



The Best Kept Secret in CMH:

The metamorphosis of CSDD Day
Programs into Transitions
By Daniel Devaney

Did you know that throughout the CEI tri county area there are hundreds of people with developmental disabilities living inclusive lives via participation in a variety of volunteer, vocational, educational, and recreational activities at hundreds of sites? They are volunteering at the Red Cross, the MSU Vet School, and at Head Start. They deliver Meals on Wheels and clean our parks and work at food banks. They raise morale at nursing homes and make children smile at daycare centers. They are everywhere they choose to be and everywhere they are, they make a difference. Everyday.

How did we get from routinely giving people institutional life sentences to the point where 442 consumers participated in 152,861 hours of community inclusion activities at over 250 different sites over the course of the past year? These same folks who were once sent away for being too medically fragile or old or cognitively challenged are now being recognized as volunteer of the week and employee of the month.

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It has been a long underfunded process. A process filled with vision, perseverance and courage by board members, staff and consumers who never stopped believing in what was possible if only we kept trying. And trying is what it has been all about. Along with being open to change and opportunity.

Not so long ago creating the day program system with its sheltered workshops and adult daily living programs was thought to be the best choice. Day programs provided a safe and supportive alternative to either being in the institution or staying at home. Life outside the institution was better for many but the individual struggled to emerge. Almost everyone lived in a segregated home, went to a segregated day program, and rode in a segregated vehicle. Interaction with the community on an individualized basis continued to be out of reach for many.

As people became more comfortable with their new programs, they found they wanted more. Person Centered Planning arrived on the scene, which allowed staff to

ask, "What do you want to do?" Individualized programming became the expectation. With training and exposure to community experiences people began to let us know what they wanted. They wanted choices. They wanted opportunities. They wanted to be included. Finally, the individual was able to emerge!

The formula for turning the program around was a "simple" one. It was started by developing one community opportunity for one person. And then another was added. And another. Throughout the years, 283 partnerships have been developed in the community.

Consumers talked to one another and encouraged the taking of risks and trying new sites. Peer support groups were started.

Under the heading of what gets measured gets done, goals were set that got reviewed quarterly. Annual consumer satisfaction surveys insure that staff continue to listen to what people want. The agency mission statement that references including people in the community was taken literally to the extent that one of our large day programs was closed and replaced with smaller satellites so that people could be served near their home communities. Our satellites are now in St. Johns, Mason, Charlotte, and Lansing. The overarching question continues to be asked, "Is this the best we can do?"

CSDD's Day Programs have evolved. It was not that long ago that virtually everyone spent the entire day within the four walls of the day program. Currently 96% of people in traditional day programs spend some time in community experiences. To this end, formal programming and support services continue to be offered so that people can be prepared to be as independent as possible in the community. Our new name, Transitions, pretty much says it all.

Maybe you have some awareness of the incredible transformation that has been slowly developing. Maybe consumers are so seamlessly included in the community that it is no longer noticeable. In any event, the issuance of a regular newsletter is intended to provide higher visibility for the consumers as they continue to make wonderful contributions in their communities. Acknowledging community partners for their ongoing support as well as giving a little publicity is a second goal. Lastly, keeping you informed of what and where consumers operate may inspire you to help staff with potential placement leads or other useful resource information.

This process is energizing for the staff and consumers so you might say that we are on a roll. We know what needs to be done and we know how to do it. Together with consumers and a welcoming community we believe that the best is yet to come!

Stay tuned.....

Below are the various Transitions locations and lead staff to contact with questions or information:*

*Charlotte Satellite (serving Eaton County)
*551 Courthouse Drive
*Charlotte, Michigan 48813
*(517) 543-5100 Ext. 237
*Jean Stroesenreuther or Carol Kron

*Clinton County Satellite
*1000 E. Sturgis St.
*St. Johns, Michigan 48879
*(989) 224-5301
*Michelle Whitcomb-Sheren

*Mason Satellite (serving Rural Ingham County)
*715 Curtis
*Mason, Michigan 48854
*(517) 676-3401
*Elizabeth Putnam or Carol Kron
*

*Transitions Central
*812 East Jolly Road
*Lansing, Michigan 48910
*(517) 346-9544
*Beth LaFleche-Hall or Larry Koehler

*Transitions North
*3200 Remy Drive
*Lansing, Michigan 48906
*(517) 323-9558
*Susan Speers, Karen Wilber, or Mary Studenka
*

*Transitions South
*2389 Jarco Drive
*Holt, Michigan 48842
*(517) 694-5098
*Deb Voss or Lisa Mack

Feel free to call us or stop by and see what we are doing!