



December 2011

Dear Friend,

I really didn't want Jamie to live in a group home, certainly not any time soon. But there he was, at 21, leafing through catalogues, looking for chairs and blenders for his "apartment." With each year he became more and more insistent: His older brother and sister moved out, why couldn't he? I wasn't ready. He was.

I'd heard about the 2000-person, two-year plus waiting list for residential placement for adults with developmental disabilities on Long Island, so I figured we'd get in line, string out the process as long as possible, and worry about it all later. I knew about Community Mainstreaming Associates, that they had homes near us in Port Washington, so I called them first. I was quite unprepared when CMA told me they might just have the appropriate place for Jamie *right now*.

Uh oh.

"I'll take it," Jamie said, after a get-to-know-you dinner at one CMA house. And a few months later, there he was, ensconced in Never Neverland, a safe and happy place where his friends and the staff are family, too, where he's encouraged to be as independent as possible, where he learns about things like sexuality and how to cook, and where he's a part of the community in which he works, shops, dines out and takes the bus. He's traveled to Manhattan and Nova Scotia, and sometimes even makes time to visit us, five minutes away.

Jamie has never looked back and I recovered eventually. In fact, my husband and I got pretty comfortable, particularly when CMA opened a home to care for medically fragile adults. His future was assured. We were set.

And then, the recession. Suddenly huge cuts in services for the disabled are looming. The need for services is at an all time high, yet government funding is shrinking fast. Today there's a 2400-person waiting list for residences, with 200-300 names added every year, and *almost no new homes being opened*. Where will they all go? **And how will these budget cuts affect Jamie and CMA's other 56 residents?**

We're all wondering—and worrying—what's going to happen next. Yes, it's holiday time, but once again we're worried about Jamie's future. Your donation to CMA will help fill the funding gaps, and will have a powerful and positive impact on the lives of these vulnerable people.

Thanks for listening, and happy holidays,

Nancy Axelrad Comer



Yes, it's always this neat... scary!



At work - boy, does he love baking!