

GET INSPIRED!



Portrait pictures healthier lifestyle

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Bernadette Portrait has been attending the day habilitation program at Bridgewell's Boston Street Center for less than a year, but she has already inspired staff and her peers with her commitment to a healthier lifestyle.

Portrait, who was primarily wheelchair-bound when she started coming to Boston Street, has gotten out of her chair – literally – and combined exercise with healthy eating to lose 50 pounds in six months.

"We are all very proud of Bernadette," said Donna Lucier, a Developmental Specialist at Boston Street. "She's come a long way since she got here."

Portrait, who lives in a group home in Danvers, comes to Bridgewell five days a week. Not only has she traded in the wheelchair for a walker – and sometimes she gets around without even that – she doesn't sit still very often.

Whether it's completing laps around the inside of the building with the daily walking group, or using the Wii to do yoga or play tennis, Portrait has undertaken a markedly more active lifestyle. That, combined with making healthier choices when it comes to diet, has led to the significant weight loss.

"I eat a lot more salads," she said. "I try to make good choices."

As an example of that, when they order out for lunch every Friday and Portrait can get whatever she wants, "she always makes healthy choices," Lucier said.

In addition to the walking group and the Wii, there are several other initiatives in place at the Boston Street Center to promote healthier living, including a fitness room that features treadmills, exercise bike and weight machines. Fourteen new Wii units will soon be purchased with proceeds raised at the annual Imagine the Possibilities Gala held this past November. The Wii units will be distributed among several programs to inspire others working or living in Bridgewell managed sites to live healthier lifestyles.

**WELLNESS IS A FOCUS OF
WHAT WE DO HERE.**

There is also a weekly Nutrition Group meeting, run by Deniece Jones, Direct Support Professional, every Tuesday afternoon. The group discusses healthy eating, exercise and physical activity, reading the labels on food items, portion control and other ways to live healthy.

"The theme is eat less and move more," said Jones. "We talk about the food pyramid, low-fat alternatives, and eating a healthy lunch and snack. We give them homework, play games and watch exercise videos. We make it fun."

That also seems to be a theme at Boston Street, where the walkers do their laps with music blaring while staffers dance with program participants in the cafeteria. You get the feeling that it is a welcoming, warm place where everyone is made to feel important.

"Bernadette was very shy when she first came here. Her self-esteem has gone way up since she started losing the weight. We give her positive feedback and keep her encouraged," Lucier said.

"Wellness is a focus of what we do here. We try to keep them moving, regardless of what their physical ability is."

If Bernadette Portrait is any indication, it seems to be working.

For more information on Bridgewell please visit <http://bridgewell.org> or call 781-592-1088.



Joining the walking group is one way Bernadette Portrait has committed to a healthier lifestyle.

LIVING WELL ON BOSTON STREET



Bernadette Portrait loves using the Wii as a tool to stay healthy and fit.



Staff members dance with clients in the cafeteria during the daily music-filled walks.