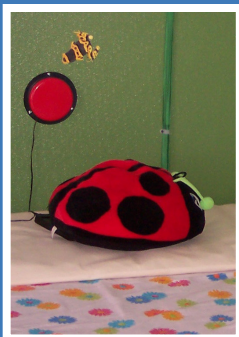


CONNECTION

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www.carf.org

*By Elaine LaMontagne, director of vocational services
Community Work Opportunities, LLC*

Many persons served in the vocational program at Community Work Opportunities (CWO) in Canton, Michigan, were unable to participate in the organization’s activities because of behaviors such as severe self-stimulation, self-abuse, aggression toward others, property destruction, or shutdown. These individuals experienced difficulty engaging in their own lives, visiting with family members, meeting appointments, and going out in the community.

When CWO staff members began researching ways to deal with this issue, they tried using low lighting, Snoezelen® equipment, quiet areas, and soft music. However, these measures were not enough to defuse the environmental stimuli. A new approach was needed, and CWO turned to sensory processing.

CWO’s sensory program uses a “sensory diet”

A sensory program addresses the underlying sensory processes for the behaviors that make it hard for individuals to participate fully in their lives. The program provides the environments and sensory opportunities needed to get an individual’s nervous system ready to engage in life’s opportunities.

The presentations at a CARF International conference last year provided innovative solutions to many challenges that service providers face today.

Although the conference speakers represented the employment and community services field, many of their ideas can be adapted to organizations across the health and human service spectrum.

This series consists of five articles in the presenters’ own words. Their approaches to problem solving are as diverse as the topics they discuss and the barriers they have overcome.

In this issue of CARF Connection, we’re showcasing a sensory processing approach for improving the lives of persons with autism.

Further steps for implementing a sensory program include:

- Identifying persons served who might have sensory processing disorders.
- Educating agency supervisors, direct support staff, and others providing supports and services on the foundations of sensory processing, indicators of sensory processing disorders, the barriers the disorders impose on daily interactions, and the potential outcomes that can be accomplished when using a sensory program approach.
- Designing sensory-enriched environments that promote learning and accomplishments through meaningful and functional tasks.
- Teaching sensory-based techniques to support staff so they can be incorporated throughout a person's day.
- Implementing consistent, predictable daily schedules within sensory-enriched environments.
- Measuring positive changes that lead to more meaningful and purposeful daily interactions, both for the persons served and the staff members who support them.

CWO has reported great success using a sensory-based approach for scheduling day-to-day activities for self-care, work, and leisure.

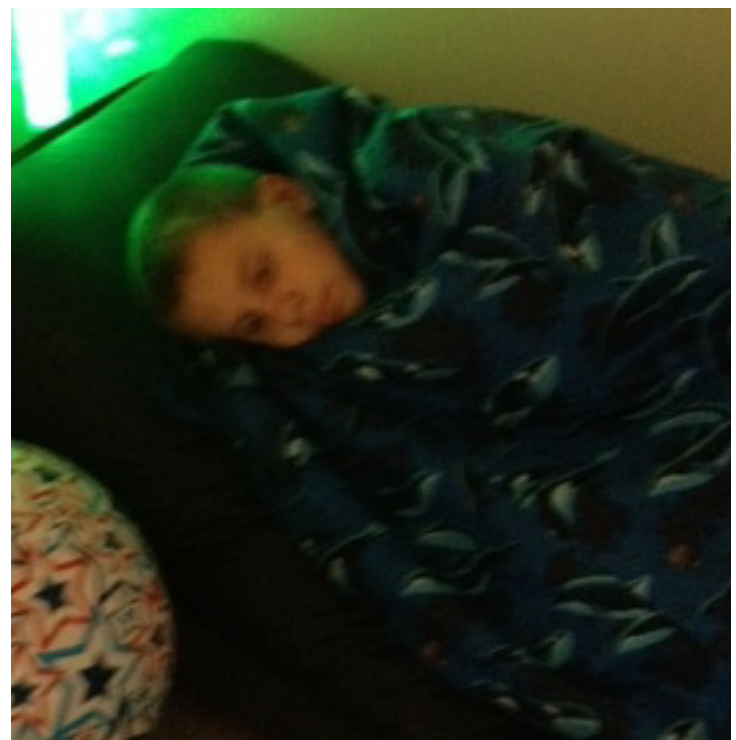
Parents are a key part of therapy. By practicing the techniques at home, actions become behaviors, and real change occurs. Over time, parents see their children able to do things, like sit at the dinner table and attend sporting events and activities that seemed impossible before therapy.

The opportunities are endless and limited only by imagination. Working together, staff members can help the persons served move from being overwhelmed, anxious, and upset to being calm, socially interactive, and able to take part in a meaningful day.

Top right: A relaxation area is inviting.

Center right: Bouncing on the "peanut" is fun.

Bottom right: A weighted blanket provides deep pressure.



About the author



Elaine LaMontagne, director of vocational services at CWO, has worked with individuals with developmental disabilities for more than two decades in schools and residential and vocational programs.

Her background includes presenting trainings and workshops on sensory integration, micro-business development, and job development. She also consults with organizations and families about developing programs to serve individuals with challenging behaviors.

About Community Work Opportunities

Community Work Opportunities (CWO) serves more than 300 adults with developmental disabilities in the Canton, Michigan, area. A video on the benefits of sensory integration therapy is at www.quest365.org/about/about_cwo. The organization's vocational programs include job coaching, life skills building, micro-business, community integration, and job development.

CWO is available for consultation to assist organizations with developing strategies and environments regarding sensory processing disorders and challenging behaviors that interfere in a person's daily life.

CWO's parent company is Quest, Inc., www.quest365.org, based in southeastern Michigan. Quest provides residential and vocational support services to promote inclusion, maximize independence, and improve the quality of life for adults and children with disabilities.

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CARF Board of Directors reelects senior housing industry leader Kayda Johnson as chair

At its November 30, 2012, meeting in Tucson, the CARF Board of Directors elected Kayda Johnson to serve a consecutive term as chair of the board. Her second one-year term begins January 1, 2013.

Johnson is chief operating officer of Senior Resource Group, LLC, in Solana Beach, California. Active nationally in the senior housing industry, she served on the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA) Board of Directors for more than twelve years and is now engaged in the federation's executive chief operating officers group. She has participated in committees of the National Investment Center (NIC) for senior housing and care industries, and she is active in the American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA).

Serving in diverse health and human service fields, the eleven members of the CARF Board of Directors bring unique and valuable experience to their governance roles.

Read the full news release at www.carf.org/KaydaJohnson2.

CARF directors elect Sherry Wheelock to a seat on the board

Sherry Wheelock, was elected to a seat on the CARF Board of Directors during the board's November 2012 meeting. Wheelock will serve a three-year board term beginning January 2013.

As Special Olympics Florida president/CEO, Wheelock brings two decades of financial leadership and support for persons with disabilities.

The board provides governance for CARF International, a nonprofit accreditor of health and human services.

Read the full news release at www.carf.org/SherryWheelock.

More CARF news is at www.carf.org/news.

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