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FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Introducing Stone Belt’s newest internship program

By Jenny Austin • Stone Belt Project SEARCH Coordinator

I feel like a dogwood among sequoias in the Project SEARCH classroom. Four out of the five participants are six feet tall or close to it, and they tower over me as their instructor. These are all very dedicated young men who are motivated to achieve their goals in this class. Since most of the group have only been out of high school for a year or so, I’m not yet spending hours a day sitting in a classroom nor high on the list of preferred activities. That they still like nearly every day for class to be a normal day demonstrates the drive that will push them toward success.

While very different in many ways, it’s been great to see where the guys have found similarities — any new job. Three young men took positions at Cook, Inc. working in Janitorial, Cafeteria, and Boats and Bins. Two other young men are working at Ivy Tech. One works for the Facilities Department while the other works a split shift between the Word Processing Center and the Registrar’s Office. Everyone was excited to begin work, and they are all doing very well in their placements, according to supervisors and co-workers.

Not only are they finding new job skills they can take into corporate workplaces, they are also learning how to become part of corporate culture. One of the participants at Cook, Inc. is a very reliable and consistent worker that has been recognized and promoted for his hard work and good attendance.

When they complete all three rotations, they will have some impressive experience to add to their resumes. They will have relationships with supervisors to use for references. And perhaps most importantly, they will have had a chance to change some perceptions and make some friends.

About the Program

Candidates for Project SEARCH should:

• be between the ages of 18 and 24
• have applied and be found eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Indiana or be a graduate of any educational program

The Project SEARCH programs are free and open to individuals with disabilities. All of the participants are paid the federal minimum wage or above. The next group of participants is available in August 2010.

Project SEARCH is based on a partnership that includes: Stone Belt; Hoosier Business Management Center; Stone Belt; and Indiana Family & Social Services Administration Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Project SEARCH Indiana started in 2008. Currently there are eight programs in the State.

Meet the Participants

Brandon Ramos, my name is Brandon Ramos. I am a student in Project SEARCH who has a diagnosis of Autism. I love to read books. I love to play video games. I love to work. I split my time between work and recreation. I enjoy being with friends. I want to continue working here. The Project's two host businesses, Cook, Inc and Ivy Tech, offer participants a unique hands-on learning experience.

Jack Thrasher, my name is Jack Thrasher. I would like to say that it has been a privilege to be selected for the pilot test group of Project SEARCH in Bloomington. While many people have told me that the program is very helpful, a chance to make a difference in another person’s life is what I love the most about Project SEARCH. I like to make people happy and help others. I will continue working here for the rest of the program. I love to play video games. I also like to watch TV. I am looking forward to the program being a success and helping others in the future.

Justin Richardson, my name is Justin Richardson. I am a student in Project SEARCH trying to get help to find a job. My favorite hobbies are television, video games, working out, and shopping. I like to play football, basketball, and baseball. I want to find a job that I can work at when I am older. I love to work with my hands and I am looking forward to getting my GED. I love to work at the Indiana Memorial Union. I am looking forward to the program being a success and helping others in the future.

Nathan Buffie, my name is Nathan Buffie. I enjoy interning at Project SEARCH. It helps me gain good work skills for the future. I want to continue working here between now and the end of the July. I am planning on working at a job somewhere close to home. I will forever be thankful for the social skills they are teaching me at Project SEARCH. I love airplanes. My favorite plane is the F-14 Tomcat. I love coming to Project SEARCH. I love to ride the bus. I like working with my Dad on construction sites. I hope Project SEARCH will help me find a good job when I am done.

Casey Mangum, my name is Casey Mangum. I am a student in Project SEARCH. I enjoy working at Ivy Tech because it is a lot of fun, it is close to home, and I really enjoy coming to Project SEARCH. My first internship will be at Bloomington Regional Hospital. I really want to continue working at Project SEARCH. I hope Project SEARCH will help me find a good job when I am done.
Our plans to weather through tough times

Introducing the Community Engagement Department

The Community Engagement Department was created as a result of our conversations with our clients, families, and partners. Our development department recently launched a community fundraising effort, called "Building Pathways to Empowerment," to raise funds for Stone Belt’s ongoing programs and services. The Community Engagement Department will take a focused, data-driven approach to building relationships and strengthening partnerships with community members. The Community Engagement Department consists of: Amy Jackson (Community Engagement Director) & Leighanne Chiles (Development Director).

The role of the Community Engagement Department is to facilitate the building of relationships between the agency and the community, and to encourage the many ways in which the agency and community can strengthen each other. The Community Engagement Department is responsible for the overall strategy and infrastructure to create meaningful community interactions, with a focus on positively impacting the agency through its building and strengthening of relationships and partnerships.

Stone Belt’s Community Engagement Department will play a critical role in providing ongoing financial support for new and existing programs. The Community Engagement Department is committed to building stronger relationships with community members, families, and organizations.

Our plans to weather through tough times

The Stone Belt community sends positive wishes to all the social service agencies in Columbus that were impacted by the fire on Christmas Day. The fire displaced several agencies in this very important area and we wish them and all the organizations in our community success as they move forward.

Initiative" Unveiled

The State of Indiana is facing a budget crisis unlike anything that has been seen in many years. Every program counted on by individuals with disabilities is facing huge challenges, at a time when more people than ever before need help.

At this critical time, it is even more important than ever that we act. That is why The Arc of Indiana has launched a new campaign, called "Building Pathways to Empowerment," to raise a fund to sustain programs and services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, and to inform and equip our agencies and partners to ensure that we can provide what people need and want in the most sensible way possible.

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Kim Craig’s monologue sums up Stone Belt’s recent stage performance of I Am You: “How awesome is that?” Craig and 13 other Stone Belt clients presented two performances of I Am You, dramatic monologues written and performed by individuals with disabilities. The performers spent six months pulling together the thoughts, recollections and favorite parts of their lives and fashioned them into an inspiring series of monologues, songs, dances and conversations that they shared with the audience as they guided one another through the process of talking about their favorite things. Dixie Chaney conveyed her love of music and dancing through the performance of three songs spread throughout the evening. “I Am You” is a collaboration involving Stone Belt, the Bloomington Playwright Project, Theatre of the People and a host of other volunteers. This project was originally inspired by Michelle Tonnpson, an Indiana University student-athlete who worked with the Bloomington Playwright Project to develop and produce I Am You. The project continues and now involves more than 15 Stone Belt clients. Established in 1965, Theatre of the People produces fictional and actual stories that help people understand each other through storytelling. Stone Belt is pleased to help support this project.

One of the performers, Rebecca Ziemann, said she was pleased with her performance that night, even after a few of her lines were cut. “I was happy. Glad it was a bit nerve-racking. I thought I did pretty well,” she said. Bloomington resident Annie Cerrigan attended the show and said it “touched the heart” of everyone who watched. “I’ve never been so moved. I’ve seen so many beautiful lives that I’ve never been able to see before.”

Meet the amazing performers and directors of I AM YOU below:

- **Crystal Pitts**
  - From Indianapolis, Crystal came to Stone Belt two years ago, with the goal of living an independent life. Her talents as an artist have recently flourished in Stone Belt’s art studio. Crystal enjoys bowling, being with friends, and watching soap operas.

- **Dixie Chaney**
  - A resident of Bloomington, Dixie Chaney’s favorite things are music and dancing. She displays her independence through her involvement in Self-Advocates of Indiana as president of her chapter and her part-time job with the Arc of Indiana.

- **Kimmi Bignell**
  - Kimmi is a resident of Hope, Indiana. She enjoys working at Marsh, playing basketball, bowling and seeing her grandparents and friends at the skating rink. Kimmi is also active in Special Olympics.

- **Misty Lawyer**
  - Misty is a resident of Bloomington. She enjoys working at the YMCA, playing basketball, bowling and spending time with friends.

- **Jamie Patton**
  - Jamie is a junior at IU studying sociology and economics. She loves reading and working with people. Jamie became connected to I AM YOU when she responded to an interview process in search of new directors.

- **Sara Rebmann**
  - Sara is a part-time student at IU. She loves working with people and enjoys playing sports. She is active in Special Olympics and enjoys playing basketball, bowling and spending time with friends.

- **Dongie Chaney**
  - Dongie is a resident of Bloomington. She enjoys working at the YMCA, playing basketball, bowling and spending time with friends.

- **Angie Ehlers**
  - Angie is a resident of Madison, Indiana. She displays her independence through her involvement in Self-Advocates of Indiana as president of her chapter and her part-time job with the Arc of Indiana.

- **Krista Heard**
  - Krista is a resident of Bloomington. She enjoys working at the YMCA, playing basketball, bowling and spending time with friends.

- **Hannah Moss**
  - Hannah is co-artistic director of Theatre of the People, a theatre education organization that nurtures the “human value” of ensemble storytelling to benefit the public good. Hannah is an actor, director, costume designer and choreographer.

- **David Nosko**
  - David is co-artistic director of Theatre of the People, a theatre education organization that nurtures the “human value” of ensemble storytelling to benefit the public good. David is a playwright, director and scenic designer.
Stone Belt is thrilled to have once again been selected as one of six agencies to participate in Dancing with the Celebrities – Bloomington’s local, charitable version of the hit television program, Dancing with the Stars.

Dancing on behalf of Stone Belt will be local celebrity Gladys DeVane. Gladys is a beloved professor on the faculty of the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, where she was always active as a volunteer in the community, since retiring Gladys has also become known as an acclaimed local actress and storyteller. She regularly performs in productions of Cardinal Stage Company, a heralded professional theatre company. She recently starred in two of their dramatic hits, “The Delaney Sisters: The First Hundred Years,” and “Inherit the Wind.”

Gladys also recently wrote, directed and performed in a presentation of women’s voices throughout history, part of the City of Bloomington’s 2014 Women’s History Month. Gladys is the founding member of Long Time Stone Belt.

Gladys will dance as part of the real life tutorials, with Twin Kibories, mastering those dance performances for the big event on May 1 at the Buskirk-Chamberlay Theatre in Bloomington.

Now in its fourth season, Dancing with the Celebrities is organized by Arthur Murray Dance Studio in Bloomington. The dance company originally designed the program as a way to both encourage dancing in the community and to help raise important funds for non-profit agencies. Not only will a celebrity be selected as the best dancer of the competition, but one of six agencies will also win the organization that raised the most philanthropic dollars.

In 2006, during the third season of Dancing with the Celebrities, and Stone Belt’s second season as a participating agency, Stone Belt and its celebrity dancer Phil Smerk – Manager of IT/ITU with the great power of raising tons more than US $200,000 in three months. All of these dollars went directly to support programs of what we believe opportunities for individuals with disabilities to help participate in the life of the community.

In 2007, Dancing with the Celebrities and Stone Belt took it up a notch for the second year in a row! Every dollar raised at Glen’s stores, donations of 100% tax-deductible, and can be made securely online to directly help in funding efforts.

Leading up to the special evening of Dancing, Stone Belt and Stone Belt’s staff and a series of partners throughout the community, during which their invited guests get to give a sneak peek at Gladys and Stone Belt’s current clients found opportunities for first contributions to Stone Belt. In addition, Stone Belt will have special art items for sale to promote its participation in the event, and will be selling tickets to the always-sold-out show.

For more information about how you can support Stone Belt’s participation in Dancing with the Celebrities, contact Community Engagement Director Amy Jackson at 812-332-2168 ext. 314 / ajackson@stonebelt.org.

Please be sure to include the word “Stone Belt” in all your email correspondence.

Words have power. Words must be used with integrity.

Language is a reflection on how people see each other. That is why words we use to describe other people can hurt. It’s also why responsible communicators are now choosing communication that shows respect for individuals with disabilities. That is why words like “mentally disabled” and “the person before the disability” are not used. Stone Belt encourages everyone to say “person first language.” Person first language puts the person’s ability and disabilities second to a person, not first. Person first language removes stigma and shame from disabilities.

Stone Belt encourages responsible communicators to use “words with integrity” in every situation:

Instead of . . .

She’s autistic

She’s mentally retarded

She’s in special education

She’s learning disabled

Say . . .

She’s a person who is autistic

She’s a person with intellectual disabilities

She’s a person with learning disabilities

She’s a person with special needs

She’s a person with disabilities

Words with integrity.

Words that respect everyone.

Milestones to be Waiver training provider

Stone Belt is pleased to partner with the State of Indiana to provide new training opportunities to help parents, additional family members and non-paid caregivers meet needed educational and training opportunities for children, adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities.

The Arc’s newly established Family and Caregiver Training Program will offer The Arc’s popular workshop on the essential education and other services in a room of your choice. Milestones will work with you to create training opportunities that are right for your family. By utilizing The Arc’s educational resources, families and non-paid caregivers will have the flexibility to receive training and support as a team.

Visit our gallery @www.nadsp.org

For more information on the Caregiver Training Program, please contact The Milestones Direct, Shannon Gates, at 812-235-3535 or email shannon.gates@milestonesinc.org. The Milestones Family and Caregiver Training Program is located at Milestones in Bloomington, Indiana.

Milestones and the Arc of Indiana are Here to Help

Milestones is pleased to offer this program to parents and non-paid caregivers. Milestones will work with you to create training and support opportunities for your family.

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