

A New Life for Bryan



It's been a long road to walk for Bryan who lives in a group home with three other men. His journey began in 1978 when he came to SRVS' Community Living program which provides residential care to individuals in homes and apartments, and nursing services to those who are medically fragile. Bryan lived in a ten bedroom group home for men and was working at SOS Industries. SOS was a difficult environment for Bryan because he was anxious about crowds and loud noises made him nervous. When Bryan's fears and phobias were diagnosed by the SRVS staff, Bryan transitioned into SRVS' Community Based Day Services which has since helped him to overcome his self-injuries, enhance his socialization skills, and given him the opportunity to participate in meaningful community activities with specific therapeutic goals.

A major factor in the road to Bryan's recovery has been the constant and steady support he receives from his DSP Cindy Fields. Cindy began working in Bryan's first group home as a House Manager and later decided to become a direct support staff because of her desire to provide one-on-one support and attention to the special needs of Bryan. Cindy is calm, patient, kind, understanding and compassionate. Her special ability to interact with Bryan has had an enormous impact on him. Before he met Cindy, Bryan was socially withdrawn, very resistant to staff, capable of verbalizing but non-conversant, and in poor health. When Cindy met Bryan, her heart went out to him and she knew that she could make a difference in his life.

"When I first met Bryan, he was very withdrawn and exhibited several behavioral problems," recalls Cindy. "I felt a connection with Bryan and knew immediately that he just needed someone who could spend the time with him. Bryan knows he can always reach me and depend on me. He can count on me to keep him safe and be his friend."

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There was a time when Bryan would not go out into the community at all. After his teeth were removed and he was placed on medication, Bryan developed phobias and a deep seated fear about going out into the public. He was afraid to put his feet on the floor because he thought there were snakes below. Cindy helped Bryan get healthy. They go everywhere together including church, the museums, parks, and especially trips to the Memphis Zoo where Bryan loves to walk. He has learned the names of many animals and is able to identify and speak their names. Cindy has also taught Bryan mathematics and how to read books, and makes sure he visits with his family and socializes with the other individuals at his home. After consistent supervision, tutoring, medical attention, and actively engaging him in conversation and socializing, Bryan has become a new person. He is more relaxed, enjoys learning things, smiles, walks more, and is very energetic.

Cynthia Alexander, Director of Community Living I, has seen the transformation in Bryan as well. "Cindy has managed to keep Bryan from injuring himself and calmed his phobias. She is very diligent about keeping him healthy and safe and ensures that all his needs are met on a daily basis," remarks Cynthia. Her diligence and loving support have not gone unnoticed. She has received awards from SRVS for DSP of the Month and from the Tennessee Community of Organizations for Outstanding DSP of the Year.

Another stabilizing factor in Bryan's life has been his long-time friends and housemates and the wonderful staff who take care of them all. When the state required fewer individuals per home, Bryan moved from his ten bedroom group home to a new home with three of his housemates. Bryan now lives with Charles, Gregory and John, and they have all formed a close bond with one another. While Bryan keeps active in the community, Charles, Gregory and John attend SRVS' Kramer Activity Center.

Wendy Saulsberry has been a DSP for the men for more than six years. Both she and Cindy were both trained by House Manager Sandra Bolden, a finalist for the national Irwin Siegel DSP of the Year Award. Wendy has seen a difference in all the men since moving to their new home. "Bryan and his housemates compliment each other and like to interact with one another. We take very good care of them and know all their habits, likes and dislikes," says Wendy. John used to be very quiet in the larger home. Now he helps with household chores like taking the garbage out, bringing the mail in, and folding the laundry. He is more independent and confident and happy to Wendy when she picks him up at the end of the day at Kramer. John goes home on the weekends yet can't wait to come back to his friends on Monday. John's mom doesn't mind, "That's why I know my son is treated right," says Jane McIntosh.

Charles was institutionalized at the age of seven. Since coming to SRVS, he has become more self-sufficient. "His behaviors are less frequent and although he is non-verbal, our staff communicates with him with verbal cues," explains Wendy. "And Gregory came to us in 2006. He recently lost his mom and likes to put flowers on her grave yet he knows we are there for him. He keeps active and loves to draw. Gregory is very knowledgeable about his surroundings."

Bryan, Charles, Gregory and John like to go on errands together, grocery shop, play games at home, attend events, go dancing at the Skinner Center and most of all, go out to eat. Thanks to the dedicated support they receive from their house staff who have a unique way of understanding their needs, wants, interests, joys and fears, these men are having the time of their life!