

June 03, 2024

Greetings,

This year, as director of RSS, I have the pleasure of stewarding this great company into its 50<sup>th</sup> year of existence. Sometimes when asked where I work, that question is often followed with “What does RSS do?”. While RSS is an acronym for *Residential Support Services*, what we do is so much more than support people in their residences. We make a house a home, we build community.

One of the things we’ve been trying to do is to make our company vision, and mission statement, truly reflective of what we do. You see, when you read “Residential Support Services”, that doesn’t tell you much about us. A residence, simply put, is just a house. And we don’t support houses. A house is nothing more than ‘a meal, a bed, and a roof over your head’. That same thing could be said for jail. A home is so much more. A home is family, having a home is connection to those we love, and who love us, and being a part of home is being a part of a larger community. But I can’t change our name to “Home Support Services”, or people will think we go into your home to support you. And it still wouldn’t tell people anything about us. And lawyers would have to get involved, but I digress.

At Residential Support Services, our guiding principle is that every human being comes into this world with something to contribute. In the same way everyone has their shortcomings, their faults, and their own disabilities, the intellectually and developmentally disabled community we serve have their own unique gifts, and strengths, and talents to share. RSS’ mission is to provide a safe environment where having a disability does not prevent a person from achieving their fullest potential in every way possible, thus building a stronger community for all of us through participation, inclusion, and greater understanding.

That sounds idealistic. In truth, when people have the necessary supports that allow them become an integral part of their community, we all win. RSS doesn’t strive for community inclusion because of the CMS Settings Rule stating that service recipients must be integrated into their communities to the same extent as non-Medicaid citizens are, although the Settings Rule requires it. We don’t work hard to help people to be able to do everything they can for themselves because it lightens the workload on our staff, or it increases independence, or because their support needs might then impose less of a burden on society, even though that might be true.

We choose to give a hand up to those who need it because when every member of society is given what they need to achieve their full potential, it makes the world a better place. And that’s something desperately needed by all of us right now. It’s easy to become cynical and jaded when you’re look around at a world that appears to be consumed with wars, pollution, homelessness, economic disparity, a younger generation that’s given up on the dream of having a better quality of life than their parents had, and all the other social ills defining the spirit of the times we are living in.

We’re not so naive as to think we can fix the world, but by helping people to live a fuller and more rewarding life, we make the world a better place for them, and for ourselves. By helping

others, we give hope that they can live a life that's worth living. Hope for a better future is something that's in short supply right now, but it is something that's needed more than ever. Just like in the mythological story of Pandora's Box, hope can work miracles. Hope can make all the world's evils seem less terrifying. And in a world seemingly filled with lots of bad things, who doesn't want to be part of something good that gives us all a little hope that something better could be possible?

Have a great summer, and do your part to make the world a better place for all of us.

All the best,

Calvin Calton,  
Executive Director,  
Residential Support Services