

ANDREA MELLO



My daughter, Andrea Mello, is a 40-year old Deaf/Blind young adult with Usher's Syndrome. She started pre-school at 18 months and Perkins School for the Blind when she was 4-1/2 years old. She was a day student at first and gradually transitioned to a residential student during her teens. When she finished Perkins at age 22 and became part of the adult community, Andrea went into a home and became a part of the Waltham Committee, dba WCI – Work, Community, Independence.

The funding agency was and is Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and our family was so pleased that MCB was involved with our daughter. Our case worker, Lil Ciulla, has been with us all the way throughout Andrea's years at WCI. With MCB's support Andrea has been able to learn many new skills at WCI and her staff have been exceptional; they are caring, involved, and want the best for her. She would benefit with more of a one-to-one staff ratio for part of the day, but with money so tight, that plan is on the back burner. Andrea has a great sense of humor, good memory of people she meets and places she visits; loves animals especially kittens and puppies. She loves to go on vacation, bowling with friends and family, playing games and teasing and is real gutsy when it comes to trying things like parasailing with staff, roller coasters and snow tubing, etc.

Andrea's latest challenge is kidney failure. She is on the list for a transplant, but we have no idea how long that will be. We depend on the funding from MCB to help Andrea continue to grow and learn and we are VERY concerned that MCB may be swallowed up in another agency. It is difficult to stretch the dollars now and we would not want to see a decrease in the amount designated for Andrea.

Please keep MCB as is and not combine it with another agency. As a family, we support the excellent work MCB does and would request that you keep it as an independent agency.

Judy Mello