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I am writing on behalf of my son and other similarly-aged individuals with and autistic spectrum disorder, who are transitioning into adulthood and a more independent lifestyle. My son is now a 22 yr old who is still living at home and on several levels, not likely to be in a position to live outside our home for awhile. When... is totally unpredictable.

My son has entered his fourth consecutive year in a local community college and hopes to graduate with an associate degree in Spring 2015. In his first year, a transition year after high school, he was part of a pilot program for higher functioning individuals on the Autistic Spectrum and only took two non-credit developmental classes. His high school helped provide this opportunity. Then he graduated.

During this time, Dan was able to secure part-time/seasonal employment with the help of ASRC and Roses for Autism at a local apple orchard. Finally, through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, (and after over three years of no regular part-time employment despite their efforts), he was able to secure a regular part-time job at a local supermarket.

Getting situated for relative success in both the community college and the employment required extensive planning, efforts, time, collaboration, and resources. This scenario is not an uncommon scenario for folks like my son– and it unfortunately continues. Capable in many ways, promising prospects in many areas, but stuck and at the mercy of many overburdened and ill-equipped agencies in several other ways. And yet, despite Dan's passion and drive to please, his pleasure in interacting with others, general well-mannered and motivated approach to getting along as a team player - even still, his diagnosis impedes him. Will he be able to get employment once graduated? Can he have the support he requires to maintain it? Will he be able to live on his own – based on his capacity? We know these situations will require the same combined efforts and resources as the other prior situations. Existing resources are still rather scarce - and often, financially limiting. He/we/families depend on trained personnel and professional services provided by our communities.

This population and the needs of individuals attempting to have a less rocky transition into adulthood – and once there, maintain a reasonably independent life, has been discussed here before. It continues to be a slow process – but the needs remain. Many families suffer in silence, although the hopes and promises remain. Every opportunity should be made to truly move forward, to look hard at the systems currently in place. And take the action that needs to keep being taken- so that these people can more accurately be seen for who they are, what they can do, and what they really need. They are capable, they are often smart, they can live independent lives. But they really can only do it with meaningful, appropriate, and collaborative community support. It needs to be better. Those who have the power to take decisive and prompt action - to make changes happen - need to do what needs to be done to make it better.

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