

ISSUE NO.70

Spring 2024

Stone Belt 65TH Anniversary 1959 - 2024

touchstone

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

Shining bright for 65 years

Earlier this month, we all looked up at the sky to view a once-in-a-lifetime total solar eclipse. For a few minutes, we felt a sense of closeness and belongingness. For the last 65 years, Stone Belt has connected individuals with developmental disabilities and their families with their communities, allowing everyone to feel valued, seen, and heard.

In March, Stone Belt teamed up with the St. Meinrad Benedictine Oblate for a day of service, a chance to connect with peers, friends, and the community to enjoy each other's company. Volunteers helped beautify Stone Belt in Bloomington. They cleaned classrooms and organized closets, and they connected with the residents living at Majestic Care, a long-term care facility in Bloomington, by creating beautiful cards for them.

Just as everyone witnessing the solar eclipse experienced a shared human experience, the volunteers left with a connection to Stone Belt and a recognition of the opportunities Stone Belt provides for all to shine brightly. May we continue to find moments that bring us together in awe and peace.



Volunteers at the St. Meinrad Benedictine Oblate day of service take time out for a selfie.

Contacting Your Legislators

Every Indiana citizen has a state representative and a state senator. To find your legislators go to: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/>.

In Washington:

To express your concerns about federal issues, contact these legislators.

- Senator Todd Young
202-224-5623 in Washington, D.C.
or 317-226-6700 in Indianapolis
www.young.senate.gov/contact/email-todd
- Senator Mike Braun
202-224-4814 in Washington, D.C.
or 317-822-8240 in Indianapolis
www.braun.senate.gov/contact-mike
- Representative Erin Houchin
202-225-5315 in Washington, D.C.
or 812-288-3999 in Jeffersonville
<http://houchin.house.gov/contact>
- Representative Greg Pence
202-225-3021 in Washington, D.C.
or 812-799-5230 in Columbus
<http://pence.house.gov/contact>

Just Do It . . .

As Stone Belt steps into a new season filled with promise and possibility, I am reminded of the incredible strength and resilience residing within each of us. It's time to embrace the mantra of "Just Do It" with determination, especially when it comes to empowering abilities and creating inclusive communities for individuals with disabilities.

At Stone Belt, we firmly believe everyone has contributions to make and deserves the opportunity to thrive and contribute to society. That's why we're committed to providing support, resources, and opportunities for personal and professional growth because positive support provides the best long-term results. But the journey towards inclusion and empowerment is not one that we take alone. It requires the dedication and involvement of our entire community.

For our incredible staff members, I encourage you to embody the "Just Do It" spirit by actively seeking opportunities to engage with and support individuals with disabilities. Your efforts make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve. Let's challenge ourselves to step outside our comfort zones and embrace new experiences with open hearts and minds because learning creates empowerment.

To all of the individuals with disabilities supported by Stone Belt, I want to remind you that your potential knows no bounds. Seize each day as an opportunity to explore your passions, pursue your dreams, and defy expectations. Whether it's joining a new club, learning a new skill, or advocating for your rights, remember that you have the power to shape your own destiny because self-determination is essential. And know that we are here to support you every step of the way.

To all of our Stone Belt supporters, I ask you to look for ways to use your connections to include people with disabilities in the community, through places of worship, through jobs, through hobbies, and through people you know because social life and relationships help create a high quality of life.

Here are a few ideas to get everyone involved and engaged:

- Host a scavenger hunt
- Visit a farmer's market
- Volunteer
- Host a party
- Start a club
- Get to know neighbors
- Participate in cultural events
- Develop new hobbies
- Find places of belonging

We all love seeing pictures of clients and staff embarking on new adventures. Let's continue to build our library of joy to share and motivate each other to continue providing excellent support.

Remember, it's the collective actions of each and every one of us that drive positive change and create a more inclusive world for individuals with disabilities. So, let's lean into the "Just Do It" spirit and embrace the endless possibilities.

With gratitude,

Bitta DeWees



Bitta DeWees
Chief Executive Officer

Become a corporate sponsor

For information on corporate sponsorship, visit www.stonebelt.org/giving. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Director of Community Engagement Adam Hamel at (812) 332-2168, ext. 269, or ahamel@stonebelt.org.

HYLANT



MATRIX
INTEGRATION

CPAS / ADVISORS

blue

CJB

OLD NATIONAL BANK
Your bank. For life.™



UnitedHealthcare



Baker Family Dentistry



Boston
Scientific

Advancing science for life™

MC AULEY
LAW
LLC



ST. JOHN ASSOCIATES
Connecting Lives

IU Credit Union

Community Employment receives \$400,000

Stone Belt Community Employment has received almost \$400,000 in grants from Indiana's Bureau of Disabilities Services (BDS) thanks to the organization's participation in the Employment Transformation Collaborative, which began in 2022. Because Stone Belt has been transitioning away from a sheltered work model since 2022, the nonprofit organization was able to apply for additional funding.

Stone Belt will use the transformation grant to assist in implementing transition plans, stabilizing business operations, and building capacity to shift to service models that increase competitive integrated employment (CIE) outcomes and include training, technology, professional development, community outreach, and engagement.

Indiana's BDS is using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to assist in transitioning away from sheltered workshops— where businesses employ people with disabilities at less than minimum wage and in settings that primarily or exclusively employ individuals with disabilities – and toward competitive integrated employment (CIE). The goal is to increase CIE for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the state from 23% to 38% by 2027 and ultimately to realize the vision that people with IDD have the right to live, love, work, learn, play, and pursue their dreams in the community.



Robert enjoys working as an associate at Casey's Gas Station.

Milestones launches telehealth service

Milestones now offers StationMD, a telehealth program, to Stone Belt clients. Thanks to a Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services Innovation Pilot Project grant. The telehealth option better supports individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and caregivers. And it's working. Stone Belt clients completed five virtual visits between March 13 and 31.

The telehealth service helps bridge visits with healthcare professionals, including canceled appointments and prescription refills, when providers cannot keep scheduled appointments. The service will reduce ER/Urgent Care visits.

Milestones is excited to offer the StationMD program, made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act funds Indiana received specifically

targeted at improving services and supports for individuals with disabilities and their families. StationMD enables individuals with I/DD faster access to high-quality care, which helps improve the quality of life for clients and their caregivers. StationMD is a telehealth company dedicated to serving individuals with I/DD and other vulnerable populations. The company's mission is to provide the highest quality of care for individuals with disabilities, fostering independence and improving the quality of life for those we support and those providing their care.

All StationMD clinicians are board-certified and specially trained to treat individuals with developmental disabilities. Clinicians are available 24/7 via the telemedicine program for urgent and non-urgent medical matters. The telehealth company resolves 88% of the calls received without the patient needing to leave their home setting. If sent to the emergency room, StationMD calls ahead with information for the ER doctors before the client arrives at the hospital.



Share the experience while making a difference

Stone Belt announces its fourth annual Belt Out Loud! Benefit Concert featuring Busman's Holiday on May 25 at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater in Bloomington. Busman's Holiday is Lewis and Addison Rogers, brothers of melodic charm and ecstatic showmanship. And for this special concert, the brothers will also be joined by a band. IU Credit Union and Old National Bank are sponsoring this special event.

Proceeds from the benefit concert go towards helping Stone Belt provide day programs, employment training, and residential services (both group homes and supported living) to individuals with developmental disabilities in our community.

Want to share this experience? Purchase a sponsor ticket so a person with a developmental disability and their staff can attend. By sponsoring a person with a developmental disability and their staff, you're granting them access to an event they may not have been able to participate in otherwise. Your sponsorship ensures that financial barriers don't hinder someone's ability to partake in activities that promote socialization, skill-building, and enjoyment, fostering a sense of belonging and community.

Belt Out Loud! hopes to serve as a model for future events promoting accessibility to individuals of all abilities, ensuring an inclusive and enjoyable experience for everyone. By supporting Belt Out Loud, attendees aren't just attending another event; You're advocating for a more inclusive society, promoting awareness and understanding of the importance of accessibility. Join us in spreading joy, fostering inclusion, and making meaningful experiences accessible to all.

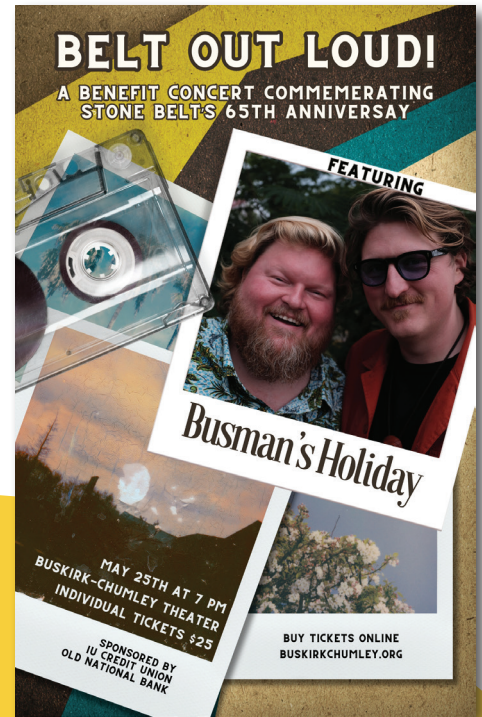
Belt Out Loud! Benefit Concert for Stone Belt
May 25, 7 p.m. (Doors open at 6:30 p.m.)

Tickets available at BCT Box Office, 114 E Kirkwood Avenue

Online at buskirkchumley.org/tickets or via phone 812.323.3020, ext 1



Scan QR Code for
tickets to Belt Out
Loud! at the BCT.



Founder of Unique Connections visits Stone Belt



Dr. Beverley Samways traveled from the United Kingdom to the United States to study implementing trauma informed care into disability services.

Dr. Beverley (Bev) Samways, founder of Unique Connections, a nonprofit organization that "exists to improve the lives of children and adults with intellectual disabilities who self-injure," met with Stone Belt staff to learn more about trauma-informed care and disability services. Bev received a Churchill Fellowship to travel from England to the United States to see how the country is using trauma-informed care to improve disability services. She is also a research associate and lecturer at two universities in the United Kingdom.

Trauma involves an event or circumstance that is emotionally overwhelming and potentially life-threatening to a person. Trauma can have long-lasting effects on a person physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Trauma-informed care is a system-wide approach that realizes trauma is very common, recognizes the signs of trauma, responds in ways that promote healing and growth and resists causing further harm to people.

Bev met with Stephanie Calhoun, LMSW, about the work done at Milestones and how she uses trauma-informed care with her clients. Bev presented to Milestones' leadership and staff about her work with clients who engaged in self-injurious behavior. Bev stressed the importance of being present with an individual, allowing sufficient time to build rapport and understand their different communication methods.

Bev also met with Sarah McKenney, MDiv, and Tonya Vandivier, Executive Employment First Director, to learn about the history and programs that Stone Belt offers. Bev had the opportunity to learn about how Stone Belt integrates trauma-informed care to enhance the work experiences for staff and the quality of service delivery for clients. In addition, Bev learned about the innovative strategies used to support Stone Belt clients' spirituality.

Stone Belt Buddies **STEP** it up!

In March, Best Buddies at Indiana University and the IU RedSteppers invited Stone Belt Buddies to participate in a "Dance at Halftime" performance during the IU Women's Basketball game against the Maryland Terrapins at Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall. Best Buddies - IU is dedicated to fostering friendships between college students



Stone Belt Buddies pose for a photo with IU Best Buddies participant and a RedSteppers dance team member before the halftime performance.

at Indiana University and members of the Bloomington community with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Since 1972, the RedStepper Dance Team has incorporated many different dance styles into their performances with the IU Marching Hundred. The RedSteppers perform during halftime at football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and other community events.

Stone Belt Buddies stepped right up and learned the dance routine during a practice session with the dance team in February. Participants spent the next week practicing the choreographed routine.

They were so dedicated they

even agreed to arrive two hours before the Maryland game to practice the routine a few more times. As halftime approached, everyone walked through the tunnel connecting Assembly Hall to Cook Hall and onto the basketball court. The buddies danced their hearts out, and the crowd responded with thunderous applause following the performance.

The buddies then enjoyed snacks and watched the remainder of the game from reserved seats behind the band. It's safe to say a few dancing stars emerged from this exceptional performance.

Shawn King practices his smile before performing at the IU Women's Basketball Game at Assembly Hall.



Jeff poses for a photo with a member of the RedSteppers right before heading onto the basketball court to perform at Assembly Hall.

Getting to know Bloomington's Mayor Thomson



Mayor Kerry Thomson joined Stone Belt and the City of Bloomington's Council for Community Accessibility to discuss accessibility and inclusion.

Advocates from Stone Belt and the Council for Community Accessibility met with Mayor Kerry Thomson to discuss accessibility and inclusion issues dealt with daily by individuals with disabilities living in Bloomington.

Attendees asked the mayor specific questions about the accessibility and affordability of new housing, the lack of accessible transportation to areas like Ellettsville, and the dangers and frustrations of deteriorating sidewalks often blocked with trash, recycling bins, and snow.

Mayor Thomson listened intently to the concerns of those in attendance. She agreed with the advocates that people with disabilities need a seat at the table where major decisions are discussed. On a personal note, she shared that using a mobility device for a few months after an injury gave her a first-hand perspective of how inaccessible sidewalks are throughout Bloomington, and repairing current sidewalks is one of her priorities.

Giving supplies (and hope) to families in need

In March, Employment Fundamentals participants and Jubilee, First United Methodist's young adult ministry, hosted a donation drive to collect bedding, bathroom necessities, toys, and more for New Hope Family Shelter, a program for families experiencing temporary homelessness.

Both groups then spent a day together sprucing up a favorite outdoor spot at Stone Belt and creating beautiful "Welcome Home Cards" to give to the families moving into the shelter.

Sarah McKenney (spiritual support coordinator), Jupiter Canada (spiritual engagement coach and Jubilee member), Cheyenne Schlegel, and Keagan Burk from Stone Belt wrapped up the service project by delivering everything to the shelter. While there, they took a tour of the building and learned more about the services provided to those residing at the shelter.



Stone Belt and First United Methodist's young adult ministry members joined together to help families experiencing homelessness.



812.332.2168

@StoneBeltArc

Stone Belt Arc



www.stonebelt.org

PREPARE EMPOWER SUPPORT

www.stonebelt.org

2815 East Tenth Street • Bloomington, IN 47408



NONPROFIT ORG
US Postage
PAID
Bloomington, IN
Permit No. 310