

jobpath JOURNEYS

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Job Path supports people with developmental disabilities in their efforts to make choices about their lives.

The fabric of our lives...

By Fredda Rosen

We are working on a creative new way to tell the Job Path story: through a quilt. It will convey what we do — for people who might want to come to Job Path to work or for support; for the members of our extended family who come to our annual benefit and for everyone who is involved with us in other ways, from employers to landlords.

The people who will be guiding us in creating our story quilt are long-time members of the Job Path family. Beth Mount is a nationally recognized expert on person-centered planning and an artist who created a quilt for Everyday Heroes, a project involving support workers sponsored by the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD); Gail Jacobs is a quilt maker who founded Community Options, one of the first supported living programs in the country. They will help us find visual ways to express the stories of people we support.

We expect the quilt to illustrate the values that underlie Job Path's work. Using an artist's canvas — in this case a quilt — we will choose visual symbols that cut across cultures and put us all on the same page.

In January, we held our version of a quilting bee. Before taking up needles or scissors we shared our ideas and thoughts. We will be collecting scraps of material that visually reinforce the themes that run through Job Path's history. As we shared stories of our own lives, we discovered that one of us was an extra in the movie "Trading Places," and another was a bus driver in the South. Still another recounted how her uncles were activists in the civil rights movement in Alabama in the '60s. We all look forward to our next quilting session.

The quilt is one way to mark our upcoming 25th anniversary. We expect to unveil it at our benefit in the spring of 2004. The finished quilt will be our version of a Job Path banner, representing our hopes and dreams for the future.

Fredda Rosen is Executive Director of Job Path. You can contact her at: frosen@jobpathnyc.org

AUCTION NEWS

MAY 8, 2003

"If music be the food of love, play on"

About 30 lucky people were treated to a concert by pianist Elizabeth Wolff, wife of Job Path's Deputy Director Richard Charlson, on Sunday, January, 26. Elizabeth offered the performance at last year's auction/benefit. The winning bidders — friends of Job Path board member Diana McCourt — planned a celebration for everyone who is a part of Diana's daughter Nina's support circle. (See inside story about Nina and her support worker.) You too can have the sound of music echoing throughout your house if you come to this year's auction on May 8th and make the winning bid on Elizabeth Wolff. This year her concert will be packaged with a home-cooked Italian meal!

Adventures in Oz

Yvette Weir skipped the Wizard and landed directly in Oz. Her husband, Claude Weir, Jr., Job Path board member, successfully bid for a walk-on part on the prison drama "Oz" at last year's auction. Yvette was transported recently to a production studio in New Jersey. Although she shot three scenes, only one made it to the small screen — she got to follow cast member Rita Moreno at a funeral. It was the last day of shooting for the series, and all the actors were taking pictures of each other. Although this was Yvette's first professional acting job (she was actually paid \$79), one fellow actor insisted he remembered her from the television show "Third Watch." At this year's auction, expect Yvette Weir's hand to shoot up when another walk-on is auctioned off.

Update: Clement

By Annika Bengtsson

In last fall's issue, we introduced you to Clement, the artist. We are happy to report that in January, Clement celebrated six months of employment at the comic bookstore Forbidden Planet. He has a great relationship with his co-workers. Clement feels good about no longer being the newest employee and goes out of his way to be helpful to more recent hires. He is spending more time with the merchandise and the customers, which he enjoys. But Clement says that sometimes he wishes he had a job actually drawing, so we are pairing him with a mentor who works in the comic book field. Forbidden Planet is so pleased with Clement that they would like to welcome another Job Path worker to the staff.

Clement reports, **"I like my job and it makes me feel good about myself."**

Annika Bengtsson is Coordinator of Employment Services.



◀ Clement delights the Job Path family with his original drawings at our recent holiday party. He is currently working on a piece to be auctioned at our upcoming benefit.

Spotlight on: Board Member Jennifer Berkeley

During her early career as a corporate lending officer with the Chemical Bank (now J. P. Morgan Chase), Jennifer was introduced to Job Path informally. Michael Smith, then director of The Vera Institute of Justice and a good friend of Jennifer's husband, asked her to find a job for a developmentally disabled young man. As Jennifer explains, "Michael knew that my older brother was mildly retarded." She found the man a job at the bank, and since then she has always been interested and involved with Job Path's work and mission.

Jennifer graduated from Tufts University and earned a master's degree in international relations and economics from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. Before joining the Job Path board, Jennifer served on our Business Advisory Council. Today, she heads the board's audit committee and serves on the finance committee. She does *whatever* is asked of her — making corporate introductions, hosting parties, proofreading proposals and, always, finding jobs. She has also been involved with marketing and private donations.

Looking to the future, short of "cloning Fredda and Emily" (JobPath's Executive Director and Deputy Director), she would like to see a resource developed that supports people who have siblings with disabilities.

As she says of her 20-year association, "I can't imagine my life without Job Path in it."

In her private life, Jennifer travels extensively with her husband. She judges flower arranging around the state and is an avid gardener and horseback rider.

Job Path Employer: The Isaacs Center

Walter Higley, the Assistant Executive Director of the Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, is the unofficial ambassador for Job Path. As he says, "Every time I go to other settlement houses or neighborhood centers, I tell them about Job Path and how beneficial it has been to us."

About a year ago a friend of Walter's, who is familiar with Job Path, noticed that the Center had two employees with disabilities who were deliverers for the Isaacs Center's Meals on Wheels, which takes over 380 meals a day to seniors. The friend wondered if they had come from Job Path. They didn't. More importantly, Walter found out more about these employees. He discovered that each had been on the job over 10 years and they were described as very reliable. In fact, they were never absent from work.

Encouraged, Walter decided to use Job Path for internships. Soon interns from Job Path joined the fleet of deliverers; they showed up in the kitchen where they feed 75

people breakfast and 180 lunches. They could be seen sweeping up in the halls and working at the Center's thrift shop. When the Center created a new database and needed people to input information, Job Path sent them Margo.

Walter admits: "I don't even know exactly how many Job Path people we have. I have to stop and think about who is here for training and who is on staff. We treat them all the same. As far as I'm concerned, they are *all* staff doing a good job." The Isaacs Center is an agency with a tight budget, so unfortunately they can't hire every intern they train.

"We have assistance that we wouldn't be able to afford without the interns," says Walter, who admits that there have also been challenges along the way. "The way I look at it, there are challenges for anyone on staff." And in the process the staff has learned more about people with developmental disabilities. The bottom line is: "This relationship has worked to both of our advantages — and then some!"



◀ Nina and Sherrill strolling on the dance floor at our holiday party.

Support Worker Sherrill Stuart

Recently, Job Path board member Diana McCourt was asked to write a letter about Sherrill, who supports her daughter Nina. This is an excerpt:

I am the mother of a 41-year old daughter who suffered through terrible years at Willowbrook. Finally, four years ago we found Job Path. The support workers listen to my daughter who does not speak. She has overcome her fears of entering stores, riding on buses. Sherrill explains everything they are going to do. No one thought of that before. For the first time, Nina will now sit to get a haircut due to Sherrill's patience and encouragement. Sherrill is fearless about connecting with neighbors. Nina has made friendly connections in the community. The community is now her classroom.

Sherrill Stuart has been at Job Path since 1998. Here's life as a support worker to Nina in her own words:

When I first met Nina, I was told she was agoraphobic and I was given a list of all the things she didn't do. I don't like to put labels on people. I watched her for a month and assessed her. One day she just looked at me and smiled and took my hand. Now, we go out all the time. When I first met her she wore a helmet; she doesn't need that anymore. She's quite a food connoisseur. We have a container from every restaurant we have eaten in. We put them on the table and she'll pick one to tell me what kind of food she wants.

For a long time Nina was silent. She doesn't communicate with words. She communicates with body language, with her eyes and with sounds. I talk to her constantly. She understands everything you say to her. I can read her body language. I can even tell when she's telling me off by the way she looks at me. Sometimes when I take Nina out, people stare at her. I used to get mad, but I turned that around. I say to them, "Hi. How are you? I'm Sherrill. This is Nina. What's your name?" Currently, Nina lives in a state facility, but she will be living in her own apartment soon. I've started showing her how to do laundry.



▲ There was plenty of food and laughter at the recent Supported Living house warming.

"Rooms with a view"

By Dahlian Porter

At a large three-bedroom apartment at Riverside Drive, with a great view of the river, we support two young women with developmental disabilities who live with a non-disabled roommate. The typical arrangement is to have around-the-clock support provided by shift staff.

April James, who was referred to us by a former Job Path staff member, now occupies the third bedroom. It's a very nice fit and was just meant to be. April lived in Paris while earning her masters in French culture and civilization. We pay one third of the rent for April, and she gets a stipend of about \$120 a week. Currently she works part time as a French tutor, which gives her the opportunity to "spend time with the ladies."

Officially, April is on call for her roommates Sandy and Tyeast from 10 PM to 8 AM Sunday through Thursday. But unofficially April can often be found hanging out with them anytime. The three roommates all love very scary movies. You can hear them singing or shrieking a little as they watch the movie "Panic Room" or "Joy Ride."

You can feel the good vibes when you go into the house. According to April, "They are like my sisters. And sometimes we all act silly. Sandy likes to dance and seems to be coming out of her shell. Tyeast is a 'star' who walks around voguing – you know, tossing her hair." April is a vegetarian and tries to connect to her roommates through food. They are always looking for new recipes.

As April says, "We do all this normal roommate stuff."

Dahlian Porter is Director of Supported Living.

Good News

- ▶ Support worker Clara Cabrera officially became a U.S. citizen on May 10, 2002.
- ▶ More good news for Clara. She and fellow support worker Cathy Castillo were just promoted to Employment Specialists. We wish them good luck on their new job path.
- ▶ Support worker Louisa Henderson will be featured in a video for direct care staff. Four state agencies combined forces with a production company to do a recruitment video. Louisa was chosen by the New York State OMRDD to represent their direct care workers across the state.
- ▶ Several Job Path staff members have been accepted into LaGuardia College's Disability Studies Certificate program. On Wednesday evenings you can find Audrey Fitzpatrick, Jose Hyatt, Scott Krupnick, Jacqueline Sylvah, and Wayne Wallace all busy attending classes.
- ▶ Thanks to J. P. Morgan Chase, several of our participants are learning basic computer skills. They get hands-on attention two days a week, Tuesday and Thursday from 4:30 to 5:30 pm.
- ▶ Connie Lyle O'Brien, recognized for her work on behalf of people with disabilities, is working with schools in Rhode Island to adapt our Pathfinders Project. Originally launched

in early 1996 by Connie with Dr. Beth Mount and supported by the New York State OMRDD, Pathfinders helps young people with disabilities make plans for their lives after special education. Pathfinder's coordinator Carolann Granata participated in the Rhode Island kick-off.

BULLETIN BOARD

- ▶ **Lamont and Rafael are looking for a two/three-bedroom wheelchair-accessible apartment in Upper Manhattan.**
- ▶ **Lavera is looking for a one-bedroom in the North Bronx.**
- ▶ **Mitchell, who has porter experience, is looking for work in a supportive environment in Queens.**
- ▶ **Sara has clerical skills and experience working with data entry. She is looking for work in a moderately paced environment.**
- ▶ **Carlos, who has porter and stock experience at a sporting good store, is reliable and dedicated.**

Note: All participants whose stories or identifying information are included have agreed in writing to participate.

Get out your day planners and Palm pilots!

Save Thursday, May 8, 2003, for our next benefit/auction.

jobpath

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