

Embracing Independence

Like most 18 year olds, Rosie finds it hard to contain her excitement when talking about her prom and high school graduation. "As you can tell," she says, "I like to talk a lot!" Rosie's enthusiasm for these events - and most things in life - isn't dampened by her long-time diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy. Tanya, Rosie's mother, explains that the condition affects the muscle control in her daughter's legs. Rosie uses a cane for assistance when walking and regularly attends physical therapy to improve her mobility. "My goal is to eventually not use my cane," Rosie says with emphasis.

Looking for additional support, for both herself and Rosie, at the suggestion of a MassHealth staff member Tanya called Springwell.



Rosie (R) smiles and hugs her mother, Tanya.

Tanya had been struggling to juggle the practical challenges that come with Rosie's condition and the many appointments with doctors and therapists while also caring for her 8 year-old daughter and holding down a part-time job as a hair stylist. "I was just dying," says Tanya as she shows her calendar overflowing with appointments, pick-up, and drop-off times. "I needed help."

Since Rosie enrolled in Springwell's Adult Family Care in December 2008, the changes in both mother and daughter's lives have been "unbelievable" according to Tanya. The family is supported by a registered nurse and social worker from Springwell who visit

once a month. During these visits, Rosie and her mom discuss any changes in Rosie's health (such as her recent knee pain and adjustments to her new leg brace) and ways to increase Rosie's independence. "Empowering Rosie to take on additional daily tasks increases her self-confidence and gives Tanya an opportunity for a break," explains Kate Siegel, care advisor for Springwell's Adult Family Care Program. Prior to enrolling in the Adult Family Care Program, Tanya was getting up with Rosie each morning to make her daughter's bed, prepare her breakfast, and put lunch in her backpack. Rosie now follows a to-do list that outlines her morning tasks which she completes independently. "I have the whole list memorized now!" Rosie says proudly.



Rosie shows the to-do list with her morning tasks, such as getting dressed and preparing breakfast, which she completes on her own each day.

Another area where a small change has made a big difference is the managing of Rosie's medical appointments. Tanya spoke of the practical challenges she faced driving Rosie to-and-from multiple appointments each week. To help, Springwell arranged for a Medicaid-sponsored taxi to drive Rosie to her physical therapy appointments. Rosie takes great pride in calling the taxi company herself. She kiddingly points to her mom and says, "Now, I don't need her anymore!" Tanya also began using Springwell's Caregiver Notebook* to organize and keep track of Rosie's various appointments and activities. "It's a big help," she says.

In September, Rosie will begin a vocational program that focuses on life skills, such as cooking and using the computer. She hopes to someday work with animals or children. Rosie's care advisor, Kate Siegel, observes, "It's been less than a year that Rosie began receiving support through Springwell's Adult Family Care Program and already there's been big growth. That's what the program's all about - being as independent as possible."