

Robert Stauffer's Testimony

Good Afternoon, my name is Robert Stauffer, I am a retired school teacher from Philadelphia but for the last 6 years I have been working for Vision for Equality as a Consumer/Family Satisfaction Team Leader I have a caseload of 38 consumers many of which once lived at Emereeville State Center. My responsibility is to visit my Emereeville consumers three times a year, including some Individual Support Plan meetings, then write a narrative snap shot picture of their current lives, finances, community connections, family communications and highlight signs of quality; I also make recommendations and do advocacy to improve their lives. Because I serve an aging population with behavioral and medical health issues, a big part of my job is to monitor their current health issues, including hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and medication changes.

I would like to tell you about two men who were Emereeville residents and came out to live in the Philadelphia.

First meet Edward B. Edward is a physically and emotionally healthy 60ish year old man who lives in a quiet middle class Northeast Philadelphia neighborhood with his two housemates who were also from Emereeville. In my opinion Edward is living a life well lived! Just how different is Edward's life from his Emereeville days. Well, he lives in a community; he walks in his neighborhood; he says "hi" to his neighbors; he brings in groceries; he puts out the trash; he shovels some snow; he comes and goes to a job he has held at CVS for 12 years. At home he likes to strum his guitar, pay cards, and watch some of his favorite shows or sports on TV. In other words, he lives a life similar to yours and mine.

Edward has a full life outside his residence. He keeps in contact with his brother. He takes a yearly vacation; he has been to Phillie Phanatic spring training several times. He visits local malls and stores to purchase personal items. He goes bowling at Erie Lanes. He goes to pro and college sporting events. He visits his branch of the Free Library, a local nature center, Penn's Landing, and Fairmount Park. So, as you can see, he does things similar to what you may do with your friends and family. These are all things Edward may never have had the opportunity to do if he had lived in an institution.

Arthur J's situation is different but no less a success story. Arthur lives in a group home in the Germantown section of Philadelphia; he is not ambulatory and needs a wheelchair to get around. Arthur has some serious health issues but is a trooper in his own right.

For years after leaving Emereeville, Arthur was able feed himself finely chopped food and drink regular liquids but about two years ago he developed aspirational pneumonia and some attenuated nutritional deficiencies. Arthur's doctors and his medical team felt it would be better for Arthur to be tube feed for the remainder of his life. At this point, it would have been easier to put Arthur in a nursing home or large ICF but that was never considered. Arthur's medical team and everyday staff felt that they had a commitment to him; they embraced his diagnosis, they received the proper training necessary to support Arthur and he still lives in the community.

When I visit Arthur we talk about all sorts of things: sports (he likes basketball and is a LaBron fan), current events, TV shows (The Price is Right and Family Feud are winners for him), cars (his favorite car

is the VW Beetle), our families (he sees his sisters and their families), our friends (he occasionally still sees an old Emereeville buddy named Harry), etc. Yes, chatting with Arthur is just like what you do around the water cooler her at the Capitol.

I am here to tell you that the people I serve are better off living in the community rather than in institutions. Why? Because they have every day lives like you and I.