



Welcome

Best Life Newsletter was created by Washington County Community Services staff to educate and advocate for the use of person-centered best practices as we support people in living their best lives. We will showcase success stories, share artwork and talents, provide education about

*Educate and advocate
for the use of
person-centered best practices
as we support people
in living their best lives.*

language and goals, and provide resources. It is meant to be uplifting and supportive, and accessible for all people, families, providers, and staff. This newsletter focuses on living your best life in your own home.

Spotlight: My Home. Creating the Best Home for Me.

Beau and Chris had known each other for many years through the same circle of friends, community social



Beau and Chris on signing day 2020!

groups, and Special Olympics. They had considered the idea of living together in the past, but the opportunity did not surface until this year when Beau's parents found the perfect place in the perfect location close to their support networks of family, friends, and community.

successful move and transition from their current homes. While Beau moved from his parents' home, Chris moved from an apartment he leased with his brother. Both Beau and Chris work competitive jobs and were responsible to take on a lease with guided support from their parents. Beau and Chris's parents report the positive determination the guys have had through this entire experience has been inspirational. Beau and Chris's parents report their story needs to get out there to empower others to know it's possible.

While Chris and Beau had an integrative team approach (or a lot of people working together) to help make their move plan successful, there are many positive supports someone can access while on the Developmental Disabilities (DD), Community Access for Disability

*"...we both respect
each other's boundaries
and we hang out
with each other."*

- Chris

Inclusion (CADI), Brain Injury (BI), Community Alternative Care (CAC), Elderly Waivers (EW), or the Alternative Care (AC) program to make a move as "person-centered" as possible. Supports and

services are individualized, based on eligibility criteria and approved by your county or tribal agency. There are services available to help you plan for, find, and move into your own home and also have the supports needed to stay there.

In This Issue

- Welcome!
- Spotlight Feature
- Our Words Matter
- Goals, Outcomes, & Dreams
- Person-Centered History
- My Supports
- Artist Spotlight
- Best Practices

Beau and Chris's support teams worked hard to plan for a

Continued from Spotlight: My Home... page 1

Talk to a county case manager to find the services needed to reach your goals! If you don't have a county case manager and are interested in exploring if you are

eligible for these supports, please call 651-430-6484 and request a MnCHOICES Assessment.

– Chantelle Heifort-Adams, Social Worker II

Beau and Chris Interviews

How did you end up living together?

- *Beau:* We talked about being roommates years ago. Chris does a nice job and was also looking for a place.
- *Chris:* Beau and I have the same circle of friends and also through Special Olympics. Jody, Beau's mom, found this place and reached out.

How did you decide where to live?

- *Beau:* I had to live near my friends and be in my own community that I was used to.
- *Chris:* I wanted to be closer to my friends. With support from my mom, I thought I would give it a try.

Who helped you move into your new home?

- *Beau:* Parents, friends, sisters, county social worker, and New Directions staff helped me settle in once I moved.
- *Chris:* Beau's parents, my mom, brother, New Directions staff, and county social worker.

What is the best thing about living together?

- *Beau:* Living by myself, independently. Problem solving with Chris. Doing our own chores. Going skiing together when it snows.

Parent/Guardian Interviews

What was the hardest part of making this move?

- *Jody (Beau's mom):* Having his own home has always been Beau's expectation, and we have spent a lot of time working on the skills he would need to help him prepare to live as independently as possible. We were lucky a good friend, experienced in independent living, was interested in being a roommate so we didn't have to find a stranger. By far the hardest part was finding a suitable place that fit as many of their needs and wants as possible. Safe, affordable on their limited resources, clean, decently livable, located in their known community, in their home county for service continuity, variety of local businesses they needed that they could independently walk or bike to shop and do things, public transportation available for work and larger

- *Chris:* We respect each other most of the time. It's nice to have conversation with Beau. Every weekend, we share pizza.

What is the hardest thing about living together?

- *Beau:* Working out an agreement to do our fair share.
- *Chris:* Doing our trips with each other. We both get blamed. Beau and I tell each other what to do...boss each other around.

What are the challenges/rewards of having a roommate?

- *Beau:* Challenges include communication and agreeing. Rewards include pizza on weekends, we hang out more, have become better friends, and have learned to be more independent.
- *Chris:* Challenges include we argue sometimes which is natural, especially about the thermostat. Rewards include we both respect each other's boundaries and we hang out with each other.

community ventures, close enough to family/friends for visiting, help or a quick response if needed. It took a while of intensive searching and exploring many options, and we were super lucky to find the sweet spot they have. It is everything we hoped for and perfect for them!

- *Barbara (Chris's mom):* Christopher used to live together with his brother only two miles away from me. Because he was so close, I saw him more often and it was easier to bring him anything he needed. His brother also kept me informed of how Christopher was doing (both good and bad.) Now that he is 10 miles away, I don't see him as often and it's more difficult for me to take him to appointments, etc.

Continued on page 3

Continued from Spotlight: My Home... on page 2

What positive changes have you seen with Beau and Chris living together?

- *Jody (Beau's mom):* Chris has been living independently for a while, and Beau was ready to take this step. He is definitely very proud to be an independent man on his own and take care of his own responsibilities. He has a new 'large and in charge' swagger in his attitude. He is disappointed that COVID prevents him from inviting everybody he knows over to check it out. We have seen increased confidence in himself, a greater willingness to step up to responsibility and a new level of maturity. He and Chris are learning how to respectfully live together, and working out the few small issues that typically arise in any roommate situation. Overall, they are

getting along very well. They have much in common, but their individual personalities and life experiences complement each other and they are taking their friendship to a new level as roommates. It is a joy to watch them flourish!

- *Barbara (Chris's mom):* This is the first time Christopher has lived with a friend. He's spending less time alone in his room and more time hanging out with Beau. Before he lived with Beau, most of his activities were structured and he didn't often have opportunities for casual get-togethers. Beau and Christopher have mutual friends who live in the neighborhood. Once we have a vaccination for COVID, I think they are all going to have a great time together.



Our Words Matter

By using best practices with person-centered language, it shows we want to be intentional about the words we use when talking with others, when talking about others, and/or when writing about others.

- **Talking *with* others:** Historically we may have used words such as “placement” or “bed.” Best practices suggests rather than using these words, we say “home.” And when saying “home,” we should be specific about the *type* of home the person is interested in (such as they want their own apartment, townhome, assisted living, home with roommates or group home, etc.).
- **Talking *about* others:** Historically we may have used words like “looking for an opening” or “looking for a bed.” Rather than saying these phrases, best practices would be to say things like, “Beau is looking for a home with supports available” or “Beau is exploring available rentals with a roommate.” It is

best to be specific! For example, “I am working with someone who is looking for a home in the Newport area. He would like to live with other men in their 30s and be close to a bus line. Do you know anything that is available?”

- **Writing about others:** Historically, we may have written: “Chris lives in an ACR group home located in Newport.” Keeping person-centered best practices in mind, you may consider writing: “Chris is living in a home in Newport supported by ACR. He enjoys living with his two friends, and he likes how there are always people there to support him with what he needs help with. Chris is happy where he lives because he has always wanted to live with friends.”

For more examples on the use of person-centered words and phrases, and historical language to avoid, please see [Washington County's Our Words Matter](#).

– Amy Heimkes, Social Worker II

*“Talk” graphic at the start of this article is by Guilherme Furtado, BR, Creative Commons CCBY (Noun Project).



Goals, Outcomes, & Dreams

Your goals are just that—YOURS. They are a very important part of supporting you to live your best life. For anyone helping someone, it is important to understand this shift to person-centered goals.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services *Informed Choice and Transition Protocol* states that person-

centered outcomes are defined as: Achievement of what is most important to the person, in ways that work for him or her and build on his or her strengths. These supports help the person connect to opportunities in the community as well as build relationships he or she cares about. Person-centered services and supports make it possible for a person to enhance his or her ability to

Continued on page 4

Continued from Goals, Outcomes, & Dreams on page 3

achieve his or her goals that are measured through the person's quality of life."

Below are some examples of goals using Chris and Beau, as well as fictional names:

- **Beau and Chris want to move into their own home together** vs. Beau and Chris will work on paying their bills for one year without reminders to work towards living on their own.
- **Chris wants to arrange his own transportation to and from work** vs. Chris will rely on staff to arrange transportation until he can independently set-up his rides at least 85% of the time.
- **Beau wants to cook independently at least once a week** vs. Beau will cook one time per week with

staff available and demonstrate that he can complete 90% of the task independently.

- **Nick wants to remain in his current home and one day inherit this home and live there by himself** vs. Nick will demonstrate that he can live independently by cooking, cleaning, and paying bills before he will inherit the home he is living in.
- **Sheila wants to live independently, near her parents, and have a roommate** vs. Sheila will demonstrate that she can complete her personal cares and home management tasks 85% of the time before she can move out on her own.

– Caitlin McNamara, Senior Social Worker

*"Goal" graphic at the start of this article is by Adrien Coquet, FR, Creative Commons CCBY (Noun Project).

Person-Centered History

Person-centered means: Empowering people to choose, set, and reach their own life goals and treating each person with dignity and respect. According to the *History of the Person-Centered Approach*, the "person-centered approach" can be traced back to the 1940's with Carl Rogers, who formed the basic ideas as he was looking for better ways to help people with emotional, social, and mental health challenges, rather than using the era's commonly practiced Freudian psychoanalysis. The use of these ideas in past mental health treatments are rooted in present-day person-centered practice. Person-centered practice within disability work is closely tied to the closing of institutions during the 1970's, though the University of Minnesota's research shows that person-centered planning specifically has "developed and evolved" over the last 15 to 20 years as described in *Increasing Person-Centered Thinking: Improving the Quality of Person-Centered Planning: A Manual for Person-Centered Planning Facilitators*. By advocating for people to be a part of their communities, the deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities and severe and persistent mental illness was one of the first steps toward being person-centered in our delivery of long-term services and supports. The work did not stop there.

This incredibly important work continues today because – as is consistent with other systemic inequities – supporting people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, physical disabilities, or older

adults is rooted in *system-centered* service delivery. Changing our approach in supporting people to be person-centered provides continued steps towards how we "craft a pattern of living that increases people's participation and belonging in community life," as also stated in *Increasing Person-Centered Thinking*.

Today, the use of person-centered practices is critical as we partner with each and every person we support to help them live their best lives. This is not only for people who may be using "formal" services; using person-centered practices also includes staff, teams, and organizations.

Washington County emphasizes person-centered practice in how we support people, how we talk with and about people, and how we support each other internally. This is not new, but the focus has been intense since 2017, initially through a grant provided by the Minnesota Department of Human Services in partnership with STAR Services. It continues through the leadership and staff in the Access, Aging, and Disability Division within Community Services. While we are continuing to grow in our person-centered practices, we know that it simply starts with the person and identifying what it is *they* want, *how* they want it, and partnering with them and their supports to achieve their dreams and help them live their best lives.

– Molly Henningsgard, Senior Social Worker

My Supports

There are many supports you can use if you are on the Developmental Disabilities (DD), Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADI), Brain Injury (BI), Community Alternative Care (CAC), Elderly Waivers (EW), or the Alternative Care (AC) program.

If you don't have a county case manager and are interested in exploring if you are eligible for one of these

waivers or programs, please call 651-430-6484 and request a MnCHOICES Assessment. However, there are also resources, services, and supports to help you find your own home, even if you are not using one of these waivers or programs!

– Chantelle Heifort-Adams, Social Worker II

Resources: Waiver-Funded

- [Case management](#): Individualized and person-centered help to access, coordinate, and monitor formal and natural supports and services.
- [Consumer Directed Community Supports \(CDCS\)](#): Option available under all waivers and the AC program that gives flexibility in planning and self-directing your own services and supports, including hiring and managing staff.
- [Individualized home supports \(with training\)](#): Provides instruction related to living in the community directly from staff.
- [Integrated community supports](#): Provides support and training to people over 18 in their own home (NOT a family home). This support can be delivered up to 24 hours a day in the home or community.
- [My Moves Plan](#): You develop this plan with your team to help you outline everything needing to be done to make sure your move is as smooth and successful as possible! It is required when you are on the DD, CAC, CADI, or BI waiver and moving into your own home.
- [Person-Centered Planning](#): A certified person-centered planner facilitates discussion and the development of a plan based on what YOU want and YOUR goals. This is for the big things in life: moving, new jobs, living more independently. It can also be used to improve tough situations and improve supports received.
- [Transitional services](#): Helps cover the cost of items and expenses reasonably needed to transition into your own home.
- [Cash Programs \(Minnesota Supplemental Aid, Group Residential Housing, and Others\)](#): State-funded programs that can assist with cost of room and board for individuals who meet the eligibility criteria.
- [Disability Hub MN](#): Free statewide resource network that helps you solve problems, navigate the system, and plan for your future.
- [Family Support Grant \(FSG\)](#): Cash grants to families of children up to age 25 with a certified disability who reside at home. Recipients between the ages of 14-25 are able to use the grant fund towards transitional services and supports.
- [Housing Benefits 101](#): Explore your housing options, discover what works for you, and make a plan to get there.
- [MN DHS Housing Stabilization Services](#): A new Minnesota Medical Assistance benefit to help people with disabilities, including mental illness and substance use disorder, and seniors find and keep housing.
- [Natural Supports](#): Can include family, friends, school, work, spiritual community, neighbors, or other people or places that occur “naturally” in your community.
- [Semi-Independent Living Services \(SILS\)](#): Training and assistance (i.e. managing money, preparing meals, shopping, hygiene, and other activities) needed to help you live in your own home. May receive a one-time housing allowance of up to \$1,500.
- [Stone Soup Thrift Store](#): Non-profit organization that helps individuals within the community who need household goods. Talk to your case manager to get a referral.
- [Washington County Housing and Homeless Resources](#): Information about affordable housing, homeless services, and more.

Resources: Non-Waiver

- [Bridging](#): Minnesota non-profit that empowers individuals to thrive in their homes by providing furniture and other household goods. Talk to your case manager to get a referral or you can access this service through housing services.

Artist Spotlight

Katherine Schimmel won the Bill Murray Choice Award for her Butterfly Tree on September 7, 2019 at an annual event called Colab, where artists from all backgrounds are welcome. The event was held at The Show Gallery Lowertown in St. Paul. Katherine worked with artist Debbie Kinney and they created the Butterfly Tree with clay. It was then dried in the kiln and painted. This beautiful piece was put up for bidding—the lucky winner was Katherine’s aunt!



Katherine with award-winning “Butterfly Tree.”

Best Practices: Quick Tips!

Key Concepts, Words:

- Keep. It. Positive!
- Use language that is respectful and *personable*, avoiding acronyms and jargon.
- Highlight the person’s strengths, preferences, and likes.
- Be as specific as you can about the person you are talking/writing with/about.
- Start by highlighting strengths, preferences, goals and dreams, *then* cover areas of need.

Key Concepts, Goals:

- Are what the person wants, the person’s preferences, strengths, and/or what they identify as important.
- Come directly from the person. Or, if a person uses other ways to communicate, someone who knows them well can speak to what goal(s) they would say if they could use words to tell us.
- Are NOT services/needs, etc.
- Don’t give people goals we know they don’t want! For example, someone who does not like exercising probably does not want a goal of exercising every week (this does not mean exercising is not still a *need* captured in the person’s assessment and/or support plan).

When helping someone live their best life, think about this quote from [Becoming a Person Centered System](#): “The rock, tossed in the pond makes waves. And the bigger the rock, the bigger the waves. But no matter how big the rock, the pond eventually goes still again.” Being person-centered is not just about completing a form or changing a few words we use. It is also about making changes to our systems, organizations, policies, and values to completely put person-centered practices into effect. This will keep waves continuing for the people we support.

Check out these websites for more information:

- [Minnesota Department of Human Services Person-Centered Practices Overview](#)
- [Washington County Person-Centered Culture and Practice](#)
- With the help of focus groups composed of people with disabilities, the Disability Hub MN created: [What does person-centered mean for me? An introduction. \(DHS-6803\)](#)

Contact Us

For questions or for article and spotlight submissions, contact:

Molly Henningsgard
Washington County
Community Services
14949 62nd Street North
Stillwater, MN 55082
651-430-6500
[Email](#)

Sign Up for this Newsletter

You can sign up to receive this newsletter via email or text through our [Notify Me system web page](#).