



Sharing the News

Newsletter of the Shared Living Programs of the Polus Center • Winter 2011 • Issue 8

Mark McGreal A Man on the Go

Several years ago, Danielle McGreal started documenting the adventures of her son Mark, with whom she lives in Marshfield, MA., by starting a collection of action photos. There's a picture of Mark in the driver's seat of a GTO, one of him sailing on Duxbury Bay, another of Mark in a glass bottom boat in Key West, a photo of him at the Salvador Dali Museum in Florida and another of him skiing with his friends Werner and Julie at Wachusett Mountain. My personal favorite is a picture of Mark and

The pictures of Mark reveal a life rich in experience and adventure. He and his family vacation together regularly in Maine, Florida and New Mexico. He has also traveled to Arizona and closer to home, visits Salisbury Beach and Martha's Vineyard on a regular basis. Mark has a wide circle of friends and family which includes his best friend Carlos and his buddy Frank who goes out with Mark every Saturday to explore southeastern Mass. Another companion is Chris, who goes sailing with Mark every week

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Mark kayaking in Maine.

Danielle at the Grand Canyon. It captures the beauty of that place and the joy he was feeling at being there. Danielle told me that Mark, who has difficulty using words to express himself, really opened up at the sight of the Grand Canyon and was very talkative. "He was like a different person", she told me.

during the summer. Mark is also close to his brothers Dan and Brian and his long time friends and traveling companions, Werner and Julie. Everybody assists to make sure that Mark has a good time and his presence adds to everyone's enjoyment. "We work hard to make these trips happen", Danielle tells me, "and it's

worth all the effort when I see how happy Mark is."

Each photograph in the collection shows Mark enjoying activities that might be considered too challenging or dangerous for a person with physical and developmental challenges. Whether it's hiking, skiing, kayaking, or rafting, Mark is there, actively participating and ready for any new fun activity that may come his way. Dancing, bowling, golfing, fishing, going to classic car shows, farms and fairs – Mark keeps up an active pace year round. His favorite season, however, is summer and his favorite activities take place on the water. Whether it's sailing, cruising or kayaking, Mark is happiest when he is on the lake

or in the ocean.

Mark's story is inspirational and I thank him and Danielle for sharing it with me. I can't wait to hear what new adventures await Mark in 2011. I'm sure his collection of action photos will keep growing and impressing us with his courage and joy of living. ❁

Employment For All

Successful Symposium Hosted by the Polus Center

On September 23, 2010, the Polus Center hosted a symposium at The Boston Foundation entitled “Inclusive Employment in a Tough Economy”. Attended by over 40 people representing a dozen agencies from all over Massachusetts, the symposium was the beginning of what we hope will be a fruitful collaboration among people who are committed to creating employment opportunities for people with disabilities in our state.

The symposium was the result of a planning process among Polus staff and members of the Advisory Board of Commonwealth Business Associates (CBA), the Polus Center’s supported employment program. The purpose of the event was to explore creative options for employment and how to overcome barriers to employment that exist, especially in the current economic climate.

Keith Jones, a member of the Polus Center’s Board of Directors and Executive Director of Da Soul Touchin’ Experience, set the stage for our discussion with his presentation, “Inclusive Employment in the New Economy.” “Everyone benefits when companies hire people with disabilities,” Keith told us. Employers benefit from having dedicated dependable workers who are eager to go to work every day. People with disabilities benefit by being part of the workforce and by being contributing members of society. Our communities benefit by having people with disabilities integrated into the workforce. “Our communities are stronger when everyone participates,” Keith proclaimed.

“The segregation of people with disabilities is morally wrong and needs to stop.” This was the message of our second speaker, Dale Deleo of the Training Resource Network, Inc., whose talk was entitled “Building an Employment First



Keith Jones and Dale Deleo

Culture for People with Disabilities”. He challenged participants to find ways to overcome barriers to full integration in the workforce for the people we support. One problem that Dale spoke of is the expectations that surround people with disabilities in our culture. They are often not expected to grow up to be contributing members of society and are routinely not given opportunities to learn the skills necessary to be successfully employed. Reliance on readiness models, such as pre-vocational programs, prevents people from learning in the real world. Dale encouraged participants to be open to innovation and to challenge the status quo when it comes to planning supports for people with disabilities.

During the last hour of the symposium, participants met in small groups and discussed creative ways to address the challenges presented by Keith Jones and Dale Deleo. Developing apprenticeship models, helping people become self-employed, networking with local businesses and becoming more aware of economic trends in our cities and towns were some of the topics discussed. People came away from the symposium energized

and ready to take on the challenge of creating real economic opportunities for people with disabilities in Massachusetts and beyond. ❁

This fall, the Polus Center welcomed several new people to our staff. We are excited by the energy and experience that each of them bring to the Polus family. Welcome to:

- **Neal Goodman** has joined The Polus Center as the new Program Director for Shared Living Alliance in Quincy. He brings with him more than two decades of experience in the developmental disabilities field. Over the years, Neal has worked in a variety of residential, day rehabilitation, recreation, and family support programs. During the past five years as Family Support Coordinator at Cambridge Family & Children’s Service, he coordinated a wide range of services for families and individuals with special needs. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Sibling Support Network. In addition to his social service background, Neal is an award-winning video documentary producer specializing in mental health and disability issues.

PROVIDER FORUM

What do we mean by “Age Appropriate”?

Although our society puts a lot of emphasis on being young (age-defying eye cream anyone?), none of us likes to be treated like a child. In fact, most children can’t wait to grow up so they can get to do what adults do, such as drive, have a cell phone, earn money, stay up late, etc. Young people also strive to look like adults by wearing make up, getting the latest hair dos and the most up to date adult fashions. Yet, many adults with disabilities are treated like children their entire lives. Statements such as “He’s a good kid” are damaging to people with developmental disabilities because they limit the perceptions of what a person can do and who a person really is. If someone is considered to be a child, even if he or she is in their thirties, forties, fifties, etc., this perception can result in many life defining experiences: being called childish names like “Tommy”, being spoken to in a sing song kind of voice, being given childish toys like dolls and stuffed animals and taking part in childish activities like coloring, playing on swing sets, and going to only Disney movies.

The topic of considering age



Regina, Thelma, Beatrice and Florence at the forum.

appropriate experiences and possessions for people with disabilities often results in lively debate among those who offer support to them. At a recent Forum held in Worcester, Home Providers from Quinsigamond Shared Living and Lakeside Community Connection were animated as they shared their thoughts on this topic. People with teenagers talked about how important it is for them to “graduate” to doing things like having a Facebook page, getting a cell phone and

going to parties without their parents. We talked about helping the people we support to acquire some of these valued adult possessions and experiences.

We also discussed the problem of people choosing to dress in a certain way or buying things like stuffed animals for themselves. Sometimes the people we support have not been exposed to all of the adult choices that are out there and they, and sometimes their families, are more comfortable with more childish choices. We agreed that people could be encouraged to buy things that are more age appropriate such as porcelain figures or pillows and they could gradually replace their older childish possessions with more adult ones. People can also be encouraged to wear more adult clothing and accessories. When people look more mature, they are more likely to be seen as more mature and treated accordingly.

Thanks to everybody who participated in this interesting forum. We have several handouts on this theme. Call or email Jan Doody to request a copy. Jan can be reached at 978-724-3361; jdoody@poluscenter.org. ❁

New Faces at the Polus Center!



Left to right: Neal Goodman, Rich Reho, Colette Cave, and Tom Landry.

helped lead the first project in Self-Determination for people with disabilities in the country in the Monadnock region of New Hampshire and developed innovative approaches to inclusion through the arts, education, shared living and proactive community development. Over the years, Richard has organized and directed several projects in inclusive, co-creative theater, and is currently the Director of Turning Point Theater in Peterborough, NH.

- **Colette Cave** is the new Program Director for Lakeside Community Connection, which supports households from the former CMCN program. Colette is a native of New Hampshire, with a BS in psychology. Early in her career, she worked at a group home in Leominster, a position which she loved. She married and helped her husband with his business for many years. When their last child left for college, she reentered the work field and was hired as a Service Coordinator for DDS in Worcester. This past summer, she joined Polus and expresses

that she is delighted to be working with such a dedicated team of people.

- **Tom Landry** joins us as one of our new Program Directors in Worcester. His program, Quinsigamond Shared Living, embodies part of the former Central Mass. Community Network (CMCN). Tom is a native and current resident of Leominster, MA and a graduate of St. Bernard High School in Fitchburg, MA. Tom received a Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Notre Dame and graduate degrees and professional certificates from Catholic University of America, Washington DC, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, MA, and the Graduate Spiritual Foundation, South Bend, IN. He has spent the majority of his professional career in Central Massachusetts, serving families and faith communities, including ten years as a chaplain at UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester. ❁

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A Holiday Feast in Worcester

The community room at Plantation Towers in Worcester was packed with holiday revelers on December 15 for a party sponsored by Quinsigamond Shared Living and Lakeside Community Connection. Folks from many Shared Living households were present along with friends, family members and staff from the Polus Center. There was a bounteous buffet provided by Eddie Esper, the head chef at Chioda's in Worcester. Everyone had a wonderful time, visiting, sharing gifts and celebrating the season.

Thanks to Colette Cave and Tom Landry from Quinsigamond Shared Living and Lakeside Community Connection for organizing this event.



Party On! Laurie Sault, Julie Gain, and Theresa Kane.



Lorna Goodman in the holiday spirit.

Best wishes to all for health and happiness in the new year! ❁

Nights out!

The Polus Center celebrated the holidays this year by stepping out and going to a show. Lots of Polus Center friends and staff received tickets to attend a show of their choice. The Urban Nutcracker, Boston Pops, Radio City Rockettes in Boston, A Christmas Carol or a Celtic Sojourn at the Hanover Theater in Worcester, and the Vienna Boys Choir in Lowell were just some of the exciting events enjoyed by folks in Worcester, Boston



Dennis and Kent Taylor attended the Pops Concert in Worcester together.

and the North Shore. Everyone had a fabulous time dressing up and going to a holiday extravaganza with their friends and family. Thanks to all who made this possible – our donors and the wonderful people in our Clinton office who organized the purchase and distribution of tickets.



Mark Your Calendars!

Following are some not to be missed events sponsored by the Polus Center:

**Saturday, February 26, 2011
7:00 pm**

"Rock Your Irish", an evening of great music and celebration of Irish culture at the Clinton Town Hall in Clinton, MA, featuring two nationally known Irish rock bands, The Gobshites and Black 47. Tickets are \$15.00. Purchase a table of 8 for \$90.00! All proceeds benefit the Polus Center. Tickets are on sale at www.poluscenter.org or by calling 978-368-1550.

**Wednesday, March 2, 2011
9:00 am – 3:00 pm**

5th Annual Ski Day at Wachusett Mt in Princeton, MA. Invitations will be going out in February. Don't miss this exciting day on the mountain. The Adaptive Ski Program makes it possible for everyone to take to the slopes. Call Jan Doody at 978-724-3361 for more information.

Upcoming Provider Forums:

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

195 Lake Ave., Worcester, for Quinsigamond Shared Living and Lakeside Community Connection

Thursday, April 7, 2011

21 Mayor Thomas McGrath Highway, Quincy, for Shared Living Alliance