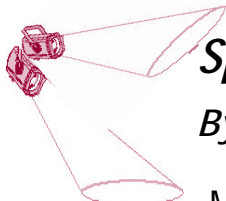


NEW BEGINNINGS IN COMMUNITY LIVING

Newsletter of the Family Education Project

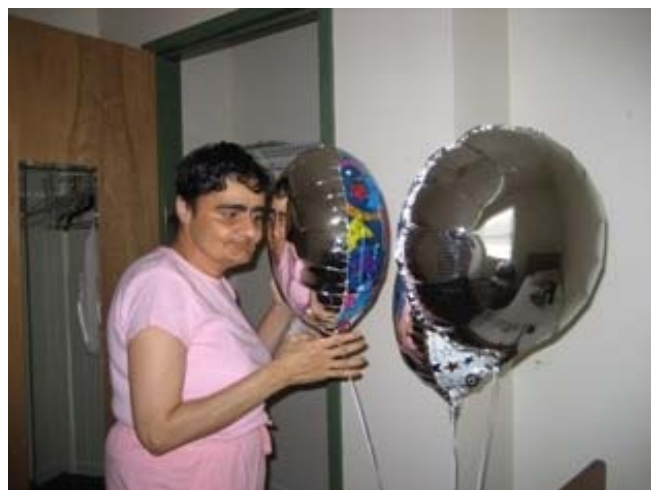
University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey School of Public Health/Health Systems and Policy Department



Spotlight on Success: A Day in the Life of Milagros

By Antoinette S. Johnson

Milagros (which means “miracle” in Spanish), is having the time of her life being a resident of a great community. On May 15, 2008, she made her transition from a developmental center in New Jersey to her new home in a Central Jersey community, and life has been very exciting for her since moving. “She lives in a supported living apartment,” stated Charles Robinson Jr., assistant director of the Community Access Unlimited Agency, which provides Milagros with her daily supports. Charles has worked with Milagros since June 23, 2008. His dedication to Milagros comes shining through as he puts in long daily hours. He does not notice the long hours because he feels a sense of accomplishment when he does his job.



Although Milagros spent most of her life in a developmental center before she moved, the transition did not happen overnight. It was done very carefully to make sure that all of her necessary supports were in place before moving. She had a team of dedicated people working with her to ensure her transition would be as smooth as possible.

Milagros shares her home with two female housemates and has great neighbors all around her who look out for her because they care. She participates as an active member of her community by going to see movies at a neighborhood park, attending local barbecues, and eating out at Red Lobster. Milagros enjoys going to a day program and volunteering at Trinitas Hospital. Community Access Unlimited also has a fantastic line-up of activities that are conducted on a monthly basis for anyone who is supported by them to participate. Activities

Milagros continued on page 2

include: craft shows, bowling, reading and cooking classes, game night, dinner outings, bingo, and various parties.

Everyone that meets Milagros states that she is a warm-spirited, loving individual. "I think she is very affectionate, and if you sit next to her, she is very open to new people; she is lovable," stated Patricia Oviedo, support coordinator for Neighbours, Inc., who helped to develop Milagros' transition plan. Patricia has worked with Milagros for many years and is happy that she is now meeting new friends and living a new life in the community.

Milagros is now able to spend time with her family which was difficult to do in the past because of the developmental center's distance from the family residence. The family is very involved with Milagros' new life.

One of the positive things that Milagros is able to do now is travel. She has been to Six Flags Great Adventure and many neighborhood stores. One day soon, she will travel out of state possibly to places like the Bahamas and Cape Cod. She also likes music and going to dances. Positive things that she has learned include putting away groceries, placing her clothes in her hamper after undressing, and making sure the dishes she uses go into the sink.

Charles admires her "spunk and get up and go." He describes her as happy, outgoing, and energetic. Another member of her support staff, Betty Vertule, admires Milagros as well. She says, "It's amazing to see her transformation." In her transformation, she has learned a lot by taking part in household responsibilities.

None of this could be possible if it were not for the team effort of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Neighbours, Inc., Community Access Unlimited, and Woodbridge Developmental Center where she lived before moving.

It can definitely be said that the miracle of life has been bestowed upon Milagros, and she is living it to the fullest. She is an awesome human being enjoying her new life in the community!



Interview was conducted by Antoinette S. Johnson and Natalie Trump, UMDNJ-School of Public Health, Family Education Project

Pictured from left to right: Patricia Oviedo, Support Coordinator, Neighbours-Inc., Milagros, and Betty Vertule, Assistant Support Counselor, Community Access Unlimited

Reviewing a Year of New Accomplishments

By David Wright, Family Education Director



This past year has seen many individuals have the opportunity to begin new lives living in a community setting. At this point there have been over one hundred people who have made this move. Amongst these transitions, 13 people have moved utilizing the new support coordination process.

The support coordination process is a person-centered method involving a team of those who know and care about the person transitioning. After developing an essential lifestyle plan (ELP), the person and their team are able to select and purchase the appropriate supports with the individual's designated budget. Families play an essential role in the team and the voice of family members is valued in the process.

It has been stirring to witness the variety of settings people have moved to. These settings reflect the diverse needs and desires of each individual. The UMDNJ Family Education Project (FEP) has chronicled some of these transition stories in the New Beginnings Newsletter this year. In addition to our newsletter, there have been learning events held over the past year to help inform and support families considering community transition for family members. Learning events included 4 Family Forums which provide pictures of community living and 4 New Beginning meetings which review the support coordination transition process.

In the upcoming year, the FEP will continue to provide learning opportunities and inform families of important events as the Olmstead initiative moves forward. There will be many other events available throughout the state to help individuals and families understand and successfully use the opportunities that now exist. We are looking forward to another exciting year of progress and learning.

The staff members of the Family Education Project wish you and your family a very happy, safe, and blessed holiday season!

The Family Education Project Welcomes the Family-to-Family Advisory Group

By Natalie Trump

On Saturday, November 8, 2008, the Family Education Project’s “Family to Family Advisory Group” held it’s first “brainstorming” session at Ocean County College. The session was warm, heartfelt, emotionally moving, and a huge success. There was so much information from the advisory group for the Family Education Project to hear, learn, and absorb, and the project was enriched by that information.

The Family Education Project is definitely on the right track and has received input and assistance from its advisory group of experienced families, which will lead to the project’s ability to help many individuals and families. This is so exciting and the possibilities with the advisory group and having it grow over time are endless!

Pictured from left to right :

First Row: Sheilah Garry, Shannon Hopkins (in the process of moving from Woodbridge), Tom Hopkins (Shannon's Dad), and Ann Martinelli

Second Row: Alberta Lewis and Nadine Morris



Thank you!

Thank you to all who came out for Pictures of Community Living which took place on Friday, November 14, 2008, at the Vineland Developmental Center in Vineland, New Jersey. If you were unable to attend, please look out for information about the next forum.

Look for the Family Education Project 2009 Calendar of Events coming soon!



FAMILY GUIDE SERIES ON PLANNING, CHOICES AND MOVING TO COMMUNITY LIVING

Is your family member, or someone you know, beginning the new support coordination transition process to community living? Do you have questions about the process? Are you wondering how you can stay informed and involved? A new series of Family Guides is available from the Family Education Project. Each guide describes a step in the transition process, and offers tips and suggestions for taking part. To request your copy of the New Beginnings Family Guide Series, please call us at 800-500-0448.



Living in the Moment: The Miracle of Life by A.S. Johnson



In life, we all go through many things. Some of those things are good and some are not so good. These situations help to build character. One thing that we can agree on is that life itself is a miracle. Just think about all of the things that life has to offer. Looking back into childhood, we took life for granted. We never thought about what the possibilities were for our future or if we would make it to see the next day.

As we get older in life, we are more thankful to see the next day and understand that life is not promised to us. Life has so much to offer and it is such a blessing to be able to take advantage of those things. Just to be able to breathe in the fresh air, feel the sunshine on our skin, and indulge in tasting marvelous foods is such an awesome experience.

We should cherish each and every day that we have to spend with loved ones and friends and understand that although tomorrow is not promised, we do have today to share the miracle of life with others.

What is the Family Education Project?

The Family Education Project provides information and support to families of people with developmental disabilities who are moving, or exploring the possibility of moving, to community living from a Developmental Center. The Project works to help families to:

- Envision possibilities for a family member in community living;
- Learn about and participate in the transition process; and
- Provide support to a family member throughout the transition to community living.

Project Staff

David Wright, Family Education Director
Lynn Boettinger, Field Coordinator
Antoinette S. Johnson, Admin. Coordinator
Natalie Trump, Training Specialist
Lois Grau, RN, Ph.D., Principal Investigator
Susan Hammerman, Ph.D., Project Director

Give Us A Ring!

Do you have questions about Olmstead or transitioning to community living?



Do you have a New Beginnings story to share with us? Do you have any comments or questions about this newsletter? Please call us at 1-800-500-0448 or email us at johnsoas@umdnj.edu.



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University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey

Family Education Project

Health Systems Policy Department
Liberty Plaza - Suite 2200
335 George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Telephone: (732) 235-3277
Toll-free: 800-500-0448
Email: johnsoas@umdnj.edu

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Happy Holidays!