

Gordon Bensings Statement

Thank you for inviting us here today. I have been involved in advocacy for many years and appreciate the opportunity to speak here on behalf of all individuals with special needs. Peter and I lived at Hamburg Center since we were children and I became involved early on in the plans to relocate it's residence and close the center. We would like to thank the many people who cared for of us at Hamburg Center over the years. They did a fantastic job and we will be forever grateful for that care. Through Excentia Human Services Peter and I moved into our new home in Lancaster County on June 27, 2018. We each received a key to our new home and quickly adapted to our new lives in the community. We each have our own rooms and got to choose the paint color. I chose blue and Peter chose pink. I have always wanted a pet and in December I purchased a Cockatiel which I named Frankie, after one of my good friends at Hamburg. She brightens my days with her endless whistling and talking and has even learned to say "Love You Gordy". Peter has a beautiful fish tank in his room which we have to turn off at night so he doesn't stay up all night watching the fish. We are able to spend our days lounging in the sun on the back deck, working in our little vegetable patch, visiting with friends and neighbors, walking in the park, going to church or community events, bowling, fishing, watching football and sporting events in our man cave, and shopping as we please. It is our choice what time we want to go to bed, what time we want to get up, what music or movies we want to play in our own rooms and even what flavor beer we want to drink while watching the game. Our favorite is Angry Orchard.

I was asked to speak about how life has changed since moving to the community but I only have 5 minutes so I will highlight the most important. The biggest difference has been the change in Peter's and my health. I was in and out of the hospital on almost a monthly basis but since moving in June 2018 I have only been admitted to the hospital once. The same goes for Peter. His health is much improved and in fact, after being unable to eat or drink anything by mouth for almost 20 years and receiving all sustenance and fluids with an enteral feeding tube, Peter is now eating and drinking, much to his enjoyment, and has had his feeding tube removed. I am still unable to eat anything by mouth but I do get to do tastings. I tried cotton candy for the first time in my life and MAN was it good. Angry Orchard doesn't taste too bad either!!

I want to advocate for other individuals still living in institutional care to have the chance to experience the richness of life that we have since moving to the community. To advocate for the same rights for all people, no matter their special needs. In closing, let me say again how thankful we are to be here today and even more, how thankful we are for OUR home with Excentia Human Services and to be part of a community where we feel valued and included. Have a great day and don't forget... GO EAGLES!!! (or GO STEELERS for Peter)