



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heritage Centers
Louis J. Billittier Center
101 Oak Street
Buffalo, NY 14203
www.heritagecenters.org

Contact:
Heather Pennington
(716) 856-4202 ext. 202
FAX (716) 856-9433
hpennington@heritagecenters.org

BUFFALO WOMAN APPOINTED TO GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

(BUFFALO, NY, June 23,2008) – Heritage Centers is proud to announce LaRenz Picken's recent appointment to Governor Patterson's Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council.

Ms. Pickens has been with Heritage Centers for over 25 years, receiving services, working and leading their self-advocacy group. As the current Co-Vice President of the New York State Self-Advocacy Association, Governor Patterson called on her to join this council.

Having just returned from the June 11, 2008 meeting in Albany, Ms. Pickens said, "I am honored to have been selected to be on this advisory council. I hope to accomplish many things. I want to help individuals with disabilities to have a stronger voice. I am not just doing this for me. I am very proud to be doing this for all people who have challenges. I am so excited...I never thought I would be where I am today. I hope to make a difference statewide. It's just an amazing opportunity."

Michael Gross, Heritage Centers Executive Director stated, "I believe that Governor Patterson has picked the best qualified candidate he could find to sit on this advisory council. Ms. Pickens is knowledgeable, sensitive, eloquent and a true representative. She has an outstanding way of expression that compels the listener to really hear what is being said. We are so proud of her."

The Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council meets quarterly in Albany and is comprised of: New York State OMRDD Commissioner Diana Jones Ritter, three self-advocates from different areas of New York State, parents of children with disabilities, professionals from provider agencies, lawmakers, and representatives from the state's faith-based community.

This advisory council will serve to: have conversation about statewide challenges, goals and objectives regarding services for individuals with developmental disabilities; foster public understanding and acceptance; consider and make recommendations for the improvement of programs, services and opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

If you would like to schedule an interview with LaRenz Picken and/or Michael Gross, please contact Heather Pennington at Heritage Centers at 856-4202 ext. 202.

Heritage Centers is a local non-profit that employs over 900 people and serves more than 3,000 individuals with disabilities (and their families) each year. Individualized services include, but are not limited to: early intervention, education, residential, vocational, service coordination, legal and advocacy programming.

###