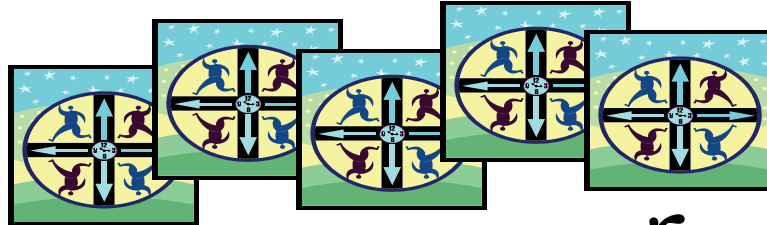


New Directions



On The Move

October 2007

New Directions Profile

*DDA would like to profile the creative ways in which **New Directions** Waiver participants are designing and directing their services. If you have a story you would like to share, please e-mail Catriona at CatrionaJ@dhmh.state.md.us.*



Lisa Hughes

We are all familiar with the strong tendency young adults have to recognize far easier the things they do not want as part of their lives, than being sure what it is they definitely want. Lisa Hughes clearly demonstrates this common struggle as she succeeds with her transition into young adulthood.

Lisa, the 23 year old daughter of John and Nancy Hughes of North East has been in **New Directions** since June 2006. To best understand the value of the program to Lisa, it is helpful to understand the dilemma she has endured since completing her education at Perryville High School in 2002. Lisa could easily assimilate into any peer group with her stylish dress, trendy jewelry and accessories, and confident yet shy mannerism. There are no obvious signs that Lisa has a serious seizure disorder that has quietly impacted her life in significant ways. Lisa's mom sees this fact as a mixed blessing. While most all parents of a child with a disability crave for that child's acceptance into the mainstream of life, Nancy insists there is a cost as well to that

accomplishment. On the surface Lisa fits in so well with her peers that she can "slip under the radar," sometimes resulting in her not receiving the supports she needs to in order for her to fully participate in a given experience.

Lisa received her diploma and completed school prior to age 21. Until she turned age 21 and was able to qualify for the Governor's Transitioning Youth Initiative, she kept occupied the best she could with work opportunities at a veterinarian practice, a theater stage crew, and volunteering at an office doing mailroom assistance. She also participated when possible in several *Special Olympics* groups in nearby Delaware. She enjoyed included gardening.

To achieve a more fulfilling life, Lisa began planning with the DDA Eastern Regional Office's Transitioning Youth Coordinator, Dave Benjamin. Reflective of her personality, strengths, and support needs, a very individualized approach to Lisa's continuing education and vocational needs was embarked upon. Cecil County has some award winning programs offered by three DDA licensed providers. Living close to the Susquehanna River, Lisa's family naturally looks out of the Eastern Region for some services offered in adjoining Harford County or New Castle County, Delaware. In spite of planning using this "wider lens" with three very creative and capable advocates, Lisa could not arrive at an



Lisa Hughes, continued...

individualized plan that she felt could make her dream come true.

Faced with this dilemma, the Eastern Region's ***New Directions*** Coordinator presented a request to the Statewide Workgroup's ***New Directions*** Task Force in the spring 2006. DDA has been blessed with dynamic leadership and a strong system reformer in Diane Coughlin who recently retired from state service. Diane and the workgroup immediately recommended extending the option of ***New Directions*** enrollment to Lisa and other transitioning youth so they could begin this essential DDA service with a full range of opportunities.

With this approval, Lisa wasted no time in creating an innovative menu of vocational and personally enriching activities. The result mimics a stimulating liberal arts curriculum and includes components similar to an internship in a crafts guild. This consists of class work and mentoring at both the community college and the Elkton Community's Artisans. Elements of this constantly evolving plan have included sampling some pursuits while immersing herself in others. This eclectic curriculum Lisa and her parents have designed includes sign language, equine therapy and care, pottery, photography, oil and watercolor on mixed media, massage therapy and international art study.

A large sample of Lisa's artwork was on display Cecil County Arts Council expose' in Elkton. Lisa has plans pending to utilize her ***New Directions*** plan to budget for the purchase of a kiln to explore pottery as a cottage industry. The community shares pride along with Lisa, her family and the DDA ***New Directions*** effort over her great accomplishments within only a year of this innovative approach.

We all are eager to see what this talented and ambitious young lady will be accomplishing next!



People

A number of personnel changes has taken place since our last newsletter. At the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Michael S. Chapman is now the director and Audrey Waters is the acting deputy director. Former DDA Headquarters staff, Kim Bennardi, has replaced Mary Quigley and Marlene Moreno as the Southern Maryland Regional ***New Directions*** Coordinator, and Edward Willard has joined DDA as the ***New Directions*** Advocacy and Training Coordinator (see article below).



Edward Willard Joins DDA



For people with disabilities and families who I worked with through the "My life going Far" project with TASH, consider my role a continuation. My position at DDA is to provide advocacy and training for individuals enrolling in or already on the ***New Directions*** Waiver. If you have talked to

your Regional Coordinator and are still in need of assistance, I am here to problem solve and guide you regardless of where you are in the process.

For people who I have not worked with before, allow me to introduce myself. Having a significant disability, I could not live in my own home without support services. Ensuring support staff is scheduled, obtaining the right mixture of therapy, and yes, engaging in community activities, are parts of my daily life. Having this level of understanding enables me to help you navigate the ***New Directions*** Waiver and make a life for yourself. Professionally, I bring 23 years of working in the disability field, primarily doing systems change work.

It is absolutely an honor being at the Developmental Disabilities Administration, and I look forward to working with you.

You can contact me by e-mail at WillardE@dhmh.state.md.us or by telephone at 410 - 767-5634.

Training

A **New Directions** Orientation is scheduled for October 29 at the Rockville Library. Other Orientation sessions are currently being scheduled, so please check the DDA website for dates. **New Directions** Support Broker trainings are scheduled for October 17 and November 10. Beginning this month, Budget Training will be integrated into the monthly Support Broker training. For more information or to register for **New Directions** trainings, please contact Terri Elliott by phone at 410-767-5421 or by e-mail at TElliott@dbmb.state.md.us.

In addition to accessing DDA trainings through the DDA Training Calendar at <http://ddamaryland.org/Training/output/webcal.html>, **New Directions** participants considering ways to train direct care staff may want to look at courses available online. A number of organizations have developed courses on supported employment (<http://www.trninc.com>), advocacy (<http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com>), and specific disabilities such as autism (www.narppaa.org). If you have a training resource that may be useful to other **New Directions** participants, please let us know so that we can share your resources with others.



Numbers

New Directions continues to grow! As of September 18 there were sixty-three people on the **New Directions** waiver with another eleven pending.

In Memory



Jacqueline A. Speciner

Jacqueline A. Speciner, an advocate for people with disabilities and one of the first Marylanders to use the **New Directions** waiver, died suddenly on August 21 at the age of 49. Described by friends as fiercely independent, she championed the rights of people with disabilities throughout her life and in the last year, completed her autobiography – *Finally, Dreams Coming True* – which she self-published in 2006. In 1996, she was one of the plaintiffs who filed a lawsuit and won accessibility improvements at the Baltimore City Circuit Courthouse. She was an active member of the Maryland chapter of ADAPT and testified in Annapolis on issues affecting people with disabilities. She was married to Neil Speciner for almost 10 years until he passed away in 1995.

Memorial services were held August 24 at the Ruck Towson Funeral Home in Towson, where family, friends, members of her church, colleagues, and support staff celebrated her life and the impact she had on other people. Amidst a mixture of laughter and tears, all who spoke praised Mrs. Speciner's determination to control her own life and advance the rights of people with disabilities. Her book, cowritten with Phyllis Godwin, is available at <http://www.lulu.com>.

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A Note to Families

Beginning with the July, 2007 *New Directions* Support Broker training, DDA added a new handout and discussion with training participants on the topic of family members as direct care staff. Below is the text from the handout for your consideration:

The *New Directions* Waiver allows family members of individuals over age 21 to be paid for direct support.... but is that the best for the individual participant?

Ask yourself:

- At age 24, 36, 48, etc., is it appropriate to still have mom or dad with you throughout the day?
- If a family member supports an individual from birth onwards into adulthood, does the individual learn to adapt to different people and increase his or her flexibility and independence?
- If an individual with a disability is always supported by a family member, what happens when that caregiver is gone? Who else has knowledge of the individual?
- Can a family member be a barrier to increased community integration or friendship development?
- Does having a family member as direct support staff expand the individual's circle of support or risk shrinking it?
- Is this in the best interest of the individual with a disability in the long term?
- Is this about the individual's wishes, desires, needs, or about supplementing a family member's income?

Consider paying a family member if:

- Staff supports are provided at difficult times of the day to get or schedule employees.
- You are in a rural or otherwise isolated area.

- As back-up to hired staff or on a temporary basis.
- Having a family member as staff:
 - ⇒ Truly reflects the individual's wishes and desires,
 - ⇒ Increases the individual's quality of life in measurable ways,
 - ⇒ Increases the individual's independence,
 - ⇒ Increases the individual's choices,
 - ⇒ Expands the individual's circle of support, and/or
 - ⇒ Increases the amount of hours of needed services.
- There is a plan in place to help the individual gain greater independence, self-advocacy skills, and social and community connections.



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