

It is the mission of the Beaver County Rehabilitation Center, Inc. to provide the opportunity for growth and independence while respecting the dignity and uniqueness of each individual.

## BCRC Executive Director changes lives - Retires after 47 years

by Frank Shialabba

According to Executive Director Paulette Miller, "One of the smartest things that I have done in my life was to accept a job at BCRC way back in 1975." Now after a career of 47 years at BCRC, 32 as executive director, Ms. Miller has decided to retire. Her tenure as executive director is the longest in BCRC's history and it is marked with many accomplishments.

Ms. Miller's main goal as executive director was to see that people with disabilities were on "equal footing with other people and that they worked in facilities they could be proud of."

Paulette has achieved that goal with the state-of-the-art building in CenterPlace which houses the Production Center, WIN Services, Community Programs and BCRC's Records Management Program, and the Beaver buildings where Aurora and the School to Work programs are located. She has also seen many individuals take their place in the community with fulfilling jobs. She recounts the story of one individual who is still thriving at his job in the community after more than 30 successful years.

Paulette views her success through the lives that have been changed by BCRC over the years. Although she has had many honors and held many positions, it is the stories of the BCRC clients that she cherishes the most. She says, "I love sharing the message that people with disabilities have many talents that are valuable and deserving of our admiration and respect. I have been privileged to know all the individuals who have so much to offer the world. It is important that we provide the opportunity for them to grow and take pride in their accomplishments."

Along with many successes, Paulette has faced numerous challenges over the years, chief of which was the recent pandemic. "It was hard to have people stay at home while we prepared to welcome them back to a safe environment." Along with making BCRC a safe place to work, Paulette spearheaded the effort to provide COVID vaccine clinics at BCRC. She assured that BCRC's clients and staff, as well as many other individuals with disabilities in the community, had access to COVID vaccines.

Leaving a local chemical plant and taking a pay cut of 50%, Paulette fulfilled her dream of working in the field of rehabilitation when she accepted a job at BCRC as vocational evaluator. It is a decision that she has never regretted and it is a decision that has improved the lives of countless people with disabilities. Over the years, BCRC has added many valuable services and programs under Ms. Miller's steady leadership. Most of all, through her belief in the people that BCRC serves, she has showcased them as valued people who have so much to offer the world. Way back in 1975, Ms. Miller found her voice and she has used that voice to advocate for the people that she loves so much.



## Staff members become certified non-violent crisis intervention trainers

by Mary Jo Sanders

Two BCRC staff members, Facilities Manager Laura Medarac and Mental Health Program Coordinator Adam Loverich, have become certified non-violent crisis intervention trainers.

They recently attended this course over several days and engaged in both classroom instruction and hands-on demonstrations. Laura and Adam will join a network of over 37,000 CPI Certified Instructors representing a multitude of professions; from education, residential settings, healthcare, behavioral/mental health, law enforcement, and other human services.

This was a very extensive training. Laura and Adam had to pass several written tests, as well as complete demonstrations of techniques used to de-escalate a bad situation in a nonviolent manner. The duo are eager to introduce these lessons to their co-workers and they will modify and condense the training to suit the needs of the agency.

The skill of nonviolent crisis intervention is paramount to keeping the staff and participants in the programs here at BCRC safe and happy.

We congratulate both Adam and Laura and appreciate their hard work!



## Beal to help incarcerated parents

by Mary Alviani

Kris Beal joins BCRC's Traci Hughes, Susan Smith, John Palmer and Nina Gilbert as a certified parent coach for parents incarcerated in Beaver County.

Kris participated in the course "Coaching Parents of Struggling Teens and Young Adults" hosted by the Parent Coach Trainers Academy. The course is approved by the International Coach Federation for 40 coach-specific training hours including classwork, self study, and coaching practice hours. Kris participated in the 17-week class and obtained her certification.

In June, Kris began providing Parent Coaching through the Keeping Families Connected Grant from Beaver County System of Care to inmates at the Beaver County Jail. The parent coach asks the client to come to each session with a focus and desired outcome for each session and together they work to deepen their learning and gain insight into their parenting decisions and actions.

Traci Hughes oversees this program where interested inmates sign up for a series of evening sessions. Coaches offer the training as often as clients like. Upon completion of a minimum of four coaching sessions, each inmate receives a certificate of completion but, may continue further sessions if agreed upon.

Congratulations to Kris and thank you to the team of certified parent coaches for their hard work in helping individuals and families!

Kris reported, "I am grateful to have had the opportunity to complete the parent coaching course and to have begun to coach quickly. I am inspired by being able to truly make a difference with the inmates as they learn how to make better parenting decisions and make plans to reunite with their families. It is rejuvenating for me to coach and to be a part of these individuals' continual efforts of growth."

## Please join us as we extend a warm welcome to our new Executive Director, Lesley Hallas!

Stay tuned ... More information about Lesley to follow in a future issue ...

## Thad loves his new job!

by Kristina Beal

Fifty-six year old Thaddeus Knauff began his first competitive integrated job as a Crew Member at McDonalds in June 2022. He is responsible for cleaning the dining area and restrooms at the Beaver restaurant.

"I love my job." Thad often proudly exclaims. Thad has achieved his long-term goals of having a job in the community with the help of BCRC staff. Thad receives ongoing support at McDonalds from WIN Services to help him learn and maintain his role independently.

Over the past 13 years, Thad has improved his vocational skills in BCRC's Production Center in a variety of community activities (including a volunteer role at Uncommon Grounds) and in small group employment.

Program Specialist Kristina Beal stated that. "Thad is polite, respectful and gets along well with his co-workers and supervisors. Thad takes pride in his work and his appearance. He is eager to live independently and maintains a sense of humor. I am very happy for him to have this opportunity to work at McDonalds."

In his free time, Thad enjoys watching the Pittsburgh Penguins, exercising, listening to Christmas music, and spending time with his family.



## Shop Talk

by Frank Shialabba

- BCRC clients enjoyed the return of the annual picnic in June. The festivities were highlighted by two exciting one-run ball games and the wonderful food provided by the Monaca Recreation Board.
- Megan Patterson's sister, Ashley Stein, secured a donation of \$750 from Citizens Bank. As a result of the donation, BCRC clients enjoyed treats from an ice cream truck.
- BCRC has obtained a state grant which will be used for upgrades to the parking lot.
- School to Work completed its four-week Extended School Year program with 35 participants.
- BCRC's psychiatric rehabilitation program, Aurora Services, passed a rigorous inspection with flying colors.



**Students from BCRC's School to Work Transition Program volunteering at Communicycle**

## WIN is 'Land of Opportunity' for two BCRC staff

by Frank Shialabba

WIN Services has truly been the land of opportunity for two WIN staff as they were promoted to significant leadership positions recently. Jonni Kichta was promoted from supervisor to manager of WIN Services while Julianna Tisak was promoted from program specialist to coordinator of employment services.

Ms. Kichta has been employed at BCRC for twelve years. In addition to her most recent position, she has also been employed as an employment specialist and program specialist. As manager of WIN Services, she will supervise WIN staff in all departments including employment, habilitation, and community participation services. This involves scheduling staff to assure that clients in every program have proper staffing. Employment scheduling requires quick thinking and adaptability as jobs come up quickly and require immediate support.

Additional challenges are providing sufficient staffing during a time when there is a shortage of labor and keeping clients and staff safe during the pandemic. Ms. Kichta, "loves to see the development of clients and staff as they achieve growth in their jobs".

Ms. Tisak has been a BCRC employee for six years working as client support, employment specialist and program specialist. In her new position, Tisak will coordinate all employment-related services at WIN. This involves developing a good working relationship with Beaver County Behavioral Health and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. She assures that the community support program and group employment sites have proper scheduling and that all service are documented. She also coordinates with other BCRC departments such as the School to Work Program, Work Activity Center and Aurora Services to assure that client employment needs are met. She states, "I love being able to make a difference in the clients' lives and I enjoy developing relationships with the other departments".

## Katherine grows and thrives in community jobs

by Frank Shialabba

Twenty eight year-old Katherine Belcher of Zelenople has blossomed as a person and a worker since gaining employment in the community.

According to Manager of WIN Services Jonni Kichta, "Katherine has become a star at her job at a local doctor's office and a group employment site". Kichta states, "She used to be more within herself but, now she is much more outgoing." Ms. Belcher is more socially aware, picking up on cues from her coworkers and asking about their well being. She is pleasant and friendly as she asks coworkers "How are you today?"

Her social awareness extends to the development of a professional demeanor and a knowledge of appropriate dress for work. WIN Coordinator of Employment Services Julianna Tisak states, "Katherine likes casual dress; however, she is now proud to show off a beautiful dress that she has picked out for her office job."

In addition to her social skills, Katherine excels at all her job tasks and is in much demand by her employers. She has been able to handle changing demands with little difficulty and she has become independent in the performance of her job duties.

In addition to her independence at work, Katherine now lives in an independent community setting.

She is growing and thriving and she has become a role model for others who seek to expand their world by becoming a contributing member of their community.



**Jonni Kichta**  
Manager of WIN Services



**Julianna Tisak**  
Coordinator of Employment Services

**Executive Director**

Lesley Hallas

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**Roger McClain receives award nomination**  
*by Ian Thomas*

Records Management worker Roger McClain was a nominee for this year's UniqueSource Nettie Mann achievement award. UniqueSource, based in Mechanicsburg, PA, created the award in 1996 to recognize individuals who exhibit outstanding achievement and exceptional character in living and coping with his or her disabilities, particularly in the workplace. Nominees receive a plaque and a monetary award.

Roger was nominated because of the progress he has made in his seven years at BCRC. He is consistent in his attendance and in his work ethic. In addition, he has a positive attitude showing great concern for his peers and helping them when possible.

Roger has worked on a variety of jobs including learning how to use a computer in order to scan documents for Records Management clients. Best of all, Roger has put the skills and confidence he has gained at BCRC to work outside of Records Management to gain independence in the community.

He recently moved out of the group home where he lived for eighteen years and into an independent living situation.



*Photo: Ian Thomas, Tracy Kuzmich, Roger McClain, Bethany Westbrook*

**Employee of the Month**



**Juliette Dorsner**  
 June 2022



**Johnny Anslie**  
 July 2022



**Wendy Nadzam**  
 August 2022