

# touchstone

A quarterly publication providing the latest news & information for individuals with disabilities, families, friends and our community.

## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

### Michael Ely: A Story of Success

Stone Belt's Lifelong Learning Program aims to provide individuals the skills and knowledge they need to empower themselves. A part of this program, the Moving Forward Classroom has given Michael Ely those opportunities, allowing him to exercise his independence and make choices for himself. He is in a supportive environment that encourages growth and self-improvement. "Michael is with people who respect him" says Cyndi Wolff, a Client Support Coordinator. Michael has taken full advantage of this experience by participating in several different programs through Stone Belt that have allowed him to truly become involved in the community.

Through the partnership between Stone Belt and Growing Opportunities, a program operated by the South Central Community Action Program, Michael and other clients have learned important job skills that they can apply in the future, while growing lettuce in the hydroponic greenhouse. "I've seen more of a sparkling personality come out as a result of Growing Opportunities" says Tiba Walter, a Direct Support Specialist. Michael's dedicated involvement in the Self Advocates of Monroe County has resulted in his receiving several awards, including the Elbert



Johns Self Advocacy Award and the Self Advocacy Award from the Bloomington Community Council on Accessibility.

The 10th Street Talk is a newsletter for the Moving Forward Classroom that Michael has helped re-vamp with his web design skills. He has an associate's degree as a web designer, and this newsletter allows him to showcase his talents. Michael says that he eventually would like to start his own freelance website design business. "He's constantly building and creating in more ways than

you can see, but what we do see is extraordinary" Cyndi says.

Another exciting opportunity heading Michael's way is the Habitat for Humanity House that he and two others will be moving into this year. "This house will give them permanency, home ownership, and more involvement in the community" says Sharon Hauss, Michael's mother. With the continued support from organizations like this and Stone Belt, we know Michael will continue to grow and impact the community in positive ways.

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**We believe in the uniqueness, worth and right to self-determination of every individual. Therefore, it is our mission, in partnership with the community, to prepare, empower and support persons with developmental disabilities and their families to participate fully in the life of the community.**

# Excited for an Eventful Spring!

This spring and summer are shaping up to be very busy and eventful for Stone Belt. After the celebration of The Awards for Excellence, honoring five outstanding employees on March 30th, we will be moving on to host an education and advocacy event called It Matters to Me on April 18th. Important information about state and federal changes will be shared along with appeals to participants to get involved in advocacy. And, by the way, you'll read more about our outstanding Awards for Excellence winners in the June edition of Touchstone.

We are very excited to once again be gearing up for I AM YOU, the on-stage performances of client-written vignettes that tell their powerful stories and demonstrate their gifts and talents. Plans for this event began in the fall of 2015 and practice is now busily underway to bring you this amazing show. Isaac's story, which you can read about in this issue, is one of 10 that will be presented. Mark your calendars now for June 10th and 11th, and watch our Facebook page for ticket

information.

These are a few of the special events coming up, but did you know that every week clients and staff are involved in a myriad of other community events? The Indiana University Best Buddies chapter has a monthly social event for Stone Belt clients and their Best Buddies (university students partnered for socialization and friendship). With staff supports, Stone Belt clients regularly participate in the Special Olympics program and the PALS therapeutic horseback riding program. Clients and staff form teams that walk in various 5K fundraising events. We had a Lotus Blossom concert at our 10th Street facility in March. Client art will be given to members of the ONB Foundation advisory board and will grace the tables of the Rotary District Conference held in Bloomington in April. The list goes on and on.

Many of these special activities and community engagement events are above and beyond what we are paid by our funding sources to do. It is the



generous support of donors, corporate sponsors, and grants that make many of these things possible. You can easily see how quality of life for the individuals we support is improved. This support, along with the determination of our staff and the participation of friends, families, and the broader community strengthens us all. Thank you for being a part of it.

Best Regards,

P.S. Make plans to participate in the April 15th Tax Day benefit to be held at Bobby's Colorado Steak House from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At this event you can name your price for a delicious bowl of soup with your full donation benefiting Stone Belt.

## It Matters to Me

Making sure you know about important issues that affect people with disabilities, their family and friends, and the community is a key part of what Stone Belt does. This is why the Stone Belt Board's Advocacy Committee is hosting an education and advocacy event called It Matters to Me, to keep you up to date on what's happening, not just at the local level, but a national one as well.

A keynote speech will be given by John Dickerson, former Executive Director of The Arc of Indiana, on the importance of taking action and how you can advocate for change. There will then be a few break-out sessions that will focus on more specific issues, such as employment for people with disabilities and proposed changes to workshop programs, as well as the recent push for people with disabilities to have more community-based services. We will also cover updates to the ABLE Act, and how an ABLE Account could benefit you or your family member. Lastly, there will be a discussion on the importance of voting, including an opportunity for voter registration.

It Matters to Me will take place Monday, April 18th from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at St. Mark's United Methodist Church. It is open to people with disabilities, their families, and the public. There will be a chance to win door prizes for those who attend!

## The 2015 Annual Report is Available!

The Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2015 is now available on our website! So many exciting things were accomplished in the last year by our amazing staff and clients. Stone Belt's employment programs were successful in assisting 71 clients obtain jobs in the last year. Two client artists from Bedford were commissioned to paint canvas paintings for The Arc of Indiana's training hotel in Muncie. Several clients from the Moving Forward Room had another fun year in the greenhouse with Growing Opportunities, learning job skills while gardening.

Milestones, which was founded to address the mental health needs that many individuals with and without disabilities face, celebrated their 10th anniversary in January of 2015. Stone Belt had success at the Indiana State House advocating for a restoration of funds after budget cuts led to staff shortages. The advocacy, led by Leslie Green and



Stone Belt clients, helped influence local legislators to vote for a restoration of funds this past year. To read more about Stone Belt's highlights from the last fiscal year, check out the publications page on our website!







## STAFF SUCCESS

# Congratulations Carmen Levasseur!

Milestones Manager of Social Work, Carmen Levasseur has been working in Stone Belt's group homes since July of 2014. Now Carmen is assuming a new role, and taking on much more responsibility. Beginning at the end of February, she joined Stone Belt's Program Leadership Team as the Director of Supported Group Living (SGL). Director Jim Wiltz explains that while Milestones, one of Stone Belt's divisions, will miss Carmen's boundless creative energy, the group home program will benefit from her taking on a leadership position in the agency.



"Carmen has accepted every challenge she's been given, and now she can do that on a bigger scale where her talents will positively impact Stone Belt and our clients more deeply. We are fortunate to have this smart, dynamic problem solver take on the challenges of running the

group home program" says Jim.

Looking back at Carmen's tenure at Milestones, it is easy to see why she will be missed. One of Carmen's most notable accomplishments was starting a therapeutic group at Lifelong Learning called Bouncing Back, where Stone Belt clients learn to increase their resilience through self-expression and group interaction. To help support this group, Carmen spearheaded a partnership with the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence in order to promote social inclusion as a means of preventing violence against people

with disabilities. This partnership remains strong and will continue even as Carmen reduces her own role within the Bouncing Back group.

Carmen has had a very positive impact on Milestones and its services. Everyone at Milestones will miss her, but we also know that she is on to better things that will improve the lives of Stone Belt's group home residents. Please join us in offering our support and congratulations to Carmen.

Carmen can be reached by email at [clevasseur@stonebelt.org](mailto:clevasseur@stonebelt.org)

## PROGRAMMING

# Fridays with Friends

As individuals age, some of their needs change. Some people feel depressed or isolated as life brings changes to their physical, mental, and relationship needs, and it can be tough to find ways to cope with these feelings.

Recognizing the unique challenges facing her older clients, Milestones Behavior Clinician, Christiana Redman decided to establish a casual get-together for some of the clients she serves whose health or aging challenges have prevented them from having consistent opportunities to socialize with peers.

Fridays with Friends is a social "drop-in" type group for clients who receive Stone Belt residential services, but spend most of their time at home. The group meets at Stone Belt in Bloomington for an hour on a weekly basis, where six to eight clients enjoy activities and socializing. Favorite activities include Bingo and the card game Uno



as well as activities centered around sharing positive memories from the past, which is an element brought to the group by the reminiscence therapy model. Attention is paid to ensure that group activities match the level of need for the clients participating, including accounting for memory loss and other processing concerns.

Reminiscence therapy is a type of therapy often used with older adults to decrease feelings of depression and isolation by reminiscing about positive experiences from the participants' past. While Fridays with Friends is a casual social group, elements of reminiscence therapy are used to encourage conversation and positive reflection

among the friends in attendance.

Gary "Gary-o" Taylor, a long-time Stone Belt client and recently retired janitorial employee, has been coming to the group since it first started in July 2015. Gary says that he enjoys playing Uno and seeing his friends. He said he thinks coming to the weekly group helps him keep connected with the Stone Belt community of clients and staff, especially since his retirement.

Looking toward the future, Fridays with Friends intends to keep up their weekly meetings.

For more information contact Christiana Redman at [credman@stonebelt.org](mailto:credman@stonebelt.org).

## NEW STAFF

# Milestones welcomes Mark

Mark Ochsner, M.A. is the newest addition to the Stone Belt team of Behavior Clinicians. He earned his Master's in Counseling Psychology from John F. Kennedy University, in California, in 2002. Upon returning to Indiana, Mark worked as a psychotherapist in inpatient, outpatient, and home-based modalities. He has been working as a Behavior Clinician for the past five years prior to joining Stone Belt.

Mark leads a very active lifestyle and looks forward to helping his clients lead lives that allow them greater levels of independence. Milestones is very excited to grow our Behavior Support Services so we can provide these needed supports.



## CLIENT FEATURE

# Isaac Spear: Expression through Music at I AM YOU



**"When Isaac found out last fall that he was going to be playing at I AM YOU, he was very excited."**

**Loretta Patterson,  
Client Support Coordinator**

This June, Stone Belt, in partnership with the Bloomington Playwrights Project, will present I AM YOU, an event where individuals with disabilities perform the vignettes they have written. I AM YOU provides these individuals a unique opportunity to share their stories and showcase their talents. One of the individuals chosen to participate in this event, Isaac Spear will have a particularly interesting performance. He will be expressing himself by doing what he loves, playing the drums.

Isaac thoroughly enjoys playing the drums, including the bongos, and practices often. He has performed in front of audiences before, as his family encourages him to get involved in their Sunday church services by playing. He also plays when there are special events at Stone Belt. Not only does Isaac play an instrument, but he sings as well. His favorite performer is Michael W. Smith, a well-known Christian artist. Isaac is planning on performing a few of his songs during his I AM YOU performance, including one called "Above All."

Isaac says he has been a musician since he was a little boy. His large family, including his five brothers and sisters, often plays music together. Isaac plays the drums and sings along with them when they get together. "When Isaac found out last fall that he was going to be playing at I AM YOU, he was very excited" says Loretta Patterson, a Client Support Coordinator.

Clients' participation in I AM YOU empowers them to share their impactful stories, experiences, and aspirations in a public setting. Individuals work hard to bring this performance together and present their skills to the audience in their own unique way. Client performers and directors spend about 15 weeks working together to craft their vignettes and work on the dramatics. The finished products demonstrate to the community that Stone Belt clients have significant stories and passions to share. We look forward to seeing Isaac take the stage with his spectacular performance!

## EMPLOYEE FEATURE

# Ryan Peek - Awarded for Outstanding Work

Stone Belt is fortunate to have so many great employees on our support staff, but last year one stood out among the rest. Ryan Peek, a Direct Support Professional, received the Cathleen Clark Professional Service Award for his outstanding work ethic and dedication. This award, bestowed by The Arc of Indiana, was established by Carol Clark, the mother of a daughter with intellectual disabilities. She wanted to thank staff who made a difference in the life of her daughter, and others like her, by rewarding them with the coveted award.

Ryan started out in the employment department at Stone Belt and has now been here for 15 years. Now, you can most often find Ryan out in the community with clients working as a Direct Support Professional in the Lifelong Learning Program. "The clients



are the highlight of the job" says Ryan, adding "You begin to view the people here as an extended family."

In his nomination letter, Tyler Frazee Lifelong Learning Coordinator, writes

about Ryan's hard work with a client who needed a great amount of support and consistency in his life. Ryan viewed this client's challenges as a way to understand this client's potential. By putting in the time and

effort to gain insight into the supports that this client needed, Ryan was able to help him develop a healthier response to changes in life. Eventually the client was able to start handling change in more positive ways due to Ryan's patience and dedication. "I always want to make sure clients feel completely heard and understood" says Ryan.

The award came as a surprise to Ryan, who was not expecting such recognition. There was a luncheon hosted by The Arc in Carmel, Indiana where they presented Ryan, and several other award recipients, with the awards. The Clark family provides a \$250 cash gift with the award. "It was an honor" said Ryan. This award was given to him on behalf of Stone Belt and the hundreds of lives he has positively impacted during his time here.



## THANK YOU DONORS

Stone Belt extends appreciation to all our generous donors from December 1, 2015 to February 29, 2016. We are grateful for their continued support. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy of this listing. If you think there has been an omission, please accept our apology and contact Jana Surigao at (812) 332-2168 ext. 269 or [jsurigao@stonebelt.org](mailto:jsurigao@stonebelt.org).

### Builders Society (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Summer Boyd, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Art & Kay Dahlgren, First Insurance Group Inc., Cynthia Higgins, Stuart & Cookie Mufson, Harold Turner, Betty Underwood, Henry & Celia Upper

### Advocates (\$500 - \$999)

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### Stewards (\$100 - \$499)

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### Friends (\$1 - \$99)

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### Corporate Giving

Becoming a corporate donor today is a premier way you can show your support for remarkable achievements in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Be part of something meaningful in 2016 and gain increased community awareness for your company at the same time. A corporate gift provides many unique and substantive marketing opportunities for donors. For more information on how to make a positive impact on individuals with disabilities and the many amazing benefits that come with being a corporate donor, contact Jana Surigao at [jsurigao@stonebelt.org](mailto:jsurigao@stonebelt.org).



Our programs supported in part through a grant  
from the Smithville Charitable Foundation.



## GIVING MATTERS

# Why I Give: Janet Decker

**Janet Decker is an Assistant Professor at IU's School of Education, and has served on Stone Belt's Board of Directors for two years.**

When I was in my twenties, I fell in love with James, Adrienne, Kevin, Spencer, Bobby, Stephanie, and many other preschoolers diagnosed with autism. I taught them using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) methods. My students' parents had high hopes for their children. For some, this meant they hoped their child would become indistinguishable from his/her peers. For others, this meant that their child would learn to talk. It was an exciting time! Each child was learning new skills at a quick pace. Of course, the parents faced challenges during these preschool years, but these difficulties were overshadowed by hopes of what the future held.

Now it is the future and these preschoolers have become young adults. Some of them are well-integrated into their communities—they are employed and happy. Yet, none of them are living independently. Their parents face a new set of hopes, but now, their optimism is overshadowed with concerns. Although the parents still hope their children will learn new skills to increase their independence, the parents are deeply concerned about what will happen when they are no longer able to be their child's primary caregiver and strongest advocate.

That is why I give. It is because I love many individuals with autism and their parents. Stone Belt recognizes its responsibility to advocate for policy change to improve the lives of its clients. I know my donation is contributing to Stone Belt's programs that offer lifelong learning, community employment, residential services, advocacy, and so much more. Therefore, I am confident that my donation not only helps individuals with disabilities, but provides parents a little peace of mind as well.

**Complete the enclosed giving envelope and drop it in the mail with your donation, or visit [stonebelt.org](http://stonebelt.org) to donate online.**

## EVENTS

# Tax Day Soup Fundraiser



Make the beans count for  
**Stone Belt**

Bobby's Colorado Steakhouse is hosting a tax day fundraiser for Stone Belt, where guests can name their price for a delicious bowl of ham and bean soup, accompanied by sweet and savory cornbread. 100% of the proceeds benefit Stone Belt, and give contributors an early start on their 2016 tax deductions.

The full lunch menu will be available to customers, however only soup orders will count as a tax deductible gift for the agency.

This fundraiser will take place on **April 15th from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.** Surprise local celebrity negotiators are scheduled to attend!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Tax Day Fundraiser

April 15, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
Bobby Colorado's Steak House  
1635 N. College Ave.  
Bloomington, IN

### It Matters to Me

April 18, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
St. Mark's United Methodist Church  
100 N St. Rd. 46  
Bloomington, IN

### I Am You

Performances June 10 and 11  
Bloomington Playwrights Project  
107 W. 9th St.  
Bloomington, IN

If you would like to receive our publications, please contact Jana Surigao at [jsurigao@stonebelt.org](mailto:jsurigao@stonebelt.org).  
Stone Belt is an affiliate of The Arc and a member of United Way of Monroe County.

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