

Written Testimony for the Sunset Advisory Commission Hearing

June 25, 2014

Submitted by Helmut Lowe

Father of Blake Myers

Resident of Richmond State Supported Living Center



Blake, hugging his mother,
Carrie Lowe during a
visit to Richmond



Blake spending time with his
father, Helmut Lowe during
a visit to Richmond

My name is Helmut Lowe, I am the father of Blake Myers, four year resident of Richmond State Supported Living Center (RSSLC). I am here to testify on his behalf because he is unable to do so.

My son is nonverbal and is unable to communicate his needs or feelings. I can assure you, if he were able, he would be fighting to keep the RSSLC open.

Blake is healthier now than he has been in years. This is solely because of the efforts of the RSSLC. When Blake was an adolescent, treating him became great challenge. Blake would become extremely aggressive when he was in pain. Being unable to express that pain made diagnosing him much more difficult. Finding out what was hurting or what was wrong was a constant guessing game. Drawing blood work was incredibly challenging. Without these results it was impossible to diagnose what was wrong. Working with a patient childlike in mind but the size of a grown man was taxing on even the best of doctors and hospitals.

When our family made the decision to enroll Blake as a resident at Richmond, his health was extremely poor. We exhausted all avenues that were available to us. We had approached every doctor that we could in the private sector. Still, will all of our efforts, Blake received no relief.

Once Blake became a resident at Richmond, he suddenly had easy access to qualified doctors specializing in treating people with special needs. Blake had a behavioral analyst watch him over several months. After charting his behavior patterns, the doctor determined that Blake's aggressive behavior was associated with pain. Through other tests Blake was diagnosed with GERD, Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease. With proper medication and diet change, we began to see a huge improvement in his demeanor. Because of this diagnosis, we were able to disprove the theories of doctors in the private sector. Blake was not crazy or depressed, he was in pain and had no way to tell us.

Another huge problem for Blake was determining the proper seizure medications. While at home, Blake's neurologist frequently switched seizure medications attempting to find the right one. This was very hard on Blake. Since his stay at Richmond, seizure medication has been administered and monitored much more closely. If the doctors feel something needs to be changed, the change takes place over 6 weeks rather than 7 days. The longer transition period allows Blake to acclimate to the new medication without dealing with harsh side effects. At this time, Blake's seizures are under control and have been for several years.

While at home, Blake's sleep patterns were extremely erratic. It required the three adults in our family to take shifts staying up with him because he could not be left unattended. At Richmond, Blake sleeps at night for 6-8 hours. A major contributing factor for his change in sleeping habits is the routine that he has at Richmond. Because of Blake's Autism, routine is incredibly important. He is now on a set schedule, meals are at the same time and has activities throughout the day. Keeping Blake focused and busy is very important, as is the social interaction with his peers. Because of the routine Blake has developed at Richmond, his quality of life has greatly improved.

After hearing Blake's story, how could anyone determine this living center should be closed? Furthermore, why is a committee that voters of the State of Texas did not elect, making decisions for my son? This is not the way the government of this great state works. I do not want a committee making these decisions, this is what we have elected officials for.

Closing the Richmond State Supported Living Center would be detrimental to my son's mental and physical wellbeing. Richmond is his home now, and the residents and staff have become part of his family.

The State of Texas will not save money by closing these centers. It will increase medical costs due to improper care and would put residents at great risk. The residents of the State Supported Living Centers are in the best place that they can be and are receiving the best care they could possibly receive.

If Blake could live in a home safely and maintain good health, he would be living at home with my family.

I am speaking for my son who cannot speak for himself when I say the following:

Please, Do Not Close My Home.