



Northeast Center for Special Care

www.northeastcenter.com

300 Grant Avenue
Lake Katrine, NY 12449
845-336-3500



Gerry Brooks, MA, CCC, CBIT

Director of Brain Injury Programs

As Director of Brain Injury Programs, Gerry Brooks has fostered the development of innovative treatment programs that integrate clinical services in order to produce positive treatment outcomes for individuals with traumatic brain injury.

Gerry has helped to lead the professional staff at Northeast Center for Special Care to create a fully integrated, therapeutic community, that is different than the traditional rehabilitation program. "The Northeast Center for Special Care's physical plant and exceptional rehabilitation staff provide everything necessary for creating what we consider to be a truly unique program. We have created a bustling, community of almost eight hundred individuals who work, play, eat, and enjoy each others company in a variety of ways, all linked by two important goals: recovery from brain injury and return to the individual's home community."

"The idea is to encourage our Resident-Neighbors to become a fully functioning member of the Northeast Center Community as a means of preparing for participation in their home community. We utilize therapies as supportive of the individual's natural interests and activities in the community." Brooks continued, "The approach is person-centered and emphasizes the development of physical, cognitive, and especially social skills and personal interests that can be transferred to the home community."



Gerry Brooks reviews programming material with Unit Manager Francine Rivenburgh, LPN

“Returning to the Community is one thing but it is not enough. Our goal is returning an individual capable of living a meaningful and happy life. This requires us to take rehabilitation to a higher level than most other programs.”

Gerry's work at Northeast Center touches on all disciplines and in fact is devoted to merging the talents of the professional disciplines and forging a unique collaboration of the almost 500 staff members that represents virtually every clinical discipline, and many non-traditional ones, such as music, art, and writing.

“I have been blessed with the best opportunity imaginable for a professional in this field. Although I'm biased of course, I believe we have some of the best professionals anywhere. We challenge each other to be excellent and to push the boundaries of brain injury rehabilitation which truly is only in its infancy. Even though I came to the Northeast Center with many years of experience, I am a better therapist now than I was at the start because of the professional environment that exists here.”

“I am proud of the staff here, they bring a sense of commitment and urgency to work with them every day. They don't settle for mediocrity. This is no small feat in this field of brain injury. Again, the science is in its infancy and therapists are challenged to visit again and again clinical problems that stubbornly resist change with mainly their tenacity, creativity, and will to overcome. It is not a work for the faint-hearted or those interested in glory of some kind. It is better suited to a missionary mentality that many of our therapists exemplify.”

“Our ability to innovate and to help individuals succeed at the Northeast Center for Special Care is unprecedented in the U.S. today. The Northeast Center for Special Care is a stunning example of commitment to ‘total recovery by any means necessary’ that would be impossible were it not for an Operator and Administration that supports the work we do and has in fact, every day I have worked at the Northeast Center since it opened in 1999, pushed us further to find new and better ways to serve the individuals we are privileged to serve.”

“I don't apologize for how I gush on this topic. The Center is really that good. We accept individuals with any combination of problems, we presume potential rather than limiting our services to those selected for treatment by what we consider to be outdated prediction methods. As a result, our task is monumental and yet it is accomplished.”

Gerry Brooks giving a presentation entitled *TBI Recovery, Breaking the Cycle of Institutional Dependence*, at the 2006 "Mid-Hudson Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference" hosted by Northeast Center for Special Care in Kingston, NY.



“The look and feel of the environment at Northeast Center, the human environment is different, visitors may not be sure what they are seeing at first. Most are awed by the size and bright colors and spaces bustling with individuals with an array of disabilities they would not normally see in their Communities. The longer you spend here, however, you cannot help but notice this most important quality of the Northeast Center for Special Care: here these individuals take on the challenge of living, leave behind the identity of “a disabled person,” and learn to face life, face doubt, face failure, *and to dare to dream*, just like the rest of us.”

We can do what other rehabilitation programs do and we can do many things others cannot. Our particular strength is in cognitive and behavioral rehabilitation. We focus intensely on re-developing an individual’s identity. This requires many things. One thing we must do is to help the individual recognize that accepting help does not mean accepting failure. We receive a significant number of referrals of individuals who were in the Community but failed to make it, because they refused help. There is an abundance of assistance in the Community through programs such as the Medicaid Waiver program. But if an individual refuses help, they are truly beyond help.”

“Ultimately, we help individuals find themselves. We use the phrase, ‘Dare to Dream.’ By that we mean that your life is ahead of you. It may be a different life than you had but it is a life that still holds the promise of success as well as failure; of joy as well as sadness. It will be a life that is challenging, to be sure, one that will test you and those who love you. It is only through accepting that challenge that we truly live, however. And this is the challenge that unites all of us here at the Northeast Center for Special Care, our Resident-Neighbors, families, and staff alike - into a community of equals all trying every day to meet that challenge of living.”



Gerry carried the symbolic "torch" at our 2005 winter Olympics games.

Gerry’s background is as a licensed speech-language pathologist who came to Northeast Center for Special Care after working in private practice devoted primarily to individuals with neurologically based cognitive, communicative, and swallowing disorders since the late 1970’s.

One of Gerry's unique qualities is that he has been a working therapist for most of his professional career and has logged thousands of direct therapy hours performing one on one and group therapies with hundreds of brain injured individuals. Before coming to the Northeast Center for Special Care Gerry founded and operated the Center for Neurologic Communication Disorders in Wappingers Falls, NY where he conducted an active and innovative cognitive rehabilitation program. He has served as consultant to hospitals, home care agencies, and schools and taught on the graduate faculty at SUNY, New Paltz.

Gerry has given hundreds of presentations to professionals interested in brain injury rehabilitation, including local and national conferences. He is a certified brain injury trainer through the Brain Injury Association of America and he has written numerous articles on brain injury and a chapter in a book on counseling entitled, *Counseling Children and Adults with Communication Disorders*. His primary interests are in treatment of motivation, social, and identity disorders following brain injury.

Gerry is originally from Brooklyn, New York. He loves the outdoors, philosophy, religion, and the Arts, and is a sometimes thespian who has appeared in productions of the local Mohonk Mountain Stage Company's Reader's Theatre with credits including the lead roles in *Don Juan in Hell*, *The Misanthrope*, and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. He and his wife Debbie, an Art Teacher, live in the Hudson Valley.

© Copyright 2000-2007 Northeast Center for Special Care All Rights Reserved