

Open Letter from the new Executive Director

To all residents, families, guardians, staff and stakeholders of RSS:

Greetings,

Many of you already know me, but for those of you who don't, I would like to take a few minutes to introduce myself to you. My name is Calvin (Cal) Calton, and as of July 21st I am the new Executive Director of Residential Support Services.

Rather than reciting to you my academic and vocational credentials, I would prefer you get to know me through my vision of what services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities should look like. Throughout my career in working with disabled persons, I have sought to follow one guiding principle, which can be summed up with this quote from Mahatma Gandhi: "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members".

That statement only scratches the surface of the importance of the role of caregiver. While it is true we are tasked with helping people stay safe, healthy, and engaged with others in their community, it is equally important for society at large to see intellectually and developmentally disabled (IDD) people working, playing and making a difference in the world around them. There are still some glass ceilings to be shattered, some stigmas to be relegated to the dustbin of history. For nearly a century persons with cognitive disabilities were isolated from their communities, shut away in places with such innocuous sounding names like the Montana Developmental Center at Boulder (MDC), and Eastmont. Despite the name, there was not a lot of development happening at MDC, by the way.

In the fifty or so years since deinstitutionalization became mainstreamed, our IDD folks have moved back into the community, but we haven't always done the best job integrating them into the outside world. As a parent of a young adult with Autism, I know it takes work and a lot of creativity to help people with special needs overcome the barriers which prevent them from fully becoming a part of the community. It is my goal to help shape Residential Support Services into a company which provides all the individualized supports necessary for each person to live a life of their own choosing, complete with the joys and sorrows, challenges and achievements, and risks and responsibilities that make for a meaningful life.

This is a lofty goal, but it is one worth striving for. RSS isn't a huge company. We are small enough that we see each of our residents as a unique person, not as a client or a cost plan. I plan to keep us that way, no matter how we may grow. What makes this vision of truly individualized services possible is the amazing core of talented direct support professionals supporting our individuals on this journey toward full inclusion. As Director, I plan to work hard to earn the trust of our residents, our families, our staff, and the community. The people we serve deserve no less. I look forward to this challenge.

Sincerely,

Calvin C. Calton

Executive Director, RSS