

February 28, 2015



Gerald

Tim

Hello and thank you for your time.

Let me start by introducing myself. My name is Deborah Bixler and I am the guardian for two residents of Brookside Extended Care in Mason Ohio. I went through Warren County Court to get guardianship of the two gentlemen in the photos. I had worked at Brookside Extended Care from 1991 to 1995 providing direct care to the residents. Physical limitations prevented me from continuing but I continued to visit as often as possible. Gerald needed a guardian and Brookside knew how close I was with him so we started the process for me to become his guardian. Guardianship was finalized on September 8, 2006. Being a guardian is so rewarding I asked Brookside if I could also be the guardian for Tim. On May 25, 2010 Warren County Court granted my guardianship for Tim.

Let me tell you a little bit about these two wonderful men. Gerald was born November 3, 1951 and lived at home until 1956 when he went to a foster home in

Williamsburg, Ohio. From 1959 to 1960 he was in the Columbus State Institute then moved to Gallipolis Developmental Center where he lived from February of 1960 until August 1980. Brookside had opened and Gerald was placed in their care on August 21, 1980. Gerald has an inflammatory disorder, Cerebral Palsy, is Paraplegic, has poor circulation, has chronic anemia and has vascular disease. Gerald's sister had also lived at Brookside until she was moved into a more group style home where she later passed away. Gerald loves loud fun music and being outdoors. But He cries over sad slow Elvis songs. The texture of paper mache on his hands makes him gag.

Tim was born September 4, 1964. He lived at home until 1972. Tim lived at Orient State Institute from May 1972 to June 1972 then moved to Woodruff Home in Mt Orab Ohio. He stayed at Woodruff until October of 1973 when he was placed back at Orient State Institute. He remained at Orient for 7 years before moving to Brookside on September 23, 1980. Tim has Cerebral Palsy, a seizure disorder, scoliosis, hearing loss, and is allergic to penicillin. Tim enjoys his quiet room with his fish tank and easy listening music. Tim is 50 years old now, but when he sleeps you will usually find him on his side sucking his thumb.

Gerald and Tim have a diagnosis of profound mental retardation. They are wheel chair dependent and need full assistance to move from their beds, wheel chairs, bath tubs or mats. They are both incontinent and are checked regularly by their care providers. Gerald needs assistance to eat and drink. Tim has a G tube because he is unable to swallow. They receive physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech/language therapy, daily baths, meals and snacks, doctors' visits, appropriate age related medical test, dentist visits, trips to museums, ball games, malls and stores, the zoo, parks and countless other places the staff finds for them to enjoy. They enjoy family and guardian events like Valentines dances, St Patrick's Day dances, Easter Egg hunts, a Spring Luau, Ice Cream Socials with Elvis, a Fall Lawn Fest with a petting zoo, Halloween parties and Christmas parties. I'm pretty sure the places Gerald and Tim lived in before coming to Brookside did nothing like the events Brookside provides for them. Will your new idea of how they should live give them all those things or anything even remotely close? I don't believe a small community setting with a 1:4 staff/patient ratio could do all these things for Gerald and Tim. There aren't even enough people to push their wheelchairs.

If you are familiar with any of the locations where Gerald and Tim lived you know that Orient and places like them were simply horrible. I haven't seen records of what the other places did or did not do with their residents. However I am certain Gerald and Tim have had a better life over the almost 20 years that I have known them because of the care and attention the Brookside caregivers and nurses provide for them.

Each of them have lived at Brookside for 35 happy years. I know they are happy because I see it in them. They have their own space and their Brookside family. And I know that they are loved at Brookside.

These are just two of the people that can't speak for themselves. They can't walk, talk, or vote so I am here to be their voice. To move Gerald safely to his chair, bed, mat or tub requires two people. To move Tim to his chair, bed, mat or tub it takes three people with a Hoyer lift. Do you know what a Hoyer lift is? Will there be one in your new idea of what care they need? How can this safely be done in a group home with the limited person to resident ratio?

ICFs like Brookside provide the attention and support every special-needs human being deserves. If you close ICFs like Brookside you take away the home they know and need. What support do you have that shows the residents the IFCs will get the same level of care as what they have now? It simply cannot be done with a 1:4 staff/patient ratio.

The workshops that they go to work hand in hand with the ICFs to provide each special-needs person with the level of activity/work specially designed for them. There is nothing in the public sector that can provide those types of activity/work for the residents. If you take away their workshop, you will take another important support system for them.

How can you say that the life they currently have isn't meaningful? Gerald and Tim have had three roommates with them for the entire time they have lived at Brookside. Those roommates are like brothers to them. Now we hear you can no longer have four to a room. Have the people who suggested this policy even seen their rooms? Do they know how big their rooms are and how much room each resident has? How can someone know what is right or wrong for Gerald and Tim if they haven't even met them?

Gerald and Tim aren't like you and me, they can't write letters, debate, or give their own opinion. But they deserve and should have the same rights as you and I, the right to proper healthcare, safe care, empathy and love, and as their guardian, I am dedicated to ensuring that they receive this level of care. They aren't inmates, they're special needs.

Thank you

Deborah K Bixler

Guardian for Gerald Dearwester and Timothy Collett

Residents of Brookside Extended Care, Mason, Ohio