



**“Learn from
yesterday,
live for
today,
hope for
tomorrow.”**

— Albert Einstein

This year we will be highlighting some special people and organizations who are making a difference in the lives of the disabled and their supportive families. We hope you make use of these connections as it is our hope that they will link our Special Needs Community in a more personal and supportive way.

defending the freedom of choice

Whether it's what you want on your sandwich, the way you take your coffee, or the type of clothing you prefer — we are bombarded with messages telling us how much our choices matter. Yet while we enjoy being able to choose the creamer for our coffee, that cannot be compared to the more important choices most of us take for granted. Choices such as 'can I live in the home I prefer', or 'can I live with my friends', or 'can I choose how I want to spend my day'! Unfortunately for many adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities these choices are limited and are being challenged each and every day.

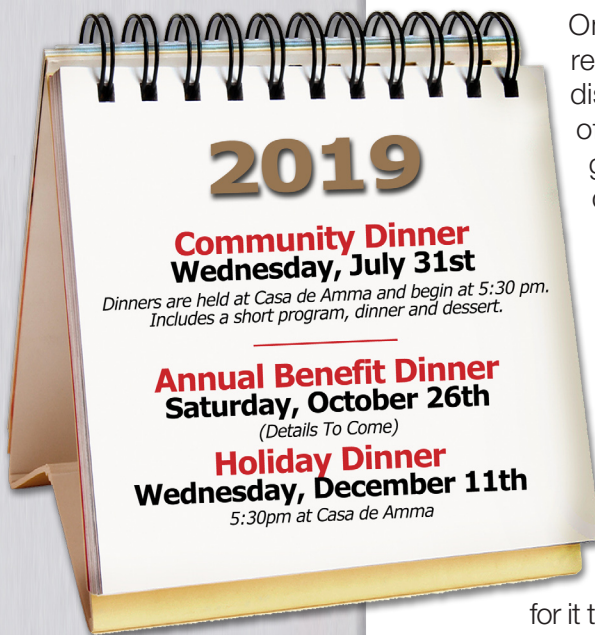
Together for Choice (TFC) is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to unite to protect and advance the rights of individuals with I/DD to live, work and thrive in a setting of their choice. TFC identifies federal and state laws, regulations and policies that limit choice and advocates for change in those laws, regulations and policies. TFC meets with legislators and agency officials in Washington and in state capitals to explain the importance of policies and that allow individuals with developmental disabilities to have the same life choices as non-disabled individuals. On their website, www.togetherforchoice.org, TFC identifies that one of the most significant regulations inhibiting choice is the 'Settings Rule' issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2014. The Settings Rule initially did not respect the rights of the individual to choose where to live or how to spend his or her day. Instead, the Rule limits Medicaid waiver funding to small homes in neighborhoods and to certain work sites that also employ non-disabled individuals. It discriminated against campus settings, farmsteads and disability-specific work and residential settings that many individuals with developmental disabilities find preferable because they better meet their diverse needs.

On Friday, March 22nd new guidance was issued that supersedes and replaces prior guidance on the criteria of an isolating setting, which presumed disability-specific settings to have the qualities of an institution regardless of the quality and types of services provided by the setting. The previous guidance threatened to force individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to leave the community they have chosen in which they had lived and/or received services for years, and it would have substantially limited the choices available to them. In contrast, the new guidance is outcome-oriented based on choice and person-centered plan.

While TFC applauds the new guidance, it urges CMS to take further steps to maximize choice for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Scott Mendel, Chairman of TFC, stated: "In addition to this guidance, we ask CMS to amend the Settings Rule to eliminate the 'heightened scrutiny' process altogether. This ill-defined process adds unnecessary administrative costs, confusion and uncertainty. If a setting otherwise meets all the robust requirements in the Settings Rule, there is no need for it to be subjected to 'heightened scrutiny'." Mendel added: "We also request that CMS expressly clarify that settings specifically designed for individuals with disabilities should be treated no differently than, and be subject to the same standards as, other settings in which individuals live and/or receive Medicaid HCBS. It is critical that the individual and his or her family choose where to live and receive services based on individual needs and preferences, rather than have the government dictate such choices."

Together for Choice also hosts conferences and their 2018 conference, hosted by Misericordia in Chicago, was a tremendous success! Advocates and service providers from all over the country gathered in support of choice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Topics of discussion focused on how laws can best protect and expand choice, as well as sharing best practices on how to provide quality service options. Together for Choice is a great organization we think you should learn more about.

The best way to help spread Together for Choice's mission to lawmakers is by joining as a member. By helping increase TFC's numbers on a national scale, we can demonstrate the demand for preserving and expanding high quality community choices for people with I/DD. Here are some of the benefits you'll enjoy as a member of TFC are access to a national network of organization and individual advocates, access to regional networks to facilitate communication on topics of choice for people with I/DD, invitation to join our advocacy efforts in Washington, DC and at the state level, quarterly TFC newsletter, email news alerts and access to toolkits for meeting with legislators and other policy makers. You can learn more about Together for Choice at www.togetherforchoice.org.



happy anniversary CasaFit!

Our highly successful program CasaFit, just celebrated it's tenth anniversary! CasaFit started as an answer to this question — "How do we persuade our residents to engage in an effective exercise program?"

Unfortunately, the majority of adults with developmental disabilities are considered obese and have serious health issues related to the lack of exercise and poor nutritional choices. As the result, we have created a program that moved our residents from the couch to the gym — while having fun along the way!

To begin, it was important to find someone to run CasaFit, who was experienced and able to connect and motive our residents. **Hilary Mann** was a perfect fit and she has been with this program from the beginning! Hilary brings a combination of expertise and a caring heart which helps residents enjoy their exercise and achieve their goals. CasaFit consists of three weekly workouts led by Hilary and several Healthy Lifestyle Events throughout the year. The weekly groups combine cardio workouts, strength training, and a variety of fun and engaging activities such as Adult PE, bike rides and a variety of ways to help burn calories. There is no extra charge for participants, and for those who need a more personalized program Staff can customize workouts.

In order to keep the sessions more engaging, they will often participate with the residents, encouraging togetherness and camaraderie.

Over the years we have held fifty+ events / special workouts including some favorites: Casa's Annual Triathlon, 300-Kettlebell Challenge, Twelve Days of Fitness Christmas Workout, Halloween Candy Crush Workout, and the Silly Sock Workout.

The key to the success of the CasaFit program has been that it is FUN!

These are just a few of our dedicated CasaFit participants . . .



www.casadeamma.org