

### Three Siblings' Perspective

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Our "little sister" Sharon is the youngest of seven children, four girls and three boys. She is the light of our lives and has taught us about love, compassion and giving to others. She does not know what hate is; she is innocent, sweet and kind.

Sharon's mental age is probably somewhere between two and three. As you can see in the picture of her, she loves stuffed toys and dolls.

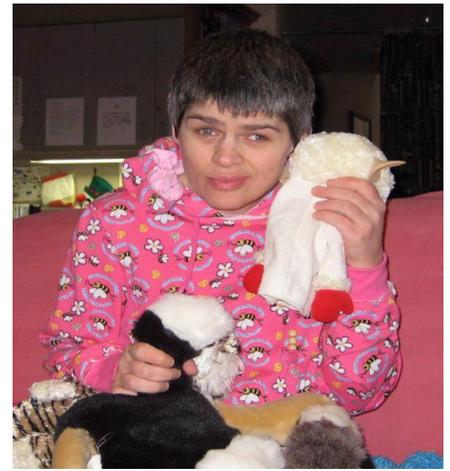
She normally carries around two or three at a time; her Dora doll is her favorite. Sharon was brain damaged at birth and lived at home until she was eight years old. She was quite active and kept us all very busy. She liked to go off exploring, sometimes in the middle of the night and at other times she would go into the neighbor's homes looking for toys and food.

Our parents wanted to keep Sharon at home, but she took up most all of their time and they had six other children to raise.

Sharon needed 24/7 supervision; understandably, her high care needs were stressing the family out. We suffered from sleep deprivation in those days.

Sharon had one out-of-home placement before she went to live at Fircrest ICF/MR ("Residential Habilitation Center" (RHC)), where she has been since 1974. At that time, some of us kids wondered if Fircrest was the best place for her or not.

Our parents told us that the staff at Fircrest "took better care of Sharon than we could" and that Sharon was learning new things every day, had caregivers/professional staff that were experts in understanding her needs, and she had a large safe campus to roam on.



Our mom admitted that Fircrest may not be perfect (that was 1974) but she told us that it was our duty to work to make sure it was. She told us that people with developmental disabilities were not highly regarded in our society and it was our responsibility to work to change that. Mom was a great role model; she volunteered at Fircrest regularly in the 70's and 80's and was always busy advocating for people with developmental disabilities.

Our parents were very devoted to Sharon and visited her often at Fircrest to make sure she had what she needed.

Now it is our turn.

***We don't want other individuals, or families to suffer without proper services for their loved ones.***

Our father passed away in 2003 and our mom is now 90 years old. The three of us – her sisters care for Sharon. We take turns

visiting Sharon every weekend and taking her on outings, attend her annual IHP's, and go to the Friends of Fircrest meetings.

None of us will ever forget what a challenge it is to care for our sister who is profoundly developmentally disabled. We don't want other individuals, or families to suffer without proper services for their loved ones. Our state RHCs are a godsend. We need them as part of our continuum of care for all citizens with developmental disabilities to be able to access. We advocate for these services all the time with VOR, Friends of Fircrest and our state organization ActionDD <http://www.actiondd.org/>