

By Lori Ostrover

# Your Family's Peace of Mind



Martha Lloyd Community Services' headquarters in Troy, Pennsylvania.



Parents never really want to send their mentally retarded child away to a residence home. They won't be able to see their child as often and they will have to get used to unfamiliar people caring for their special needs child. However, with all of the involved frustrations, some parents don't realize the positive aspects involved in the placement of an individual with special needs into a residential home. Many parents of daughters who reside at Martha Lloyd Community Services (MLCS) agree that this living gives the ladies more freedom and has helped family life improve at home.

MLCS has been operating in the small town of Troy, Pennsylvania for 75 years. It is a residential facility consisting of 14 group homes and nearly forty acres of land. The residence consists of all women, ages 15 and older. According to John Mattingly, father of 21-year-old Jenny, a resident at Martha Lloyd, her stay goes beyond a place to live, "It gives the her a 'life.' The kind of lifestyle parents couldn't provide for their children in the comfort of their home."

A beautiful three-story Victorian style house makes up the administration building. In addition to the houses where the clients stay, most visit

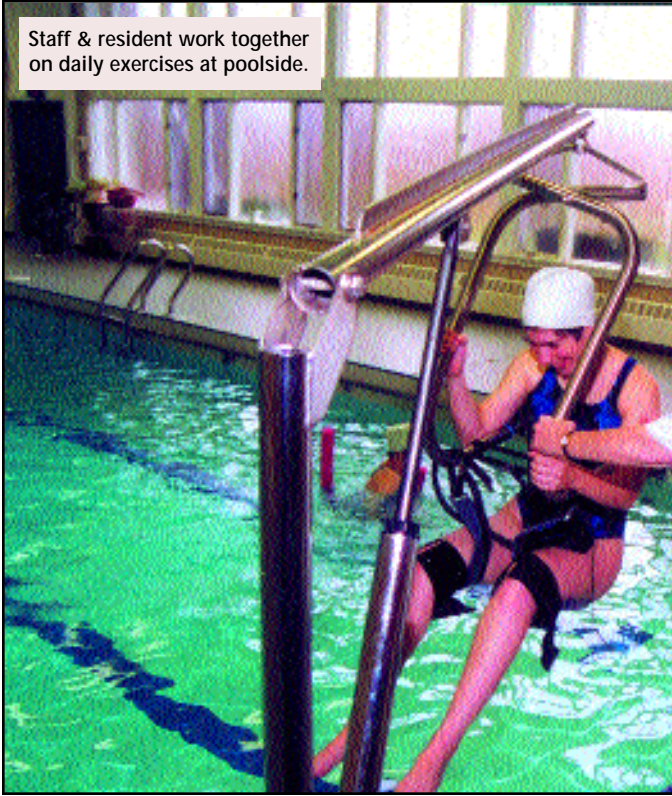
the classroom facilities everyday, where they participate in life skills, sensory integration and pre-vocational training programs. Everyone is encouraged to visit the library and the recreation building to work on their fitness and physical health, utilizing the fitness center, the large indoor pool or the outdoor track for running, walking and bicycling. There is also a hiking trail, a screened pavilion for picnics and a dining hall. There is even a beauty shop on the campus.

The doctor visits the infirmary once every week and a Licensed Registered Nurse Practitioner visits three days per week. Five Licensed Practical Nurses, supervised by a RN, provide day-to-day monitoring and first aid. If there is not a nurse on campus, there is always one on call.

The parents seem to agree the doctors have a good grasp on the different drug therapies used and never over-medicate, which was a concern for many. John Horton, father of Christy, 32, was very pleased with the slight medication adjustments made with Christy when she arrived just eight months ago. "She was much more calm and had less mood swings when she was home for Christmas."

The residents have their own greenhouse used for several programs to teach and to raise plants for sale. There is also the Coppertree Store, where the residents sell crafts made by participants, their own packaged bulk foods and a variety of gifts and wares. This program provides the school to work transition. The women get paid as they receive spe-

Staff & resident work together on daily exercises at poolside.



Staff member and resident at MLCS work together on arts & craft matters.



cific skilled training, vocational assessment and job coaching. Coppertree also obtains work contacts from local businesses, where the participants are eligible for alternative, meaningful work.

The residence could be described as a "college like" campus. The small town is just a short walk from the residential houses. The ladies at MLCS are very independent: they can walk to the town and go to McDonalds, the video store, the pizza place, the bank, or wherever they wish and are always treated with kindness and respect. The Martha Lloyd community is not separated or secluded from the rest of the town in any way. The clients participate in Special Olympics, take vacations together, and visit amusement parks and tourist sites. They have dances, parties, go shopping and partake in the town's craft fair.

Every program in the living center is based on each individual's needs, like an Individualized Education Program (IEP), based on their age, ability and interests. It is typical to go through a three-month trial period, so

the professionals can assure that they are providing the best program for that particular individual. Everything is customized from therapy sessions to living arrangements. The ladies have the option of staying in their own room, or having a roommate. If a special diet is called for, then that is what they will get. A majority of the food served in the dining hall is quite nutritious. However, if someone doesn't like one of the meals they can easily get something else. The staff eats all their meals with the clients.

Parents feel very comfortable with the staff and are pleased with the safe and loving environment their daughters live in. The number of staff provided is based on the requests of the parents or the necessity of the client. Some require a one-on-one ratio at all time. All staff must go through an in-house extensive training program. Mr. Mattingly explains, "Even some of the older women who live there, care for Jenny and treat her like a little sister." The staff always makes an effort to keep constant interaction with the parents and update them on their daugh-

ter. If a parent calls to speak to a staff member they are always available. Parents are always welcome to visit the campus at anytime. In fact, it is encouraged. The parents are entitled to take their daughter home at any time for as long as they desire. If for some reason one of the clients cannot go home for the holidays, the staff will always make sure it is special for them.

The decision of whether or not to place your child in a residential facility is extremely difficult. It requires a lot of research, heartache and trust. But many of the parents who chose Martha Lloyd have had their fears assuaged by the positive results of their choice. John Mattingly is so attached to what Martha Lloyd did for his daughter, that he has dedicated his Mattingly Company Web Site to the organization with a brief narration and a link to Martha Lloyd's home page. MLCS is a wonderful place for a woman with special needs to realize her full potential. EP

*To contact Martha Lloyd Community Services log on to <http://www.marthalloyd.org> or call (570) 297-2185 ext. 268.*