



Spotlight on Staff

DAVID P. SOUSA

HIS GOAL: TO BE A SPECIAL ED TEACHER

David P. Sousa began interacting with children with intellectual and developmental disabilities by working with several autistic kids in a youth theater program he co-founded. He had some success getting them to open up and enjoyed the experience so much that he decided to

make it a career. He's getting additional experience as a Direct Service Professional (DSP) at Favarh's River Bend Academy (RBTA) at Tunxis Community College in Farmington, part of Favarh's Transition Services. But he's also studying for his master's degree in special education at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) in New Britain, with the goal of becoming a special education teacher, preferably in a high school.

He began his higher education as a journalism major at the University of Connecticut (UConn), but decided very quickly that he and journalism "weren't right for each other." So he transferred to CCSU, where he majored in theater. That opened up a whole new area for David. He explained that there are more community theaters in New Britain than in any other town or city in Connecticut. He has directed a half dozen plays at the Hole-in-the-Wall theater and acted in many others.

David also co-founded the New Britain Youth Theater, an after-school program that staged seven productions a year and attracted children from 50 different Connecticut communities.. It was while he was with the youth theater group that he worked with several children on the autism spectrum.

"It wasn't that they were non-verbal, but they were non-communicative," said David. "They enjoyed the experience and they began to open up. They were doing something unique and beneficial. Because of our success we started to get more kids on the spectrum."

However, the theater was more of David's avocation rather than his vocation. He became a substitute teacher and did a long-term substitute teaching assignment in special education. Because of that experience, plus working with autistic children in the theater program and then working here at Favarh, he set his goal on a career as a special ed. teacher.

David lives in Torrington with his wife, Denise Clapsaddle, the interim pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church. The couple have a daughter, 24, and a son, 21. The couple adopted the brother and sister in Russia when they were nine and 12 years old.