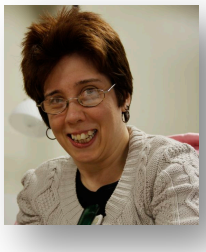
Cross Disability Coalition Meets with BHDDH Director Craig Stenning

In May the Cross Disability Coalition met with BHDDH Director Craig Stenning and his senior staff Tom Martin and Dave McMahon to share their **"LIFE IS GOOD"** Presentation and newly developed **"EQUALITY"** Video. Tanja Blicker-Ucran, Coordinator, sent the Director an email and requested an opportunity to meet with him to talk about the Coalition, issues of importance to members and to share **"LIFE IS GOOD**" and the "**EQUALITY**" Video".

"LIFE IS GOOD" (see attached link) was developed by people with disabilities from the RI Developmental Disabilities Council and RI Cross Disability Coalition to express their thoughts on what is **REALLY IMPORTANT** in their lives and what the words "*Independence, Productivity, Integration and Self-Determination"* mean to them.

Tanja and Deanne Gagne spoke about ***"INDEPENDENCE"*** which to them means making their OWN LIFE decisions, being on their own not dependent on others, having their own "home", using accessible places in the community and access to affordable transportation and at times when they need to go places.



Allyson Dupont commented that for her ***"PRODUCTIVITY"*** has been a *"journey"* beginning with her dream of attending college and the importance of having support staff approved by DDD to help her to get up mornings, get dressed and assist her in classes. She is very proud that she attained her Graphic Arts Degree at RISD and was then able to start up her own business "*Allyson Dupont Designs*". *Productivity* means doing things that people really enjoy and have a passion for, whether that is a job, a career, taking classes, community service or just doing something the person considers *"meaningful*" with their time.

Steve Porcelli talked about ***"INTEGRATION"*** and the importance of *REALLY* being involved in his local community with other citizens in everyday activities, classes and events. He is very pleased that he is a Lector on Sundays for St. Anthony Church and appreciates having friends to go out with and just have a good time! Steve believes very strongly that people with disabilities need to be respected and treated equally just like anyone else. He also mentioned its important for people

with disabilities to feel that people are REALLY listening to them and what they have to say, and not left out of conversations.

Megan Reynolds spoke about **"SELF-DETERMINATION"** and how that means making her *OWN CHOICES* for things she wants in her life and decisions about HOW she wants to live her life. She commented on the importance of having her voice heard and her opinion really matter to others. To her having a relationship and spending time with her boyfriend Charlie is really what matters! Megan also mentioned that she is an adult and while she loves her mom very much she wants to be treated as an adult and be able to speak up for herself and do things on her own. Megan is involved with self-directed supports, lives in her own apartment and hires her own staff to work with her on things she really wants and needs.

Director Stenning stated he was "*really glad to have the opportunity to meet with members of the Coalition. "* He thought that what people shared with him about **"Life is Good"** and the **"Equality"** video was "*really good information and very important for other staff in the department to also hear".* Tom Martin scheduled the Coalition to do the same presentation with all of the DDD social case workers for the following week. The Coalition was very pleased to be able to meet the Director and talk with him and his staff about issues and things they think are important for all people with disabilities.

Allyson Dupont, Tanja Blicker-Ucran, BHDDH Director Craig Stenning, BHDDH Administrator Tom Martin, Deanne Gagne, BHDDH Administrator Dave McMahon, Steve Porcelli and Megan Reynolds