

A Life Worth Living

Everyday People...Everyday Lives! By Agnes McCray

"A community's strength is measured by its ability to include the gifts and contributions of all its members."
-Self Advocacy Association of NYS, People With Disabilities Speaking for Themselves

My name is Agnes McCray, and I have been advocating for my rights since the age of 9. In South America, where I am from, people never thought of my disability as the focal point of my life. People always treated me as they would other children regardless of whether I was walking or not. When I moved to North America, the school system turned out to be the first big barrier in my life. I didn't understand why now I was being separated from others and why people treated me differently. I knew I wanted meaningful activities in my life, and to be a contributing member of society like everyone else. I was almost broken from that experience. I really felt the school systems should help children set goals regardless of ability or in their eyes, disabilities.

I went to LeMoyne College and OCC in Syracuse, NY where I received a master's degree in Specialized Rehab Counseling. I am a proud mother of three growing boys, and continue to advocate for better transportation and accessibility issues in my community. This year I received the Presidential Volunteer of the Year Award. I am a member of the Self-Advocacy Association of NYS Speaker's Bureau. The Speaker's Bureau focuses on community inclusion and the importance of the natural supports in the lives of those with disabilities. Without these important relationships, life doesn't seem as important. Advocacy has helped me learn to appreciate myself and my disability. I wouldn't want to change a thing. In my life I've learned to be positive even when it's tough, and that anything is possible. With a little bit of modification we can all realize our own dreams!



With A Little Help From My Friends

Dennis Pullen is an award-winning and accomplished painter, writer and orator. Oh yeah, and he has quadriplegia. How has Denny accomplished so much? He'll be the first to tell you support from his friends, including his nurse Kelly, and former service coordinator Deb Bojarski helped tremendously. Denny, who sustained injuries in a truck accident and is now ventilator dependent, considers himself fortunate to have found Kelly, who has been his private duty nurse and friend for more than 11 years. It was Kelly who brought Denny on his first vacation. And it was the team of Deb and Kelly that gave Denny the encouragement and courage to be more independent. His self-determination plan was approved and Denny moved into his own apartment six years ago. Since that time, he has been exploring many different things. "I've been from the west of the New York State to the east and south doing presentations of how self-determination helped me. Without the help of Kelly and fellow self advocates, none of what I do now would be possible," Denny said. Not too long ago, Deb was offered another position and Denny interviewed five different candidates before selecting Holly Abel as his service coordinator. Holly and Deb introduced Denny to Norman Roth, a local artist who thought Denny, who paints by holding paintbrushes in his mouth, showed great potential. Norm has been teaching Denny how to apply color and color theory to his paintings and Denny has since created at least 10 new pieces of art, some of which have been commissioned. Denny was named the winner of the Stone Canoe's 2008 Burton Blatt Institute Arts Leadership Prize. Denny, with support from Deb, Holly, Kelly and Norm (who donated two of his own works) recently raised \$5,000 to purchase an adapted easel that will enable Denny to mix his own paints and access the canvas with little staff assistance. If only we all could have a Dennis Pullen original..!

14th Annual Networking Day Sponsored By:

Onondaga County Department of Mental Health

Onondaga Case Management Services Inc.

ARISE Inc.

OMRDD CNY Developmental Services Office

14TH ANNUAL
NETWORKING DAY

"A LIFE WORTH LIVING: LIVING, LEARNING, WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY"

This dynamic event will provide an opportunity for providers of services to people with disabilities to network with each other and to learn about how to build partnerships with community and natural supports to further community inclusion.



**Renaissance Syracuse Hotel
Syracuse, New York**

September 15, 2008

8:00am-4:30pm

Registration Deadline: September 10, 2008

14TH ANNUAL NETWORKING DAY



REGISTRATION

*"A Life Worth Living:
Living, Learning, Working
in the Community"*

Cost: \$40.00

When: September 15, 2008
8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Where: Renaissance Syracuse Hotel
701 E. Genesee Street
Syracuse, NY 13210

Directions

Thruway - take NYS thruway E. Take exit #36 to rte 81S to exit #18 (Harrison/Adams). Make U-turn @ Adams to Almond, go 3 lights, hotel is on right.

81 South - 81S toward Syracuse / Thruway, Exit 18 *Harrison/Adams*. Bear left at bottom of exit. Continue to Adams Street and make U-Turn at Adams to Almond. Go through 3 stop lights and the Renaissance Hotel is on the right.

For more information, contact:

Danielle Tongue at
(315) 472-7363 ext. 231
or
dtongue@ocmsinc.org

PROGRAM

8:00 - 8:45 Registration/Breakfast

8:45 - 9:15 **Introduction**- Scott Ebner, Director of Operations for OCMS Inc.
Welcome-Bob Long, Onondaga County Commissioner of Mental Health

9:15 - 10:45 **"A Life Worth Living"**
Agnes McCray, MSE, CRC
Dennis Pullen
Self-Advocacy Association of NYS Speakers Bureau
Sharon Lathrop, Peer Mentor Coordinator at OCMS Inc.

10:45 - 11:00 Break

11:00 - 12:15 **Concurrent Sessions**

- A **"A Life Worth Living: Learning About Financial Literacy in the Community"**
Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling, FDIC Certified Money Smart Trainer, Director of Special Events & Public Relations at Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University
- B **"Supporting People with Disabilities in Higher Education"**
Stephen Simon, Director of Office of Disability Services at Syracuse University
Roger Purdy, Ed.M, Director of Disability Support Services at LeMoyne College
Kathie Briggs, Disability Services Specialist at Onondaga Community College
- C **"Project Search"**
Katherine Teasdale-Edwards, School Counselor for Special Education Transition

12:15-1:15 Lunch

- 1:15 - 2:30 **Concurrent Sessions**
- A **"Housing How To's, Secrets of Section 8 and Shelter Plus Care"**
Jan Moag, SPOA Coordinator for Onondaga Case Management
 - B **"Eating Well On A Budget"**
Linda Quinn, MS, Dietician at CNYDSO

2:30 - 2:45 Break

2:45 - 4:00 **Concurrent Sessions**

- A **"Art Therapy One on One"**
Arthur Brangman, Senior RT
Art Therapist at Hutchings
Amy Lau, MAAT, ATR
Art Therapist at Hutchings
- B **"Supported Education: A Vehicle For Recovery"**
Kristin Neagle, CRC; LMHC, Assistant Program Director, Educational Services at Transitional Living Services
Zisha Francis, CTRS, Educational Consultant at Transitional Living Services
- C **"Volunteering In Your Community: How You Can Make A Difference"**
Kelly Knab, Volunteerism Associate at United Way Of Central New York

4:00 - 4:30pm Evaluations and Wrap Up