Microboards 101

## An Introduction to a Person-Centered Solution Offering Full Accountability, Active Community Support, and Lifelong Continuity of Care

Bill and Don remind us that ***all of us*** need acceptance and understanding, trustworthy companions, valued social roles and many opportunities to contribute to the life and well-being of our communities.

Families need lifelong trustworthy sources for continuity of care and creative solution-seeking for their sons and daughters. We need strong partners to help us create good lives on a day-to-day basis.
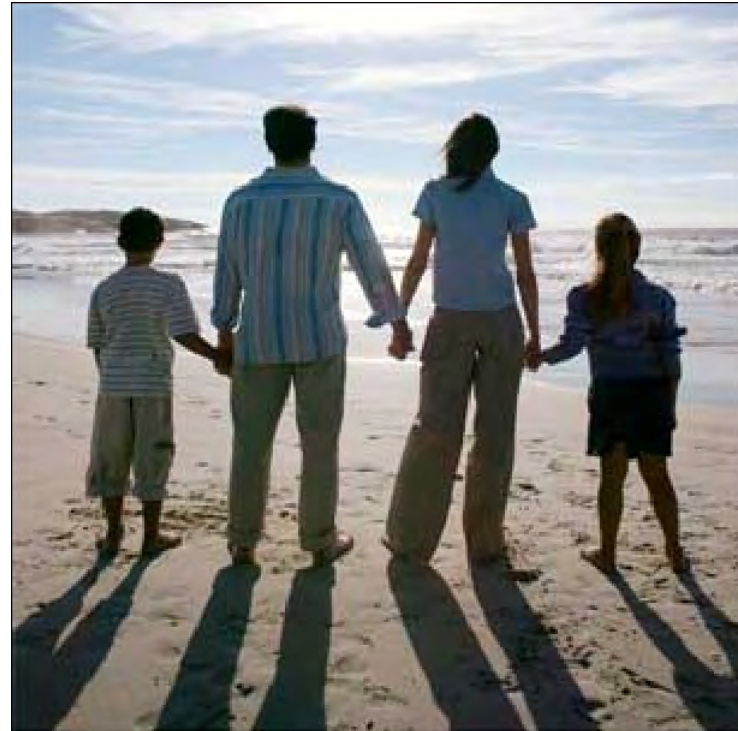
Community partners need understandable models for making meaningful differences in one person's life.

Governments are looking for clear, sustainable methods for making services and supports more person-centered, family-friendly, and directed by the people and families who are being supported.

Elements of a Good Life

- Autonomy and Interdependence
- A Life that is Rich in Relationships
- Meaningful Employment
- Meaningful Contributions
- Valued Social Roles
- A Home of My Own
- Financial Security
- Continuity of Care and Advocacy
- Person-Centered Supports

This evening, we'll be talking about a person-centered option in which the state provides direct individualized funding to a small provider organization called a 'Microboard'.

Microboards are small (micro) nonprofit corporations (boards) that are designed to serve one person.

We created the first Microboard over thirty years ago.
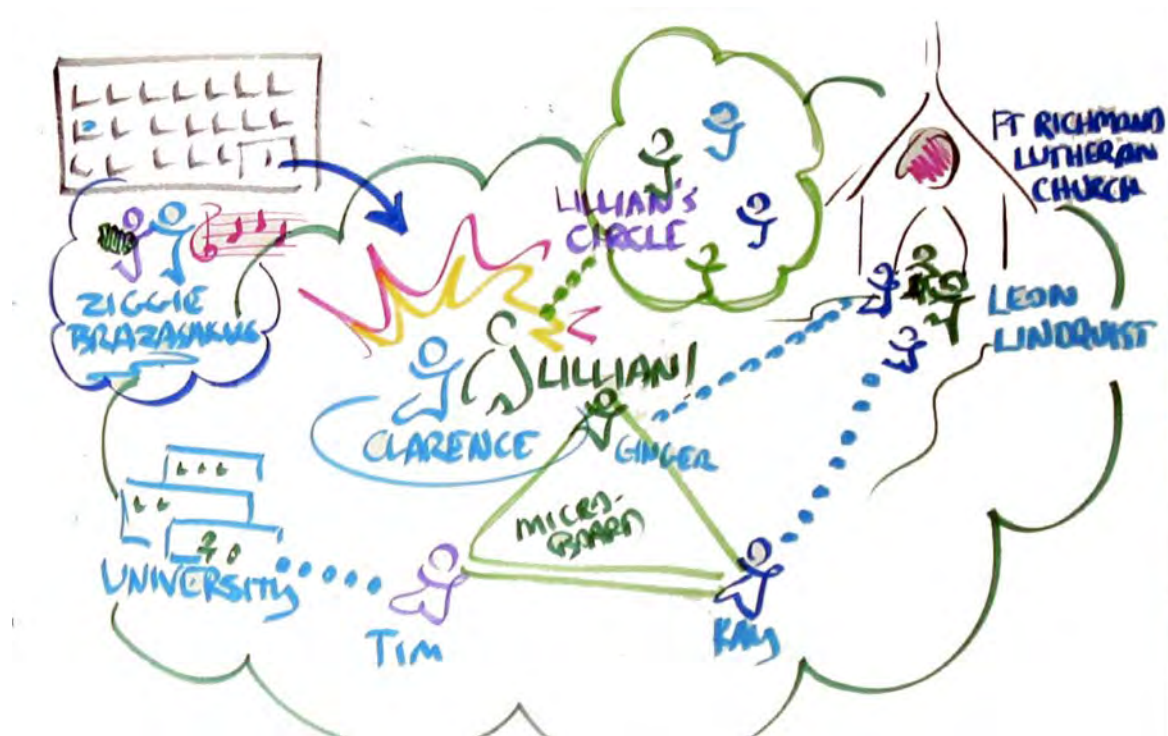
That Microboard inspired a *movement* as people realized that the model would work for them and governments realized that they were working well for the people.

There are now nearly 3,000 Microboards worldwide, including ….

- Vela Microboard Association in British Columbia
- Microboard Associations in
  - **Illinois**
  - Wisconsin
  - Georgia
  - Tennessee
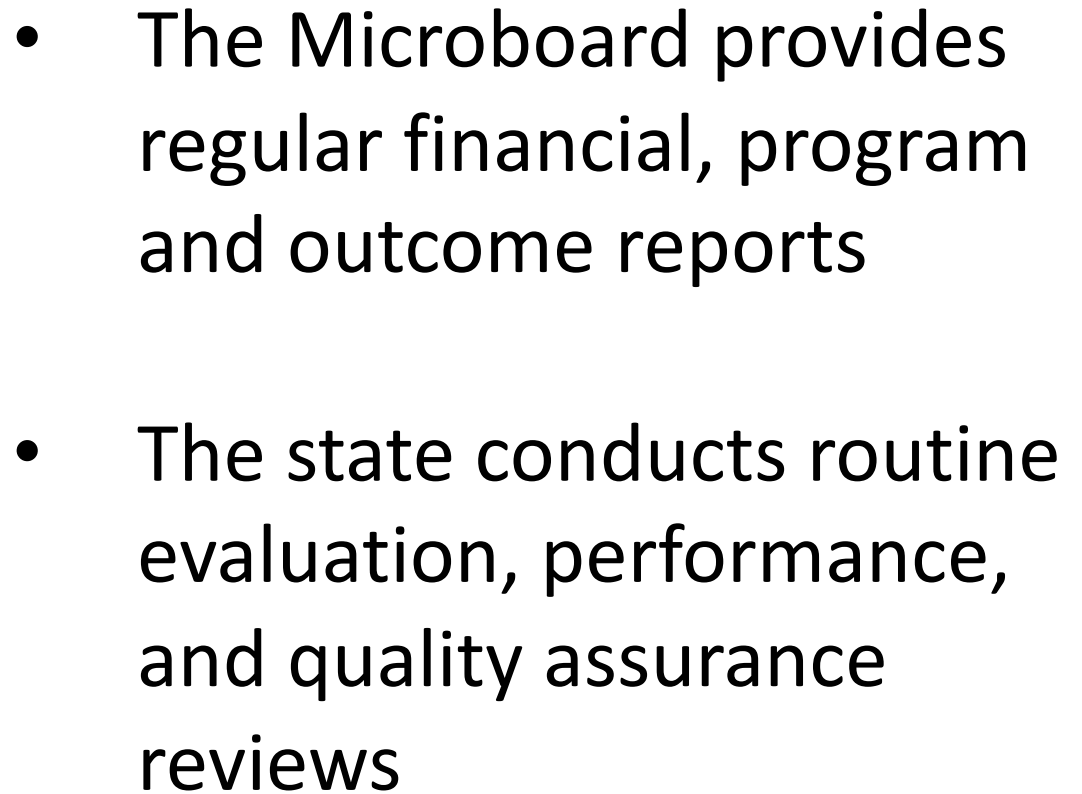 - Australia, the UK, Norway, and elsewhere

The state qualifies each Microboard as a *provider*, in the same way as it qualifies any other provider.

- The Microboard builds a person-centered plan and submits a program plan and a budget to the state

- The state contracts with the Microboard for specific services and supports

- The Microboard provides regular financial, program and outcome reports

- The state conducts routine evaluation, performance, and quality assurance reviews

- All of this can be done without requiring any changes in legislation, policy, regulation or administrative procedures.

Like any other provider, the Microboard:

- Employs and supervises direct support workers
- Purchases goods, services, and specialized supports,
- Purchases 'utility' services such as payroll, benefit plans, etc.

Because they serve only one person, Microboards have a number of important features that are 'baked into' their architecture …

- Person-centered planning is 'baked in'

- Planning *with* the person, their family and trusted community partners is 'baked in'

- The person and their Microboard control who provides direct support on a day-to-day basis. As one of the organizers of a state-wide Association says, "You get to control who comes in your front door."

- The person is a full member of the governing board, and receives whatever supports he or she needs to effectively express their sense of direction.

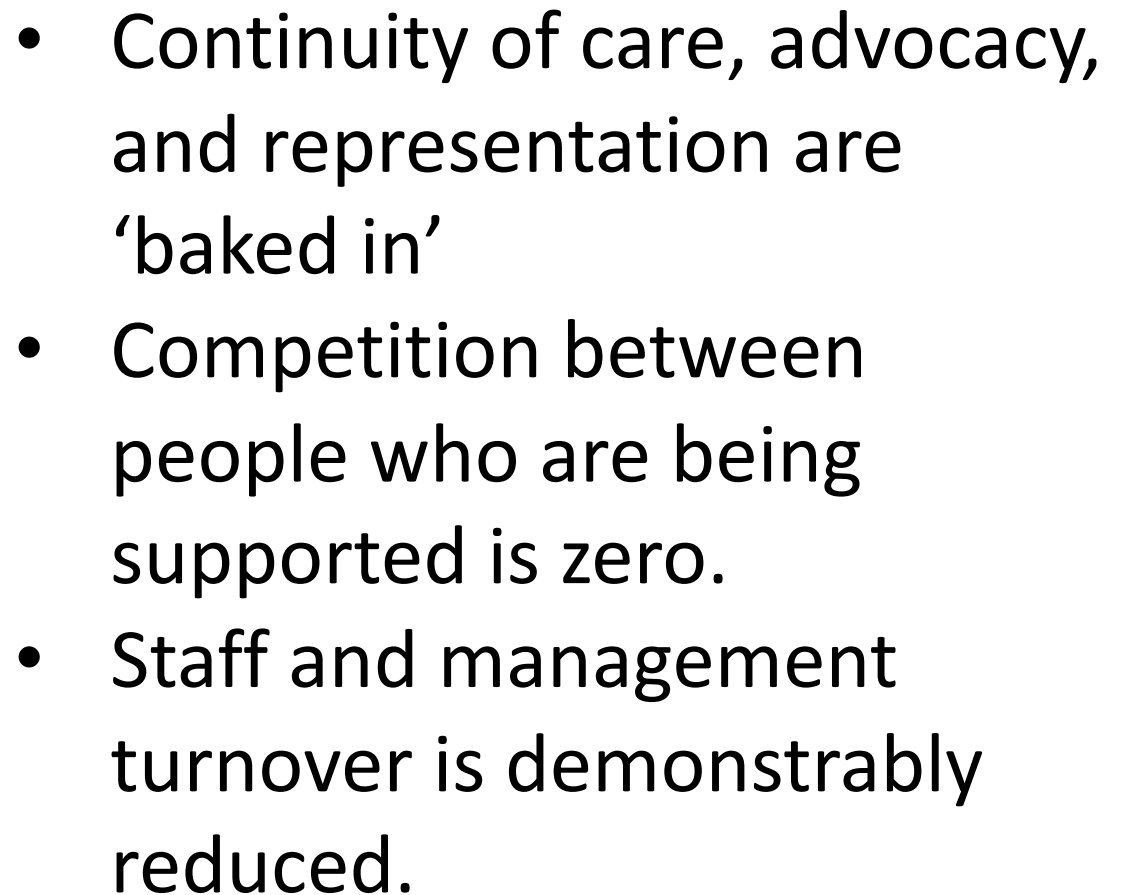- Microboards strongly encourage and support the active involvement and engagement of community partners.

- These partners can offer invitation and membership in the community spaces in which they have standing and influence, greatly expanding the person's connections and opportunities.
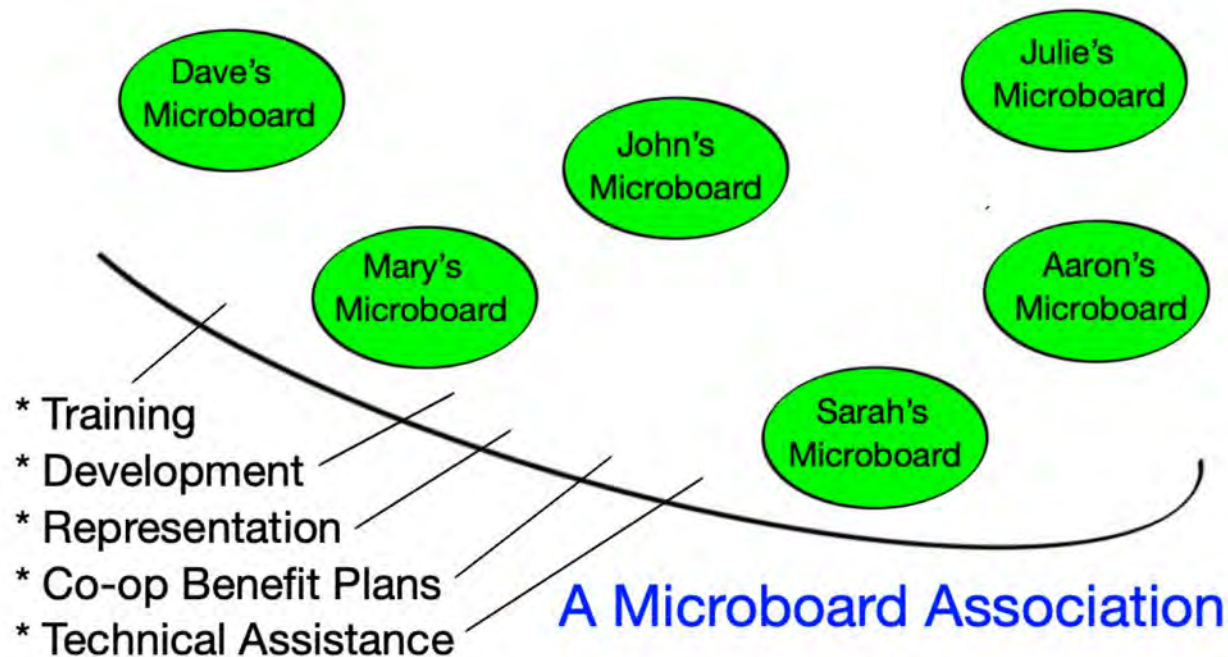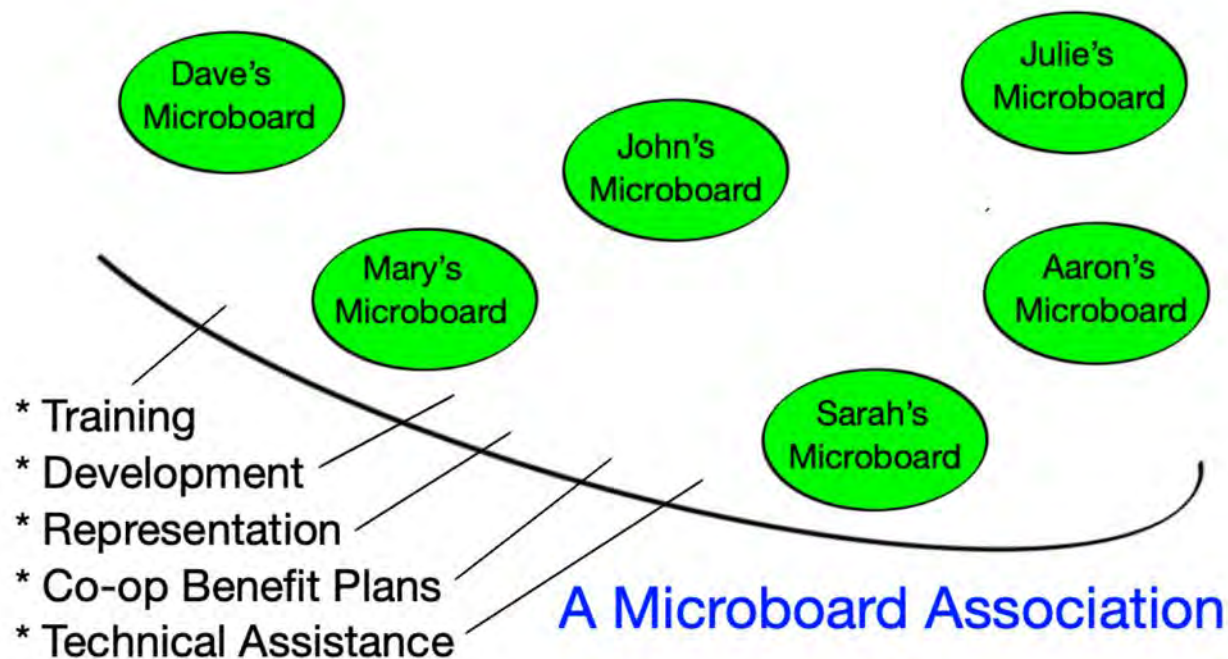
- Rapid adaptation and response is 'baked in', including the fact that …
- The person can move to another house without losing their supports, and
- The person can choose another provider without losing their home.

- Continuity of care, advocacy, and representation are 'baked in'
- Competition between people who are being supported is zero.
- Staff and management turnover is demonstrably reduced.

Dave's Microboard

Julie's Microboard

John's Microboard

Mary's Microboard

Aaron's Microboard

Sarah's Microboard

* Training
* Development
* Representation
* Co-op Benefit Plans
* Technical Assistance

A Microboard Association

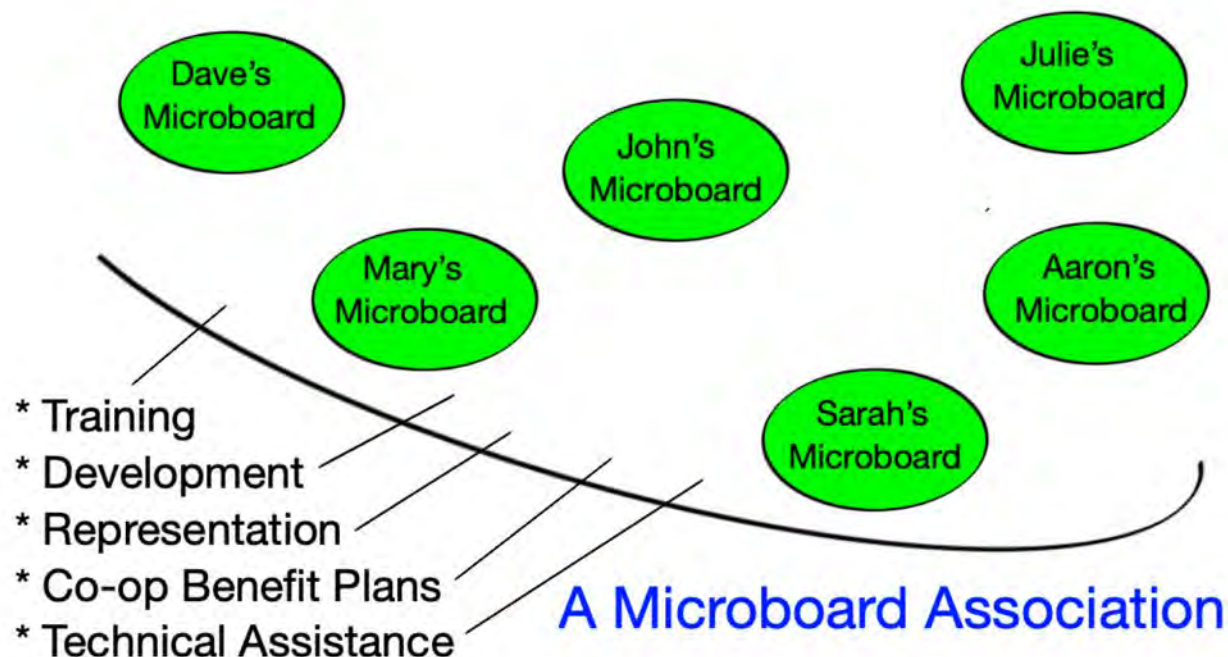Microboards don't do this in isolation. Individual Microboards are developed and supported by local, regional or state-wide Microboard Associations.

Dave's Microboard

Julie's Microboard

John's Microboard

Mary's Microboard

Aaron's Microboard

Sarah's Microboard

* Training
* Development
* Representation
* Co-op Benefit Plans
* Technical Assistance

A Microboard Association

This makes it possible for Microboards to receive high-quality training and technical support and share high-quality resources such as accounting services, benefit plans, HR consultation, etc.

Dave's Microboard

Julie's Microboard

John's Microboard

Mary's Microboard

Aaron's Microboard

Sarah's Microboard

* Training
* Development
* Representation
* Co-op Benefit Plans
* Technical Assistance

A Microboard Association

Membership in the Association is voluntary, although some states are asking Associations to certify that a Microboard is in good standing and following established principles and practices.

Now we're going to look at the connection between the Microboard and a method for developing enduring circles of support called the 'Star Raft'
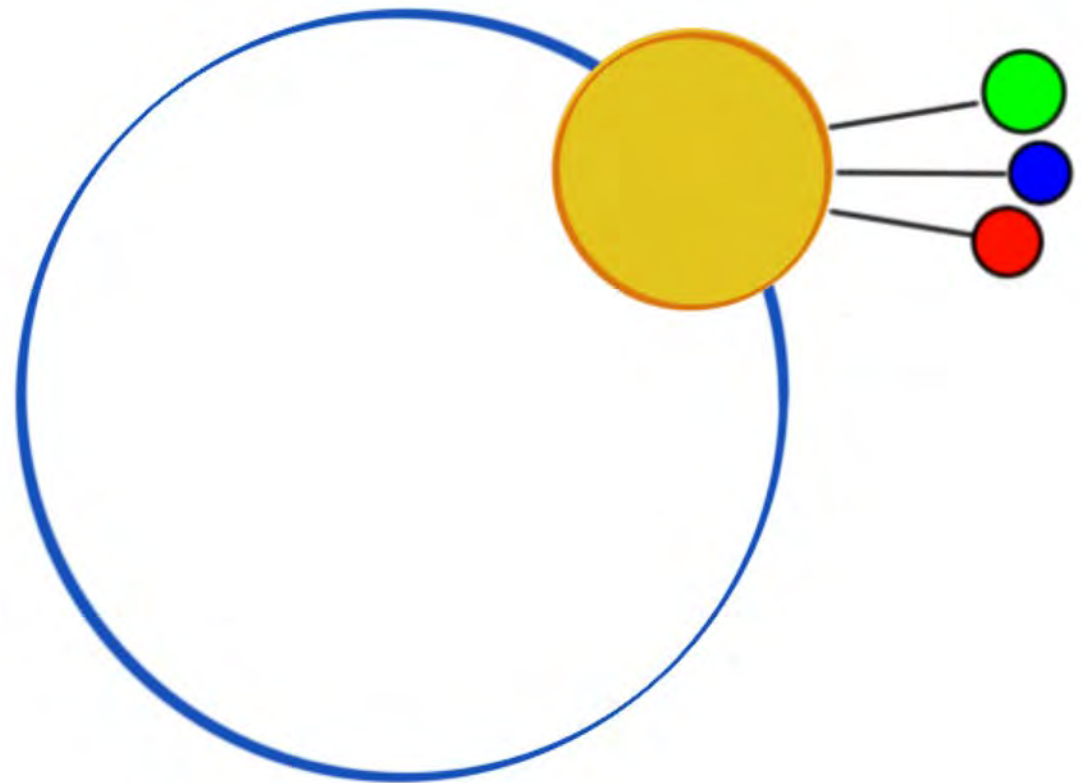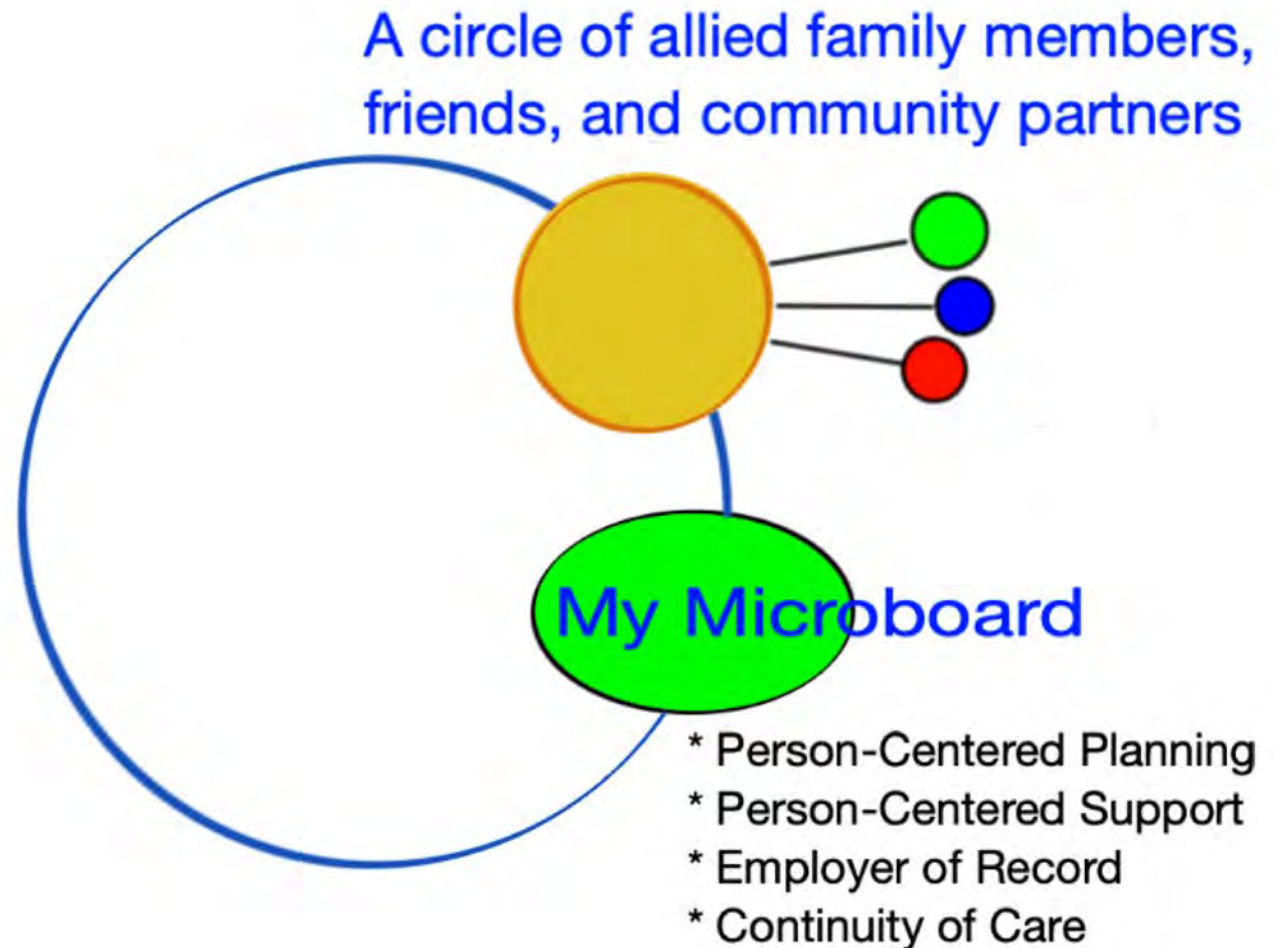
All Microboards start with a larger **circle** that is made up of allied family members, friends and community partners.
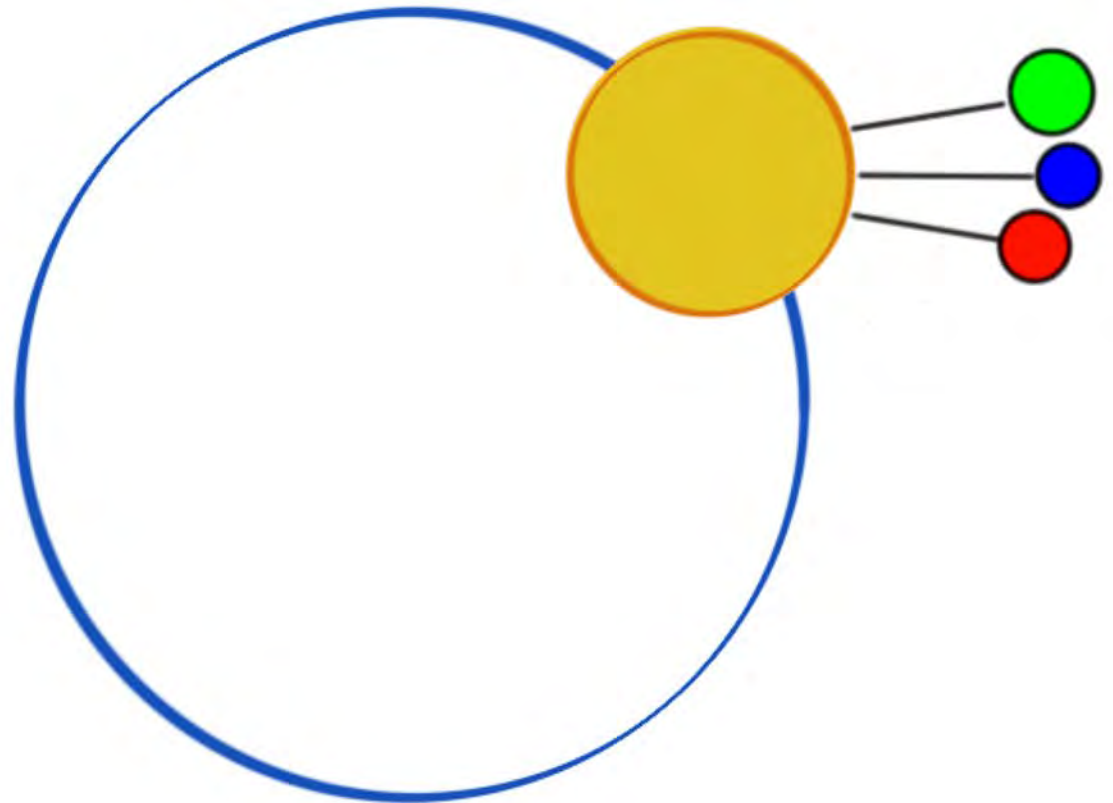
At any given time, a few members of the circle, including the person at the center, serve as directors of the Microboard corporation.

A circle of allied family members, friends, and community partners

My Microboard

* Person-Centered Planning
* Person-Centered Support
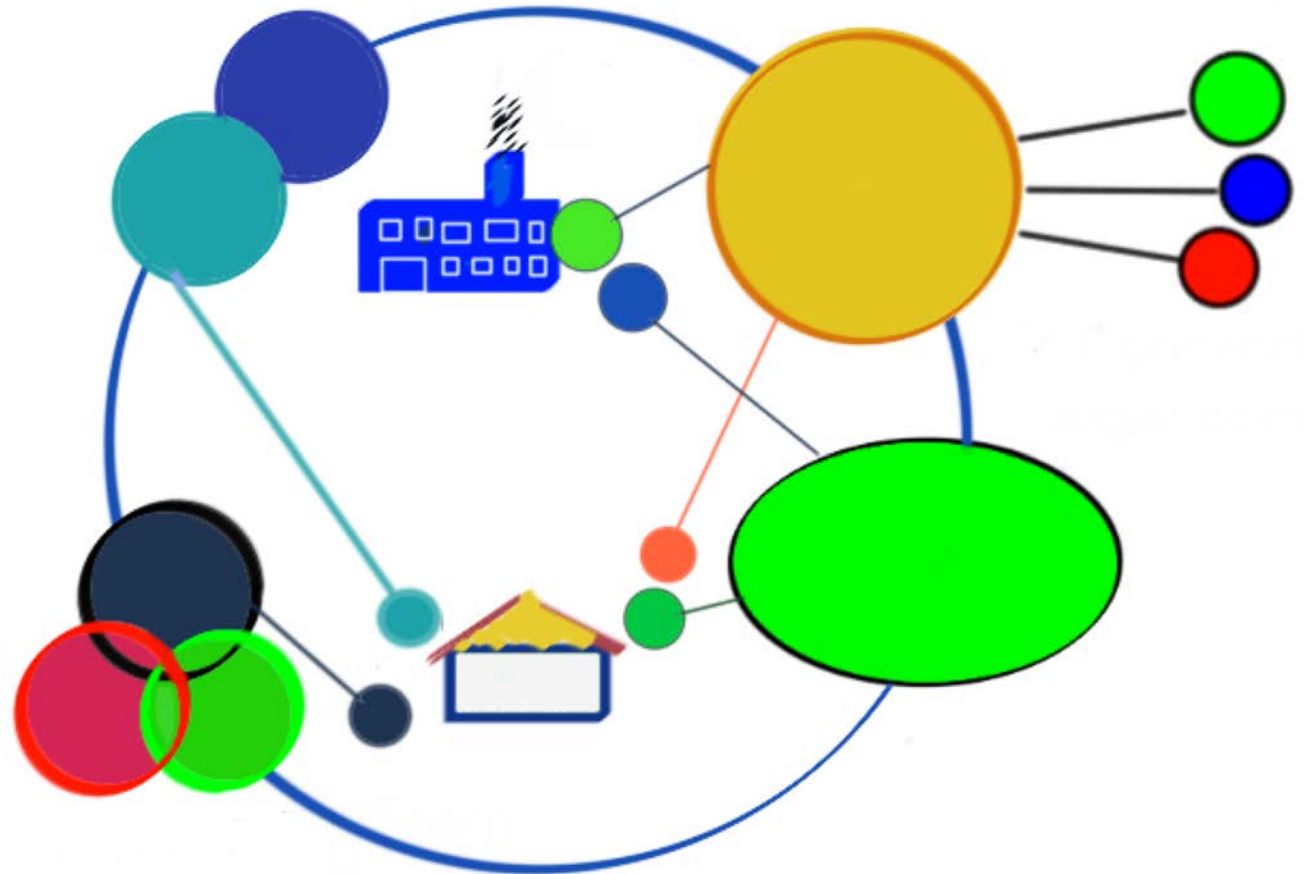* Employer of Record
* Continuity of Care

Other circle members may serve in additional roles, such as Supported Decision-Making partners, Financial Trustees, formal Representation Agreement partners, and so on.
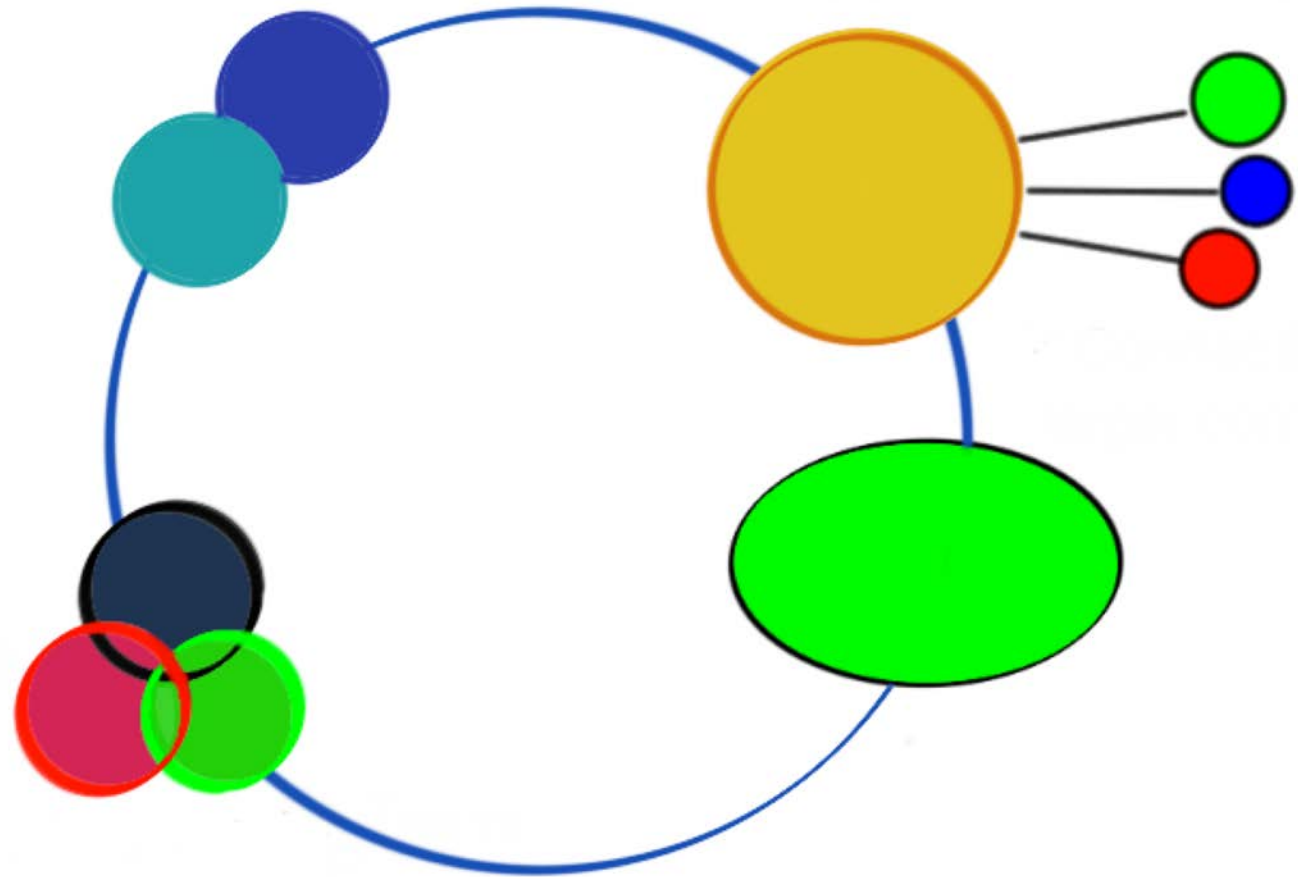
Along with the Microboard, circle members can assist the person in being successful as a renter or owner his or her own home, or in customized employment.
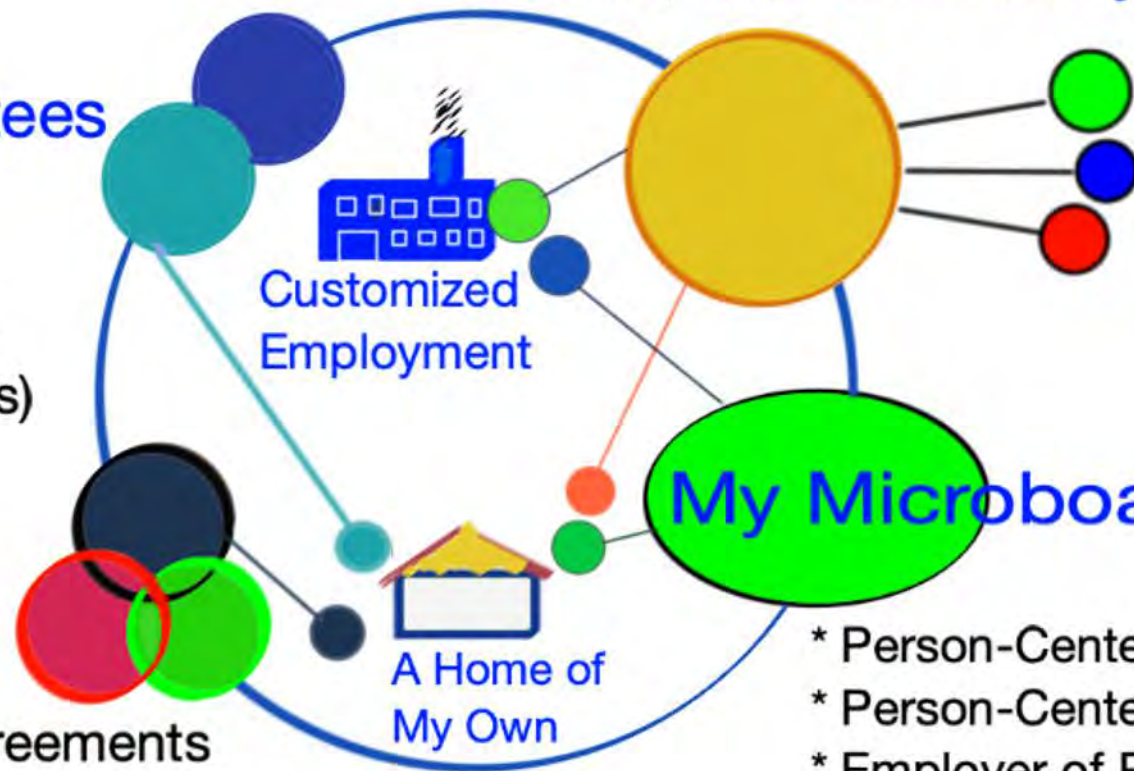
My Financial Trustees

* Wills and estate
  planning
* Discretionary trusts
  (special needs trusts)

My Supported
Decision-Making
Partners

* Representation Agreements
* A legal alternative to guardianship

A circle of allied family members,
friends, and community partners

Customized
Employment

A Home of
My Own

My Microboard

* Person-Centered Planning
* Person-Centered Support
* Employer of Record
* Continuity of Care

We know that the *idea* of a circle is very important

But the *image* of a circle doesn't give us much of an idea about *how to do the work.*

So we knew we needed a model that wasn't quite as simple as a 'circle'

Some time ago, we learned that recreational sailors sometimes tie up in a circle called a 'star raft' when they want to anchor *in community*.

The Star Raft Circle has all of the *qualities* that we've been seeking …

… a step-by-step *method* for building it and sustaining it

… a clear sense of *direction*

… and a 'metaphor' that could help people understand the roles and responsibilities involved.

It occurred to us that this …

… was like this

The sailing star raft is based on a nautical tradition of *hospitality*

People sharing connections and what they 'carry on board'

Helping new sailors 'learn the ropes'

Deciding how they will manage any hazards up ahead

Identifying interesting places to visit

And planning the next adventure together.

The circle starts with an *invitation,* and it's built one boat – one conversation – at at time

Each new person brings new opportunities, insights, connections and capacities

Each person has different interests and 'standing' in different places, so more opportunities show up

The shape creates a space in the middle where it's safe to swim, because everyone's in view and everyone is always within reach

People can see, encourage and support one another

They feel accountable to the person at the centre and to the group

They see the need for continuity, so they naturally keep adding new people

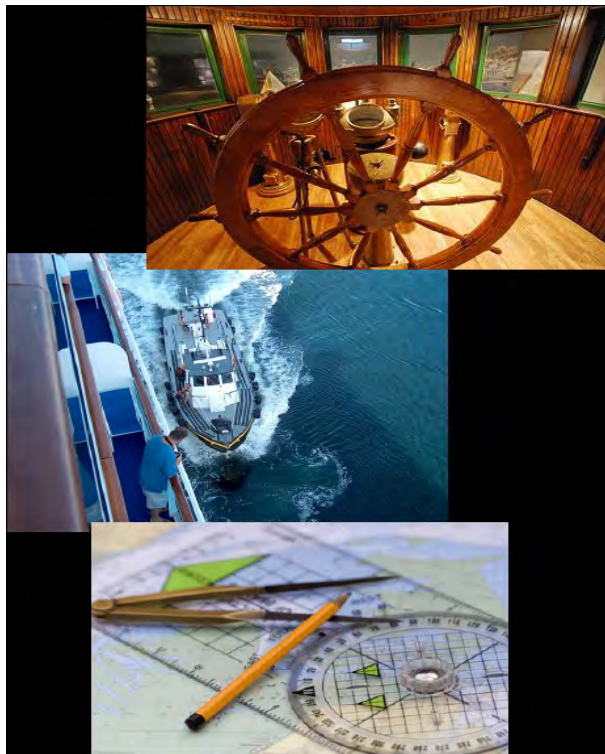# There's a sense of energy, creativity and celebration

And there are more people to share the work

The sailing metaphor offers some interesting ways to think about the roles that need to be fulfilled …

The Owner

The Skipper

Navigator

Map-Maker

Log-Keeper

Radio Operator

Safety Officer

Hospitality Officer

Harbor Pilot

Eight Essential Nautical Roles

Owner
Skipper
Map-Maker
Navigator
Harbor Pilot
Radio Operator
Log-Keeper
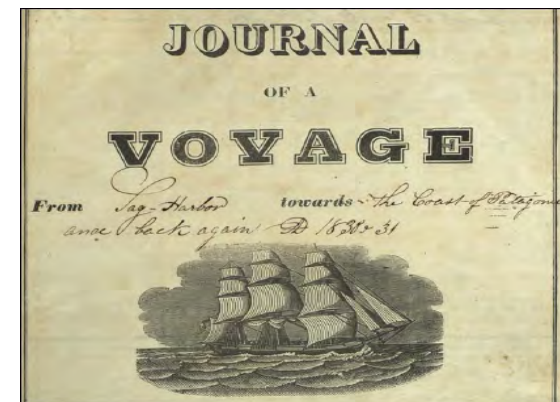
In a single-handed sailboat, one person is responsible for filling *all* of the roles that are essential for safe and happy sailing: Owner, Skipper, Navigator, Radio Operator, Safety Officer, Harbor Pilot, and so on. In a larger boat, a family or a Star Raft circle, it's important for each of these roles to be filled and ultimately for lots of people to be good at these jobs.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Owner

It's important to be clear about the difference between the 'owner' of a boat and its 'skipper'. The Owner says *where the boat is going*. The Skipper takes responsibility for getting us there, keeping everyone safe, and organizing the contributions of the crew and passengers. In a Star Raft, the 'focus person' is always considered to be the Owner.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Skipper

When there's an agreement that people will share the nautical roles, the Skipper has ultimate responsibility for 'safe passage'. She has authority to organize everyone's work and responsibility to keep everyone safe on the water. In the long run, Star Raft circles work best when people take turns and get experience in all of the roles - especially the role of Skipper.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Navigator

The Navigator keeps track of where we started, where we're headed, where we are at the moment, what obstacles or traffic might lie ahead, and what course changes will get us from where we are now to where we're going. This is never about criticism or blame, so the Navigator has a kind of 'diplomatic immunity'. It's helpful to take turns in this role.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Radio Operator

Think about the role of the Radio Operator as keeping everyone connected and informed about what's going to happen next. These days, we use email and instant messaging, but the role is the same. On the water, the Radio Operator has an additional important role - that of sending out distress signals and listening for other vessels in distress.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Log-Keeper

In a Star Raft (and in life), it's often very helpful to keep a 'journal' - a record that allows us to reflect on our experience, learn from our history, and celebrate how far we've come. Keep a vivid graphic and verbal record of the journey - useful for learning, teaching future members, and sharing the story. With today's technology, you can use words, videos, drawings!

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Map-Maker

The early explorers sailed in uncharted territory, and they *always* made maps that allowed them to return home safely and make future journeys faster and easier. We now have tools that allow us to 'map' our connections and communities and quickly capture 'windows of opportunity' - people and places that pop up in conversation that we might miss unless we map them.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

Chief Steward

A wise person once said, "If you feed them they will come", and if we share this job around, Mom won't have to do all the baking. Hospitality, in its original sense, means 'friendliness to guests'. More than food, it connotes a sense of welcome, safety, comfort, and appreciation. It's important to have someone responsible for thinking about this and making it real in every gathering.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Harbor Pilot

When a big ship approaches a harbor, a Harbor Pilot will approach in a little boat, board the big ship, and skillfully navigate through shallows that the pilot knows well. This role comes into play when we need someone who can help us find our way into one of the community's Sweet Places. Find someone who already has standing in that place, and invite them into this role.

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

Share these jobs around!

In sailing, in life, and in a Star Raft, we're bound to be safer, happier and having more fun if everyone on deck has a working knowledge of every job, can do any job in a pinch, and feels competent and confident about what they're doing. People *will come and go, so* continuity is important and practice is essential. So share these jobs around!

Essential Nautical 'Roles'

The Star Raft pattern also includes very clear descriptions about what we are asking people to do and step-by-step instructions for making those invitations:

Introduce us to people whom you already know and trust, and who know and trust you.

Systematically identify and mobilize the gifts and capacities of the person at the center

And 'follow the threads' of the person's interests and gifts in the direction of *connection, companionship and contribution*
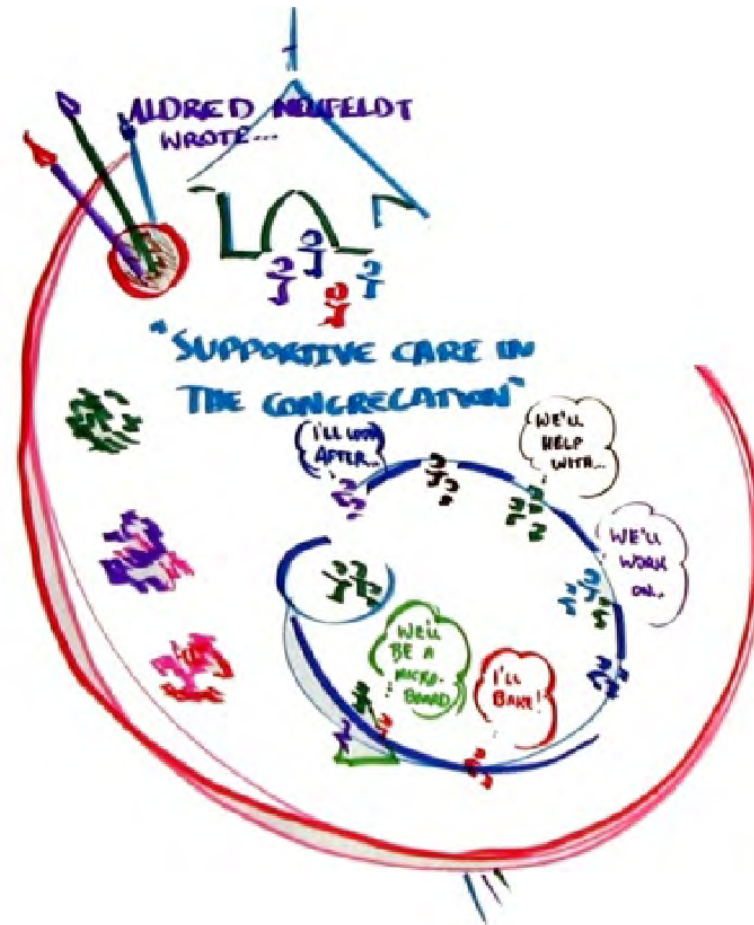
Look for the 'sweet places' in community

Be *in relationship* - become part of the person's life, and welcome him as part of yours

Make an agreement to be tied in for 'a while'

Bring other trusted people into the picture

Make agreements on 'major safeties', balancing what's important-to and important-for the person

And serve as a connector to community spaces in which you already have have 'standing'

Remember that every person in every one of these places ...

...can lend their connections to anyone else

So every thread we follow ...

Elements of a Good Life

- Autonomy and Interdependence
- A Life that is Rich in Relationships
- Meaningful Employment
- Meaningful Contributions
- Valued Social Roles
- A Home of My Own
- Financial Security
- Continuity of Care and Advocacy
- Person-Centered Supports

Support 'Infrastructure' for Person-Centered Solutions

Develop and support **independent, local s**ources for:

- ❖ Person-Centered Planning Training and Facilitation
- ❖ Microboard Development and Support
- ❖ Star Raft / Support Circle Training & Facilitation

Develop and support **independent, local c**apacity for delivering:

- ❖ Representation Agreements as an alternative to guardianship
- ❖ Financial Security through a combination of employment, government benefits and family funds
- ❖ Home of One's Own Solutions
- ❖ Customized Employment