

# Comments by Bonnie Valade, Templeton parent

STATE HOUSE STROLL - PRESS CONFERENCE - APRIL 7, 2009

Governor Patrick and Commissioner Elin Howe have said they have a commitment to serve and protect people with developmental disabilities, but turn a deaf ear when it comes to family members telling them the terrible effect this decision will be, and how it will impact the lives of their loved ones. After all, who knows better the high risk this move and change of care will be to these very fragile people than the families and the clinical caretakers.

I am here today to tell the legislators and the public my concerns for my son. His story is only one of the hundreds of stories, they are all different but all connect with the same complexities.

I am here today to tell you about Tony, his community, and his home: Templeton Developmental Center where he has lived for the past 21 years. Tony is 44 years old and has other issues which complicate his disability. Before Templeton, Tony's life was a disaster. He lived in various group homes, nothing worked for him. He received many beatings; he was robbed and even was sentenced to jail. In jail he continued to receive beatings. I truly believe Tony would not be alive today if he had not been placed in Templeton.

Tony is a different person than he was before he came to Templeton, his life has changed and I thank God everyday and pray it will never be what it was for him before he came to live there.

Templeton Developmental Center is a COMMUNITY in itself. Its setting is very much like a farm, away from neighborhoods, away from danger. There is ample space for everyone who lives there, having the freedom to roam around. They have a place to play baseball. There is a building called the canteen where they like to go to socialize and have a coffee and some snacks. Another building they get excited about has a large screen television; they feel they are going to the movies. Tony has a garden and loves to work on grounds. He also works at the Valley Barn, this is also on site. His job is to feed and clean up after the cows. He is very proud of his responsibility and loves to give tours to show people what part he has in the function of the barn, which is to produce and sell milk to other facilities. Tony has never attempted to run away from Templeton. This says a lot about the living conditions.

We have the resources for these people; why would we jeopardize their lives by moving them into communities and neighborhoods where most people aren't going to want them?



I cannot say enough about Tony's life at Templeton. He needs the on-site clinical care he receives on a daily basis. The key word here is "on-site". I am told he will not have this care when this change takes place. Tony will fall apart without it. He needs the freedom but with the structure that can only be offered in the facility he is in. Tony along with many others cannot and will not survive in the community. That is why they were placed in a state

facility to begin with. If they close there will be no options for the many that will not make it in the community. If I thought for one minute that Tony will be offered "equal or better care" I would not be here today. Where he is, and most important, the onsite clinical care there, is his LIFE-SUPPORT.

I know times are tough and the Governor has a job to do, but, not off the backs of people with this terrible disability that cannot even stand up for their rights. If he does find it necessary, then shame on him and all that agree with him. He needs to understand he is not just moving people; it's what he is doing to the people that are being moved. One elderly mother told me she had no family; it was only her and her son. Her son had lived at Templeton most of his life. Now with the threat of the change she told me with tears in her eyes that she now prays her son will die before she does, because she can no longer trust that he will be taking care of. HOW SAD IS THAT!!!!!!

So I come here today to respectfully ask our legislators to listen to the concerns of family members and visit Templeton before they make any decisions. Our loved ones really need your voice for their survival, so please do it for them, they are our eternal children, and need a little act of kindness in this very blemished world.

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