Advocacy in Action

Teddy Fitzmaurice
Susan Fitzmaurice
Teddy was born addicted to cocaine and never expected to survive.
He was lucky to be born with Down syndrome as that is the reason his birthmom didn't get to keep him.
He had failure to thrive until age 5.
He is one of the earliest people to experience inclusive education.
He now struggles with dissociative identity disorder. This is a significant mental illness that stems from early abuse and adult sexual assault. It makes employment and independent living problematic, but not impossible.
Teddy thinks it is far more important to know:

- He is 31 years old.
- He was born in New York City.
- He is adopted.
- He is Black, Native American & Spanish.
- He is of Puerto Rican heritage.
- He graduated from high school.
- He attended transitional education.
- He is the President of Teddy's Ts
And that he -

- Has 2 bunnies, Michelle & Snowball.
- Is named after Teddy Kennedy.
- Never wants to live in a group home.
- Lives in his own apartment next to his mom.
- Helps take care of his Grandma.
- Loves holiday & birthdays.
- Wants everybody to have freedom and love their life like he does.
Teddy has grown up as a disability activist.
But Teddy wanted to be more than a disability activist, he had a dream: he wanted to be president. And so he is – President of Teddy's Ts.
In the beginning, Teddy's Ts was a tiny microenterprise. He sold just a few shirts from the Nth Degree. His friend Dan Wilkins helped him get started. Dan lent him shirts to sell on consignment and Mom used her credit card to pay business expenses.
It was really hard work at first. Teddy had to learn a lot of new things.

- Make good eye contact.
- Sit up straight.
- Recognize size labels.
- Keep piles of shirts straight
- Make change
- Fold shirts
- Don't fall asleep
- Give everyone a business card
- Remember how much shirts and buttons cost.
- Be nice to people who don't buy anything
- Don't give anything away for free.
Teddy hard at work - painting a shirt and making buttons.
Mom had to learn lots of new things, too.

- Push Teddy to stay focused.
- Break things down into very small steps.
- Not do things Teddy could do.
- If Teddy couldn't do it, figure out what he could do.
- Be more patient
- Accept that there were many limitations.
- Remember - this is his dream and his business.
But Mom also learned to -

- Keep books
- Price shirts competitively
- Learn about sales tax and business expenses
- Ask for reduced conference fees
- Better understand marketing, social media, & e-commerce
- Be judicious about credit

And - Expand the original concept of Teddy's Ts to better match Teddy's growing sense of himself and a changing economy.
Mistakes were made along the way...

- Depending too much on the good will of others
- Pricing shirts at $18.00
- Expanding too quickly into too many designs.
- Delaying our move to make buttons
- Trying to silkscreen shirts ourselves.
- Trying out a retail space
But the successes have been worth it!

- Teddy has learned the value of money.
- He is finally beginning to read – via name tags.
- His attention span has expanded.
- He has a place in the community - as a business owner and a disability activist.
- He is has been formally recognized many times.
Traveled to Chicago, St Louis, New York City, Denver, San Juan, Oklahoma City, Washington DC, Indianapolis, Seattle, Baltimore, Columbus, and now New Orleans.

Met people like President Clinton, Representative John Dingell, Senator Tom Harken, Debbie Stabenaw and Patrick Kennedy and many others.

Learned to silkscreen t-shirts, hand paint designs on shirts, & design and manufacture buttons.
Some of Teddy's Tshirts

SCARS ARE TATTOOS WITH BETTER STORIES

BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD - Gandhi

Peace

I VOTE! Do You?

I ♥ My Life!

Haha!! I've got more chromosomes than you!
Some of Teddy's Buttons

- Label jars ... not people
- Our Homes, Not Group Homes
- Ho-Hall! I've got more chromosomes than you!
- Shred The Word! retard
- Disabled, Sexy, Proud!
- Nothing About Us Without Us!
What is the key to Teddy's Ts success?

Teddy is a natural born salesman and an artist.

Teddy was given the opportunity to follow his dream and it took him where no one imagined he could go.

No boundary has stood in the way of Teddy's Ts success, because no boundary was believed to be insurmountable.

The success of Teddy's Ts lies in his desire to make the world a better place.

Teddy gets a lot of help from people who care about him.

Teddy is living his American dream.
Teddy's Ts website – designed by Mom and Rich.

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