Q & A with Columbus Mayor Brown
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Celebrate excellence in the community with Stone Belt. page 7

Our Mission
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 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to participate fully in the life of the community.
Describe the Mayor’s Advisory Council on Disability & Awareness (MACDA) and its importance.

The Mayor’s Advisory Council on Disability and Accessibility began with my vision to create greater awareness and understanding in our community about the issues facing people with disabilities. People with disabilities account for 18 percent of our county population, making it imperative to work together with these residents, their parents and caregivers to ensure that after them, MACDA provides as much excellent input to listen to citizens, partner with our residents in finding solutions and work proactively to make Columbus welcoming and livable community for persons of all abilities.

How does the council function and what are its primary objectives?

MACDA meets every two months and has nine voting members. The council is purposely designed to have more than 50 percent of its members be persons with disabilities or caregivers of persons with disabilities. The Community Awareness subcommittee leads the program and already has provided four sessions as an integrated part of this year’s police department training for its officers.

What initiatives are you working on now to address access and inclusion for folks with disabilities?

One of our major accomplishments this year is implementing a training program specifically for the Columbus Police Department to improve officer interactions with persons with disabilities. The Community Awareness subcommittee had the program and already has provided four sessions as an integrated part of this year’s police department training for its officers.

What are the council’s future endeavors?

One of this year’s ambitious goals is to rollout a general awareness campaign in Columbus to remind the public that people with disabilities are part of this community. The campaign’s concept is “Living Differently Abled.” We want to take the focus off of the disability and highlight our residents’ abilities. The campaign will include public service announcements on the radio, informational posters throughout the city, and the distribution of “Access Tip Sheets” on a variety of subjects, such as tips on office accessibility, what to do in the event of an emergency and other information. We are also working on producing a video for local companies on how employing persons with disabilities can be successful.

What is the role of the subcommittees?

Subcommittees meet more frequently than the main council to continue the partnerships and work that addresses concerns and issues.

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To learn more about the council, or to get involved contact The Columbus Human Rights Commission at 812-376-2532.
As one of the area’s largest employers, the ability of Stone Belt to provide inclusive and high-quality services to its clients and staff is critical to our mission. Our dedicated staff members are the core of our success, and we are grateful for their hard work and dedication. We hope to inspire people to speak up and advocate for positive change in 2014 so we can continue to provide quality programs and services to people with developmental disabilities and fully support our devoted staff and their families.

Throughout our history, we have been driven by our commitment to our employees and our faith in the potential of people with developmental disabilities. Our staff is proud to be part of an organization that truly values the contributions of each individual and is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all.

We are sure this issue of Touchstone, which includes a photo essay of our clients and their families, will inspire and touch your heart. We are proud of the progress our clients have made and the impact they have on our community. Each week the clients have been learning to prep, cook and serve a meal and are beaming with pride as they show off their culinary efforts to the community. The clients were incredibly proud to show off what they had learned through the culinary program. The event was created by Deb Federman, direct support specialist, and was a true community event. The clients provided food for the event, and the proceeds were awarded to local charities.

The rate cut coupled with rising costs has created an unsustainable rate structure for those who provide supports such as ours. We are working with key policymakers to address this issue and work towards a solution. We are committed to working with our clients, staff, and partners to find a sustainable solution for our organization and the community we serve.

The annual Hoosier Half Marathon was a great success. The event was created by Deb Federman, direct support specialist, and was a true community event. The clients provided food for the event, and the proceeds were awarded to local charities. At the event, the clients and staff were able to share their successes with the community and celebrate the progress they have made.

The Care Gap Crisis: A Community Discussion

Hoosier Half Marathon

Upcoming events

Awards of Excellence

Annual Business Meeting & 50th Anniversary Celebration

Dancing with The Celebrities

In December, the Indiana Association of People Supporting Employment First (IN-ASEF) honored John Stadler, employment consultant, with their Professional Development Award for his outstanding commitment and professional performance in public or human services administration.

In January, the clients and staff at Stone Belt came together to host a chili supper for the clients, the clients' families and friends. Each week the clients have been learning to prep, cook and serve a meal and are beaming with pride as they show off their culinary efforts to the community. The clients were incredibly proud to show off what they had learned through the culinary program. The event was created by Deb Federman, direct support specialist, and was a true community event. The clients provided food for the event, and the proceeds were awarded to local charities. At the event, the clients and staff were able to share their successes with the community and celebrate the progress they have made.

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It's 1955 and a mother of five in Bloomington, Ind. receives a call from her oldest daughter's teacher. The teacher said she can no longer teach her daughter because she is a slow learner. So she brings her home and while her other children happily participate in school and other activities, her oldest daughter is excluded. Later she learns that her dentist's son also is not in school because of his learning and communication problems. She meets with the dentist's wife and learns that several parents have had similar experiences with their children. She is excited to learn that these parents are working to start a school program for children with special needs. This mother is Veronica Abbitt, who along with her husband and several other families in the Bloomington community, worked together to create the Stone Belt Council for Retarded Children.

By 1959, nine children were participating in a school program held in a local church basement. Carolyn Abbitt was one of those children reporting for the first day for school – an experience she hadn't had for a few years. Now, 55 years later, Carolyn and at least two other of those original students are still served by Stone Belt.

Hundreds of clients and their families have benefited by the work that a few families started in the late 1950s. Stone Belt’s founders envisioned a better future for people with disabilities. Terry, Bob and Carolyn are living examples of their vision (stories below). Today Stone Belt supports thousands of individuals, helps them to positively impact the community in myriad ways and serves as a leader in the field. We are grateful that those families and their community supporters took those first steps to making Stone Belt Arc, Inc. a reality.

The Stone Belt Council for "Retarded Children was organized in November 1958 and became incorporated the following year. The founders believed that people with developmental disabilities should have the same rights and privileges as any other community member. As proof of their commitment to support children with developmental disabilities, the council formed the first school for children with disabilities in Bloomington.

Stone Belt’s founders could not have dreamed that their efforts would result in the growth that the organization has experienced over the past 55 years. Today, opportunities for individuals with disabilities are countless. Perhaps one of the most important advances in the field during this half decade is reflected in how our society perceives individuals with disabilities. Institutions have disappeared and new doors to community inclusion have opened.

In the years following its humble beginnings, Stone Belt has become a leader in the field of supporting individuals with disabilities. The oldest and largest agency of its kind in south central Indiana, Stone Belt today offers a full range of programs and resources for over 2,000 clients in Monroe, Lawrence, Bartholomew and surrounding counties. Fifty-five years after its inception, Stone Belt continues to fulfill its mission to empower and support individuals and their families to fully participate in the life of the community.

Stone Belt has established itself as an agency of excellence, enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families, friends and larger community. As we celebrate our 55th Anniversary we remember the past, and we also look toward a bright future of innovation and inspiration.

Happy Anniversary Stone Belt!
Stone Belt extends appreciation to all our generous donors!

When it comes to writing that thank you, I thought to myself, this should be a breeze. Why? It’s pretty simple: because I love my clients and they love their clients, and I love helping them set up these client to client referral programs. I am passionate about helping people improve the quality of life for their clients, and that’s what I am doing with these programs.

Thank you donors!

If you have any questions about Bill Bartley’s programs or services, please call 812-332-2168, ext. 314 / lgarraghty@stonebelt.org.

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