

We never imagined that we would be parents of a loved one with severe disabilities. We certainly did not expect that, in spite of all our efforts and utilization of all available resources, we would be unable to give our daughter what she needed in our home.

Like many of the other families who have loved ones at the Frances Haddon Morgan Center, we tried a number of other living options that proved to be unsuitable for our daughter. Finally, we heard about FHMC, which was started and continues to provide specialized treatment for people with autism and behavioral challenges.

At FHMC our daughter has access to excellent psychiatric, psychological, medical and other therapies for her specific and changing needs. She has 24 hour care with skilled care givers who encourage her to make her own choices and become her best self. She has regular opportunities for supervised recreation and other experiences within the wider community.

Relationships are vital to all of us, and that is especially true for our daughter and her peers. They grieve when they lose beloved staff. Change, in general, is extra stressful for them because they do not understand the causes.

It is logical that there should be a wide range of options available from which each family can choose the services most appropriate for their loved one with special needs. The families who have chosen the Frances Haddon Morgan Center believe it best answers their loved one's needs at this time. Studies have shown that the level of support that the Frances Haddon Morgan Center provides to approximately 60 of our state's most challenged individuals would cost more outside an RHC. Furthermore, there are few, if any, local openings that provide this level of support.

In spite of increased community supports in recent years, residents are still being admitted to the Frances Haddon Morgan Center. Many of these families have tried other placements, but these places lacked the supervision, programming, medical supports and oversight essential for even the basics of safety and health for their loved ones.

We write this aware that there are thousands of individuals with special needs in WA State who need support services and are getting nothing. For all the reasons given above, taking away needed services from that small percentage of people who are most severely challenged is not the answer.

Lincoln's birthday today should stand as a reminder of the rights and dignity of every person. These rights which intertwine with the Golden Rule are the focus in our fight for a good life for all persons with disabilities.

Bill & Teri Looney
Silverdale