



## GREETINGS FROM “E STREET” SOUTH PORTLAND, MAINE!

By Hannah Williams



SOUTH PORTLAND, ME — What a great house we have here! We are located in a quiet harborside neighborhood in South Portland. The building is home to nine residents and two third floor live-in staff. The bus line is nearby. Everyone is busy with work and activities, which include horseback riding, skiing, bowling, bicycling and walking. Folks work and volunteer at Tim Horton’s, UNUM, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Lil’ Caesar’s Pizza, Rite Aid, the local Red Cross and Cedar’s, a local nursing home. Being just over the bridge from Portland offers us professional sporting events, museums, theatre performances and many other opportunities. A local park within walking distance has farmer’s markets, summertime live music and theatre performances, art walks, other well-attended events, and lots of ducks.

Other interests include sports of any kind, music, cooking, reading, movie night

at the house, going to the library and jigsaw puzzles. Oftentimes the residents make a plan to attend hockey, basketball or baseball games as a group. Everyone interested takes the bus or shares the cab fare. Music is also appreciated. Favorite bands and songs are often a dinner topic. A couple of people play the piano and guitar. Cooking is a hobby of a few, enjoyed by all!

The staff include Chuck Silsby, Associate Director. Sarah Donlin, the House Manager, who joined us recently. Sarah comes to E Street having run a residential program for the past six years. She is enjoying getting to know the residents and families. The transition from one house manager to another speaks to her personality and skills. The E Street community has welcomed her warmly.

The live-ins, Sandra and Colleen, have their apartments on the top floor. Sandra appreciates her “ocean view”! They are both fully involved in the daily routines, helping with the early mornings and again later at night. They share weekend hours as well.

The weekend shifts have been filled by Donnie and Rebecca, alternating weekends. They get to participate in the more casual, relaxed pace of the weekends. On Sunday mornings, it is likely that parents will cook pancakes for everyone!

The parents are also an integral part of the success! Always interested and super-supportive describes the parent group.

And myself, Hannah Williams, the Clinical Director. It is an honor to work with the entire E St community. We laugh a lot, care about each other and enjoy one another’s company.

## THE SHI EXPERIENCE X 2

By Anne Schink

SOUTH PORTLAND, ME — My daughter Ellen has lived in two different residences managed by Specialized Housing, first in Arlington, MA and now in South Portland, ME. Both houses have the same goals—providing living arrangements that maximize the individual’s participation in the community while living in a friendly home with a group of friends and supportive staff. Ellen likes the fact that they both are located ‘smack dab in the middle of things’—close to transportation, close to shops, restaurants, the library and accessible to work.

The parents are engaged closely and they drop in to visit on a regular basis. This may be a function of the fact that the house is fairly new and parents are still getting adjusted to ‘letting go’.

As a parent, when I reflect on the differences in the two houses where Ellen has lived, it is hard not to smile, because the individual residents have so much to do with the personality of each house. Each house is different from the others and they reflect both the residents and their families.

At E Street Ellen is closer to family. While Ellen misses her friends in Arlington, she enjoys being closer to her niece and nephew, two very young children who wouldn’t have anywhere near the relationship they now do with Aunt Ellen!

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

By David Wizansky

BROOKLINE, MA — Welcome to the SH Insider, first edition of a series of updates, news, and happenings, with contributions from family, staff, and residents. The newsletter will be distributed electronically and is on our website. Please contact me with any ideas for articles, or better yet, write one! (davidwiz@specializedhousing.org.)

2012 may be Specialized Housing’s busiest year yet! You’ll read about our newest house, in South Portland, Maine, follow an exciting renovation in Newton, Massachusetts, share the unique experiences of two mothers of SHI residents, and an interview with a “veteran”, Katy, who has lived in Brookline for many years as an important member of an SHI community, who understands very well what she brings to the mix and what she

needs from her fellows.

We have been meeting with a group of committed families in New Hampshire, who have a wonderful vision for the future independent living of their sons and daughters. We’ve been offering consultation to make their vision into reality.

We are readying for publication, our reflections after forty years of working with people with developmental challenges. We hope that our experience may be useful to families and professionals. Stay tuned.

We’ve strengthened the SHI administrative office. Ted Cassely, who has been an SHI house manager for fifteen years, is working directly with Chuck Silsby, Associate Director. He is taking on clinical responsibilities in new projects and joins the clinical supervision team of Chuck and Tom McGee, who continue to serve SHI households and residents with great skill and dedication. Halina Moore and Susan Denenberg continue to

manage efficiently all financial transactions and reporting.

Every house that Specialized Housing helped to create began as the vision of families. Families believe, as we do, that their family members with developmental challenges can and should have lives rich in connections and celebration, opportunities to help others and to be productive as workers or volunteers.

These communities of housemates/peers work in remarkable ways. Katy travels the larger community in the company of her housemates so she doesn’t get lost. Housemates support each other. They give TLC post-surgery. They attend wakes, deliver eulogies and comfort each other in times of loss. We have learned over the years that we don’t have to “teach” people with developmental challenges to form communities. We can observe their deepening friendships and their sense that they are their brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.

## BEN'S NEW LIFE

By Patricia Ingalls

BROOKLINE, MA — My experience with Specialized Housing started many years ago. Ben attended the LABBB Collaborative where David and Margot Wizansky spoke to parents about once a year, so I probably heard them explain the program a dozen times. The Wizanskys talked about individuals who were able to live on their own with limited staff support. I didn't think this could be possible for my son, yet I attended their talk every year. I knew that I would never feel ready for Ben to move out on his own, never.

In preparation for the reality of Ben moving into his adulthood and wanting to provide him with as much independence as possible I did some research. I inquired with different agencies about programs and I asked people to talk to me about how I could create my own housing for Ben; I was going to turn my existing home into his group home! For many reasons, my home didn't work. I considered Adult Foster Care, but I didn't want another family to take care of Ben. I wanted Ben to live with more people, to have a full life. I wanted Ben to have peers that he could relate to and they could grow old together.

Two years after Ben aged out of LABBB, Specialized Housing came into my life again. Ben's grandparents asked me if I would like to go for a tour of their properties. I did go on a tour and we began the evaluation process. The process was both exciting and scary. I was feeling many mixed emotions: fear, excitement, anxiety for myself and Ben, curious—could Ben be successful and live away from

home? I wanted him to thrive like so many adults with disabilities when they leave their parents' homes.

This would be the most difficult transition of my parenting years. Ben was feeling mixed emotions, too! Ben was excited to live on his own and scared to live on his own. Before Ben moved he was asked by his vocational program director how he was feeling about the move. Ben explained that he was excited and scared and understood about moving, but he did have one question, who would be giving him his good night hug? We both cried.

Ben did move into a wonderful home in Brookline over a year ago. I went through a necessary loss and gained a little bit of freedom for myself, which I didn't expect to ever have. Most important, Ben has gained a loving family, increased self-esteem, happiness and an active life filled with activities.

Recently I asked Ben, "What do you like about living on your own?"

He replied, "I like that I have my own room. I like that I have Showtime. I'm glad that I can do a lot more: like I can do a lot more things than when I lived with my parents. I like the people here."

Before Ben moved into his new home he didn't think he could live on his own. "But now I know I can live on my own with staff help. I like living with my new family everyone is nice. Everyone is nice to me. I like the staff. The staff takes me to my appointments. I am very busy. I go to Mass Self-Advocates, activities, exercise class, and I get to use the treadmill at home."

We are all very happy with Ben's new independence and our new extended family. I am so grateful to have found such a dedicated caring staff. Life is good!



## FULFILLING OUR DREAMS

By Tod Reidel

NEWTON, MA — Saturday, January 21st 2012 marked the first anniversary of ownership for the families and residents of 173 Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands, MA. It was an exciting year marked by our resident's monthly Outings With Ted, pot-luck dinners and a summer picnic, lots of conference calls, meetings with architects and contractors and many, many hours of discussion. All were designed to cement the bonds among the residents and families as we, guided by SHI, made the big and small decisions that will define our house.



With permits in hand, an experienced contractor on board and enthusiastic support from the neighborhood, construction/demolition began on October 26, 2011. So far, the winter weather has worked in our favor and we are on target for occupancy to begin in the Fall of this year. It hasn't all been smooth sailing but the disagreements have been few and temporary and done in the spirit of making our house the best it can be. It's all part of the process of helping to fulfill the dreams for our young adults. Watch this space and [www.173lincoln.com](http://www.173lincoln.com) for further updates!



## RESIDENTS' CORNER

### MEET KATY

by Ted Cassely



#### Katy, where are you from?

I was born in Boston at the Lying-In hospital, but I grew up in Medford. Now I live in Brookline. My dad found out about Specialized Housing through a family friend, and I moved here about 16 years ago.

#### Where do you work?

I work 5 days a week at Goodwill hanging children's clothing. I love my job, the clothes are

cute, and I have lots of friends there.

#### How do you like where you live?

Well, I have lots of friends, and my life is a lot like my brothers and sisters lives. I go to work like they do, I make money like they do, I take the T to get around like they do. It's very similar. I wouldn't want to live with my Dad, but I love visiting!

#### What's the best part of living on your own?

We help each other, recently one of my friends' parents passed away. I told him I know what that's like, because one of my parents died, too. The first year is the hardest, and then it's easier. We are here for each other when we are feeling sad, or if we just want to be together and hang out.

I also like to go out with my friends to lunch every weekend. Sometimes we go to the mall, or to the movies. My friends help me because I don't go out alone, I'd get lost.