

December 19, 2005

Dear Friends:

This letter is a quick update on several issues of interest to our members and colleagues. First let me wish all of you a wonderful holiday with friends and a peaceful New Year full of renewal and promise.

As we think about the holidays, I want to encourage you to continue your generosity to people with disabilities, their families and our front line workforce along the devastated Gulf Coast. Our colleagues from that area tell us those communities are still in desperate straits, that the infrastructure of the developmental disabilities system at the state and local level is sadly frayed, and the help promised from the federal government has been slow to come. Luckily, individuals and organizations around the country have pitched in and made much needed donations. Please think about a donation that could make a family's holiday a little brighter. Go to [aamr.org](http://aamr.org) and click on the Katrina Hurricane Relief Fund link and make a contribution through AAMR or to the other disability related organizations listed on the page. Thank you!

On December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, AAMR held a highly successful Forum on Aging and End of Life issues for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. The meeting included powerful speakers from medicine, Alzheimer's research, faith communities, ethics, hospice organizations and other key groups. It provided an important opportunity for AAMR to partner with new collaborators. The presentations should be on [aamr.org](http://aamr.org) within the next two weeks.

Following the Aging meeting, we held our Midwinter Leadership Meeting. The focus of the two days was discussion of the exciting challenges facing the organization including stimulating action groups around key issues, aligning our name with our mission, devising ways to encourage collaboration between the national organizations and state and regional chapters, and supporting and nourishing leadership among younger members. We also discussed our next Annual Meeting in Montreal and encourage all of you to attend this event. The organizers of the conference following our "AAMR Day" have received panel and paper proposals from 27 different countries. This will truly be an opportunity for AAMR members to learn about advances in research and practice around the world. You can register for the conference on [aamr.org](http://aamr.org).

The group also took on the task of crafting AAMR's response to the affirmations growing out of the DD Summit. This document will outline the way in which AAMR will support the many issues generated by the participants in September. This document will also be posted on [aamr.org](http://aamr.org).

I want to thank all of you who took the time to respond to my last letter regarding possible new names for the organization. Your responses were thoughtful and showed a real commitment to the ongoing health and vitality of the organization. The next few months will be spent communicating with as many AAMR members as possible regarding the name change. Members of the Board will participate in 3 conference calls. Instructions regarding how to join in will be sent out soon. The feedback will be very useful in preparing information on the pros and cons of each proposed name in anticipation of the distribution of the ballot. We want to hear your thoughts and to share the rationale for the choices.

Finally, Doreen and I participated in the annual meeting of our partners in the creation of yearly federal legislative goals and priorities. The group includes the Arc, UCP, ANCOR and AAMR. As you can imagine, remaining vigilant regarding possible reductions in the hard won protections and entitlements for people with developmental disabilities is especially important at this time. In order to keep members informed of the events in the Capitol, we circulate Washington Watch – the definitive newsletter regarding federal public policy in our field. If you are interested in reviewing the legislative document, the revised goals will be on the AAMR web site soon.

Thank you for your continued support – I am truly privileged to be your President. Again, have a wonderful holiday!!!

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