



Northeast Center for Special Care

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Eileen A.

"I started to perceive things and make my goals materialize."

Eileen A., is a bright, active woman who has not let a disability bring her down. She is someone who cherishes independence and who is involved with her local community on a daily basis. And now Eileen has gone home. For real.

We asked Eileen to tell us her story:

I had a brain injury and spinal cord injury in an accident several years ago. It affected my life tremendously; I had an identity crisis after that, my family had to learn to view me differently. It was a difficult adjustment. When I got out of the hospital I lived in a few nursing homes. Then my family was able to help me come to Northeast Center. It was here that I had what I think was the first breakthrough moment for me. A staff member named Jim who also had a spinal cord injury taught a class in wheelchair mobility and there I learned how to do my first "wheelie" - it was great! The other nursing homes I was in never taught me to do anything like that but I learned that here at Northeast Center. I'd only seen someone do a wheelie once and I thought that was impossible. When Jim proposed this to me and then taught me how to do it I was on shock! And this was taught to me at Northeast Center.

Eileen A., an independent woman
who has gone home to the community.



Compared to the nursing homes she lived in things were different for Eileen at Northeast Center for Special Care.

After I first came to Northeast Center I became determined to set goals each day and those goals have to be met. Dominick, another staff member as well as Jim taught me self-advocacy. I started to perceive things and make my goals materialize. I learned a lot of things here: I learned how to follow-up and I learned how to advocate for myself. I also learned how to say no. Being around other people like me has been important. I watched other people my age in wheelchairs and I saw how they moved, how they moved in their wheelchair, I got better at maneuvering my arms which helped in turning my wheelchair. While at Northeast Center I have acquired and memorized - despite a brain injury, a daily routine that completely meets my needs beauty wise, and health wise. I do my own laundry and I can even take care of my finances. I go out in the community a lot. I shop for myself; I even go to the gym every week. I work out on the upper-body machines and barbells. I also realized that I am impulsive; I've gotten a lot better. I know now that even when everything goes wrong that I can still be positive.

Eileen reflected and told us of some staff members who helped her.

I've worked with some good people here. I really like Jennifer who is a nurse I enjoy her presence and attitude. I had a great physical therapist named Lucas. One time we were in session and I said "I just can't do this." Lucas said "Eileen, you know when you go home (to the community) you can't call me," I knew what he meant so I did it in therapy because I understood I would have to do those things for myself when I lived in the community. He was very good like that. Another staff member who helped me is Carolyn Corbett, who does the writing group; she helped me realize that despite a brain injury I can still think. I've written a number of poems in that group.



Eileen A., with Nurse-manager Cindy Pope.

Sometimes finding accessible housing can be difficult and can take time. Applying for and being approved for community-based services can be daunting. It was that way for Eileen.

There isn't enough accessible housing in the community for people with disabilities. I was on housing lists for a long time and Michelle, my community reentry person at Northeast Center visited a lot of apartments. The section-8 list closed, then it opened again. It was heartbreaking sometimes to know you're ready to leave and there is nothing to go to. But then you find something and it's over in a snap! Michelle has helped me with my discharge and with getting funding and services. She has helped me to keep a positive attitude. I was turned down by the TBI Waiver but Northeast Center continued to pursue and pursue and now I have a place to live and the support services I need.

Eileen is excited about reaching her goals of living in the community once again.

I am ecstatic because I am going home. I am going to an accessible apartment in a great neighborhood which is very nice that is surrounded with boutiques, coffee shops, stores with ladies accoutrements. It's just nice. They have a Japanese restaurant there too. I love rice and sushi and I know all the dishes: tekamaki, sukiyaki, wasabi! That will be the first restaurant to check out when I get home. The first thing I am going to do when I get to my new apartment is adjust. Then I'm going to explore the neighborhood. When I go to my new apartment I want to volunteer somewhere. I like using computers so I am going to look to volunteer maybe doing data entry. I want to try that first and eventually I would like to go back to work.

For others who may be going thought what she has experienced, Eileen offered her wisdom.

Within reason, take advantage of everything that you can do especially in a rehab, it's to your advantage. I believe in God and he gives me the energy. I pray and I pray and I wake up everyday and have new goals. I am a woman, just because I am in a wheelchair does not make me less of a woman. I take care of myself.

Eileen A., with Northeast Center receptionist Sandra Colao.



Finally we asked Eileen what makes Northeast Center so special:

Northeast Center has helped me realize things about myself and how I can continue to go on and grow. I have seen see so many examples in other Neighbors here.

Eileen has been a unique part of the Northeast Center therapeutic community. She inspires and has embraced independent living. All of us here will miss her terribly but we all rejoice that Eileen has met her goals and wish her well in the next chapter of her life.



Eileen at home in her new accessible apartment.

Northeast Center for Special Care helps people like Eileen every day. It is what we live to do. Our mission drives us to assist our Resident-Neighbors to transition to rewarding, full lives in their home communities.

Creative Writing Program Poem by Eileen A.

Every Changing Life is Therapy

**From a person
who is crippled,
disability is just
doing life different
from walking.**

**Life is full of living,
in a castle or
a cave.**

**Human life is complex
and disability
is part of that.**

**There is more to
disability and how it became:
intense love, abundance for
acquaintances, euphoric with ups and
downs and a strong desire for the
atmosphere of God.**

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