**An Unexpected Gift**

The North Quabbin Citizen Advocacy program recruits local citizens to be matched 1 on 1 with an individual with an intellectual disability in order to form long lasting, freely given relationships. Tom Doody, the Director, shared a story with me about one such relationship.

He had his eye on Mary, the Director of the local YMCA, as someone who would be great to match up with an individual he knew who was somewhat isolated. He was a bit hesitant to approach her given the very busy life she had – not only as the Y Director but also as a parent and person involved in many community organizations. Finally he decided to talk to her. She too was hesitant – would she really be able to find time in her life to do this? After some time passed she called Tom and said she would give it a try.

Soon after Mary was introduced to Sheila who lived in a small apartment. Sheila could take care of herself in many ways but she spoke very little. One thing they had in common was that they liked to bake. So Mary started to visit for a few hours every couple of weeks and they baked muffins or cookies and had coffee together.

About four months went by and Tom ran into Mary at a store. She pulled him aside and said, “Tom, I can’t tell you how grateful I am for helping me to get to know Sheila. I love going to see her. We bake together and share the goodies we make over coffee. It is a wonderfully quiet time that slows me down. I always leave feeling calm and in a better place as I head back to the hubbub of my life.”