



Sharing the News

Newsletter of the Shared Living Programs of The Polus Center • Winter 2009 • Issue 6

Best Friends: Fran & Ivy

Fran Benson and Ivy Bourne met in 1963 when they were eleven years old and living at Fernald Developmental Center in Waltham. They have been inseparable friends and companions ever since. Their friendship has endured for over forty years through several moves and changes in living arrangements. For the past six years, Fran and Ivy have lived with the Jeffrey family: Shannyn and Steven, their children Skylar and Scott, and three cats: Allegra, Journey and Blizzard in Rutland, Mass. "I love Shared Living!" Ivy is eager to tell people who visit. "I do, too!" is Fran's common rejoinder.

Michael Lundquist, Executive Director of the Polus Center, and I recently visited Fran and Ivy at their home to catch up on old acquaintances. "I remember meeting you both in 1988", said Michael. Thus began a string of reminiscences from the "old days". Ivy and Fran laughed as they recalled funny stories from the Deerfield St. residence in Sharon where they lived in the 80's. "Do you remember Vicky? Remember George? Remember Deerfield Street? I remember Roberta and Leah and the time we went to Sturbridge!"

Ivy and Fran are just as animate when they talk about their current home. Like sisters who are also best friends, they finish each other's sentences and frequently talk over one another as they describe what they like about living with the Jeffreys. Ivy tells me how much she likes the food and watching Skylar, age 11 and Scott, age 9, grow up. She also likes going to the Finnish Hall in Rutland to listen to Polka music and her trips to Tangle wood. Fran likes the fact that she has an exercise bike and a piano in her home. Both Fran and Ivy are talented musicians and play the piano to entertain guests, including making several appearances at Polus Center events.

"We're very happy here", both women tell us. When Fran and Ivy first moved in with the Jeffrey family, they all lived in a

small house in eastern Massachusetts. In 2005, the Jeffreys decided to move to central Massachusetts where they bought a spacious house with an attached in law apartment designed with Ivy and Fran's needs in mind. The women share their meals with the rest of the family but have their own bedrooms, bathroom and sitting room. The arrangement works well for the two women who love to spend time together listening to satellite radio, exercising and playing the piano.

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Fran and Ivy at home with the Jeffrey family.

Fran and Ivy are avid participants in all of the Polus Center's social events. They love to go to the semi-annual gatherings hosted by Wendy Swanson and Shared Living Alliance's Advisory Board. They also enjoy the Polus Center's Summer Shindig, Ski Day

and Thanksgiving Dinner. Their favorite part of these gatherings is the refreshments, but they also love getting together with other Polus families. We are grateful to count Fran and Ivy among our friends and appreciate all they add to our lives through their music, friendliness and joy of living. 🌸

A Sizzling Summer Day at Salisbury!

“What a day!” “Gorgeous!” “Perfect!” These and similar exclamations were expressed by those who attended the Polus Center’s Third Annual Summer Shindig. In spite of the heavy traffic and packed parking lots, close to 80 people gathered at Salisbury State Reservation on a sunny Sunday this past August. Everyone enjoyed a beautiful day at the beach, complete with refreshing off shore breezes, warm ocean water and lots of friendly faces.

Under the pavilion, folks visited with friends, listened to music and enjoyed lots of delicious food. A wonderful barbeque was served up by the extended family of Theresa Kane, our intrepid Chief Operating Officer. A favorite item for foodies was the grilled sausage grinder with sautéed onions and peppers. Yum! There were also burgers, hot dogs, lots of salads, and a fabulous dessert table.



Val Walker enjoying Salisbury.

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Theresa Kane and her family taking a break from cooking!

It was wonderful to see so many friends gathered together for a day of food and fun at the beach. The North Shore was well represented as might be expected as Salisbury is practically in their backyard (luckies!) Richard, Bill, Kevin, April, Richard, Barbara, Joseph, Seth, Lana and Eric were all there along with their families and friends. Dan and the Acevedo family made the trip up from Worcester and

Danielle and Mark came all the way from Marshfield on the South Shore. Many people traveled from the Boston area, including Val and her Shared Living family as well as Delores, Brian and Gary. Fran and Ivy, who never miss a picnic, made the trek all the way from Rutland.

Thanks to all who helped make the day such a great experience. We look forward to seeing everybody at our next event! 🌸



Cornelius & Gary soaking up the sun.

Polus Center on the Move!

Two Polus Center offices have moved in the past few months.

- Central Mass. Community Network moved from its Park Ave location to 195 Lake St. in Worcester. CMCN’s new digs are spacious and right on the shores of Lake Quinsigmond. Laurie Sault, Patricia Mafra and Godfrey Koffi are all enjoying their new location, especially the beautiful views and dreams of a Polus Center cruise on the lake.
- Commonwealth Business Associates is settling into its new office in Quincy, at 21 Mayor Thomas McGrath Highway where it is sharing space in a suite of offices belonging to Attorneys Thomas Williams and Jim Bartlett. CBA’s office was previously located in Somerville, a location that was difficult for the people CBA supports to visit. The new office will make it possible for Althea Henderson, Assistant Director and Hyacinth Whitt, Employment Specialist, to better network with resources in the community and is fully accessible for the people they support. We hope to hold an Open House for our newest office space in the near future.

Reorganization: GBCN merges with SLA

- Attention all alphabet soup aficionados! The above heading refers to a recent change made to the organization of Polus’ Shared Living programs. Households previously supported by Greater Boston Community Network (GBCN) are now being supported by Wendy Swanson of Shared Living Alliance, which serves the South Shore and Boston. Althea Henderson has taken on the role of Assistant Program Director. The combined programs now support 16 households. One benefit of the merge is that all former Boston families now get invited to SLA’s famous semi-annual gatherings. The most recent gathering, held in October, was a joyful coming together of families and friends with a holiday theme. All Shared Living Alliance households will also be invited to a Discussion Forum to be held at our new office in Quincy.



Thinking about...

The Third Place: Becoming a “Regular”

At two recent Discussion Forums with our Shared Living Providers in Worcester and

Amesbury, we talked about how to enhance the number and quality of community connections for ourselves and the people we support. To help us think about this topic in a new way, we explored the concept of the “Third Place”, as described in the book, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Can Get You Through the Day*, by Ray Oldenburg.

The Third Place refers to those places, like the bar “Cheers”, where everyone knows your name. For some people, it is the Elks Club, the bowling alley, church or the coffee shop on the corner. It’s called the Third Place, because after home (your First Place) and work (your Second Place), it’s where you spend most of your time and where you feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.

At the Forums, we drew maps of our communities and the places that are important to us. Some people work out of their homes so did not have a real “Second Place” in their lives. For these folks, including many Shared Living providers, having a Third Place, a local establishment where you can go to meet up with friends is even more important. People shared examples of their Third Places: church, the barber shop, a pottery studio, Dunkin Donuts and the corner store.

We discussed ways of helping the people we support to develop their own Third Places. Edwin, who supports Dan Ricard in Worcester, talked about Dan’s success in becoming a regular at Denny’s. Over the years, Dan has actively pursued a place for himself in his community. He started going to Denny’s many years ago and found it to be a very friendly supportive place to meet friends and share a meal. He is a regular there and is familiar with all of the waitresses, cooks and managers. “Everyone

at Denny’s knows and likes Danny”, Edwin told us. “They know his favorite menu items and they always make him and his guests feel welcome. It’s like a second home for him.”

As wonderful as Dan’s story is, we need to acknowledge that the people we support are not as connected as Dan. For people who are uneasy in public places and have difficulty communicating, it may take more effort to help them become regulars, but it is certainly possible for anybody to find and nurture a place in their community where they feel accepted and at home. We all need to thoroughly examine our interests and skills and then explore the community to find a good match. We can also do something simple, like go to the same restaurant for lunch or coffee at the same time every week. Just being present at a local coffee shop is a great start for someone who has few community connections.

Everyone left the Forums energized to work on developing Third Place connections for themselves and the people they support. Our communities will be strengthened by our presence and our lives will be enriched in countless ways by discovering and utilizing more Third Places. 🌸

IN MEMORIAM

James McAdams

February 24, 1947 – April 17, 2009

The Polus Center community lost a dear friend when Jim McAdams passed away in April. Jim lived for many years with Jeannie Polino and her family in Winthrop, MA. Jim was a friendly person who had many acquaintances in Winthrop and Boston. Jim took the T into the city every Saturday. He met friends at Fanueil Hall for lunch and liked strolling around Quincy Market. He loved being part of the Polino family, enjoying picnics and parties and going to the family’s summer place in New Hampshire. Jim lived a block away from the ocean in Winthrop and every day would take a walk to the beach after work.

Jim was a loyal friend and is missed very much by his friends and family.

Holiday fundraiser!

Check your mailboxes for our special **Gifts that Matter** catalogue. You will find lots of wonderful ways to remember your friends and family while you’re helping people in Massachusetts and in Central America!

Spotlight:

Welcome, Peter and friends!

On September 12, 2009, we welcomed Peter Aronson and friends to the Polus Center family. Peter is a young man with autism who lives in Amherst, Mass. Peter, his mother, sister, grandparents and a wide circle of friends were instrumental in advocating for Peter to remain living at home and to work in the community once he turned 22, the traditional age at which special education students leave school and enter adult DDS (Department of Developmental Services) programs.

Peter has been an active member of his community



him respond badly when he is grouped with other people with autism or other disabilities. He feeds off of others' behaviors and becomes quite anxious. It is not always easy for Peter when he is in the community. He can become overwhelmed and upset. But it is the best place for him – I know that in my heart.”



ABOVE: Molly and Peter Aronson with thier Mom, Naomi.

LEFT: Peter at work on the farm.

since his move to Amherst in 1998. He attended Amherst Public Schools, worked at a local Farm School, had a paper route and was a regular on the bike trail near his home. Peter is a roller blading whiz and also enjoys swimming, bike riding and ice skating. Peter's mother, Naomi Dratfield, has been a tireless advocate for his right to experience everything typical students do: adventure, lifelong learning, friends and meaningful work. “My vision is for Pete to be a contributing and valued member of his community and for him to be able to pursue his interests and do the kind of work he most enjoys – farming and caring for farm animals.”

Naomi's vision is on its way to be realized, thanks to a program funded through the Northampton office of DDS. Jan Doody of the Polus Center is guiding the program which includes a community based vocational program and supports for Peter to take part in community activities. During the day, he goes to various jobs with his employment specialist, Fran Vancour,

a former teacher. Most days, they go to Brookfield Farm in Amherst. Peter and Fran spend several hours there washing vegetables, feeding the chickens and pigs and cleaning the vegetable storage area. The folks at Brookfield Farm are very grateful to Peter for the work he does and have come to see him as part of the crew. Peter also helps out at Kate's kitchen in Holyoke and Warner Farm in Cummington, MA, a retreat center owned and operated by Rich Fournier, a longtime friend of the Polus Center.

Peter also spends time every day learning about current events and working on his reading skills. He helps make lunch, does the dishes and then heads outside for fun and exercise. Several respite providers spend time with Pete afternoons and weekends, exploring the local scene. Peter has been learning how to take the public transportation to downtown Northampton, where he likes to walk around and go to coffee shops and stores. Peter has become a regular at many establishments and is often seen hiking the trails near his home or on the bike trail.

“Being in the community brings out the best in my son,” Naomi says. “I have seen

We at the Polus Center are very pleased to be supporting Peter Aronson in his endeavors and in being part of his family's vision for a future of inclusion and accomplishment. ❁

Night of 100 Dinners!

A Fundraiser for the Shared Living Programs of the Polus Center

Saturday, February 27, 2010

Friends of the Polus Center from around the world will gather on one evening, February 27, 2010, to share food, drink and fellowship. Each host will invite 8-10 friends to join them for a meal at their home or at a public venue. The host provides the food and drink and each guest contributes up to \$20.00. All of the venues (100 or more, we hope!) will be connected via the internet so everybody can enjoy the spirit of the evening. Proceeds benefit the Shared Living households supported by the Polus Center.

Please join us in this event by hosting a dinner!

For more information call Jan at 978-724-3361.