

PIN POINTS

a newsletter from

Philadelphia Independence Network

JEVS Human Services'
New Community Based Program,
Where Young Adults with Disabilities
Live in Their Own Apartments,
with Supports

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Contact Us

JEVS Human Services

www.jevs.org
9350 Ashton Rd.
Suite 201
Philadelphia, PA 19114

*For more information about
PIN, call*

Marnisha Henry
Program Director at JEVS
267-350-8678
pin@jevs.org

Lois Frischling
Family Advisor at
215-844-8914
loisf@verizon.net

Jennifer Sonenshein
Family Advisor at
610-668-8855
jennifersonenshein@gmail.com

How the PIN Program is Impacting My Life

by Adam

My name is Adam and I am 27 years old. I am one of the original members of PIN. I live in my own apartment in Narberth PA, a nice community with friendly people. I have been living in Narberth for a few years, first with a roommate and now by myself. I have been living alone for the past year and a half.

In 2006, I graduated from Pathway School, a school for kids with special needs. Then I attended the Vocational Independence Program at NYIT and graduated in 2009. At NYIT I learned independence skills and how to live without my parents. Currently, I am a paid employee of the Montgomery Hospital and I have been since 2011. I work part-time (15-20 hours per week) in the rehabilitation O/T department as an occupational therapy aide and I love my job! Before I became a paid employee I volunteered there for a couple of years.

My work and my family are important to me and so are friendships. Even though I lived independent of my parents when I was away at school and again when I moved to Narberth, I had no real friends. I was pretty much isolated in my apartment. PIN supports me in my independence and lets me meet new friends. In the beginning some of the other PIN members didn't understand my humor, now everybody gets me. Now I go to dinner, sporting events, bowling, movies and other events with my PIN friends. I also go with Marnisha and other PIN members and their families to talk about PIN to people who are interested.

At the beginning of the summer we got our new "PIN clubhouse" and it's great. We meet there for all sorts of activities, training sessions and birthday celebrations and we always have good food. We discuss our activities calendar and share what's happening in our lives. As the PIN program enters its 2nd year, I look forward to even more social activities and traveling with my PIN friends.



Adam at home in his Narberth apartment



Adam with PIN friend David

A Successful Transition

by Cindy

Gabrielle didn't agree that it was time to move out. She was twenty-three, but enjoyed living at home. She was happy to work during the day and to return home come evening where dinner was prepared and she was able to veg in front of the t.v. before bed.

Her dad, Elliott, and I understood. Gabrielle attended boarding school for four years. She made many friends, and worked hard academically. Yet, she missed home, terribly. She jumped at our suggestion that she enroll at our local high school as a senior. Despite the fact that she knew no one at school, she was very happy there. She graduated in 2007.

The following fall Gabrielle gave college a try, but the college with the best fit was in New England, and again, she yearned to be home. We agreed that our youngest could return home after only a single semester. College wasn't right for Gabrielle, not now anyway.

So, Gabrielle was well entrenched in life at home when we learned about PIN. She was happy and saw no reason to leave home, once again. She wanted no part of PIN, and made that very clear.

But given time, she came around. She met the PIN members, and saw their apartments. She recognized they had a freedom and level of independence she lacked. She met Marnisha, who had faith in her ability to live on her own. She began to consider moving on, and moving out.

Unlike the other times that Gabrielle had moved away from home, this was her own decision. That made all the difference! She began to contact realtors - calling, sending texts and emails, and moved quickly to see apartments as soon as they were listed. With admirable determination and perseverance she found "the perfect place".

Gabrielle now lives in the quaint town of Narberth. By choice, her choice alone, she has a one bedroom apartment and lives solo. Her space is adorable, and she took great pride in her consignment shop hunt for cool stuff. Her design sense is sharpening.

Gabrielle is learning as she goes: she enjoys having friends and work colleagues to her apartment. She recognizes the need to



Gabrielle and mom Cindy

keep her place clean, and have food and drink to offer guests. She has begun to learn how to make some simple meals, and is beginning to understand the importance of healthy eating.

Gabrielle has developed many of the skills necessary for independent living. She rises at 5 a.m. so that she can be at work on time. She takes care of the trash and recyclables. She writes the checks to cover her monthly utilities, parking and rent. She is a quiet and respectful neighbor. She is a valuable member of the PIN community and the community of Narberth!

Our daughter is feeling very good about herself, as she should! She is developing new self-confidence, in large part, thanks to her PIN participation. And, there are collateral benefits: Elliott and I have been able to take a stepback. We are witnesses to Gabrielle's transition and transformation. We knew that she was capable of independence, given the right support. That is what PIN has given all of us!

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www.jevshumanservices.org

Email us at:
pin@jevs.org



Met: Wednesday, August 8, 2012
Location: Our Club House (Narberth)

Members of "PIN" who attended this meeting: Adam, David, David L, Courtney, Gabby, Nish and soon to be the "newest" member of "PIN" Kyle.

This week's meeting was a specific one because it was called "Food Shopping". So basically we were going to sit down, discuss and come up with a food shopping list. That way we won't have to spend so much money every time ordering dinner out. This way makes a lot more sense! First thing in our agenda was that Nish had some things that she wanted to talk to us about. Some of the topics were redoing the PIN brochure, working on advertising more about our group, (the PIN program), scheduling individual meetings where both the PIN member and his/her parents are present also and planning/doing more trips. But the biggest news was about the meeting scheduled for next Wednesday when JEVS Vice President of Communications will come to talk to all of us (the members and of course, Nish also). JEVS would like to have an article published about this program in the Main Line Times. I think that would be awesome!!!!

The nice thing about living in Narberth is that there's a supermarket close by. It's called Acme.

That's where we went to get the items off of our list. We even had Acme's list of sale items. Nish was kind enough to pick up a copy of their listings. This trip was 100% a group effort. We all worked together to come up with the list, contribute at least \$5.00 (some people gave \$10.00 instead), but "Doctor David L" contributed \$20.00. We are all very grateful to have him in our group by the way! All together we had a fair amount of money to use.

Once we were ready we broke into two cars. David L was one of the drivers and Nish was the other. I say that we were very successful in finding and purchasing all of our items from the list. We didn't even go over our budget amount. Stayed well under it. Hooray!!!!!! When we finished our shopping trip we went back to our clubhouse. People who were interested in picking up dinner did that. We decided to watch the movie Transformers while people ate their dinner. It was a very nice evening. Everyone seemed to have a good time. Will meet again next week.

– From Gabrielle

A Message from Our Director

The PIN community has been underway for a year now and what a difference time has made. The synergy that exists among the members of the PIN community is inspiring to say the least. The PIN members share in friendship, respect, compassion and an acceptance of each other. Over the past year, whenever we meet as a group they are reminded that they are in a safe place and they are encouraged to be themselves. That message is resonated at every meeting and social activity. As a result, the members allow themselves to be vulnerable and trust their fellow members not to judge them. Witnessing this evolution firsthand has been an amazing experience for me!

This past June the PIN community obtained space in Narberth and what a difference it has made. The space in Narberth serves as both an office and a place for the members to meet. We refer to the space as the PIN "clubhouse". The clubhouse is used for most PIN meetings and our weekly social gatherings, trainings, celebrations and information sessions. More importantly it's a safe place that is shared by the entire PIN community, both members and their parents. Members are able to entertain those who are interested in joining their community and they are able to warmly welcome new members of their community. The clubhouse is a neutral space that offers snacks, big screen television, card & board games, music and most importantly acceptance. All members share in the responsibility of keeping the clubhouse tidy and each of them have assigned tasks. The clubhouse symbolizes much more than a place to meet; it is a place where members rely on each other and where they embrace difference. The clubhouse functions as a private yet open community for young adults with disabilities.

To a great extent the PIN members embrace each other as members of their extended families. Initially, members struggled with

*"Time is
what prevents
everything
from happening
at once."*

—Physicist John Archibald

understanding where they fit in the community, who they connected with, and who they could trust. Today members better understand that this is their community and they all have an equal opportunity to influence and participate within the community. Members have matured together and improved in both their individual and group capacities for sustaining patience, minimizing personality conflicts and misunderstandings; they have increased in areas such as acceptance and consideration of themselves and each other.

The time that members spend together celebrating birthdays, comforting fellow members in times of sorrow, supporting each other with projects; attending movies, going out to dinner or lunch together and encouraging each other's dreams, have all been invigorating attributes of the process. All of the variables they have experienced together over time are what has made this community what it is today. There is a sincerity amongst the members today that was lacking a year ago. Sure, there are several contributing influences for this such as maturity, support, trust, environment and encouragement from families and me. But the members did all of the work.

For the PIN community, TIME is the essence and has been the fundamental stimulus for change. I recognize that if everything we envisioned the PIN community to be, all happened at once, we would have been denying ourselves of experiencing the most enriching elements of the process. Time has been the relevant influence for change!

— From Nish

*For more information about PIN, call
Marnisha Henry, Program Director at JEVS
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9350 Ashton Rd.
Suite 201
Philadelphia, PA 19114