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Fresh start Program lets disabled pursue a 'Whole Life'

By Richard Lech staff writer

N MANY WAYS, Ray Schuholz is the same as any other 25-year-eld bachelor.

He has his own apartment, which he shares with a friend, in Livenia's Morristowne Apartments

complex.

He cooks his own meals, whipping up such dishes as spaghetti, tuna casserole and his specialty, meat loaf.

He also cleans house and washes

He also cleans house and washes his own clothes:

Five days a week he packs a lunch and heads for his job as a cleanup man at a Livenia office building. The money he brings in helps to pay for such extra as his own telephone and his pet guinea pig. Fred.

On Saturday nights, he hilts the bar seene and shows off his dancing prowess.

BUT UNLIKE most bachelors, Schuholz doesn't take his independ-ence for granted. Schuholz is considered developmen-tally disabled, but he doesn't like la-kelo.

Schubolt is considered developmentally disabled, but he doesn't like labels.

"I don't believe in labeling," and dechubolt, who got his diploma from Farmington Hills Hilly School through the special education program. "You label yourself something, you're going to be it."

"It don't nextly the "pecings deal" that just because he is developmentally disabled he cannot live independently. Instead of being in an institution or even in a group home, he is living more or less on his own, through a Livenia-based program, the Whole Life Program.

Whole Life participants, and an emergency beeper system is in place in case of emergencies.

But the apartiment is considered the participants "own private domain," a program spokesman said.

"The Whole Life people are there sometimes, but they can't always come out here to your rescue," Schubolt said.

"You've got to be your own person. The only way you're going to learn is if you do it yourself."

HIS APARTMENT is one of nine units Whole Life has at Morristowne. (There are also three units in the Blue Gardens Apartments complex in Westland)

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Morristowne Apartments," Schuholz said. "Not as disabled, but as

and. "Not as disabled, but as tenants."

And being a tenant, he knows, has its responsibilities as well as its privi-

leges.
"For instance, if you blow your muste up or have a loud party, you're going to take responsibility for it," Schubolz said. "They can sign a complaint and kick you out like anybody else."

Schuboly has become an enthusian.

cien."

Schubolt has become an enthusiaslic spokesman for the vihous laire Frogram. He has given speeches about its
advantages at group homes, even peradvantages at group homes, even peradvantages at group homes, even perindependent living.
"I really like this program,"
Schubolz sald. "It helps you eut in
your needs. And everybody's needs
are different."

STARTED BY Alternative Services, a non-profil corporation, in May 1980, the Whole Life Program has 22 developmentally disabled people placed in apartments. There is a two-to three-year waiting list, naid Madeline Maher, one of the program's two assistant coordinators.

The state Department of Mental

grams two assistant coordinators.
The state Department of Mental Realth rents the apartments, but the clients pay as much of their other expenses as they can, either with their wages from a job or with their Social Security or General Assistance checks, Maher sald.

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Participants pay for their own gro-ceries, transportation, personal needs and utility bills. One man even pays

for his own rent with money be earns from various jobs, she said.

To make sure everything is going smoothly for the participants, there are separate meetings weekly with a program counselor and a program aide. The aide discusses their progress on a checklist of activities such as money management, apartment housekeeping, and personal management.

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There are also quarterly meetings with the participant's interdisciplinary team, — a nurse, psychiatrist, and case manager — to discuss the person's progress.

An outside rights advisor keeps the participants advised of their rights. The reddents also can bring up concerns at participants' meetings, Schuholx add.

"He's fairly verbal about what his rights are," Maher said of Schuholx, "and be organizes other people in the group if he feels they're rights are being violated."

SCHUHOLZ SAID he feels his personal growth has been tremendous in the close to three years he has participated in the program. In fact, he even pated in the program in fact, he even the program of the program with the different tasks and the program of the prog

He then lived in the Plymouth Center state mental health institution for three years before finally moving in with a foster family, with whom he stayed for 14 years.

"In the institution, when they put people there, they really don't learn anything," Schubolz said. "They leave you alone, let you do your own thing, but they don't teach you anything. A foster care home — they're like your parents. They can feach you how to do things on your own."

Living with his foster family, he said, helped prepare him for the next step—t independent living step—they are they have they are they have they will be they are they have they are t

program zhowed me around, gave me a helping hand.
"The things I've learned aince I've been in the program include cooking, budgeling money, self-esteem, and responsibility. If something goes wrong, you're responsible for it."

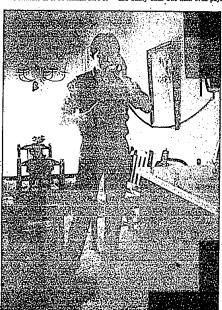
EACH PROGRAM participant has set of goals he or she works on, such a learning how to budget money or

cook.
Schuholr's latest goals are improving his vocabulary and writing letters. He has written to Gov. Blanchard, state Department of Mental
Health director C. Philip Babcock, the
Observer. his case worker. and his

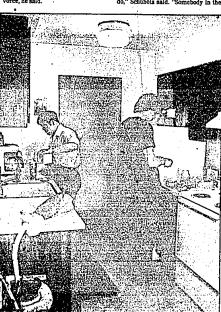
The letter to Blanchard was a thank-you note for certificates of spe-cial tribute signed by the governor that were awarded to Whole Life Pro-

gram participants at a recent recog-nition night.
"That certificate really touched ev-erybody." Schuholz said. "I know it really touched me."

Schuloit also has worked on be-coming more outgoing, with quite a bit of success. Besides giving speech-es on the Whole Life Program, he served as an atternate on a state grand jury for a year and also has made a hobby of attending public af-fairs television shows as a member of



Bohuhola has his two newcat coquisitions pel guines pig, Fred — wall in hand.



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Staff photos by Dan Doun