

SPECTRUM UPDATES

July-September 2011

The End of the Spectrum: Helping Families Find Solutions to their Autism Housing Needs.

Dear Friends,

For Spectrum, the third quarter of 2011 was a fruitful time of change and new information. We expanded our board, voted in a new board chair, conducted lots of useful research, and experienced a renewed sense of urgency regarding the need for housing in the autism community. Personally, I spent the summer continuing to look for a placement for my son Seth. I am happy to report that Seth has successfully landed in a wonderful group home in Chisholm, Mn. In spite of the four hour drive, I feel very blessed that Seth has a new home!

Warm Regards,

Sheryl Grassie / Executive Director



Every child, no matter their level of ability deserves to be loved and well cared for....

Visit to Camphill Village



Several Spectrum board members attended the September 11 th fall open house at Camphill Village in Sauk Centre, Mn and their impressions were very favorable. Camphill is a rural community serving adults with disabilities and very much like the vision we hold for a residential community for autism. Check it out! <http://www.camphillvillage-minnesota.org>

Continued Housing Shortage

In Minnesota, there continues to be a dire shortage of housing for children with disabilities. The Minnesota moratorium on foster care licensing is now entering its' third year and existing group home spaces are more and more scarce. Significant numbers of children are waiting for placement with no other publically funded venues other than

foster care licensed group homes. Spectrum is meeting with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to brainstorm alternatives to foster care and we will be reintroducing legislation to create exceptions to the current 203 foster care license moratorium.

Collaborative Efforts

At Spectrum we have thought long and hard about how to create a greater show of force for our cause. With that in mind, we have begun preliminary discussions with other autism housing groups in Minnesota who are interested in addressing the current shortage. There are several groups that target higher functioning individuals, with Spectrum remaining the only organization working with the severe end of the autism spectrum. A collaborative effort would allow for joint fundraising and grant writing efforts, as well as lend support to a greater sense of critical mass.



Social Services

Families continue to need support; physical, emotional and financial, regarding their children with autism. It would be an understatement to say that the disability system in Minnesota is complicated for families to navigate. One parent described it as, "An incredibly tangled ball of yarn that is almost impossible to

unravel." Part of Spectrum's work is untangling that ball of yarn in order to support families in getting the services they need.



Cost of Housing Long Term

I am often asked why we can't just raise money and open a private facility/private group homes? Why must we be licensed and rely on monthly public funding? The answer is simple, the cost is prohibitive. To house and school a single child ranges from \$150,000-\$300,000 per year. Over a 70-80 year life span, we are looking at between 10-24 million dollars per child. YIKES! These figures, coupled with decreasing public funding warrant a very proactive approach to finding more cost efficient housing solutions.

"You have got to keep autistic children engaged with the world. You cannot let them tune out."

Temple Grandin

[Thank You to everyone who supports work with autism in Minnesota!](#)