

# CELEBRATING

## *Mississippians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

### Transitioning to the Community Expands Opportunities for Children



Meridian resident Cynthia Rawson admits that she was somewhat skeptical about moving her 12-year-old son, Eli, from the campus of Ellisville State School to a community home within the city of Ellisville. “I wanted him to stay in the security of the campus, in an environment he was accustomed to,” she said. “He enjoyed living on campus and he enjoyed being around the people there.”

Now, after Eli’s move to Cotten’s Corner Community Home in December, Rawson is pleased with the changes she is seeing in her son. “He seems to be responding well and is even doing better in some areas such as living skills. I am optimistic that this is going to be a good fit for Eli.”

Ellisville State School recently transferred five children from the campus to a home in the community. ESS Director Rinsey McSwain said the home serves as a residence for the children who will be learning skills to enhance their ability to live independently and contribute to their communities. “We are moving them from an institutional setting to a community setting,” she stated.

Moving the children to the home is among Ellisville State School’s efforts to transition more people to the community and is a new approach in the way ESS provides services to children. “Being in the community will give them more of an opportunity to utilize community resources,” said Candy Maxey, ESS Assistant Director of Community Programs. “It’s going to be exciting to see them grow in the community.”

As she contemplated the move for her son, Rawson said McSwain was a big help in easing her doubts about the transition. “She talked to me about what they would do at the community home. She assured me that Eli and the other children would be in a safe, happy and healthy environment. They would be in more of a home-like environment.”

Rawson said Eli responds well to the staff and caregivers. “My hope and dream for Eli is that he will be active and will adjust to be the happiest and most productive person he can possibly be,” said Rawson. “I hope this environment helps all of that come into fruition.” She added that she and her husband believe having Eli in an environment where he feels comfortable will help him develop even more life skills.

“We visit Eli at least twice a week and will continue to do so,” said Rawson. “We believe that it is better for us to come and see Eli here in an environment he knows and loves instead of us uprooting him and bringing him to our environment.”

She added, “We wanted him to be in a community where he could be productive. We are trusting things to work out well for Eli.”

