Beverly and Tony’s Story

Beverly successfully completed her grammar and middle school career in Columbia, SC. With her educational years behind her, she proved herself to be a hard worker in such diverse places as Pizza Hut, Fire Mountain, Wal-Mart, and Bojangles. At 32, Beverly gave birth to her daughter whom she calls her proudest accomplishment.

Then came a period in her life where she felt she didn't have much support and encouragement. At that point, she lived in a group home, which caused feelings of depression and anxiety. In her words, she "didn't know where God was" and become upset over “feeling not wanted.” Beverly felt that those who were supposed to be providing support to her were being dishonest with her. She felt she had little control over decisions impacting her life, including creating and maintaining friendships. In spite of her troubles during this difficult time, Beverly met and fell in love with Tony, a fellow resident.

Beverly’s life further changed for the better when, after establishing a connection with the Center for Disability Resources’ Supported Community Living Initiative, she acquired the skills and tools necessary for achieving greater independence and self-determination. Beverly was well on her way to achieving her dream of living in her community of choice, with a support system in place to ensure her success. Her process began by establishing a circle of support comprised of friends, family and support staff. A PATH plan charting her goals and accomplishments was developed.

Beverly’s circle of support felt that she could succeed living in a home of her own, where she would have the opportunity for greater control over her life. On February 16, 2007, after much patience and perseverance, Beverly successfully achieved her goal of living in her own apartment. Throughout the process of locating, securing and moving in to a home of her own, Tony continued to provide love and support and their relationship continued to blossom.

Meanwhile, the Supported Community Living Initiative was working with Tony to move out of the group home. His circle of support valued Beverly's advocacy for Tony and his self-determination and assisted him in moving from a four-bedroom group home into an apartment, which, coincidently, was Beverly’s apartment before she moved into the community. Unlike Beverly, there were many doubts of Tony’s success. However, Tony overcame these obstacles and moved into a Supervised Living Program where he gained knowledge and skills that would prove to be beneficial once he moved in the community.

During a circle meeting in preparation for their wedding, Beverly’s uncle with his eyes filled with tears said, “I want to thank everyone for what you are doing to help Beverly and Tony achieve their dreams.” On November 3, 2007 Beverly and Tony, with her uncle presiding, they were married and their dream of living together “as a married couple” was realized.

Beverly was previously employed at a retirement center for one and a half years but searched for job opportunities that did not require weekend hours. In July of 2008, she acquired a position as the Lobby Attendant at Chick-fil-A near her home. She now works Monday-Friday from 8am until 4pm. Tony is also searching for a job, and with the cooking skills he is learning from Beverly and his newfound interest in the culinary world, he is exploring opportunities in food preparation and service. Beverly and Tony plan to renew their vows on their one year anniversary, holding a ceremony in their home. They would one day like to have their own house with a fenced in yard for a dog to romp around in and are considering expanding their family to include children.