

Life is Good!

Her Journey Continues...

Our daughter Brenda was born in 1976. When she was 18 months old she went into the hospital for 4 months.

At the time, no one had any ideas on how to support Brenda or guide us, her parents through the new realities she faced being blind and deaf. She was mainstreamed into school at the age of 5 but the teachers didn't know how to support her. Slowly, a team was put together that developed a communication system with manual sign language and braille. After many months, Brenda started to develop a vocabulary. It was wonderful to see. There was still a long road ahead, but with new motivation, the team continued to support Brenda to read more braille signs. Soon, numbers were introduced, then Math and English. Brenda continued to receive supports to age 21 when she transitioned to an independent living program.

The transition from school to community was challenging for Brenda and disappointing as her constant and consistent learning and communication lessened. Communication equipment that was effectively used in school was no longer being used. At this time, a professional consultant told

us that Brenda had reached her full learning potential. The consultant said Brenda would never learn contracted (advanced) braille. It was very disappointing but we did not let that hold us back. We moved forward and thanks to ICOF funding and Innovative LIFE Options, Brenda is now living a comfortable quality of life. She is now in her own home, very happy, independent and communicates through ASL, SEE sign and contracted braille, along with face to face communication equipment and much more! Brenda has excellent staff committed to her constant learning!

Brenda recently started her own business, making brailled business cards, brailled restaurant menus and making pottery items and more. Brenda, her network and her very dedicated staff are planning to develop a web site to help Brenda promote her business and products.

Just to think when Brenda came to Winnipeg in 2012, she had no staff, no program and no quality of life. Now Brenda gets visitors and connects with other people. Many are impressed and pleased with her successes! Brenda continues to live a good life! It is wonderful to see.

Submitted by:
Jim, Brenda's Dad and Support Network Member



Taking Control

By: David Weremy

David is a member of the National Task Force on Deinstitutionalization, which is a joint task force with People First of Canada and CACL. His lived experience in the Manitoba Developmental Centre makes him an expert in this area, and he is recognized all over the country for his contribution to *The Freedom Tour*, a documentary of survivors telling their stories of what life was like living in an institution. The film has been viewed internationally and is currently used in many universities and colleges all over the world as part of the curriculum in developmental services and social work programs. This year marks the 10th anniversary of *The Freedom Tour*. David is very proud of his work on this project and is recognized as a disability rights expert in Canada.

Every year People First of Canada (PFC) and their partners the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) host a federal policy forum in Ottawa on a topic of interest in Canada. This year, the forum was on Legal Capacity. PFC asked me to speak on a panel in Ottawa about how I got off being under the public trustee. On the panel with me there was a lady who had Alzheimer's, a mom of a young woman with lots of disabilities, and another woman who had mental health issues who struggled with depression and anxiety.

We all talked about how at some point in our lives 'the system' took away our legal rights to make our own decisions. This is what I told them:

"When I came out of MDC I was under order of the public trustee. That means they had control of all my money and it would take a long time for me to get it. I didn't like being on the trustee. It was my money. 15 years after I left MDC I moved into a group home. I told the Executive Director Tara that I didn't need to be on the trustee. Tara helped me talk to my social worker Lorraine. I told Lorraine I was OK to be on my own. She was worried that people would take all my money. I told her not to worry about it, I would look after my own money. It took a long time but now I have control over my money. I decide when to spend it, and where to spend it. I have people who help me, but I am the boss over my money now."



Silent Auction Prizes! Music! Food! Friends!

The committee of ICOF Employers had the following to say about the 2017 Spring Fling.

"It was a lot of fun planning the event"
"It was a good time and people had lots of fun enjoying themselves"
"The prizes, food and music were good"
"Everyone should come this year!"



To **donate** a prize towards the silent auction, baking, veggie or fruit trays, or to **assist** with the event, please contact dweremy@mymts.net
ICOF Spring Fling Committee

More **Dance Space!**

50 Cent **Silent Auction** Tickets

See included poster for further details!