a week.



Look at me, only one seizure last month. I take my pills and see the doctor regularly.

## Personal Vision

How about you? Why do you desire, and why?



## Vision

When you look at what's important to you, it makes you feel good. It gives you a clearer picture of where you would like to go.

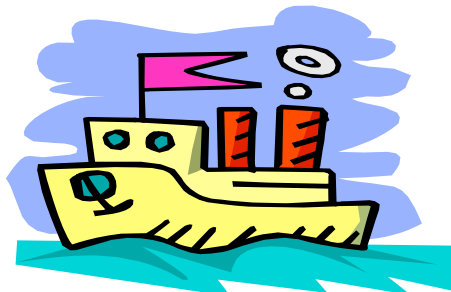


James without a vision



James with a vision

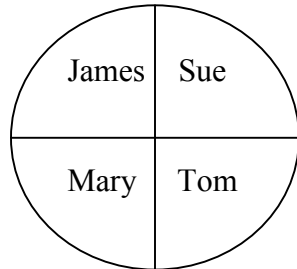
A vision is like a rudder on a boat. It keeps you moving on the right courts.



James is moving in the right direction. He is steering the boat!

**PART II**  
**SHARED VISION – BUILDING AN ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION STATEMENT**

We have looked at our own personal vision. When we are a part of a group, we bring our vision to it. It is a part of a greater whole.

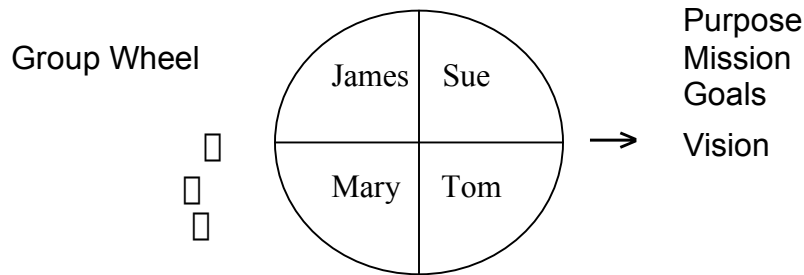


Group=Wheel

Individual=Spokes

The group is like a wheel and all the members are spokes. When we put all the spokes together, we get a functioning wheel. It is whole. It will roll forward.

When the whole wheel is together it will work and the group can do things and really “go places”.



The Group Now

Where the group wants to go.

Where do the group visions come from?

Each member of the group (a spoke) brings its vision to the group. Groups usually form for a common reason.

## Shared Vision

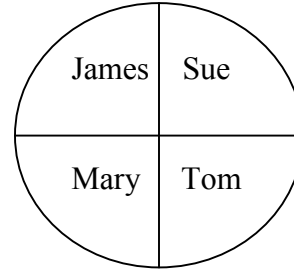
James



James



## Group

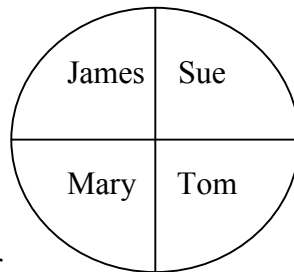


Group with a common purpose,

James wants to learn how to speak up for her rights as a person with disabilities. She wants to learn how to be a leader.

(Use cardboard cutout or wheel with broken spoke to illustrate)

When groups form for a common reason, they can create a tremendous amount of energy together to move forward towards a shared vision.

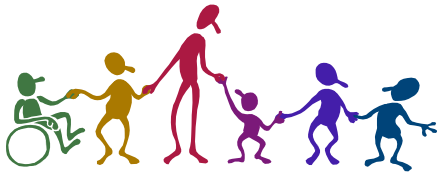


⇒ Common or shared vision

Group moving together

What does it mean to share a vision?

A vision is to have a common cause, or reason to move forward as a group.

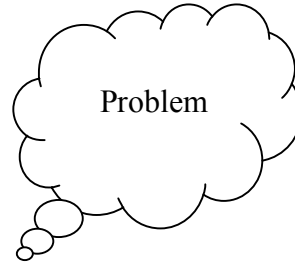
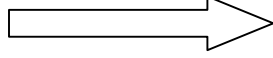
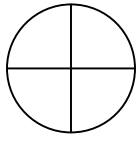


James, Kevin, and Mike want to learn to speak up for the rights of people with disabilities.

(use connecting paper people to illustrate)

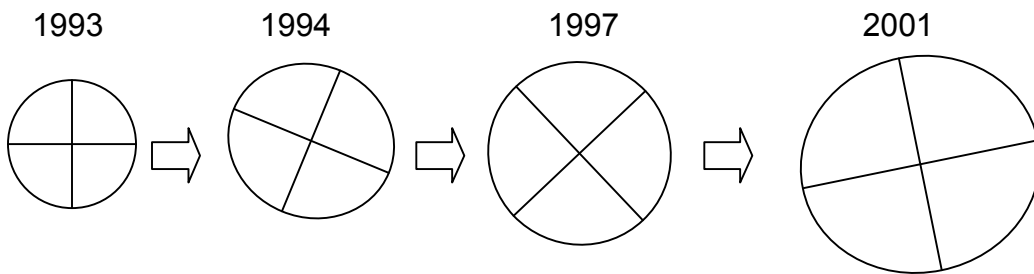
## Shared Vision

Shared vision helps us to solve problems.



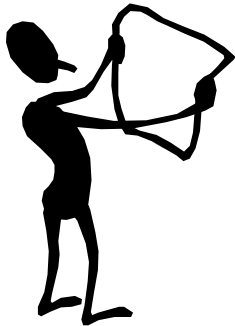
## Shared Group Vision

Shared vision takes time to grow.



The shared vision growing.

Building shared vision requires careful listening so that individual vision can be built into the group.



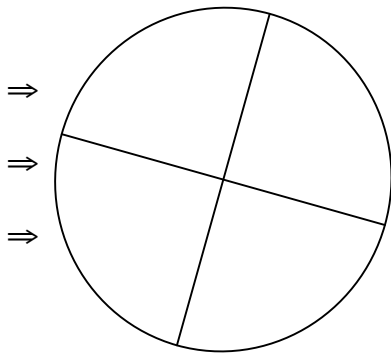
James is talking about his personal vision to learn how to speak out about the rights of people with disabilities.



Kevin listens carefully.

## Shared Vision

A shared vision can create energy and hold people together so they can achieve the vision of the group.



### “Shared Group Vision”

Shared Visions:

- 1) Do not come from “on high” – do not give them to you.
- 2) Are ongoing and never-ending. It is part of what the group does with every action it takes.
  - \* Leaders must help design and nurture the vision. Leaders must share their personal vision.
- 3) It is not a shared vision until it connects with all of the personal visions of the group – such as with Jane, Kevin, and Mora wanting to learn how to speak up for the rights of people with disabilities.

(Give everyone a triangle piece).

## Shared Vision

It is important to write down what your vision is.

Why?

- 1) So all members of the group know what it is at all times.
- 2) So other people will know what your group is all about.

The Mission or Vision Statement of People First
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- This is called a vision or mission statement of your group.
- The statement is usually short and put into words or pictures that the whole group can understand.
- The statement is a constant reminder of your shared reason or purpose in coming together.

How can we start to write this vision statement?

Let's work together in steps to get to it.

<h3>Vision Statement</h3>
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# PART III SHARED VISION – BUILDING AN ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Writing a Statement

Let's Brainstorm



- Throw out words and pictures to describe People First of New Ulm.

Person Centered

innovative

Grassroots

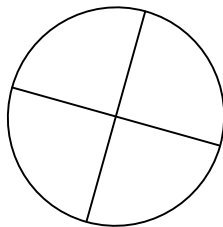
- What words or pictures would describe the purpose of People First of New Ulm?

*Self-determination*

Choice

Self-advocacy

- Let's build a wheel structure to start to put together a statement.



Let's take from our lists and put what you see as "most important".

(Everyone will put one word or a short sentence on the wheel or do it in groups if more than 8 people)

## Writing a Statement

- How does the wheel look? Does it say what the group is all about? Purpose?

- Ask the group

Would you like to leave it in the shape of the wheel?

Or

Write a statement based on the words in the wheel.

- Ask the group to re-visit statement at next meeting.

Who will present it?

Take a vote on it.

## Project Notes

08-25-98  
Meeting 1  
Contract

Today was the first meeting of the project. The officers/mentor group met to discuss the project contract and sign it. We reviewed the following items: Terms of the contract, this writer's role as coach/ally for the project, setting a time to set a budget for the next year and discussing times to meet.

The group asked thoughtful questions about the project. They were concerned about recruiting more advocates and guides to participate in the project.

People attending decided to present a short information session at the next People First general meeting. This would give all members an opportunity to hear about the project and have a chance to volunteer. After a list of volunteers is collected, a task breakdown meeting will be held to give people more information. It will be an opportunity for people to volunteer for various activities within the project.

A budget meeting/dinner will be held on September 2 to set a budget for project monies received. After this meeting, the People First treasurer and this writer will meet with an accountant to set up a \_\_\_\_\_ and accountability of monies received.

This first meeting was an excellent learning experience. As a coach, it is not my place to do the work and make decisions. One must provide information and guide people in the thought process of making important decisions. I recognize that I need to work on this. I saw that I was able to give information and let them process it. My challenge will be to guide in thoughtful decision-making without swaying the decision or making it.

## Project Notes

09-03-98  
Meeting 2  
Budget

This week's meeting focused on establishing a budget for the funds for the project. The officers and mentors for People First of New Ulm were present at the meeting.

The following items were considered for the budget. The group needed to plan for \$9,000.00. The group set a budget for mileage reimbursement, wage replacement when working at the retreats and traveling to work with other groups, materials, parties and celebrations, video resources, tuition for People First members attending the retreat, meals, accountant fees, facilitator's wage, and phone usage.

People First of New Ulm members decided to not use a fiscal beneficiary to handle the project money. With the assistance of their coaches and an accountant, the group will handle project monies received.

The group spent approximately two hours in its initial planning process. Considerable dialogue was spent on topics such as wage reimbursement and a facilitator's wage. The group opted to pay both of these out at minimum wage for now.

The group will have a second budget meeting in October to revisit the accounts and budgets. The treasurer and Project coach will meet with the accountant in two weeks to discuss how we will document on the money spent. We will need to develop a system of accountability for project monies. We will also need to discuss the accountant's fee.

The group needed some coaching to work through this part of the project. Many members have only minimal experience with budget establishment. This writer used large poster paper to show the group how much we had to work with and what areas needed to be considered in the budget. This process worked well as visual guides are helpful. We will ask the accountant to help us develop a computerized pie graph to visualize amounts for the group.

## Project Notes

09-23-98  
Meetings 3 & 4  
Retreat training  
Accountant

The retreat facilitators prepared for the second retreat, which will focus on power relationships and organizing around issues. People First will present a summary on the leadership aspects of the last retreat. We will also show the video "The People's Firehouse". This video focuses on a real-life example of grass roots organizing. We will show the video and then ask retreat participants to discuss the various aspects of the video. We will try to focus on the organizing efforts and leadership demonstrated in the video.

The two People First facilitators enjoy the process of working on retreats. They actively participate in planning related to the retreat. It is wonderful to see how people have grown in confidence and in their own leadership skills. I think it is important for people to have meaningful participation in order to see true growth and development. I will address this issue in a separate paper on participative or shared leadership.

Members of the group met with the accountant who will be assisting us with our financial accountability. We reviewed the budget prepared for incoming project money. The accountant \_\_\_\_\_ computerizing our quarterly statements, and will meet with us quarterly to review ledger statements.

Two People First members will be actively involved in the financial aspects of the project. They will attend all financial meetings and keep track of the ledger system.

The project is up and running. It truly is a process. We don't have prior history of experience with anything of this scope. People are flexible, however, and willing to learn as they go along. Our challenge this year is to discover ways in which a variety of people can be involved in meaningful ways. This will require flexibility and creativity. This will be addressed at our next leadership meeting in early October 1998.

## Power and Organizing

### Retreat #2

Sept. 25 & 26, 1998

The second retreat focused on power, leadership, and organizing. Anne, Rodonna, and I participated in this two-day retreat with those from Advocating Change Together.

Anne, Rodonna, and I focused on the first half-day as a summary on leadership and the viewing of a film called "The People's Firehouse". We reviewed points on leadership focusing on the idea of shared leadership and leadership skills. We approached the process of leadership as a journey that we take. We talked about how it starts with someone having a vision. They have seen a place they want to share with others. They share in this visioning process by including others and accepting them for who they are at that moment. As people take this leadership journey they may discover as they go talents and skills. These skills are within them and they can learn how to use them as they take the leadership journey.

We shared a story about how geese conduct shared leadership. We asked people to close their eyes and imagine the geese as we read about their "leadership" skills.

We also discussed the relationships of power as they were illustrated in the video "The People's Firehouse".

With power issues, we discussed how power changes as one exercises leadership skills. Retreat participants shared personal experiences related to power issues in their own lives.

It was interesting to note how confident Anne, Rodonna, and Jenny were at this retreat. They readily shared ideas and opinions. They also actively engaged people in conversation. As their confidence has grown they are willing to speak with others in an open and honest way. They have grown as leaders.

At this retreat we networked with other group members and exchanged information on what our group could do to assist them. We concluded the retreat with a visioning of the future for self-advocacy. The next grouping of retreats will be in the winter.

## Project Notes

10-12-98

The group is now actively engaged in Part II of the Common Vision project – technical consultation. Our first consultation will be in Windom with a group of people interested in starting a self-advocacy group.

The officer and mentor group has been brainstorming on how to assist other People First members in becoming involved in the project. At their general meeting on October 14, Anne and Mike will present on the project. They will invite people to join them for a special in-service and volunteer session on October 28.

The project participants would like to start five small work groups where volunteers could work with trained people. Each group will focus on one area from around South Central Minnesota. These work groups will personally connect with the group assigned to them. They will have an opportunity to assist other groups in starting up self-advocacy organizations. They will also learn to assist these groups in how to organize around issues important to them.

We are not sure if this process of work groups will be helpful to people. We will need to \_\_\_\_\_

The project members also started a checking and savings account today. They were excited about this and also about getting paid for their work as facilitators. The pride in their work was quite evident. It was a pleasure for this writer to see and makes the hard work of the project enjoyable.

## Project Notes

10-26-98

Participants from the project traveled to Windom on 10-19-98 to talk with people from Windom and Marshall on self-advocacy. There were approximately 25 people in attendance for this gathering.

Anne, Rodonna, and Jenny presented a short history on when People First – New Ulm started. They gave a few personal stories on how self-advocacy has helped them grow as leaders. The participants then assisted people attending in how to start meetings, elect officers, set agendas, set goals, and how to fundraise. We also role-modeled a mock meeting for attendees to view.

We ended the gathering by asking people attending to gather in a circle, hold hands, and join us in our closing words, “Together we’re a team, Let’s do it!” We had time to network with people informally and share phone numbers.

Anne, Rodonna, and Jenny agreed that this first gathering was successful. We decided to polish up our notes and posters prior to our next gathering.

On 10-26-98, this writer met with the guide leader to work on a proposed agenda for the educational meeting for the membership of People First – New Ulm. The meeting will provide people with more information on the project and invite people to be more active participants in the project. We will look at a variety of volunteer opportunities available for people to participate in. We will invite people to become a part of one of the five work groups working with regional groups. The hopeful outcome will be for the Common Vision project to include a wider circle of people.

Jenny, the project treasurer and this writer will meet on 10-27-98 to begin her system of accounting for the project. Various bills will be paid and tracking of money will occur. Jenny and this writer will meet with our accountant in November to review the process.

An evaluative summary for the first quarter was completed and sent to our partnership organization in St. Paul. This summary will be included in a report to the State of Minnesota’s Department of Economic Security. A copy of the summary is included with the project report.

## Project Notes

11-02-98

### Common Vision General Meeting

The core group of people working in the project had decided to have a general informational meeting to inform more people about the project. General members of People First – New Ulm were invited to an informational meeting on October 28, 1998.

Approximately 25 people attended the meeting that afternoon. Mike and Anne presented an overview of Common Vision. They used large poster paper to illustrate their points. After this basic informational session, people were invited to volunteer for a variety of activities. These activities ranged from general committee work to specific Common Vision work groups.

There was quite a bit of energy and excitement around volunteering. People wrote their own names on the sign-up sheets and chose their own committees. All the available spots for Common Vision work groups were signed-up for.

The core members of the group did a fine job at presenting material and describing volunteer activities. Their growth as leaders increases daily. I am in awe of the experience these people bring to the group as a whole.

The next step in the process is to meet with individual work groups assigned to regions. This writer will be guiding two work groups and assisting the other three as needed.

This writer's plan is to have a large work group meeting in early December. This meeting will focus on the basics of leadership and community organizing. The group will have an opportunity to develop individual leadership posters and learn about the spiral model of organizing.

## COMMON VISION PROJECT – PEOPLE FIRST

### MONTHLY CASH DISBURSEMENTS

4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER 1998 SUMMARY

	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>Total</b>
Consulting Fees/Retreats	\$ 428.00	\$ 152.60	\$ 100.00	\$ 680.60
Accounting/Legal Fees	25.00	25.00	25.00	75.00
Mileage Reimbursement	-0-		56.70	56.70
Office Supplies	68.31			68.31
Reference Materials	-0-			-0-
Tuition – Retreats	496.00			496.00
Lodging	-0-			-0-
Meals	47.91			47.91
Celebration Expense	12.80			12.80
Telephone Charges	-0-			-0-
Videos	196.00			196.00
<b>Totals:</b>	\$1274.02	\$ 177.60	\$ 181.70	\$1633.32

# COMMON VISION PROJECT – PEOPLE FIRST

## MONTHLY CASH DISBURSEMENTS

October, 1998

Date	Check No.	Check Issued To	Consul.Fee s/ Retreats	Acctg./ Legal Fees	Mileage Reimb.	Office Supplies	Reference Materials	Tuition/ Retreats	Lodging	Meals	Celebration Expense	Telephone Charges	Videos	Total
10/27/98	109	Current-Labels				9.45								9.45
10/27/98	108	Chris Janns Accountant		25.00										25.00
10/27/98	107	Anne Roop	184.00											184.00
10/27/98	106	Rodonna F.	184.00											184.00
10/27/98	102	Rita Werner	20.00							26.56				46.56
10/27/98	104	Advocating Change						496.00					196.00	692.00
10/27/98	101	D.F.N.U.									12.80			12.80
10/27/98	105	Jenny Bauer	20.00											20.00
10/27/98	103	Wilbur Frink	20.00			6.70				21.35				48.05
10/27/98	110	Kmart				30.18								30.18
10/28/98	111	MBW, Co.				21.98								21.98
		Totals:	428.00	25.00	-0-	68.31	-0-	496.00	-0-	47.91	12.80	-0-	196.00	1254.00

## ***Problem Solving – Relaxation***

**What do you need to know so you can solve problems in your life? You need to know about three things:**

- 1. How you feel.**
- 2. How to relax.**
- 3. Problem solving steps.**

**In order to make a good decision you should be calm, have a cool head, and have complete control over your behavior. Remember, when you are ready to relax, choose a place where you can concentrate and not be interrupted by other people or activities. Choose a quiet place and choose a chair with a straight back so you can sit up straight in a relaxed position with your**

**feet flat on the floor. Sometimes, it's hard to pay attention and do everything that is necessary to relax, so you might want to have someone sit and relax with you and help you remember the things that we talk about today.**

**Now that you are ready to relax, sit in the relaxed position, with your hands resting comfortably on your legs, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. Let it out slowly. Feel the way that your whole body begins to relax when you let out a breath. You're starting to feel better and you're starting to feel more relaxed already.**

**Now relax your shoulders. Let them droop down. Move your shoulders slowly so all of the tension goes away. Your shoulders are drooping down, and you feel so calm and quiet and relaxed.**

**Now this comfortable, relaxed feeling spreads down your arms all the way to your hands. Your arms and hands are resting on your legs and they feel heavy and calm. Your whole body is feeling relaxed.**

**This warm, calm, comfortable feeling spreads down to your legs --- all the way to your feet. Your feet are resting flat on the floor and they feel heavy. Your whole body feels calm and relaxed.**

**Now take another deep breath and let it out slowly. Think about how good you feel. You are quiet and calm and rested. You feel so peaceful. It feels so nice and you can remember this feeling so that anytime that you have a problem or start to feel upset, you can just take a deep breath and relax.**

**You've done a good job.**

Activity found in Chapter 3, pg 5

## ***Problem Solving – Steps***

**STEP 1: Relax**

**Take a deep breath and let the air out.**

**STEP 2: Say something positive.**

**Saying something positive gives you confidence and makes you feel good about yourself because it helps you remain in control. Say, “It’s ok. I can figure this out.”**

**STEP 3: Identify the problem.**

**Ask yourself, “What is the problem?”**

**STEP 4: Think of solutions.**

**What can you do to solve the problem?**

**STEP 5: Choose a solution and just do it!**

## ***Problem Solving – Role Plays***

**Watch as we show you some role plays. We're going to act out a few scenes and ask for your help to go through the problem solving steps.**

### **Role Play 1: The Soda Machine**

**You are at work and it's time for your break. You decide to go and get a soda. You put your money in the machine, and push the Coke button but nothing comes out.**

### **Role Play 2: The Phone Call**

**You need to make an emergency phone call and you are waiting in line to use the phone. The person in front of you finished their phone call when someone cuts in front of you and begins making a call.**

### **Role Play 3: The Library**

**You are in the library studying for a big test that is on the next day. There is someone studying at the table beside you. Another person comes and sits down and starts talking loudly with the person at the table beside you.**

Activity found in Chapter 3, pgs 6-7