

Parent

Journeys:

From

Fear to

Fulfillment

Dedicated to the Georgia Children's Freedom Initiative

**Creating a Georgia in which no
children live in institutions or
nursing homes.**

Founding Members:

Georgia Advocacy Office

**Governor's Council on Developmental
Disabilities**

**Institute on Human Development &
Disability**

People First of Georgia

Statewide Independent Living Council

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GO/05

River's Crossing was the first institution in Georgia to close. Since the closure in 1996, Institute on Human Development & Disability researchers have closely followed the 39 children and young adults who lived at River's Crossing. All of the residents were children when they moved away from their families.

Key findings from IHDD research are presented on the left-hand pages and actual quotes from parents and families are shared on the right. For most families, journeys began in fear, but ended with the joy of knowing that their adult child is living a fulfilled life in the community.

Over 75% of families feared the closing of River's Crossing and community living. Many believed their sons and daughters needed an institution.

Two-thirds of parents reported feelings of stress and anxiety.

***[I felt] Distressed,
disturbed, a lot of
anxiety.***

**Upset... Very
traumatic. I nearly
had a nervous break-
down trying to cope
with it.**

Scared.

**A lot of stress. What
happens if it doesn't
work out?**

**After the move,
parent satisfaction
with community
living was high.**

**Over 80% said
community living
worked for their
child after the very
first year.**

**“Go for it.”
They can do it.
They have a
much better
life.**

***Give it a try for the
child's sake.***

**The rewards for our
son have brought
peace of mind, and
he is having a
wonderful life.**

Almost 100% of parents feel confident that their child is safe and secure and no longer fear community living.

Of course, they still have the same concerns and worries of any parent about safety and preventing abuse.

All of the neighbors like him and look out for him.

People watch for him and ask about him. They want to know where he is when they don't see him.

I now Am more secure about this son's safety than I am about my other two sons who are in public school and college.

Living in the community improved the quality of life for the child according to almost 90% of families after the first year.

Improvement was still being reported by about 90% of families after the eighth year.

SHE SEEMS HAPPIER...

ONE-ON-ONE CARE WORKS. HE HAS HIS OWN ROOM WITH PICTURES. HE LIKES HIS HOME.

Able to see him in grocery store and other places with manners and restraint. Now, he doesn't grab and run.

He's more verbal, more responsive and seems to enjoy life more.

**Every parent
reported
changes in
behavior
that were
not thought
possible.**

Looks healthy, well groomed, able to move about better.

***Climbs
Steps
And walks much better.***

Different son, almost seizure free and he smiles a lot.

Calmer, happier, no soft helmet or protective gear...

Over 90% of families visit more often and for longer periods of time.

The number of family visits more than doubled in the first year.

**Definitely worth
having her close by.
She has more
choices and we like
to visit her. Life is
better in a lot of
ways.**

*Try community. You
visit more, because it is
closer to home.*

At the end of eight years, these young people with disabilities are making an impact on their community far beyond the family.

Growth in awareness of the person not the disability is mentioned most.

seeing him as an individual who has a personality and wit of his own.

He approaches people and talks to them. He brings smiles to their faces and makes them unafraid of someone who is challenged.

Ingredients for SUCCESS:

Loving, stable caregiver

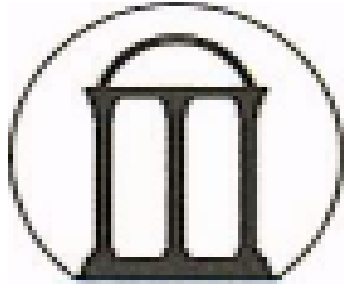
Family involvement

A true feeling of home

Community membership

Meaningful roles that

give a sense of worth



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