



Amy in the "Valued Role" of Friend

What makes a successful and happy life? For those of us raising family members with disabilities, don't we wish for them (and for all those we love) a good life? There is a lot of research about this question but the answer is very simple. Study after study has found that the secret to a successful and happy life is **not biology**. It is **not genes**. It is **not IQ or family upbringing**. The **secret to thriving is good, quality, consistent relationships**.

A young couple sat across from their son's doctor and listened as the doctor discussed the impact of their son's disabilities. They heard "he will have difficulty with this, he won't be able to do that, he will always need help with..." When Mom and Dad recovered their voice they said, "But he'll have friends, right?" Ultimately, friends -- connecting, companionship, giving and receiving -- are something most humans aspire to. Years ago, my daughter Amy became keenly aware of the importance of friends. She would say, "Friends are there for you, they have fun with you, and they help you."



Amy and Michelle with their masterpieces at "Painting with a Splash"

Amy is a wonderful friend. She is compassionate, loving and willing to try new things with friends. Her friends say she's fun to hang out with, very kind and an empathetic listener. Amy told me recently that she had called her friend Michele. When asked about their conversation, Amy said, "Oh, we cried together. We are missing our Dads."

Who are Amy's friends? Some of Amy's friends are others who share the experience of disability. Catherine has been her friend since they met in a pre-school class 40 years ago! Christine has been a friend for 18 years, Amy's boyfriend Shawn is special to her, and there are others who Amy really cherishes. Amy has a large extended family who enjoy being with her as well. However, the friends who give Amy the greatest sense of being connected to community are those who also share life experiences and interests with her but do not have disabilities. These are the people who've helped Amy be more recognizable in the community, develop more confidence, and experience an enhanced quality of life.

I will highlight a few of these friends. Michele went to school with Amy, riding the same bus and actually was our paper girl at one time. They reconnected as employees at the Christmas Tree Shop. Paula and Amy met at Camp Massasoit as young girls and Sandy and Amy met when they worked together at a store in the Dartmouth Mall. In January, Amy and Michele had been out to dinner and stopped at Rite-Aid to make a purchase. While waiting in line to check-out, a woman tapped Michele on the shoulder and asked, "What agency do you work for?" Michele turned and said, "I don't. This is my friend -- we're having a girls' night out!" Paula and Amy are talking about sharing a trip to New York City together. Amy and Michele recently went to a 'Painting with a Splash' night where they each painted a cardinal in honor of the Dads they miss so much. Amy hasn't seen Sandy for a bit but when they get together it will be like they saw each other yesterday...that's what it's like for good friends!

These women enjoy being with Amy (and she with them), give her more opportunities to interact in the community, and expand her circle by introducing her to other community members. Most importantly, they demonstrate to others in the community that Amy is a valued human being, a FRIEND and someone worthy of THEIR friendship.

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Our "VISION for the future"

The Nemasket Group envisions individuals leading successful lives that are rich with meaningful roles



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People who fill roles that are valued by others (example: photographer, employee, co-worker, voter, musician, college student) will be granted the good things of life.

We are excited to announce that **The Nemasket Group** will be moving to "The Pines" in Mattapoissett in the next few months, after a period of construction.

We invite you to participate in our "Pathway to Opportunity" Brick Program. Your personalized brick will become part of the lasting pathway at **The Nemasket Group's** new home. It's a unique opportunity to celebrate a special occasion, mark a special anniversary or make a dedication. Honor a friend or a loved one, or celebrate an important milestone in your life and the lives of those close to you.



Visit our website for more information: www.nemasketgroup.org
Or call Pat Janiak: 508-999-4436



Our 3rd Annual 5K-Walk/Run held on April 30th was a successful "Friend-raiser" and fundraiser. Congratulations to the race winners, and thank you to all that participated whether as a walker, runner, volunteer, corporate sponsor, friend, or supporter of The Nemasket Group! We are happy to announce that this event raised over \$26,000 for our programs....our best year yet!

