



# Family Support Council Newsletter

*A resource for individuals and families working alongside Community Bridges*

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Summer 2010

## Support Council Update

By Sondra Brake  
Family Support Council – Communications Chair

A parent quote on the Community Bridges website reads, "Parents who are passionate about something and can get together with agency support can be very powerful." This is the essence of the Family Support Council. A group of seven parents, we seek your input to support our goal of family success and inclusive communities.

The Council recently bid a fond farewell to longtime member and co-chairperson, Sandra LeBeau. Sandra who strives to bring awareness to community folk, is a tireless advocate, and will be missed. Our new executive committee includes Michael Panebianco and Vicki Therrien as Co-chairs, Lisa Nelson as Secretary, and Sondra Brake as Treasurer.

Our initiatives of improved communication and inclusive communities lend to the theme of inclusive community for the Fall issue of the newsletter. Please send any article recommendations, articles, poetry, ideas, or success stories to Sondra at [brakefam@tds.net](mailto:brakefam@tds.net). Another initiative is to increase our connectedness as families and as natural supports through a family directory. If you haven't already, please send the

*continued on page 2*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2** Focal Area News
- 3** Project SEARCH
- 4** Success Story: Hurrah for Nathan Therrien
- 6** Henry is Thriving Through A.R.T.S.
- 8** Living Natural Lives by Kathie Snow
- 10** Family Directory Response Card
- 11** Resources, Resources, Resources

## Direct Support Professional Appreciation Month

By Roy Gerstenberger

**This September remember to take time to celebrate direct support professionals**

If your teeth need care, you get braces or a filling. If your leg needs mending, you get a cast. A doctor tends to you a few times in the office, x-raying, diagnosing, and prescribing if you are sick.

But what if you needed more help? Someone to help you navigate not only the medical world, but the social one? Maybe you need assistance over the long-term to have a full life in the community. Maybe you're tackling the physical and psychological challenges of caring for a child with a chronic health condition and need someone to share the load until you get back on your feet. Maybe, at first glance, people in your community see only your disability and not your cheery demeanor or your love of family and friends or the many gifts you have to offer others.

Then, you need a direct support professional.

Direct support professionals are cultural, medical and personal translators for those in our community who need extra help. They work one-on-one with those they serve to ensure that extended illness, developmental issues, and brain injuries aren't the defining facts of a person's life. They prioritize personal interaction and arrange volunteer, recreation, and work opportunities.

Social engagement is important for both psychological and physical health, and direct support professionals are the silent partners who ensure that all members of our society have a chance to be an important part of their home communities. Their job description is challenging and never-ending - a day's work might include arranging alternate religious services, assisting with basic hygiene, mediating interactions with family members, or finding appropriate insurance and tax forms.

As Executive Director of Community Bridges, a provider of services for people with disabilities, I have watched direct support staff dedicate countless hours, days, weeks, months, and years to their profession.

*continued on page 11*

## Support Council Update

*continued from Page 1*

response card on page 10 to Terri Warren, Community Connector. Feel free to provide as little or as much information as you want. Please contact her at [twarren@communitybridgesnh.org](mailto:twarren@communitybridgesnh.org). Terri is also available to meet with you to help you achieve greater connectedness in your community. She'll come to visit you in your own community.

We hope you enjoy the legislative updates from our Legislative Liaison, Sarah Aiken. Sarah also wears the hat of Family-to-Family and seeks opportunities to match your family with a mentor connection. If you'd like to become a family mentor and support a family, please contact her at [saiken@communitybridgesnh.org](mailto:saiken@communitybridgesnh.org).

Exciting times lie ahead with our new executive council. Remember this is your council, and you are welcome to all of our meetings. We meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month from 5:30pm for a light supper. Our meetings begin at 6:00pm. ❖

## Family Directory Update

The first edition of the Family Directory has been a great success. Over 70 families participated in the directory by completing and returning their form. The directory will be published and e-mailed to each family who participated. If you did not provide an email address, a paper copy will be sent to you. If you missed this opportunity to participate and would like to complete a form, please contact Terri Warren at [twarren@communitybridgesnh.org](mailto:twarren@communitybridgesnh.org) or 226-3212 x269. ❖

## Focal Area News

The Family Support Council supports local events in five identified focal areas of the region. Each focal area is a group of parents who have an interest in helping design activities or host activities that promote local community inclusion and involvement.

### Current activities include:

**Concord:** The group met and created a list of potential activities and events. The group will start working on the event calendar for the year and identify the first event for the fall. Events being considered are a harvest dinner, a film series, open gym night at a local church, an educational series, support groups for youth and parents and lots more. The group would love to hear your ideas! Look for a survey in July that will give you an opportunity to share what you would like to see for activities.

**Franklin:** A meeting was held on June 22, 2010 where the group talked about potential activities to host. The group came up with a list of 16 activities that they will be choosing from for their first event in September.

**Hillsboro:** The group has a list of ideas for the first event but would love to hear your ideas! Look for a survey in July that will give you an opportunity to share what you would like to see for activities.

**Kearsarge:** The Kearsarge group has set a tentative calendar for the summer and fall. The group will host a community picnic at Wadleigh State Park on Saturday, July 24, 2010 11:00-3:00pm. The event is free but you must RSVP by calling Terri Warren at 226-3212 x269 or by e-mailing her at [twarren@communitybridgesnh.org](mailto:twarren@communitybridgesnh.org). In August the group will host a booth at New London Hospital Days and in October the group is planning to host a screening of the documentary, *Lost in Laconia*. The group has also talked about hosting a family event at the Historical Society.

**Pittsfield:** The Family Support Council and the Pittsfield Middle High School Student Leadership Team co-hosted a screening of the film, *Including Samuel*, on Tuesday, June 1, 2010. Fifteen people including students, school staff, parents and community members came for dinner, a screening of the movie, and a great discussion after the movie. Members of the Pittsfield Middle High School Student Leadership Team led the discussion and served as hosts for the event. The group is looking for more members to help plan a calendar of activities for the upcoming year but would also love to hear your ideas! Look for a survey in July that will give you an opportunity to share what you would like to see for activities.

**If you would like to take part in any of these meetings, or you would like to have events in your area sent to you, please contact Terri Warren at [twarren@communitybridgesnh.org](mailto:twarren@communitybridgesnh.org). ❖**



## Notes From a First Time Support Conference

### Attendee

By Michael Panebianco  
Family Support Council Co-Chair Person

My wife, Jennifer, and I attended the annual Family Support Conference for the first time this year. Because we needed some time to ourselves, and we didn't know what to expect at the Conference, we arranged to have someone stay at home with our two children. Our son, who is six years old, has special needs, and you know what that's like. Our daughter is three years old and has an older brother with special needs. As I said, we needed some time to ourselves.

We arrived first thing Saturday morning. Beautiful weather. Beautiful room. No emergency calls from home. All is good.

Here's the short version play-by-play: we went to the same seminar in the morning, different ones in the afternoon, and pretty much every group event. We saw people we knew would be there, and people we knew but didn't know would be there, too. We "argued" over what to bid on at the auction and how high the bids should be, and we each won something the other didn't care for so much. We went to bed on the early side, tired but relaxed, and without children present, for only the second time in the last six years.

There were morning and afternoon educational sessions to choose from on Saturday. The sessions were geared toward issues affecting children of different age groups (like toddler, school-aged, and transitioning out of school), and some of general interest, so we could pick a session that best suited what we, as parents, are currently going through with our child. In the morning, my wife and I went to the same session, and we learned and realized things about

*continued on Page 12*

## Project SEARCH

By Rachel Ryan  
Project SEARCH Coordinator

Fifteen years ago, Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati was having increasing trouble filling entry level positions. The hospital was also striving to add to the diversity of its workforce. Emergency Department Director, Erin Riehle, thought to herself: "Could a person with a disability do this job?." She admits that she did not know anyone with a disability, but knew most children with a disability in Cincinnati would come through Cincinnati Children's at some point as a patient. She thought it was a good idea to have at least a few people working at Children's who could serve as an example of what people with disabilities can do. Thus came into being the idea for Project SEARCH.

Fast forward to 2010, and Project SEARCH has spread around the country, as well as the world. With over 150 sites, one more will be added with the Concord Hospital Project SEARCH. Concord Hospital, in collaboration with NH Vocational Rehabilitation, Community Bridges, and the Concord School District, are excited to announce the kick-off date of August 31, 2010. We have 10 students participating, a mix of high school students and young adults from the Merrimack Valley area.

Project SEARCH is a one-year internship program for students with disabilities in their last year of high school, but we have also accepted some young adults into the program. It is targeted for students whose goal is competitive employment. The program takes place in the hospital setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process through continuous feedback and acquisition of employable and competitive work skills. Students are given support through on-the-job coaching and work site accommodations with the ultimate goal of independence. Individualized job development, and placement is on-going throughout the year.

A typical school day includes:

- Classroom instruction in employability and independent living skills
- Participation at one or more internship rotations
- Lunch with peers and coworkers
- Feedback from the instructor, job coaches and hospital co-workers

During training, students will be sent out in rotations in the hospital. Initially, participants are accompanied by job coaches, until they have become proficient in performing the functions of a given job without assistance and instruction of our staff. Students report independently to and from lunch and are encouraged to eat with their department colleagues or their fellow interns. Students also report independently back to their work assignments. After students finish daily job site duties they report independently to the classroom at the end of the day. Students use the end of the day to reflect on their day with the instructor, job coaches, and fellow students.

Please stay tuned for more information and updates on this year's class. We will be having an Open House in the fall for prospective students for the 2011-2012 school year. Please contact Rachel Ryan with questions at 225-4153 x394 or by e-mail at [rryan@CommunityBridgesnh.org](mailto:rryan@CommunityBridgesnh.org). ❖

# A Success Story: Hurrah for Nathan Therrien

By Vicki Therrien

“Awakening from a sound sleep, I realized that something was wrong. In 1976, a month and one-half early, Nathan had been born. This early arrival was the beginning of challenges as we learned that Nathan had been diagnosed with Down Syndrome. Fortunate to have a caring pediatrician, we were provided resources to gain support and direction. We expended time and energies to help Nathan become all he could be as we took him to sign language classes to help him speak, behavior classes to deal with tantrums, and medical appointments for croup, ear infections, and pneumonia. In time, we learned that our handsome little guy would progress slowly but steadily.

## Capturing a Vision

Nate is now 33 years old and difficult times are a blur as we bask in the presence of his accomplishments. Nate’s future did a 360 degree turn as a result of what we learned at the Institute on Disability’s Leadership Series (<http://nhleadership.org/>). It was inspiring to learn that people with disabilities can have a bright future as they attend general education classes, get paid jobs, have homes of their own, or start their own businesses. We began to see Nate as having “Up Syndrome” instead of “Down Syndrome.” We used a person centered planning tool by Inclusion Press ([www.inclusion.com](http://www.inclusion.com)) called a PATH (Plan Alternatives for Tomorrow with Hope) to help Nate move toward a positive and possible future. At the time, Nate was in an out-of-district placement and our first dream was to bring him back into his home school. Nathan became the first student with Down Syndrome to attend his neighborhood school where he became a full participant in general education classes. As Nate shared time and space with others, he was accepted and naturally supported at dances, Park and Recreation Programs, church events, Boy Scouts, and the YMCA.

## Dreams Accomplished

Nathan graduated from High School in 1997 and immediately got a job at Sam’s Club as a shopping cart retriever. With co-worker supports, he has been part of the Sam’s Club Team for 12 years. His job comes with a good hourly wage, bonuses, paid vacations, and a 401K. He is known for his dependability, manners, honesty, cheerful personality, and strength. He was chosen Employee of the Month, has won a safety award, and has received a “Hercules Certificate”. His Sam’s Club family even surprised him with a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

Nate’s dream to have his own apartment has become a reality. He says he has to “make big bucks to pay his bills.” Now he is learning functional skills during the typical, meaningful routines of his day. Community-based instruction happens when he participates in church activities, attends bowling league, is vice-president of “Our Goals Self Advocacy Group ([www.peoplefirstofnh.org](http://www.peoplefirstofnh.org))”, and belongs to the Concord Recreation Young Adults’ Club. Nathan has had the opportunity to speak about his success to high school students and teachers who are in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Teacher Education Disability Program at UNH.

We do not take Nate’s success lightly. As parents of a child with special needs, we needed to rethink, reframe, and reevaluate our parenting style. It took diligence and optimism to hurdle the challenges. As a family, we embraced and used supports and resources from Community Bridges and the Institute on Disability at UNH that have been lifelines over the years. They supported us with encouragement as we gained information and developed new skills, empowering us to create a better life for Nathan.



**Nathan Therrien**

*Each quarter we would like to feature an individual or family from our region that has overcome life’s challenges and lives life to its fullest. This quarter we would like to introduce you to Nathan Therrien.*



**Nathan at Work**

continued from page 4

We, as well as Nate, chose to embrace the following ideals:

**Have high expectations.** We created short and long term goals and explored the supports needed for Nate to realize his future dreams. Our eyes were open to the possibility that Nate had a right to attend his neighborhood school, get a paying job, have an apartment, and be a valued contributing member of his community. Nathan is a success story because we emphasized his personal strengths and talents rather than his disabilities.

**Hold to the “Least Dangerous Assumption”** that says when we are unsure, we presume his understanding and competence. When Nate wanted an apartment, many believed it would be unsafe, and he would be taken advantage of; but with help, we proactively planned the way to move forward toward Nate’s goal. He started with his brother as his roommate but then reduced dependence on supports as he gradually took on more responsibility. We built in safety nets by using neighborhood supports and Community Bridges services to develop independence.

**Remember that Together We are Better.** “The Key is We” and we appreciate the many others who helped make Nate’s dreams become realities. I remember the joy of writing a note to a Physical Science teacher thanking him for reprimanding Nate when he dropped the rope holding bricks for a science lab. That teacher helped Nathan learn the importance of following safety rules and directions. Nate is a better listener because of it. Nate had the opportunity to participate in the Ropes Course’s Winter Camping trip in high-school. That prepared him on ways to endure the weather elements in his current job. The general education classes that used project-based learning benefited Nate, and we did our part by helping him with his homework. We chose not to believe the fallacy that Nate’s learning would plateau. He has enlightened us daily with his expanded vocabulary and knowledge. His favorite TV show is Channel 9 News.

**Accountability leads to self-sufficiency.** Nate is held accountable for his actions. Since he was five years old, he learned to “first work”, then to do a “fun activity.” His work, identified as “Have-to’s,” included chores, independent hygiene, and being prepared with materials. Many peer models have contributed to Nate’s ongoing education as he learned new skills (such as good work ethics, self control, the importance of a cheerful nature, and a willingness to help others) in real and meaningful situations. We taught functional skills at home and provided community experiences after school so he could get the most out of his academics.

**Consistency and commitment promotes success.** Consistent patterns of training, play, and acceptable behavior were the key- notes to successful integration into community living. We didn’t make excuses for Nate or accept inappropriate behavior. We rejected such statements as, “He can’t learn to behave because he doesn’t know any better. He needs to be loved.” When he was younger, we knew he would grow into an adult and the behavior once thought cute wasn’t going to be cute anymore. Others wouldn’t want to associate with him if he were unkind or self-centered. We learned to be consistent with our expectations, and Nate learned to act appropriately or experience the natural consequences of his actions.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our family shouts, “Hurrah!” Nathan’s success is because of collaborative vision, optimism, high expectations, commitment and a “We can do it spirit.” We learned that when professionals, school, and community work together, Nathan can achieve a better life. In my opinion, Nathan’s life is a tribute to what all people with disabilities can achieve and what lies at the heart of the human spirit. He is treated with dignity and respect as he lives a productive, full, and prosperous life. ❖

### **Gluten Free Grocery Store:**

White Birch Market LLC, in Hillsborough, NH (35 West Main St) is a complete gluten-free grocery store with dry goods, refrigerated and frozen items and much more. Everything is gluten free. This may be helpful to those people who experience Celiac disease, those who follow a gluten free diet to assist with behaviors associated with Autism as well as people who simply want to cut back on their gluten intake. Please call 464-2700 for more details, or visit them on the web at [www.whitebirchmarket.com](http://www.whitebirchmarket.com) and on Facebook under White Birch Market.

### **Free Dental Care:**

Easter Seals Dental Center Licensed dentist provides dental treatment to your child Free of Charge if they have NH Healthy Kids (including Medicaid, gold, silver and a sliding scale fee for qualified families as well as private pay). They offer cleanings, check-ups, restorative services, sealants, fillings, fluoride treatment, extractions, as well as oral hygiene instruction. For an appointment call (603) 621-3482 or contact Laural Dillon via e-mail at [ldillon@eastersealsnh.org](mailto:ldillon@eastersealsnh.org)

A big thanks to the New Hampshire Family Voices *PASS IT ON* newsletter for these tips.



**Please note that the Council/Community Bridges does not endorse or support any product or program unless specified.**

# HENRY IS THRIVING THROUGH **A.R.T.S.**

By Jennifer Pike

If you are looking for a different approach to therapy, try thinking outside the box. In the Kearsarge area there is a very special place where a little boy named Henry has found success playing with clay. This place is called A.R.T.S. which stands for **Adaptive art. Respite. & Therapeutic Play. Services.** Here you will find Cindy Best teaching classes for preschoolers, home schoolers, adults, and children with special needs.

Since childhood, Cindy has loved to play with clay. Although she holds a Master's degree in pediatric physical therapy, she has always found time to take pottery classes. Cindy found ways to creatively incorporate clay and art projects into her physical therapy sessions with children and teenagers. When she moved to NH in 2001, Cindy started Little Bear Pottery, creating original clay beads, jewelry, barrettes, hand-painted gift plates, and custom tile work.

Working with children had always been her passion, so in 2006 she started summer clay camps. In 2007, Cindy started a two week Adaptive Art Camp for children with special needs. It was so popular that the camp, in addition to 1-on-1 and small group classes, grew into the nonprofit business called A.R.T.S.. A.R.T.S. offers classes and camps for children with special needs in addition to enrichment programs, resources, and respite for their caregivers.

Using her physical therapy background, Cindy adapts clay projects to each child's abilities, taking individual challenges into consideration. "Creating with clay can be a sensory experience, building upper body strength and coordination, challenging the imagination, stimulating speech, teaching mental flexibility and promoting multitasking," she explains. "The goal is for children with special needs to experience these benefits while having fun. In addition, small group classes and camps focus on the child's ability to interact with peers and play cooperatively."

Henry is an 8-year-old boy diagnosed with both Autism and Apraxia. "Henry was one of Cindy's first students. Over the past three years, he's made tremendous strides, partly due to Cindy's expertise," says Henry's mom, Laura Jean Whitcomb. "Cindy's adaptive pottery class provides fine motor skills, social skills, gross motor skills - but Henry doesn't know all this is happening; he's just having fun! He looks forward to his weekly

class and is sorely disappointed if he ever misses it," adds Laura Jean.

When Henry first started taking Cindy's class in the fall of 2007, he was nonverbal. She worked with Henry's school occupational therapist to set up a picture board system for him. Over the years, Henry has become verbal and has made huge changes in his behavior. Now his pottery class includes social communication with another child, so they can work on social skills. With Cindy's help, Henry entered 3D clay animals in the 2010 New London Historical Society Children's Art Show and won second place in the 3D category! What an enormous achievement!

Henry has also participated in Cindy's pottery camp for the last two years. His mom says he loves it! "This year, we're hoping he can do the overnight camp on the last day - it will be a first for him," says Laura Jean. She adds, "With all the therapies Henry takes, it's nice that he is able to have a little break and have some fun." Cindy does make him work with lots of fine motor activities and makes him create his own projects, but the best part is that he just doesn't know it is happening!

A.R.T.S. will also be coordinating a "Collaborative Parent Support Group" in the Kearsarge Area scheduled to start in Sept. 2010. For more information about this, after-school classes, summer camps, and caregiver services, please visit their website at [www.artstherapynh.com](http://www.artstherapynh.com). To register for camps or for additional questions, please contact Cindy Best at (603) 927-4050.

The 2010 A.R.T.S. Summer Adaptive Art Camp now offers two sessions.

Session 1: For Returning Campers (in session)  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9 to 11 am  
June 28th to July 9<sup>th</sup>  
(An optional campfire and sleepover night is offered July 9th)

Session 2: For New Campers  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9 to 11 am  
July 12th to July 23<sup>rd</sup>



Adaptive art. Respite. & Therapeutic Play. Services

**A.R.T.S.**

# Legislative Update

By Sarah Aiken

## Budget

Special Session HB 1 (known as SSHB 1) was introduced in the House Wednesday June 9th 2010 and included all the measures previously agreed to by the conferees, along with several other provisions necessary to eliminate the entire projected deficit of \$295 million. The Governor has now signed the legislation.

Addressing a state budget shortfall of this magnitude was an extremely onerous task, with difficult choices having to be made every step of the way. Although there will be some direct impact from the reductions at the Department of Health and Human Services, overall the adoption of SSHB 1 did not result in significant cuts to the Bureau of Developmental Services. For this, your legislators should be commended. Please express your appreciation to them.

## Priority Bills

**HB 569-FN clarifying insurance coverage for diagnosis and treatment of pervasive developmental disorder or autism.** This bill is a clarification of NH's existing mental health parity statute with regard to insurance coverage for children with autism. The current law includes autism as a covered condition; however medical bills for important aspects of the therapy are still not being paid by insurance companies. This bill will ensure that children will receive proper care for their condition and will, as a result, use dramatically less assistance from the state. **Enrolled (A bill is enrolled when both houses of a legislative body have voted to approve it and it has been sent on to the governor.)**

**HB 1283-FN relative to participation in the state children's health insurance program.** This bill sought to eject children from the healthy kids program if their parents had another option available to them for health insurance. There was no provision to determine if the available option was affordable or of comparable quality. Families would have to pay a sliding premium up to the full cost of the coverage for healthy kids plans based on their income. Other states that have tried to implement programs to shift children away from public health insurance plans left most of those children with no insurance. **Bill Killed**

**HB 1437 requiring the department of health and human services to provide a legislative report on Katie Beckett.** This bill would have required a report from the Department of Health and Human Services on supports available to children who are medically fragile or chronically ill. The Health and Human Services Oversight Committee will request that the department provide an analysis and recommendation regarding whether a new Medicaid waiver to provide in-home supports to these families is possible and appropriate. **Sent to Interim Study**

**HB 1499 reducing the number of area agencies in the state.** The intent of this bill was to reduce the number of area agencies from ten to four. The House heard extensive testimony, including that from BDS that the area agency system as configured is working well on behalf of the people they serve. **Bill Killed**

**HB 1599-FN establishing an emergency mental health and developmental disabilities database within the division of state police.** The legislature believes that training law enforcement to deal with individuals having certain medical, developmental, or mental health conditions would serve a much better purpose than being able to access a database when having to deal with specific emergency situations. **Bill Killed**

**HB 1572-FN, relative to the certification of integrated residential communities.** The legislature has agreed to a new version of **HB 1572**, which will establish a committee to study certification or licensing of integrated residential communities. **Enrolled**

**HB 1664 this bill makes appropriations reductions for fiscal year 2011.** This bill would have, among many other cuts, eliminated funding for individuals scheduled to come off the DD and ABD waitlist post July 1, 2010. **Laid on the table**

**SB 396-FN, limiting the use of child restraint practices in schools and treatment facilities.** This bill would eliminate child restraints such as chemical, mechanical, or physical techniques which have been shown to have harmful consequences including broken bones, asphyxiation, and other serious physical and emotional results, including death of a child. It also establishes certain reporting requirements, including prompt notification to a child's parents when restraints have been used. **Enrolled**

**These and any other bills can be seen at [www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill\\_status/](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/)**

## Elections

While it may feel like summer outside, fall is just around the corner; and with that comes elections. The State Primary will be held on Tuesday September 14, 2010 and the General Election will be held on Tuesday November 2, 2010. Please go to [www.sos.nh.gov/electionsnew.html](http://www.sos.nh.gov/electionsnew.html), to see who is running for office in your town or to find out where to vote.

If you have additional questions please contact:  
Sarah Aiken, Public Policy Coordinator  
Community Bridges  
[saiken@communitybridgesnh.org](mailto:saiken@communitybridgesnh.org)  
(603) 226-3212 x241

# Living Natural Lives

## Natural Supports + Generic Services = Community

### by Kathie Snow

The lives of many individuals with disabilities are unnatural. But having a condition that is considered a disability is *not* the basis of an unnatural life. No, the real basis can be found in the *unnatural environments and experiences* imposed on people with disabilities and their families.

When my son began receiving early intervention services (EI) and physical and occupational therapy at the tender age of four months, his life became unnatural. For the next six years, he spent more time as a *client*, with therapists and other professionals, than he did as a *child*.

When Benjamin first started therapy, I reluctantly enrolled his two-year-old sister in a Mom's Day Out program during the hours Benj was in therapy each week. Later, I found myself missing some of my daughter's activities because of my son's therapy sessions. Our family's schedule revolved around therapy and home visits by the EI service coordinator. Our lives were not our own anymore. Variations of this situation—some better, some worse—are mirrored in the lives of millions of other families.

***The lives of too many people with disabilities and their families revolve around services.***

For adults, a similar *atmosphere of clienthood* creates unnatural lives. Instead of working, they wait patiently at home (existing below the poverty level) for a voc-rehab counselor to find them a job. Many wake up every morning in a bedroom that's not their own, shackled to a group home and its rules.

Children and adults with disabilities spend an inordinate amount of time living unnatural lives in unnatural environments. Surrounding them are paid professionals, instead of family and friends in typical environments.

It won't take an Act of Congress (more services, more programs, or more money) to right this wrong. It only requires enthusiasm and a willingness to shuck the familiar trappings of the service system and today's conventional wisdom, and embrace the abundant supply of natural supports and generic services in our communities.

Contrary to popular belief, natural supports are not cotton underwear! They're the everyday people and places in our community where friendships, networking, and mutual assistance are exchanged. Friends, neighbors, churches, and community activities represent a brief (no pun intended) list of natural supports. Generic services are the common, ordinary, typical entities that create the foundation of any community. The "services" may be provided by the actual entity or by individuals from the entity, and there may be overlap with natural supports. A partial list includes: private businesses, local governments, nonprofit and community organizations, churches, and civic groups.

At one time, prior to the creation of the service system (an evolutionary process that took many years), people with disabilities—like everyone else—*did* depend on the natural supports and generic services in their communities. They had to, since there was no system to turn to for help. But as disability-specific services have grown, individuals with disabilities and their families have abandoned non-disability generic services in favor of the specialized services they're told they need. There is an unspoken—and *unproven*—assumption that disability-specific services are better or more appropriate than generic services. But I don't know of anyone who can offer proof this assumption is valid, so shouldn't we question it?

Separation from the mainstream parallels the use of specialized services for one simple reason: services designed specifically for people with disabilities exclude people who don't have disabilities. And the degree of separation (segregation) is often in direct proportion to the number of disability services used.

People who *don't* have disabilities live natural lives without really trying: a natural life is the default position! Ensuring natural lives for those with disabilities is easy when we look at the lives of those without disabilities and follow their lead.

Children and adults who want to be physically fit exercise in a variety of ways; they don't go to therapy sessions. So instead of physical therapy, children with disabilities can take karate or dance classes; participate in community sports activities (and make new friends at the same time!); or simply engage in lots of physical play at home with their families. Instead of water therapy, they can simply go swimming! Instead of horseback riding therapy, they can just go horseback riding! Do we really believe a child will not benefit from these experiences, even though a paid professional is not there to direct them? Alternatively, therapists can help parents, family members, and others learn how to incorporate beneficial "therapeutic-like" activities throughout the child's day, *in natural environments*, instead of providing hands-on manipulation at a clinic or in the home.

Adults with disabilities, with the help of family and friends (when necessary), can find employment the same way other adults do: by networking, spreading the word about the type of job they want, and beating the bushes to flush out job opportunities. They may decide self-employment (with its unlimited opportunity) is right for them. Why should they depend on voc-rehab or other disability-related employment counselors when there are so many more avenues to employment in the community?

Adults with disabilities may decide they want or need more training before entering the competitive job market. If so, they can attend trade schools or college, and seek financial assistance for education the same way others do: via scholarships, grants, and other methods.

These are just a few examples of the many ways we can ensure individuals with disabilities live natural lives. When I present this topic at workshops, it's not uncommon for a member of the audience to pooh-pooh these suggestions as "unrealistic," "too hard," or "not appropriate." You may think these suggestions could work for "someone else," but not for your child or the person you're working with. But they can, and as I mentioned before, it simply takes enthusiasm and a willingness to make it happen. As Henry Ford once said, "If you think you can, you're right; if you think you can't, you're also right." So think out of the box, brainstorm, and use whatever method of creative, enthusiastic thinking is right for you. My best ideas usually come out of the blue—in the shower, while driving the car, or before dozing off each evening. Keeping pencil and paper handy is a must! (But I haven't quite figured out how to do this in the shower!)

Please note that objections to this new way of thinking generally come from parents or professionals. Never have *adults with disabilities* responded in the negative (and if children were asked, I doubt if they would, either.) On the contrary, they usually cry out, "Yeah! Why can't we do things the way other people do?" Every adult who has taken the time to discuss this issue with me has stated, unequivocally, that the best jobs they ever had were the ones they got for themselves, not the ones procured for them by others!

The joy in discovering more natural solutions to meet people's needs is that there is no right or wrong way to do it! Within the system, we're forced to do things "by the book." But in our communities, we can do things any way we want!

You may be hesitant to make radical changes or give up the safety and security of the system for the unknown. If so, view this as an experiment. "Try it for 30 days," and if you don't like the way things are going, you can try a different approach or go back to the old ways of doing things.

Back to where we started: the presence of disability is not the cause of an unnatural life; it's the unnatural environments and aberrant experiences that are part of the service system that create unnatural lives. If we truly want people with disabilities to be included in every aspect of society, as participating, contributing citizens, we must look inside ourselves and discover what actions we can take to make this ideal a reality.

***Nothing will ever be attempted,  
if all possible objections must  
first be overcome.***  
***Dr. Samuel Johnson***

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**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**Wednesday, October 13, 2010**  
**Inclusive Communities – Organize for Change**

Parent, author, and trainer Kathie Snow will join us for light refreshments and a presentation. Learn more about Kathie Snow at her website:

<http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/>



### **Family Directory Response Card**

**Parent One**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Two**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family Member with Disability: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Member's Disability: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family Member with Disability: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Member's Disability: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family Member with Disability: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Member's Disability: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

**Family Interests:**

\_\_\_ Biking/Hiking

\_\_\_ Bowling

\_\_\_ Camping

\_\_\_ Comedians/Concerts

\_\_\_ Community Centers

\_\_\_ Community Picnics

\_\_\_ Crafting Classes

\_\_\_ Day Trips

\_\_\_ Group Dinner

\_\_\_ Lecture Series

\_\_\_ Movies

\_\_\_ Museums

\_\_\_ Plays/Concerts

\_\_\_ Sporting Events

\_\_\_ Training/Educational Series

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Siblings:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Resources, Resources, Resources

Terri Warren, Community Bridges Community Connector, put together a list of resources to help us all remember to access these no cost and low cost places in our communities. Remember to contact your Service Coordinator at Community Bridges for the contact information for these resources and more. Thank you, Terri!

- Community Parks: There are a number of parks in a variety of communities in Merrimack County. Check with your local recreation department for more information.
- UNH Cooperative Extension: There are a number of activities for the summer. Gardeners can get tips and assistance on growing a rich crop for the summer both in the garden and in containers. They will also have a listing for the county fair in their area. County Fairs kick off in July with the North Haverhill Fair July 28.
- The Christa McAuliffe Planetarium in Concord has a number of great activities over the summer. Located at 2 Industrial Drive, they are centrally located for everyone! Check with your local library to see if they have free passes available.
- The Forest Society in Concord runs a number of activities through the summer months.
- How about a round of mini-golf? Chucksters is open! Located on Bailey Road in Chichester, it is minutes from Concord and lots of fun. FORE!
- Low cost meals are available at Serve New England throughout the state. Volunteering just two hours a week in your community completes the eligibility requirement for this low cost food program.
- If horseback riding is your thing, time to check out the listings for riding. You can find leisure riding, therapeutic riding and more.
- Libraries are always great places to get books, read current magazines and newspapers, and find out about all of the community events in your area. Check out your community library!
- There are a number of great museums in the area covering everything from New Hampshire history to contemporary art.

Looking for a single source for all of the great events in your community? Check out local publications for local area events.❖

## Direct Support Professional Appreciation Month

*Continued from Page 1*

Roseanne Emerson, for instance, lives in Deering and spends forty hours a week with Andy, both in his home and in his community. Andrew is an energetic twenty-two-year-old man from Boscawen. He experiences Dandy-Walker Syndrome and Autism.

When Roseanne met Andy he was spending very little time in the community. There were sensory issues, challenging behavioral needs, and safety concerns that had prevented Andy from enjoying many typical activities for a young man in his twenties. For example, Andy did not acknowledge others when he met them.

However, in the last year, with Rose's support, Andy has been swimming at a local pool several times a week, attending theatre productions at the Capitol Center, and eating out at lunchtime. He attended his brother's wedding, an overnight trip away from home. He has consistently spent more time in the community week after week. Andy now charms everyone he meets with a handshake and a smile.

Over 1,900 direct support staff in New Hampshire serve people with disabilities. In addition, there are more than 800 shared home providers. They work with more than 10,000 people in the developmentally disabled system in our state.

These numbers, however, belie an important fact: At one point in our lives, we will all either be caregivers or receive care, and the demand for these services is increasing each year as the baby boom generation ages. Direct support professionals make sure that there is a system - a helping hand and kind face - in place to help us as we are confronted with challenging situations.

This type of difficult work doesn't come with a big paycheck or social recognition. The social rewards are great, but low wages and long hours are the unfortunate hallmarks of the trade; we need to work to increase salary and benefits. Direct support staff might be silent partners, but their own everyday existence is a familiar story - families, households, personal trials and personal triumphs. They deserve our respect for making the impossible possible on a daily basis.

Each year Governor John Lynch has designated a day in the final week of September as Direct Support Professionals Day in New Hampshire. Again this year we plan to have more than 700 yellow flags honoring the bond between support professionals and the people they support flown at the State House, and events celebrating the work support professionals do will be held around the state.

Let's take some time to honor those like Roseanne Emerson, who provide support and services to those in our community who need extra help, and in the process enrich the lives of everyone around them.❖

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## UPCOMING TRAINING AT COMMUNITY BRIDGES:

### MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION TRAINING

DATE: JULY 8 & 12, 2010

TIME: 12:30-5:00PM

Class size will be limited so please register in advance. Please remember that you must attend both classes. Please feel free to bring a bag lunch. To pre-register, contact Pam Madison, RN directly at 225-4153 x413 or via e-mail at [rdavidson@communitybridgesnh.org](mailto:rdavidson@communitybridgesnh.org)

The training will be held at the 2 Whitney Road Office in Concord. For a full list of upcoming trainings, please visit [www.communitybridgesnh.org](http://www.communitybridgesnh.org) and click on our training calendar.

### OTHER UPCOMING EVENT:

#### BOSTON/PORTSMOUTH AIR SHOW

PLACE: PORTSMOUTH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT PEASE

DATE: AUGUST 28 & 29, 2010

TIME: 9:00AM GATES OPEN

Sponsored by the Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire and featuring the most famous jet team in the world, the U.S. Navy Blue Angels. For more information, please visit their website at <http://boston-newenglandairshow.com/index.php>.

Community Bridges  
2 Whitney Road  
Concord, NH 03301

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Notes from a First Time Support Conference Attendee

*continued from page 3*

our son and ourselves that have allowed us to be better parents and to deal with everything with a little less stress. In the afternoon, we each went to a different session, and that worked out well, too.

The environment of the Conference was such that we realized we could bring our children next year and it wouldn't be a disaster, either for them or for us.

If you've never been to the annual Family Support Conference, you really should attend if you can. Come to a monthly Family Support Council meeting and I'd be happy to tell you more about the Conference as well as what the Council can do for you. Hope to see you soon.❖

#### Family Support Council

c/o Community Bridges  
2 Whitney Road  
Concord, NH 03301

Phone: (603) 927-4746 – Sondra Brake  
e-mail: [brakefam@tds.net](mailto:brakefam@tds.net)

#### VISIT US ON THE WEB!

[http://www.communitybridgesnh.org/family\\_council.cfm](http://www.communitybridgesnh.org/family_council.cfm)

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