



Assisting people with developmental disabilities so that they have the opportunity to build safe, healthy, meaningful lives in the community

# Choices' Joices

CHOICES IN COMMUNITY LIVING, INC. Est. 1985

Founding Partner of Partners For Community Living



## Home – Family – Community – Celebrating our Silver Anniversary

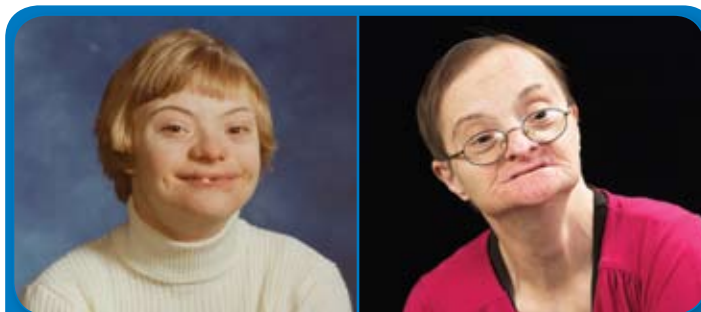
by Tom Weaver, Executive Director

The definition of an 'elevator speech' is a concise, carefully planned and well-practiced description about a company or project. I've had years to try and perfect my 'elevator speech' for Choices In Community Living, but it's never quite worked out. It may be that when it comes to talking about what we do and why we do what we do, I find it almost impossible to be concise. There are always those stories that come to the surface when I'm talking about us, which means that my carefully planned and well-practiced description goes out the window.

Maybe it's something to do with my own challenges or maybe it's something more important, something beyond me. What we do and why we do it simply can't be reduced to a concise, carefully planned and well-practiced description when we're talking about who we are – Home – Family – Community.

Those are the three most powerful words I can think of as all of us together celebrate the 25th anniversary of this remarkable organization called Choices In Community Living. We were founded when the Montgomery County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities "spun off" their residential services and we began providing services in our first three homes.

**HOME – a place of comfort, a place where you're in control of your life, that place for all your own 'stuff', your own space, your own room.** It's that place where you go to celebrate your successes, to mourn your losses, to find comfort when the world is less than comforting. It's that place that is centered around who you are, where you're free to express yourself and have the things that you like and that matter to you. It's that place where you are supported and surrounded by laughter, tears, sharing, caring, acceptance and the people who accept, respect and love you just because you are you.



Annie Long had just celebrated her 25th birthday when she became one of the first people to join our Choices In Community Living family in October, 1985.

Annie, who lives in our Huntsview home, will not only help us celebrate our 25th anniversary, she'll celebrate her own milestone when she turns 50 in October.

**FAMILY –** There is nothing scientific, nothing genetic, nothing biological that links David and Vicky. How then is it possible that they can in the most real sense of the word be family to each other. I sat recently with David as he talked about all the years he has been a part of our Choices family, how he came to us confused and uncertain, afraid of the future because his father was getting older and unable to care for him, no longer able to be that foundation of family that he needed, wanted and deserved.

Through that initial fear and sense of loss, that difficult time of leaving one home and trying to find a new one, he found that sense of family once again. The staff at Choices have been his extended family for over 20 years. He smiles in gratitude when he speaks of his Choices home and family, of Vicky, who is so much more than a staff person to him. He calls her his 'angel' with a reverence and respect that we

have for those who are our family. He shopped for her during the holidays and gave her what he thinks is the perfect gift, one that sums up in one eloquent gesture what it means to have the bonds of family. He gave her an angel.

**COMMUNITY – to be a part of and not apart from.** Generations of professionals have been inspired by the values of philosophy of Wolf Wolfensberger. Not only are we older but we are wiser because of him. It was Wolf who opened our hearts and our minds to what "service systems" can do when they label and isolate people in a way that devalues them, that keeps them apart from their communities and not active, equal and participating part of them. He told us that such isolation is like a rock in people's backpacks that they end up carrying throughout their lives.

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**You are invited to join us on October 1 for our formal celebration of our 25th Anniversary. Be watching for details.**



## Celebrating our newer programs

We'll be spending time during 2010 looking back over 25 years of providing person-centered, community-based services for people with developmental disabilities. One of our newest services began in January, 2007, our Fun Fit Day Hab program. Community partnerships have been and will continue to be one of the things that sets Choices apart from other service providers.

Our Fun Fit Day Hab program was developed in partnership with the Kleptz YMCA in Englewood. It began with seven clients participating in exercise and physical activities twice a week for five hours a day. Success begets success and in a short period of time the program expanded to serve nine clients five days a week. It currently services 27 individuals. It has proven so successful and so popular that there is now a waiting list, resulting in plans to open a second Fun Fit program in April at the West Carrollton YMCA.

According to Program Manager Kelly Defibaugh, participants in the program have seen positive results and are living much healthier lifestyles. Many have significant weight loss and report more energy and more enjoyment in their daily activities. The program is provided to Choices clients and to individuals from the community. Eight individuals live at home with family members. We have recently welcomed two new clients from the Resident Home Association, Joan Lukens and Nancy Manary. Joan's favorite activity is swimming, while Nancy loves basketball and shooting pool.

Kelly is in her fifth year of service with Choices, where she implemented our Recreation Program in 2005, which included a bowling league, field trips, summer break activities, dances and a variety of community activities. Nicole Bettinger and Gentry Worth-Heflin are direct care staff, both of whom have developed strong relationships with clients in a short period of time.

Kelly also coordinates Choices other new program, our Day Transportation Program, which began in 2009. We provide transportation from six of our program homes to and from work sites in the community, including Shiloh House, United Rehabilitation Services and Montgomery County Adult Services Centers/MONCO. Transportation is provided in vans instead of school buses and results in less travel time between locations for participants.

"Kelly and her staff do an exceptional job with these programs," says Executive Director Tom Weaver. "Our commitment is to not only continue the services we've had since we began in 1985, but to look at new and creative programs like this that add to options for people with developmental disabilities, while providing us options to develop additional funding sources. It's a win-win for the people we serve, for us and for the community."

There's no time-line on learning – no deadline on changing our lives for the better. No one shows us how true these words are better than Kevin Gutierrez. This June Kevin (l) will mark a



milestone when he celebrates his 50th birthday. He is pictured with Program Administrator Michael Richardson and Endicott staff member Gwin Flowers celebrating another milestone in his life. He proudly displays his Certificate of Recognition, presented to him by his staff to honor the positive changes he has made in his attitude, his home and his life.

"We knew Kevin would be happier and more relaxed by just making a few changes in his life," shares Michael. "It's not always easy to change your attitude," he continues, "but Kevin has put in the hard work to do just that. He now says please and thank you. He makes an effort every day to be more respectful to his housemates and staff. It's not only made a difference in the atmosphere of his home, but he's carried that attitude over to being a part of the community as well and he's getting so much more enjoyment in doing things around home and in the community. We expect to see continuing change in him and now he has that same expectation for himself."

**25TH ANNIVERSARY NOTE:** *Kevin has been a member of our CICAL family since 1989.*

## Good-bye to Oakley

We began 2010 mourning the loss of Oakley LeMaster, who was 91 years old when he died in December. He was our oldest client and was a loved and valued member of our Route 42 home in Madison County. He was a member of our Choices family for the past 12 years. He was retired from MATCO in Madison County and enjoyed his housemates and his home.

Program Administrator Kathy Liff remembers how excited he would get watching OSU football games and especially enjoyed watching them with staff. He loved horses and western movies, anything to do with western movies. He had a bird feeder outside his bedroom window and nothing pleased him more than lying in bed and watching the birds.

He was loved by staff. Former staff would drop by and visit him and he would welcome them with big smiles. It was his current staff who were with him the last months of his life and who mourned him at his funeral. "He waited to die until I started my shift," remembers Kathy. "He waited for me. He died at home, with us, just the way he wanted to. We were able to give him that."

There's colorful artwork on the walls. A new dining room table and chairs and a big smile on the face of Maurice Hollingsworth that's been a long time coming, more than a year at least. Maurice doesn't ask for much and has lived frugally in his small apartment without complaining.

With the support of staff, he set himself a savings goal to be able to put together enough money to finally get some furniture for his apartment and that goal has finally been reached, the first time in many years he has something new for his home, thanks to saving money from his job in a cleaning enclave with MONCO Enterprises.



Anyone who has ever attended a Choices Talent Show would be sure to recognize Maurice. At 52 years of age, he's as agile and smooth on his feet as a teenager. It would be hard to remember a Talent Show when Maurice hasn't stepped on stage and transformed himself into Michael Jackson, right down to the Moon Walk.

*25TH ANNIVERSARY NOTE: Maurice has been a part of our CICL family since 1987. While he would never ask for himself, we know he would welcome a few more items for his home, especially bathroom linens and kitchen towels. The best thing he can ever receive is CDs to add to his growing music collection.*



**Looking back at our family scrap-book:** *Some we miss. Some we've grown older (and mellower) with over the years. For some our memories of names has faded a little, but for all we honor you as part of the history of our Choices family. This 1989 photo features some of the very first members of our family enjoying a day at Kings Island, including (front) Nate Moody (deceased); Kevin Warman; Tom Barnes; and Dan Ryan; (back) Donald Barnes; David; and Bill Thompson (deceased.) Even then we had a commitment to opening doors of opportunity in the community for those we served.*

## Home – Family – Community – stand ready to help them

*Continued from page 1...*

For the past 25 years it has been our commitment to the people we serve to remove the rocks from their backpacks, to ease the burdens, to open doors of opportunity and acceptance in our communities, communities that belong to us all, to lighten their backpacks and to stand ready to help them carry them, these members of our family. It is a commitment that will be as strong when we celebrate our golden

anniversary in 25 years as it is this year when we not only look back at what has been but look forward to what is yet to be

**HOME – FAMILY – COMMUNITY** – maybe all of us together, from our Board of Directors to our staff, from our families, volunteers and donors, just maybe all of us together have done what I thought I couldn't do alone – define just who we are at Choices In Community Living in just three well-defined, concise and powerful words.

## Help us celebrate 25 years of family

We invite our mothers, sisters, caregivers (and dads and brothers as well) from Choices to help us celebrate our 25th anniversary by sharing stories at our annual Partners Mothers Day luncheon. We would enjoy seeing any photos you might like to share and hearing stories about your family.

Our Mothers Day Luncheon will be May 6 in the Fifth Third Room at Cox Arboretum. Send us an email at [partners@choicesincl.com](mailto:partners@choicesincl.com) or call us at 937-898-3655 to be sure we have your name and address for our invitation list and to let us know of family members and friends we should invite to join us.

**Help us purchase vans for Choices and  
Resident Home Association.**

**Call us today at 937-898-3655 to order your  
\$10 Kroger Rewards Program card or order  
online at [www.partnersohio.com](http://www.partnersohio.com). We benefit  
every time you shop at any Kroger store!**

## Raiderthon scheduled for April 8

"Dance Your Pants Off" is the theme for the 2010 Raiderthon at Wright State University. The university-wide event will benefit Partners For Community Living and Toward Independence. WSU President Dr. David Hopkins will start off the event at 11:00 a.m. on April 8 in the Apollo Room in the Student Union. Clubs and organizations from throughout the University will be participating. The event is coordinated through the Student Activities office, with plans to make this a WSU tradition of service to people with developmental disabilities.

A variety of activities, including hours of dancing, will run until 11:00 p.m. The public (adults only) is invited to attend for any or all of the activities. Teams of up to 20 members are welcome to participate. Registration is \$10.00 a person.

*Please join us and our "celebrity grillers"  
on June 11 for our 25th Anniversary  
Cook-Out at our Olive Road home,  
from 4:30 – 7:00.  
Olive Road was one of our first three  
homes when we began services in 1985.*

## Choices In Community Living, Inc.

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