



# Sharing the News

Newsletter of the Shared Living Programs of The Polus Center • Fall 2008 • Issue 5

## Celebrating Life at the House of Peace

If you have ever entered a building and felt an overwhelming sense of being surrounded by beauty and peace, you will know how I felt upon visiting the House of Peace in Ipswich, Mass. John and Carrie Schuchardt established the House of Peace eighteen years ago as a place of refuge and hospitality. Over the years, hundreds of people have sought shelter and support from the Schuchardts at their spacious and historic home, built in 1728 by Rev. Nathaniel Rogers as a place of refuge for those suffering persecution.

The House of Peace truly lives up to its mission of “being a spiritual and physical refuge for victims of war in companionship with people with disabilities.” On the day of my visit, a family from the Middle East, consisting of three adults and two children, were living at the House of Peace. The children are recovering from injuries and are receiving treatment at local hospitals. They were joined by Geraldine Ortiz, an old friend of the family and Mary Ellen Donohue, Carries’ sister. Both women call the House of Peace their permanent home, as do Barbara Baker and Joseph Jacques.

Barbara and Joseph are adults with disabilities who are supported by the North Shore Shared Living program of the Polus Center. They are an important part of the hospitality provided by the House of Peace. Carrie put it this way: “My friends who have impairments offer so much to others – a profound sense of unconditional welcome and acceptance and the gift of caring”. Barbara and Joseph each demonstrate their



John and Carrie Schuchardt from the House of Peace.

gifts in different ways. Barbara likes to visit and looks for opportunities to help others. She is also a great swimmer. Joseph has a strong handshake and is affectionate toward all of the visiting children. He is especially fond of Zeyad, a three year old boy from Darfur who lives nearby. Joseph gets to spend time on the weekends with Zeyad and his father Hassan. “They have a real connection,” says Carrie.

According to Carrie, Barbara and Joseph’s attitude toward life is what holds the house together. Their preference for routine and having a rhythm to the day and week helps others in the household feel secure. “Their stability is a gift to the whole house”,

### Inside This Issue:

- Kristin Ferris . . . . . 2
- Summer Shindig Shines . . . . 3
- In Memorium . . . . . 3
- Discussion Forum . . . . . 4
- What’s New . . . . . 4

Carrie told me. “No matter how many people are coming and going and how many interruptions occur, Barbara and Joseph are always here to remind us to slow down and to have regularly scheduled meals. It’s easier to accept the unexpected when you are so grounded.”

Built on a foundation of reaching out to those who are wounded and celebrating those who need care, the House of Peace is a place filled with the joy of living. The Polus Center is proud to be affiliated with the House of Peace and all of those who strive for peace in the world. ❁



Barbara and Joseph at home.

## Kristin Ferris: All Smiles in her New Home

“I could get used to this!” Kristin Ferris grinned as she told me about living in her new home in Worcester. “I get home from bowling and there’s dinner waiting for me. Breakfast on Saturday mornings is awesome.”

Juliana Danquah, Kristin’s new Home Provider, smiles in agreement. “I enjoy doing it. When I have time to cook, I love to make big breakfasts.” Kristin elaborated. “On my birthday, I got waffles, scrambled eggs, hot cereal, and cupcakes for breakfast. The cupcakes had chocolate kisses on them. Wow!”

Juliana and Kristin have shared a home since July 28, 2008. Prior to that, Kristin had been living in a respite house for almost two years. She and her parents were eager to find a new home with a supportive family so they contacted Laurie Sault of Central Mass Community Network (CMCN), one of the Polus Center’s Shared Living programs. After getting to know Kristin, Laurie introduced her to Juliana and her family: husband Festus and their daughters Aba and Margaret.

“I thought Juliana and Festus’ home would be ideal for Kristin” Laurie told me. “I know she would like to move into her own apartment some day and the set up at Juliana’s allows Kristin to have her own space. Also, Kristin and Juliana seemed to hit it off and those relationships are really important.”

Kristin has a suite of rooms on the top floor of Juliana’s spacious home on the outskirts of the city. The two women have been spending time redecorating and trying out new ways to arrange Kristin’s furniture. Kristin is an avid user of email, so her computer has prime space in her lounge along with an electric organ –a family heirloom. She also enjoys reading, doing crafts, making puzzles, and watching TV. She joins the family for dinner most evenings and then there are the famous breakfasts on Saturday. “I like to sit around and chat with Juliana and Aba. We do



*Kristin Ferris relaxing at home – her new home.*

stuff together, like shopping and going to cookouts. It’s been great!”

Kristin has been keeping up with her busy schedule in spite of her recent move. She works at a local CVS three days a week, goes bowling twice a week and to church on Sundays. She also enjoys water aerobics at the local YMCA. Along with all of these activities, she makes time to see her parents and to talk to her friends on her cell. Kristin

also likes to Instant Message with Juliana’s daughter, Margaret, who’s away at college. “It’s fun to keep in touch with her. I’m looking forward to having her come home for a weekend soon”, says Kristin, grinning widely.

Kristin has plenty of reasons to smile these days. We wish her and the Danquah family a happy future together! ❁

## Summer Shindig Shines!

The verdict is in! Having a barbecue at the beach on a beautiful summer day makes for a wonderful Summer Shindig, the Polus Center’s annual summer extravaganza! The Picnic Pavilion at Salisbury Beach State Park was plenty big enough for the ninety-plus people who came to enjoy a day of socializing, swimming, dancing, picnicking, games and some serious relaxing on the beach.

Clinton Caterers Nancy Heron and Kathy and Paul Martin provided a superb barbecue lunch. There was plenty of everything for everybody, thanks to the able catering staff and all of the wonderful potluck entrees. The grill was sizzling all day with burgers, dogs and sausage and the dessert table overflowed with goodies.

Before and after lunch, people headed to the beach to walk the dunes and swim. Many folks took advantage of the free beach wheelchairs provided by the State Park. The chairs made it so easy to hang out at the beach. Susan Smith, who shares her home with April Gauthier, called them “the best invention ever!”

The beach party atmosphere was helped along by Paul McQuaid and his band, “The Polus Express”. They wowed the crowd with their renditions of standards and ballads and their tunes got lots of people up on their feet. The Rosetti family danced to almost every number. Kevin, Collette, Steve and Maylin were also up on the lawn



*Susan and April enjoying the beautiful day at Salisbury.*

grooving to the beat.

Folks left the shindig with a host of happy memories and the knowledge that next summer will bring another shindig and they would be sure to be a part of it. ❁

IN MEMORIAM  
Henry L. Clark | 1945-2008



*Henry Clark with Ellen and Gladys at the 2007 Summer Shindig.*

Everybody at the Polus Center is saddened by the recent death of Henry Clark. Henry was part of the Central Mass. Community Network for the past 10 years. He passed away at UMass Memorial Healthcare Center after a long struggle with cancer and pneumonia.

Henry, or “Hen” as his friends called him, was lovingly remembered at his funeral by his many colleagues, friends and advocates. Godfrey Kollie, from CMCN welcomed everybody with the words, “We are here to celebrate the life of our brother and friend, Henry Clark.” Several people came forward to speak of the ways that Henry blessed their lives. He is remembered as someone who was always smiling and who shared his joy of life with everyone he met.

Ellen Sandiman, Charles Ardey and Gladys Kaizer shared their home with Henry for the past two years. “He was a part of our family,” Ellen said during her eulogy. “I will miss his big smile when he got home from work. That always made my day.”

Laurie Sault, Program Director of CMCN and a long time friend of Henry, spoke of his compassion for others, his love of drumming and his church, and his steadfastness. “Henry was always there for me”, she said. Laurie thanked the people who helped Henry throughout his life and during his final illness: Ellen, Charles and Gladys, Patricia Mafra, Godfrey Kollie, Larry Speigel, Helen Duda and Jonathan Kinley.

We will dearly miss Henry and his ever present smile and are grateful to have had him in our lives.

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*The Rosetti family: Dom, Genie and Billy*

## DISCUSSION FORUM: The Fine Art of Belonging: Part 2

Helping the people we support to become valued members of their communities is an ongoing endeavor for family members and Home Providers. At Discussion Forums held on the topic last winter, we acknowledged that there are many obstacles to helping people participate in community life. One of the key obstacles, we all agreed, is fear.

Family members may fear the person will not be safe by joining a community group or working at a real job in the community. Providers may fear what the public will say or do to the person they support. We may fear going beyond our "comfort zone", such as attending a group meeting for the first time or going someplace new.

Fear of rejection affects all of us and has a real impact on our willingness to take risks when we are planning community

activities for the person we support. We all shared examples of times we had taken risks. They ranged from being pleasantly surprised at the ease of attending a neighborhood block party where the person fit right in to the not-so-successful experience of getting rained on at an outdoor concert and forgetting where you had parked. We agreed that after every experience – good or bad – it is helpful to reflect on what went well, what didn't go well, how to prevent problems from occurring next time and most importantly, to not give up.

We at the Polus Center believe that communities are made better by the presence of people with disabilities who have so much to offer. In this spirit, we will continue to help people become active members of their communities and will

continue our efforts to support providers in overcoming obstacles and celebrating successes. If you have a story of successful community integration to share, please contact Jan Doody at 978-724-3361, [jdoody@poluscenter.org](mailto:jdoody@poluscenter.org).

## What's New at the Polus Center

We welcome **Hyacinth Whitt** to her new position as Employment Specialist with Commonwealth Business Associates. Hyacinth will be working with Althea Henderson and Jan Doody to provide vocational supports to five people living

in the greater Boston area. Hyacinth has worked for many years with Choice, Inc. as a case manager. She has twenty five years of experience working in the field of Human Services. Welcome, Hyacinth!



Left to right: Jan Doody, Hyacinth Whitt, and Althea Henderson.

*Everyone at  
the Polus Center  
Wishes You and*

*Your Family*

*A Joyous*

*Holiday Season and*

*A Peaceful and*

*Happy New Year.*

