

4-4-05

Statement to Alexandria City Council

April 4, 2005

Good Afternoon

My name is Amber Nightingale and I am a resident of the City of Alexandria. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today about services and housing in Alexandria for adults with developmental disabilities. I have written letters to all of you about my sister Victoria whom I am here to advocate for today so what I am about to tell you may sound familiar. She lives in an independent living program that offers very little support services; most of the time, the program has no staff to help her and I fill in where necessary. I spend every weekend with her, and I drive down to check on her every other weeknight. As you can imagine, this is quite exhausting and I am about to burn out.

In June 2004, I contacted the Alexandria Community Services Board and started the process of getting Victoria moved into a program in Alexandria for high functioning adults with development disabilities. From what I understand, there are only about 12 individuals currently being serviced in this program in the City of Alexandria. These individuals live in one bedroom apartments called Bellefonte Apartments in Del Ray.

Victoria, along with 5 other people, are on the waiting list for the program at Bellefonte Apartments. When she was placed on a waiting list, we were told that it could take 3,5, or even 10 years before her name comes up for an apartment.

In looking at the current proposed budget from the Alexandria CSB, they have not requested additional funds to expand their residential program for high functioning individuals with MR.

Maintaining the status quo is unacceptable when you have people on a waiting list.

So I am here today to ask you to consider expanding the residential care services and housing options for individuals with disabilities, and to ask that you look at them as individuals – NOT as an expense and please don't try to lump them together in a group home. Group homes are fine for some individuals, but they are not the answer for everyone. Victoria's abilities would quickly deteriorate if she were placed in a group home. She would thrive in a supported living environment such as the one offered at Bellefonte Apartments. So please do what is in your power to help her, and other individuals with developmental disabilities, become a true part of our community in the City of Alexandria.

I thank you for your time and for the work you do for our community.
