



Spotlight on Staff

GARY THOMPSON

VETERAN SPECIAL ED TEACHER; DSP

Gary Thompson has had a fascinating life. Originally from Michigan, he's lived in Florida and Germany, and has traveled to eight European countries. He's been a special education teacher and a program director. But it's his role as a direct-service provider (DSP) at Favarh's group home on Two-Mile Road in Farmington that he enjoys the most.

A soft-spoken, almost shy man with a reputation for punctuality and flexibility, he grew up

living just outside of Detroit before he pursued a degree in special education from Central Michigan University. From there he taught first-through-sixth grade special education students in Hudson, FL, for 10 years. And after that he spent another four years teaching first-through-sixth grade special education, but this time for the U.S. Department of Defense Dependent School System in Nelligan, Germany.

While he lived in Germany he took the opportunity to travel to Spain, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Lichtenstein, Greece and what was then Yugoslavia.

When he came back to the United States some friends convinced him to try Connecticut. He stayed and currently lives in the Rockville section of Vernon.

Gary has worked at Favarh for 16 years as a DSP, first at a former group home in Bloomfield, then at Two-Mile. But for 14 of those 16 years he did double duty, also working as a program director for Key Human Services, an agency that like Favarh supports people with disabilities. However, he said, "when I turned 64 I dropped Key, so I just work at Favarh now. I didn't want to be in management anymore. I like doing the hands-on" work that DSPs do at Favarh.

Because of his education and background teaching special education, plus his management experience, "When I first applied to Favarh I was told I was over-qualified. I said, 'No, I want to do direct care. I've had it with management.'

At 67, he still loves his job, even after so many years teaching and caring for people with intellectual disabilities.

"The guys" he helps support at Two-Mile, "are always surprising me with little things," he said. "There's more to them than meets the eye. All of a sudden they'll say, 'I can do that,' and they do."

(July 30, 2018)