Vermont

Sheltered Workshop Conversion
• In 1967 group of concerned parents in VT started their agency and sheltered workshop.
• Similar workshops around the country emerged in the 1950’s-60’s.
• Sanctuary away from the institution and a safe haven from the community.
• Sheltered workshop built and maintained on charity.
• Developed an insular community.
Pros & Cons of Sheltered Work?

**PROS:**
- Safety
- Less demanding
- Structured time/space
- Low stress
- Friendship with peers
- Lifelong stability
- Easy placements
- History/tradition

**CONS:**
- Low pay
- Poor job match
- Segregated
- Institutional behaviors
- Exploitive
- Not self-determined
- Stigmatizing
- Dead end
- Illegal?

Dague, 2013
Benefits of Employment

**EMPLOYMENT**
- Enhance Self-Worth
- Increase Self Esteem
- Satisfy Creative Urges
- Contributing Member of Society
- Self-Realization & Achievement
- Income to Pursue Other Life Goals
- Social Capital

**UNEMPLOYMENT**
- Negative Health Effects
  - Emotional
  - Physical
- Increased Anxiety
- Low Self-Esteem
- Poverty
- Lack of Choices
- Isolation

Dague, 2013
Sheltered Workshops

Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.

*James Baldwin*
An Outdated Model?

- Possibility of on-the-job training as an alternative to sheltered workshops (Riscalla, 1974)
- A Dinosaur in Our Midst? (McLoughlin, Garner, Callahan, 1987)
- Supported Employment, Self-Employment, Job Carving, Customized Employment, Employment First Policy
- Yet, today 75% of ID/DD are still served in Sheltered Workshops, and only 25% in Supported Employment.
The Time is Now

- “Sheltered workshops and segregated environments do not protect and empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Rather, they are a failure of our imaginations to provide better integrated opportunities.”
  - ADD Commissioner Sharon Lewis, 2011

- “Simply put, sheltered workshops are just another institution segregating people with disabilities away because of our unwillingness to accept that our perceived notions about their ability to work may be wrong.”
  - Curtis Decker, Executive Director, NDRN
Issues/Topics...

- Sensitive/Emotional
- Funding/Policy Issues
- Family Perspective
- Values & Philosophy
- Self-Advocates
- Tradition/History
- Leadership (state, local, agency)
- Other?
Paradigm Shift (1967-Now)

- Segregated
- Sheltered Work
- Mentally Retarded
- Uneducable
- Children
- Protected
- Parent-Determined
- Potential Untapped
- None/Spec. Ed.
- Older Parents
- Agency-Based
- Community Exclusion

- Included
- Supported Employment
- Intellectual Disability
- Having Competence
- Adults
- Dignity of Risk
- Self-Determined
- Potential Maximized
- Inclusive/Spec. Ed.
- Younger Parents
- Community-Based
- Community Acceptance

Dague, 2013
Twenty-five years ago the “experts” said that the state institution was the way to go. Then the experts said it had to close and people went to foster homes instead of the family, because experts said that would be best. [My son] was physically and emotionally abused at that foster home. He starved himself to get out. He had always been good-natured, but became very unhappy and difficult. Talk about trials and tribulations! We weathered it all. They didn’t live up to their word.
• We are all scared to death. My biggest concern is the far-reaching effect on their emotions of closing the workshop. I’m not sure about how she will feel not having that be a center for her. Whether it’s a workshop where she really works or whether it’s a place they can come and go. If they can just come back there and eat lunch so that they could see their own peers and belong, and feel that this is MY place.
I don’t like the thought of putting people in an area where they’re not seen. They need to be appreciated by the community. People need to know that there are people with disabilities out there, not hiding away somewhere working on projects.
I watch many of the people who were in the sheltered workshop and how they behave socially. I think maybe because they work in this closeted room or closeted box that they are in, that they don’t have the opportunity to socialize and I think it comes out when you bring them to large groups of people. You see that.
I think he’s happy, what more can I ask for than to have him contented and happy?

[Her] integration into the community has been a remarkable move up the ladder for her in skills. She is so verbal you would not believe it. You cannot close her down sometimes. And you know, before she went into the workshop situation, she wasn’t speaking at all.

Dague, 2011
Generational Differences

- Closing Doors of Workshop
- Letting go: Loss and Grieving
- Not ready, too late
- Ridicule and abuse
- Taking away friends and community
- 35 years of tradition and culture
- Care after parents

- Opening Doors to Community
- Opportunity, Risk, Being with non-disabled peers
- Graduating with jobs
- Community work and social life
- Same age peer group
- Social skills and daily living skills for community
- View sheltered work as reclusive & stigmatizing

Dague, 2013
Champlain Community Services

Where Are They Now? 10 Years After Sheltered Work
DIY Newsletter staff

Dague, 2013
Cable-Access Television

Dague, 2013
Self-Advocacy

To boldly go where everyone has gone before.

“We have been prepared enough. Get us real jobs. Close sheltered workshops.”

(SABEUSA.org)

STOP FEEDING THE DINOSAUR

We want real jobs!

Dague, 2013
I have developed an original recipe for my first batch of trail mix. I will be purchasing a flex mount device that allows me to pour and mix ingredients on my own. Finished batches will be bagged so they can be sold at local businesses.

- Full Steam Snacks
- GoFundMe ($1,000)
Nickering Nuggets

- Start up was $130.00
- Idea was generated – Personal interest and community feedback
Nickering Nuggets

- Micro Business supports multiple goals within the Individual Service Agreement
  - Independent living skills
  - Money management
  - Social Capitol
  - Social Awareness – and appropriate social interactions within business marketing
  - Animal therapy
  - Structure/Flexibility
  - Financial Sustainability

Dague, 2013
Transition Student – Desire to work independently and cultivating natural supports. How we did this

- Educating employer and co-workers
- Fade out plan
- Results

Dague, 2013
Employment based on interests and talents
Natural consequences and how we as a support agency will not “swoop in and save the day”.
Result

Dague, 2013
“I’ve been making a lot of money. I’m happy.”
Participating in the CCS Sheltered Workshop

Been employed by FYE since 2004 (10 years)

Multiple positions within the business throughout his employment

When asked – Did you like the sheltered workshop “yes, I liked being around my peers – but I like to work at FYE better”.

Has seen challenges with co-workers and learned the value of advocacy at the workplace

Dague, 2013
In 2002, my workshop closed down. I had been there for 20 years. When it closed, I felt great! I knew it wasn’t fair to just be stuck there all day. We needed to do something more with our lives.

Now I work at the Burlington Airport checking people in and out of the observation tower.

Dague, 2013
Bill @ Sweet Clover

- Assist with damaged product and insuring product dates are current.
- Participant in the CCS sheltered workshop.
- First job at age 55.
- Mom very much against community based employment for Bill.
- Supported Bill in advocating his desire to work.
- “I have shown the community what I can do and come out of the shadows of protectiveness from my mother.”
- Has been employed by Sweet Clover for the last three years and participated in three performance evaluations leading to increase in pay.

Dague, 2013
Not part of the Sheltered workshop
Has been working at Walmart since 2005 as a greeter – position is in the process of changing
Working with Paul and Walmart on a valuable/meaningful position as Walmart eliminates the greeter position – Walmart is totally on board with continuing his employment and carving out a position that meets the needs of both parties
Challenges that we have faced with this position
- Accommodations for Paul within the position(s)
- Personal support while on the job (works 10 to 5:00 – 2 days per week)
- Cultivating naturals supports
- Community Education
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