



The Competitive Edge

BCRC, Inc., 131 Pleasant Drive, 2nd Floor, Aliquippa, PA 15001-3515

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Mobility Barriers Addressed at Regional Forum

by Frank Shialabba

How do people in Beaver County access needed services, and what mobility barriers do these same people face? Beaver County residents were asked these and other questions at a forum held at BCRC's CenterPlace on October 1, 2014.

The forum, hosted by BCRC, was sponsored by the Alliance for Transportation Working in Communities (ATWIC), a special program within the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC). Kathy Stefani, Program Manager represented ATWIC. The primary responsibility of the Alliance is to assess the region's "overall transportation accessibility and identify where access to jobs and services fall short, especially for low income individuals, persons with disabilities, and older adults."

As a provider of employment services for persons with disabilities and individuals with low incomes, BCRC has a unique insight on the vocational and transportation needs of these two very important groups. BCRC and other attendees at the forum provided input on mobility barriers faced by human service clients, ways that these barriers are currently addressed, and what needs to be done in the future.



With the information gathered at the Beaver County meeting and input from nine other southwestern PA counties the ATWIC hopes to develop "a Public Transit Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan that lays the groundwork for a transportation system that is inclusive and works for all residents, regardless of where they live, how old they are, their levels of income, and any physical and/or mental disabilities that they may have."

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Alice Found Guilty, Everyone Else Wins

by Frank Shialabba

The verdict is in. Alice is found guilty of theft and disturbing the peace, and she is sentenced by Judge James Ross to never return to Wonderland. WIN participants, however, are welcome to return to the courthouse in the future for another mock trial similar to the one conducted on Friday, September 5th.

According to WIN Director, Sheila Silbaugh, "Everyone was a winner. People from the community were able to appreciate the capabilities of individuals with disabilities and our participants learned valuable lessons about courtroom protocol, respect and citizenship. Judge Ross was very gracious in donating his time. He took questions and gave us an update on the latest changes in courtroom procedure. I would also like to thank Aileen Bowers of the courthouse staff, for facilitating the event as well as Joanne Bozig, courthouse staff and officers and members of the Young Lawyers Association. The day was so well orchestrated and the people at the courthouse couldn't have been nicer."



While Alice may have been a little disappointed with the outcome, everyone else came away delighted with a wonderful day of learning and a new sense of community. ■

BCRC Puts Our Heart on Paper

by Amanda Dodd

If you've recently been in our buildings or participated in any of our programs, you will have hopefully had the opportunity to peruse BCRC's newest publication- our Welcome Letter!

Spurred by a county-wide System of Care initiative, this letter exists to share with participants and the local community our agency's core values- the things that fundamentally drive how we develop and implement our services. BCRC feels that the best way to welcome those around us is to share the heart behind who we are and what we do. Consequently, the letter emphasizes: client-driven services, the value of diversity, the necessity of partnership, the far-reaching effects of personal responsibility, and embracing change and development.

Though you may be very familiar with our agency's current happenings through our newsletters and website, we want you to know that no matter how our agency evolves and develops, these values will always be at the heart of what we do.

If you haven't gotten the chance to read the letter, please feel free to stop by in any of our offices to pick one up. Our doors are always open, so come on over. We'd love to share with you. ■



Carol McCullough and Thaddeus Knauff enjoying Rec Night Dance.

Zak Flies High at New Work Experience

by Sheila Silbaugh

Nicholas Zak dreamed of getting a job in the community. As is the case for many young people, Nick had much to learn about the responsibilities required to successfully hold a community job. Thus began his BCRC journey.

Nicholas started at BCRC in January, 2004 with the School to Work program, and after graduating in 2006 he entered the agency's prevocational program. As he learned new jobs like packaging cutlery and making boxes, Nick felt that he was ready to try competitive work.

His first community job involved seasonal employment as a maintenance worker. As this employment ended after the summer, Nick moved on to a dishwashing job. Nick also did janitorial work while continuing to work for BCRC during the days, gaining valuable experience and hoping for a steady job.

Meanwhile, Nick continued to search for competitive employment and was finally hired in June, 2014 at the new Baden Walmart. He was offered an overnight shift performing janitorial duties.

Jonni Kichta, his WIN program specialist, states, "Nick has grown vocationally in his ability to arrive at work on time and remain through the completion of his duties. He has focused on developing positive interactions with his coworkers and supervisor while being able to meet the various demands of his employer." She praised Nick for being able to obtain his schedule utilizing the internet and for developing proper communication with his staff. Ryan Hudacsek, Nick's job coach, continues to visit weekly and states that Nick consistently is eager to go above and beyond his duties and has made many strides in his work performance. Kathy Davis, BCRC Director of Client Services, feels, "Nick has overcome numerous obstacles along the way."

Nick is proud that he has soared higher than he believed that he could. He continues to have new work adventures ahead of him including his first Black Friday sales event. ■



Jack Skrlac demonstrates fire extinguisher to Meghan Patterson as Alex Berry and Josh Vono look on.

People Empowered Through Photography

by Laurel Baker

Participants in the Psych Rehab program at Aurora Services recently completed a group project known as PhotoVoice. Stigma and discrimination are significant barriers to recovery from mental illness, and PhotoVoice provides one creative way to combat this obstacle.

The concept of PhotoVoice originated with Professor Caroline Wang at the Michigan School of Public Health, and Mary Ann Burris from the Ford Foundation, and has been further developed by Boston University for use in psychiatric rehabilitation. Participants take pictures of routine items or situations that invoke a connection to the discrimination they have experienced on their recovery journey. They then match the pictures with personal narratives of the impact of that discrimination. The end results become powerful depictions of the roadblocks society can place in the path of recovery.

Marty Shafer, the practitioner who guided this project, indicated that PhotoVoice inspires a passion in the participants around combating stigma, and that it really makes people stop and think about the impact their actions may have on another person.

One of the participants discussed how the project helped him overcome the idea that mental illness results in hopelessness and helplessness, and that anyone can achieve their goals despite what society may think. He stated that, "This was a great learning and teaching experience that shows how people with mental illness do fit into society." ■

Spotlight On:

Marisa Scalamogna

by Jennifer Gengarella

Almost a year ago Marisa Scalamogna joined the BCRC team as a program specialist. With a background as a TSS and a Family Advocate for Head Start, as well as working for Job Training, she has brought valuable experience to assist the individuals in her group.

As with all BCRC staff, Marisa pitches in to help wherever she is needed. She recently joined the forensics program and is the advisor for the Vision Coalition which is a consumer run group at BCRC. She has also begun working towards her master's degree.

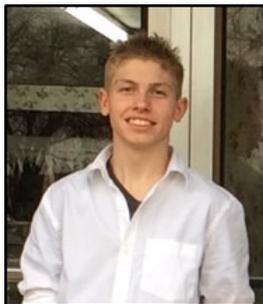
Marisa and her husband have 3 children, a dog, a cat, a guinea pig, a rabbit and a lizard! Even with her busy life at work and at home, she welcomes anyone, client or staff, to come to her with ideas or questions. She is someone who truly understands and appreciates the joy of working with the individuals at BCRC. ■



Terrific Kid Does Terrific Job

by Bonnie Smith

Randy Palombo first started at BCRC, Inc. in the fall of 2013 in the School to Work program. He did very well in the program and after graduation, with support through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and staff from BCRC's WIN Program, Randy was hired by Eat'n Park Restaurant. Randy loves going to work and, as his Program Specialist, Jane Sainer says, "He's an absolutely super kid." ■



BCRC has Super Penn Stater

by Kelly Newhouse



BCRC employees never fail to inspire and amaze those with whom they work. BCRC is proud to have among these dedicated employees, Marjorie Marcellus. In September, 2014, Marjorie was named a "Super Penn Stater". She was chosen among many students based on her inspirational life story and the strength and determination she shows in all she does. Marjorie is raising three boys, works in the School to Work Program at BCRC, and volunteers in her community where she currently holds the vice president position for the New Brighton School District PTA. With all of this, she still manages to grow personally and professionally by working toward a degree in business management. It is clear that while she inspires her students, they inspire her. Marjorie says that working at BCRC has changed her life and she plans to remain in the social service field indefinitely. Marjorie states, "All it can take for a person to shine is another person to care enough to help show the way." ■

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Pumpkins, Scarecrows and Quilts-Oh My!

by Frank Shialabba

WIN participants recently combined a talent for art with a gift for giving in a number of recent projects.

A wide variety of scarecrows lined the halls of the WIN offices as they awaited their time to shine during the Halloween season when they were part of a "Parade of Scarecrows" that visited many of the senior centers in Beaver County.



Created by WIN participants, they range from "scare-cows" to more traditional scarecrows.

Pumpkins of many shapes and designs also displayed the talent of WIN participants. Artistic pumpkins painted, or adorned in jewels, etc., were created for and displayed at Merrick Art Galleries in New Brighton. More traditional pumpkins were carved for the Fellowship Riverside Gardens in Youngstown, Ohio. WIN contributed to over 500 pumpkins that were part a beautiful display at the gardens that also featured a variety of fall flowers.



Also benefiting from the artistic talent of WIN" participants is the BCRC client Christmas gift fund. A raffle for a quilt created by WIN clients has generated one thousand dollars for future client gift funds. ■

Safety Lights Ebola vs Flu

by Cindy Kirkpatrick

Today, many Americans are fearful about ebola. Although ebola is a virus like the flu, it doesn't spread easily like a cold or influenza. Ebola is only spread through direct contact with bodily fluids such as blood, saliva, sweat and urine. Unlike the flu, it can't be spread through the air or through everyday contact, such as a handshakes or touching a surface previously touch by an infected person. More attention needs to be placed on the spread of the easily transmitted flu, which is expected to kill 20,000 Americans this year. Get a yearly flu shot, wash your hands often, contain your sneeze or cough (sneeze into a Kleenex or your elbow), and try to avoid large crowds. ■

SHOP TALK

Volunteers from the United Way Day of Day of Caring tackled projects at the 1517 Production Center and the CenterPlace building recently. The hallways at the 1517 Production Center received a much needed coat of white paint, while the carpets at the CenterPlace building were given a thorough cleaning. BCRC clients at the 1517 building remarked on the cheery atmosphere of the hallway, while staff at CenterPlace was grateful for the clean, bright carpets and the giving nature of the volunteers.

The United Way began its campaign recently with its annual kick-off breakfast headed by new UW Executive Director, Mike Rubino. Anyone wishing to donate to BCRC through the United Way may contact the United Way office at 724-774-3210. Also, you can donate to United Way by adding a dollar to your Giant Eagle bill and designating it for the United Way.

Colorful T-shirts are currently on sale at 1517 Sixth Ave, New Brighton to benefit BCRC's School to Work Program.

Additional upgrades to BCRC buildings have included the installation of a leased phone system at the 1517 Production Center and sealing and lining the parking lot at CenterPlace.

BCRC's 509 building, which previously housed our Evaluation Center, was sold recently to a local veterinarian.



Hunter Giles modeling the new School to Work T-shirts.

If you would like to receive a digital copy of the newsletter via e-mail, rather than a print copy, please call Pat Tengeres at 724-847-1306.

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Employee of the Month

Production Centers



Nancy Lewis
August



Anthony Rascoe
September



Cody Fabyanic
October

School to Work



Benjamin Biggs
September



Joseph Collins
October



Damian Altman
November

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