

touchstone

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

Stone Belt and partners pilot Trauma-informed care certification program

It is well documented that people with disabilities experience trauma at higher rates than those without disabilities. This may be in the form of neglect, abuse, abandonment, family crises, and other adverse experiences. The effect of these traumas may be long-lasting and lead to depression, aggression, and other mental health issues.

Individuals may be re-traumatized in situations or settings where they feel unsafe or do not feel that they have control, power, choice, a voice, or value. Research also shows that staff in human services fields have experienced a high incidence of trauma. Therefore we feel it is essential for Stone Belt to recognize the prevalence of trauma and its effects on clients and staff and provide a culture of trauma-informed care.

As part of our strategic plan, Stone Belt has started a trauma-informed care (TIC) initiative to build awareness of trauma and its impacts; and to develop practices and policies to create a positive environment that adheres to the five components of a TIC approach – safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment. We partnered with Dr. John Keesler from Indiana University's School of Social Work, who has more than 20 years of experience working with people with developmental disabilities and is a preminent expert in integrating TIC into their support systems.

A team of Stone Belt staff from across the organization and with various positions, including Direct Support Professionals, met with Dr. Keesler to assess our current environment relative to TIC and develop new

policies and procedures to move toward a more trauma-informed culture. Two of our board members also sit on the committee, further demonstrating Stone Belt's commitment to long-term change.

One of the team's first activities was to survey staff on the current culture at Stone Belt. About 60% of staff completed the survey, one of the highest survey return rates Stone Belt has seen. The team has started analyzing the survey results and developing possible actions the organization can take to improve the workplace and client support structures.

It will take some time and effort to see the effects of this initiative, but Stone Belt hopes it will improve how staff responds to those we support, how supervisors support their team, and how employees feel about

working at Stone Belt. An essential concept of TIC is to change the question from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" With TIC awareness and new approaches that take this into account, Stone Belt will make a more significant difference in the lives of clients and staff alike.



Stone Belt teamed up with Indiana University School of Public Health-Bloomington, and Indiana University School of Social Work to pilot a new Trauma-Informed certification program.

Contacting Your Legislators

In Indiana:

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 Trey Hollingsworth
202-225-5315 in Washington, D.C.
or 812-288-3999 in Jeffersonville
<http://hollingsworth.house.gov/contact/email>
- Representative Greg Pence
202-225-3021 in Washington, D.C.
or 812-799-5230 in Columbus
<http://pence.house.gov/contact>

FROM THE CEO

New beginnings

By **Bitta DeWees**

As I sit here writing my first Touchstone article as your new CEO of Stone Belt, I am so excited! Stone Belt has had incredible CEOs since our formation 63 years ago, from Joan Burton to Elbert Johns to Leslie Green. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to follow in all of their footsteps and work with the staff, clients, families, and board of directors to lead Stone Belt through our next chapter.

As we move towards more opportunities to meet in person and have group gatherings and services, I feel the joy coming back in waves. Although COVID is still with us, Stone Belt has seen very few cases among staff and clients in the past two months, which is a vast improvement from the winter season. There are still some safety protocols in place. By following those, we continue to limit the impact of the coronavirus on our services.

Another new beginning at Stone Belt is our Employment First Initiative. We are moving towards all services within our day programs to focus on employment and developing skills needed for work. So on a broad scale, we will focus on:

- Pre-Vocational Skills
- Partners in Education
- Volunteerism
- Interactive Classroom
- Employment Skills Classroom
- Mentoring
- Community Exploration
- Discovery
- Work Experiences
- Employment

More specifically, within Manufacturing, we will focus on value-added jobs to increase wages in partnership with Cook Medical, so more clients work above minimum wage. We will also create training programs focusing on employment skills and work experiences for those who may not be able to work all day. Stone Belt has an excellent partnership with Cook Medical and an excellent reputation for providing quality work.

Within community employment, we will add resources and focus on serving more people from our Manufacturing and Lifelong Learning programs. It's our job to match an employment seeker's skills with an employer's needs. We have an excellent reputation throughout the state for our employment services.

We see the most significant transformation within our Lifelong Learning program, which will become Employment Fundamentals on May 1. We will continue to provide quality activities but will shift the underlying focus of the movement to working on the soft skills needed for employment. This includes teaching social skills, communication skills, conflict resolution, staying on task, advocacy, and work experiences.

Many exciting classes are beginning this spring that will focus on employment fundamentals.

One of these is the Gardening Club, taught by Zoe Kolozenski, an IU student doing an internship with Stone Belt. Thanks to this initiative, some of our old raised garden beds have been given a new life. Together the club sanded them and then painted them with beautiful flowers and artwork. Next, they planted seeds indoors to grow into sprouts in the garden beds. They will be planting herbs and vegetables to be used in upcoming cooking sessions held in our employment classroom. The clients look forward to seeing the changes in the seedlings, sprouts, and plants each day. They are excited that the vegetables and herbs they have grown will be used in the cooking class and be part of developing healthy eating habits. Throughout these activities, participants improve their communications skills, work together as a team, and learn what they like to do and what they don't want to do.

So we come full circle to new beginnings: CEO leadership; COVID-19 retreating (at least for now); more opportunities to get together and celebrate spring and each other; and Employment First initiatives teaching new skills in new ways and creating opportunities.

I hope you find some time to enjoy spring, enjoy time together, enjoy the outdoors and enjoy new beginnings where they fit for you.

Fondly,



Bitta DeWees
Chief Executive Officer

BENEFIT CONCERT

Belt Out Loud!

It's taken a few years, but Stone Belt is finally hosting the second annual Belt Out Loud! Benefit concert—featuring Jenn Cristy with special guests from RESPECT—on May 7 at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater in Bloomington. The show is sponsored by IU Credit Union and Old National Bank.

Singer/songwriter Jenn Cristy's background experience includes recording and touring with John Mellencamp before moving on to a successful career as an exceptional songwriter and entertainer, performing original material. Cristy does it all; she sings, plays the piano, and serves as a multi-instrumentalist. She is the owner of One Pulse Entertainment, based in Bloomington.

Special guests from RESPECT will celebrate the women of rock 'n' soul—Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Whitney Houston, Tina Turner, The Supremes, Gladys Knight, Patti LaBelle, and Adele—to name a few. It's a night to celebrate the women, the voices, the legends, and the powerful impact they have made in history.

Opening act Eric Brown & the Hungry Hearts will play some of the most legendary rock 'n' roll songs. Featuring the music of Tom Petty, John Mellencamp, Bruce Springsteen, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Bob Seger, The Who, and many more classic rock artists.

Hailing from the Windy City, Eric Brown honed his guitar chops by backing up countless bands—and leading a few of his own—on Chicago's club scene before hitting the road to tour the USA and Europe.

Doors open at 7:30 p.m. for the reserved seating concert on May 7 at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. The benefit concert is \$20 per ticket. Tickets can be purchased at the BCT Box Office located at 114 E Kirkwood Avenue or online at bctboxoffice.org. The theater requires vaccine verification or negative COVID test results within 48 hours to enter the venue. Wearing a mask is optional but strongly encouraged.

If you would like to sponsor next year's concert or be involved somehow, contact Adam Hamel at ahamel@stonebelt.org.



Jenn Cristy performs at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater during the 2021 Lotus Festival.

Stone Belt presents Belt Out Loud!

MAY 7TH

BUSKIRK-CHUMLEY THEATER

DOORS 7:30pm

SHOW 8:00pm

TICKETS \$20



Featuring

JENN CRISTY

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS FROM

RESPECT



OPENING ACT
ERIC BROWN
& The Hungry Hearts

Sponsored by

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DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Tootsie Roll Drive donation

Stone Belt recently received a \$6000 donation from the Knights of Columbus Council 1166. The funds were raised as part of the council's 44th annual Tootsie Roll Drive to benefit local children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Stone Belt will be using this donation to develop an *Employment First* room at the Arc of Lawrence County facility in Bedford. The renovated room will be equipped with individual computer desks and chairs and will offer a professional space for training and instruction. The funds will also be used to purchase iPads and televisions for electronic instruction. Thanks so much to the Knights of Columbus Council 1166 for their generous donation. Special thanks to the Stone Belt volunteers who helped out with the 2021 drive.



Knights of Columbus members present Stone Belt's Executive Employment First Director Tonya Vandivier with a check from their Tootsie Roll Drive. Pictured (L-R) are Jon Nett, Mark Coressel, Charles Edwards (LARC board chair and Knights of Columbus member), Tonya Vandivier, and Greg Stanley.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

Becoming a corporate partner is a premiere way to show support for people with disabilities and is vital in helping Stone Belt staff and clients reach beyond what current resources allow. For more information on becoming a corporate sponsor, visit www.stonebelt.org/giving. If you have questions, please contact Development Manager Adam Hamel at (812) 332-2168, ext. 269, or ahamel@stonebelt.org.



CPAs / ADVISORS



Why I Give...

By Cyndi Johnson

When I've been asked why I volunteer, advocate, and give, my response has been short and sweet: This is not about a cause. It's about my kids.

And while they're growing fast and now correct me when I call them kids, that is no less true. People in Bloomington are undoubtedly passionate about their causes. It's one of the many things I love about this small town and its many generous citizens.



Cyndi Johnson,
Stone Belt Board
of Directors

So a few years ago, when I was asked to become a member of Stone Belt's board, it didn't take much to convince me. But I admit I agreed to it not entirely in a spirit of service. The truth is, I selfishly wanted to know whether Stone Belt was deserving of its strong reputation in our community and around the state. Was this a place I could trust with my kids when the time came? I felt compelled to find out for myself, and being at the board meetings would give me a front-row seat to the inner workings and decision-making.

Stone Belt has most certainly earned its standing as a credible, innovative, high-quality provider. But it's not the place that has earned my trust. It's the people. From leadership to licensed professionals to direct support staff, I have met many with a passion for their work and genuine respect and care for clients. Would I trust my kids to be well served by Stone Belt's personnel now and in the future? Absolutely yes, and I view my contributions of time, talent, and resources as an investment that helps ensure Stone Belt's continued excellence for many generations to come.

March happenings bring so much happiness!



Stone Belt's advocacy luncheon featured presentations from (l-r) Hal Turner, Cyndi Johnson, Bitta DeWees, Leslie Green, and Vi Simpson.

March 10 It Matters to Me-Advocacy 101

More than 40 individuals participated in Stone Belt's advocacy luncheon on March 11. The program "It Matters to Me-Advocacy 101" highlighted the importance of voting in the upcoming 2022 elections. Speakers included Stone Belt's CEO Leslie Green and COO Bitta DeWees. Also speaking were Cyndi Johnson, a family advocate with The Arc of Indiana and Stone Belt board member, Hal Turner, former special assistant for US Senator Todd Young and Stone Belt Treasurer, and Vi Simpson, former District 40 Senator in Indiana. The advocacy program also kicked off Stone Belt's voter registration drive. For more information about your legislators and ways to make sure your voice is heard, visit www.stonebelt.org.

March 23 Give the Magic-Blue Man Group

Stone Belt received 75 tickets to see the Blue Man Group thanks to the IU Auditorium's Give the Magic program. Attendees were treated to the group's all-new production featuring signature drumming, colorful moments of creativity, and quirky comedy performed by the "men in blue."



March 29 I AM YOU video premiere and watch party

Stone Belt hosted the premiere of 2022 I AM YOU performance video at the Ted Jones Playhouse in Bloomington on March 29.

The video features performances written and practiced over the past year by Stone Belt clients under the supervision of director Lucy Farmer. The 2022 production also featured the return of two troupe members from the I AM YOU performance in 2018—Anna Harner and Lyle Freeman—participating as coaches for the newest troupe members.

Performers and their families and friends gathered to watch the video premiere on



I AM YOU troupe: front row (l-r) Gregory Maxwell, Anna Harner, Mikaela Coppedge, Melinda Owens & Michael Ely. Back row (l-r) Lyle Freeman, Kristina Hale, Joseph Cramer, Alvin Day & Leslie Green.

a big screen. Performances included: "My Army of Rainbows" by Mikaela Coppedge, "Gregory's Life Story on His Good Side" by Gregory Maxwell, "Stage Fright" by Lisa Dickey, "The Story of Joseph the Artist" by Joseph Cramer, "A Lot Changes But It's Going Good" by Alvin Day, "Adoption: The Day Somebody Gave Me a Chance" by Kristina Hale, "Daniel Day" by Melinda Owens, "Don't Judge Me By My Physical Appearance" by Michael Ely, and "Can't Stop This Feeling" by Logan Eppard.

Stone Belt received a grant from the Indiana Arts

Commission for the production of I AM YOU in 2022. Special thanks to our sponsors: Boston Scientific, Clendening Johnson & Bohrer, Crowder's Pharmacy, Hylant, IU Credit Union, Lisa Baker, D.D.S., Matrix Integration, Old National Bank, Smithville, and World Arts

March 30 & 31 Goodbye events for CEO

Leslie Green visited Stone Belt sites in Bedford, Bloomington, and Columbus during the final week of March. In Bedford, she was greeted with enthusiastic chants and hugs as she entered the building. Artists had created unique centerpieces for the occasion, and everyone wanted to take a final picture with her.

At Bloomington's celebration, Stone Belt Board President Dan Lodge-Rigal presented Green with a memory book complete with photos of her throughout her 42.5 years with the organization. Hal Turner, board treasurer, read remarks from Mayor John Hamilton stating that April 1 would be proclaimed Leslie Green Day in Bloomington. Artists presented her with a mosaic they had created resembling one of her favorite locations

Columbus greeted her with a drum roll performed on conga drums. She also received a painting created by artists in Columbus, appropriately featuring bold, green colors

Thanks to Leslie Green for all she has done to prepare, empower, and support individuals with disabilities over the past four decades!



Art on display in the community



Neisha Luther, an artist with Stone Belt, poses with her artwork which is currently on display at the Bartholomew County Public Library in Columbus.

Several locations in our communities are displaying artwork created by artists at Stone Belt. Please stop by and check out these displays and let them know how much you appreciate seeing these displays in their spaces.

The Stone Belt Arts program provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to expand their capacity for self-expression, develop new life skills, and work professionally in the arts. All proceeds from the sale of artwork go directly to the artist.

Ongoing display

Indiana Institute of Disability and Community - 2810 E Discovery Parkway, Bloomington 47408

May/June

Switchyard Brewing Company - 419 N Walnut Street, Bloomington 47404

June/July

Bartholomew County Public Library - 536 Fifth Street, Columbus 47201

August/September

Monroe County Convention Center - 302 South College Avenue, Bloomington 47403



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www.stonebelt.org

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