

The People First **Connection**



The Voice of Self-Advocacy in Oregon
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Special Edition: Staley Brokerage Services

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Salem

Many people wonder why people with disabilities need so much money for support services and how that helps the community as a whole. Because, after all, “What, “ they wonder, “can people with disabilities do other than to be a burden on society?” But that’s not true at all. People with disabilities can and do have a lot to offer to their communities. We may need some help. But everyone needs

some help from time to time. Brokerage Services have changed many lives, because services are based on what the individual wants and needs to live a full and productive life. There are 9 service brokerages in operation around the State of Oregon. As a result of brokerage services many people with developmental disabilities have improved the quality of their own lives in many ways.

The articles in this issue of *The People First Connection* are examples of how people are individually supported. Some have received help in finding a job that they like and can do well. Brokerage supports also make it possible for people to be able to be included in all things that the community has to offer. In this issue you will be able to read some of the personal stories from people who are customers of brokerages, and how their lives have been changed because of their supports.

Living Life My Way

**Andy Owens
Portland**

I am a 24-year-old person who lives in Portland and has cerebral palsy. I need fulltime support and right now that support comes mostly from my mom and dad because I live at home. I hope someday that I can live in my own apartment. Because I cannot physically dress or feed myself, I need to depend on others.

But just because I cannot do those things does not mean that I cannot work. I have worked for almost four years at Powell's Book Store and earn \$10.01 an hour. I use computer technology to do my job and work like others without disabilities. Because I work in the community I have friends, and they are great.

When I go into the community, I have an assistant who drives my van. His name is Tim and he is about my age. We like to hang out and do things that other guys our age do. Tim has a dog and I have two birds.

When I was younger, there were no funds to help me with some of the needs I have. Not that I am an adult we have money that helps people who want to live at home. That money comes from the Staley lawsuit. Because of that settlement I can have a fuller life and a job where I can earn my own money.

Some of the dollars I earn from my job go to help pay for my assistant. Because I like to do things with my friends in the community, I need someone to help me get around in my wheelchair and Tim helps me with that.

After work I meet my friends and we go do things together. The support I get from my services keeps me from being lonely and always having to stay at home. I can earn my own money to buy the things I need or want and don't always have to ask my parents for money. That makes me feel good and more independent.

I cannot imagine how life would be without the supports I have now. I know that it saves the state dollars to have us living in our families' homes, and I like it that way too. For someone who pays taxes like I do, that is important.

Help Make History

What: Accessible Voting Systems Vendor Fair (an opportunity for you to try new accessible voting machines).

When: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.,
April 4, 2005.

Where: Oregon State Capitol Galleria

Why: To help the Secretary of State decide what machines Oregon should buy to help voters with disabilities. This is your chance to have direct and meaningful input that will impact your ability to vote privately and independently in the State of Oregon.

For more information or assistance:

Call 1-866-ORE VOTE
(1-866-673-8683)
or
(503) 986-1527.

Plans

**Lorrie Cleven
Corvallis**

I am 23 years old. I have cerebral palsy. Right now I live with my family. I plan to be married in 2006. My mom helps me. Our local service brokerage pays mom for some of her help.

I have a job at a pre-school. I have worked there for seven years as a teacher's assistant. The brokerage helped me get the manual wheelchair I need for my job. Sometimes I have to travel in regular cars or visit places that are not accessible.

The brokerage also pays for Dial-A-Bus that gets me to work and also a city bus pass.

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Things Changed!

**Laurinda Gabert
Portland**

I finished my high school when I was 21. That included attending the Community Transition Program at Portland Community College. When I left there I transitioned into nothing. That went on for years.

My mom has to work so I had to stay home alone. Here is what my days were like. My mom made my breakfast and when I got up I put it in the microwave oven. Then I took a bath and brushed my teeth. Then I would go up to my room and listen to music and sometimes I played my guitar and sang songs.

But what I really did all those years was work on my “homework.” It was a special kind of “homework.”

My mom bought me the video of “Lord of the Rings,” and “Fellowship of the Rings.” She also bought me the books.

I got a bunch of notebooks with lined paper and copied both of the books into the notebooks. I have a

very special way of writing. I worked on copying the books at least three hours a day. It took me two years to finish.

We have safety rules at our house. I was taught to never answer the phone or the door and never to go out in the yard if my mom wasn't home. So for all that time I just stayed indoors and copied the books. Sometimes I would take a break to exercise. I like to do karate. But mostly I just copied.

I didn't have any friends. The friends I had from school were like me. They didn't have anything to do and we lost track of each other.

I needed more people in my life than just mom and I. I needed some involvement. Sometimes mom would take me with her to clean houses and she would pay me \$10.00.

Then my mom found out about service brokerages. On March 15, 2004 we went to our local brokerage, which is called DSI. We made a service plan and since then my life has been wonderful. I have lots of friends now.

Our plan gave us some money for me to hire a personal assistant for a few hours a week. Her name is Kelly and she is really wonderful.

Things Changed (cont.)

Kelly takes me shopping and we go out to dinner with friends. Now I am learning to cook and can have friends come over for dinner. She even took me to Vancouver, Washington to meet her parents.

Kelly and I have gone to real dances, like ones at the Crystal Ballroom. I had never done that before! We go bowling and take long walks. Anything I want to do she makes happen.

We do make-up and she is teaching me how to dress better. Last summer she stayed with me for a whole week. My mom went on a vacation. It was the first time in over three years that my mom and I had not been together everyday.

I started in an activity called the PASS Program. It is for people over 18 years old who have nowhere else to go. We go on outings like shopping and movies. Right now we are learning how to garden.

Kelly is my friend. She is my best friend. Now, when my mom goes to work I don't miss her so much.

Last summer I got to go to Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp for the first time. It is pretty expensive. At camp they called me "Queen Diva." I called Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp paradise. I get to go again next summer. My plan will pay for it.

My Lift

**Asha Soiney
McMinnville**

Before I got my first lift my mom had to pick me up and put me in the van. But now I can use the lift to go in the van. Now I can have other people drive me places. I can use my power wheelchair to go to the movies and places like that.

With the lift I use tie-downs to put the chair safely in the van. I was so used to not being in my chair at all because before the lift I just got lifted into the van and had a seat belt. But now, I am getting used to having the lift.

I like how you float in the air when you get down from the van.

My mom got the lift from my brokerage in Independence. It only took one day. I really like it.

This Old House

Mark Hertel
Hillsboro

My roommate and I share a house in Hillsboro, Oregon. It is an old house made of birch. It is in a neighborhood. I like it because all of our neighbors are friendly and my roommate and I can go visit them.

I work at the Safeway store in Hillsboro. I have been there over five years. My job is to bag groceries and collect shopping carts from the lot.

When the weather is good I like to walk to work. When the weather is bad I take the bus.

I get Staley services from our support brokerage in Washington County. I worked with them to create my service plan. In order to support me in my work at the Safeway Store my plan pays for my monthly bus pass. Without that there would be many days that I could not get to work. They not only bought me my bus pass but they had a person from the brokerage who came and taught me how to ride the bus.

Right now I am completely independent in my job and don't use my services to iron out problems. But I have had some issues in the past. If I have any more I know that the brokerage is right there to help me.

One of the things I like to do is cook. I wanted to learn to be a better cook so that I would be better at independent living and know how to take care of myself.

I told my brokered services person about this desire and they helped me to hire a person to come to my house and teach me to be a better cook.

We have learned a lot. We talk on Sundays and make up a weekly schedule of cooking lessons. The first time we do a new dish she does it all by herself and I just watch. The second time we do the dish she does less and I do some of it. After that we repeat the dish until I have learned how to do it completely alone. After that I tell her all about it and what I learned that I could use for other dishes.

What I like about my brokerage is that when I have made suggestions to them about what I would like to learn they find a way to make it happen.

Brokered Services Are A Success for Me

Theresa L. White
Aloha

When my family and I first arrived in Oregon, I had no services. Later I was asked to be on the committee that created a service plan for our regional brokerage.

About 6 years ago I was assigned a broker and started receiving services. My service broker has helped me in many ways. When I was asked by my broker what I really wanted more than anything, I told her that I wanted to learn to read.

I was referred to Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) where doctors tested me and decided that, because of a very restricted field of vision, I am considered legally blind. I also have cognitive problems and severe dyslexia. They suggested that I learn Braille.

Through my service broker I got a tutor from Independent Living Resources of Portland.

After several years of Braille lessons my tutor noticed that I was reading the words that he printed above the Braille and suggested that I could learn to read large print.

I wish I could show everybody who said that I couldn't read that I can!

Because of brokered services my mom hired a tutor and the brokerage is paying for it. Now the tutor is teaching me to read and also helping me to speak more clearly.

My brokerage also helped me to learn mobility and I now take the bus and Max Train all by myself. I am much more confident and thanks to my living skills instructor, I am able to do many things that I never thought I would be able to do by myself.

I like to go on vacations planned and carried out by TRIPS, Inc. When I told my broker that I had finally saved enough from my job for my dream trip to Disney World she told me that the brokerage

A Success For Me (cont.)

would be able to help me with chaperone expenses.

The brokerage sure helped me to be independent more than I ever thought I could be.

What Would It Be Like?

**William Gilbert
Forest Grove**

What would my life be like if I didn't have the services that I have now? We talked about this question at a meeting of Washington County Self-Advocates. I just don't know where to start.

One area of my life that benefits from my brokered supports is housing. I have been living on my own for two years and four months. The Washington County Housing Office helps me with a portion of my rent. That service is

part of my plan and is arranged by my service brokerage.

I have a developmental disability called Soto's Syndrome. My disability makes it hard for me to find and maintain a job with a living wage. If it were not for the support I get on paying my rent there is no way that I could afford to live independently.

If it were not for my service plan I would still be living at home with my two loving mothers. They are part of my support team.

Another part of my plan, also arranged by my brokered supports person, is hiring an independent skills specialist to help me learn to cook. Cooking is an especially important independent living skill.

The broker also helps me keep track of my budget and the money I receive from my place of employment.

If I had no independent skills trainer I would have to rely on my two wonderful mothers for all the skills that I require in order to live on my own

There are many more services that I receive that I have no room to mention.

What Would It Be Like? (cont.)

My message to legislators, both state and federal is: please think, and think hard, about how lives like mine will be turned upside down if these services are cut or eliminated. For me it is the difference between a useful and independent life and one in which I don't have a chance to compete.

How I Get Around

**Jeff Otto
McMinnville**

I use a wheelchair to get from point A to point B. That is how I get around town. Some people are snotty and cut me off when I am on the corner trying to cross the street. Other people sometimes get road rage and make nasty comments to me.

Some disabled people need more supports than others. I get mine from the support brokerage in McMinnville. They really have helped me a lot when it comes to living on my own and going where I want to go.

Some people with disabilities live at home with their parents, some live in group homes, some live on their own. Thanks to my service brokerage I live in my own home.

People with disabilities must learn how to do things on their own. One thing is learning how to get around town by themselves. My supports have enabled me to learn how to get places. I have also been taught about cooking on my own, reading recipes, measuring ingredients.

Parents need to learn to trust their child's service brokerage and their child's own instinct. My brokerage has helped parents to better understand their child. Sometimes people with disabilities rely too much on their parents and don't know what to do without them.

It is good to have brokered services become part of your life. The services can help a person with disabilities to cut some strings from their parents and learn to trust themselves more.

The support service brokerage helps the family to learn to trust each other, and the person with the disability learns to go out and have a life.

My Way of Life

**Rena Kriegh
Eugene**

Before I was 18 the only help my mom got with me was a little bit of respite care. Services are important to keep families together.

Now that I am eligible for brokered services my life is better. The Lane County Transit District has a program called Ride Source. My brokered services helped me learn how to use public transportation. They have also helped me out by showing me how to get state insurance. If these services are cut I will be in a world of hurt. Brokered services can also help get equipment. But I have to pay, myself, for repairs to things like my manual wheelchair. That can get expensive for those of us on a fixed income.

As a community of people with disabilities we should fight more for the services we require to live a well-rounded life.

*All stories in **The People First Connection** are subject to edits for grammar, spelling and content.*

Services and Independent Living

**Shana Tubbs
Hillsboro**

Because of the services I get from the Tualatin Valley Workshop in Hillsboro I have a job at the Maryville Nursing Home in Beaverton. I work in the laundry room. I fold clothes and put them away. The people who live there are old and sick and need help. I talk to them and visit with them.

I started this job in 1992. I like this job real well. If it were not for the support services I get I would not be able to have a job at all.

I live in my own apartment. I get supports to live in my apartment from the housing people at the Edwards Center in Aloha.

My roommate is a parakeet named "Sunshine." He is green and yellow with a little gray on his head. In my own home I can do anything I want.

I moved to my own home in 1993 and I like it. For a while it was real scary. But after some time I got

Services and Independent Living (cont.)

used to it. Now I can't imagine living any other way.

If I did not have my apartment I would have to go and live with my parents. I am 56 years old. My mom is 84 and my dad is 83. They are way too old to have me move in with them.

The housing services I get from Edwards Center help me maintain my home and live the kind of life I want. Something simple like having a pet bird may not seem like much to many people. But when you have a disability you sometimes end up living in places where you can't make any decisions on your own. There is always somebody that has to say yes or no to the simplest idea.

I would be real sad if I lost my home. It is one place where I can sing and dance and listen to my music and talk to my pet.

Besides the housing and employment services I also have had help from my brokerage to learn to take public transportation

to get around town and to get to my job. When the weather is good I like to walk to work. It takes me about 45 minutes each way. I take the bus everywhere else.

It Gives Me Freedom

**Charlene Dean
Tillamook**

There is a service brokerage that operates here in Tillamook County. I am very happy with it.

I have met a lot of nice people and done a lot of nice things. They listen to me and my plan makes me happy.

I recently toured the Capitol in Salem and had a very enjoyable time. I have had a few problems but not too many.

I have been asked to give speeches on behalf of my service brokerage and explain how it works to other people who may be able to get services. That experience has been a real confidence builder for me.

I like my personal assistant very much. I also appreciate the Dial-A-Ride program. It gives me freedom to get around that I would not have otherwise.