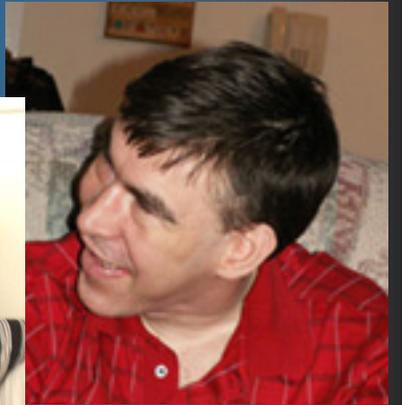


# Change . . .



# is good!

*Stories of Success for Community Inclusion*

# *Change is Good!*

## *Stories of Success for Community Inclusion*

The Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities embarked upon this project in an effort to educate Missouri's citizens about the opportunities that community inclusion can offer individuals with developmental disabilities. The Council believes ALL people with disabilities can be successfully served in the community with appropriate and individualized supports. It is our deepest hope that these stories will offer vision and hope to the many families and self-advocates who are considering a life in the community for themselves or their family member. We would like to express our appreciation to the self-advocates, family members, providers, and direct care staff who graciously agreed to participate in these success stories and a special thank you to Bobbi Linkemer, our Writer, who tirelessly interviewed and compiled these stories.

If you have questions or would like additional copies or information please contact:

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# Ron thinks he is one very lucky guy

Ron's life today is nothing like it was a little over a year ago, before he moved into his new apartment in Columbia. One of a group of young adults who were moved from Bellefontaine Habilitation Center into homes and apartments throughout Missouri, Ron considers himself a very lucky guy.

"There is more freedom here," he says, "and I am treated much better. I also have a job and I can pay my bills."

Ron works for Alternative Community Training (ACT), which is the community living program that oversees his care and daily activities. ACT, which is based in Columbia, also runs an affirmative industry program that hires adults with and without disabilities to recycle electronic media.



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## Ron is proud of the clothes and other things he is able to buy.

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Ron handles a variety of jobs at ACT and earns a salary, which allows him to purchase necessities and things he has never had before. He proudly shows off his new Nike tennis shoes and jeans and his favorite acquisition, state-of-the-art sound system. "It has great sound," he says, "but I don't turn it up because we have neighbors upstairs."

A major focus of ACT's program is Person Centered Planning, which means that all decisions are team decisions. Ron takes an active part in the discussions. His particular individual plan (IP) calls for 24-hour support, with an ACT staff person actually living in the apartment. That way, Ron knows there is someone right there if he needs anything.



Ron & the sound system he bought with his earnings

Ron's staff person was with him at Bellefontaine and moved to Columbia about the time Ron did.

The apartment is set up with bedrooms and bathrooms at opposite ends and a kitchen and living room in the middle.

The kitchen gets a lot of use. "I cook," Ron says. "My favorite is turkey burgers. There is no danger of running out food. Just off the kitchen is a small room with a well-stocked refrigerator and a freezer.

Family is important to Ron. He has five sisters and brothers, whom he sees whenever he can. He has photographs of his parents, both deceased, and his twin nephews prominently displayed in the living room. In a large envelope, he has more pictures of family members, including a black and white high school photo of his mother.

Ron says not only has his life changed in the past year, *he* has changed as well. He has more self-control, he is

well behaved, and he gets along better with staff.

The staff supervisor agrees, observing that she has seen some amazing changes in Ron. "He has adjusted well to his new home. He is working hard at his job and takes a lot of pride in his work. He is happy about the money he's earning. Everyone is getting along well, and we are working as a team."



# Kelly is part of the community

**K**elleen, or Kelly, as everyone calls her, loves coffee and soda. Drinking a Pepsi at a big, round table in a brightly lit kitchen, she looks like any young woman entertaining guests in her home. “And it *is* her home,” says Carol Snow, Director of Future Care, a privately owned provider of independent supported living residences. Future Care operates 16 homes for 31 consumers throughout Missouri. “Every home is totally individualized to meet the needs of the consumers who live there,” explains Carol. “We ask ourselves, if these were my kids, what would I want for them? Then, we provide those things.”

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## Kelly has changed a lot -- become very independent.

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Kelly has lived in Rolla less than a year, but she adjusted with surprising ease to the move from Bellefontaine. “What made the transition so smooth,” says Carol, “was that she was familiar with us. We visited her six or seven times before she moved, to get an idea of her needs and her routine. When she saw this house, she walked right in and made herself at home.”

Kelly’s parents, Pauletta and Tony Jahnsen, had kept Kelly at home until she was eight. “Doctors kept telling us we were going to have to institutionalize her,” says Pauletta, “but I took her everywhere. We had her in a state school, and they insisted she needed 24-hour supervision. One day, I was fixing supper, and my back was turned. She ran past me and out the screen door. From then on, every time she was out of my sight, I was in a panic.

“It broke my heart to place her. It was the hardest thing I ever did. I felt like I had abandoned her.” The only thing available at the time was a place called Wood Haven in Columbia. Kelly,”

recalls Tony. “Her skills deteriorated, and they told us she was becoming uncontrollable. They released her.” The Jahnsens had few choices. Despite their initial reluctance, they chose Bellefontaine. Kelly was there for 20 years.

Then, suddenly, the family heard that Bellefontaine was closing. They were devastated by the news. “We were told we would have a better chance of finding a house for her if we placed her early,” recalls Tony. “We heard things about Bellefontaine on the news; we heard stories about what could happen if we moved her into the community. We didn’t know what to believe.” The first house they saw was a two-story, they knew that wouldn’t work for Kelly.

“Then, God stepped in and found Future Care for us,” says Pauletta. “We looked at this house and had a good feeling about it. It just all came together.”

In the short time she has been living there, Kelly has become a part of the community, which is what Future Care wants for all of its consumers. “At church, at the center where they go swimming, at the beauty shop... they all know Kelly,” says Carol.

“She has changed a lot — become very independent. At Bellefontaine, everything in the kitchen was locked up. Here, the kitchen is hers, and she can just go to the refrigerator and take out whatever she wants. She can go anywhere in the house she wants to go.”

There are other changes, as well. With one-on-one attention, Kelly’s personal grooming and self-care have improved. She has regained abilities she had lost over time. She loves her room, which Carol and members of her staff painted and filled with stuffed toys and brightly colored pictures. There is no question that Kelly feels at home.



**Pauletta Jahnsen & Kelleen**



**Kelly & her father, Tony Jahnsen**

# “Jason’s” new life is busy and productive

Jason (whose real name is David Jason) is shy ... *until* he is asked to conduct a tour of his roomy, sun-filled home in Ferguson. Then, he proudly shows off his room, his collection of movies and CDs, and the spacious kitchen with the table set for dinner.



**Jason and his aunt and guardian, Brenda Nash**

Jason has lived in this house for two years, with 24-hour-a-day supervision from the Life Development Support Center. He has lived other places, as well, including in his own apartment for a short time. His last home was at Bellefontaine Habilitation Center in north St. Louis County. “Each move has been better than the one before it, but he is happiest here,” says Brenda Nash, Jason’s aunt and legal guardian.

Brenda wasn’t eager to move Jason again. He had lived at home for 16 years and, then, in a series of habilitation centers. She wasn’t unhappy with the care at Bellefontaine; but, when she heard it might be closing, she had to explore her options.

“Frankly, I had misgivings about having Jason live in a community setting,” she recalls. “I had heard stories about homes in bad neighborhoods and unfriendly neighbors. But the stories weren’t true, I have not experienced anything like that here.” While Brenda describes herself as a very protective person, who didn’t want anyone to take advantage of Jason, she was also concerned about waiting until the last minute to make a decision.

She had expressed an interest in finding a place for Jason to live. The transition coordinator at Bellefontaine introduced her to Life Development Support Center, which earned her trust. “I felt relaxed and comfortable,” she says. “And, when Jason saw the house, he liked it.”

The differences between where he was and his new home are profound, says Brenda. Things she had to do for him when he was at Bellefontaine, she no longer has to even think about. Now, his clothes are clean; he has everything he needs; he is even on a special diet.

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**Jason is happy to show off his room, his possessions, and his home.**

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More important, she points out, Jason’s personality has changed considerably. He was not always easy to control, but he has settled down quite a bit. He works at Lafayette Industries, where he makes money and can buy the things he enjoys. He cleans his room and helps around the house in many ways, including cooking and taking out the trash. He looks after his roommate and even has a girlfriend, whom he talks about often.



Observes Brenda, “At Bellefontaine, he was part of group; here, he is an individual. There, he didn’t get out much at all. Here, he goes shopping, to the movies, and out to eat. There, caring for him was a job; here, it is a family.”

Jason is used to being with family. He has two siblings and three cousins, all of whom were raised together and still see each other frequently. “There are always people around for meals. At Thanksgiving,” says Brenda,

“there were 40 of us!”

“The staff has been supportive from the very beginning,” she says. The doors are open; I can drop in anytime, unannounced; and the place is always clean and neat.”



**Jason and his father, David Simms**

# For Jimmy, “it’s a very good life”

Jimmy, who has multiple developmental disabilities, lived at home for his first 21 years. It was not by choice that his mother, Jackie Swinnie, placed him in a habilitation center when she had to go to work. After seven difficult years of trying to get Jimmy into supported independent living, Jackie finally succeeded.

Jimmy was an active, athletic young man when he lived at home but didn’t fare well during his years away. His physical and mental deterioration were a source of constant concern. Jackie joined Choices, a group of parents, guardians, and professionals who advocate for adults with disabilities. Through Choices, she was introduced to Life Skills, which marked the beginning of a new chapter in Jimmy’s life.

Now Jimmy and his two roommates, Mike and Nic, share an attractively furnished, three-bedroom apartment in Kirkwood. There, with support from Life Skills, they shop and cook, keep their home neat and clean, and go about their own activities during the day. Nic has a job at McDonalds; Mike works at Lafayette Industries; and Jimmy goes to a day program called Life Development. In the evening, they hang out together, watch TV, and enjoy each other’s company.

“It’s a very good life,” says Jackie. “Her boys,” as she calls them, “are active and happy, which is all any parent can hope for.” She drops by the apartment frequently and takes Jimmy home on weekends. “He doesn’t always want



to leave,” she says, which tells her that he now feels happy and secure.”

Jackie’s role goes far beyond that of caring parent. She

is also a committed advocate for people with disabilities, particularly those with developmental disabilities. Jackie testifies before the Missouri State Legislature, serves on numerous committees, and mentors parents of other young people who are making the transition from habilitation centers or group homes to supported independent living in the community.

“These parents have many concerns,” she says. “I had concerns, as well. It gave me confidence to know there were medical people at the hab center and enough people to cover for employees who didn’t show up for work.

“But, when Jimmy left, I found a doctor who provides wonderful care. Life Skills also has a list of physicians it recommends and adequate staff to cover unforeseen absences. I tell parents this is an opportunity for their adult children to live in a nice environment and feel a sense of independence.”

Life Skills is a nonprofit organization that helps 1,400 people with disabilities, throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area, find independent living opportunities. The Life Skills philosophy is that “everyone, regardless of the severity of their disability, can live and work with dignity in the community.”

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## Jackie Swinnie is a grateful parent. Her son is living the life she envisioned.

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The Life Skills staff works in what are called Person Centered Plans (PCPs), each of which focuses on a single “customer.” Jimmy’s team consists of his advocate or parent (Jackie), community living instructors, a program supervisor (who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the home); and a case manager from St. Louis Regional Center (the funding agency).

While there are three staff members for every home, customers are encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves, depending on their level of function. Jimmy and his roommates are well-matched. Because they are all at different levels, they help each other, learn from each other, and like each other.



**Jackie Swinnie and her son, Jimmy, share a happy moment.**

# Rukena writes about life in her journal

Rukena is a bright, articulate 24-year-old woman who lives in a foster home in Florissant. Lorrie Glover, her foster mother, has 24-hour-a-day responsibility for Rukena's care. The foster care program is administered by Caring Solutions, which serves children and adults with developmental disabilities who live in the greater St. Louis area. "We design services according to the specific needs of our consumers," explains Madeleine Hawn, CEO of Caring Solutions. "Our goal is to identify and meet the individual needs of each consumer in the areas of personal care, social activity, behavioral support, health, vocation, and transportation. We then work to provide the services in a manner that maintains the dignity and respect of both the consumer and the staff." Caring Solutions currently serves 12 customers in foster homes, 16 in individualized supported living (ISL), and two in their natural homes.



Rukena is talkative and expressive. She remembers all the places she has lived and what she liked or didn't like about each of them. When her mother died in 1991, she and her sisters spent time in St. Vincent's Children's Home. She also lived with her grandmother before she went to Bellefontaine. "I was at Bellefontaine for five or six years," she recalls. "I like it better here. I love my room. I have more peace and freedom. I get to go places and do things. I go to the mall, to the store, and out to lunch. I bought a book for Lorrie."

A high-school graduate, Rukena spends her time crocheting, reading, listening to her favorite music, and writing. Her journals consist of several spiral notebooks filled with handwritten reflections, stories, drawings, and prayers. Her subjects range from fairy tales to essays on life and race. Janice says she plans to type them up some day and put them in a book.



Rukena has a large family, but it is mostly out of

town. She has four sisters, only one of whom lives in St. Louis. Her nieces and nephews are growing up, but she does see them. Her mother and brother are deceased. She spends time with Janice.

"Grammy takes me home with her, sometimes" she says. "She takes me to church, she takes me out to eat, and she takes me to see my sisters when they are in town."

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## Janice Cole says Rukena has blossomed.

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Rukena entered foster care 17 months ago when she was released from Bellefontaine Habilitation Center. "This is the best place for her right now," explains Janice Cole, Rukena's grandmother. "She has to learn to do more things on her own and get her behavior under control."

Those are the things Lorrie and Rukena have been working on since they've been together, but it is slow moving," says Lorrie. "Rukena can become very emotional in certain situations. In a group setting, she has trouble staying focused, and she can't receive the one-on-one attention she needs. That's why she hasn't been able to remain in a day program, though she very much wants to be in one."



**Rukena and her grandmother,  
Janice Cole**

Janice is pleased with the positive changes in Rukena. "She has blossomed," Janice observes. "She has matured. We know that she has some behavior problems, but she relates to people much better; she looks them in the eye, which she didn't always do. She can carry on a conversation. She has really come a long way."

# Jason, back to his old self again

From the time he was very young, Jason has been a country music fan. He can name all of his favorite singers and has seen many of them perform live on stage. Jason is not a stay-at-home kind of guy. He spends much of his time in a day program at the Cerebral Palsy Association and many weekends at concerts, auto shows, and swimming.

Jason and his two roommates live in a comfortable home in Bridgeton where supports are provided by staff members of Creative Concepts For Living. Creative Concepts provides 24-hour individualized supported living (ISL) services for adults with developmental disabilities. The agency operates 20 private homes in the St. Louis area.

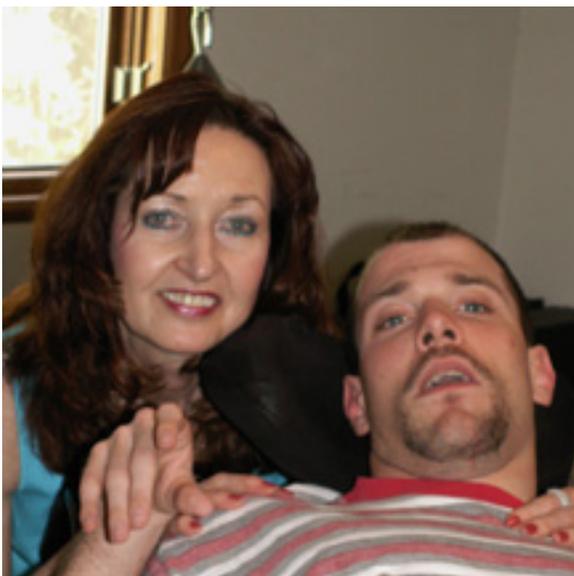
Jason has changed a great deal since he first came to live in this house. He is much more outgoing, according to one of the staff. “He talks more. He interacts with people. He remembers names. I was gone for a year and a half,” she recalls, “and when I walked in, he called me by name and asked me to take him swimming.”

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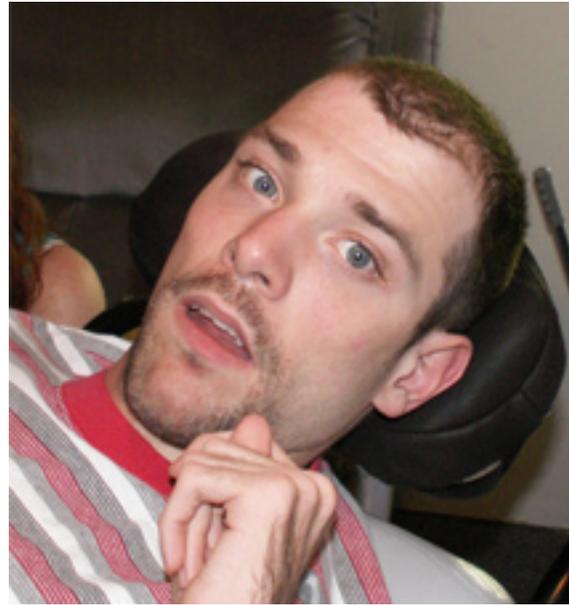
**Jason is more independent, more verbal, and more adaptable.**

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Jason was an only child who lived at home until he was 18. When his parents divorced, his mother Jan Barn-



**Jan Barnholtz and her son, Jason**



holtz, tried to manage alone but found it difficult. I couldn't take care of him by myself,” she recalls. “He's a big guy, and I had to keep calling on the neighbors to help me with him.” That's when he went to live with his father for about six months. That didn't work out very well either, so his parents placed him at Bellefontaine.

During the year he was there, Jason changed, says Jan. “He became very withdrawn. He didn't smile. He didn't talk. He just stayed in bed.” His parents were anxious to find a better living situation for him. While Jan focused on visiting Jason at Bellefontaine, and taking care of him, his father was able to get him into individualized supported living (ISL) through Creative Concepts. He has been thriving ever since.

“Jason is back to his old self in many ways,” says Jan, “I spoiled him when he lived at home,” she admits, “but he is much better behaved and independent now. He adapts very easily to new situations, which he didn't in the past. When I took him shopping or to a movie, he used to get agitated. He no longer does. His speech has improved, and he is much more verbal than he was.”

Jan attributes her son's increasing independence to being surrounded by and interacting with people, as well as to all of the activities in which he is involved. “His direct care staff takes all of them so many places,” she says. “They go out to eat a lot. He has tickets to concerts at Riverport. They do things with him I wouldn't be able to do if he were at home. He is much happier.”

## Marvin, starting a new life at 40

**M**arvin has spent quite a bit of his life in institutional settings. His first placement was at the age of 11 in Hannibal, Missouri; his most recent, 10 years at Bellefontaine in north St. Louis County. Last year, at 40, he moved to a private home with two other roommates. The house is managed by



Creative Concepts For Living, a private, nonprofit agency that works with people with disabilities and behavior problems.

In less than a year's time, Marvin has changed dramatically, according to his principal caregiver from Creative Concepts. First of all, he is happy, always smiling and cheerful. Second, he does many things for himself that he was unable to do before, including shower, dress himself, fold his clothes, and help clean his room.

The sight in his injured eye has also improved, after three surgeries for a detached retina. Recovery involved close attention from caregivers, which he has received.

It wasn't an instant adjustment, of course. For the first couple of weeks, Marvin seemed agitated. His records from Bellefontaine indicated "aggressive behavior," but any sign of that soon disappeared.

Creative Concepts For Living provides 24-hour individualized, supported living (ISL) services for adults with developmental disabilities. The agency operates 20 private homes for 50 consumers of Missouri De-

partment of Mental Health. "Our clients have varying levels of abilities, not disabilities," explains Denise Millham-Quirk, executive director. "We build support around each person, and we work closely with all parities involved to develop individual plans of service. Two full-time staff members are on duty during the day and three take over in the evening.

In individualized supported living, clients are taught responsibility and independence. They are also exposed to the surrounding community on shopping trips and visits to local restaurants. At the other end of the spectrum, in their new homes, they have the gift of privacy. Marvin clearly enjoys having his own space. In the evening, when everyone is watching TV in the living room, if he gets tired, he can go to his room and lie down.

One other positive aspect of his new situation is living with family. Verlyn Williams, Marvin's sister and guardian, is a single parent of two sons, both of whom have developmental disabilities. Her younger son, 25, is already one of Marvin's roommates. The other, 30, is scheduled to go into an ISL soon.

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### Marvin is happier, calmer, and more self-sufficient in his new home.

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Verlyn would like to see all three of her family members under one roof, if possible. "If that doesn't work out," promises Denise, we will do everything we can to make sure they spend as much time together as we can arrange."



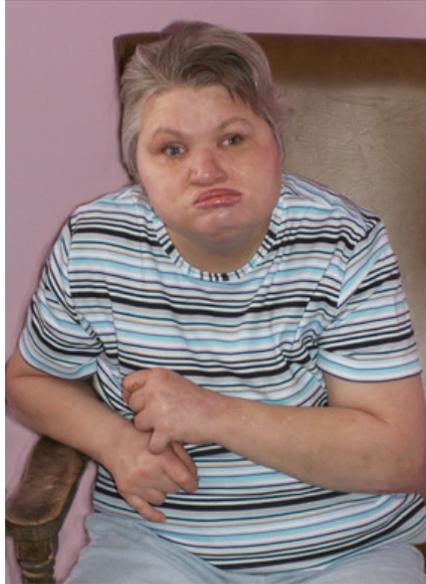
Marvin and his sister, Verlyn Williams

# Kathy gets a new lease on life

**K**athy was always her daddy's little girl. When Bob Rust came home at night, to give his wife, Anne, a break, he would play with Kathy for hours on end. She loved water, so on many weekends he took her swimming. But, as time passed, it became apparent Kathy was not doing the things other children her age could do, like roll over or sit up by herself.

"We had a gnawing feeling something was wrong," Bob recalls. "When she was two, we took her to be evaluated. The doctor sat down with us and recommended that we put her in a home. He told us her abilities were going to be very limited. But, at the time, she was just a baby and easy to take care of."

The Rusts were determined to try; they kept Kathy at home until she was nine-and-a-half. "There were some difficult times," Bob remembers, "but there were some beautiful times, too."



They met with the Bellefontaine coordinator and came out to look at the house. "I knew within five minutes that this was going to work," says Bob.

Kathy's new home is managed by Reliable Home Care in conjunction with the Department of Mental Health. Reliable operates 30 individualized supported living homes in east central Missouri for people with mental retardation and development disabilities. Reliable's support staff provides community integration, personal care, and daily living activities 24 hours a day.

Neither Bellefontaine nor Reliable were in any hurry to move Kathy before they agreed she was fully acquainted with her caregiver and her new home. For weeks, Kathy and her primary staff person went back and forth to visit each other until a comfort level was established.

According to Anne, Kathy's adjustment has been beyond their wildest expectations. "She looks much better. She's cleaner. She's not self-destructive. She doesn't grind her teeth, which she used to do when she was nervous. She is happier and calmer."

"I wish we had done it years ago," says Bob, "but places like this weren't available then. I would tell other parents who aren't sure if they want to move their child, at least give it a look. Don't be close-minded like we were. It can be done, and it's much better for Kathy."

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## Kathy is happier and calmer now that she has gotten used to her new home.

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Kathy didn't walk until she was four. She became increasingly self destructive and harder to manage, until Bob and Anne realized they couldn't do it any longer. They had Kathy admitted to Laurel Haven in Ballwin, Missouri. Even now, they say, it was the most difficult thing they ever did. When Laurel Haven was closed two years later, the Rusts placed their daughter in Bellefontaine in north St. Louis County, where she spent the next 34 years of her life.

When the state decided to close Bellefontaine, as well, the Rusts were apprehensive about moving her again. "People like Kathy don't adjust well to change," explains Anne. "We voiced our concerns to the Bellefontaine coordinator who was in charge of placing her in a private home. Frankly, we didn't know this type of community living was available."



Anne, Kathy, and Bob get ready to go out to lunch

# Tracy, interacting, smiling, and doing more

Life for Tracy at her home in Maryland Heights is much like it was during her first 26 years, when she lived with her parents. The house she shares with a roommate is bright and attractively furnished. The Life Skills employees who provide support 24 hours a day are attentive and patient. Her days are filled with trips to the park, lunch at neighborhood restaurants, naps, games, and television.

This is quite different from her routine at Northwest Habilitation Center,

where Tracy lived for four years. “In the habilitation center,” says Roy Heckenkamp, Tracy’s father and guardian, “there was almost a complete lack of interaction with the general population. She never went out. She lost weight. There definitely was a manpower problem.”

It was only when Donna Heckenkamp became ill that she and her husband were forced to explore other options for Tracy’s care. First, they sent her to a day program to get her used to being away from home and, then, to Northwest. “Our daughter Nancy, who had worked for several years with people with developmental disabilities, wanted us to consider community living,” recalls Roy. “We were reluctant because we had heard so many negative stories about it.”

Nancy introduced her parents to Wendy Sullivan, director of Life Skills, who assured them that Tracy would be safe and well cared for. Then, began the process of finding a house, securing funding, and making the



necessary arrangements. “Tracy gets Social Security, and whatever state funding she had while she was at the habilitation center ‘followed her’ into the community,” Roy explains. Through his contacts with the Department of Mental Health, where he had once worked, Roy was able to facilitate Tracy’s move to her new home. She has lived there for the past seven years. It is a decision

Roy and Donna have never regretted.

“Tracy has improved in so many ways,” says Donna.

“She communicates more. She does more. She interacts more with people. She goes out and does things she’s interested in doing. She’s definitely happier. She comes home about once a month and on holidays. When we

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## Tracy is learning to communicate her needs more clearly.

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bring her back here and pull into the driveway, she can’t wait to get out of the car.” Donna thinks of Tracy’s caregivers as second mothers. “They take such good care of her; our minds are very much at ease.”

Of course, the Heckenkamps, like all parents of adult children with developmental disabilities do worry about the future. “What’s going to happen when Tracy gets older?” Roy asks. “We’re getting older, too, and we are seeing more and more elderly people in ill health. Naturally, they’re concerned about their children’s futures. Down the road, this is going to be a very big problem for the Department of Mental Health.”

That problem is one of the reasons Roy co-founded Choices, a support group for parents of sons and daughters living in the community. “People find us by word of mouth,” he says. “It’s surprising how little they know about what is available in the way of resources. We share our experiences and help in any way we can. Everyone is welcome at our meetings.”



**Roy Heckenkamp talks about Choices, a parents’ support group**

# Lynne , independent, athletic, & energetic

Lynne is happiest when she's in motion. Living across the street from a park in north St. Louis is perfect for a young woman with her high level of energy and athleticism. Access to walking trails and other facilities in the community allows Lynne to keep active. As a result, she has lost weight and improved her fitness since her move from Bellefontaine Habilitation Center more than a year ago.

Another change Life Skills staff has observed is a vast improvement in her social skills. "We're working on patience," notes one staff member. "When Lynne wants to go somewhere,

she wants to go *now*, but she is learning to wait. She has also come a long way in terms of acting appropriately. Often, it takes little more than a reminder." According to staff, she is very independent — making coffee, washing the dishes, and doing many things for herself. With one-on-one attention and regular exercise, Lynne is showing great progress in a relatively short time.



another habilitation center in Farmington or a move into the St. Louis community. Margaret convinced their mother, who was legal guardian at the time, that the community was the better choice.

the St. Louis area. Life Skills operates on the principle that "everyone, regardless of the severity of his or her disability, can live and work with dignity in the community."

Margaret feels that Life Skills was the best choice for Lynne. When the governor first announced that Bellefontaine would be closing, Lynne's family had two options:

Margaret took over Lynne's guardianship this year. Until then, she had worked behind the scenes, asking questions, doing research, and helping her mother, who was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. Now, she and her other sister, share Lynne's and their mother's care.

Lynne is the second of three girls in the family. Her problems became apparent when she was a baby, but the pediatrician dismissed concerns as "a new mother's jitters." She wasn't diagnosed until she was two, recalls Margaret. She was in special education programs in Kansas City and St. Louis until she was about 13. When Lynne began to experience changes, her parents realized they could no longer care for her at home.

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## Margaret knows she made the right choice for her sister, Lynne.

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Her first placements were in private group homes, but, eventually, Lynne was placed in Bellefontaine, where she spent the next 20 years. During much of that time, she struggled with behavior problems and weight gain.

"But, due a change in medication and environment," notes Margaret, "she has made great progress since her move into the community." Today, as she goes to the park to feed the ducks, interacts with her roommates, mall walks at a nearby shopping center, and offers coffee and soda to guests, Lynne is clearly thriving in her new home.



One of the reasons she has met with such success is her familiarity and comfort level with staff members, several of whom worked with her at Bellefontaine and followed her to the community. Margaret, Lynne's old-

er sister and guardian, also played a vital part in that transition. Now, as members of the Life Skills team, these same staff members are part of an organization that serves 1,400 people with disabilities, throughout

# *The Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities . . .*

The Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities (MPCDD) is a federally-funded, 23-member, consumer-driven council appointed by the Governor. Its mandate, under P.L. 106-402 (The Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act) is to plan, advocate for, and give advice concerning programs and services for persons with developmental disabilities that will increase their opportunities for independence, productivity, and integration into communities.

The Council's mission is:

*To assist the community to include all people  
with developmental disabilities in every aspect of life.*

The Council believes this mission will be achieved when people with developmental disabilities:

- Make informed choices about where they live, work, play and worship;
- Receive individual and family supports which are flexible, based on need, and are provided in a culturally sensitive manner;
- Have the opportunity to engage in productive employment and meaningful retirement;
- Experience continued growth toward their full potential;
- Live in homes with the availability of individualized supports;
- Are treated with dignity and respect;
- Attend school with their peers in regular classrooms in neighborhood schools, and
- Are members of powerful advocacy networks made up of individuals, parents and family members.

The Council also believes that individuals, parents and family members are the most powerful forces in forging a responsive and flexible support network for people with developmental disabilities.



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