

Residents of a group home live like any other big family

Same dreams and same problems

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The young men and women who live at 71 DeKay St., West Brighton, have a hard time agreeing on what radio station to keep the living room stereo tuned to.

The four men and six women can't agree on whether to watch MTV or VH-1 either. They tend to bicker about issues like this, much the way brothers and sisters do.

Like most people between the ages of 18 and 23, these people are happy to have moved away from their parents and into a place of their own. They also all happen to have developmental disabilities and live in a group home.

"We're like everyone else in the neighborhood," said Donald McCarthy, 18. "We work, we go to school, we play sports." Donald is

one of the people who lives at this community residence run by On Your Mark, a West Brighton-based agency that provides residential, recreational and educational services for people with developmental disabilities.

The housemates are aware that their neighborhood did not welcome the news that they would be moving in. "I think most of us have faced prejudice all our lives," Donald said.

But prejudice is not what is on the minds of this group. They are too busy living their lives: preparing for graduations and proms, going to work or looking for jobs, learning the skills that will help them become even more independent, and finding time for sports and other social activities.

A recent evening visit provided a glimpse of what life is like on DeKay Street. The house stands on a corner of the quiet, tree-lined avenue, and from the outside there is no way to tell that this home is different from any of the others on the block.

Donald and his roommate, Anthony Fairweather, 18, offered a tour of the house. Two of the women have their own bedrooms, the rest of the residents share rooms with one other person.

A giant poster of the pop singer Michael Bolton hangs on the wall in the room shared by Lynn Gregoli, 21, and Samantha Rothman, 22. Melissa Calman, 20,

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