



The Competitive Edge

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

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Community Participation: Five Months and Counting

by Jessica Rusak

Brandi Senior, a BCRC participant who receives community participation support, says she loves going out and interacting with others at the local businesses. "I like being able to make money transactions on my own," she said.

Community participation is intended to provide opportunities for community inclusion and help increase potential for securing competitive integrated employment. As a result, this service is a combination of facility based training and work experience, along with integrated community activities.

Currently, participants in this program are experiencing less than 25% of their time in the community.

However, by July 2019, the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) will begin to increase the required facility to community ratios, resulting in additional community time for participants.

Various outings are offered to the participants, keeping in mind the locations must be non-disability specific and must be in a non-licensed space. The idea is to provide a natural setting where participants can increase social roles and relationships, build supports, and increase their independence.

For community participation clients Megan Burkhart and Kathy Matthews, visits to the Humane Society and thrift stores are among their favorite. "We enjoy going out, interacting in the



community, and being a part of something meaningful," they said.

At first many participants felt uneasy about going into the community, but after five months in the program, everyone is enjoying their experience. ■

Katie Grows and Matures at Production Center

by Karen Adamo and Frank Shialabba

BCRC's staff can count on Katie Hanton of New Brighton for a job well done. She has excelled in BCRC's production center and has advanced to a community work site. According to Program Specialist Karen Adamo, "Katie has matured greatly in her work and independence." She is someone who displays a positive outlook in her work and in her relationships with others.

Katie is able to do many different jobs and she has the ability to perform jobs with multiple steps; she can clean independently at our remote janitorial sites. She has mastered the general routine of the job and is very dependable. Katie also excels at assembling electrical plungers and has greatly increased her work production. She has great attendance, and she gets along well with her peers. She is also willing to fill-in at the community work site when her co-workers are absent.

As Katie continues to make progress, she also enjoys time with her family on vacation in North Carolina and has fun attending concerts. She enjoys reading and is very knowledgeable about many subjects. Katie is a shining example of the success that individuals can achieve in BCRC's communication participation program. ■

Creating the Way to Wellness by Laurel Baker

Individuals in mental health recovery often turn to the arts as a means of both coping with and expressing the journey into wellness. This results in unique and meaningful creations that are worthy of showcasing for the world to see. Bonnie Palmieri, a Recovery Coordinator for Beaver County (and a talented artist herself), has wanted to make this idea a reality for some time. Finally, this September, she got her wish. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration celebrates September as Recovery Month, which seemed the perfect time to illustrate the county's own talent in recovery. The first annual Bridges to Recovery Art Exhibit was held at the Phoenix Café at the Mental Health Association on September 27th and 28th.

Participants worked diligently on their masterpieces, which ranged from inspirational rock paintings to watercolor scenes. Individuals at Aurora Services focused on their projects during the creative expressions class, receiving guidance and feedback from Deanna McCracken. Some artists even offered pieces for sale at reasonable prices.

Upon entering the art show, attendees were greeted warmly and offered refreshments. There was performance art through music, song, and poetry. Visitors were free to browse the displays and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere. It was an inspirational and educational way to spend an afternoon, and provided a glimpse of the beautiful healing nature of the arts.

Renowned painter Henri Matisse said, "Creativity takes courage." Recovery takes courage as well. These brave local artists deserve recognition and appreciation! ■



Spotlight On: Renee Marvenko

by Kelly Newhouse

Renee Marvenko, a BCRC administrative assistant for the last five years, is invaluable to her coworkers as she makes sure they have the supplies needed to do their jobs. Renee is responsible for ordering supplies for all three of BCRC's buildings and mobile work sites. She also assists our accounting department with billing processes.

Renee brings with her a wealth of experience having worked as a senior accountant at a major



pharmacy and health care store. Her professional experience shows in all she does for BCRC. Renee states that she likes serving the participants and staff and enjoys the caring and positive work environment. Her hopes for the future of BCRC are that everyone continues to feel inspired and to feel a strong part of the BCRC family. Renee hopes that BCRC will always succeed in helping others.

In her free time, Renee enjoys spending time with her family. She and her husband have been married for 27 years. Renee has seen the country traveling with her husband who served in the Army for 22 years. Her oldest son serves our country through the Air National Guard while attending college and the two younger sons attend a local high school. Together, the family loves to ride mountain bikes, having visited many bike trails in the Pittsburgh area. In addition to all of this, Renee still finds time to help at her church and teaches first grade Sunday school. ■

Moving Forward into 2018 and Beyond!

by Mary Jo Sanders

Construction work is nearing completion at our CenterPlace location, providing much needed improvements to our building. The 1st floor renovation is 2809 sq. ft. and the 2nd floor renovation is 2775 sq. ft.

The new construction will add 15 offices, four new and much needed restrooms, four conference rooms, storage closets, new sinks and counters in the client lunch room, windows to provide light and enhance the workspaces, new sliding glass entrance doors, and a new



elevator to give added accessibility to the east side of the building.

This huge renovation project was set to be completed by Thanksgiving, although it will take some extra time to fully furnish the added spaces and add any finishing touches.

The clients and staff are eagerly anticipating the unveiling of our new space and we look forward to a very productive and exciting future here at CenterPlace! ■

Records Management Excels

by Gina Alberti

Individual success stories are numerous, but sometimes, praiseworthy success is department-wide. Take the acclaimed Records Management department, for example. Under the

leadership of Lisa Vesolich and her outstanding team, the department has excelled at securing varying scanning jobs that not only support BCRC as a whole, but teach valuable work and social skills to our participants.

Within the past month alone, Lisa and company entered BCRC into a contract with the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs for a major project. Over the next three years, the Records Management department will prep, scan, and index selected files for the DMVA. Lisa commended her hardworking crew, saying she was delighted with how quickly her clients had picked up the processes. Though the job is difficult, she has no doubt her extraordinary group is up to the task.

Stay tuned for more great things from Records Management! ■

Amy Leads the Way to a Fullness of Life

by Frank Shialabba

Amy Kochanowski is a renaissance woman who leads a full life with equal parts work, helping others, socialization, interest in sports and politics, and big city excursions. While many individuals are just now beginning to enjoy community participation, Amy has been doing so for some time.

Amy has been employed at a Center Township restaurant for almost 10 years. According to WIN's Jonni Kichta, "Amy does everything well. She never misses work and is often called in when others call off." Amy is a diligent worker, making it a priority in her life.

According to WIN Director Sheila Silbaugh, work is just one component in Amy's very full life. She enjoys trips to Pittsburgh for holiday celebrations, pep rallies, parades and festivals. She loves

sports and has participated in the Polar Bear swim. Amy is also an informed voter, who takes her obligations as a citizen seriously.

Amy uses her many talents to contribute to others. She is an accomplished swimmer who has been asked to assist Special Olympic swim instructors as they train children with special needs. Her helping spirit was also on display when she volunteered at a soup kitchen in Beaver Falls. Ms. Kichta compliments Amy for always going "above and beyond." She has made hundreds of bracelets for patients at Children's Hospital. Amy is going above and beyond in the way she lives her life; learning, giving, and participating eagerly in the world around her. She is forging the way to community participation for her many friends and co-workers. ■

Tis the Holiday Season

BCRC would like to thank the participants of the Paid Work Training and Work Ready Programs for the beautifully decorated Christmas trees.



Front Lobby

Board Room

Lessons Well Learned

by *Aimee Spencer*

Students in the School to Work program demonstrated newly learned skills by creating a coffee cart, complete with hot chocolate, warm apple cider and homemade pumpkin cookies. Several students throughout the week took to the kitchen and learned much about baking.

Lessons focused on what ingredients to use, how to read a recipe, measure ingredients and use an oven, and safe food handling and proper cleaning. Students and passing staff alike were excited as the pumpkin smell of baking filled the halls. The students also learned about entrepreneurship, advertising and marketing. They created flyers, decorated the coffee cart, and made signs.

On the day of Halloween, students Marcus and Brandon helped serve the holiday goodies with hot drinks. Practicing communication skills that were learned, Marcus enthusiastically told patrons what was on the cart and helped serve the cookies. Brandon helped pour drinks and handed them to patrons. Both were polite and courteous to everyone they served, and as a result, each person left with a smile on their face. ■



Pictured (Lt to Rt:) Aimee Spencer, Amanda Dodd, Brando DeSanzo and Marcus Delourmel.

Director of Client Services Retires

by *Frank Shialabba*

Kathryn Davis, Director of Client Services, retired October 31, 2017 after 40 years at the Beaver County Rehabilitation Center. Over the years, Ms. Davis played an integral part in the growth of BCRC, as well as in the lives of many individuals.

Program Specialist Karen Adamo lauds Ms. Davis for “the love she had for the people we supported; she always put the clients first.” Indeed, Kathy cites her greatest accomplishment as “being included in the lives of our clients.”

Kathy supervised BCRC's job coaches and program specialists as they assisted the clients in goals designed to achieve growth in both work and personal skills. She saw many improvements over the years as BCRC evolved and changed to enhance the quality of service and meet more needs.”

One of the more recent changes at BCRC is the impetus to provide more community participation for individuals in the facility based program. Kathy has overseen this transition and the



participants have become increasingly involved in community activities. She praises BCRC's staff and clients for their commitment to this new phase of BCRC's growth.

On a personal level, Kathy states that she “enjoyed working with so many different clients, laughing and learning from them.” She also enjoyed the teamwork that was so vital to BCRC's production centers. Ms. Adamo states that, “Kathy took the time to get to know everyone.” Director of Community Programs Kay Podbielski will particularly miss Kathy's wise counsel and her willingness to always listen.

Losing someone as integral to BCRC's day-to-day functioning as Kathy Davis is always difficult. However, Kathy made it a point to train those who will follow in her footsteps and truly hopes for continued growth for BCRC. She would like to see the clients get the opportunity to experience more work sites in the community.

Kathy will continue to help others in her retirement. She is very involved with her church and will continue to pursue other ministries. She would also like to continue golfing and get back to her oil painting. She hopes to pursue the simple life with much less stress. Kathy certainly earned the chance to enjoy retirement; BCRC will always be indebted to her for her tireless work and dedication to our clients. ■

Fashion and Pierogis Highlight Fall Activities

by *Sabine Kane*

Two successful events highlighted fall activities for individuals attending BCRC's WIN Services. Participants showed their style and flair at a fashion show, while they enjoyed autumn activities at a fall fling.

Support coordinators, family members and residential staff were delighted with a fashion show presented by 17 WIN participants at Pathway Church in Chippewa Township. The ladies wore evening gowns or wedding dresses, and the guys strutted the aisle in suits and ties.

Things came together quickly as some creative staff came up with the idea to let WIN participants show their fashion sense, and as usual they received the unfailing support of WIN Director Sheila Silbaugh. When wedding dresses went on sale at the local Goodwill store for 99 cents, WIN staff members Jonni Kichta and Heather Lanter-Haley thought that it would be an ideal time for a fashion show. Staff member Wilma Westbrook secured Pathway Church for the event and members of the church were very gracious in their support. Staff did the hair, nails and makeup of the ladies the morning before the show.

WIN participants also had a wonderful time at Yeck's Farm during WIN's fall fling. A corn maze, hay rides and live music were enjoyed by approximately 50 clients and 45 staff. The highlight of the day was a pierogi race that could compete with any held by the professional baseball team. In fact, our pierogis are ready and willing to race at PNC Park anytime!

Kudos go out to the entire WIN staff for their dedication to providing fun and educational programming! ■

Paulette Miller
Executive Director

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Safety Lights *by Cindy Kirkpatrick*

This year BCRC conducted its annual Safety Day on September 29th. For many years Mr. Jack Skrlac has graciously agreed to talk to staff and clients about fire safety and the correct use of fire extinguishers. This year was no exception.

Although discussing a topic that may produce anxiety for some, Jack's use of humor and his ability to engage his listeners made learning about fire safety informative while allaying any one's fears. Additionally, clients were encouraged to submit a safety question into a drawing. Excitement and anticipation built when each time a question was drawn, the author received a gift card.

The day ended with a delicious lunch, consisting of a sandwich, munchies, drink and ice cream. Yummy! ■



**Jack Skrlac dis-
cussing fire safety.**

Connect 4 Grand Champion

Congratulations to Caitlyn Davis, Connect 4 Grand Champion She defeated Nicole Ober, champion from WIN/Aurora. Caitlyn received \$100 total in Amazon gift cards for her victory. ■



**Caitlyn Davis celebrating
her win.**

The staff and clients at
BCRC wish you and
your family a safe and
joyous Christmas and a
Happy New Year!

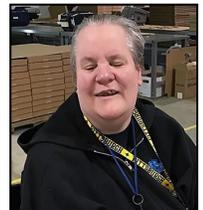
Employee of the Month



James McCartney
October 2017



Troy Levinger
November 2017



Nancy Lewis
December 2017

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