

BCRC Raises \$3500 While “Freezin’ for a Reason”

by Mary Jo Sanders

On Saturday morning January 27, the outside temperature was 41 degrees but the act of raising money for Special Olympics warmed the hearts of a record number of “plungers”. The BCRC Team set a goal of \$500 and smashed it, collecting \$3500.

The Bridgewater Landings marina quickly filled up with teams ready to dip into the cold waters of the Beaver River for a very important cause. They were cheered on by supporters including Special Olympics athletes, BCRC board members, retirees, and friends and family. Laura Medarac, Properties and Facilities Manager, said “it was such a wonderful morning filled with camaraderie and it was a great team building experience.” BCRC’s team consisted of 17 human plungers and Bailey, our certified therapy dog. Everyone paid an entrance fee and advertised on their social media platforms to raise sponsorship money.

Over 600 total people plunged into the icy water to raise a record setting \$158,000 for the athletes. All the money will be set for quality training, competition, leadership training and health initiatives for the Special Olympic participants.

We offer our gratitude to BCRC’s amazing “Plunge Team” who engaged in this act of service to help others and were truly “Freezin’ for a Reason!”



BCRC Works With Coalition To Preserve Employment Choice

by Mary Alviani

As a member of the “Coalition for the Preservation of Employment Choice,” BCRC supports employment choice as a human right. The Coalition and those involved support the elimination of barriers to employment and the expansion of employment opportunities for all. Recognizing that one-size does not fit all when it comes to disability support services, the coalition advocates for the preservation of choice with a wide range of employment choices tailored to fit individual needs, skills and preferences. Representative Robert Matzie, Congressman Chris Deluzio, and the staff of Senator Fetterman’s office, recently toured BCRC and engaged with participants and direct support professionals serving in the role of job coaches. Executive Director, Lesley Hallas and Production Manager, Barb Shearer engaged in advocacy and educational discussion during these tours, supporting both competitive integrated employment as well as center-based employment based upon individual choice. The coalition believes that rather than eliminating employment choices more choices should be offered. Ms. Shearer reports that “BCRC & the Coalition have taken a proactive approach in educating lawmakers about who we are as a pre-vocational facility and what BCRC has to offer. This is why we have been requesting meetings and tours with local lawmakers to encourage a ground swell of support.”

BCRC will always be a staunch advocate for the individuals we serve, working actively to preserve employment choice to ensure every individual has the opportunity to work in an environment where they can reach their fullest potential.



Production Manager Barbara Shearer, Coalition Chairman Colleen Stuart, Executive Director Lesley Hallas

...Be part of something

She Was And Is “Beautifully Sue”

By Frank Shialabba

After supporting BCRC’s Executive Directors for the last 16 years, BCRC’s invaluable Executive Assistant, Sue Leiper has retired.

Sue came to BCRC 26 years ago from New Horizon School, where she worked with children with disabilities. She left New Horizon in 1997 to work as a full time job coach.

Sue’s natural talent, love of people, and ability to adapt to change allowed her to rise quickly during her time at BCRC. She was soon promoted to Contract Facilitator at the newly formed Records Management Center, where she spent 10 years under the direction of manager Pat Healey. She believes, “Pat is responsible for much of my early professional growth.”

Sue grew even further when she traded her teaching activities for the chance to manage staff and handle multiple responsibilities. When the Executive Assistant position became available, Sue embraced the opportunity. Looking back she states, “I embrace change and love having something different to do each day. As Executive Assistant, I was able to be involved in just about every facet of BCRC and that has been very satisfying.”

Sue believes that, “my time spent here [BCRC] has been one of the most rewarding things in my life. I will forever be grateful for the opportunities that have come to my doorstep, and I will miss my daily interaction with our participants and coworkers.”

The important role of Sue Leiper in the daily operations of BCRC is reflected in the words of Executive Director Lesley Hallas. “Sue was and still is a tremendous asset to BCRC and its participants. Sue approached all aspects and duties of her various roles at BCRC with enthusiasm and a desire to serve others. Her work over the past 26 years has advanced the mission of BCRC and has impacted countless individuals and families. Sue’s energy was contagious, bringing laughter and joy to all those fortunate to have worked with her. Sue put BCRC participants at the heart of everything she did and the needs of others before herself. Her selflessness, joyful personality, work ethic, and commitment to BCRC were but a few of the countless qualities that made her “beautifully Sue”.



BCRC And United Way Are Partners In Service

By Ian Thomas

In a relationship dating back to the late 1960’s, BCRC is well into its fifth decade as a member agency of the Beaver County United Way. The United Way is “a centralized, non-profit fundraising organization allocating resources.”

BCRC is among seventeen member agencies and numerous non-profit groups sustained in part by United Way donor designations. In this way, United Way supports and encourages bridging services and partnership opportunities to maximize organizational potential, which allows United Way and, by extension, their member groups, to empower as many individuals as possible. These individuals come from every demographic of the Beaver County community. “BCRC continues to be grateful for the UW as well as the donors who help support critical programming for those in need,” says BCRC Executive Director Lesley Hallas.

According to Mary Lou Harju, Executive Director of the United Way, “The United Way of Beaver County is honored to have the opportunity to serve the Beaver County community, in part through the work of our Member Agencies such as BCRC. Our county is very blessed to have so many wonderful non-profit organizations who often work together to serve those whose needs would otherwise be unmet. It’s so important to give to the United Way, because we leverage the dollars of our donors to make an even greater impact in Beaver County.”





Maloney Uses Feedback To Grow

By Adam Loverich

Sometimes BCRC participants enter a period of growth where they make great strides. This is what has happened to David Maloney during the last three months at BCRC.

David has excelled at shredding documents, and he has shown his versatility on other jobs as well.

His skills have improved on jobs such as packaging welding rods, making boxes, and assembling kits of predetermined pieces.

In addition, David has been able to use various techniques to keep himself on track during his work day. For example, he uses the prompts of staff to ensure he has a productive day. He has also been able to utilize information, gained in team meetings, to make himself a more efficient worker.

David's ability to adapt and change had made him a pleasure to work with as he is always open and positive about feedback that he receives.



April is Spring's way of saying, "Let's Bloom"

Sue Middleman Retires After 24 Years of Personal Growth

By Frank Shialabba

After 24 years as a trusted job coach at BCRC, Sue Middleman, of Chippewa, retired in December of 2023. Sue was known for her love of our participants and her expertise on many of the jobs she supervised.

Sue had never supervised people when she began her employment at BCRC in 1999. She will be forever grateful to former job coach Elaine Alberts, who trusted her abilities and encouraged her to grow and excel. Elaine encouraged Sue to apply for a position supervising a group of individuals who had mental illness. Sue loved the work and she says the people she worked with "were great!"

As trust was placed in her, Sue trusted that the individuals she supervised had the talent and ability to be successful in the work place, and they thrived under her supervision.

Her own personal growth was something that paralleled the growth of those Sue supervised. She developed expertise in the intricacies of BCRC's mailing operation, and she became the "go-to person" for that and a number of other jobs.

Sue developed many friendships over her years at BCRC, and she will especially miss the smile on the face of our participants when they learn and successfully complete a job.

She will also miss wonderful BCRC events like the Christmas party where the participants get to dress up, dance, feast and celebrate the holiday's. In addition, she is very appreciative of the acknowledgement received by BCRC job coaches during Direct Support Professional week. She states, "that recognition means a great deal, and I am thankful to Executive Director Lesley Hallas for the appreciation that she shows to the job coaches."

In her retirement, Sue will appreciate time spent with family and friends. She plans to travel to places like Nashville, the New England States, and she hopes to see many of our nation's waterfalls.

Bon voyage Sue and thank you for a job well done.



In the Spotlight

KATIE WISNIEWSKI

By Kristina Beal

Katie Wisniewski, Transition Specialist of Youth Services, works diligently to improve the lives of students in BCRC's School-to-Work program while encouraging them to "Be Kind. Work Hard. Know that you are loved!"

Katie was originally hired part-time, but through her hard work and work ethic, she has transitioned into a full-time position at BCRC. Katie develops, implements, and leads group pre-employment transition programs for students ages 14-21 in Beaver County. She collaborates with the Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit and Job Training of Beaver County to present the Beaver County 'Yes for Success' program monthly for high school students from all districts throughout the Beaver Valley. She provides job-coaching, assessments, volunteer opportunities, and coordinates instructional classes for students enrolled in the School to Work program.

Katie is motivated by the opportunity to "support students in their own journey...being a part of their A-HA moments everyday." Katie enjoys participating in the "always fun and amazing" Polar Plunge, which supports Special Olympics athletes.

When Katie is not at BCRC, she provides peer-to-peer grief counseling at the Highmark Caring Place, directs the color guard team of the North Hills Marching Band, and supports her daughters in lacrosse. Simultaneously, Katie is working toward her degree in Special Education at the Western Governor's University. Katie said "it has been a wonderful blessing of an opportunity to work directly with students while growing into the educator that I hope to be."



Annual Awards Highlight Christmas Party

By Frank Shialabba

BCRC celebrated the annual Christmas Party, generously sponsored by the John A. Antoline Foundation on Friday, December 8 at the Fez in Hopewell Township. A number of awards were presented to some very deserving recipients. The awards are as follows:

Megan Patterson-**Employee of the Year** for giving 100% in her work production and being a role model for others.

Chad Lewandowski- **William A. Lintz Sr. Award** for his welcoming attitude and willingness to help others.

Scott Grimes- **Competitive Employment Award** for achieving competitive employment in 2023.

Kayla Edgington-**WINner of the Year** for having a positive impact on the lives of others.

Karla Tomaszewski-**Student of the Year** for her commitment to learning and growing.



Executive Director

Lesley Hallas

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- Tracey Antoline-Patton, 2nd VP
- Jan Kaminski, Secretary
- Lucas Rihely, Treasurer

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Mikel Shares Passion For Work And Art

By Frank Shialabba

Mikel Brickner, age 25 of Beaver Falls, is passionate about art, photography and his job at a college cafeteria.

After some time away, Mikel has made a successful return to the work force in a job that he truly loves. In addition to his duties as a dishwasher, Mikel replaces dishes and silverware in the serving area and prepares the cafeteria area for the next meal. According to WIN Services Program Specialist Madeline McGee, "Mikel's love for his work is evident in his increased responsibilities. "He has started to expand his duties to other functions in the cafeteria. In addition to the dinner shift, the manager has asked Mikel "if he would work the lunch shift."

Ms. McGee praises Mikel's "outgoing nature, his work ethic, willingness to help others and team focused attitude."

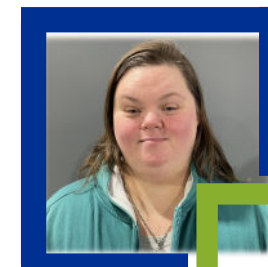


"Never was so much owed by so many to so few." - Winston Churchill

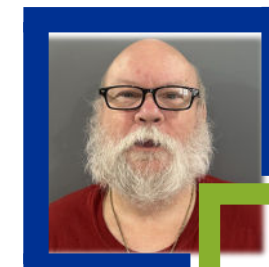
Memorial Day May 27th, 2024

Employee of the Month

Katie Hanton
December 2023



Roger McClain
January 2024



Latonya Binns
February 2024

