LIVES OF DISTINCTION

Creating a Life Path Using Individualized Supports

Stories of people with disabilities who are contributing to community life through Job Path's Community Supports Program

By Beth Mount, Ph.D. in collaboration with Job Path, New York City, New York 2007

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By Beth Mount
In Collaboration with Job Path, Inc.

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We dedicate this book to Manuel (Manny) D. Sanchez, November 19, 1970 – August 12, 2007, who truly led a life of distinction.

THE LIVES OF DISTINCTION QUILT:

The Lives of Distinction Quilt was inspired by the people who are supported by Job Path's Community Supports Program. The quilt, with its forty characters, symbolizes that the path toward making a contribution differs for each individual. People find their way with the support of others who believe in their potential.

LIVES OF DISTINCTION

"EACH SINGLE ONE OF US IS SAID TO BE OF INFINITE WORTH...EACH SINGLE ONE OF US IS A GOD CARRIER, EACH ONE OF US GOD'S VICEROY. CAN YOU IMAGINE IF WE REALLY BELIEVED THAT?"

— ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

Lives of Distinction puts forth the vision that every person with a disability has a distinctive contribution to make to the world. When we discover and develop these contributions, and make connections between people and places in the community, these contributions become visible, and people's lives are enriched. Consequently, people with disabilities are no longer seen as "different." Instead, they can live lives of distinction, as people admired and respected by others.

This publication features ten people supported by Job Path's Life Path Center, the hub at the center of Job Path's Community Supports Program. The Community Supports Program provides individual supports to 30 people who are engaged in valued activities such as working, volunteering, exploring cultural resources, engaging in artistic endeavors, pursuing spiritual interests, working out, traveling, building relationships, and participating in neighborhood life. These experiences are organized by the structure of a weekly schedule, which constantly changes to reflect new opportunities and connections to neighborhood life.

Many of the people who use Community Supports, along with their support staff, gather at the Life Path Center every Friday morning. The Friday morning conversations and activities support people as they clarify their interests and gifts, share their dreams and accomplishments as well as their struggles, and further define their life paths. People share ideas and solve problems together. The staff benefit as much as the people with disabilities, as they grow and expand their vision for the people they support.

As the demand for quality individualized supports increases, so also does the need to manage effectively this model of a "day program without walls." We hope that *Lives of Distinction* stimulates the development of similar efforts.

OVERVIEW

LIVES OF DISTINCTION offers stories and tools from more than twelve years of supporting people to be members of community life. Job Path's Community Supports Program was one of the first programs of its kind in New York State, and this program continues to be exemplary because of its highly individualized, neighborhood-oriented approach. For example, most other programs without walls are operated from a hub site facility; many of the activities are organized to include three to five people; the program uses agency vehicles to transport groups of people; and typically, the weekly schedule does not include paid work.

In contrast, Community Supports seeks to assist one person at a time to be fully included as community members in their own neighborhoods and communities, using public transportation or walking, without using a hub site facility. Sometimes paid work is a part of a person's weekly schedule. While Job Path does not operate a hub site facility, people are encouraged to attend the Life Path Center located at the Job Path office. This gathering gives people and their support workers an opportunity to meet and be part of a community of people with disabilities who are living fully inclusive lives.

INSIDE *LIVES OF DISTINCTION*:

PART ONE: PORTRAITS OF INCLUSION:
This section illustrates the ways that the unique gifts of each person are brought forth through community connections facilitated by committed workers and families. Each story illustrates one aspect of the Ten Community Life Building Blocks. When this work is done well, people are engaged in the community in all ten ways. As people's distinctive contributions emerge, their lives expand, and they become valued members of their communities.

PART TWO: EVERYDAY HEROES:
This section highlights the projects of direct support staff. These projects reflect the creativity of the staff who find capacities in people, their families, their neighborhoods, and themselves, and then combine these discoveries into creative paths toward community membership.

PART THREE: PLANNING FRAMEWORKS:
Here we provide planning worksheets for charting a life path and some of the tools we use to organize our discoveries and make plans.

PART FOUR: LESSONS LEARNED:
In this part we share our experiences and outline some of the challenges of managing an individualized program in an urban environment.

PART I: PORTRAITS OF INCLUSION

STORIES OF TEN PEOPLE WHO RECEIVE COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

The Lives of Distinction Quilt represents the Ten Community Life Building Blocks. When we listen to the many ways that support workers help people build connections to their neighborhoods, they are defined by these ten categories. Of course, every person has his or her own priorities and weekly schedule based on a person-centered plan. Each weekly schedule evolves and changes as people and their support workers try new things, discover opportunities in the community, and make new priorities.

When people are fully included and take part in community life, we often see that they are engaged in belonging reflected by all Ten Building Blocks, and their support workers are involved in exploring opportunities in all ten ways. The profiles that follow illustrate the ways that the building blocks are combined to create a life of distinction. While each person may be involved in community life in many of the ten ways, their profile reflects the one aspect of community life that is most important to them.

With the help of their support workers, people were encouraged to create a business card for themselves. Some people took it literally and described exactly what they are currently doing, while others used the exercise as a way to dream about where they would like to be. So, for example, John's card tells you where he is working now and how he makes a difference, and Rita's business card is an expression of how she hopes to grow her needlework into a thriving business. Everyone's life is a "work in process." New ideas and opportunities emerge as people gain a sense of belonging and membership.

VOLUNTEERING
COMMUNITY SERVICE

WORK

SELF EMPLOYMENT

THE TEN BUILDING BLOCKS

RELATIONSHIPS

What IS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

WHO IS THE PERSON?

CREATIVE EXPRESSION
COLLEGE AND
CONTINUING ED

DESIGN A WEEKLY SCHEDULE

M	T	W	Th	F	S	Sun

PERSONAL AFFAIRS

how DO YOU CONTRIBUTE?

WHAT SUPPORT DO YOU need

SPIRITUALITY
CULTURE
ASSOCIATIONS

TRAVEL

NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE

SPORTS/FITNESS

Increase Work and Vocational Opportunities

WORK: RODNEY ROBINSON

FULL TIME | PART TIME | INTERNSHIP

BY RODNEY ROBINSON AND MICHELLE ROSSI

RODNEY is clearly a distinguished figure in his South Bronx neighborhood. His mother was determined that he "be somebody" when he graduated from high school, and she has kept him rooted in his neighborhood.

Rodney has an ideal work situation at a local gym three days a week. He takes public transportation from the bus stop outside of his apartment building directly to the pizza shop where he picks up his lunch and heads to work at the gym. He clocks in at the gym to work for two hours, then clocks out and stays to work out. He is in excellent shape. In spite of some health challenges, his mom has always encouraged him to be strong.

Having worked at the gym for five years, Rodney knows everyone, both employees and community members. He clearly belongs, and somehow saying hello to everyone does not interfere with his ability to get the job done.

In addition to his job at the gym, Rodney is also active in the housing complex where he lives with his mother. He takes karate classes in the community room and is working on his fourth belt. He helps out around the building, checking to be sure smoke detectors are working, and helps his mother around the house.

With his mother, Rodney is engaged in The Eastern Star, a large fraternal organization, which regularly gathers both locally and nationally. Rodney loves to be involved in the programs, including a six week summer session that gathers members from throughout the U.S. He and his mom also travel to large family reunions in Philadelphia, Delaware, and Florida.

In addition to these commitments, Rodney is often in the neighborhood, visiting his local barber and library, and shopping on his own.

BATMAN ENTERPRISES

RODNEY ROBINSON
40 WEST MOSHOLU PKWY
(718) 555 2134
batmanenterprises@hotmail.com

GYM REPRESENTATIVE
FOR ALL YOUR HEALTHY NEEDS

Rodney speaks about support worker Michelle

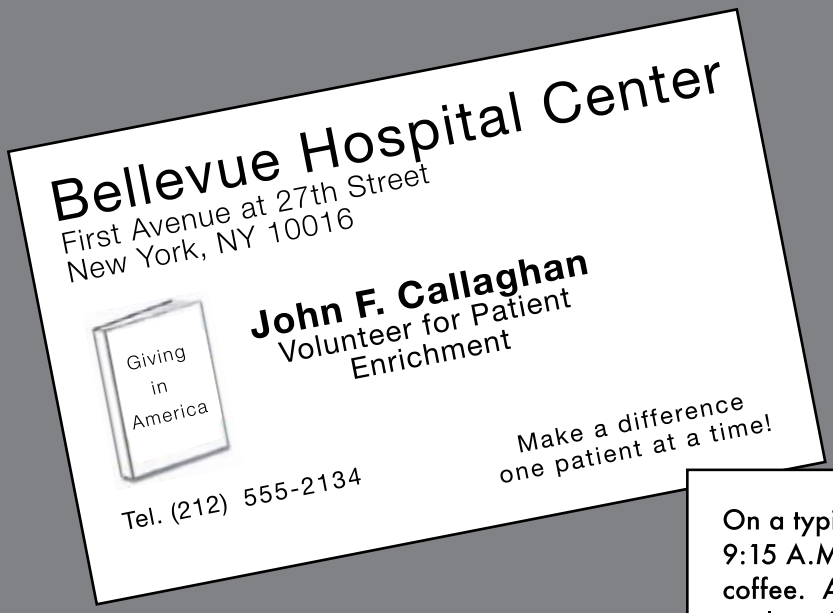
I appreciate Michelle because she is there for me over time and is genuinely in my life. We do many things in the neighborhood together, and my mom is confident that I have the support I need.

Increase Work and Vocational Opportunities

VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE: JOHN CALLAGHAN

MEMBER | VOLUNTEER | COMMITTEE OR BOARD MEMBER

BY RICARDO VASQUEZ



On a typical day, John and I arrive at the patient library at 9:15 A.M. He has a breakfast bar or two and a cup of coffee. At ten we go to the mailroom to pick up the library mail, and we deliver the books and magazines to the patients who requested them. John and I also deliver magazines to various waiting areas in the hospital. Twice a week we visit his sister at her hospital office (she is a nurse at Bellevue). Then we get lunch and head back home.

John really loves dogs, so we go to the local pet store regularly to visit and pet the dogs.

John is also working on a book about his life. Given that he spent many years at Willowbrook State School, he is quite reflective about his life story. Writing his autobiography has been a great way for him to find meaning in all that he has survived. We like to think that one day his story will be made into a movie, and that Jack Nicholson will play the part of John! Writing this book together is a great way that we continue to learn more and more about each other and to appreciate the stories of both our lives.

Increase Work and Vocational Opportunities

CREATIVE SELF-EMPLOYMENT: RITA DOSWELL

SELL PERSONAL SERVICES | SMALL BUSINESS OWNER | PRODUCE A PRODUCT LINE

BY RITA DOSWELL AND LATOYA BENNETT

I did not know much about Rita, and I was concerned that she would be uncomfortable with me replacing her last support worker. In contrast, she was warm hearted and charming. I learned that Rita's upbeat presence and personality symbolized pure happiness. Once I learned more about her, I found there was a lot more to Rita under the surface. Like all of us, she was unhappy with certain aspects of her life. Her unemployment is part of the reason she seemed a bit depressed.

Rita and I developed a relationship based on devotion, dedication, and determination. I also discovered that Rita has a real love for and talent in sewing.

Rita is now immersed in many aspects of her community. She belongs to a ceramics group at the local recreation center. She goes to that same center to work out.

Rita lives at home with her mother, brother, and nephew. She shows an immense respect for her family and her neighbors, who reciprocate this respect.

Rita showed me how much she wanted to work in her community; therefore we walked through her neighborhood looking for different places where she could become employed or make a difference. Rita was determined to find a job, whether it was paid or not. As a result of our perseverance, she landed a volunteer position at the senior center in her community.

I appreciate Latoya so much as she is like a big sister to me. She helps me read and takes me to my volunteer site on Thursday. I love to work, sew, volunteer, shop, and talk, and Latoya appreciates all of these things about me. One day I hope to completely leave my current day program (I still go two days a week) and spend my week doing all the things I love in the community. It's people like Latoya who help me see that my dreams are reasonable, and that I can achieve my goals.

Rita speaks about support worker, Latoya

Make Cultural Contributions Through Self Expression

CREATIVE EXPRESSION: PETER CLARKE

ARTIST | MUSICIAN | POET | WRITER | DANCER | PROMOTER | COLLECTER

BY VICTOR RODRIGUEZ

Peter has been drawing for years, but no one noticed his talent. He has a special gift for art. He draws on scrap paper and almost anything that is blank such as boxes and loose-leaf paper. Peter also has a talent for making puppets. This summer, Peter had his first art show, thanks to the help of Job Path and the generosity of Phoebe's, a local cafe. Peter sold fourteen pieces of art, so he made about four hundred dollars!!! More important, about fifty people came to the art show, and Peter truly emerged as an artist during that show, for all in his community, family, and friends to see and appreciate.

Peter and I frequently visit the local neighborhood library where he searches for new inspiration from comic books and the internet. He has made friends at the library, and they, too, are impressed with his art. He has made many friends by showing off his talents and handing out the invitations to his art shows. He is a different person in the eyes of other people and certainly to himself.

The postcard promoting Peter's solo art exhibit!

Make Cultural Contributions Through Self Expression

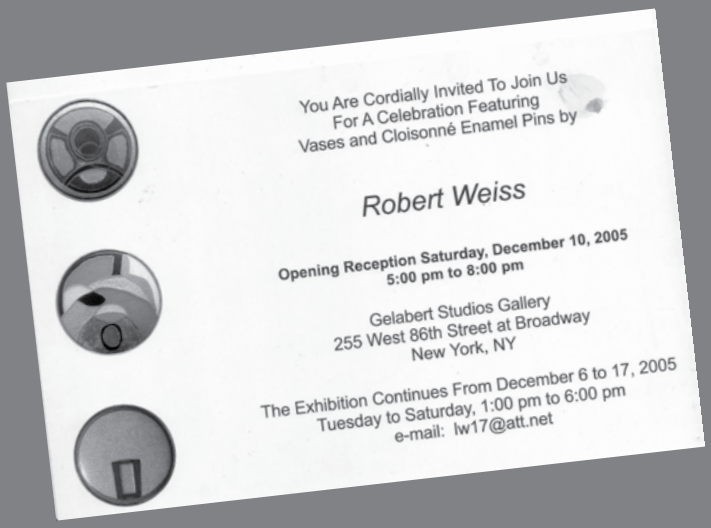
SPIRITUALITY/CULTURE: ROBERT WEISS

MEMBER | ELDER | BAR/BAS MITZVAH | TEACHER | CHOIR MEMBER | USHER

BY LINDA SMALL

To me, Robert is a shining example of a working artist who expresses his connections to the art world in a variety of ways. He works as a volunteer one day a week at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and he volunteers in the gift shop at Gouverneur Hospital on another day. Last year he worked one morning a week for four hours for pay as a general administrative assistant at Avoda Arts, a nonprofit organization that uses film, photography, painting, music and theatre as an entry point into Jewish learning. Director Debbie Krivoy, who hopes to rehire Robert, says, "Working together was a great experience for us all."

In addition to his volunteer and part-time work, Robert is a serious artist, whether he is applying explosive color schemes to his ceramics, or concentrating on his remarkable detailed inlaid jewelry. He is deeply involved, bringing his own creativity into the world through his art. He recently had a one-man show at the Gelabert Studios Gallery on West 86th Street in Manhattan. Fourteen of his vases, and 10 pins were purchased by appreciative patrons. He has also exhibited at the Get Real Art Gallery, the World Fine Art Gallery, and the Williamsburg Art and Historical Center. He works on his art both at home and at the LAND Art Studio in Brooklyn. Attending the art studio is part of his weekly schedule.



Build Neighborhood Life and Community Membership

SPORTS AND FITNESS: NOEMI URENA

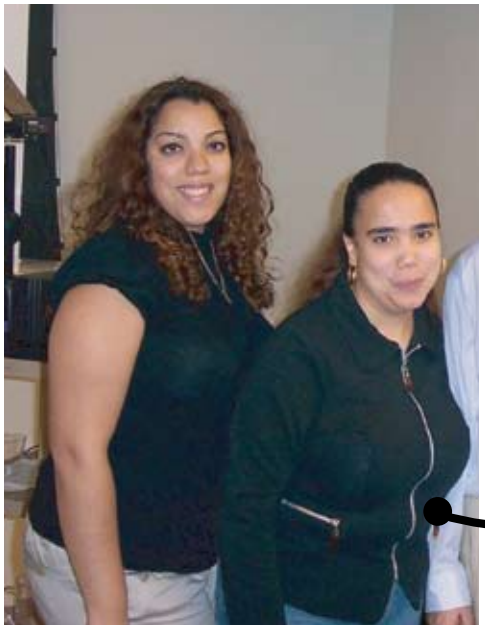
ATHLETE | FITNESS MEMBER | FAN | REGULAR

BY NATALIA ANDUJAR

When I first met Noemi she wanted to improve her health and feel better about herself. We started by going to the gym three to four times a week where we did cardio mixed with light weights. We became friends with the people at the gym and the guys that work there who help us use free weights. Now we do everything from the cardio machines, free weights, and ab workout routines. Noemi has lost a lot of weight, and I have too. We motivate each other and have fun.

Noemi's love of fitness has landed her a volunteer job at a nearby hospital doing recreational therapy with seniors. She helps motivate the seniors to attend group exercise classes and then works out along with them. Noemi was very shy at first but now has made friends with many of the seniors and staff. She will often make rounds on her own, to greet and cheer up the seniors.

One particular senior at the hospital, Jose, has struck a chord with Noemi. She visits him every afternoon after her volunteer duties are done. They chat, and Noemi learns about "the old days" on the Lower East Side. They often play a game of dominos, for which Noemi has shown a talent. Last Father's Day, Noemi and I went out and got a card for Jose. Jose cried and hugged us both when he saw it. Noemi has really made an impact on the people she works with.



Natalia and Noemi

Build Neighborhood Life and Community Membership

NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE: KEITH ASH

REGULAR | GOOD NEIGHBOR | SHOPPER | IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

BY SCOTT KRUPNICK

Keith

When we first met, Keith was disappointed that I was not a blond, female bass guitar player. I was however, a male bass player, and we both love music. In fact, I think it is fair to say that music is our life, and we have that in common.

Keith was having trouble getting into the community. It took a while to work out the arrangements with his residence to go out. So, in the beginning, I came everyday with my guitar, and we played music together and talked about his life and his interests, and he began to trust me, as did the staff at the residence.

Finally, we started getting out. Given that we both love good food and music, we went to restaurants and music stores and began to become regulars in the same places over time. Keith loves Greenwich Village, so we go there when we can, and work on being regulars around the neighborhood, learning people's names, and saying "please" and "thank you," and all those mannerly things.

I noticed that Keith always commented on the dogs we met out on the street in the neighborhood, so we became volunteers at a local dog shelter where we go every week to walk the dogs. Perhaps this will grow into a dog walking business for Keith, but for now we are just getting to know the routines and developing some skills.

Keith's version of his story and what we do together can be summarized as "I learn new songs, I like to learn new stuff and try things. Scott is a great friend for all of that."

Build Neighborhood Life and Community Membership

TRAVEL AND INDEPENDENCE: OSVALDO URENA

LEARNING TO USE THE BUS, TRAIN, AIRPLANE

BY JORGE AYORA

In the beginning, I was nervous about this line of work simply because I never did anything like this before. So I was a bit reserved when I met Osvaldo and his family. I wanted to be a stable presence in his life, both by creating a routine of meaningful experiences, and then being a reliable support for him.

We decided to begin with physical activity, as physical therapy was one of his goals. Osvaldo and I are members of the recreation center near his home, where we love to work out. We work on aerobic exercises, lift weights, and do physical therapy exercises at the end of the workout. The best part is shooting baskets. Osvaldo is hot on the court, and we continue to be surprised at the perfection of his shots.

As time has passed, we have worked on a lot of other things in which he is becoming more independent, such as traveling around town and using the library. He is now a regular at the library, and he is able to go on his own and use the computer and the internet by himself. He also takes out books and movies from the library using his library card.

When I first met Osvaldo, we traveled together, but then we began to travel separately so that he could learn how to get around on his own. That means that he would go first, but that I would follow in the background making sure that everything went OK. He began to pay for his metrocard by himself, with the help of the toll booth lady who knows him.

Osvaldo has become incredibly confident in using public transportation. We live and learn with our practice runs. When he makes a mistake, I teach him where he went wrong. With this new confidence, he makes choices and goes about having new experiences without hesitation. He feels really good about traveling by bus and train by himself.

As we go about our routines in the community, it seems that everyone knows Osvaldo!!!! Going around the neighborhood with him is like being with a local politician. He is remarkably popular and known as a neighborhood personality. It is thrilling to support him to emerge as a community member. A lot has happened since our first meeting.

Support Relationships and Home Life

PERSONAL AFFAIRS: MANNY SANCHEZ

COOK | HOUSE CLEANER | MONEY MANAGER | HANDY PERSON | APPOINTMENT KEEPER

BY STEPHANIE BERRIOS

Manny is such a different person these days that people don't even recognize him. When he was in a day treatment program, bussed back and forth from home, Manny had no connections or experiences in the community. Manny now receives the individualized support he needs to live in his own apartment and be active in his neighborhood in Queens.

Manny counts on support workers like me to assist him to find the places where he can become a member, make a contribution, and belong. I helped Manny move into his apartment, and I assist with the practical things involved in managing home life, like shopping and cooking. We also share a love for Latino music, drawing and painting.

Manny worked at a restaurant where he made friends who introduced him to a local pool hall. When that pool hall closed, I helped him find a new place to play pool and meet friends.

Manny volunteers at Food Change, a neighborhood non-profit agency, where he prepares and serves food to homeless people. Over the years, the agency has recognized his dedication with community service awards.

When Manny's real family moved away to Santo Domingo, I helped him build connections to a surrogate family. He travels independently every day to spend time with them. We are helping Manny explore a move that will enable him to live closer to these friends and maybe work in the dry cleaning business that they operate.

Manny and I work together to plan out his weekly schedule so that he brings his gifts to community life through positive involvement in a variety of places. As things change over time, Manny and I make new decisions based on Manny's growing independence and expanding preferences. As Manny develops community relationships and natural supports, I readjust the way we spend time together so that he can take greater charge of his life. Manny brightens all his relationships with his enthusiasm.

Manny speaks about support worker, Stephanie

Stephanie listens to me and understands me. She is more than just a support worker— she is one of my best friends. She cheers me up when I'm sad or upset, and helps me solve problems. She helps me with many things that I need to do to live on my own. She helps me clean, cook, shop, balance my checkbook, and even dress with style. I really appreciate having her in my life.

Support Relationships and Home Life

RELATIONSHIPS: DAVID HUGHES

FAMILY | FRIENDS | INTIMACY | ROMANCE

BY BETH MOUNT

David is a man who makes friends through his enthusiastic engagement in life. On any given day of the week, David can be found expressing himself in many valued roles in his community.

He volunteers at the Supreme Court Building where he delivers law journals to the judges on Mondays. He is supported by a group of co-workers who consider David one of their team. He has another volunteer job as the music librarian at the radio station at Brooklyn College, where he helps the DJ and does whatever is needed around the station.

David is also a music lover. He has an extensive music collection and a beautiful voice. He sings at family functions, holiday and birthday parties, and other special occasions. He writes songs and is respected for his singing and performing abilities.

Three days a week, David works at Food Town, packaging groceries and keeping carts and inventory straight.

In his spare time, he designs greeting and holiday cards for his family, friends and neighbors. He keeps track of birthdays and other reasons to celebrate. Many people count on David to remember their special occasions.

I've noticed that David lights up the room by his presence, and he tends to his relationships with his good will, like a gardener waters his flowers.

DAVID HUGHES (718) 555 2134	*Jazz Singer*
	Working at courts to do the law journals and getting mail sorted.
	Taking good care of families Also background vocals on 77 Garfield Place
	Handle business practicing music

THE LIFEPATH CENTER

In January 2005, Job Path established The Life Path Center, creating a space in our offices where people could get together on a regular basis. An average of ten to fifteen people and their support workers get together each week to develop life plans, share and celebrate accomplishments, and to discuss difficulties and challenges. And to have fun!

Each session begins with going around the room to ask: "What's new?" Each person has the opportunity to answer that question and everyone listens. When Keith talks about his new volunteer job walking dogs in Williamsburg, that gives other people ideas. When Osvaldo talks about his exercise program, that sparks interest in other people. This is a place where you know you will be heard. **We all learn from each other.**

While the structure and content is different every week, the sessions cover one of the four topics of the Life Path Curriculum:

1) **Person-centered planning and celebrating accomplishments:** People, support staff, and supervisors all work together on worksheets, updates, and art projects to clarify life plans and solve challenges related to implementation.

2) **Exploring adult life and changing images of people with disabilities:** Group discussions include topics such as: joining recreation centers, public libraries and other local organizations, dating, sexuality, exploring relationships, money matters, diet/nutrition and fitness. Occasionally the group watches films such as "I Am Sam" or "The Other Sister" to stimulate discussion about being an adult with a disability.

3) **Learning from current events and holidays:** Whatever the holiday, there is an activity that can be associated with it. When Veteran's Day occurred on a Friday, everyone decided to go to the parade as a group and later talked about what it means to be a citizen. When the topic is sports, there are spirited conversations about the various teams that play in our area, with fans on all sides.

4) **Urban and cultural exploration:** Guest speakers from local museums have provided great sessions at Life Path. One session involved people creating their OWN versions of a Van Gogh painting. Another session included statues to literally feel, because some people have visual challenges. We regularly take advantage of the cultural diversity of the group and have potluck dinners sharing food from each person's culture.

Everyone involved with the Life Path Center benefits from getting together on a regular basis and finding meaning in the work while belonging to the Life Path family.

PART 2: EVERYDAY HEROES

PROJECTS OF DIRECT SUPPORT STAFF THAT DEMONSTRATE FINDING CAPACITIES IN PEOPLE

The quality of the lives of the ten people described is directly related to the creativity, imagination and activism of the direct support staff. Some people with disabilities are fortunate to have families who "carry" their dreams and help with implementation, along with their direct support partners. Others completely rely on the commitment and passion of their support workers to have a quality life.

Managers of programs like Community Supports must support the development, creativity, reliability, and leadership of direct support workers. Job Path has invested in direct support development through the Everyday Heroes program. Ten of the 16 direct support staff in Community Supports have been involved in Everyday Heroes. Over a ten month period, the Everyday Heroes Coordinator led monthly meetings with the staff using the OMRDD Everyday Heroes Curriculum. The sessions focused on listening and communications skills, as well as ways to build relationships within the community.

The Everyday Heroes program supports staff to discover capacities in people, their families, the neighborhood, and in the staff, and to bring these capacities together into creative approaches to community membership and belonging. This section illustrates creative ways that direct support staff express their discoveries, ideas, and accomplishments with each other via art projects, poetry and music.

Learn about...

- skills in
- preferences of
- challenges of
- qualities of

... THE PERSON

FINDING CAPACITIES FOR RUBEN

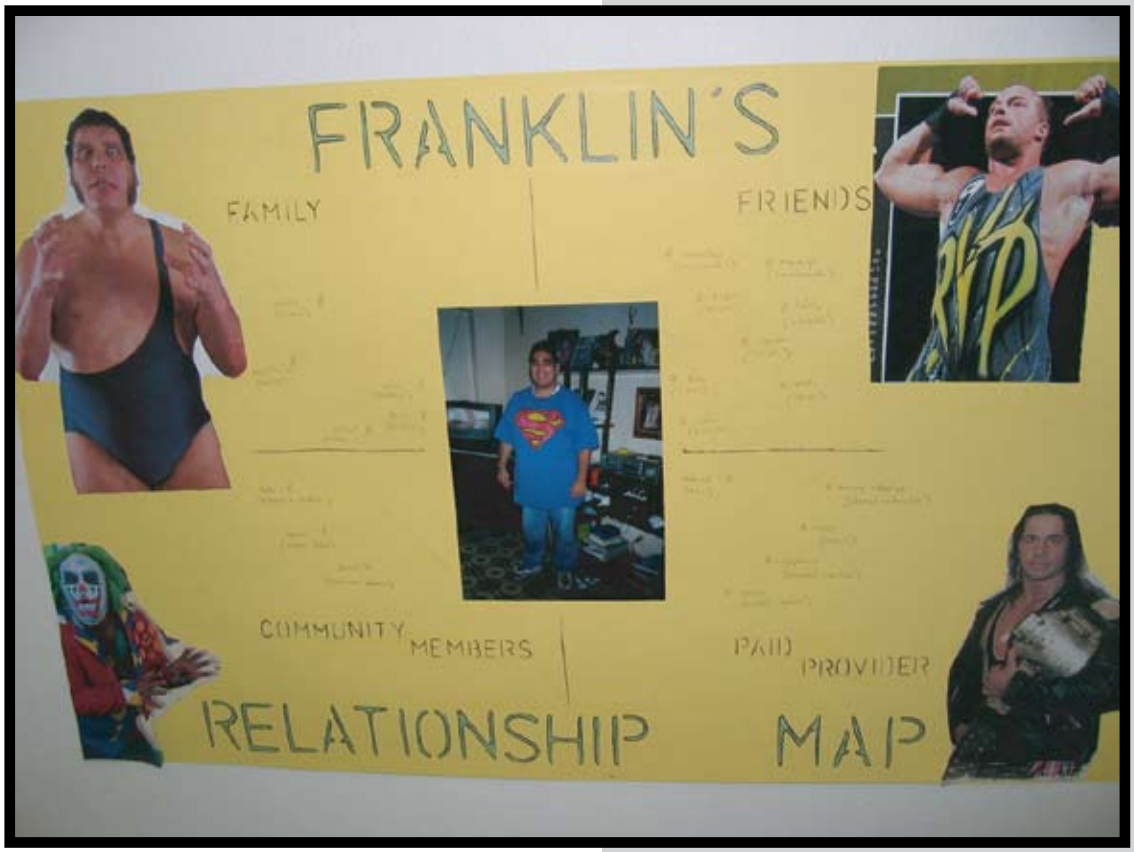
FINDING CAPACITIES FOR RITA

Listen for...

- values & identity
- connections
- resources
- neighbohood ties

... OF THE FAMILY

A RELATIONSHIP MAP



RELATIONSHIP MAP FOR FRANKLIN

A COMMUNITY MAP

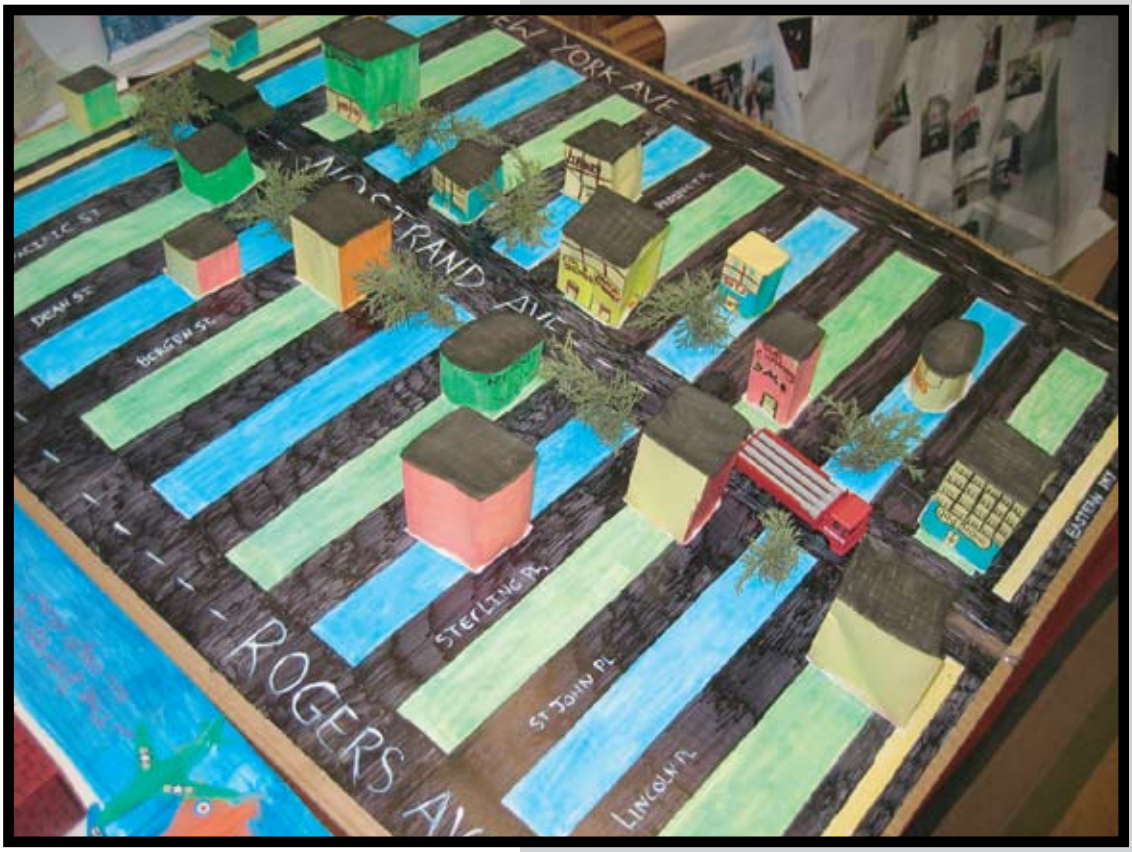
IN MANHATTAN FOR MARYLYN

Explore...

- economic opportunities
- recreation
- transportation options
- social groups

... IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A THREE-DIMENSIONAL COMMUNITY MAP



IN BROOKLYN FOR JASON

GEORGEA AND JASON TELL JASON'S STORY

CRECIDA AND ERROL TELL ERROL'S STORY

"BEING EACH OTHER'S HEROES"

EVERYDAY HEROES

DESIGN Personal Supports...

- individualized supports
- natural supports
- service coordination
- employment supports

... USING CREATIVE RESOURCES

EVERYDAY HEROES
BY JORGE AYORA

Seeing you all present, makes me smile
I understand we all get paid
Waiting for our checks on Friday
So we can have on what we have on today
We don't always realize how we are building their life plan–
And ever growing
and maturing form of living that everyday people are
missing in today's life.
They are us and we are them
While we think we are supporting 'em
We are really making friends
And isn't that what we all need?

We keep on going strong
Knowing we have each other's back
That is what this whole thing is all about
Being each other's hero on this lovely day
Without the blue suit and red cape.

PART 3: PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

EXERCISES FOR PLANNING A LIFE PLAN

People build life plans by discovering capacities and brainstorming possibilities. The following four worksheets guide the planning process and lead to a person-centered plan.

1. Use **The Five Accomplishments** to guide a life path.
While every path is different, experiences that lead to community membership are guided by the five accomplishments.

- Belonging
- Sharing Places
- Having Respect
- Making Choices
- Contributions

Periodically people use this worksheet to record existing accomplishments and think together how to do more.

2. **Find Capacities** for people to record their findings and ideas related to:

- Their capacities,
- Opportunities in the community,
- Their vision of potential contributions, and
- The support needed to bring ideas into reality.

3. **Imagine a Community Life** is another brainstorming tool that encourages people to generate as many ideas as possible about ways to support the person to become a member in community life.

4. **Plan a Time to Try Out Your Best Ideas** encourages people to select priorities, to find time in the weekly schedule to try things, and to generate action steps for getting started.

1. Use the 5 Accomplishments

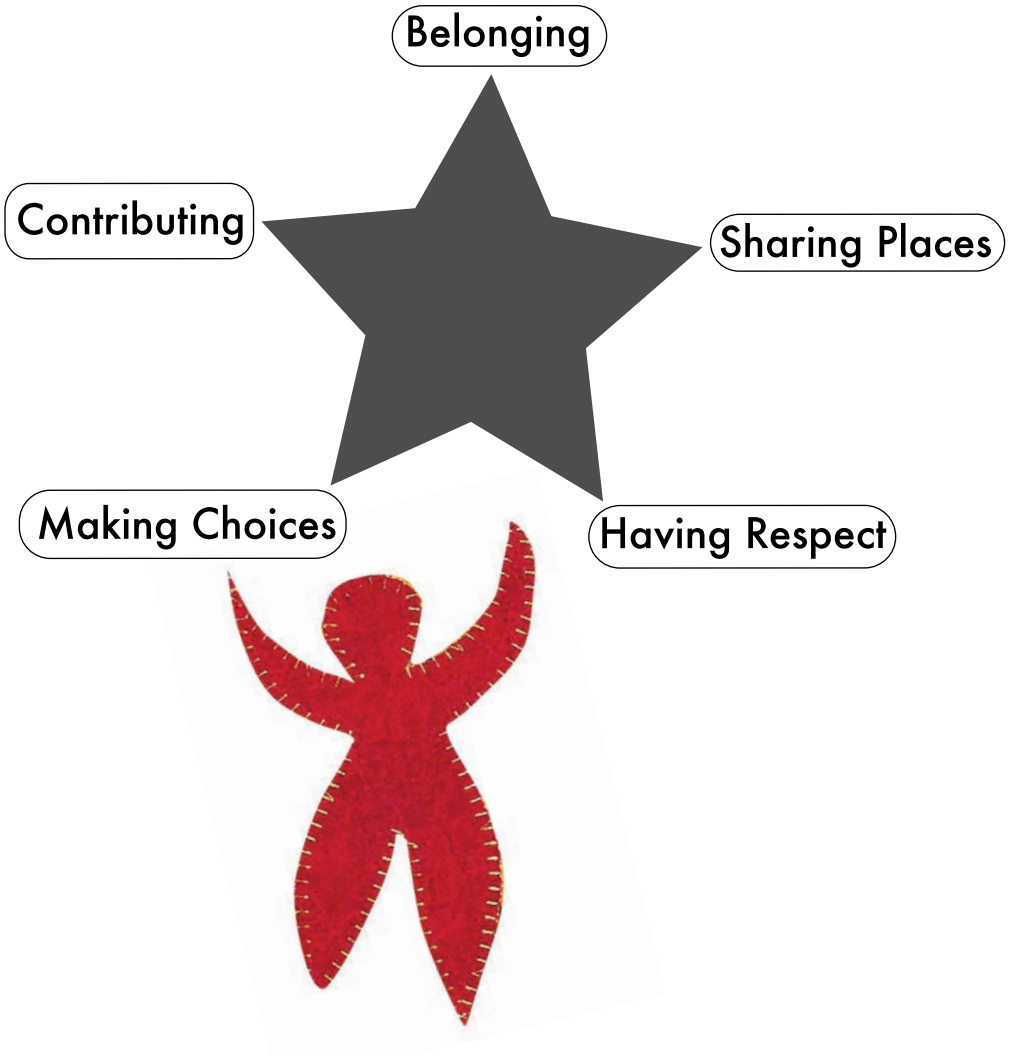
Every Person Has a Life Path

This process helps people with disabilities and those who support them to create their path.

The path for every person is different. Each path reflects:

1. The gifts, capacities and interests of the person.
2. Opportunities in the person's community.
3. Distinctive contributions the person brings to community life.
4. The supports the person needs to make a difference.

While every path is unique, real lives are guided by the **star of the five accomplishments**, which are:



2. Find capacities

People build a life path by finding capacities in these four aspects of a person's life:

Learn about...

- skills
- identity
- challenges
- qualities

... IN THE PERSON

Explore...

- stores on the block
- economic opportunities
- recreation options
- transportation options

... IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY

CREATING VALUED ROLES WITH SUPPORT

Listen for...

- values & identity
- connections
- resources
- neighbohood ties

... OF THE FAMILY

Design Personal Supports...

- individualized support
- natural supports
- service coordination
- employment supports

... USING CREATIVE RESOURCES

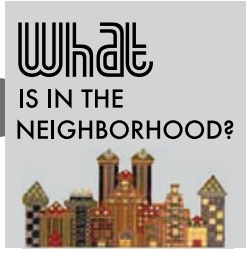
3. Imagine a Community Life

Use this worksheet to generate as many ideas as possible about ways to match the person's capacities to community opportunities and the ways that the person can be a contributing citizen in these situations.

Capacities to Build on or Build-up Gifts of hand, head, heart, identity.	**Potential Community Opportunities** Places, associations, networks where the person's capacities would be welcome.	**Possible Roles: Combine Capacities and Opportunities** How the person can be a contributing citizen in this place, association or network.
David loves anything related to law & justice. He wants to wear a suit & tie! David loves music. He has an amazing memory for songs and artists. David is helpful. He wants to make money. He loves to put things in order.	Police Department Law offices Court House Work in a record store. Brooklyn College Radio Station Barnes & Noble music department Local grocery store. Local drug store.	Deliver mail Security officer Greeter Inventory work Assistant to DJ

4. Plan a Time to Try Out Your Best Ideas

Take one or two ideas and work



Design a Weekly Schedule

M	T	W	Th	F	S	Sun	new choice

Action Steps	Person Responsible

PART 4: LESSONS LEARNED

THE COMMUNITY SUPPORTS PROGRAM

Job Path's first programs helped people with developmental disabilities find satisfying and stable employment. Our Community Supports Program was a natural outgrowth of this work. Each of us is more than our job – we all need to be involved in activities that connect us to others and to our communities.

About 12 years ago we met Beth Mount and learned about person-centered planning. She inspired us to create the Community Supports Program. Our goal was to help people create their own life plans and to help them implement those plans through volunteer, social and recreational activities in their communities.

Today, each of the 30 people in Community Supports is supported in their own neighborhoods with their own support worker. The only time people are in a group is when they get together on Fridays for the Life Path Center at Job Path's offices. About half come to Life Path each week, while the others choose to stick to their regular activities.

Looking at each person's weekly schedule tells the story: No two schedules are alike because each person is an individual with different interests, capabilities, and support needs. Similarly, people receive varying amounts of service, ranging from as few as twelve to as many as thirty hours a week.

As an example, Osvaldo's weekly schedule includes volunteering at a hospital, working out at the gym at a neighborhood recreation center, using the computer at his local library, playing pick-up basketball at a nearby park, and attending Job Path's Life Path Center. His schedule reflects the complexity of the program because people are engaged in a wide variety of experiences in many different places.

We first met Osvaldo ten years ago when he was "in transition" from special education and headed to a day treatment program. A principal once commented that Osvaldo, who never participated in class discussions, would not amount to much! Osvaldo has a great sense of humor, has learned to use public transportation to get to his activities, and is well known in his neighborhood. Next on his agenda is a job.

We provide a very individualized, complicated service, particularly when people want a full week's worth of activities. Each person is involved in a different set of activities in various neighborhoods. The very nature of individualized services creates challenges. As you can imagine, scheduling is tricky! In order for our services to appear seamless to people and their families, there is a lot of behind-the-scenes juggling.

It's even harder when a worker calls in sick. We can't keep staff on a back-up list, when they might only be called once a month. And we have to be careful about who we send to cover. It must be a worker who knows the person and how to support her. Supervisors fill in whenever possible. We make it clear to families that sometimes coverage problems are unavoidable, and we've helped each family figure out a contingency plan for staff absences.

We feel good that we offer a lot of choices, but that can also be a challenge. Individuals and their families interview potential staff and know that they can say "no" to the potential hire we worked so hard to recruit. People request changes in their schedules or in staff, and then we have to go back to the drawing board. It makes life harder for us, but we don't see any other way to give people real choices and real control over their services.

We strive to connect people to meaningful activities. We have covered a lot of ground over the years discussing what constitutes a meaningful activity. As just one example, taking someone who loves music to a guitar store is not particularly meaningful if the person and the support worker are just browsing. However, if we help the person develop relationships with the owner and store staff, becoming one of the "regulars" who visit frequently to talk music, play together, and look over new equipment, that is meaningful.

All agencies need reliable and mature direct support staff, but these qualities are even more critical for our program. Our staff must work independently, out in the community, mostly without "eyes-on" supervision. We have a complicated call-in system to assure that staff is where they are supposed to be. Our supervisors spend time in the field, getting to know the individuals and their families, and supporting staff – so we can be sure that everything goes as smoothly as possible.

Community Supports is a work in progress. The creation of the Life Path Center and the Everyday Heroes Project has helped to improve the quality and breadth of Community Supports. Both efforts have provided additional training for direct support workers while recognizing and supporting their creativity and commitment.

We will soon be able to implement some changes through a project funded through OMRDD's OPTS (Opportunities for People Through Services) program. This project, in response to on-going operational challenges, will provide for more flexible scheduling and clinical support for individuals, and more supervision and training for staff. It will allow people who want to work to have real jobs in addition to their other activities through a "blended" service. This opens up a lot of opportunities for people who might never have been considered for employment.

We've struggled to find the best way to structure the program within existing Medicaid requirements. For example, the "Individual Day Habilitation" designation would work best for us, but the program is classified as "Group Day Habilitation" because of the weekly gathering at the Life Path Center. We could have chosen to have both classifications, but we were concerned that having multiple plans and billing forms would increase opportunities for error. In these kinds of situations–as with other challenges–we just find a way to make it work.

Fredda Rosen
Executive Director
Job Path

ABOUT JOB PATH

Since 1978, Job Path has been supporting people with developmental disabilities in their efforts to make choices about their lives. Founded as a project of the Vera Institute of Justice, Job Path spun off from the Institute as an independent not-for-profit in 1999.

Job Path's programs enable people with developmental disabilities to find jobs and launch careers, establish their own homes and participate in community life.

Employment Services: Job Path is recognized for its pioneering work developing strategies that assist people with the most severe disabilities. We have helped more than 2,000 people find work in hundreds of New York City companies and nonprofit organizations.

Supported Living: Job Path assists people with disabilities to establish their own homes, whether they need around-the-clock support or less intensive help. We arrange for people to rent apartments through the regular real estate market as lease-holding tenants.

Community Supports: We support people to become contributing members of their communities. Job Path looks for places — businesses, services and religious organizations, social centers, parks, and gyms — where people can pursue their specific interests and develop lasting friendships.

Life Coaching for People with Autism Spectrum Disabilities: Job Path's new project was established in the fall of 2006 to find innovative ways to help ten young adults with Autism Spectrum Disabilities to pursue a college education, get jobs and find meaningful community activities.

Please check out www.jobpathnyc.org for more information, available material and other resources.

ABOUT BETH MOUNT

For more than 35 years Beth Mount's professional work has been based on the belief that those with disabilities are valuable members of our human community.

Through her unique concept, "The Art of Capacity," she has helped people – many who have communication difficulties – to express for themselves a path for their individual empowerment, finding their way toward meaningful lives within a responsive and sharing community.

For the past 15 years Beth has worked with OMRDD on new initiatives for individualized services, which include leading initiatives related to person-centered planning, community inclusion, Day Programs Without Walls, careers in the arts and the development of art studios, individualized living arrangements, self-determination, the FAR Fund Alliance, Everyday Heroes, the Wheel Power curriculum for self-advocates, and the Individualized Supports Learning Institute for NYSARCA.

Beth also has worked extensively with provider agencies, including Job Path, where she works directly with people who have disabilities, parents, advocates, and direct support workers. Her cutting-edge leadership on individualized planning spurred Pathfinders, a transition planning group for self-advocates, parents and providers, which was sponsored by Job Path and OMRDD. Beth met a number of the people now served by Community Supports when they were in high school and, in partnership with the staff of Job Path, has followed and supported these students and their families for more than ten years.

Beth has worked in partnership with John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien who have been in the forefront of thinking and creating precedent setting innovations that have helped to create full lives for people with disability labels the world over. Additional resources for them can be found at www.inclusion.com/jobrien.html. Several free downloads related to the Five Accomplishments and Promoting Valued Social Roles are also available on this site.

Additional books and artwork by Beth Mount related to person-centered planning are available though www.CapacityWorks.com.