

Today's Quote:

"Giving up doesn't always mean you are weak; sometimes it means that you are strong enough to let go." ~Author Unknown

A Special Day for Woodbridge DC Resident and her Family

Carol Matsikoudis, a resident of Woodbridge Developmental Center (DC), recently celebrated with family, friends, staff and fellow residents as she received her First Holy Communion. It was a joyful occasion made possible by Carol and her family, the DC's Office of Volunteer Services and a local parish.

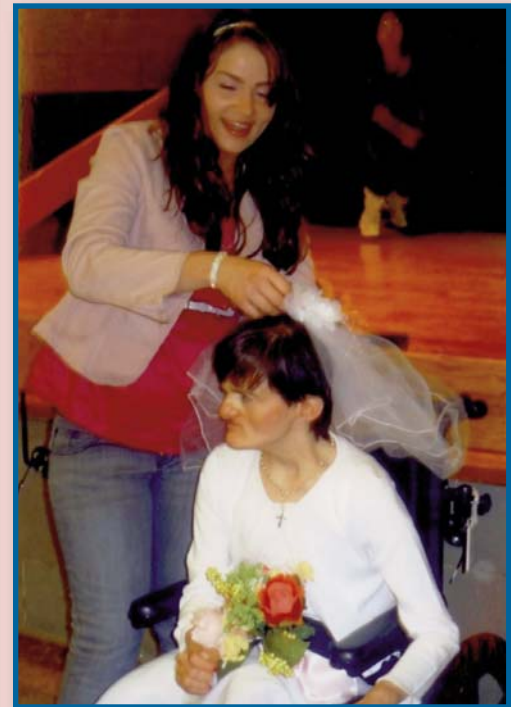
"It was a beautiful ceremony," said Carol's sister and co-guardian, Eileen Wyville. "Everyone also enjoyed the party afterward, including Carol." Rosemarie Walter, Assistant Director of Volunteers Services at Woodbridge, said the event was unlike anything she has witnessed or been involved with during 25 years in volunteer services at the DC.

"We have had services in which a group of people took part in a particular religious rite," she said. "But I can't remember a time when the event was for just one person, and the family did so much work to make it so memorable. Twenty family members, including Carol's brothers and sisters and their families, as well as many friends, attended the mass. The family planned everything about the day and many of them arrived beforehand to decorate for the party. It was really a very beautiful day."

Carol, 53, has resided at Woodbridge since shortly after the DC opened in 1965. The question about receiving communion, however, apparently had never come up until earlier this year when Wyville asked if her sister could attend mass.



Carol and a family member



Carol with niece, Courtney

"I wanted Carol to be able to celebrate her faith," said Wyville.

Woodbridge, which offers Jewish, Catholic and Protestant religious education and programs to all interested residents, was receptive to Wyville's request. As part of the discussion, it was determined that Carol would be able to receive her

First Holy Communion, and the Office of Volunteer Services reached out to St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church in Avenel. St. Andrew's offers a religious education program for Woodbridge residents each Saturday morning. For several months before receiving her First Holy Communion, Carol participated in this program, learning about and growing in her faith

The mass was celebrated at the DC by the Reverend David Kosmoski of St. Andrew's on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Carol participated dressed beautifully in a traditional white dress and veil and carrying a bouquet of flowers.

After the mass, everyone moved to the canteen area for a luncheon. Decorations included tablecloths, centerpieces and wall hangings, and the food included a large sheet cake. Wyville said that although Carol does not communicate verbally, she clearly demonstrated her enjoyment of the luncheon as it came to a close.



“We were getting ready to wind up, and one of the staff members said she was going to take Carol, who uses a wheelchair, back to her room,” said Wyville. “When they were about halfway across the room, the staff member paused for a few moments. Carol took that opportunity to wheel herself back to the table. It’s as if she was saying ‘It’s my party and I’ll leave if I want.’”

New Lisbon Developmental Center Celebrates Cultural Diversity

The staff and residents at New Lisbon Developmental Center (NLDC) recently celebrated their first ever Cultural Diversity Day. The event, which allowed the New Lisbon community to learn about different cultures from around the world, was deemed a success such that plans are to hold it again next year.

“Honestly, it was the best event in a while and I think people will be psyched to do it even better next year,” said Jeff Schroeder, Chief Executive Officer at NLDC.

The event, held on May 19th, included many different activities. Each unit and department was encouraged to participate by setting up a display for a country they chose to represent. Residents were encouraged to be creative with their displays and the only requirement was that each display had to include the country’s flag and map.

Before the event, 5th graders from local schools created imitation passports for each person who participated. The passports were then stamped as the individual traveled from display to display (country to country).

As part of the event, residents also decorated the cottages and departments, and had the opportunity to take part in and watch entertaining and informative dances, songs and performances. The day was capped by a “World Cup” style soccer game for the staff and residents.

The fun, competitive atmosphere helped to create a great sense of teamwork and camaraderie among all who attended. Everyone is looking forward to the event next year.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities (ABCD)

The Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities (ABCD) is pleased to announce that it has developed a training workshop and curriculum on Aging and Developmental Disabilities, which addresses multiple areas of how to provide supports and services to aging individuals with developmental disabilities. Additional information about the September and October workshops, including a workshop description and instructions for registration, can be found on the ABCD website at www.abcdnj.org. Please note that there is no cost for attendance.

Autism New Jersey (ANJ)

ANJ Workshops - Healthcare Resources: Access and Funding for Autism. Click [here](#) for details....

New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP) 2010 Workshop Series

Schedule and Workshop Descriptions [Sept/Oct] (click here for details)

Parent Link

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services has launched a new website for parents called Parent Link, the Early Childhood, Parenting and Professional Resource Center:

<http://www.njparentlink.nj.gov/>. NJ Parent Link is the new "central station" for receiving early childhood updates, events and networking opportunities.

DDD Presents County-Based Forums

DDD invites individuals who are in Real Life Choices, Self-Determination, or at the top of the Priority and Priority-Deferred categories of the Waiting List for Waiver Services (formerly known as Community Services Waiting List [CSWL] or Residential Waiting List) to attend a county-based family forum.

These forums are geared toward the family's need to plan and prepare for the well-being of their adult child/children with developmental disabilities. Forums are being held in each county in the state.

Morris County Family Meeting

Date: Future meetings are scheduled for Sept. 15, 2010; Nov. 10, 2010; Jan. 12, 2011; March 9, 2011 and May 11, 2011. Time: 6:30 - 8:45 PM Location: Morris County Library, 30 East Hanover Ave., Whippany, NJ



How many people have recently moved to the community from developmental centers?

"We are in the process of updating our information and expanding our reporting data. This feature will be moving to our website so stay tuned for further details."

The Family Support Center of New Jersey (www.fscnj.org) has re-established "The Training Calendar," an online resource for information about training opportunities, lectures, and other activities for caregivers and receiving support and care. Please visit www.thetrainingcalendar.org for more information.