

Telling Our Stories...

Personal notes from families and people who have lived in institutions

May 01, 2007

Mr. Craig Demers
85 Gosfield Townline
Essex, Ontario.

Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Toronto.

Dear Member of Provincial Parliament:

My name is Craig Demers. I lived at Southwest Regional Centre for 45 years. Life at SWRC was good. I worked delivering mail and putting things where they belonged in the stock room. The staff worked hard to make sure I was happy and comfortable. If it had not been for the planned closing of SWRC, I would still be there. With it closing, my brothers Grant and Bruce were put into a position to make many choices on my behalf. This was not easy for them as my father is elderly now and had many fears pertaining to the whole process. Fortunately, a lady named Carmen at SWRC helped guide my family on the many steps that had to be taken for me to re-locate and start a new life.

Carmen showed my brothers different places that I could go. Grant had to fulfill my late Mothers request, that, I would never go to another Venture House again. After viewing other locations, Grant said Mom would have approved of Community Living Essex. Life now in the group home is as busy as my life was at SWRC. Community Living Essex has gone through great efforts to be sure the transition was as smooth as possible. I still get to see my many friends at SWRC and I am still on the Special Olympics team there. I know my new support staff is doing everything possible to make sure my life is better than it was before. I have my own room, instead of a ward. I have personal furnishings rather than shared amongst many.

I go out into the community now and work at the Legion and a senior's residence and am making many new friends. I also have many new friends at my new church group, which is a lot of fun. I sure love going there as I am a very social fellow. I live a lot closer to Dad now so I can go visit him once a week at the retirement home.

Grant and Bruce had to go to Edmonton Alberta to find work.
They made sure I was ok before they went.

Your's truly,

Craig Demers

Craig
Demers

May 1, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

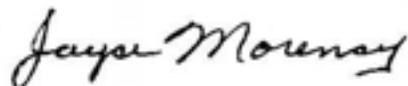
I am a mother of two developmentally challenged adults. Christine Ann is 54 years old and Wayne is 53 years old. They had been living at Southwestern Regional Centre (SRC) for over 40 years. Currently, they are both living in the Amherstburg community area. What a difference in them! They are much happier, relaxed and at ease. Christine just loves her own room. She loves that she has her own place to put her super heroes. She has bonded well with her caregivers. They are very thoughtful of her privacy. This house is her home and she loves it. She often says that she doesn't want to go back to SRC.

Wayne is very happy with his home. We've found out what a sense of humour Wayne has. He also has some of the best caregivers. They care about Wayne and when I talk to them about Wayne, they are very open about all his care and needs. Wayne goes out every day. He must get his car ride in. He sees his sister every week. They spend afternoons together. I can see them whenever I please and as often as I please. They are just 10 minutes away and I talk to them every other day on the phone.

Here I was, 71 (at the time) and worrying about what I was going to do to help my children. Then, I met some people who helped me understand and put me at ease. They showed me the resources out there that would help Christine and Wayne. I now know that I have spent all that time worrying for nothing. They have the best caregivers and are happy.

Without the government funding, Christine and Wayne would still be locked away at SRC. At my age of 73 and the distance between us was making it difficult to travel and see them as often as I would have liked. My visits were getting less every year. I can only say THANK YOU for with out your help, I would have lost contact with my children.

Sincerely,



Joyce Morency

April 30, 2007

Dear Members of Provincial Parliament:

On August 30, 1999 a big change and adjustment took place in Kevin Cartier's life and in mine also. After living at Southwest Regional Centre he returned home to Wallaceburg to live.

Much credit goes to Community Living Wallaceburg and staff at Southwest Regional Centre, plus his caregivers at his new home. They were all so supportive to Kevin and I and made the transition much easier to accept.

He now has his own bedroom, 24 hour care, home cooked meals, daily hugging and rocking time with mom and participates in many activities. He enjoys attending all family functions, he even was groomsman in his brother's wedding.

Kevin goes bowling, horseback riding, swimming, camping, grocery shopping, dances, goes to the barbershop for haircuts, banking, and attends church services every week. At Christmas Father Greg asked Kevin to bring up Baby Jesus to put in the manger, I was so proud of him. Kevin is secretary of People's First.

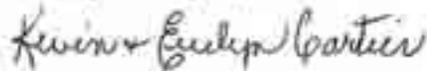
We vacation in Owen Sound where his sister Lau Anne lives and we stay in a motel there for 2 or 3 nights, with the help of staff. We also go on many day outings with staff's help, like Colasanti's in Leamington, Winter Wheat in Sparta, rhubarb festival in Shedden, picnics by the water, shopping for the day with lunch included. We never got to do all these things for 26 years that he was at Southwest Regional Centre.

The wonderful staff who see to his needs have set up a sensory tactile area, since Kevin has now lost his sight. They are also teaching him intervention with signs and concrete clues. They also let him assist in hand over hand preparation of meals and washing dishes and doing his own laundry.

Kevin used to be quite vocal and angry and pinchy but these bad habits are almost non-existent now. Kevin thrives on hugs and love, and he gets this daily now from mom. If I take an occasional day off, there seems to be something missing in my day and his too.

Our thanks and praise go to everyone at Community Living Wallaceburg and all the wonderful, thoughtful caregivers at his new home. I would definitely endure all the planning and anticipation again, it was all well worth it. Kevin and mom are together again. Both of us know that dreams do come true.

Thank you everyone,



Kevin & Evelyn Cartier
and family

Dear Members of Provincial Parliament,

I moved into my new home in Orillia in the middle of January 2007. I had lived at Huronia Regional Centre since 1962. Over the past three months I've experienced a number of new things! I enjoy visiting with my new house mates and making new friends. I also really like a cup of Tim Hortons coffee. Now that the weather is nice I go for walks during the day to the Tim Hortons at the end of the block.

Another thing that I like to do is shop! I really like the Dollarama, and there is always something interesting to see at Wal-Mart or at the Mall! I recently went to a salon and had a pedicure for the first time and really enjoyed the massage chair.

On days when I don't feel like going out to do anything, I love to look at magazines and sit in my new rocking chair. I recently spent a week visiting my mother at Easter, and had a wonderful time. I look forward to spending my birthday at my mom's at the end of May.

By Joan Crooks

Ridwan Place on the River,
550 Hillbrook St., Apt 508
Ottawa, ON K1N 7M3
December 22, 2006.

Dear Mr. Shuck,

This letter is long overdue to express my gratitude to the members of your staff involved in my son's move from Ridwan Regional Centre to Kempenville.

I was most apprehensive over the move. George had faced many changes over the past two years. His father and brother had died and his home in Ottawa was sold and moved to a retirement home - how would he cope?

I can't believe the change in George. He has opened up to people, is talking and singing. He is more relaxed than I have seen him over the past 44 years.

A special "thank you" is due to Maryon, Kim and the other team members who care for George. He has bonded well with them and

is enjoying home life for the first time in many years.

I would like to express my appreciation to Janice Rowe, Dore Black and Margaret Leaver. Janice and Deborah were able to allay my concerns over the move. Margaret Leaver has brought George to Ottawa to visit me and has established a wonderful relationship with George. I can't possibly thank them enough for their care and concern.

You have a wonderful staff and I can say it that George is now enjoying life in his new home - as happy as last many years ago.

Once again my deepest thanks.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Bradley.

May 1-07

Our experience started some 44 years ago when our daughter Kim was admitted to Cedar Springs Southwest Regional Centre. Over the years many needed changes took place regarding treatment, care decisions and especially attitude towards challenged individuals, but during that time we always found the staff to be an extremely supportive and caring group.

With the impending closure of the large facilities, a decision was made for a group home placement, with understandable unknown concerns, such as staffing, safety, recreation, and emotional transition.

The fears were unfounded due to the procedures implemented, starting ^{with} Essex Community Living representatives doing an observation and familiarization trip to assess Kim's eligibility, which we were glad to hear was acceptable.

This was followed by an orientation visit for Kim's reaction to her new home and environment, and along with the information and patience afforded to us, the moving decision we had made was affirmed in our minds.

Having a real home, with her own room providing a personal and private setting, and especially the acceptance of her neighbours, has surely impacted on us and Kim.

The home setting creates a more normal lifestyle, and along with the outings, recreational activities, and exposure to various venues such as movies, the high school musical, as well as an overnight trip to Niagara Falls have certainly enhanced her quality of life.

Having Kim in the vicinity of family, and being looked after by a caring, concerned, co-operative staff who in a way are really her surrogate parents has made this experience a winner all around.

N. Stein Lara Stein

6523 Marina Drive
Manotick, ON
K4M 1B3

August 13, 2006

Mr. John Hewitt;
Administrator
Rideau Regional Centre
Smiths Falls, Ontario.

Dear Mr.Hewitt;

Four weeks have passed since my son, Richard, moved from the Rideau Regional Centre [RRC] to a new home owned by Community Living North Grenville[CLNG] in Kemptville. After 4 weeks I am elated to report that none of the anticipated problems and anxieties that we anticipated might develop, because of the move from his home for the last 46 years, have happened. I think that we can consider the transfer a 100% success. Many people contributed to this success story.

I credit the foresight of Deborah Beckett[now retired] who was the supervisor of ward W4C at the time of the closure announcement, with much of this success. When the announcement was made I expressed to Deborah, my concerns about how Ricky would react to a move. He is deaf as well as being profoundly retarded, so could not be talked to. He had a history of adversely reacting to any change. We agreed that moving with familiar faces might help and she identified 3 other men on the ward who had the same quiet disposition as Richard. With the help of Janice Rowe and Pamela Johnson [MCSS Placement Facilitators] the Guardians of the other 3 men were contacted and we met each other and expressed our mutual concerns about the RRC's closure. We agreed that moving 4 friends together was desirable. It was arranged that we visit several group homes operated by several different Agencies. We quickly concluded that we preferred a rural rather than a urban environment for our relatives. Arrangements were made for us to meet with the Executive Director and Senior Staff of Community Living North Grenville located in Kemptville. A couple of us also met with the CLNG Board. They agreed to take the 4 men from the RRC. After an unsuccessful search for an existing house, they agreed to build a new house for the 4 men. It is a beautiful large bungalow on a 1 1/2 acre fenced lot. The house is "state of the art" in every way, including things like an ultra violet water treatment system, a fire sprinkler system, a fresh air exchange system, a natural gas fired electric generator that will automatically switch on in the event of a power failure. A new 7 passenger van has been purchased for the house. CLNG have also purchased all new furniture and appliances for the house.

July 17th 2006 was moving day- a day I had dreaded since "Challenges and Opportunities" was first published 20+ years ago and the ultimate closure of all Schedule 1 facilities was announced. A friend and I were at the RRC about 8:15am. Ricky and the other men were picked up about 8:30am by CLNG. Two RRC staff also accompanied them.They were not delivered to their new home until noon hour. My friend and I quickly removed all Richard's pictures,bulliten boards etc.from his walls, packed up all his stuffed animals and ornaments from his dresser and set out for his new home at _____ in Kemptville. The 4 men spent the morning at the CLNG activity center. This interval gave my friend and I a chance to get his pictures up on the walls, Knick Knacks on his new dresser and desk and stuffed animals on his new bed. When Ricky arrived at noon hour, he quickly surveyed his new bedroom, climbed up on his new bed and took a short nap between two of his familiar stuffed animals.