
CENTER FOR DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Possibilities in Education and Training

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Living the Dream in a Small Town

By SueAnn Morrow, Money Follows the Person Employment Services Specialist



To say that Amos Brosamle had a rough beginning would be an understatement. He had seizures on Day One of his life and started on Phenobarbital. He was also put on a respirator due to his poor respiratory efforts when sleeping and started taking antibiotics due to infections. It was really on Day Three and Four when Amos started showing his spirit and determination. These early issues did leave him with a brain injury resulting in Cerebral Palsy.

When Amos was nine months old, he went to live with the Brosamle family. They became his permanent family when they adopted him at the age of two. It is a close family and Amos has strong bonds with his parents and siblings.

As a child, Amos was active in the small town of Merville and involved in both school and community activities. He has been described as a "friendly, respectful and well-mannered" young man. After you are around him for a while it is easy to see why those words were, and still are, used to describe him.

Medical concerns have been major issues for Amos. He received medical care from Shriner's Children's Hospital in Minneapolis for years. As an adult he is now affiliated with the Gillette Lifetime Specialty Clinic. In 2015, Amos had a deep brain stimulator implant procedure to reduce spasticity and pain.

Determined to become more independent, Amos moved to an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) operated by Opportunities Unlimited (OU) in Sioux City. There he worked on his cooking, housekeeping and laundry skills and continued physical therapy. While at OU he was awarded the Annual Angel Award, given to an outstanding resident each year. Amos humbly acknowledged that it was "cool to be chosen".

Having “met his goals”, OU suggested he use Money Follows the Person (MFP), a program which provides one year of intensive supports to Medicaid recipients on select waivers wishing to move from congregate facilities to community-based settings, to achieve his goal of living independently. Enter Sherry Stowe, MFP Transition Specialist who serves the western part of the state. Sherry worked with Amos, his family, and OU staff to plan the move and ensure that all needed supports were in place. The move took about 6 months to complete. According to Amos, the move was smooth and he credits that to good communication between the transition team, he and Sherry. He added that it was important “to also have family, friends or other connections you can call when you need assistance.”

While the move was smooth, there were some initial hiccups in maintaining services. There was staff turnover, staff missed scheduled times and information was not always shared in a timely fashion. But now, those initial problems are pretty much gone and Amos receives the services he needs. He says that the hardest part of moving and being independent was paying the bills. It wasn't having the money to pay them; that was not the issue. The issue was the process—remembering when they are due, remembering to write the check and then actually mailing it. He says he has it down now, but in the beginning, it was a frustration.

The best thing about living on his own is the freedom and independence. He enjoys setting his own schedule and “being like everyone else his age”.

Amos enjoys living in the town in which he grew up. He enjoys being close to family and friends, although he admits he usually drives into Sioux City for the nightlife.

Sports have always been an important part of Amos's life. He earned his Coaching Certificate from Western Iowa Technical Community College and has been coaching for Siouxland Christian School for two years. He will start his third season with them this fall. That keeps him busy from about November to February, Monday through Friday for about 3 hours a day. He really enjoys working with the youth as well as the paycheck.

Amos has also worked at a restaurant as a host. While he enjoyed the work, there just weren't enough hours to justify his drive into Sioux City. Working with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), Amos explored different options. He is a night owl, he enjoys driving and he is flexible about what type of job he wanted—except fast food—he was not interested in that at all! He thought he might like to be a night desk clerk at a hotel, but after a job shadow he decided that such a position was not for him. Amos says he has the best IVRS Counselor, Brittany Gutzmann out of the Sioux City Area Office. “She makes it all about me”, he states.

Using his interest in driving, Amos secured a position driving for a vocational rehabilitation counselor who is blind. He will also assist the counselor with tasks associated with helping job candidates complete select forms. As of this writing, this position has just begun and Amos has not logged too many hours. He is hoping his hours will increase.

Amos has also expressed an interest in being an Uber driver. At this time, he is exploring the possibilities, pros, cons and expectations through conversations with other Uber drivers.

Amos enjoys his life in a small town. He has his own apartment, receiving hourly services to help with some tasks—basically some cooking and deep cleaning. For the most part, however, Amos is living the dream. He encourages everyone living in a segregated setting to give living more independently in the community a try.

Community Matters ...in the DRL

ADA in details: interpreting the 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design. Kent, J. (2017). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

“Architects, designers, and everyone else involved in the built environment can turn to this authoritative resource to understand accessibility compliance for places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and public buildings.” -synopsis

Blueprint for an autism friendly city: how Battlefield became the first autism-friendly city in Missouri. Barboa, L. (2016). Battlefield, MO: KIP Educational Material.

“The City of Battlefield Autism Friendly Project is an award-winning program teaching citizens and businesses to become aware of social and environmental barriers affecting people with autism. Other cities can follow this guide to modify communication and physical spaces to create a city free of social barriers.” -synopsis

The complete guide to autism & healthcare: advice for medical professionals and people on the spectrum. Lesko, A. (2017). Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

“Special strategies and accommodations are necessary to provide optimal care for autistic patients. Most importantly, healthcare professionals and all ancillary staff must understand autism. Only through understanding of autistic individuals can effective communication occur.” - introduction

Disability incarcerated: imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada. Ben-Moshe, L., Chapman, C., & Carey, A. C. (Eds.) (2014). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

“This volume argues that disability is central to understanding the varied forms of incarceration and their manifestations through time and place. The essays together reveal that a consideration of disability broadens the conceptualization of incarceration beyond prisons to a range of places that detain, segregate, and warehouse people with atypical and/or devalued bodies/minds...” -synopsis

Deaf culture: exploring deaf communities in the United States. Leigh, I.W., Andrews, J.F., & Harris, R.L. (2018). San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing.

“A unique and fresh perspective on the exploration of Deaf culture and the development of one’s Deaf identity... the perspective offered regarding the psychological aspects of Deaf identity, particularly when compared to other cultural minorities, is very beneficial to understanding Deaf culture.” –review, Dana L. Ulmer, AuD, CCC-A

Making life more livable: simple adaptations for living at home after vision loss. Duffy, M. A. (2016). (3rd ed.). New York: American Foundation for the Blind Press.

“This updated edition includes information on using technology, preventing falls, and finding other helpful resources. Making Life More Livable gives older adults with vision loss effective solutions for living independent and productive lives.” -synopsis

Including families of children with special needs: a how-to-do-it manual for librarians.
(Rev.ed.). Feinberg, S. (2014). Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman.

"This revised edition is a step-by-step guide to serving those children and youth with disabilities as well as the brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, and other people involved in their lives." - preface

Making the library accessible for all: a practical guide for librarians.

Vincent, J. (2014). Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield.

"A single-source guide that librarians can refer to when planning, remediating, or evaluating accessibility... it emphasizes the perception of people with disabilities as providing resources to meet a common goal rather than as a population to be "served." -synopsis

"Change starts with compassion and ends with taking
action...make your difference in the world."

– Dr. Jerry R. Alliston

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