

Summer 2005

Beckwith Residence Hall

With the arrival of this Fifth Edition of the Beckwith Newsletter, I am happy to announce that UIUC alum and former DRES graduate assistant, Patricia Malik, will return to serve as Director of Beckwith Hall beginning in July 2005. Pat earned a doctorate in therapeutic recreation from the University of Illinois in 1984. She enjoyed a successful career as a faculty member at Illinois State University, until serving as president of a family owned and operated business which provided state of the art residential services for persons with disabilities in northwest and central Illinois. Pat brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the post, and we are certain that under her direction, Beckwith Hall residential, educational and research programs and services will soar to new heights. Welcome Pat!

Brad Hedrick, Director
Disability Resources and
Educational Services

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*For an alternative format of this newsletter please go to:
www.disability.uiuc.edu*

Welcome

...to the Fifth Edition of the *Beckwith Newsletter*. It is exciting to highlight the experiences and accomplishments of our students academically, personally, and professionally. This year's edition features articles written by several current students in all phases of their academic tenure, as well as a reflection from a Paralympian.

The ultimate goal of Beckwith Hall programming is to make it possible for graduates to go anywhere their lives and career aspirations take them, confident that they can manage their own needs. The experiences that the students refer to in their articles are the building blocks to the attainment of that goal. The opportunities afforded the students living at Beckwith Hall facilitate ongoing growth and development in terms of maximizing their independence as well. Finally, it is so beneficial for the students to be able to interact freely with one another, and not allow the barriers that so many individuals cope with daily to thwart their otherwise enthusiastic personalities and zest for life.

From our perspective, it has been very fulfilling getting to know all of the students and staff this year, as they are a very dynamic group of individuals. It has further been rewarding to assist with their growth, maturity, and independence through participation in the Transitional Disability Management Program. We hope you enjoy reading about their accomplishments as much as we enjoyed revisiting them.

Sincerely,

Katherine Johnson
Interim Director

Paige Lewis
Interim Associate Director

A Message from the President



By Stephen Hopkins

Having been a resident of Beckwith Hall for four years, I can look back and be very thankful for the opportunities I have been given. Before visiting this dormitory, I never thought that I would have a normal higher education experience living away from my home and parents. However, I have found in Beckwith Hall a friendly little community for people with and without disabilities. It offers safety, independence, convenience, and most importantly, friendships. It seems now that the dorm is much more than a stepping stone into independent living for people with disabilities.

The Beckwith Student Government is a registered student organization on campus and its membership is made up entirely from residents of our dormitory. Our goal is to raise social awareness of people with disabilities on campus. Although this mission is not official or verbalized often, it is indirectly achieved through our ability to foster a strong living community here in Beckwith Hall. Through friendship, courtesy and fun, we form a tight-knit group which is a necessary foundation for each resident of the dorm. No individual is excluded from social activities and everyone helps each other. There is a lack of formality and everyone is treated as an equal, with or without a disability. By forming a strong community where friendship and assistance are always available, hopefully all members of the Beckwith Student Government will leave the university with their individual goals achieved and a bright future.

As president of the Beckwith Student Government, I welcome all to visit and join our little community. Hopefully it can offer many more the same benefits it has afforded my peers and me over the last four years.

Reflections of a Paralympian

By Sam Williams

When New Year's Eve of 2003 came, I had finished a long, hard journey through my first semester at the University of Illinois. I had faced transition, technological and equipment failures, death of family and friends, fear, temptation, and depression. I also learned how to get back on my feet after being knocked down.

When I came back for second semester it was quite cold outside and there were six inches of snow on the ground. If I had been told that I was going to march into Oaka Stadium in 100 degree weather in nine months, I would never have believed such a tale. However, on Thursday, January 25th, I received an invitation to the U.S. Paralympic Boccia Trials in Topeka, Kansas. I practically flipped out of my chair when I read the email. The trials were in the middle of March, so I had to get hot fast.

The trials were stressful, yet exciting. I was glad when they were over, but I could hardly wait for them to announce the team. When I heard my name called I went ballistic. I could not believe I was going to

Greece! And I knew I had a great teammate in Austin Hanson. I was exhausted on the way home, but could not stop smiling. I knew I was about to take part in something very special. However, I did not know the road to Athens would be quite as long and hard

as it was.

The nine-hour plane ride began at 9:00 p.m. In the morning, the sun was out and I could look down on the Aegean Sea. It was as blue as the stripes on the Greek flag. We had arrived at the center of the world for three weeks. As my mom was walking me through the jetway, a Greek woman took my arm and helped me walk to my wheelchair. This was the first act of the kindness that was displayed to us in Athens by the Greeks. It would certainly not be the last.

The village itself was a site that will always be with me. On the perimeter, Greek soldiers with automatic rifles sat at positions every 400 meters. Inside, people from 140 nations walked in peace on terra-cotta sidewalks and stucco buildings. I saw blind men

leading other blind men. There was an ancient water aqueduct that ran down the center of the village. At the very center was a fountain that had the five Olympic rings in the water. At night the rings would light up and illuminate the water with five colors. As we arrived in the dining hall, the enormity of the event that I was taking part in hit me with a bang. I was almost brought to tears as I saw people from all over the world eating together. It would be in this area of the village where I would make friends from Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, China, Japan, Thailand, Mauritania, Mauritius, Austria, and all over Africa. Every skin color, language, and prejudice melted away. One day as I was eating dinner I decided to exchange pins with the Iraqis. I got a pin out and headed over to their table. I was not exactly sure how I would be received. I presented my pin with a smile. I could not have predicted their response. The entire Iraqi team wanted to exchange gifts. The war did not matter to us. We were friends having a chat. I hope they're safe.

The next five days were filled with practice at Ano Liossia Olympic Hall and the Dhekelia Complex. Before I could start practice, Jim had to take me to be classified. While I was in line, a man from Iran came up to me and pointed to my dynavox. I showed him how it worked. He was quite fascinated with my machine and gave me a pin. This was my first experience communicating with a person who did not speak English.

Two days before the opening ceremony, the power-lifting team joined us when we went into the city of Athens. I had never ridden on a subway system before. I probably looked like a total idiot, staring out the window with my mouth wide open. It took a good hour to get to our final stop, which included changing trains. Our first destination was the Acropolis. We got off the metro in the middle of the Plaka, which is the Greek equivalent of Times Square. As we exited the station, we looked off to the right and saw the Acropolis on a lofty plateau. In front of us was a ruin from ancient times. I had seen images of the Greek ruins in books and on television countless times, but to see them in person made me feel like some explorer discovering these magnificent structures for the first time. We began our hike up the mountain. To this day, I have no idea why our Greek security guards chose to take us up the route they did, but I will be forever grateful that they chose that steep, rough and winding road. As we ascended the path, we looked off to the left and saw the ruins of a Roman theater. When I say path, I mean a stone street where cars and motorcycles would come zooming by honking their horns. Houses and shops were stacked on top of each other on either side of the street. Further up the path we came to a clearing where we saw an intact



Top L-R: Gary Baraclaughs and Sammy Williams.

Bottom L-R: Austin Hanson, James Thompson (Head Coach), and Sam Williams.

temple below. Next, we came upon an outcropping of marble rock just southwest of the main stairway to the Acropolis. Our security guard read us the plaque on the rock. This was the Areopagus, or Mars Hill. Trials were held on this hill, and the Apostle Paul gave a speech at this site. Bruce and I decided we would climb it after we saw the Acropolis.

The final ascent to the Acropolis was an adventure in and of itself. Since we could not use the ancient stairway, we had to take a steel cage elevator up the 200-foot cliff face. If that puppy fell, it was lights out. As I got off the elevator, I saw the Erechtheion in front of me. The Parthenon was off to my right. The Temple of Nike was in front of the Parthenon near the stairway. I could not believe I was standing at this fabled site! I wanted to see everything. As we walked between these magnificent buildings, I was blown away. Statues of gods and goddesses were everywhere. Athletes and warriors were carved into the Parthenon. The Pillars of the Caryatids held up the south side of the Erechtheion. Just as we were going to the Acropolis Museum, I looked over the east side and saw Panathinaiko Stadium, where the 1896 Athens Games were held. I looked to the northwest and saw an old Greek Orthodox church with its monastery on another high mountain. In the museum, there were several statues taken from the Acropolis. I accidentally nudged one of them with my chair and a worker steadied it. I guess I left my mark. After we toured the museum, my mom, Bruce and I went down to go climb Mars Hill. I was not expecting to make a pilgrimage in Athens, but my brief moments on Mars Hill will be etched into my heart for as long as I live.

It was now time for the opening ceremony. Finally, it was time to march in. Kevin Szott, a gold medalist in judo from Sydney raised the flag and marched into Oaka Stadium with the whole contingent shouting, "USA, USA, USA!" When I crossed the threshold and heard, "The United States of America," chills went down my spine. I could not believe I was marching with the best of the best.

Athens was the first time that the organizing committee for the Olympics oversaw the Paralympics as well. This was huge! The time came for the lighting of the Paralympic torch. The flame entered Oaka Stadium and made a lap around the track, carried by four Greek Paralympians. The last Paralympian was at the opposite end of the stadium to where the torch was situated. He showed the flame to the capacity crowd of 70,000 people and put the flame to a wire. The flame went around the top of the stadium setting off massive fireworks on top of and outside of the stadium. When the fireworks reached the torch, the same flame rose to declare the games open. It was showtime and the hunt was on.

My first match was the next morning against Armando Costa of Portugal. It was finally time to make history. I remember being so pumped up on the way to the venue. I had the Rolling Stones blaring in my ears, with my game face on. I was ready to get in the ring and go 16 rounds. I did have a few good shots in that first game. However, Armando took me apart eleven to one. The guy was unbelievable. I was not too disappointed after that match, since I had three more the next day. Jim and Bruce told me after the match that I was a rookie and not to worry about it. I didn't do as well in the other matches as I would have liked, but my opponents were very worthy of each win.

As I walked out on the court for my last match against Yolanda Martin, I knew that she was ranked in the top ten in the world and I would probably lose, but I had my pride and my sword of hope to brandish. I kissed the jack in the first end and scored a point. I scored two more points in the second end. Yolanda scored three points in the third end to tie the match. On my first ball of the final end, I scored a point. Yolanda did not score on any of her shots. Before

throwing my remaining shots, I remembered to confirm the score with the referee. The score was four to three in my favor. I threw off the rest of my balls to not affect the score. The scoreboard flashed my name and the American flag with the word "winner" in capital letters. I had won my first Paralympic match! I held up my fist to the section of American fans. My pride was restored.

I had worked hard for four years to get to Athens. Those years were full of frustration and bitter disappointment. I sacrificed my time, body, and energy to boccia. I took a few beatings, but I represented my God, family, friends and country, and never lost my hope or honor. No one can take from me what I accomplished in Athens.

I may have had my lunch handed to me in Athens, but I was smart enough to examine why my opponents were so great. This motivated me to get started on a new ramp design. The wheels in my head began to turn. I knew what I had to do to get to Beijing. It was 1,361 days to the Beijing games. I was ready to rock for the next cycle.

Our Paralympic odyssey had come to an end. The past sixteen months have been an incredible journey. Since I had cerebral palsy, I was able to represent my country on the field of play. I was able to share a unique experience with my mom. I have seen humanity come together in peace. I set foot on foreign soil and made a pilgrimage. I learned to sharpen my skills for my sport. As I knock at the door of my future, I look back and see the range of mountains that I have climbed. Through the door I can see higher mountains that stretch to the sky.



Benefits of the Transitional Disability Management Program

Beckwith Hall was initially designed to be a transitional residence hall for students with severe physical disabilities. It was assumed that students would naturally learn skills necessary to be more independent and responsible. However, it became apparent that acquiring the aptitude for independence doesn't spontaneously result from mere residence in Beckwith Hall. There is a clear need to provide educational resources for students to gain the expertise necessary to succeed in every facet of their life.

The Transitional Disability Management Program was developed three years ago to assist students in gaining the competence necessary to enable them to succeed in living in whatever

environment they choose. The program is designed to focus not only on improving one's physical independence, but all realms encompassing the social, emotional, spiritual, and academic aspects of their lives as well.

The next five articles highlight how students in all phases of their academic career utilize and benefit from the Transitional Disability Management Program. These articles summarize how students need to take responsibility for acquiring the knowledge to find the resources they need and to make good life choices. Good disability management skills will provide students with the confidence to successfully make the transition to the life they envision beyond college.

Adjustment of an International Student

By Ji Hae Lee

Due to complications of my disability when I was younger, I was home-schooled. For a long time I knew that attending the University of Illinois could be a good option for me since it is much more accessible than any university close to where I live in South Korea. Until now, I had never been apart from my parents before.

After I received an acceptance letter, my parents and I began to worry whether I could succeed here or not, considering my disability. We were concerned about whether I could get as much assistance as I did from my parents and if there would be help if something unpredictable happened.

I arrived at Beckwith Hall alone, since it wasn't feasible for my parents to come with me. I faced a lot of things that I had

to make decisions about and handle by myself, from orientation and registration for classes to what brand of shampoo I wanted to buy. I was so excited with all the new school experiences and the independence that I now had and so overwhelmed with the new environment that I didn't have time to be homesick. When I struggled, I knew that others would help me. After the first crazy month, as things settled down I became homesick only once.



"As I look back on my experience this year...I can honestly say that attending the University of Illinois was a great decision for me."

When I went home for winter break, my friends and family kept asking me if I liked it, and if it was what I had expected. I replied that it was much better than I had expected! I had services to accommodate my needs (transportation, notetaking, etc.), so that I could concentrate more on my academic goals rather than hassling with disability-related problems. Unfortunately, the services couldn't accommodate for my poor sense of direction, so I got lost several times a day for months.

Most importantly, there were people who were willing to help me. Socializing was stressful to me since I wasn't experienced at interacting with strangers, especially peers. However, the directors, resident advisors and my fellow residents were friendly and made me feel comfortable enough that I could ask about many different topics. They also helped me to learn about college life and American culture, from Halloween to "Unofficial St. Patrick's Day." When I found myself "freaking out," I asked numerous questions about how to deal with certain issues.

As I look back on my experience this year knowing what my parents and I feared, I can honestly say that yes, attending the University of Illinois was a great decision for me. I will be able to succeed here, despite

potential complications of my disability, and all of my needs will be met. I can attribute this success to the overwhelming accessibility of this campus and Beckwith Hall, participation in the Transitional Disability Management Program,

and all of the other resources available to me. Most importantly, it is through the friendships that I have developed during my short time here on campus.

The Road to Independence

By Adam Reid

For the past six years my family and friends helped me with every aspect of my life (transportation, activities of daily living, writing, transferring...). Last year when I was a freshman, I saw how other students were learning to manage their disabilities and maximize their independence. I put some thought into this over the summer and I decided that I wanted to see what I was truly capable of doing for myself. I understand that I will always need someone to help me do some things, but I also know that I'm capable of doing more than what I have in the past.

When I arrived back this fall and developed my goals for the Transitional Disability Management Program, I decided that becoming more independent was what I wanted to primarily focus on. I learned what type of adaptive equipment I needed, as well as how to use it successfully. I became adept at unlocking my door and participating more in my activities of daily living. Before Thanksgiving I was feeding myself and working with teaching my other personal assistants (PAs) how to do range of motion on me. You should have seen the look on my family's faces when

I brought out my splints and started feeding myself at Thanksgiving dinner. By the end of the semester, I had even taken off my sweatshirt alone once.

This semester, I want to get better at cutting my own food, get physically stronger, and try pushing a racing wheelchair. Before my accident I used to be on the track team, and the thought that I may be able to compete again really thrills me. Part of what motivates me to complete these goals is that they are included in my Transitional Disability Management Program. It is my ambition to work on these goals, and the people and resources that are available to me have allowed me to achieve them. This is only a beginning. I look forward to challenging myself further. By the time I graduate, I hope to be driving my van and using a PA much less than I do now.



Highlights of an Odelius Scholar

By Carmen Sutherland

The Matthew Allen Odelius Award was established to honor the memory of a former Beckwith student. Matthew is remembered for his independence, and above all, his positive attitude. The annual award is given to a UIUC student with a disability currently living at Beckwith Hall. He or she must be in good academic standing and demonstrate leadership in advancing the involvement of students with disabilities in all aspects of academic and co-curricular life.

In November, 2004, as a junior in special education, I was blessed to receive the Matthew Allen Odelius Award. I was given this honor because of my success in academics, as well as my efforts to be a leader in the disabled community at the University of Illinois. I have been involved in a wide variety of activities around campus. One of my extracurricular ventures is holding the position of secretary, Delta Sigma Omicron, the service organization for students with disabilities. Also, I'm a facilitator for Boxes and Walls, an interactive museum which allows people to experience what it's like to be part of different minority groups. I volunteered in the "people with disabilities" room. I am also involved in an organization called VIP Best Buddies, where people from UI are paired up with people in the community who have mental

disabilities, and the pair participates in activities together, as well as forms a deep friendship. Outside of school last semester, I served as a tutor at Urbana Middle School, helping students with math in one of the special education classes. Through these opportunities, I have been able to encourage others and show them that it is possible to achieve one's dreams.

I was thrilled to receive this award, not only because it contributed to my education in a monetary sense, but it also exemplified that people recognize, and most importantly, support, the difference I am trying to make for people with disabilities. I am excited to learn more about disabilities and expand my effort to make a difference in the future. I am also grateful to be able to honor the Odelius family and others through my efforts.



Life After the University of Illinois

By Michael Gorman

After four years living at Beckwith Hall, I think I finally understand how it has helped prepare me for an independent life outside of college. Coming to the University of Illinois as a freshman, I was very scared

to leave such a comfortable situation at home. I had never been very good at asking other people for help, and I was not looking forward to hiring my own personal assistants (PAs). However, Beckwith Hall has provided a great framework and network for finding and training PAs in order to make my life more independent, and allowed me to receive a quality education at the same time.

As a finance major in the College of Business, I realized by my junior year that I had to start thinking about my future, a very scary topic. I wanted to gain more real-life experience by completing a summer internship. This would also help prepare me for a full-time position the following year. I was able to utilize contacts at DRES in order to interview for and receive an offer from Motorola.



However, I also applied on my own to another firm, Arthur J. Gallagher, and accepted an internship there. It ended up being a fabulous summer and a great experience.

When it came time to look for a full-time position this fall, I knew that I already had my foot in the door at Gallagher. I didn't want to limit my opportunities. I interviewed with several different firms with the help of Business Career Services in the College of Business. I accepted a full-time position at Gallagher, although I valued the experience of interviewing and networking with many great people throughout the process.

Now I am preparing for life on my own. My Transitional Disability Management Program goals consist of finding an accessible apartment and reliable PAs, looking into public transportation, and many other issues. It will not be easy, but I feel like living at Beckwith Hall has provided me with the tools to effectively transition from college to almost complete independence. The most important thing in making that transition, I believe, is to be assertive in your job and internship search. Don't just rely on resources for people with disabilities. Supplement those resources with regular advisors and career fairs and services. I have a lot of planning yet to do, but I am confident that I will be successful and independent, due in part because of my experiences while living at Beckwith Hall.

Easing Transition into Post-Secondary Education

By Mary Jo Cribfield



I am currently earning my masters degree in rehabilitation counseling. In December, 2004, I completed a masters degree in higher education administration. Throughout my entire academic career I have lived at Beckwith Hall. For the past two years as a graduate student, I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve as part of the administrative team for a new pilot program at the Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services. The program, Illinois Students Taking Effective Preparation (ISTEP), was designed as a transition program at the University of Illinois for incoming

students with disabilities.

ISTEP is a wonderful opportunity for any incoming student with a disability to utilize, but especially for those who are intending to live at Beckwith. It is designed to help students with their transition from high school to college, and to maximize the potential for each student to be successful at this university. It also allows students to begin addressing other parameters of their education which are also imperative to their successful transition.

When I think back to my freshman year, I can remember being very "dazed and confused" most of the time, in addition to experiencing a mix of intense emotions. I often found myself wondering if I had made the right choice to attend this school. The University of Illinois can be a frightening place for many new students who are facing obstacles never imagined. A primary concern is the hiring, training and management of personal assistants. I obviously made the right choice to attend UIUC, because after five years I am still here and have had a successful experience. However, I can't help thinking that if

a program like ISTEP would have been available when I was a freshman, how that would have eased all of those intense emotions that I experienced. Furthermore, it would have offered me an additional outlet of support. It also would have alleviated some of the questions/concerns that I had in regard to being a student with a disability on campus.

The curriculum covered during ISTEP includes an introduction to the services offered by DRES, an overview of academic accommodations and study skills, and most importantly, an emphasis on teaching students how to be effective self-advocates. In addition, students have the opportunity to meet

one-on-one with a resource facilitator to discuss any concerns about accommodations and the transition from high school. Any student who will be living at Beckwith also has the opportunity to meet with the director to discuss living arrangements and anything else that will make that first semester easier for all.

I encourage any student with a disability who will be attending UIUC to learn more about ISTEP, and take advantage of every opportunity offered to make the best out of these college years!

Wheel Awareness 2005: Perspective of a Participant

By Chandra Moore

Last semester, I participated in Wheel Awareness. This is an opportunity for able-bodied individuals to use a wheelchair for the day and to get a glimpse of what it is like to have a disability. It is also a fundraiser on behalf of the Muscular Dystrophy Association, United Cerebral Palsy, and the Spinal Cord Injury Association.

I was very excited when I was propositioned to participate. I just knew it would be fun and easy. Was I in for a surprise! Don't get me wrong, however. I enjoyed being able to support the cause, but there were some unforeseen circumstances I underwent. First of all and most importantly, the sidewalks in Champaign-Urbana are horrible. They are not conducive to a safe and smooth ride. Quite a few times I almost fell out of the wheelchair. If I hadn't cheated by putting my feet down, I would have fallen out. One sidewalk was so hilly and cracked I didn't know what to do. Many people saw me struggling.

That brings me to my next point. Some people asked me if they could help, but others just came right up behind me and sort of shoved me. There I was wheeling up a hill and someone came up behind me and pushed me without any warning. You can imagine how terrified I was. I commend the effort of their wanting to help, but there are certain ways to go about it. For example, "Hi, my name is (). I noticed you were having a hard time getting up this hill. Would you like for me to help you?" One person did come up to me and asked if he could assist. He said he knew how hard it was to use a manual wheelchair because he had previously broken both of his legs.

After having to endure the terrible streets of the

"I found the experience to be very beneficial. I now have a little insight on what people with disabilities deal with on a day-to-day basis."

city and rude people, I just knew there wouldn't be any more problems. To my surprise, I realized that the so-called accessible buildings on campus are not always accessible. One building in particular had an entrance ramp that led to a basement elevator. On

the way to the elevator, there is a steep hill. Going down was pretty wild. But going up was scary. I tried to wheel up and hold onto one rail to help me, but I found myself falling backward. Usually I could pull myself up holding both railings, but in this building the railings were

too wide apart so I could only grab one side. This was very awkward! To top things off, it started raining when I was on my way back to Beckwith.

Overall, I found the experience to be very beneficial. I now have a little insight on what people with mobility disabilities deal with on a day-to-day basis:

Sore arms
Stares....



Mission

Beckwith Hall opened in 1981 to accommodate the residential needs of students with disabilities who require the help of personal assistants to perform basic activities of daily living. While aiding students in the management of their activities of daily living (transferring in and out of wheelchairs, dressing, grooming, bathing, etc.), Beckwith also offers individualized training designed to help students learn to independently manage their disability-related needs and, whenever possible, transition to mainstream community housing. The ultimate goal of Beckwith Hall programming is to make it possible for graduates to go anywhere their lives and career aspirations take them, confident that they can manage their own needs.

Beckwith is much like any other university residence hall in that it has a cafeteria, student government, laundry room and a campus location along the Division's bus route. In addition, Beckwith offers the unique convenience of private sleep-study rooms with adjacent semi-private bathrooms. A computer lab with four workstations, voice activation systems, and a wide range of peripheral assistive input devices are also available.

For additional information about Beckwith Residence Hall, you may visit our website at www.disability.uiuc.edu/services/beckwith, contact the DRES Student Services Office by phone at (217) 333-4603 (v/TTY), or send email to disability@uiuc.edu.



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