

Technology Provides Growth for Webb

by Jessica Rusak

For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier; for people with disabilities, technology makes things possible¹.

One day while temporarily substituting for the mail run, Gary Webb ran to his mother and pushed a button on his iPad. This was no ordinary button – but rather a voice for an individual who was otherwise silent. The excitement over this newfound job opportunity was incredibly communicated, all by the touch of a button.

Nearly three years ago, Employment Specialist Roberta Marshall, began working with Gary. Roberta was dedicated to ensuring that Gary would have the chance to learn to communicate with others, so she created picture cards to help him to identify basic needs. Initially, there was a struggle, but Roberta continued searching for the right program or device that would benefit Gary.

Last year, Gary progressed to using an iPad, which has a communication support application installed. The application 'LetMe Talk' enables Gary to line up images in a meaningful way, ultimately creating a sentence. Each day of interaction with the technology is an accomplishment. The ability to integrate technology into our services yields a greater success among our clients, and Gary's growth is no exception.

Gary is more social and outgoing, looks for interaction from others, and is learning to make specific requests for activities of his own choosing. Communication may not always be easy, but Gary has proven that it *is* possible. ■



^[1] International Business Machines (IBM) 1991 Training Manual

John Branthoover Fills His Own Personal Wish List

by Frank Shialabba

Filling John Branthoover's wish list was a tall order. He wanted a badge, a uniform and a job working in security near airplanes. Needless to say, reaching these very ambitious and very specific goals did not happen overnight. BCRC's WIN Services staff knew that it would take persistence, but that's something John has never lacked.

John began by going to the Pittsburgh airport and "acing" his job interview. When an opening at the airport was not available during a shift when John had transportation, he began a process of negotiation with the airport personnel office to find just the right job and shift that would meet the needs of both parties. After numerous calls and conversations, John found a job in security that was a perfect fit.

Since John has to go through security check points, it was not possible that he receive job coaching from WIN staff. He was not fazed; he was eager to begin this new phase of his life. He started his new job on May 9, 2019 at the rate of \$10.25 an hour. John loves his new job and is doing well for an airport security company. When the company was short-handed, he volunteered to work a shift that required him to get up in the middle of the night. According to WIN's Joni Kichta, "John already has the reputation of being the most dependable worker they have, and is always willing to help, even when it involves getting up at 3:00 a.m. to begin his work shift. He is the perfect example of what hard work and dedication can get you; a dream come true!" ■

BCRC Clients Spread Love to Deployed Soldiers by Frank Shialabba

It's no secret that BCRC clients love to help other people. They're good at it, and they thrive on it. That's one of the reasons that the partnership between BCRC and the Yellow Ribbon Girls has been so successful. BCRC clients are enriched by the opportunity to volunteer, while the lives of soldiers, who are stationed far from home and often in harms way, are brightened by the "packages of love" that they receive from the Yellow Ribbon Girls and BCRC clients.

This symbiotic relationship started when BCRC's Sheila Silbaugh learned about the program through BCRC Job Coach Jim Smith, whose wife was a Yellow Ribbon Girl volunteer. Ms. Silbaugh began taking a BCRC client to volunteer at their headquarters in Ellport, PA, as one of the first Habilitation experiences to occur in Beaver County. There Ms. Silbaugh met Bonnie, Vicky and Patty whose brother, Major John Stich, was deployed as an Army Critical Care Nurse as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Major Stich asked his sisters to provide care and comfort to the many soldiers who were stationed far from their family and loved ones. The girls started the Yellow Ribbon Girls and the rest, as they say, is history. According to the sisters, "we started with one soldier and have grown to support several hundred service men and women."

When Ms. Silbaugh became WIN Services Director, she worked with the sisters to extend the opportunity to volunteer to many of the individuals who attend WIN. BCRC clients help prepare items for packaging one day a week and participate in the actual packaging on another day.

BCRC's CenterPlace site will act as a collection site for notes of encouragement, treats, crafts, etc. for the soldiers. Please be generous as we honor the sacrifices made by our service men and women.

BCRC clients, you prove every day just how caring and special you are! ■



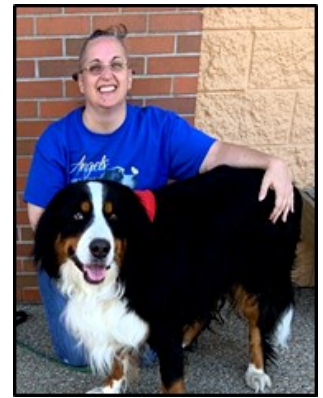
Safety Day 2019 was Packed with Information and Fun

by Mary Jo Sanders

On a warm and bright sunny day in late September, clients and staff of BCRC spent a fun and educational day learning important lessons in safety. Mike Welhorsky, of Henderson Brothers Insurance, started the day with a very informative presentation explaining blood borne pathogens. Next, Jack Skrlac, from Aerial Fire Equipment, talked about fire safety and demonstrated the correct use of a fire extinguisher. With his humorous personality, Mr. Skrlac engaged the clients in a spirited question and answer session. He has graciously partnered with BCRC for many years of fire training, and everyone enjoys his visits.

There were also a number of after-lunch activities. The Center Township Volunteer Fire Department brought their truck, and allowed participants to see their tools and sit in the driver's seat. The Center Township police brought their MRAP vehicle (mine resistant ambush protected vehicle), which is very impressive in size. The clients enjoyed looking it over and learning all about it. One of the highlights of the afternoon was a new addition to Safety Day. Michelle Powell and her service dog, Samson, who is a large, friendly and lovable Bernese Mountain Dog greeted everyone.

The pinnacle of the day was the awarding of grand prizes. There were drawings for McDonald's gift cards, lunch with the maintenance department, lunch with a friend, etc. However, the most anticipated prizes included rides in the fire truck, the Medic Rescue ambulance, and the very cool MRAP vehicle. The day was capped off with ice cream from Bruster's—one of our many sponsors. We would like to thank our many corporate donors and Facilities Manager Laura Medarac, and her team, for their hard work and planning. ■



**Michele & Samson
Therapy Team**

Consumers Will Have Building They can be Proud Of

by Frank Shialabba

BCRC's Aurora Building in Beaver had numerous improvements recently that according to Building Manager Laura Medarac "will help save costs in the future." The new low cost maintenance design involved the planting of trees, perennials and "loads of myrtle."

The building also received an updated look by replacing shutters, painting trim, and repainting signage. According to Ms. Medarac, "we will continue the update next year with new railings and exterior lighting."

Executive Director Paulette Miller believes that ongoing maintenance will give consumers a building they can be proud of. ■

Spotlight on: Jack Brooks

by Kelly Newhouse

Jack Brooks accepted a full-time position as a BCRC job coach in April 2019. He brings fresh ideas and a varied background to the work activity center.

Jack is a "forklift driver extraordinaire", who also serves as ambassador to one of our contracting companies. In addition, Jack works 1:1 with an individual whose life he enriched with experiences in the community and



the work activity center. Jack states, "It has been a great joy to get to know him and watch him achieve goals and push boundaries that he hadn't tried before". He shares a mutual admiration with this individual and all our participants. This mutual respect enriches every experience. Jack states, "I enjoy watching our participants do something that he/she didn't think they could do, or never tried."

Jack also shares respect for his coworkers. He credits coworkers for being extremely talented, hardworking, dedicated, and compassionate people who serve our clients. He states that he has "been inspired to step up his game in many areas". His hope for the agency's future is that we would continue to encourage each other to be the best version of ourselves. All this to cultivate a positive and encouraging environment for everyone.

In addition to being a pastor at his church, Jack spends a lot of time with family. He has been married to his wife Genine for 29 years. They have three children, a daughter-in-law, and a three-year-old granddaughter who is the "center of the universe." Jack and his family enjoy many outdoor activities and visiting restaurants/coffee shops in the Pittsburgh area. You might see him cycling through town with his family. ■

Youth Ambassador Program Update

by Sabine Kane

Since 2016, the Youth Ambassador Program (YAP) has strived to educate and equip students in Beaver County schools with the tools they need to manage their

mental health and decrease the stigma associated with it. In conjunction with the countywide Zero Suicide Initiative, the Youth Ambassadors have taken on the task of enhancing mental health awareness within their school districts and communities.

The first district to accept this challenge was Beaver Falls High School. They hosted their 3rd annual YAP After Dark event on October 30th. The agenda was the introduction of the Beaver County Zero Suicide Initiative and video clips previewing the Kevin Hines' movie, "Suicide - The Ripple Effect". The BF youth ambassadors facilitated an open discussion with the audience following the video preview. The event was well attended by students, parents, administrators, teachers, staff, residents and school board members. Several community resources were also on hand to answer questions and provide mental health information regarding the services and supports in Beaver County. Agencies included Beaver County Behavioral Health, Pressley Ridge, Aurora Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Beaver County Crisis, Highmark Caring Place, Dear Mind Campaign and the ACT-SO Program.

In an effort to spread the Zero Suicide Initiative throughout Beaver County, every school district has been encouraged to host a YAP After Dark event this year. Each event will be supported by Beaver County Behavioral Health and Beaver County System of Care community resources. For information and updates on the Zero Suicide Initiative and other mental health resources, please check out the Beaver County System of Care website at www.bc-systemofcare.org. You can also follow YAP on Instagram and Twitter: [@bcyapprogram](https://www.instagram.com/bcyapprogram). ■

Shop Talk *by Cindy Kirkpatrick*

* National Fuel Gas needed to run a supply pipeline to the new Shell PA Petrochemical Complex. In order for them to accomplish the task, it was necessary for them to dig through our parking lot. After completion, the outer circle of the parking lot was repaved which conveniently made improvements to our lot without the expense.

* BCRC added two more vans to the fleet. The Dodge Grand Caravans contain all the latest safety equipment. They will transport people to various activities, including volunteer opportunities, for the community part of the Community Participation Services Program.

* In October, BCRC celebrated **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)** by displaying posters throughout the buildings announcing the theme, **"The Right Talent, Right Now"**. This theme emphasized the essential role that people with disabilities play in America's economic success. The Department's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) administers NDEAM, which celebrates America's workers with disabilities both past and present, and emphasizes the importance of inclusive policies and practices to ensure that all Americans who want to work can work.

* BCRC hosted a pumpkin carving contest as a fundraiser for our client Christmas gift fund. There were a total of 27 pumpkins entered. The entries showed the creativity and talent of our staff.



Rose Dunkerly,
clients choice

Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to vote for their favorite pumpkin. The clients chose the pumpkin created by Rose Dunkerly and the staff vote went to Bethany Westbrook. BCRC would like to thank Janoski's and Home Depot for donating the pumpkins.



Bethany Westbrook,
staff choice

BCRC Joins the Fight to Save Lives with the Zero Suicide Initiative

by Laurel Baker

On September 11, 2019, BCRC staff and consumers were blessed with the opportunity to meet Kevin Hines, and view his documentary, *Suicide: The Ripple Effect*, at Penn State – Beaver. It is said that everyone has a story, and as Mr. Hines shared his, it was nearly impossible to avoid an emotional reaction. On September 25, 2000, Kevin Hines jumped from the Golden Gate Bridge, in San Francisco, in an effort to end his life. He was just 19 years old. Miraculously, he was pulled from the water alive, and while he had significant injuries, he did recover physically. Mental recovery, however, has been an ongoing process.

An important aspect of Hines' recovery is advocacy. He travels the US and various other countries, telling his story and

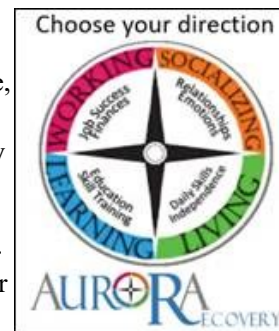
fighting for awareness of safety measures. Specifically, he lobbied for a steel net to be placed on the Golden Gate, which, is currently being constructed.

Hines was brought to Beaver County as part of the statewide Zero Suicide Initiative due to his belief that suicide is preventable. Beaver County has consistently reported a suicide rate that is higher than the national average. System-wide education on suicide care, rather than relying on select clinical staff, is based on the idea that everyone can make a difference for an individual in crisis. Kevin Hines says that on that fateful day, he would not have jumped if even one person stopped to see if he was okay. No one did.

The System of Care of Beaver County and Beaver County Behavioral Health have invited all community partners to engage in the Zero Suicide program. One objective is that all employees feel confident if faced with an individual who is expressing suicidal thoughts.

BCRC's team leader for the Zero Suicide Initiative is Melissa Coakley, with Maureen Hawk as additional support. They have successfully put together a team of representatives from every department within BCRC, who will be responsible for identifying and addressing BCRC's specific needs in improved suicide care. The Zero Suicide Initiative sets the bar high, with the goal being zero lives lost. BCRC is honored to be part of this mission.

Suicide: The Ripple Effect reminds us that suicide affects us all. Therefore, we all share the responsibility of suicide prevention. If you or someone you know is struggling, there are resources available. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, or text "PA" to 741741. Both services are free and confidential. Additionally, Beaver County has a crisis hotline at 1-800-400-6180. ■



BCRC Hosts Monaca Recreation Board

by Frank Shialabba

Executive Director Paulette Miller fulfilled a promise recently when she hosted members of the Monaca Recreation Board for a tour of BCRC's CenterPlace facility. The promise was made at the annual BCRC picnic in gratitude for Monaca Recreation's many years of sponsorship of the picnic.

Members of Monaca Recreation were treated to lunch and a tour of the facilities by Ms. Miller. According to Ms. Miller, "they were surprised by the size of BCRC's facility and the breadth of its programs. We were so happy to host this generous organization, which has brought so much fun and enjoyment to BCRC's clients over the past 42 years that they have sponsored the picnic."

The Recreation Program first became a sponsor of BCRC's picnic in 1977 when John Antoline expressed an interest in doing something for BCRC's clients. The Polce family has carried on this tradition. Words cannot express what this picnic has meant to the many BCRC clients who have enjoyed it over the last 40 plus years. ■

Paulette Miller
Executive Director

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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.



Seven Placed in Competitive Employment

by Ian Thomas

BCRC placed seven individuals in competitive employment in the last few weeks. This is due to the hard work of the staff at WIN Services and a strong desire to succeed on the part of the people we serve.

BCRC program specialists, job coaches, and administrative staff work together to assess client needs on the basis of work history, educational and training background, personal interests and employment goals. BCRC works to place clients into competitive employment through a variety of programs, such as community participation, paid-work training experience, small group employment, and supported employment.

During the last quarter, representatives of BCRC made around 70 visits to individuals who are working competitively and maintaining employment. These visits entail interviews with clients and employers on the progress and issues associated with the client's competitive employment arrangement.

Placing clients into lasting competitive employment is dependent on the client's abilities and circumstances, and aided by funding from the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Beaver County Behavioral Health, and Federal Medicaid Waivers. ■

Embracing Our History

by Joshua Ward

Chapter 4

"Getting to know Frank Sniezek and how he touched the hearts of BCRC"

When I first met Frank Sniezek, I got to interview him for the BCRC newsletter. My first impression was that Frank was a good guy, who had a heart of gold. He was happy and joyful to be around. I knew that he would be a perfect person for the clients at BCRC.

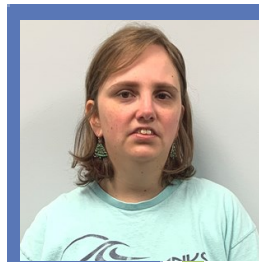
Frank understood the lives of the clients and gave a chance for us to have a normal life by listening to us and caring about each person at BCRC. He taught clients new skills so that they could live more independently. I am thankful for all the work he has done so I and others can live in the world with everyone else.

He will be truly missed. ■

Employee of the Month



Shelby Schnellbach
October 2019



Mary Scott
November 2019



Aaron Harris
December 2019

BCRC is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form.