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Care of the Developmentally Disabled: from Institutions to the Trinity House

Since the 17th century, individuals with disabilities have been ostracized and made to feel horrible. In the late 1800s, the developmentally disabled started being placed in institutions. Once the individual was put in the facility, he was generally never heard from again.

Institutions were merely a place to house the disabled because parents either couldn’t take care of their child, or simply didn’t want to. “Conditions could be horrific [in the facilities],” explains Elizabeth Cohen, “Residents were sometimes restrained in leather cuffs or straitjackets, overly sedated, isolated for long periods of time, and … sterilized” (*Families*).

There were many reasons why parents placed their children in institutions. Doctors advised them to “give the baby to the state, and don’t worry about it” (Johns, *Families*). Some parents even did it willingly. The most common reason for sending a child away, however, was depending on “the parents’ age and health status” (Sherman 97). Some other reasons were the size of the family, if the individual had siblings, and “socioeconomic status” (Sherman 96).

Fortunately, in the 1970s, institutions began closing because there had been many lawsuits against them. Individuals housed in the facilities were deinstitutionalized and sent to group-homes.

Jeff Daly, a man whose sister, Molly, was put in an institution in 1957, was finally reunited with his sister in 2004 after about 50 years of being separated. According to Elbert Johns, the president of the ArcLink, many people are searching for their long lost family members that were institutionalized (Cohen). Institutionalization scattered loved ones and broke up families.

Luckily, today, there are many group-homes and community outreach programs, such as the Trinity House in Bloomsburg, PA, that help to alleviate parental responsibilities, and to keep individuals with exceptionalities living in the community rather than sending them away (Trinity 3).

Unlike being in an institution, the Trinity House keeps the individual in the community and provides him with all necessities to live independently. Students attending the university live in adjacent housing and interact with individuals living in the Trinity House (Trinity 3). “The students… have demonstrated through BU’s service initiatives the ability to connect, communicate and encourage individuals with disabilities to learn and grow” (Trinity 3). The Trinity House not only positively affects the individuals with disabilities, but the Bloomsburg students also get a lot out of the experience. Its location is key; downtown Bloomsburg provides shops, restaurants, and businesses where residents can interact with the community (Trinity 4).

Along with helping the exceptional individual and the students of Bloomsburg, the Trinity House also provides help for the parents of the adult with disabilities. Many parents are getting older and their health is deteriorating, so it’s very difficult to also care for an individual with disabilities. The house provides support and independence for the individual and the parents (Trinity 5).

The Trinity House provides so many things for students, adults with disabilities, and their families. It gives the disabled a chance to live independently, and gives their parents a sound piece of mind. The community of Bloomsburg has been very helpful since the project first began in 2008. The Trinity Church gave the organization a “90 day due diligence period to investigate the potential of developing the project” (Trinity 7). The Trinity House is a big step in the right direction compared to institutions in the 20th century. The Bloomsburg community is better off with this project, and BU is lucky to say they are the founders of the Trinity House.

Works Cited

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