
CENTER FOR DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Possibilities in Education and Training

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Stories of Transition from Park Place and Pacific Place, Part Two

By Mike Hoenig, Program Coordinator, State and Community Projects- Center for Disabilities and Development

Editor's Note: This is the second in a three-part series dedicated to telling the stories of Money Follows the Person participants who moved from Park Place and Pacific Place to community settings.

Money Follows the Person (MFP) is a state/federal partnership which provides financial and direct support for up to one year to eligible Medicaid beneficiaries who want to move from congregate settings to the community. Each participant is assigned a transition specialist who typically coordinates all aspects of the move, connects participants to community services and supports, explores employment options with participants, and monitors progress throughout the year to increase the likelihood of a successful outcome.

Park Place and Pacific Place were two southwest Iowa Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF'S/ID) which closed in 2015. The 90 residents were given two months' notice of closure.)

Art's Story

Art Cates lives in a gorgeous apartment in Council Bluffs. He's called the apartment home for a year and a half. "It's a lot better than Park Place," Art tells me.

"Staff from REM, the agency which provides Art's residential services, came to see him at Park Place," explains MFP Transition Specialist Paige Shelton. "When he first moved out, he lived in a nice home which REM owned near the railroad tracks. The location was too noisy, and he told us he wanted to move. He and his roommate now rent an apartment."

Many things have changed for Art since the move. "My family is really important to me," explains Art. "I've gone to Texas to see my sister Connie. I'm going there again in October. My other sister, Dianna, comes to see me a lot. I like that."

When not traveling to Texas, Art keeps busy at home and around town. "I like to ride my bike, go

out to eat, and go to car shows," Art tells me. "I'm going on a picnic tonight."

MFP has provided invaluable financial and personal supports to help make Art's move to the community a successful one. "We bought him a sound machine to help him relax at night, and it's made a big difference," Transition Specialist Shelton explains.

"Even though Art's MFP year is over, we still keep in touch," Shelton tells me. "We talk about the weather, he asks me how I'm doing ... he just likes to check in."

A nice home, deep family connections and newfound natural supports; who could ask for anything more?

Carolyn's Story

Carolyn Baumgardner is proving just how important it is to believe in yourself and speak up for what you want. She's enjoying her active, busy life in Glenwood.

Things haven't come easily for Carolyn. "She had lived at Park Place since 2006," explained MFP Transition Specialist Lindsey Robertson. "Staff wasn't sure how well it would work for her to move back to the community."

"Carolyn and her best friend first moved to the small community of Pacific Junction," Robertson told me. "When she learned that her friend would be moving to Glenwood, she asked to join her. Staff from Nishna Productions, Carolyn's residential services provider, made it happen."

"Carolyn and her friend settled into a comfortable life in Glenwood," continued Robertson. "They became regulars at a local restaurant and grocery store. Shopko employees recognized them when I took them Christmas shopping."

With her routine established, Carolyn made it clear that she wanted to work five days a week. "Nishna vocational staff weren't sure if that was the right decision, but they let her try," said Robertson. "It's working out very well."

Carolyn agrees. "I put toys in boxes, and I work real well," she told me during a recent phone interview. "I like making money!"

Carolyn suffered a blow in February of this year when her best friend died. April marked another change, as her year of MFP eligibility ended. Given the concerns about her ability to succeed at the time of her move, one might expect that she would be struggling today. Once again, Carolyn is proving her resiliency.

"I love it here," she told me. "I'm supposed to go to the zoo tomorrow. The staff is real good."

Carolyn has high praise for Transition Specialist Robertson and for Cookie, a Nishna Productions staff member. "Lindsey was most helpful. Cookie helped me a lot when I moved."

Carolyn profoundly summed up all of her recent life changes. "It's a long way, a big change. I'm proud that I moved!"

Sensibilities Revisited ... From the Disability Resource Library

Blind Rage: Letters to Helen Keller / Georgina Kleege. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2006.

“As a young blind girl, Georgina Kleege repeatedly heard the refrain, ‘Why can’t you be more like Helen Keller?’ Kleege’s resentment culminates in her book, *Blind Rage: Letters to Helen Keller*, an ingenious examination of the life of this renowned international figure through 21st-century sensibilities. Kleege’s absorption with Keller originated as an angry response to the ideal of a secular saint, which no real blind or deaf person could ever emulate. However, her investigation into the genuine Helen Keller revealed that a much more complex set of characters and circumstances shaped Keller’s life.” – Publisher

Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body / Lennard J. Davis. London: Verso, 1995.

“*Enforcing Normalcy* redraws the boundaries of political and cultural discourse. By insisting that disability be added to the familiar triad of race, class, and gender, the book challenges progressives to expand the limits of their thinking about human oppression.” – Publisher

A Lens on Deaf Identities / Irene W. Leigh. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

“Dr. Leigh opens by writing about identity and labeling—two of the basic instincts that humans use in trying to classify other humans. By addressing these issues early on, Dr. Leigh prepares her readers to retreat from the phenomenology of the deaf experience and to focus on the diverse nature of deaf and hard-of-hearing people and the deaf community.” – Foreword, Stephen F. Weiner, Ed.D.

Staring: How We Look / Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

“Human stares, rather than car wrecks or sublime spectacles, epitomize the staring encounter and are the center of this book. To get at what stares do and how they understand these intense visual exchanges, this anatomy of staring draws from self-presentations, visual representations, and published accounts by and of stares as well as interviews with people who have stareable traits, all of whom have spent years—sometimes lifetimes—managing staring encounters.”—Chapter 1, *Staring: How We Look*

Staring Back: The Disability Experience from the Inside Out / edited by Kenny Fries. New York, Penguin Group, 1997.

“Throughout history, those who live with disabilities have been silenced by those who did not want to hear what we have to say. We have also been silenced by our own fear.... Now writers with disabilities affirm our lives by putting the world on notice that we are staring back.” –Kenny Fries

The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public / Susan M Schweik.

“In this watershed study of the ugly laws, Susan M. Schweik uncovers the murky history behind the laws, situating the varied legislation in historical context and exploring in detail what the laws meant. Illustrating how the laws join the history of the disabled and the poor, Schweik not only gives the reader a deeper understanding of the ugly laws and the cities where they were

generated, she locates the laws at a crucial intersection of evolving and unstable concepts of race, nation, sex, class, and gender.” –Publisher

“I am thankful for my struggles because without them, I wouldn't have stumbled across my strengths.”

Mary Hale

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