

Hello my name is Kathi Carfrey –the mother of Colleen Carfrey a recent recipient of an MR waiver

After being on the waiting list since she was 2 and the urgent list since her dad passed away in 2004 Colleen now 20 was awarded a MR slot this past Feb 25th, her Dad's birthday. I can not begin to tell you the relief that this waiver has brought to me as a widowed mother. As I said in a previous speech to the general assembly I had so many fears that I would need to quit my job to stay home and watch Colleen if a waiver did not become available for her.

Even more importantly, the quality of life that Colleen now has available to her is so promising.

I am happy to report to you that **Colleen is already using the waiver to become a more productive member of our state.** We have chosen to use the consumer based services. With the help of her personal attendants Colleen is learning to grocery shop, do laundry, exercise daily and other task that will make her be as independent as possible and have "A Life like yours". But more importantly I am so pleased to report that beyond the personal services that Colleen will receive **we have made it a priority for Colleen to have the right to share her gifts with others and be a volunteer.** For as Dorothy Height another fellow Richmonder and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award said "Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. **It's important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop.**" Colleen bakes cookies and visits Alzheimer's patients at a nursing home weekly. She sits and visits with them or sings and plays games with them to improve their quality of life. She has made bag lunches for a church organization that feeds the homeless and she and her attendant volunteered for Vacation Bible school programs. Thru the Easter Seals program that she can now attend weekly she also has volunteered at the Ronald McDonald house and walked dogs at the animal shelter. One of her attendants also provides day care for pre-school children and Colleen is able to help her and plans to volunteer with her at the elementary school this coming school year. For as Martin Luther King Jr. said "**Everyone can be great because anyone can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't even have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love...**" Colleen like so many of our MR Citizens has that heart full of pure grace. They love all those around them for the sheer existence of their humanity. I know that if all those individuals on the waiting list for MR waivers had the opportunities to grow and give like Colleen now does that our state of Virginia would be stronger and better for it. **We really have so much to gain from tapping into this vulnerable but still valuable resource of citizens.** We need to work diligently for those citizens of our state that can't always speak and advocate for themselves, treat them as they should be treated so that they can become the citizens they are capable of becoming and have a "Life like Yours".