



Fall 2010

# Beckwith Hall

*"Making important choices...Leading empowered lives."*

## Balancing Continuity and Change

*By Patricia B. Malik, Ph.D., Director*

As Beckwith director, it seems as if each passing year goes by quicker and quicker. This year has been no different. Beckwith residents and staff found themselves doing what they always do ~ making a difference. What made this year a little more challenging was that we were also ending an era for Beckwith Residence Hall and transitioning its programs and services of 28 years into new space and a new and exciting era with University Housing. Our vision for this new partnership is to maintain what is best about Beckwith, and to expand and broaden the opportunities and experiences of Beckwith supported residents within a larger university context. In essence, we are looking for a balance between continuity and change, with the hope that both will provide a wonderful future for current and future University of Illinois students with severe physical disabilities.



Within this newsletter you will meet a variety of people who have experienced both continuity and change because of Beckwith. It is my distinct pleasure to share some of the highlights from this past year:

- The newest residence hall on campus was officially named after DRES founder, Timothy J. Nugent. Beckwith Residential Support Services will be integrated into Nugent Hall.
- A new record! Twenty-three residents supported during fall semester with 90 personal assistants on payroll!
- Hugo Trevino and Katy Hoyer traveled to Costa Rica with Mobility International USA. The selection process was competitive, and the fact that two Beckwith residents were selected to attend in the same year is a testimony to how they have changed and grown over the years while at Beckwith. They traveled with Beckwith PAs, Lucas McKeever and Mary Clare Graff.
- A record number of Beckwith residents are transitioning out of our current program into accessible University housing next year. Amber Buckley-Shaklee, Philip Edgerley, Katy Hoyer, David Kirby, David Kuriniec, Ian Nelson, and Kushal Parikh will find themselves expanding and growing outside the walls of the Beckwith program. Margaret Hackett felt confident enough to transition to other housing after one semester at Beckwith.
- CJ Holterman, currently a housing resident director (RD), will be the RD of Nugent Hall in the fall. He worked with the Beckwith staff throughout the year planning orientation programs for next year, as well as developing a community model. We also worked with the Illinois Leadership Center in January through their Ignite Program to generate ideas of how to best make the social transition to this new inclusive space.
- Maddie Mier, a live-in PA, has been working as a research assistant this past year as we began the development of a parent mentoring program. The intent of this program is to provide resources and support to parents whose children have severe physical disabilities from parents whose children with similar disabilities have successfully managed the transition to college. Maddie has been a PA since her freshman year, and will make the move with us to Nugent Hall to complete her third year as a live-in PA.
- This year's Matthew A. Odelius Award winner, Corey Hyslop, transferred to Illinois two years ago. He diligently worked on getting an internship for Summer 2010. His persistence paid off as he will intern at Stewart Peterson, an agricultural advisement firm in Madison, WI.
- This was Kerry Zimmerman's last year as cook of Beckwith Hall. Kerry has been the chief cook and bottle washer for 27 of the 28 years that Beckwith has been in existence. Kerry has been so much more than a cook. He has been a friend, confidante, and cheerleader (in his own quiet way). Nonetheless, he will be missed by all those he touched during his time at Beckwith.

As Pauline Kezer once stated, "Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights." I look forward to the change that next year will bring, stretching staff and residents alike to grow and maybe even accomplish what others think is impossible, or at least improbable. However, I will always be diligent to take care of what makes Beckwith special ~ the concern of staff, all staff; best practice programs and services; and an expectation that residents strive to lead empowered lives. Yes, the combination of continuity and change can truly bring us to new heights.



**Personal assistants,  
mentors, and students...  
a recipe for success!**

## Beckwith's Odyssey

*By Brad Hedrick, Ph.D.  
Director, Disability Resources  
and Educational Services*



In Arthur C. Clarke's novel, *2010: Odyssey Two*, mysterious monoliths transform Jupiter into a star that gives life to the new world of Europa. An artificially intelligent computer named HAL plays a central role in the story plot; a computer that, according to the story, was built on the Urbana campus of the University of Illinois.

Now, in the year 2010, we have another thing in common with Clarke's storyline. The Urbana campus will have completed a significant transformation of its own on the northeast quadrant of Ikenberry Commons with the opening of the Student Dining and Residential Programs and Timothy J. Nugent Hall. For the Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES), the latter represents the fruition of our 51 year odyssey of helping students with disabilities who necessitate personal assistance services chase their dreams of earning Illinois degrees, pursuing careers, and living independently. From our meager beginnings at Greenbrier Nursing Home in 1959 will arise a new, technologically advanced residential wing in Timothy J. Nugent Hall that will house the next generation of the Beckwith Program. The focus of Beckwith Residential Support Services (BRSS) will be disability

services rather than housing services. Thus, Beckwith professional staff will direct their expertise and skills expressly toward the provision of individualized support services and educational programming to optimize each student's ability to pursue his or her life goals.

Embedding BRSS in Timothy J. Nugent Hall and thereby allowing the Housing Division to oversee all "housing" services will provide residents with access to a substantially greater range of dining services including a more flexible schedule and food choices, not to mention the cardio room with accessible equipment and program space. It will also better accommodate social interaction by residents with and without disabilities in activities and networking, as well as allow convenient employment opportunities. Finally, Beckwith Program support will also be expanded to include a resident advisor, multi-cultural advocates, and disability advocates under the new organizational arrangement.

Unquestionably, the future looks bright for residents within the newly created and sophisticated confines of Timothy J. Nugent Hall! Finally, with regard to the naming of the residence hall, what a fitting tribute to a rehabilitation pioneer whose vision, passion and legacy of accomplishments on behalf of persons with disabilities were truly transformative. Congratulations Tim on receiving this well-deserved tribute to your magnificent career of distinguished service and remarkable achievement!

## Changes... Just a Few

*By Katherine Johnson, Associate Director*

I have been affiliated with Beckwith Hall for 12 years, primarily as the associate director. My job responsibilities include overseeing the operations and maintenance of the facility and coordinating all realms of the Personal Assistant Program. During this time, Beckwith programs and services have evolved and changed. They will continue to evolve and change - for the better.

**Flashback: Fall of '98...** We utilized private nurse staffing agencies to assist in the fall opening for those students without personal assistants (PAs) scheduled, and utilized an outside RN consultant to do the PA training classes. Students then hired their own staff. We realized that private agencies were not the best solution due to the uniqueness of Beckwith, but we had limited choices. They wanted to set up individual care plans for the students, which was a very cumbersome system that did not allow for change or flexibility. Also, they preferred scheduling their staff for eight-hour shifts which wasn't the mission of our program. As a result of these challenges, PA duties would often fall to the resident advisors (RAs) and me.

**Flash forward through the decade...** We tried new solutions for PA coverage, such as offering PA staff prime-time pay and having them sign up for morning or evening hours to replace the need for the agency staff to fill this short-term void. The implementation of live-in PAs allowed a more creative resource of PA staff which was also cost effective. In exchange for 18 hours of work,

these individuals received room and board. Finally, I facilitated the PA training and developed that program into what it is today. This allowed a more efficient hiring and training process for PAs so that the students could get their shifts filled sooner.

**What the future brings: Fall 2010...** The meal assistant position will be eliminated and absorbed into dining services. Students will continue to hire and schedule their PAs, but they can meet them at other destinations on campus when necessary, rather than being limited to the residence hall. If a student needs assistance to eat, they will be provided seven hours per day instead of five hours. They will hire these shifts on their own. Finally, I will no longer be responsible for the operations and maintenance of the facility as that will fall under the auspices of Housing. I will be able to further develop PA training and other programs to better accommodate the residents and staff of Beckwith Residential Support Services.

A lot has changed during the past 12 years. What hasn't changed is the commitment to students with severe physical disabilities to provide an environment that they can not only live independently, but where they can learn strategies to develop the confidence to live independently outside of Beckwith. Timothy J. Nugent Hall provides a new state of the art facility which affords an entirely new opportunity of growth. I look forward to the changes that will occur in the next 12 years.



## “Kathryn Comfort Hoyer”

By Katy Hoyer

Kathryn Comfort Hoyer. At least that’s what my birth certificate should have read when I was welcomed into the world 21 years ago... Comfort has always been my middle name. Now let me paint you a little picture of a scene that you are all too familiar with at this point. It was my senior year of high school and time to fill out those dreaded college applications. While I knew the next path I needed to take was one that would lead me to a level of higher education and a future career, I was mortified to take even the first step down that long road. My mom on the other hand was the one who saw more strength in me than I ever could see in myself. She knew I had to go to college to discover myself and touch the lives of as many people in whatever way I could. The question of “where?” remained until we stumbled across this place that I now call a home.

Beckwith Hall has changed my life in numerous ways, some of which are easy to vocalize with my words, and others of which I can only feel with my heart. Have my Transitional Disability Management Plan meetings taught me how to manage my time more efficiently? Yes. Has hiring and training my PAs helped me to learn about independent living? Yes. Have the “Good Luck!” cheers that come from

down the hall as I run out the door relaxed me before I went to take an exam? Without a doubt! Are the conversations like, “Which PA wipes the best after you use the bathroom” some of the most fun conversations I will ever have? Certainly. Have the residents and staff become my family? Always and forever, no questions asked.

Next year we are moving to the new Timothy J. Nugent Hall and it will be a change. There will be new people and places to experience. I feel as though I am approaching the move into the new building like I acted toward college three years ago, slightly afraid to take a leap into the unknown. I will no longer be a part of the Beckwith programs. I’m transitioning to the 2nd floor where the rooms are ADA accessible, but I have to rely on the knowledge I have learned to live more independently than ever before without the Beckwith support services.

Over the years, and with the help of my Beckwith family, I have realized that change is good and you never have to face anything alone. Therefore, it is now time for us to say goodbye to the old, and welcome the new with open arms. We will not forget our past as part of the “original Beckwithians,” but we now will be welcoming many more people into our family. I for one cannot wait for the journey!



## Leading by Example

By Corey Hyslop

I believe I have demonstrated leadership in advancing the involvement of students with disabilities by setting a positive example that younger residents can follow. In the two years that I have lived at Beckwith Residence Hall, it has been my priority to take advantage of every resource the University of Illinois, Beckwith and DRES have provided. Through different programs I have been able to sharpen my leadership skills, search for internship opportunities, and plan activities for Beckwith. These resources have not only given me the fundamental tools to succeed academically, but increased my awareness of how much dedication this university has to its students. Also, I must note that throughout my aspirations I believe I now have a greater willingness to take and accept responsibility. Accomplishments such as these enable me to set a positive example to younger students with disabilities.

One of the greatest resources that our school has to offer is the Illinois Leadership Center. As recommended by Pat Malik, Beckwith Director, the center displays excellent techniques that give participants a competitive advantage upon searching

for careers in a tough economy. Upon interviews with multiple employers, I have realized that leadership is one of the most sought after skills in which a potential applicant can possess. After attending the i-program Intersect, I achieved a greater level of personal development through the understanding of my own communication style and interpersonal skills.

*“This award has inspired me to branch out by maintaining my assertiveness, increasing my openness to others, and to always act with a great level of integrity.”*

Also, we were able to create and manage successful teams by collaborating, facilitating, and understanding group dynamics. These teambuilding activities increase awareness of others’ perspectives and how it is possible to step into leadership roles in any situation. By explaining these techniques to employers and providing concrete examples, I have definitely had an advantage over other candidates despite my disability going into the interview process.

I am honored to receive the 2010 Matthew A. Odelius Award. With a clear vision of where to go, as well as a firm grasp on how to achieve success, I have tried my best to exhibit qualities that the Odelius family would be proud of. This award has inspired me to branch out by maintaining my assertiveness, increasing my openness to others, and to always act with a great level of integrity.



### My First Son was Born and Life was Good

*By Sherri Kullander*

We found out he had a disability when he was 18 months old. Believe it or not, your mind goes crazy and before you know it you are wondering how we'll make it through life. Of course we would always be there for all of his needs for years and years, but ... what about going to college?!!!

Fortunately for us, my husband went to Illinois and he knew about the great services for students with disabilities as an Illinois alum. He first got information about Beckwith Hall when Leo was going into third grade. We continued to research all U.S colleges that had any services for students with disabilities, and outside of Berkeley, California (freshmen only) there was no other place like Illinois and Beckwith Hall. No matter how great we thought Beckwith was, Leo first had to just get accepted. Not an easy task, as academic standards are now very high. We had been programming Leo toward Illinois and Beckwith Hall his whole school life. We knew it was the only place for him. What we didn't know was how many others knew the same thing.

In December 2008, Leo was accepted at Illinois, but Beckwith Hall was filled, and we were second on the wait list. I can only say that the only feeling I had was that of panic. What were we going to do? How was he going to be able to go away to school without the help of Beckwith? As housing contract deadlines for 2009-10 approached we looked all over campus for alternatives, while Leo calmly knew that everything would work out fine. It looked like Newman Hall was the best substitute

housing, but what about PAs? How was Leo going to hire PAs? How is that done? The questions were endless. On April 15, 2009 our answer came, Leo had a spot at Beckwith! Paige called and left a message on our answering machine and you would have thought we won the lottery as we listened. I was so happy I could hardly contain myself. Leo received many emails from Paige to start the process of hiring PAs, but like any good old fashioned American teenage boy, procrastination is his modus operandi.

Throughout this whole thing, me worrying and losing sleep, Leo kept calm. He just knew it would all work out. Perhaps it was because of the constant updates from Paige. She always remained calm and confident that things would work out. The staff at Beckwith have been and continue to be very helpful. I don't think I could have survived leaving Leo if it weren't for the confidence that exudes from all at Beckwith. Those first weeks leaving your child in someone else's hands hundreds of miles away were made bearable only through our faith in the Beckwith staff.

Leo is about to finish his first year at Illinois. He has become more independent than I would have ever imagined. He is looking forward to one more year receiving Beckwith support, and then moving out his

junior year. I suppose I will go through worrying once again, but maybe not so much. Beckwith has given Leo the right tools and talents to move forward in his independence.

*If I had to give you the most important piece of advice, it would be to HIRE YOUR PAs, AND MANY OF THEM, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!!!*



## My Life in a Nutshell

By Leo Kullander

For my entire life, relying on my parents wasn't a choice, but a requirement. They took care of my every need, not just physically, but emotionally as well. So you can imagine the slight shock when I woke up one cold morning in December and realized "I'm going to college..." To be frank it wasn't the distance, or the promise of an academic challenge that worried me, but the idea of finally being weaned off the milk (metaphorically of course). In that first week of horror, the little walls that I had built came crashing down one by one as I evaluated just HOW MUCH my parents did for me. You never think of such little things as "pulling your sock down" or "getting the box of pens off the shelf;" but when it all adds up, it's quite a shock. Needless to say, I never thought I would be ready. But then came that fateful day when I had to (insert dramatic gasp here) hire my own personal assistants (PAs). I never knew what to expect. Do I just ask? Do I ease into the question? Do I let them ask me? How do I ask them to do stuff? Thank goodness they knew what to expect, because I sure didn't. Sure I had read all that was sent to me, and asked mentors; but it's like the difference between seeing someone punch through a board and thinking "I can do that" and then actually trying it. Not the same thing.

The summer came and left too soon, as that dream-like time is prone to doing; and shocker, I was a mess of a kid with but a few PAs lined up. I thought I was doomed. But then I came to Beckwith and I found myself immersed in a place like I could not believe. I had not even the slightest idea how

supportive Beckwith really was until I arrived, and it truly changed my life. Within a week, I had all my shifts filled, my every need accounted for, and was out living the college life. I found myself living life with a confidence I never knew I had. I had always been a passive person, but after taking care of myself, I truly feel I can do anything.

My first year here has been nothing if not amazing. I have met some amazing people, found what I really want to do in life (and not what was expected), and gained a whole new feeling for what I need to do to

make my plans come true. I would say that if I could do it all over again, I would get out there even more than I have already, oh, and not be so excited over it all that I neglected my studies a tad.

For any incoming students, here is my advice: Don't fight it, and never be afraid. You are coming to college to learn yes, but there really is little that will help you in the classroom if you cannot first learn to get along with the class. And if you mess up, believe me, you would not be the first, and you are DEFINITELY not going to be the last. As for the PAs, it is only a big deal once, and then it is second nature. I remember the first time a PA canceled a shift on me, and I started to see explosions in the

distance. Now I would much rather deal with that than the stack of homework on my desk. Everyone here is so supportive; it doesn't ever feel like you need to worry about anything. Soon I hope to take the next step, and move out to an apartment on my own or with friends. But I would never have even dreamed about that if it hadn't been for the people here at Beckwith.



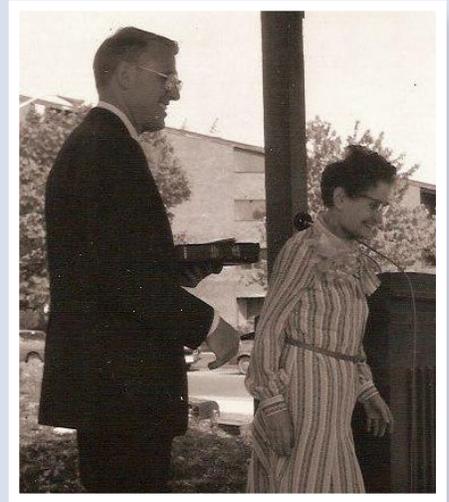
# Beckwith Residence Hall ~ 1982-2010

201 East John Street

*Here is a collection of photos taken through the years, showing the dedication of Beckwith Hall in 1982, students and staff, the groundbreaking ceremony of Timothy J. Nugent Hall, and the end-of-year/era celebration.*



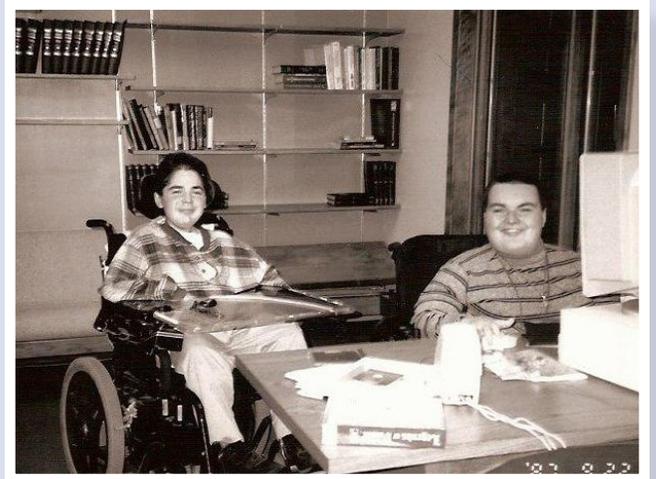
The first residents of Beckwith Hall, 1982.



President Stanley Ikenberry receives the Beckwith family bible from Wilhelmine Hursh at the dedication ceremony.



Tim and Jeanette Nugent.



Studying in the Beckwith library/computer lab.



Halloween parties: a Beckwith tradition.



Celebrating the holidays.



Starting a new year.



Beckwith personal assistants have been recognized campus-wide for their contributions to the program.



Groundbreaking ceremony for Timothy J. Nugent Hall.



Bowling, one of the many activities students enjoy.



End-of-year/era celebration recognizing Kerry Zimmerman for 27 years of service to Beckwith residents and staff.



Former and current residents coming back to bid Beckwith farewell.

## Resident Advisor Perspectives



*By Jenna Runyan*

This year has brought so much change into my life. I moved back to Illinois, started graduate school, and I got to move into an amazing resident advisor (RA) position at Illinois. I have appreciated my time as an RA at Beckwith more than words can say.

Coming into this year I was scared and apprehensive about all the changes I would have to encounter. I was scared about moving to a new place and meeting so many new people. Even though I am a determined person, my fear was very present.

I guess there is a lesson to be learned about change, because it has brought so much happiness into my life. I have loved getting to know all of the Beckwith residents and staff this year. From the late night breadstick orders, to the crazy computer games residents got me addicted to, and all the late night talks in the cafeteria, I have loved it all. I have benefited so much from learning about what life can be like with a disability. Examples of the way each resident lives life have given me new perspectives in living my own and have encouraged me to keep going when life can get hard. I am thankful for the example of residents' courage and determination that have carried me through some tough times this year, for being my family when I couldn't go home and for being a place I loved coming home to every day.

I have so many memories from this year. If I could say one thing, it is that the happiness from the change I experienced has overridden all the fear and anxiety that I had coming into this year. The lesson learned is that when each of us is presented with a change that might bring about the feeling of fear (like moving into a new residence hall or facing a new school year), remember that change can bring such amazing people more enjoyment than ever expected. I am so honored to have been a part of this year with everyone. As we move into this new year, keep being excited and positive about changes that may come and keep your determination to finish what you started!

*Jenna and Vishal at the Beckwith Halloween party.*

*By Vishal Chikkerur*



My year at Beckwith has been a joyful one and has gone so fast that it feels like weeks since I've been here, not a whole year! I have been in the United States now for almost three years from my home in Australia. I must admit, my one year at Beckwith has seen me meet some of my closest friends - friends I will cherish and maintain contact with for the rest of my life.

As a resident advisor (RA) for Beckwith there have been many demanding moments, but none that I was unable to do. There have been many hilarious moments too. There are so many amazingly spirited people I have met who have helped shine a light in places of myself that I could be better. They have helped me become a happier and less self-seeking individual. Previously, when I used to live the typical grad student life, there would be days I'd dread tackling. Every day at Beckwith though has offered promise of so many things, whether it be a simple chat with someone at breakfast, a "Soul Caliber" fight with someone in the afternoon, or a long detailed discussion into the depths of the meaning of life and life's dilemmas with someone at 2:00 in the morning. Each day has been an unwritten script and each day has been fun.

There are so many things that I wanted to do as an RA that I know will go unaccomplished sadly, but I do rest assured that my time at Beckwith has not ended. If I am lucky enough to be around Champaign-Urbana next year, I look forward to visiting everyone at the new premises! It will be a welcome change for all of the students and one that I am excited for. If per chance the future and time carry me away, I know that everyone at Beckwith - the students, my friends, all of the staff and all of the PAs will comprise a time that I will never forget. Here's hoping though that the future and time do no such thing.



## Traveling From Here to There, and Beyond!

By Hugo Trevino

Every year Beckwith becomes home to many students with severe physical disabilities. Thanks to its small setting, the Beckwith community quickly becomes a new family for many students who, for the first time, are transitioning out of only being in the care of their parents. A whole new set of independent living skills are learned and mastered when these students learn how to hire and work with personal assistants (PAs). Thanks to my Beckwith family, I have learned the necessary skills to travel to parts of the world I never imagined would be accessible to me.

During the summer of 2009, I was able to study abroad in Costa Rica and road trip across the Southwest United States. Thanks to the skills I learned at Beckwith and the encouragement I received from my friends living at Beckwith, I felt confident heading into these adventures. Students at Beckwith are constantly going through challenges together, and because of Beckwith we learn how to successfully live on our own. Traveling abroad was even scarier than moving out on my own, but the excitement and joy I got out of it definitely outweighed the bad.

I traveled to Costa Rica, thanks to a study abroad program from Mobility International USA. They are a great organization that helps college students learn how other countries are dealing with disability issues and how to advocate most effectively when there is an issue. I learned a lot from the program and the people I met there will never be forgotten.

The trip marked a new set of first accomplishments for me; I rode in an accessible taxi, went to the jungle, and left the country without my family. Instead, I traveled with my PA and friend, Lucas McKeever. Having a good PA is key and thanks to the knowledge I acquired



at Beckwith, I had a great group of PAs to choose from.

Traveling across the country was a whole new adventure. It is one of the best experiences that I have ever had and the trip allowed me to see just how accessible my very own country is. My friend, Stevie Hopkins, coordinated the trip and if it wasn't for the excellent help of the PAs he hired — Joel Morrison, Steve Lee, and Bill Stadwiser,

it would not have been as successful. We went to over nine different states and some things I experienced were wheelchair surfing, acupuncture, and exploring countless miles in different National and State Parks. People love traveling abroad, but the US also has a lot to offer. I definitely recommend this trip to anyone.

All these travels happened within one summer. I

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*“Traveling across the country was a whole new adventure. It is one of the best experiences that I have ever had and the trip allowed me to see just how accessible my very own country is. We went to over nine different states and some things I experienced were wheelchair surfing, acupuncture, and exploring countless miles in different National and State Parks. People love traveling abroad, but the US also has a lot to offer.”*

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could not have asked for a better summer and I don't think that any other summer can top it, though I am going to try. I was definitely scared to embark on all these trips, but what helped was doing a ton of planning and just having faith in myself. But most importantly, knowing how to schedule PAs and recognizing how much travel my body could tolerate so that I

didn't exhaust myself was imperative. I didn't overdo it, but I pushed myself to the limits and I'm thankful for it.

## Reaching Out



*By Becky Bargfrede*

I glanced around nervously as I entered Beckwith for the first time my sophomore year. I had no experience with people with disabilities, I didn't really know anyone, and I couldn't remember where to go for my job interview. As I stood there awkwardly, I was rescued by Carmen, a resident at the time, who greeted me and introduced herself. She offered to show me around Beckwith and even went with me to where my interview was. Instantly, I felt at ease and felt like I was not alone. This was my first memory of Beckwith and it has stuck with me ever since. I soon got to know more residents at Beckwith and felt like I was a part of the Beckwith community.

Two years later, I felt like a regular at Beckwith. It was that year Beckwith got its largest influx of new freshmen. I worked the front desk during move-in day and watched as wide-eyed freshmen and their parents moved in and attempted to navigate the campus. As the welcome weekend ended and all the parents left, you could almost feel the apprehension and hear thoughts of "Can I really do this...?" I remembered my own feelings of nervousness when I started working at Beckwith, and I realized one of Beckwith's greatest strengths: everyone reaches out to help. I introduced myself to anyone I didn't know, answered any questions I knew, and tried to help out whenever I could. The RAs worked tirelessly planning and organizing social events, staff members were flexible covering shifts, and older residents mentored new freshmen throughout the year. Over the school year, it was amazing to watch quiet, timid freshmen

transform into confident and capable student leaders.

What I have learned from Beckwith is that new experiences and change are made easier by people reaching out to you. You feel like you are not alone. You feel more confident and it propels you forward.

Now the entire Beckwith community will have new experiences and changes as it moves into the new residence hall. While change may cause some nervousness, I am confident that Beckwith's character for reaching out will help build strong relationships with the rest of the Champaign residence halls. It is that character that will help the entire new community transition.

I have experienced a lot of changes since graduating and leaving Beckwith. I have gone from being a personal assistant (PA) at Beckwith to now working on my masters degree at Midwestern University as a different PA (Physician Assistant). I will soon start my clinical rotations. Although things are constantly changing for me, the lessons I have learned from being a part of the Beckwith community have stayed with me. Even when I'm not quite sure I can do something, I remember the people along the way who have reached out and encouraged me. We inspire one another to move forward and do what we never dreamed we could do.

*Becky Bargfrede is an Illinois alum and worked at Beckwith from 2007-2009. She is best known for her superior salad creation skills as a meal assistant and for her discovery that Beckwith had the best soda fountain machine in all of Champaign-Urbana.*

## Exciting Times

*By CJ Holterman*

I'm CJ Holterman, and I will be the residence hall director (RD) for Timothy J. Nugent Hall for the upcoming year. I am currently the RD for Garner Hall, located next to Timothy J. Nugent Hall. I have worked for the University of Illinois for the past two years and within the housing world for the last seven years as a full-time hall director, as a graduate hall director and as a resident advisor (RA). I am looking forward to working closely with the Beckwith program and Timothy J. Nugent Hall!

This past year has been very exciting. I have been working with the Beckwith professional staff and University Housing staff to plan for the transition of the Beckwith Program into the University Housing system. Several ideas have been addressed such as: How do we build community in the new hall? How will we structure the professional and student staff and the RAs so they can have the best impact on the hall? And, how will we help the new hall feel like home?

Several people have been in on that conversation from project managers to maintenance to disability advocates to residents of Beckwith Hall to me. We have planned extensively around the areas of service, programming, creating community and safety.

This next year will be very exciting on several levels. Timothy J. Nugent Hall is the first residential hall of its kind in the country. It is the first hall to incorporate a program such as Beckwith into the traditional residential life system. We will also be opening a new dining hall with nine stations that can seat 1,200 students at one time. The dining hall will be in our new programming building that houses a coffee shop, several programming spaces, a convenience store and a library, just to name a few amenities. If you want to learn more about Timothy J. Nugent Hall you can access the housing website:

**[www.housing.illinois.edu/Current/Halls/Nugent](http://www.housing.illinois.edu/Current/Halls/Nugent)**

There are several exciting changes for the upcoming year. I am looking forward to next fall and the opening of Timothy J. Nugent Hall!

## Who Would Have Thought

*By Mary Jo Crikfield*

When I completed graduate school in the spring of 2006 I was pretty apprehensive about transitioning into “the real world.” I was very settled in my routines as a student, and I felt very comfortable having lived at Beckwith Hall for seven years while completing my undergraduate and graduate degrees. I really did not know how I was going to adjust to all of the changes to come, but upon graduation I started my first job as a vocational rehabilitation counselor at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC). I also moved into the first home of my own, a new condo in my hometown of Evanston, IL. I really cannot believe how fast the time has passed, as this spring it will have been four years since I left Illinois.

Since I have graduated, a number of things in my life have changed that, if asked about at that time, I would never have anticipated. One piece of news I am happy to share is that I’ve recently joined the “wives club” this past October and am a happy newlywed now of seven months. I met my husband, Frank, just a little over four years ago, around the time I graduated. He had the pleasure of visiting me at Beckwith a couple of times before I left. I was so happy I was able to share that part of my life with him as I had many years of fond memories. Another change I never would have predicted came in November of 2008 when my health took a major unanticipated turn. I spent roughly 60 days in the

ICU over several months with a recurring collapsed lung and a host of other medical complications. As a result, my breathing was significantly compromised and I lost a lot of strength and stamina. Due to my condition I had to leave my job at RIC and since that time I have been focused on my recovery and taking care of my health. I find it ironic that my job at RIC was to counsel other individuals with disabilities, yet I now relate to what my clients were experiencing more than I ever could before. I can honestly say though after everything that has happened over the past several years that I am the happiest that I have ever been. I owe my positive attitude in large part to the experiences I had while living at Beckwith. Not only did they prepare me for the social aspects of living in society with a disability, but also taught me how to manage my health care needs and live as independently as possible. Most importantly though, I have learned that you cannot always anticipate the changes to come, and it is important to take each day at a time for what it has to offer.



## Reflecting on the Past and Celebrating the Future

*By Madeline Mier*

Someone very wise once said that “sometimes it’s the smallest decisions that can change your life forever...” When I first applied for a position as a personal assistant (PA) in 2007, the summer before my freshman year, I could not have imagined the journey I was about to embark upon. As I first arrived on this campus and began working at Beckwith Hall, I could not have begun to foresee the ways in which the experiences I’ve gained and the people I’ve come to know and love were going to change me and shape the person I have become. Working as a PA and meal assistant my freshman year, and subsequently becoming a live-in PA for both my sophomore and junior years, I have learned that there is nothing more valuable than an open mind and the benefit of the doubt. I realized that labels, stereotypes and first impressions are rarely accurate, and that with a little faith and a great deal of perseverance, often our most difficult trials can become our greatest success stories. In the past three years, Beckwith has become so much more to me than a job I’ve held or a building I’ve

lived in – this has become my second home and the people here, my extended family. This community has seen me through every milestone of my college career – together we’ve celebrated our achievements and worked through our failures. We’ve studied and played together, laughed and cried together, and we’ve built friendships that I’m certain will last a lifetime.

So I have now arrived at the beginning of the end: my senior year is quickly approaching, and there are so many changes just beginning to emerge on the horizon. As I begin my personal journey of applying to medical schools and working to fulfill my dream of continuing my education and ultimately becoming a doctor, Beckwith is beginning a journey of its own. In just a few short months, we will be joining University of Illinois Housing and occupying the first floor of the newly built Timothy J. Nugent Hall. Although this transition is sure to come with its share of bumps in the road, I am convinced that this move will be successful, if for no other reason than because our students and staff face challenges head-on, with no fear of the unknown but rather an extraordinary optimism regarding all that lies ahead.



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## Beckwith Mission

Beckwith Hall opened in 1981 to accommodate the residential needs of students with disabilities who require the help of personal assistants to perform basic activities of daily living. While aiding students in the management of their activities of daily living (transferring in and out of wheelchairs, dressing, grooming, bathing, etc.), Beckwith also offers individualized training designed to help students learn to independently manage their disability-related needs and, whenever possible, transition to mainstream community housing. The ultimate goal of Beckwith Hall programming is to make it possible for graduates to go anywhere their lives and career aspirations take them, confident that they can manage their own needs.

For additional information about Beckwith Residential Support Services, please visit our website at [www.disability.illinois.edu/services/beckwith](http://www.disability.illinois.edu/services/beckwith). You may also contact the DRES Student Services Office by phone at (217) 333-4603 (v/TTY), or send email to [disability@illinois.edu](mailto:disability@illinois.edu).

