

# Independent living means new challenges

**RYAN SPAULDING**  
Staff Writer

Have you ever lived on your own? If not, have you at least thought about what it would be like? Now here's an interesting question: What if you had a mental or physical handicap and decided to live on your own? Do you think it would be harder for you if you had a disability?

There are many people who deal with this same problem, but one I know locally is Dan Spaulding, 23. Dan was born with brain damage, but was never diagnosed with a definite handicap. This impairment affects Dan's speech, coordination and learning abilities. Dan lives by himself in the Allen Apartment housing complex. He moved out of his parents' home in Long Rapids Township in May and into an apartment with a roommate. Dan then decided to live on his own and moved into his own place in August.

"It was hard when I first moved in because I didn't know people around the apartments," Dan said. "I didn't know how to budget and in the first weekend the toilet overflowed three times. After the first couple of weeks, I got more comfortable and got used to it. I like the independence, you know, the freedom of doing what you want. I could take off with nothing to tie me down."

It may sound like Dan doesn't have life all too bad, but you need to know some of the things he can't do. For instance, Dan doesn't know how to drive. He's tried in the past, but because of his disability, he couldn't do a lot of the hard things, like parallel parking and following directions. So Dan is confined to riding his bike if he needs to get somewhere, or he has to wait for a ride from either my mother Jean Spaulding or myself.

Dan also doesn't know how to cook. He can nuke things in

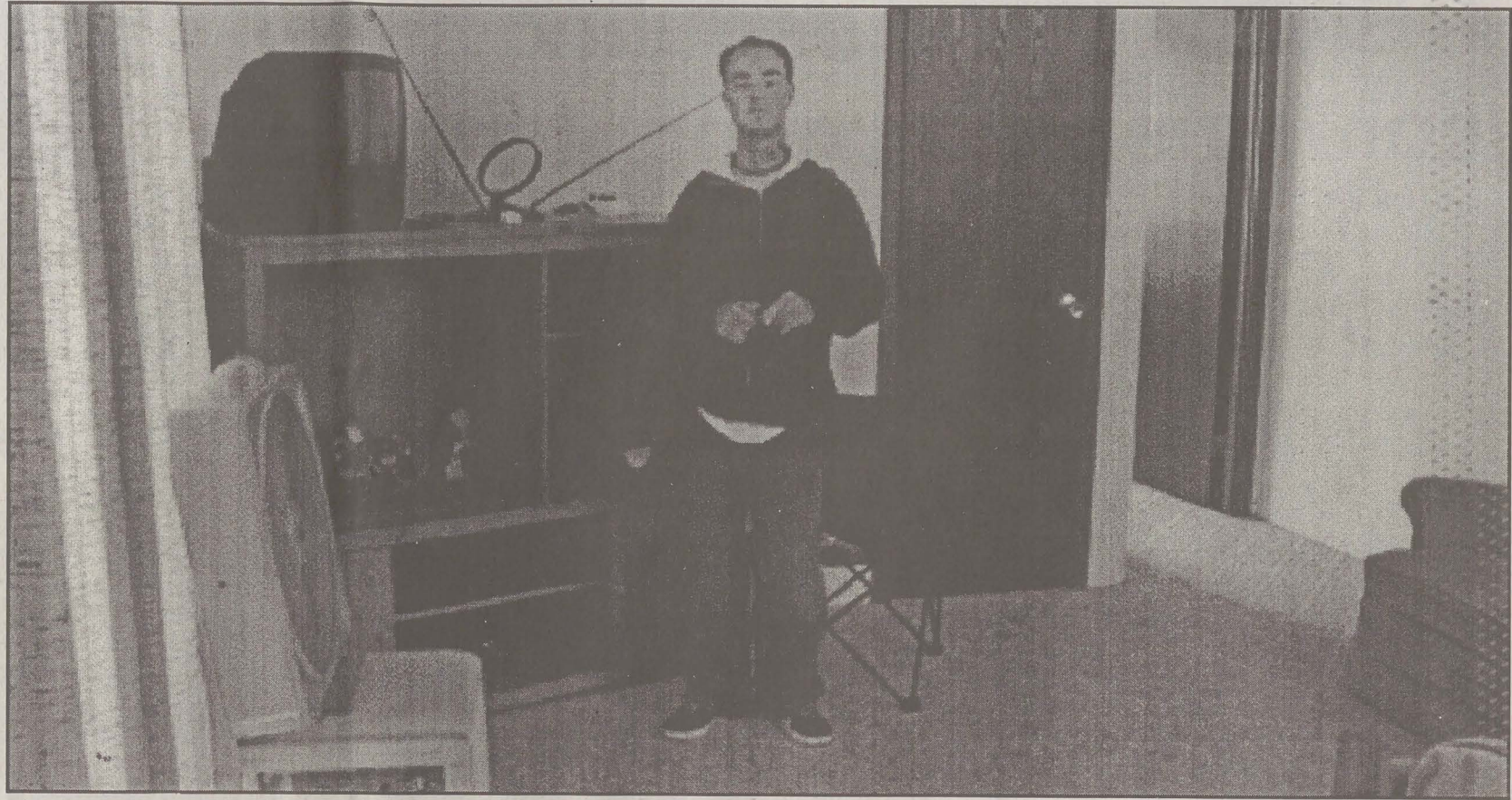


Photo by Ryan Spaulding  
Dan Spaulding stands in the living room of his apartment. Living on his own has been challenging for Dan.

the microwave, but as far as that, he's very limited. A lot of the time, he eats at fast food restaurants, which costs lots of money. His mother is trying to show him how to prepare meals, but he'll never fully be able to fix himself a nice steak dinner or spaghetti, which

is one of his favorite meals.

Another thing that Dan has trouble with is that he's in constant fear of what people think of him. He has been made fun on his whole life because of the way he spoke or the fact that he can't read well. Before he had his family always there to help him deal with his problems, but since he's moved, he has to deal with them on his own most of the time. This probably has been harder on his mother because she has always worried about Dan.

"It was hard to see him move out," Jean Spaulding said. "I worry about him all the time, like if he's eating right or people taking advantage of him. I still help Dan out as much as possible; like

I cook him meals sometimes, and if he needs a ride anywhere or needs to go shopping, but I can't be there for him all the time like I used to."

Another problem Dan faces is finding a job he can do. He has tried working at a fast food restaurant, but it didn't work out. This has given Dan a tight budget. Other than what he gets from the government, which he uses to pay for rent and food, Dan barely has enough for himself.

Dan is a senior at Alpena High School where he maintains a 3.5 GPA. Dan also belongs to Peers United in Friendship, his church group. He volunteers at the Alpena nursing home as well as being in the Boy Scouts. Dan also

belonged to the Youth Volunteer Corps over the summer, where they cleaned parks, put food in boxes and went to a science camp. In his free time, Dan enjoys rollerblading, bike riding and spending time with friends.

After Dan gets out of high school, he would like to become a counselor for younger kids who have trouble with school or whatever may be bothering them. Dan also had his advice for anyone who wants to live on his or her own for the first time.

"Think about it very hard," Dan said. "Get to know who your neighbors are so it's be easier in case you need something. It's a different story when you're actually on your own."

## Changing Faces



Photo by Jocelyn Haske

Sue Grulke, left, is assuming the duties of teaching journalism classes and advising *The Polemic* replacing Colleen Steinman, who is leaving Alpena.

**SOAP,**  
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and accounting needed in a business.

"It's a federally-funded program designed to counsel and train new businesses as well as existing businesses," said Carl Bourdelais, head of the center. "The program has been in existence for 15 years and has been active on the ACC campus since 1995. The annual numbers of the people involved in the program are incredible."

All together, Pike estimates that she invested about \$10,000 on materials and equipment including a dehumidifier for the damp basement she has turned

into her work area.

Besides the ACC Bookstore, which happens to be the most profitable store, Pike has displays in Alpena, Cheboygan, Rogers City, Traverse City and Flint.

Pike offers a wide variety of scents ranging from "peaches 'n cream" to a scent called "Lumberjack," form-ulated exclusively for ACC.

Also available is what she likes to call "Fisherman's Soap," made from a plant called anise. The aroma, she claims, attracts fish and covers up human scent.

Nature's Echo has had exposure through the Alpena News, WNEM Channel 5 in Saginaw

and the Muskegon Chronicle.

Pike is striving for enough customers to increase her output of 30 lbs. of soap per week to 100 lbs.

"Then," she said, "it could be a very profitable business."

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**ASSAULT,**  
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with fear. My potential assailant realized that there was a fearless female prepared to run, yell and fight and I was not going to be the easy target. Those few precious seconds of smart thinking stalled the men long enough.

At that moment, the floodgates opened and club goes were spilling out into the parking lot. He began to casually retreat to his car but followed us in the direction where we were parked.

My girlfriend took my arm and we calmly walked. I still was

in shock over what was happening. She had just enough time to get the right keys ready and tell me what to do.

She unlocked my side first. I got in and hit the lock down. A split second later the man was at my passenger side door and grabbed the door handle. He stood there for a few moments banging on the window and her car roof. My friend was smart enough to let me in first. I don't think he planned for that either. By the time he had gone to my side of the car, she was already in and both of us were safe.

I was lucky. If it wasn't for my friend and her knowledge of how to handle the situation, I could have been seriously beaten, raped or even murdered. According to experts who study kidnapping, rape and assault, there are two scenes for each potential crime. The first one is where the victim is abducted and the second is where the perpetrator commits the crime. If I had been taken from that parking lot, my chances of surviving were less than zero. My friend emerged the hero and I learned one of the most valuable lessons of my life.

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