

The Story of My Family

By Jane Browning
11 Precioso Lane, Hot Springs Village
Senate District 14, House District 23
and
Paul Browning
1842 Center Street, Arkadelphia
Senate District 12, House District 18



Paul Browning at work at the Honeycomb Restaurant, Arkadelphia

My name is Jane Browning and I live with my husband of 35 years, John, in Hot Springs Village.

Up until three years ago, our son Paul lived with us, but when he turned 27 years old he decided he wanted to move out and live on his own. His older brother, Jack, had gone off to college and made his way in the world years earlier, but Paul has Down syndrome and finding his niche in life was a little more complicated.

Paul does live semi-independently in a home we bought for his 30th birthday, with round-the-clock live-in supervision provided by Group Living, Inc., of Arkadelphia. The bright young men who live and work with Paul are among the small army of "Waiver Workers" that make successful lives possible for people like Paul who have developmental disabilities.

Group Living operates under the Medicaid Waiver system, but Paul's services are not covered by Medicaid. Paul is on the waiting list for waiver services, I think he is now #2023 in line to get his program paid for.

In the meantime, he is supported by what he receives from Social Security Disability Insurance, some State of Arkansas Developmental Disabilities Administration funding, and private pay from us, his parents.

As I mentioned, John and I are retired and receiving Social Security benefits ourselves. We don't have a lot of disposable income these days, but we are happy to continue supporting Paul as long as we are able. However, our days are numbered. John's father died at age 66; my only brother died of cancer at age 58, and my only sister died at age 66. How long can we realistically expect to carry the financial burden?

We kept Paul home with us when other parents enjoyed the financial and personal freedom of turning their children over to the State to be kept in institutions. Paul had a lot of medical issues as a little boy, including open heart surgery at 18 months. We have paid every day for paid companions to stay with Paul after school and as an adult, after he returned home from his program, while John and I were still at work. We provided personal assistance to Paul to help him accomplish daily tasks others take for granted, like shaving and washing his hair, assistance he continues to require.

We live in your district. We are your constituents. We need your continuing help on an ongoing basis to keep Paul safe, healthy and active in the most independent setting possible.

Thank you for being there for us. I hope you will call on me whenever you need help explaining programs and services for people with developmental disabilities to your colleagues, or to answer any of the questions or concerns you may have.

Jane Browning, 410-693-1040, Browning.jane54@gmail.com

Community First Choice Option (CFCO) Supportive Organizations

We believe that CFCO is an opportunity for the state of Arkansas to offer individuals who are elderly and those with disabilities the choice to receive services in their homes and communities. It is for this reason that we, the undersigned, urge the state to move forward with implementation of CFCO.

- AARP
- Arkansas ADAPT
- Arkansas Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)
- Arkansas Autism Resource & Outreach Center (AAROC)
- Arkansas Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)
- Arkansas Mental Health in Education Association (ARMEA)
- Arkansas Residential Assisted Living Association (ARALA)
- Autism Speaks
- Arkansas Support Network, Inc. (ASN)
- Arkansas Waiver Association (AWA)
- Developmental Disabilities Provider Association (DDPA)
- Disability Rights Center of Arkansas (DRC)
- First Step, Inc.
- Gregory Kistler Treatment Center for Children, Inc.
- Independent Case Management, Inc. (ICM)
- Integrity, Inc.
- Lifestyles, Inc.
- Mainstream
- Partners for Inclusive Communities
- Sources
- Spa Area Independent Living Services
- United Cerebral Palsy of Arkansas, Inc. (UCP)