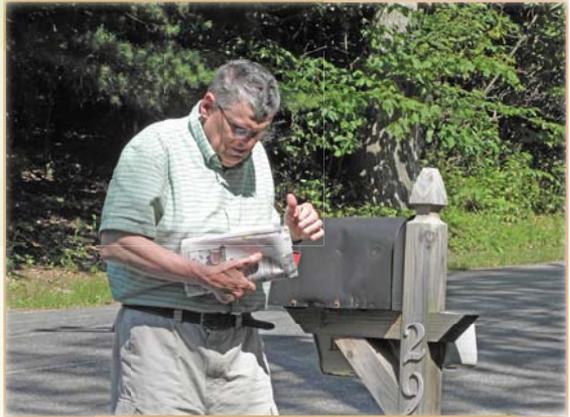




Into the Community

Lifestyle opportunities for individuals with disabilities



Featuring:

top row: Russell Mary Mickey
second row: Richard Pixie Sandra



About this booklet

This publication is a collaborative project of The Arc Connecticut, WeCAHR, The Arc of Meriden-Wallingford, the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services and Remedial Expert.

We thank all of our participants, guardians and family members for welcoming us into their homes and lives to benefit others.

Development and printing of this booklet was made possible by funding by the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Introduction

Over the years, different methods have emerged on how best to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Many years ago, it was common for a state to create large, state-operated facilities, often situated in the countryside, to accommodate many people with various and varying degrees of disability.

Contemporary thinking is quite different. The State of Connecticut has joined other states in a movement to find or create small and individualized community living arrangements. The experience of this change and the accompanying services has shown that, with appropriate supports such as staff assistance and technical or adaptive assistance, an individual with disabilities can not only thrive, but benefit in almost every measurable way by living in the community.

All sorts of options are open to them in the community, including employment, civic engagement and choices in how to spend leisure time. Community settings are also a place for unlimited opportunities for development of new and healthy relationships.

In 2010, the State of Connecticut entered into a Settlement Agreement which ensures that each individual at Southbury Training School, and/or their guardian, is entitled to real choices about how and where services and supports are to be provided.

While many people are thrilled at this idea, others are concerned. How will these residents fare outside the facility where they have lived for so many years? One way to learn about the possibilities is to see how other people have transitioned into community life. The lives depicted in this booklet illustrate some of these possibilities.

The individuals profiled in this booklet are all former residents of Southbury Training School who now live in either small group homes, assisted living programs or family support situations.

Each individual was interviewed by volunteers, and their stories are told here so that their success could be shared and in some way inspire others to create their own, full life.

Mary

Mary is 62 years old and loves her life. She dreams of the day when she and her sister can go to Walt Disney World.



When someone asks Mary, "How long did you live at Southbury Training School?" Mary answers, "A long time. Too long."

Mary was admitted to the institution when she was 17 years old and remembers living at various cottages and riding her three-wheeled bike around the grounds. She remembers being part of Special Olympics, participating in skiing and the discus throw.

Twenty-eight years later, when Mary was 45, she moved into a group home in New Haven, Connecticut. A few years later, she moved to her present home.

"I love living here. Nice people. I love living here. I have my own room."

A job in the community...

Mary works at Easter Seals/ Goodwill Industries in Orange, and loves being in the community everyday. She enjoys her job and the people she works with. She has a special fondness for a few people and likes being with them on a one-to-one basis. A dedicated helper at work helps her move about.

Mary's home is surrounded by trees, yet is very close to many retail stores, and that enables her to enjoy a favorite activity: "going to Wal-Mart and shopping for clothes."

Mary has two house mates and truly enjoys having their friendship. They celebrate "Girl's Night Out" every Friday night at various restaurants. She also enjoys dabbling in all sorts



“I love living here. Nice people. I love living here. I have my own room!”

...and a private bath

of arts and crafts, and she showed us some of her work hanging on the wall.

When asked if she has privacy in her current home, Mary says “yes.” She has her own room with her own television. She can be in her room and do whatever she wants and choose the TV programs she prefers. She also has her own, private bathroom attached to her bedroom. Her personal items are in her bathroom and bedroom, and no one touches them.

Mary speaks mostly about her family. Her sister talks with her by phone weekly and visits regularly. They often go out for pizza, especially on her birthday. She spends holidays with her family and looks forward to shopping for

holiday clothes for those special occasions. She is happy to see and be in the midst of her siblings, nieces and nephews at family gatherings.



Russell

Looking rather dapper in a charcoal shirt with white trim, Russell smiled again and again at his guardian, Mark, as the two were interviewed for this article.

"He smiles more and seems more relaxed since he moved here," says Mark Mothershead. "He never looked happy at Southbury Training School (STS). He always seemed to be jittery there."

Mark has a long history with Russell. He worked at STS for more than 30 years, nearly as long as Russell lived there; he became Russell's guardian in 2003.

"When I worked there, I always tried to get people involved in the community," Mark says. "I helped people move off grounds and into the village. I did this because people's behavior always got better when they were living with fewer people in a more home-like setting."

"I looked at a lot of places before I found the right place for Russell."

The "right place" for Russell is a group home, located in the community; it is designed for individuals who need a lot of medical/physical support.

Each person has a private bedroom; bathrooms are shared, but there are fewer people for each one.

"He gets the good medical care and lots of opportunities to get out and do different things."

"He has privacy in the bathroom. He can be in the bathroom alone and pull the string when he wants someone to come in and help," says Mark.

"I think he likes being in a home with people with similar needs," Mark relates. "His home is spacious, he has his own room, and there are fewer people. I think all these things make him feel relaxed and happy."

Opportunities in the community

The smaller group home makes it easy for Russell to go out and partake in the usual errands and pleasures of home life. He particularly enjoys going for car rides and shopping.

Five days a week Russell heads to a day program located, not in his group home, but in the community. Among the activities he's involved in, Russell makes dog biscuits that he delivers to people in his community. He also makes visits to the food shelter and the recycling center.

are that he needs
et outside his home
hings.”

Russell's guardian



Russell seems to enjoy the people from his community that he sees regularly. This includes the ambulance service EMTs that he knows as a result of his continuing health issues. He smiles at people he knows, and when he feels playful, his way of interacting is to toss things at them.

Mark notices this: “At STS he was always a loner. He seems more social and happier here.”

Making the Move

Russell has lived in his new home for 2 years. Mark made sure that Russell visited the new home several times in the month prior to his moving in.

Mark emphasizes that what he liked best about this home for Russell was the 24/7 nursing services, the great relationship with local EMT/first responders and a high level of care from the local doctors who are only three minutes away.

“I have spoken to numerous families,” Mark says. “I tell them to

be cautious and to take their time to find what is right for them.

“You need to research the options and be a good advocate. Don’t just accept whatever is offered. Make sure the private agency will provide the same care you would want for yourself. Be sure of what you are doing. Take your time.”



Richard

Speaking up for himself is a strength which Richard has acquired since moving into his small group home in Trumbull, Connecticut.

Maybe it's because he has developed a self-respect and self-confidence that staff members say was lacking when he moved there in 2005. For this and other reasons, he is now better able to connect with people.



Richard moved to his home directly from Southbury Training School. He says he lived at STS “too long.”

Richard had an easy move into his home, responding very quickly and favorably to the one-to-one attention from staff and the opportunity to have his own room.

That’s a life-changing benefit since he can now leave items in his room and know that no one will take them. Before, he needed to keep personal items hidden or in his pockets.

A life at home with family and friends

Richard told us that he loves his home, particularly the stream that runs behind the house, and that he doesn’t want to live anywhere else. He lives with three other men and the staff report that the four of them,



Using a combination of hearing aids, sign language, lip reading and speech, Richard now is able to convey his thoughts and express an opinion.

plus the staff, really are a family, doing household chores and even vacationing together. They've made trips to Sturbridge Village and Mystic Seaport, and Richard showed us the photo album he has put together from those trips.

Richard has settled into his home. He likes being able to help with household work, especially laundry. He particularly likes grocery shopping and pushing the cart around the store and being in control of the cart.

Part of the community

Because he lives in a small family environment within a community, Richard now has many opportunities to be part of his community, and he enjoys the various trips and errands around town. Going for a ride in the car and then getting coffee is number one. He likes to go bowling, to the

movies, playing in arcades, ball games, and going for walks.

In addition to his housemates, Richard sees his friends at work almost everyday, and he counts his boss, Mary, as a friend. Staff members say he is more personal and connected in his relationships.

Personal development

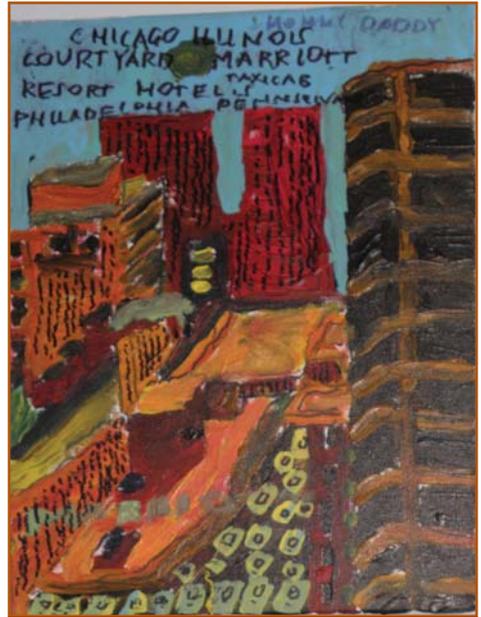
Richard has developed in many ways since leaving the institution. He knows what is available in his community, and he speaks up for himself. He lets people know that he wants to go to the library, out to dinner, for car rides, and stopping for coffee. He participates in doing his own banking and has a better understanding about his money.

Richard likes being in charge, having control over certain things – pushing the cart at the grocery store, deciding when he wants coffee, expressing himself. He enjoys having people in the community pay attention to him, and he's confident interacting with them.

Mickey



“I like living in my community”



For Michael, the group home he shares with three other men is perfect. It's situated in a small town where he has ample access to many of the simple pleasures that can add up to a satisfying life.

Michael, or Mickey as he is sometimes called, visits Dunkin Donuts for coffee and regularly spends time at the library choosing and checking out the books he wants.

He goes to church, listens to music and meets new people. Oftentimes after church service, he stays to have coffee with the other parishioners.

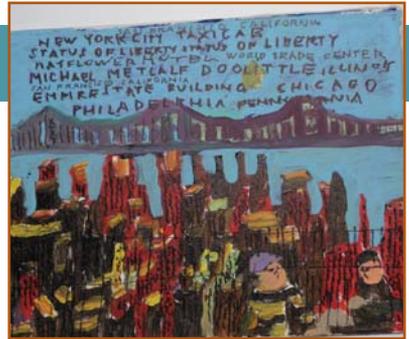
It's a much different life from the one he led for many years at a large state-run institution. There, he felt restricted; there, he felt dependent.

About fourteen years ago, Mickey left the institution and moved into a small group home in central Connecticut.

He now has his own room and an art studio, which is very important to him. He's an avid artist, working in colored pencils and water color. Many of his art pieces hang in his room and studio.

Here is "home" with all its best attributes. He says, "I feel safe and secure - it is quiet and peaceful and organized."

With just three other men sharing his group home, Mickey has privacy which was missing from his former life. But he also has built-in companionship.



“My housemates and I have dinner together at night. And we drink coffee. And we watch old movies together and celebrate the holidays together.”

As an art enthusiast, he looks forward to trips to museums and art galleries, and enjoys seeing productions at the Warner Theatre, a regional center for the arts.

Mickey continues to hear from a former staff member at STS where he used to live. And his brothers call and send emails; when they have more time, they pick him up at his home and take him out for lunch.

But it's the daily interaction with people in the community that adds much to his life. Staff from the day

program that he attends, parishioners from his local church, library employees and past staff members are all in the community with him, and when he happens upon them on the street, they speak to him and ask him “How are you?”

And that's why moving into the community feels so good to Mickey.



“I really like being on my own. I can do what I want; I have my own money. I spend a lot of time shopping for things to add to my collections.

“At Southbury I couldn’t collect things I wanted. The only thing I could collect were photos that were sent to me by my mother.”

A woman with an independent streak

When Pixie was about school age, her parents, a professor and a painter, moved from Manhattan to Southbury. They built a house and enrolled her in Southbury Training School. She continued to live there till she was in her mid twenties.

During her years there, she lived in different cottages and attended school on the grounds. As an adult, she shared a dormitory with about 30 other women. The women worked in another cottage doing housekeeping.

She remembers being paid very little, and she’s quite aware that she makes more money now working in the community. As a woman with an independent streak, she remembers never having time to herself and never being able to go out.

“The closets were all locked. We couldn’t choose our own clothes.

Pixie

“I am moving forward.”



Someone else would do that. There was a store there with clothes, but we couldn't buy what we wanted. You had to wear a housedress."

It was not the kind of life Pixie wanted, and she was fortunate to have a social worker who believed she could succeed outside the school.

"My social worker suggested I leave Southbury, and I moved to New Haven and lived by myself. I worked at Blue Cross washing dishes. I also worked at Finest Grocery, then at Kohls."

Twice she tried sharing an apartment with one other woman, but both times, it seemed that living alone was best for her.

"I live in my own apartment now; it is much better here. I can go where I want - come and go as I please, mosey around and shop. I go to yard

sales and to the Jumbo Shop. I take care of my laundry on Sundays when the shops are closed.

"If there is a show at the Garde Theater, I do my chores early so I can go. I have a season pass there and go to all of the shows. Sometimes I go to the rooftop of my apartment to watch the sunset."

Pixie has a lot of friends in New London: close friends, plus people she knows from the Garde Theater, the soup kitchen, the Salvation Army, Homeward Bound and the Waterfront Park.

Pixie feels good about her life and says she would recommend community life for others who are still at Southbury Training School. For herself, she would never move back to Southbury.

"I am moving forward," she says.



Sandy



She loves her coffee

*“My mother
would have loved
to have seen it.”*

James,
Sandy’s brother

“I love it. I’m so happy she is there and happy she is close by.” That’s James, Sandy’s brother and guardian, speaking about her home in town.

She had lived at Southbury Training School for 18 years before moving into a local community in 2001.

James observes that, “The home atmosphere is so different and much nicer. She is better off having only a couple of roommates.”

He believes that she enjoys where she is, and that she is happier.

In her smaller group home, Sandy

has housemates with whom she occasionally socializes. But she does have privacy when she needs it. As part of her household chores, she does laundry and folds clothes. She also has a paying job, working at a GSE where she does housekeeping.

Staff members work with Sandy to handle occasional bouts of aggression when she is upset over occurrences in the kitchen or at her day program.

Her home has both a deck and swings, and Sandy enjoys both. In the summer, there is also a blow-up pool, and she loves to play around in the water.



At home with a deck, swings and a splash pool.

Although her father, before his death more than 20 years ago, visited Sandy a few times each week while she was at Southbury Training School, Sandy now sees the rest of her family even more because she has moved into the community. Sometimes the staff members from her home take her to visit her brother.

James is pleased that his sister gets out more. She enjoys grocery shopping, going on recreational outings (the Beardsley Zoo is a favorite), and going out to eat. Her brother says, "She loves her coffee and eating. I think it's her favorite past time!"

"I'm not in favor of closing Southbury altogether," James says, "because some people need to stay there. It's the only place they've known their whole lives. However, it all depends if they want to move or not. I would tell them that there are opportunities for them to grow outside of Southbury."

For him: "I was ready. I wanted her out of Southbury."



Sandy takes joy
in using her
special coffee maker.

Many people who successfully transitioned into the community lived at Southbury Training School for decades - some for more than 50 years - and have now fully adapted to their new homes.

Learn more

Monitoring:

The state of Connecticut maintains strong oversight during and after each person's transition to the community, including ongoing measures to ensure health and safety and quality of life.

Planning:

Everyone who moves from Southbury Training School to the community must have a person-centered community transition plan carefully developed with the individual and the family which is designed to support their needs and desires.

Case Manager:

Everyone who moves from Southbury Training School to the community is assigned a regional case manager who will help plan for and coordinate all services and monitor progress.

Daytime Options:

A full array of daytime activities are available in the community, including employment services, individualized day supports and senior supports. Services are designed so that individuals can "age in place" in their own homes.

Choice of Service Provider:

Individuals from Southbury Training School can choose their new community service provider and the area of the state they wish to live in.

Family Connections:

To support family connections, all efforts are made to transition people close to their families when desired. In some instances, people can receive supports to move back to their family home.

Provider Fairs:

Twice a year a provider fair is sponsored by Southbury Training School to afford families the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about their options.