

NEXUS CHAMPION

CAROLANN RAE



After spending most of her life in and out of psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment centers, Carolann Rael finally found Nexus and Dr. John Cassidy. Her mother, Carmela Rael, explained, **"I have never in all the years of her treatment found anyone who has advocated for Carolann like Dr. Cassidy and his team."**

Carolann came to the Rael family at the age of three and they adopted her two years later. Due to negative experiences in early childhood, she has challenging behaviors. Over the past couple of years, her behavior escalated to the point that she was a danger to herself and others. She also started running away and was constantly involved with law enforcement.

At that point, the Rael family felt they had tried every treatment and therapy available but couldn't find anything that helped Carolann for an extended period of time. A Crisis Intervention Manager through the police department recommended Nexus.

"A woman from Nexus came out to meet us and she explained the neurorecovery program to us," said Carmela. **"It was a completely different treatment approach from anything we'd tried before. She got her mental health treated, as well as physical, occupational, and speech therapy."**

Since Carolann was borderline intellectually independent, she was admitted to the Nexus Neurorecovery Center Independent Living Program. While this was the right fit at first, after a few weeks it was determined she would be more successful at Nexus Children's Hospital. Although the team thought this was the next best step for her, Carmela remembers **"it was a battle to get insurance to pay for it."** **"The main reason we never found the right treatment for Carolann was due to insurance. If they would have paid for her to stay as long as she really needed at past places, we feel that treatment would have been more**

successful," she said. **"When she transferred to the Children's Hospital, it was challenging, but Nexus was amazing and got insurance to approve."**

Once there, Carolann settled in, even saying the hospital was the first place she's ever been where she felt comfortable. Instead of staying at a restrictive psychiatric facility, at Nexus, she could have her makeup, hair straightener, and other items that made a difference.

Dr. Cassidy explained, **"Carolann had longstanding neurobehavioral handicapping conditions with needs that couldn't be met in a mental health facility. Because our highly specialized environment is unique from anywhere in the entire country, we can help children like Carolann who have complex behavioral and medical challenges."**

Carolann was at Nexus Children's Hospital for about three months. While there, the team made adjustments to her medications and she received psychological services and interdisciplinary evaluation and treatment.

Approaching her 18th birthday, Carolann transitioned back to Nexus Neurorecovery Center so she could benefit from more learning opportunities, young adult peer groups, vocational activities, and outings. She also continued to receive medical and behavioral management by Dr. Cassidy, psychological counseling, and interdisciplinary therapy.

During her latest conference, her team was excited about the progress she's made. Amanda Collier, Dr. Cassidy's PA-C, reported, **"Carolann has been very cooperative with taking her medications and her mood and behavior has been stable. She has also shown improvement in her sleep habits and daily hygiene, which has enabled us to decrease her level of supervision."**

Amanda went on to explain Carolann is working on healthy eating habits, as well as purchasing and preparing her own food. Many evenings, Carolann is excited to practice her cooking skills and has even made some meals for the whole unit of residents! She's also participating in therapeutic days, where she is learning different life skills like budgeting and paying bills. Plus, she's enjoying various on and off campus activities, like yoga, going to the park, and eating out at restaurants — all while maintaining appropriate behavior.

"I really think Nexus will greatly improve her outcome. Just being able to stay where she needs to be is a huge part about what is making this treatment work," said Carmela.

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