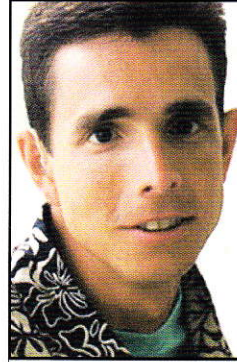




# Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Center for Community of Caring

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

## *Guest Column*



Paul Wichansky

Recalling the memorable experiences of the past year, one of my personal highlights was a visit to Las Vegas in July, where I was honored to be the closing keynote speaker at the annual Community of Caring National Conference. I remember those two days were filled with plenty of sunshine and warmth, but I am not referring to the hot summertime weather typical of Las Vegas, but to the optimism emanating from all of the people I had the honor to interact with at this conference. Whether you are a teacher, counselor, or administrator, Community of Caring is a valuable network of people whose ideas and programs help ensure that K-12 students learn to embrace the core character education values that serve as hallmarks of peer leadership.

Earlier this year, the conference coordinator, Katie Lewis, found me through the website of my speakers bureau, *A Vision in Motion*. Even if I have cerebral palsy, the cerebral palsy does not need to have me! This kind of positive attitude, combined with a supportive network of family and friends, has allowed me to reach my dream of walking and many other goals as well. During the conference keynote, I shared some of these experiences to show, by example, that any dream can be realized with motivation and a winning attitude. For that hour, the hotel ballroom was filled with genuine laughter, good tears, and pertinent questions, as the audience responded positively to a program that was sincere, uplifting, and insightful. Showing video clips that helped personalize some of the experiences I shared (such as skydiving and scuba diving), I emphasized that even negative experiences always have a silver lining. The next day, I left Las Vegas with a renewed sense of hope, hope for the future of this country, and the hope that we can all work together to eliminate hate and prejudice while promoting tolerance, respect, and understanding, especially towards those students with special abilities.

I trust that your continued involvement with Community of Caring encourages you to deliver a message of tolerance, a spirit of compassion, and the knowledge that helps brighten the prospects of our country's future (which lies in our children). With the holiday season now upon us, we should continue to bring out the best in others and that certainly helps bring out the best in ourselves. I am also sending my best and brightest wishes of the holiday season to you and your families.

Solstice Greetings and  
Happy New Year!

*Paul Stuart Wichansky*

*Paul S. Wichansky is a motivational speaker who enjoys presenting assemblies to K-12 students, teachers, and parents. He shares personal experiences with humor and encourages others to ask questions that help shape their understanding of people with disabilities. Paul has been speaking at schools since he was ten years old, and is an active member of the speakers bureau A Vision in Motion. For more information about Paul, please visit the website [www.avisioninmotion.com](http://www.avisioninmotion.com)*

# New

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