

**Issued by Helen Bosch, Executive Director
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Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center is a training program for adults with disabilities located on the shoreline of Connecticut. We currently provide training and supports to about 170 individuals ranging in age from 18 to 50, who have neurological disabilities. These may be learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, seizure disorders or autism spectrum disorders. The young adults who receive training at Vista do so because we know that they have the potential to live with relative independence and work successfully. They receive comprehensive training for about 3 years, similar to going away to college, and then enter the shoreline community to be workers, voters, consumers, and neighbors. They are independent and successful. They work as sales associates, food preparation assistants, child care assistants, office workers, data entry clerks, hotel registration clerks, travel associates, and on and on...currently approximately 90% of those ready for employment are employed.

130 adults live in over 75 households in the community. About 50% own their own homes. The other 50% rent. They participate in the local churches, synagogues, fire and ambulance associations, volunteer at elder and child care, help out with local community events such as the annual town clean up or the holiday tree lighting ceremony. They go to the movies, eat out, shop, take the bus all over the shoreline, and lead successful lives.

They are successful because they receive training and support. They receive life skills instruction such as money management or household management. They receive help in getting and keeping a job. They receive counseling in how to solve conflicts and deal with those thorny social issues that arise.

These are the lucky ones. They have families or other funding to pay for this training and support. What about those who do not have the resources or do not have enough funding to give them what they need? This is the goal of House Bill # 7280 to give these young men and women a chance in life. It is time for the State of Connecticut to acknowledge their partnership with families and service providers in supporting this population of adults, to provide a chance to achieve everyday dreams. No more, no less...work, independence, friends...that is what it is all about.

I hope you support House Bill #7280. It will mean the world to those young adults who are ready to make their mark on the world, to achieve success.