

Dear friends of Liberty ARC,

As a board member of Liberty ARC, people will sometimes ask what my connection is to Liberty ARC. For me, the answer is easy: it's my older brother George.

George was born with a significant mental disability. He was my mother's oldest child, born in the 1950s. As George grew he had no fear. Living on the third floor of a house on the east side of Amsterdam, my mother was very worried he would fall out of a window because he didn't understand to keep away from them. After a few close calls, at the encouragement of his doctors, George went to live in a developmental center. He was six years old.

The place was west of Amsterdam by a couple of hours, and my mother, my other siblings and I would drive out to see George as much as we could. It was terrible. I can remember, they wouldn't even let us go in his room. One time we walked down the hall and there was a door and they had a window in it. You looked and it was a room with a sea of beds. I knew he was tied to one of those beds because he was a 'runner' and would try to get away.

It was very hard on my mother. She was raising three other children and working. Back then there wasn't much of a life that could be expected for someone with a significant disability.

During our visits we would take George out for car rides, or to McDonald's. While he was non-verbal, we knew he enjoyed those activities – he especially loved riding in the car. We wanted a better life for him than the development center offered, but at the time, we didn't have options. George lived there until he was 22. We eventually found him a nicer institution to move into, that was closer, in Saratoga County. We were able to visit more often and take him to parks.



In 1994 George moved into a Liberty ARC home in our community, and everything changed for the better.



Kim and George

Suddenly he had a group of people working with him who cared for him. Scott, Dawn, and Heather, they were his favorite people. They would call me up and talk about all the things they wanted to try to make him comfortable. **They wanted to know him and what his likes and dislikes were.**

The people that work there treated him like their own, like he was a family member. It mattered to them that he was happy. What does he want? He likes rides in the car – Ok, We're going for rides. Compared to where he was, it was a night and day difference.

For the first time, I really felt like George was back home.



There's such a difference with the way people with disabilities are treated now, and even more so at Liberty ARC. In the last 30 years George has lived in three Liberty ARC homes in the Amsterdam area, spending most of his years at Lindbergh Ave., and at all of the homes the people who worked with him were loving, attentive, and compassionate. I remember one time bumping into George and his housemates unexpectedly at the Rotterdam mall – they were out on a Christmas shopping trip, and it was so good to see him in a public place enjoying himself. What a far cry from those other days when we couldn't even see where he slept.

I knew he was happy and thriving. My mother never got to see that – she passed away two years before George moved into a Liberty ARC home. She would have been amazed at the care and freedom he had with Liberty ARC. She would have been so grateful to see the life he was able to lead at Liberty ARC.

I have fond memories with my big brother. I can remember being four years old when George was living with us. My mother had put my hair up, like a palm tree on top of my head, and it must have caught George's eye. We had a big yard and were outside. And my mom whispered, "Start running. Just start running." I started running, my brother started chasing me to catch my head and we both laughed so much. It was a silly thing. But that was one of the memories I have of him. We were family - we still are.

George went through some difficult times, and we did too as a family. **But when he came to Liberty ARC, he truly came home.** Here he was surrounded again by people who loved and looked out for him. George could be a handful, but the staff were like brothers and sisters to him.

Please join me in supporting Liberty Foundation's 2021 Annual Appeal over the course of the next two months. Through your generous donations, Liberty ARC can provide the best possible life for people with disabilities like my brother George.



George on a trip with Liberty ARC to Niagara Falls

All donations to the Liberty Foundation go to fund programs, experiences, and items for Liberty ARC that are not covered by state or federal funds. There's a reason why Liberty ARC is one of the best providers in New York, and that's thanks to the dedication of staff and the support of donors like you. Thanks to donors like you, George was able to take trips, live in a well-kept home, and spend many happy years close to family, friends and staff who care about him.

With your donation to the Liberty Foundation, individuals with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities have the opportunity to live fulfilling lives for many years to come.

With gratitude,

Kim Brumley

Your donation to Liberty Foundation helps people like my brother George live their best life – **you make that happen!**