

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.



## Gary Thunberg Celebrates 50 Years of Employment

by Frank Shialabba

At a time when it's common for people to stay at a job for less than five years, Gary Thunberg, age seventy of Vanport, is unique. On Friday, May fifth, Gary celebrated fifty years employment with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Baden at a gathering with staff, family and friends.

I was Gary's vocational counselor in 1973, when at the age of nineteen, he came to the Beaver County Rehabilitation Center, eager to work. It was obvious that Gary had his sights set on working in the community. While employment for people with disabilities was not readily available at that time, Gary regarded it as a fait accompli. He was going to work, and I was going along for the ride.

Former Project Director Frank Shialabba, Gary Thunberg, and BCRC Executive Director Lesley Hallas

Placement Director Frank Sniezek and I found Gary a position at Mt. Gallitzin Academy (now Baden Academy), where he was hired by Sr. Mary Canise as part of her kitchen staff. The good sister was a compassionate individual who had an eye for talent. She told me that she felt Gary would be a wonderful employee for many years to come, however, even she couldn't have predicted fifty years.

While still working in Baden with the sisters, Gary is currently employed by Cura Hospitality. Gary's coworkers call him compassionate, caring, selfless, dedicated and possessing a gentle nature. Director of Dining Services Elliott Hilton states, "Gary has made a big difference in the lives of everyone he comes in contact with. He is always willing to help others, and he tries to lift them up when they are having a bad day. He knows the equipment better than anybody, and he often anticipates problems before they happen. He is simply invaluable."

Gary has been invaluable to many as he has paved the way for thousands of people with disabilities who have been placed in community employment by the Beaver County Rehabilitation Center over the last fifty years.

Gary's work is not done, however. While his fifty years employment are remarkable and a cause for celebration, Gary has not retired. His work continues, and so does the example he sets for us all.



**Selah Shows Passion for Life and Work**

*By Frank Shialabba*

Selah Gallo, age twenty of Chippewa, is passionate about a lot of things. Her passion and energy have led to a successful beginning to her first job at a local grocery store, where she was placed by BCRC's WIN Services.

Selah approaches work with the same passion and energy that she displays in all things that interest her. WIN Program Specialist Madeline McGee feels that, "Selah was very anxious to work in the community. She couldn't wait to get a job and was very excited when it happened." Her enthusiasm was evident on her very first day of work.

Selah was a quick study and is already a self-starter. Ms. McGee states, "Selah stays busy. When she has completed her assigned duties, she looks for more work to do. She knows where everything is and what to do. In a very short time, she has learned to work independently without a lot of supervision. She has become more assertive and has overcome her reluctance to discuss concerns with her supervisor."

According to Selah's supervisor, "Selah brightens everyone's day. She is friendly and bubbly and a wonderful worker."

Selah is indeed wonderful at many things. She is a Special Olympic gymnast and she plays the electric and acoustic guitar.

Selah's job allows for eventual cross-training and the chance to use her talent and energy at a number of different positions. As usual, Selah is anxious and ready for the challenge of the exciting future that awaits her.



*"In early June the world of leaf and blade and flowers explode, and every sunset is different" - John Steinbeck*



**Retired Director Honored By Education Trust**

*By Frank Shialabba*

Retired Executive Director Paulette Miller was one of the first people inducted into the Education Hall of Fame by the Beaver County Educational Trust at the Willows on May ninth. Many of Ms. Miller's family and friends attended the event to recognize her achievement.

Ms. Miller was honored for developing and supporting programs that allowed people with disabilities to learn essential life and employment skills.

According to new BCRC Executive Director Lesley Hallas, "Ms. Miller ensured that all individuals with intellectual disabilities and mental health diagnoses had educational and vocational opportunities to prepare them to thrive both personally and professionally. Her community advocacy served to educate the broader community as to the abilities and strengths of individual with disabilities."

In addition, Ms. Miller and BCRC's clients and staff worked with the Educational Trust to distribute thousands of books to young children through the "Growing With Books" Program. BCRC clients labeled, packaged and mailed the books to children born at the Heritage Valley Medical Center for many years, and the work continues today.

**Mary Tackles New Challenge**

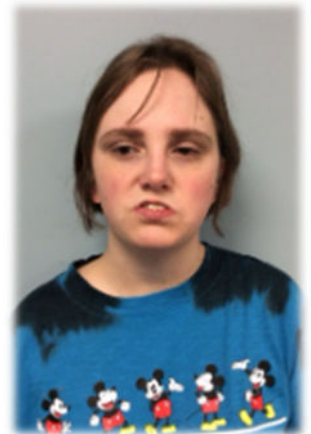
*By Adam Loverich*

In March of 2023, Mary Scott's life changed. She decided to embark on a new venture by leaving her old job for work at a local diagnostics firm.

Mary likes a challenge and her new job was decidedly different than her previous work as a dining room attendant. Mary's role is to tidy up files and to place the paperwork in a particular order for each patient in the imaging department.

She focuses intently on her work, and, at times, needs to be reminded to take a break. She's commended on doing a thorough job and for keeping the files "up-to-snuff."

Mary continues to do well on her job and to meet her annual goals. She also continues to participate in services at BCRC and spend time with her peers.



## It's YES for Success Academy

By Mary Alviani

Recently, BCRC School to Work Program collaborated with the Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit (BVIU) to bring together schools for the Yes for Success Academy. These monthly workshops are an opportunity for students to connect with peers in neighboring school districts to participate in hands on activities throughout the school year.

School to Work created the unique, individualized curriculum so students can engage in learning experiences about job searching and development, interviewing, and financial literacy.

Kathryn Wisniewski from School to Work was the lead for this program. She reported, "I was blessed to have the support of Rodney Brown and Cara Moyer throughout the sessions. As a team, we were able to connect with students and build trust, allowing us to push them past their comfort zone and grow before our eyes."

School to Work will continue to collaborate with many schools for the next school year as well. Kathryn also stated, "My own personal take away from this experience has been giving the students a place where they can have new experiences and grow as people. The students have engaged with each other, learned about each other, found what they have in common, and learned to work together. It has been an honor to be a small steppingstone along their journey."

## In the Spotlight

NICOLE OBER

By Kristina Beal



Nicole Ober wears two hats at Aurora. She is a certified psychiatric rehabilitation practitioner and a certified peer support supervisor. She provides education and support while facilitating psychiatric rehabilitation groups that allows individuals to achieve their recovery goals. She also mentors and oversees peer support staff and provides peer support services.

Nicole began working at BCRC in October 2014. Her background was in community counseling with both adults (outpatient mental health) and children (BHRS). She is originally from the North Hills area of Pittsburgh. She first learned about Aurora's psych rehab program by exploring jobs in Beaver County. Nicole now loves "working with my fellow co-workers. We are a pretty small department so we work close with one another in order to best serve our group members."

Nicole said she has grown in her "ability to adapt to change and be flexible when needed. Every day is a new adventure and sometimes we have to change plans at the last minute." Nicole looks forward to Aurora's annual Thanksgiving holiday meals because it is a wonderful way to discuss the topic of gratitude.

Outside of work, Nicole spends most of her time with her three boys, running them around to different activities. "They certainly keep me busy."

## July 1st—National Joke Day

What was the most popular dance in 1776?  
Indepen-dance

### Shop Talk

★ On May 25<sup>th</sup>, The YAP (Youth Ambassador Program) students participated in "chalk talk" with encouraging messages at the Beaver County Courthouse and received a proclamation from the Beaver County Commissioners declaring May as Mental Health Awareness & Acceptance Month. Afterwards, students participated in a listening session with the commissioners.

★ School To Work students placed signs around Beaver County and encouraged residents to display green lights to highlight Mental Health Awareness month in May.

★ Breaking News! BCRC is now featured on Facebook, Instagram and Linked In. Follow us on these social media sights to view BCRC's latest events and happenings!

★ In a vote of BCRC clients and staff the Wolf designed by School to Work was voted the BCRC mascot!

★ BCRC's Youth Ambassador Program was featured on a segment of Kidsburgh on KDKA!



KDKA's Kristine Sorensen with YAP Student Polina Shannon



## Brandon Nominated for State Award

By Mary Jo Sanders

BCRC congratulates Brandon Belich on his nomination for the 2023 UniqueSource achievement award. Brandon will receive a plaque and cash award when UniqueSource visits BCRC in June. UniqueSource provides employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Pennsylvania.

During an interview, Brandon impressed UniqueSource executives with his friendly and positive demeanor. He talked about his many challenges and personal losses, all while maintaining a positive outlook.

According to Jonni Kichta of WIN Services, Brandon also has an “impeccable work ethic, knowledge of his job, good attendance, and flexibility.” Brandon is self-motivated, and he cares about keeping a work place that is clean and healthy for others. He brings laughter and joy to each shift, and he is a true team player.



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Lesley Hallas

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## Classes Inform, Educate and Empower

by Ian Thomas

When Rich Edder took on the role of Production Center Supervisor in early 2023, one of his goals was to use his experience as an educator and school principal to bring formal instruction to BCRC in the form of monthly classes on specific subjects. Why go beyond job-related instruction on work-based tasks? These classes impart information that will benefit the participants in and out of work settings.

“The purpose of the monthly classes is to inform, educate, and empower our participants with more knowledge/information,” Mr. Edder says. “The information presented and discussed benefits the participants in that they may more positively engage with their peers in conversation regarding specific topics.”

During the poetry class our participants wrote their own poems.

In May, Mental Health Month, Mr. Edder will lead instruction on managing mental health by discussing ways to reduce and manage stress.

“The intent of each theme is to motivate participants to understand that learning continually takes place over time,” Mr. Edder says. The participants have responded enthusiastically to this opportunity to learn among peers in a supportive environment.



Have a  
great  
Summer!



## Employee of the Month

Aaron Harris  
Mar 2023



Jimmy Segal  
Apr 2023



Sam Lilja  
May 2023

