



## BCRC Reaches Out to Senator Casey's Staff to Preserve 14(c)

*by Sheila Bell*

Out of concern that one of BCRC's flagship programs, the Production Center, may be at risk, BCRC recently hosted Michael Gamel McCormick, Disability Policy Director for Senator Casey. Legislation, which passed the House and moved to the Senate in November, would phase out 14(c) special certificates which allow for BCRC's Production Center to provide employment as programming.

BCRC has successfully helped many individuals reach and maintain employment and fully supports a full array of employment options including apprenticeships, job sharing, job coaching, entrepreneurship, and increasing competitive opportunities. In spite of best efforts, however, this goal remains elusive for some individuals. For these individuals, the 14(c) certificate is an imperative and valuable option as it provides individuals with purpose, satisfaction and pride in their daily lives.

In October, BCRC hosted a Zoom conference call with McCormick. At that meeting, BCRC discussed the impact the 14(c) elimination would have on people receiving services at BCRC. This meeting led to an in-person visit by Mr. McCormick on November 9. Accompanying him were two additional members of Senator Casey's staff, Marlon Ferguson, the SWPA Regional Director and Robbie Matesic, Regional Representative. During the visit, BCRC staff presented information about services offered to clients, answered questions posed by Senator Casey's staff, and provided a hands on tour of the Production Center. Ms. Miller also requested that Senator Casey consider a "carve-out" option within the legislation that would allow for 14(c) certificate programs to continue if specific conditions are met. It is too soon to know what the outcome will be; however, there is still time to advocate for the 14(c) program by reaching out to your legislators. BCRC will be sending out additional information to staff and clients about ways they can advocate for the continuation of this important program.



## Don't Make Them Wait, Choose a Career at BCRC

*by Frank Shialabba*

A shortage of staff has lead to a waiting list for services at the Beaver County Rehabilitation Center for the first time in many years. According to Executive Director Paulette Miller, "Regretfully, BCRC has a waiting list for services at the Production Center, WINServices, and the School to Work Program. We are experiencing the same shortage of qualified staff as social services are experiencing across the county, state and really, the entire country." BCRC's director is both concerned and hopeful that the situation will improve, as it is never her wish to see people wait for services. She states, "BCRC has gone above and beyond to create a safe and welcoming environment for both staff and people with disabilities."

To start your life of service through employment at BCRC, visit the web site at [www.bcrc.net](http://www.bcrc.net) and see BCRC-Careers, or contact Amy Albanese, Human Resource Specialist at (724) 378-4750, Ext. 1253.

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## Housing Authority Contract Resumes

*by Kris Beal*

After an absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, BCRC has returned to cleaning for the Beaver County Housing Authority. Crews of four clients and one staff are contracted to clean a total of five buildings, five days each week. With the return, clients received an exciting raise to \$9.00 an hour while working on this contract.

BCRC Safety Director Laura Medarac shared, "BCRC staff and clients were incredibly thrilled to continue this 15-year or more partnership with the Housing Authority." Medarac says, "The staff and clients are really taking ownership to ensure that all supplies are organized for each site, laundry is completed, and all on-site tasks are completed." Staff and clients from Client Services, WINServices, and School to Work are collaborating and receiving cross-departmental training to fulfill the needs of this contract during these unprecedented times. All support staff have received specialized ACRE training provided by Virginia Commonwealth University. The ACRE training endorses competency in this intermediate step in prevocational services to enhance each individual's overall employability.

Medarac also shared that the Housing Authority managers have expressed joy to see our clients back and are pleased with the work that is being completed.



## BCRC's Team of Certified Investigators Grows

by Mary Jo Sanders

Congratulations to Karen Adamo, Laura Medarac, and Krista Peace for passing the test to be certified investigators! They join Dawn Conti and John Palmer to fulfill an extremely vital role here at BCRC.

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) has a mission to support Pennsylvanians with developmental disabilities to allow them to achieve greater independence, choice, and opportunity in their lives. As part of this mission, ODP and in turn BCRC are committed to providing the necessary tools and resources to conduct quality investigations into incidents of abuse, neglect, and other significant events that occur in the lives of our clients.

Once an incident is reported the certified investigator springs into action conducting interviews of the involved parties and any witnesses and then, reporting their findings in a timely and objective manner. The certified investigator writes a report including their conclusions and determinations for corrective action.

The initial certification process consists of four parts; verification of applicant's general qualifications, taking an online prerequisite course, virtual Zoom sessions and assignments, taking quizzes, and passing an online examination. Karen, Laura and Krista all spent many hours studying for the course through Temple University and preparing to be certified by the Office of Developmental Programs as investigators.

We thank our team of certified investigators, Karen, Dawn, Laura, John, and Krista for their diligent studies and hard work!

## Alex Shares His Big Heart at Two Area Jobs

by Frank Shialabba

Alex Berry loves to put a smile on the face of other people. Currently, he is putting smiles on the faces of the staff at WINServices due to his exemplary work at his janitorial jobs at an Ambridge church and the Pennsylvania State Police barracks.



With his wonderful sense of humor and desire to help others, Alex goes about the task of cleaning at a Beaver County church with joy and commitment. This job, which is conveniently two blocks from his home, is challenging because it covers a wide area including offices, class rooms, activity areas and sacristy. At both the church and the police barracks, Alex works in tandem with another person. This suits him perfectly as he enjoys making a connection with other people.

According to WIN Program Specialist Adam Loverich, "Working at a competitive job in the community is something that Alex has always focused on. Alex's two jobs in the community are the culmination of his hard work and commitment. He is always ready to pitch in, unfailingly punctual, and never misses work."

Loverich describes Alex as loved by all due to his big heart. "He is known for his witty comments and his willingness to help." Loverich states, "Alex is a big help to his sister and he is a loving uncle to his nephew." He also demonstrates his thoughtfulness through greeting cards given for a birthday, thank you or get well wishes.

We have nothing but good wishes for Alex as he goes about his day sharing a laugh, a smile, and a helping hand to others.



## Jamal Helps Coworkers in Production Center

by Sarah Hazel

Jamal Ahmad, a worker in BCRC's Production Center, was recently chosen as an assistant to the agency's job coaches. In this role he supplies, sorts, and seals products for coworkers.

Jamal was chosen for this role as he is known for his excellent attendance and helpful nature. Jamal takes his work duties very seriously and staff describe him as organized, professional, and respectful. Jamal receives prevocational services four days per week, and he works on a variety of jobs including packaging, welding rods, labels, making boxes, and mailings.

Before attending BCRC, Jamal worked as a library assistant and teaching assistant. He is actively seeking part-time employment in a similar assistant role.

BCRC staff thanks Jamal for his hard work and dedication, and wish him good luck with his job searching.



## Staff and Clients Bid Fond Farewell to New Brighton

by Frank Shialabba

BCRC staff and clients wish to express their thanks and a say fond farewell to the borough of New Brighton as all four buildings in New Brighton are now sold.

BCRC operated buildings in New Brighton from 1980 to 2015. New Brighton was the home for two Production Centers, a vocational evaluation program and BCRC Records Management. The move to CenterPlace (Pleasant Drive, Aliquippa) was necessitated by a desire to consolidate programming into fewer buildings to cut costs and improve communication. The two Production Centers were consolidated into one at CenterPlace and the building also houses the Records Management program, various community programs and WINServices.

BCRC Executive Director Paulette Miller states, "We appreciate the support from the New Brighton Council and the borough itself. It was a great 35 years in New Brighton. While we are enjoying our new location, I think that New Brighton has a bright future ahead."



## Zagorski Seeks to Bring Fulfillment to Aurora Participants

by Deanna McCracken

Ryan Zagorski, a Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner at Aurora Services, is helping Aurora participants reach their dreams of community employment and independent living through his Life Skills classes.

Each Monday morning at Aurora Services, a young adult group eagerly engages in the Life Skills course, taught by Zagorski. With the help of technology and imagination, the classroom is alive with discussions on topics like procuring and furnishing a virtual apartment, budgeting, credit unions, credit cards, price comparisons, buying on sale and renting to own, saving money and the use of internet websites. Valuable skills such as learning to negotiate for a group consensus, and effective communication skills to hone in a more fulfilling independent life are practiced.

Ryan also does mobile one-to-one appointments for participants preparing to be in the community. Ryan works with students to utilize decision making skills to promote and express individualism and self advocacy during tasks like initiating conversations, ordering food, and making purchases in grocery stores. Exploring employment interests, job search skills, and visiting a potential employer are all on the agenda to support individual goals. Homework assignments include practicing how to sort clothes and do laundry which help participants become a more focused contributing member of a household by taking on daily tasks.

A break out group to teach cooking skills is planned for the future when COVID-19 restrictions are removed.

Zagorski's classes are helping Aurora participants break out of the status quo as they seek a more satisfying and fulfilling life.



## Shop Talk

by Frank Shialabba

BCRC staff and clients received required safety training during the agency's annual Safety Day. Training was completed virtually and through socially distanced groups. Training topics included Bloodborne Pathogens, fire safety and fire extinguisher use, Narcan administration and COVID protocols.

After morning training sessions, clients and staff enjoyed lunch and a "dance-off" competition. Everyone also viewed a slideshow of previous Safety Day activities.

Over 200 BCRC staff and clients received the Moderna Booster vaccine during a clinic at BCRC's CenterPlace Production Center on November 5. A second clinic was held on November 22, with approximately 100 people from the community attending.

## FedEx Hires Youth for the School Year

by Sarah Hazel

Nine School to Work students have been employed at FedEx for the 2021-2022 school year. These students have been learning and applying work skills such as scanning, palletizing and sorting packages. Along with their job assignments, the students participate in team building and morale-boosting exercises through FedEx. Supervisor of Youth Services Traci Hughes stated, "The kids really enjoy being part of a team and earning a paycheck."

The employment for these students runs from October 19 until Christmas break with the possibility of some continuing to work for FedEx after Christmas break. There is also a chance for permanent hire. FedEx hired five students last year and four of them are still working there part time.

Traci Hughes summarizes the experience by saying, "The FedEx employment is a great learning opportunity for the students to work in a real work environment as a part of a team, while also receiving support from the job coaches with whom they are already familiar."



**Thank you to Laura Medarac and John Baumgardner for their hard work to Deck the Halls at BCRC.**





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*The Board of Directors, staff and clients of BCRC  
wish you the happiest of holidays  
and a new year full of all that is good!*

*Paulette Miller, Executive Director*



**Employee of the Month**



**Candy Witherow**  
*October 2021*



**Brandon Belich**  
*November 2021*



**David Maloney**  
*December 2021*