

## Nikki's Next Step is OSBI's Eagerly Anticipated Expansion Into Housing

Supporting people with disabilities reach their own level of independence has always been part of the mission at One Step Beyond. Even though we don't currently offer residential or independent living services, it has always been something we have carefully considered. As many family caregivers may relate, having a suitable option for their adult to eventually live on their own is a regular thought. But what are the options? Conversations to help answer that question are starting to take place, and advocates like Amy Silverman are helping to further the cause.

Amy Silverman is a nationally recognized journalist, author, and teacher. Her work usually includes a focus on issues related to disability, often weaving narrative with investigative reporting to tell stories about her daughter, Sophie, who has Down syndrome, and others with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In a recent story for NPR, Amy explores the topic of safety when it comes to independent living opportunities for people with disabilities (LISTEN HERE). Two OSBI families were interviewed as apart of the story, including Mary Lou Micheaels and her husband John. "Housing for adults with disabilities is a complex issue, but one tremendously important to our OSBI families," explains Mary Lou Micheaels.

As family caregivers age, options for their adults to have a safe and supportive home becomes more and more pressing, ensuring their adults are cared for when their families are no longer able to. As stated in Amy's



story, more than a quarter of adults with disabilities in the state of Arizona are living with caregivers over the age of 60. If we do not have housing options for these individuals that are supportive, reasonably affordable, and safe, we will soon have a housing crisis on our hands (if we don't already have one).

As we look around the state, we are starting to see options like First Place Arizona, Luna Azul, and Treasure House begin to support the housing needs for people with disabilities in our community. But they can't house everyone. "More needs to be done." Says Mary Lou. This is why both her and John decided to start Nikki's Next Step in collaboration with One Step Beyond. Nikki's Next Step will be our eagerly-anticipated expansion into housing by providing safe, supportive, and below-market rate residences for 40 adults who have IDD. One Step Beyond is also partnering with the Big Wave Project in Half Moon Bay, CA to provide day program and employment services to the individuals with disabilities who will eventually live in their residential community. And while Nikki's Next Step and Big Wave won't solve the housing crisis in our states, we believe it a step in the right direction. For more information, or to get involved, visit [OSBI.org/Residential](https://OSBI.org/Residential)