

touchstone

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

SUPPORTED LIVING PROGRAM

Client excels in her transition to new apartment

Even though transitioning from a group home to an apartment in Bloomington was scary for Sabrina Wicks, she has thrived in the midst of change. She's settling into her new home, making friends, learning new recipes to cook and projects to make, and looking forward to getting a job.

"I thought I wasn't going to like it," Sabrina says, explaining that she was scared of having more freedom. "I was thinking that it was too much, but it's not. I thought I wasn't going to like the staff, but I really like the staff... I really like my roommate."

Sabrina lived in an extensive support needs group home in Valparaiso for five years and had her Medicaid waiver, which pays for services in a home setting rather than a facility, for a year before making the transition into an apartment with her new roommate, Susan Knight.

Even though Sabrina had challenges after moving in – such as going without cable, a landline phone and a couch for an extended period – she has enjoyed buying new furniture and personalizing her new space. She loves to decorate, especially for holidays, and chose a color scheme that includes pink, black and white. "Decorating was the most fun," she says.

Sabrina has applied for the Project SEARCH internship program and hopes to get a job that will enable her to pay for a new phone, Christmas presents and a tutu costume, so she can be a ballerina for Halloween.

Supported Living Associate Director Tammy Reuter has helped with Sabrina's transition and is impressed with how well she has adjusted. "Sabrina has fit right in and has truly done remarkably well with the transition," Tammy says. "(She) has been resilient during this process."

Tammy added that Sabrina still got up and went to her Lifelong Learning classes despite the initial problems with utilities and furniture. "I'm very, very impressed," she tells Sabrina. "I know what you've done to get to this point – that's a lot of hard work – and I'm hoping you're proud of yourself as well."

Sabrina says she is proud of herself. "This place helped me a lot, and I have a lot of support."

Sabrina's mom, Daunna Minnich, is pleased to have her in Bloomington and closer to the family home.



Sabrina Wicks

"It's gone quite smooth... I feel all the people who work with her are delighted at how smooth it's gone," she says. "This was a big new step for her. She just sorta settled right in. She misses her friends and old staff, because they're so far away, but on the other hand, she's having the time of her life."

Daunna explains that the move to Bloomington has been a "coming-of-age" experience for Sabrina. "She had never had an apartment that she can say, 'I've got my own place.' She was looking forward to getting out and having a real adult life. She wanted a real job and she's a good worker."

She adds, "It's real delightful to see the growth she's had... her self-esteem is blossoming. It's nice to have her here... I'm just real grateful."

Let your voice be heard!



There sure is a lot of attention on the elections this year, especially the presidential race. You can't look or listen anywhere that you don't see and hear "Trump this" or "Clinton that." But much of the impact for people with disabilities and their families that depend on supports and services is in the Indiana General Assembly. That is why Stone Belt, along with four other partners, sponsored the recent candidates' forum. We were very pleased with the turnout of candidates and audience participants, and we received positive feedback about the event. You can read a recap in this Touchstone issue.

The 2017 Indiana General Assembly (our state version of Congress) has a budget-making session from January to April. The budget that is passed will be in effect for the next two years. Since about 95 percent of Stone Belt's budget – and that of many other disability service providers – is determined by the state budget, it is critical that supports and services for client services receive a sufficient appropriation with which to operate.

Our immediate attention is focused on encouraging you – and, in fact, imploring you – to get out and vote. Imagine if every person with a disability, their family members, the staff that supports them and the community members with an interest in these issues would identify themselves as advocates and vote. I'm telling you, the office seekers would pay attention and work harder to get those votes.

Here's why it is important at the state level. Despite our progress in the 2015 session that restored funding for services, our workforce crisis continues. We are losing ground on pay levels for the direct support professional (DSP) and others as wages in other sectors increase. We have increased pay and benefits, but cannot close the gap on job openings and vacancies. Getting a DSP wage increase is our number one advocacy issue. Without this, staffing the needs of clients currently receiving or waiting for services cannot adequately be met.

There are important issues at the national level, too. We know that Medicaid, the primary way that people with disabilities get funding for healthcare and long-term services, is continually under the eye of Congress as they look at budget priorities. Changes in the Medicaid system could erode the safety net and set community-based services back significantly. There are also other issues – such as civil rights, education, employment and healthcare – that will also impact people with disabilities. Go to www.thearc.org to learn more about what is at stake.

As you prepare to vote in November, search the internet to find the positions of the candidates running for office so you'll be informed on how they might vote on important disability issues. Or better yet, show up at candidate forums and ask them directly where they stand. By doing this, you'll show them that disability issues matter to their constituents. Enough of us doing this will show them that we are a voting block to be heeded.

Sincerely,

Leslie Green, CEO

Grant to prepare students for work

On October 1, Stone Belt Arc received a two-year \$660,000 grant to provide pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

As grant fiscal agent, Stone Belt Arc's Community Employment will partner with other agencies to provide services in 13 counties and 25 schools. While details are still in planning stages, Bitta DeWees, director of Community Employment, says of the grant program, "It's hard to say exactly what that's looking like, but it's huge."

New legislation requires the state to allot at least 15 percent of its Vocational Rehabilitation dollars to youth transitional programs. When the state put out a request for grant proposals, DeWees helped write one that will allow partner agencies to go into the schools and provide pre-employment transitional services for a program dubbed Employment Foundations.

"It's very exciting," DeWees says. "It's by far the largest grant we have received in employment services."

Transitional services will include teaching workplace skills, career counseling, supporting self-advocacy, coordinating internships and helping explore post-secondary options as requested. By being in the schools and providing needed services, DeWees adds that the agency builds connections that open doors if clients need employment services in the future.

Organizers are still talking with schools and trying to figure out processes needed to help the program run smoothly. In essence, Stone Belt will serve six schools, with LIFE Designs, Knox County ARC, Four Rivers Resource Services and Developmental Services Inc. splitting the other 19 schools.

As the program launches, agencies will present a menu of opportunities to the schools, and then the schools will start picking students who could benefit from the program. Students and their support teams will help select needed services that supplement, but don't duplicate, what they are already learning in school. Employment staff will work with students either in groups or one-on-one and help them create a plan for life after high school, employment and/or post-secondary education.

Although the grant is approved for students 14 and older, DeWees says the targeted high-schoolers will probably be freshmen and sophomores.

"There is just a huge focus and movement on community employment," DeWees says. "People with disabilities, if you ask them what they want to do, they want to go to work. When you see this focus on youth... it's exciting."

She adds that gaining employment not only provides a person with money, but it also changes people's perceptions of who they are.

"They're capable, not needy; they're contributing, not dependent; they pay taxes, but the other thing that starts to happen is they start to make friends. And it changes the community's perception," DeWees says.

"Community employment is very important because it empowers people to be contributing members of society, and everyone wants to contribute, and everyone has skills, abilities and interests that make them employable. One thing that makes Stone Belt unique is we absolutely, truly believe that everyone is capable of working."



MILESTONES

CLINICAL & HEALTH RESOURCES

a division of Stone Belt | milestonesclinic.org

PROGRAMMING

Special guest calms anxiety

A special guest visited Milestones last month and worked with therapist Cindi Winegardner.

Romeo, a therapy dog, and his handler, Julie Miller (also of Milestones), came in to provide therapeutic support to Winegardner's 15-year-old client with a long history of anxiety in multiple areas, including social anxiety and a fear of dogs.

This has been an area of focus for the client, because he wants to be a first responder and is currently volunteering with the Bloomington Police Department. He knows he will need to work around K-9s in order to successfully fulfill this career path.

The idea arose after Romeo participated in a "thank you" visit to the Bloomington Police Department with a local volunteer group. When

Winegardner told her client about the visit, they decided this was the perfect opportunity to address his anxiety toward dogs.

The young man was encouraged to prepare a list of questions on his own to ask Miller as he approached and spent time with Romeo. He was able to do this and even more. He greeted both the dog and handler with ease, and before long was asking to hug Romeo and take a selfie with him.

An added bonus of this session was that the client's younger sibling, who is very shy and rarely speaks, was told she needed to ask permission before petting Romeo. She was able to do this and also got to share in some of the love.

Therapy animals can have an amazing impact on clients in a variety



Romeo

of ways. This connection can help alleviate the anxiety, build positive relationships, and allow both of these young people to feel a sense of success and progress in the work they are doing.

COMMUNITY

Director, therapist participate in anxiety panel

Milestones Director James Wiltz and therapist Deb Mischler sat on a community panel to raise awareness of youth anxiety on September 22.

With the intent of serving parents, teachers, ministers, youth workers and any adult interacting with teenagers, the panel discussed recognizing signs and symptoms and understanding what to do if they suspect a child or teen is experiencing anxiety.

Wiltz helped organize the panel and recruited Mischler to participate. The event at Monroe County Public Library included experts presenting information on youth anxiety and how to access local resources.

The free public program was sponsored by the City of Bloomington Commission on the Status of Children and Youth, Milestones and Centerstone.

STAFF

Deb Lane joins Milestones as practice manager

After 21 years in the School of Education at Indiana University, Deb Lane has joined Milestones as the new practice manager.

Years ago, she worked as a surgery technician, and when she decided to go to graduate school, she chose to get a master's degree in business management with a healthcare focus. She earned her degree three years ago.

"It's always been my dream to work in healthcare," Lane says. "I felt like this was an opportunity that opened up for me... It seemed like the prime opportunity."

In many medical offices, practice managers are often registered nurses

with a business background. Lane says she is excited that the position with Milestones concentrated on the business side, which allows her to work in the health field without going back to school.

"It's exciting for me to put my degree in place," she says, adding that she's also excited about meeting everyone at Milestones and learning all the new systems in place. "Everything is exciting for me, because I love learning."

She has spent her first few weeks training, meeting people and learning the ins and outs of her job, which will include organizing and managing day-to-day operations, facilities, vehicles, equipment, supports and

resources, billing, coordinating programs and services, supervising and working with staff.

In addition to a master's in business and health care administration from Indiana Wesleyan University, Lane has a bachelor's degree in business management, also from IWU, and an associate degree in surgical technology with a minor in business from Vincennes University.

Prior to leaving Indiana University, Lane worked in curriculum and instruction as the School of Education's department administrator. She earned the school's Staff Merit Award in 2004, received an IU Staff Merit Award in 2005 and held offices on the Staff Council.



Deb Lane

In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her eight grandchildren, swimming, going to the park and meeting new people. She lives in Greene County.



Keith Klein moderates the Aging & Disabilities Candidate Forum.

Forum educates candidates on aging, disability issues

With the purpose of giving Indiana General Assembly candidates information about living with aging and disability issues – or supporting someone who does – a committee of community advocates hosted the Aging and Disabilities Candidates Forum on Monday, Aug. 29, at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church.

“It was critically important for the candidates to hear directly from those persons impacted by state decision-makers and to also let voters know where the candidates stand on the issues important to people with disabilities,” said Stone Belt CEO Leslie Green. “This forum offered the opportunity for both of these things to occur.”

More than 100 people turned out to learn more about the candidates and how they would respond to aging and disability issues should they be elected or re-elected.

Presentations by The Arc of Indiana Executive Director Kim Dodson and Indiana University lecturer Steve Rahko illuminated a problem in the caregiver industry: not having enough people caring for those with disabilities and within the elderly population.

“I think we really are at a point where we are in a crisis,” Dodson said, adding that she would hate to see the problem brought to light by a crisis or tragedy before legislators took action. “We really do not have enough people caring for people with disabilities and the elderly population.”

Rahko said he expects the caregiver industry to be the country’s largest industry by 2020, with a multi-million-person gap between those needing services and those providing services by 2040, if legislators don’t step up and do something about the problem now.

At the core of the problem, according to Rahko, is the average low wages for caregivers, which is about \$9 to \$10 across the country. With that minimal income, employee turnover is great. Rahko encouraged the candidates to support and work toward a wage proportional to the work the caregivers are performing.

The eight candidates who attended – Bill Breeden (D-House District 46), Rep. Bob Heaton (R-House District 46), Penny Githens (D-House District 60), Rep. Matt Pierce (D-House District 61), Rep. Jeff Ellington, (R-House District 62), Steve Lindsey (D-House District 62), Rep. Eric Koch (R-Senate District 44), Sen. Mark Stoops (D-Senate District 40) – agreed that low wages were a problem, but didn’t agree on solutions. The dilemma rests between providing funds for social services and being good stewards of the state’s money.

Stone Belt will be continuing its efforts throughout the fall and into the budget-making legislative session next year for increased funding to support higher wages for DSPs and other staff. Learn how to get involved in Stone Belt’s efforts by visiting the advocacy page (www.stonebelt.org/forms/advocacy-news/) and signing up for advocacy information and alerts.

2016 ANNUAL CELEBRATION AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to our 2016 Annual Celebration Award Winners!

The Self-Determination Award

- Susan Knight
- Jessica Cababie

The Empowered Learning Award

- Tasia Tanier-Gesner
- Sarah McKenney

The Outstanding Contributions Award

- Josh Munoz
- Damita Rudolph

The Self-Directed Home Life Award

- Cheryl Thompson
- Lora Vanosdol

The Positive Supports Award

- Donnie Stitt
- April Gephart

The Employment Award

- Travis Smith
- Melanie Hays

The Quality of Life Award

- Cindy Anderson
- Taylor Oligee

The Community Partner Award

- Bucceto’s Smiling Teeth
- Housing Partnerships Incorporated
- Dr. Drew Watters and IU Health Emergency Staff

The Outstanding Volunteer Award

- Richie Gillespie

The Elbert Johns Self-Advocacy Award

- Gary Taylor

The Visionary Leadership Award

- Susan Hoard

WHY I GIVE

First-time donor: Richie Gillespie

Richie Gillespie is a Bloomington native who volunteered his time to represent Stone Belt at the 2016 Dancing with the Celebrities fundraising event.

All one needs to do is visit the facilities on East 10th Street in Bloomington to understand that Stone Belt is a truly amazing organization. The energy and smiles from the clients are enough to make your heart melt. Everywhere you look, progress is being made. Whether in art class making beautiful, colorful pieces or working on important items for Cook Medical, the clients are able to grow into self-empowered individuals. These programs are an absolute must, not only for the clients themselves, but also for their families.

I knew Stone Belt played an integral role in helping our local communities thrive, but I did not understand how deeply its influence spread. It is extremely important that Stone Belt has the continued ability to service its 2,000-plus clients.

My ideals align with Stone Belt's mission of preparing, empowering and supporting people to live fulfilling lives-- a concept for which everyone should be on board. This is why I give.

Complete the enclosed giving envelope and drop it in the mail with your donation, or visit stonebelt.org to donate online.



Richie Gillespie

THANK YOU DONORS

Stone Belt extends appreciation to our generous donors from July 1 to August 31, 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 Derek Richey at (812) 332-2168 ext. 214 or drichey@stonebelt.org.

Pillar Society (\$5,000 - \$9,999)

IU Credit Union, Randall & Rae Kirk

Limestone Society (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

Richard Sanders, Donald & Carolyn Snyder

Builder Society (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Malcolm Brown, Alexander & Virginia Buchwald, Art & Kay Dahlgren, German American Bank, Jim & Joyce Grandorf, Don, Carol-Anne, & Jonathon Hossler, Winston & Sue Shindell, Kurt & Lisa Zorn

Advocate Society (\$500 - \$999)

Karen Atkins, Kimberly Carmichael, Joseph Rezits, Richard & Susan Stryker, Sandra Taylor, Mary Wennerstrom Phillips, Charlotte Zietlow

Steward Society (\$100 - \$499)

Diana Baker & Tom Carter, Barrow, Loimer, & Fleener Family, Bill & Michelle Bartley, Sarah Baumgart & Bill Lozowski, Bennett Diversified Products Inc., Victoria Borrelli, Jean Camp, Ruth Chesmore, Susan Cote, Charlotte Daniel, Larry & Betty Davidson, Joseph & Betty Deckard, Richard & Rosemary Dever, David & Jane Dunatchik, Joe & Gloria Emerson, Mary & Joseph Gajewski, Richie Gillespie, John & Nancy Gilliland, Catherine Gray & John Turner, Henry Gray, David & Judy Haas, Justin & Emily Harrison, Don, June, & Tim Hendricks, Anne Higley & Eric Benson, Tim Hines & Rebecca Philippsen, Douglas Hofstadter, Everett & Betty Kerr, Harold & Claudia Lindman, Gregory Lloyd, Dan & Beth Lodge-Rigal, Russell Lyons, Robert & Suzanne Mann, Edwin Marshall, D.J. Masson & Betsy Gersin, Keith & Marion Michael, Stuart & Cookie Mufson, Bob & Mary Page, William & Phyllis Perkins, Dawn & Kevin Petrow, Richard Rose, Jerry & Nancy Ruff, Harold & Sandy Sabbagh, Cliff & Joan Travis, Harold Turner, Bill Van Tine, Albert Velasquez, Weddle Bros. Construction, Wayne & Vivian Winston

Friend Society (\$1 - \$99)

Shirley Bastin, Shirley Boardman, John & Karen Braun, Ron & Evelyn Crowe, Jay & Lori Deck, Eddie & Beverly Deckard, Imogene Embry, Mark & Linda Fields, Joe & Rosalie Fleener, Susan Fletcher, Steven Floyd, Leslie Green & Ed Maxedon, Michael Halliburton, Kathy Johnson, Thomas & Janet Kiser, Bryan Mattison, Myla Jean Meadows, Larry & Brenda Mitchell, Noell & Steve Mosca, Richard Panicco, Steve & Sue Parrish, Tim & Marilyn Parrish, Bobbie & Channing Partenheimer, Timothy Paton, Dave, Brenda, & Matt Polley, Karen Sue & Darrell Rose, Bill & Karen Stucky, Tom & Jeanette Thompson, Albert & Marie Vendel, Andrew & Susan Williams, Eva Woods, Biannca Yates, Bill & Phillis Young, Michael Young, Anonymous (12)

In Kind Donors

Buccetto's Pizza



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

EVENTS

3D for Stone Belt

Dine at your favorite restaurant and donate a dollar to Stone Belt Arc!

“3D for Stone Belt” is an initiative in December with restaurants all over Bloomington that will be donating a dollar to support Stone Belt Arc. Each time they sell a designated dish or special, a dollar will go to Stone Belt. Some participating restaurants include:

Michael’s Uptown Café, Crazy Horse, Topo’s 403, Lennie’s Gourmet Pizza, Upland Brewing Co., Cardinal Spirits, Buffalouie’s, Farmbloomington, Hopscotch Coffee, The PourHouse Café, Sweet Grass Restaurant, Zeitgeist Organic Creamery, Noco, Anatolia and Buccetto’s Smiling Teeth.

MARK THE DATE: Global Gifts Community Shopping Night is Tuesday, November 15. Stone Belt will receive 10 percent of all sales between 5 to 8 p.m.



Photo credit:
Rodney Margison

Board members, staff, supporters, clients and their families enjoyed food and festivities for the 2016 Annual Celebration on September 26. See inside for a list of winners.



If you would like to receive our publications, please contact Jana Surigao at jsurigao@stonebelt.org.

www.stonebelt.org

 Stone Belt Arc  @StoneBeltArc  812.332.2168

An affiliated chapter of



PREPARE EMPOWER SUPPORT



2815 East Tenth Street • Bloomington, IN 47408
www.stonebelt.org

