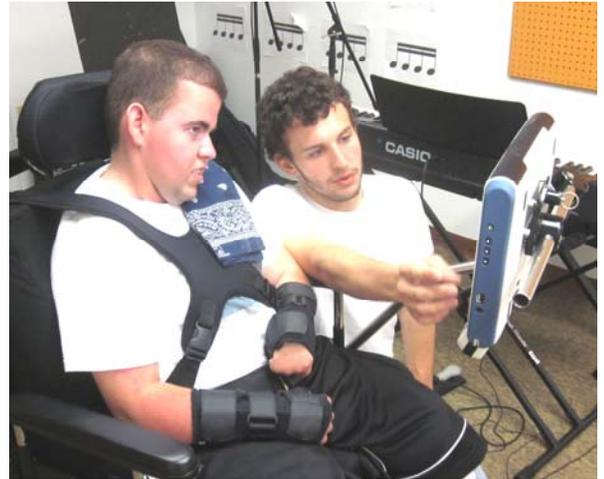




Having friends is definitely one of the “good things in life” – from the friend you meet once a week over a cup of coffee to friends that you see only once a year. I have maintained friendships with people that I met in College over 25 years ago! People with disabilities should have those same opportunities and relationships. Yet despite the fact that feeling loved and having a sense of belonging is probably the greatest need we all have, the development of relationships between people with disabilities and other community members has been generally neglected by those in the disability field.

One of the leading thinkers on this issue in Massachusetts and nationally is Tom Doody from the North Quabbin Citizen Advocacy organization. Last September, Tom presented at The Nemasket Group on “Fostering the Development of Freely Given Relationships.” Tom challenged the group to increase their consciousness of relationships – to interrogate the ordinary. What do neighbors, church members, coworkers, student club members do together? How do they meet? How do they get to know each other? How do they grow closer? How do they become friends? How do friends become closer friends – even enduring and intimate friends?



Tom reminded us of the obvious – that providing opportunities to meet people who share similar interests is an important first step to developing fulfilling, supportive friendships. People need time together to get to know each other and to share experiences and it is from this that the possibility of a friendship can emerge. We need to think about where to help build these connections for people where one would feel a sense of belonging; where one is welcomed and accepted for who they are. To do this, it helps to know the person’s community. Involving people who have extensive social networks is essential to making these introductions and connections. Our experience tells us that there needs to be careful facilitation and “behind the scenes” support to maximize the possibility of friendships becoming long lasting.

Jonathan is a man that the Building Futures Project supports. Jonathan has a passion for music and photography and for the past couple of years has been attending the “open mic” night at Rick’s Music World in Raynham on Thursday evenings. It is a very welcoming, comfortable place to go and listen to good music. Last year Jonathan performed on stage with three other friends the song “Family” that he and his music teacher Tom had written together. After the event, many people came up to Jonathan and congratulated him on his success. It was a wonderful moment. It was clear that he was seen as not only a regular but also as a musician and a composer. Rick’s Music World had really become a “sweet spot” for him. It was under these circumstances that Jonathan first met Zack. He also attends Rick’s and is an editor for a local newspaper. They both enjoy music and photography. Through thoughtful facilitation, Jonathan and Zack have started meeting once a month sometimes to take photos or just to “hang out.” Zack has invited Jonathan to attend “jam sessions” with his band on several occasions as well as going with him to other music performances. They keep in contact often through Facebook. These are very typical activities for friends to do together. One of Jonathan’s photos has even appeared in Zack’s newspaper. Their friendship is ongoing and developing and is a great example of what can happen when you support people in places with other community members who share mutual interests.

Ross Hooley
Director of the Building Futures Project

Our “VISION for the future”

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

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The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction not a destination.



The Nemasket Group mourns the passing of Philip J. Tully, on December 10, 2014. Phil was the New Bedford Area Director for the Department of Developmental Services since 1975. Phil was an Inspiring leader in his service to people with cognitive disability and their families. He was honest and forthright, always respectful and clearly took joy from the many accomplishments of individuals.

Phil continually put the needs of people first and worked very hard to meet those needs. When presented with a request on behalf of an individual or family, Phil rarely said no. If his answer wasn't an immediate "yes," it was "let's see what we can do." Phil believed in the power of community and in people helping each other and many times worked to bridge disparate parts of the community. Phil has left a legacy of partnership, thoughtfulness, hard work and perseverance that will be honored by those of us at the Nemasket Group.

Our deepest and heartfelt sympathies go to Phil's family, colleagues and friends.

On October 10th we celebrated our **30th Anniversary** at Cotali Mar Restaurant.

Over 200 people attended including individuals supported and their families, board members, staff, friends, and employers.

Thank you to everyone that helped to make the night a special occasion in honor of our founders and supporters!

