

U.S. House of Representatives Votes to Outlaw Subminimum Wage

by Frank Shialabba



The U.S. House of Representatives voted recently to end 14(c) certificates, which allow work activity centers to pay individuals with disabilities commensurate with their production. This law allows organizations like BCRC to pay subminimum wages to individuals whose productivity is below that of beginning workers at similar jobs in the community. The U.S. Senate has yet to vote on ending the 14(c) exemption.

The new bill is called the Raise the Wage Act. If passed in the Senate, work activity centers (sheltered workshops) would cease to function as we know them. They could no longer seek subcontract work that is time studied and may result in payment of subminimum wages if activity center workers are producing below the rate of community workers. Workshops could not exist if they had to pay 100% of the prevailing wage to workers who were producing at 10% the rate of the average entry worker.

While some see this development as progress, the "Disability Scoop" cites "families and advocates who say that the wage system still plays an important role, particularly for those with severe disabilities who benefit from having a sense of purpose in an environment where they are surrounded by their peers."

Please contact your senators and representatives if you wish to speak out about this proposed new law. ■

Sixty-eight BCRC Clients Attain Competitive Employment

by Mary Jo Sanders

The staff of WIN Services, School to Work and Community Programs have worked diligently this past year to assist BCRC clients in gaining 68 competitive jobs!

Clients from the three programs have been placed at a variety of worthwhile community jobs. Eleven School to Work students were placed at FedEx during the holiday season, while five were hired for year round employment. Another client has landed his dream job of working at a local airline, where he proudly wears his uniform. Some other jobs include activities aide, sandwich artist, cashier, custodian, dishwasher, grounds maintenance worker and many others. The jobs are just as varied as the personalities of the individuals who have been employed.

The process begins when a client voices the desire to enter the workforce. They complete a vocational assessment which profiles their interests, educational achievements, and physical strengths or limits. Then an assessment is written, a plan established, and the client is assisted with resume building and interview skills. Clients decide which jobs would best suit them, and they learn about logistics like whether it is on the bus line. This takes much planning and support by BCRC staff as there are many pieces to put together to make the client's dream of working come true.

Congratulations to the staff of WIN, School to Work and Community Programs and to the 68 clients who are realizing their dreams of working in the community. ■

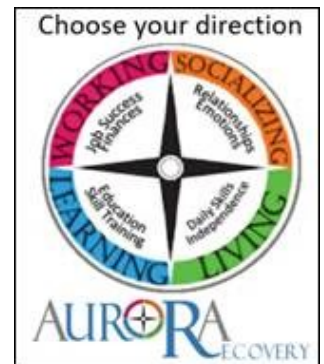
BCTA and Aurora Work Together to Reduce Transportation Stress

by Laurel Baker

Melinda Lindsay, Aurora's administrative assistant, and Mr. Shepherd of the Beaver County Transit Association have formed a working relationship that has benefited many participants as they seek to find transportation to Aurora programs.

Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services is a medically prescribed program, which means that participants can utilize public transportation to attend at no cost to them. Specifically, many people use DART's Demand and Response Transit as a way of getting back and forth to Aurora Services. This system can be a little daunting to those who have never used it before. Aurora Services staff, particularly Melinda Lindsay, problem-solver extraordinaire, is a great help to those who are learning how to navigate this transportation. She has developed a great working relationship with the staff at the Beaver County Transit Authority, which has helped the whole process run seamlessly...at least most of the time. There are hiccups and, fortunately, BCTA has a secret weapon.

Mr. Shepherd, known by all as just "Will", has saved the day more than once. He and his drivers work diligently to ensure everyone is safe and where they need to be, when they need to be there. Participants at Aurora are reminded often of the rules around scheduling DART, but mishaps do happen. Occasionally, individuals have needed extra support and patience, and Will has gone out of his way to focus on safety and compassion. His communication with individuals using DART and Aurora Services has been extremely helpful in determining solutions to issues, and he always approaches things with a good sense of humor. Melinda and Will have forged an open line of dialogue that has alleviated much of the stress that transportation issues can cause, and everyone benefits as a result. ■



Independent Living Paid Work Program “Connects the Dots”

by Ian Thomas

Every young person has different strengths and needs different things in order to succeed. However, special needs and outside circumstances often prevent some young people from having their needs met by the usual means, such as school. The BCRC Youth Services program aims to address the needs of these young people by implementing the Independent Living Paid Work program for Beaver County Children and Youth Services (BCCYS). Aimed at young people up to 21 years of age, the Independent Living Paid Work program offers person-centered programming, which means the program is different for everyone.

Services offered to Independent Living clients are as unique as the clients themselves. They can include everything from enrollment into college courses and assistance navigating the financial aid application process to assistance establishing residence and procuring government identification documents. In addition, BCCYS provides funding for identified expenses.



The precursor program to the Independent Living Paid Work program, known as Creating Alternative Pathways to Success (CAPS), was focused on vocational, academic, and social skills. However, after evaluation of the needs of its client base, it was found instruction in life skills such as cooking, banking, and wellness was also needed. While the ultimate goal of Independent Living is competitive employment, success looks different for every person.

The Youth Services program currently facilitates the Independent Living Paid Work for six clients. Clients are picked up in the morning and are then taken into the community for coaching and training. Providing transportation to clients has helped to improve attendance for clients who were having difficulty coordinating their own transportation. It also fits in with the blanket approach of the System of Care philosophy implemented by the CAPS program. “The System of Care approach is all encompassing. We meet clients where they are, but we know where we want them to go,” Program Specialist Susan Smith says. “We connect the dots.”■

WIN Helps Calvin Realize His Dream

by Frank Shialabba

Calvin Palombo never gave up on his dream to work in the community, despite obstacles that seemed overwhelming at times. Calvin realized his quest, when he trusted his dream to BCRC's WIN Services. After entering BCRC through the School to Work program, Calvin sought help with employment at WIN. He has been working four days a week at a local department store for a year now.

According to WIN's Vocational Specialist Jessica McCarrier, Calvin has become a consummate worker who “works productively and efficiently and often asks for extra tasks to do. He has great work skills, and he just needed to believe in himself. It's great to have watched him grow, because he really wanted to work in the community.” Calvin has developed good relationships with his coworkers, and his confidence has grown with his success.

Calvin is thankful for the help he has received, and he always expresses how much he loves his job. Along with his job, he enjoys attending activities through WIN's In Home and Community Supports Program, watching movies and wrestling, and hanging out with friends. WIN Services staff and everyone throughout the BCRC family wish Calvin continued growth and success.■

Jordan is “Natural” for eQuip Books

by Sabine Kane

WIN Services' Jordan Lehenny is a “natural” for his job at eQuip Books in Aliquippa, where he has worked for more than two years. Jordan loves to read; he has a particular penchant for the books of Stephen King, so working with books made sense for him.

Jordan's duties include scanning, sorting and categorizing books. He independently manages his schedule which includes switching shifts when necessary.

Jordan is supported by a job coach when working to assist with learning new skills. He loves earning an income and sets some aside for “fun” money.

Aside from working, Jordan is able to participate in the community with the support of WIN Services. Jonni Kichta, Coordinator of Habilitation Services at WIN, describes Jordan as “an overall delightful person.”■

Work Experience Results in Five Long Term Jobs

by Rodney Brown

Five BCRC School to Work students have received permanent part-time positions at FedEx in Clinton, PA. The students were selected for the work group

based on past performance, transportation, and anticipated graduation dates. They worked the afternoon shift and were provided job coaching which eventually faded at the request of FedEx. FedEx was supportive and provided the training needed to help the students succeed.

All five students are currently working and doing well. Currently, two students are flipping packages to be scanned, two are scanning and palletizing, and one is unloading trucks. They also have been given the opportunity to apply for fulltime positions.■

Dates of Interest

Columbus Day October 14

Halloween October 31

Daylight Savings November 3

Veteran's Day November 11

Thanksgiving November 28



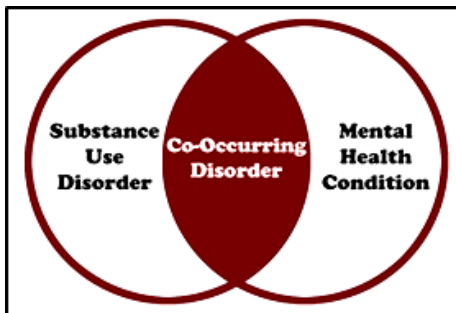
BCRC is Co-occurring Capable

by Jessica Rusak

Did you know that BCRC is co-occurring capable? This means our recovery-oriented, co-occurring programs are designed based on the assumption that the next person “coming to the door” of the program is likely to have co-occurring issues and needs, and they need to be welcomed for care, engaged with empathy and the hope of recovery, and provided what they need in a person-centered and integrated fashion.

To achieve this, BCRC has specially trained staff and services available to support individuals with a co-occurring diagnosis (COD). A co-occurring diagnosis refers to the combination of any mental health or any substance use problem. Though BCRC predominately serves those with intellectual disabilities and mental illness, numerous grant projects throughout the past several years have allowed us to extend services to those requiring co-occurring mental health services. These distinct services provide the opportunity for individuals to make progress toward having a happy, productive life.

To ensure ongoing co-occurring capability, BCRC completes an annual COMPASS-EZ™ self-assessment tool. This tool is designed to monitor the successful implementation of recovery-oriented co-occurring services. All mental health services provided by BCRC are within the value framework established by the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS). ■



Spotlight On: BCRC Compliance Coordinator Jessica Rusak

by Kelly Newhouse

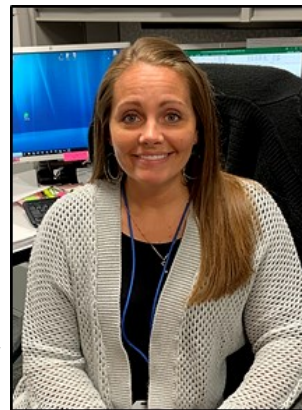
It takes a tremendous team and large group of dedicated individuals to keep all of BCRC's programs running well. BCRC is fortunate to have Jessica Rusak, our newest Compliance Coordinator, at the forefront of many of these operations.

Jessica began her career in BCRC's Aurora services in February 2016. After working for a year, she joined the Community Programs Department. She served as our Contract Specialist, overseeing the acquisition, development, and monitoring of all county and grant contracts. From there, Jessica moved into the position of compliance coordinator. Jessica continues to oversee BCRC's Quality Management Plan to ensure compliance to county, state, and federal regulations and licensing. She is diligent in

maintaining needed documentation, which keeps the agency in compliance.

Jessica is a wonderful support to all departments, allowing agency personnel to focus on our participants and their needs. What she loves best about her job is that all workers are dedicated to BCRC's mission. She states, "There is a spirit of cooperation and shared goals all revolving around providing the best services possible."

In keeping with this ideal, Jessica was involved in helping to create BCRC's new logo design. As Jessica put it so eloquently, "I am honored to be part of the logo design process and to help shape the future of the BCRC brand. The logo maintains the established color scheme and provides a simple, yet meaningful logo and unifying tagline. I hope this logo gives participants something to relate to, and that it also inspires our employees." ■



Day of Caring Volunteers Have Positive Impact

by Laura Medarac

Three enthusiastic volunteers visited BCRC as part of the United Way Day of Caring on September 11. Greg Kalamasz and Susan McMullen from BASF and Tracey Antoline-Patton from the Beaver County Courthouse assisted with the move of three separate workstations within the CenterPlace production center. These moves will enable BCRC to expand and grow contract work areas for the clients.

We are always so grateful to the Day of Caring volunteers and to the United Way for this very special day. The volunteers help us complete essential projects that are vital to our growth. We also enjoy sharing our mission with the volunteers, and we know that Greg, Susan, and Tracey had a great impact during their time at BCRC. ■



L to R: Greg Kalamasz and Susan McMullen (BASF) and Tracey Antoline-Patton (Beaver County Courthouse)

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



SHOP TALK
by Cindy Kirkpatrick

★ In March the first and second floors at WIN Services experienced severe water damage. The damage made it necessary for the rooms to be completely renovated, including new walls, cabinets, tile and carpeting. All electronic equipment was replaced, also. Business went on as usual through the construction. The renovation was completed by the end of June and everyone is pleased with their new and improved workspace.

★ Fifty WIN participants joined their staff to experience the wonders of Kennywood Park this summer. WIN Director Sheila Silbaugh states, "this is a great chance for these individuals to go and just be friends at the park. It is a wonderful day of fellowship for all involved."

★ Safety is a number one concern at BCRC. For that reason, years ago a safety committee was formed. The committee meets monthly and is comprised of both employer and employee representatives. In order to maintain certification, the members are required to have annual training, which must include three topics:

hazard inspection and detection, incident investigation and prevention, and safety committee operations. In return for providing a safe work environment, BCRC receives a 5% discount on our worker's compensation insurance.

★ The ice cream truck returned to the delight of the participants in BCRC's programs at CenterPlace, WIN and Aurora Services. The treats were a refreshing treat that helped BCRC clients "beat the heat".

Safety Lights
Fall for These Autumn Safety Tips

★ Check around your furnace before turning it on. Make sure nothing flammable is near it.

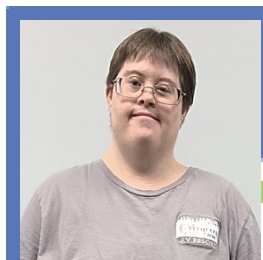
Change the batteries in your smoke alarm when you "fall back" (change your clocks).

★ Use space heaters safely. Keep combustibles at least three feet from the heater.

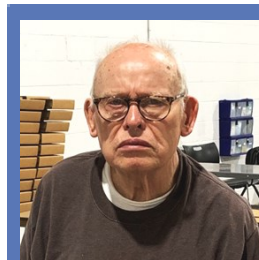
Be safe on Halloween. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic increase when kids are seeking their candy.

★ Practice your family fire escape plan.

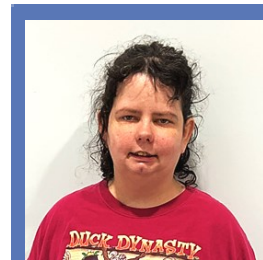
Employee of the Month



Brandi Senior
July 2019



James Elliott
August 2019



Linda Clemmer
September 2019

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