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## How to Explore Residential Opportunities

As a student prepares to transition out of the school environment, there are many things to consider. One option the student and their family may be looking into is a place to live outside the family home. Outlined below are some tools and suggestions to use in the process.

### Starting Out

For general information and a resource directory that includes a listing of residential providers in your area, explore the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) Web site at [www.omr.state.ny.us](http://www.omr.state.ny.us).

After determining which agencies you would like to explore, visit their Web sites. Take time to read each agency's mission statement, learn about the services they provide and find contacts.

Word of mouth is another great resource. Talk with people in your community who receive services from the agency or agencies you are considering. They can share their experiences and may also offer questions you should ask.

### Contacting Agencies

Next, contact the agency for a meeting to discuss your needs and desires. Advance preparation is crucial. Consider including these topics in your discussion:

- How many years has the agency been providing residential services? What other services does the agency offer?
- Does the individual receiving services and their family take part in hiring? What are the staff qualifications?
- What does the employee training process include? Will it be specific to you or your family member?

You should especially focus on questions regarding the student and their family.

- Discuss family involvement in individualized service plans.

- What type of plan will be put into place to make this transition smooth? How does the agency help the student and their family become comfortable with the new living arrangement?

- Does the agency encourage several visits at the home so everyone can become acquainted?

- How does the agency develop services to meet individual needs and maximize independence?

- What types of social activities are offered? Are there events that involve family, friends and the community?

- Are vacations an option? What are the barriers in vacation planning?

- What are their policies on handling income, guardianship and personal allowance?

### The Walkthrough

Now it is time to take a walk through the home. You should observe:

- Is the overall home clean and homelike?

- Are the bedrooms decorated and furnished as the person living there and their family want them to be?

- Visit when the residents are home. Observe interactions with staff. Are staff addressing the residents' needs? Does the home seem to run smoothly?

There are many more questions or observations that may need to be considered depending on the individual and family needs and wants. The suggestions offered will hopefully give you a base to start from.

For information on residential services offered by Aspire, please contact Dawn Bieniek, housing coordinator. at 716.505.5288. ●

To learn more about Aspire's transition services, please contact Central Intake, 716.838.0047.

### Aspire of Western New York

Address: 2356 N. Forest Road  
Getzville, NY 14068

Phone: 716.505.5500

Email: [info@aspirewny.org](mailto:info@aspirewny.org)

Web: [www.aspirewny.org](http://www.aspirewny.org)

### Aspire's Mission:

*Aspire's mission is to help children and adults with developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy, and conditions with similar personal and family effects live their lives to the fullest in keeping with their informed choices.*



Turning Disabilities  
Into Capabilities

## SAVE THE DATE

👉 *October 3, 14 & 29 – Vocational Assessment Workshop at WNY Transition Coordination Site, Erie 1 BOCES, 355 Harlem Rd, West Seneca. Participants will gain hands on approach to learning about specific vocational assessment tools. Phone 716.821.7542 or e-mail slockescott@e1b.org*

👉 *October 17, November 21, January 16 - DDAWNY Transition Committee Meeting. 9 - 11 am. Sue Coburn at scoburn@e1b.org*

## Calling All Comments, Your Suggestions and Newsletter Ideas!

If you have any comments, suggestions or a subject you would like to see in an upcoming newsletter, please contact Paula Kerber at 716.505.6792, or email paula.kerber@aspirewny.org.

Want an electronic copy of *Transition Times*? Share your e-mail address with us and we'll add you to our database!



**F**or people with developmental or acquired disabilities, life is synonymous with obstacles. By using cutting edge technology to help disabled individuals overcome these hurdles, Aspire's Assisted Technology Network (ATN) offers a world of possibilities to people whose lives are marked by limitations.

Technology connects the disabled to the world in unprecedented ways, and when combined with the expert care that Aspire is known for, the ATN is able to make a genuine impact on the lives of disabled people of all ages. From facilitating computer access to providing adaptive toys and mobility devices, the ATN is helping people overcome their obstacles and live happier lives.

Aspire has been providing Assisted Technology services for more than 20 years. Aspire's ATN team includes a broad spectrum of professionals, such as occupational, physical and speech therapists, computer and vocational specialists, vision specialists, and early intervention and special education professionals.

Comprehensive services provided by Aspire's Assisted Technology Network include student, consumer, and parent/advocate education about assistive technology and particular devices; assessments of skills and appropriate assistive technology solutions; adapted computer technology and augmentative communication device demonstrations and training; loan library; and on-going assistive technology support and therapy.

To learn more about Aspire's Assisted Technology Network, please call 505-5280.

## Welcome Back!

**M**embers of Aspire's CO-OP would like to welcome you back after a lovely summer! The CO-OP is a daytime opportunity that provides innovative choices and the supports to promote personal growth and independence.

Pictured at Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park are (bottom row) Debbie Glinski, Mike Ross, Michael Montileone, (top row) Patrick Perry, Jacqui Blake, Paige Bailey, Katie Mruk and Ryan Williams.



# Assistive Computer Technology Enhances Student's Educational Experience

Throughout the last school year, Aspire collaborated with Sweet Home Central Schools to provide an exciting transition opportunity for one student receiving services at Summit Educational Resources. Each week, staff from Aspire's Technology Today program worked with Chris Cefalu and his educational team in the Summit classroom. The desired outcome was for Chris to achieve proficiency with a variety of adaptive computer applications in an effort to enhance his language arts, math, and cause and effect skills. That goal was reached in May 2008.

The assistive computer technology that Chris used was an interesting mix of adaptive hardware and software. Physical access to the computer was provided through Madentec's Discover:Switch technology. This switch interface with built-in onscreen keyboards provides complete computer access for students capable of using a single switch. The Discover:Switch and the updated DiscoverPro software puts a scanning keyboard on the computer screen. The student accesses the

screen by pressing the switch to begin scanning through the keyboard and pressing again to select a key.

The Discover:Switch works with any software program and the onscreen keyboards can be customized for individual computer use. Chris successfully used the Discover:Switch to access a variety of software applications, including graphics programs, the Internet and educational programs.

Kurzweil 3000 was introduced to Chris after he learned how to access the computer via the Discover:Switch. This software program assists students who struggle with reading and writing. The program reads text aloud and can access printed text, electronic documents and Web sites. Kurzweil 3000 increases a student's reading speed and provides increased exposure to grade-appropriate vocabulary. The program includes a variety of additional tools, including English and bilingual dictionaries, word lists and a thesaurus.

Chris participated in a unique transition opportunity. His transition goals were



*Chris Cefalu achieves transition goals through a mix of computer technology.*

achieved in part by the successful use of assistive computer technology and personalized supports offered through Technology Today.

For further information about the technology services provided by Aspire, please call 836-7232 (Buffalo) or 742-8272 (Tonawanda). For information about the Discover:Switch and DiscoverPro, visit [www.madentec.com](http://www.madentec.com). For information about Kurzweil 3000, visit [www.kurzweiledu.com](http://www.kurzweiledu.com). ●

## Williamsville Central Wins Statewide Transition Award

The Williamsville Central School District received the Statewide Quality Transition Systems Award from the New York State Rehab Association after being nominated by Aspire. This award is the highest granted from the NYSRA School Community Partnerships Committee.

Pat Dowse, NYSRA vice president, presented the award at the annual Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day at the Buffalo Convention Center last spring.

Aspire was pleased to nominate Williamsville based on the district's long commitment to providing quality transition services to its students. Williamsville has partnered with Aspire for more than 10 years for services such as vocational assessments, community living, work experiences and work skills

classes. Transition services are very individualized and Williamsville has relationships with many community businesses to provide work opportunities for their students.

The district hired a Transition Coordinator many years before other districts considered such a step.

They participate in the Collegiate Consortium, the WNY Employment Consortium and the DDAWNY Transition Committee. Williamsville is generous in lending its expertise to other school districts. Williamsville and Aspire continue to work together on the Model Transition Program and we look forward to many more years of successful collaboration.



*Williamsville Central School District accepts Statewide Quality Transition Systems Award at Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day.*

# Aspire Opens New Health Center

Aspire has opened its newly renovated and expanded health center to meet the growing needs of adults with developmental disabilities. Originally formed in 1971, the Aspire Health Center today serves 1,700 Western New Yorkers with disabilities.

According to Thomas Sy, executive director of Aspire, "The opportunity to develop a health center specifically to meet the needs of people with disabilities is something Aspire has awaited for a number of years. The facility features everything from wider doorways and lower exam tables to lifts and other specialized equipment."

The expansion was made possible through a \$2.9 million certificate of need, which was awarded by the state Department of Health due to the patient base growing by nearly 50 people a month and an outdated clinic. Aspire is one of only two area facilities dedicated to serving the medical needs of the disabled.

Located at 7 Community Drive in Cheektowaga, the Aspire Health Center provides comprehensive, coordinated care - including primary, neurology, podiatry, therapy services, mental health and women's health.

Key features of the 16,000 square-foot facility include:

- Increase in number of exam rooms from 4 to 8
- Dedicated, covered accessible entrance
- Expanded waiting room with confidential registration area
- Centralized medical records
- Redesigned, dedicated therapy suites
- Ceiling lift system

Charitable support has played a large role in purchasing specialized equipment for the new center. Aspire has



*The new Aspire Health Center features an enlarged capacity to enable our providers to serve more patients per day.*

been awarded five grants totaling \$115,000. Additional donations from several area corporations totaling \$53,500 and individuals totaling \$18,960 make this the non-profit agency's most successful capital campaign to date. As the campaign continues, Aspire expects to meet its goal of \$215,000.

Grants awarded from area foundations included:

- The John R. Oishei Foundation - \$50,000
- James H. Cummings Foundation, Inc. - \$35,000
- Key Foundation - \$20,000
- Josephine Goodyear Foundation - \$5,000
- Rich Family Foundation - \$5,000 (plus an additional \$5,000 from Rich Products Corporation)

## Universal Mind Really Knows How to Rock

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