



touchstone

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

Community Employment on the rise

Stone Belt's Employment Consultants have been hard at work supporting Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) in their quest to secure employment in their communities, including Bartholomew, Brown, Lawrence, Monroe, and Owen counties. One of Stone Belt's *Principles of Service* states that "employment is a fundamental part of adult life."

Since July 1, Employment Consultants have helped twelve clients find great fitting jobs aligning with their vision of a good life. Recently, an individual interested in working with children took a First Aid and CPR course through Stone Belt. Having acquired these skills helped her procure an educational assistant position at New Hope for Families in Bloomington. Edgewood Primary School recently hired another person interested in working with children to monitor and help students in the lunchroom.

A significant amount of work begins way before a client interviews for a job. Employment Consultants support the client through a discovery process to learn about their interests. For example, what do they consider to be a dream job?

What is their ideal working environment? Do they have the skills needed for the job? And what about transportation? They also work together to develop the soft skills required, like time management, hygiene, and appropriate attire, to ensure the client is prepared and comfortable with the job expectations before even applying.



Stone Belt Employment Consultant Jesse Derringer assists Kyle Vanderhoeven at TJ Maxx® in Columbus.



Alexandra Schwarz enjoys working at Rural King in Columbus where she has been employed for five years. She is pictured with Terri Roessing, Stone Belt's Community Employment Coordinator

Stone Belt Employment Consultants throughout the agency are currently working with 73 clients to find their perfect job match. Once hired, the job coaching process starts. The Employment Consultant helps through the onboarding and training process. Employment Consultants advocate for accommodations, promotions, and other employment needs. Stone Belt has excellent relationships with several businesses that have hired individuals with disabilities. Currently, 79 clients are in supported employment and receiving extended services. The employment process proves that every step towards inclusion is a step closer to a brighter and more equitable community. Stone Belt is thankful for its lasting partnerships and is always looking for more opportunities in the future.

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>

FROM THE CEO

CHANGE

By BITTA DEWEES

It seems that things are changing around us all of the time. One of my favorite quotes is, "Change is inevitable; growth is optional" by John Maxwell. I have learned to welcome change and focus on how to change things for the better and one of my favorite times of change is the change of Seasons.

Fall is a time of temperatures cooling down and leaves changing. A time of football and soccer games. A time of sweatshirts, pumpkins, and Halloween. A time to think about all that is changing. A time to support people to get out and enjoy all the fall changes and activities. And here at Stone Belt, many things are changing.

There are changes in leadership at Milestones. We have welcomed Mark-Anthony John as our new Executive Milestones Director. He brings to Stone Belt a wealth of knowledge in Healthcare Administration. He will oversee all Milestones services. We have also promoted Leah Walden to Clinical Director. She will directly manage all clinical and therapy services.

Together, they will lead efforts to meet several strategic initiatives around services at Milestones. They will work with their teams to ensure clinical services become part of a broader mental health community. They will also focus on increasing professional services through partnerships and growth.

We look forward to supporting Mark-Anthony, Leah, and all the staff at Milestones to initiate changes and lead growth that will impact the quality of life for more of the people we serve.

There are changes to Stone Belt's Board of Directors. In June, six new board members: David Rodgers, Larry Ruich, Jakob Breunig, Lisa Connolly, Patricia Chappell, and Vicki Borrelli were appointed. We also gave sincere thanks and well wishes to several departing Board members, including Jack Cummings, Nancy Owen, DJ Masson, and Trish Sterling.

Stone Belt is truly blessed to work with such a committed, talented, knowledgeable, and caring Board of Directors who always have the best interest of clients and staff at the forefront of their decisions.

There are changes being made in Services. Employment First programs, including Community Employment, Manufacturing, and Employment Fundamentals, are making great progress. All three programs work together to teach the fundamental skills needed for employment, to transform manufacturing services into an integrated setting, and to increase the number of people finding jobs in the community.

Group Homes did an excellent job of helping all of the clients of Blackstone House move to supported living settings and are in the process of assisting clients at Hite House to do the same. This has allowed clients to have more choice in where and whom they live with and has helped reduce the number of staff we need. They have also been supporting clients to get out of the house more. They hosted a prom in September. Clients and staff are doing an excellent job of supporting each other and working together to make events happen.

Supported Living has been helping many clients move. This allows clients to have more choice in where and who they live with. They have escorted many clients as they have traveled to places as far away as Ireland and as nearby as the Indiana State Fair. They have also recently assisted in wedding preparation for several couples and are always looking for ways to assist in developing new relationships and social connections for clients.

All of these changes, from leadership changes to Board of Director changes to service changes, are improving the quality of support we offer to the people we serve. I hope you all find time to enjoy the fall weather and activities. And I hope you embrace changes and adopt an attitude of curiosity and wonder.

Fondly,

Bitta DeWees



Bitta DeWees
Chief Executive Officer

Clients, staff honored at celebration gala

Stone Belt kicked off Direct Support Professional Recognition Week—and celebrated 64 years of promoting, empowering, and supporting individuals with developmental disabilities—during the 2023 Annual Awards Celebration held at the Monroe Convention Center in Bloomington on September 11. The Honorable John Hamilton, Bloomington’s mayor, and Trent Deckard, Monroe County Council At-Large Representative, were guest speakers and helped present awards to the deserving recipients. Congratulations to all of the winners!



Client Self-Determination
Brea Sanders



Staff Empowered Learning
Shane Beaman



Client Outstanding Contribution
Noah Young



Staff Outstanding Contribution
Shaye Edmonson



Client Employment
Misty Lawyer



Staff Positive Supports
Kacy Deaton



Client Self-Directed Home Life
Cindy Anderson



Staff Self-Directed Home Life
Dante Hardin



Client Quality of Life
Sheida Wessell



Staff Quality of Life
Lora Vanosdol



Community Partner Award
Allison Pack



Community Partner Award
Jim Grandorf



Community Partner Award
Bartholomew County Public Library



Community Partner Award
ColumBUS



Elbert Johns Self-Advocate Award
Ezekiel Roth



Henry & Celicia Upper Lifetime Achievement Award
Stuart Mufson



Visionary Leadership Award
Tonya Vandivier

2023 Annual Award recipients unable to attend the celebration and not pictured include: Client Empowered Learning Award recipient Germaine Bussert, Outstanding Community Partner Award recipient Henry Upper, Staff Self-Determination Award recipient Joe Hatton, Staff Employment Award recipient Kate Gehring, and Client Positive Supports Award recipient Melissa Whited.

DSPs celebrated at Stone Belt



Stone Belt's Director of Community Employment Breanne Siniard cooks breakfast for DSPs in Bloomington.

Stone Belt's Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are both frontline workers and the organization's backbone. Their work and commitment impact Stone Belt every day and during DSP Recognition Week—held the second week of September—Stone Belt throws a party to showcase the amazing and often unsung work of these incredible professionals and mark just a small fraction of the recognition they deserve 365 days a year.

This year, DSP Appreciation included a week full of engaging activities and events not only as a way to show Stone Belt's gratitude but as an opportunity for everyone to come together as a team and have some fun.

Each DSP received a goodie bag full of treats and a unique Stone Belt umbrella featuring the artwork of Logan Gilliatt (Bedford). Throughout the week, all DSPs could win Paid Time Off, Stone Belt apparel, and other prizes, and meals delivered to residential sites.



Stone Belt directors washed cars of DSPs in Bedford and Bloomington. Pictured (right to left) Genna Lynn, Executive Residential Director, Ron Dela Cruz, Regional Associate Director, Kaitlynn Rodriguez, Behavior Clinician, and Mark-Anthony John, Executive Milestones Director.



Direct Support Professional Angel Polanco gets ready to enjoy breakfast in Columbus.

Other highlights included homemade breakfasts and free, ten-minute massages for all DSPs in Bloomington, Bedford, and Columbus. Stone Belt directors also washed DSP cars in Bedford and Bloomington. Throughout the week, everyone was encouraged to dress

up as Superheros, wear Stone Belt apparel, don crazy hats, and show off their tropical attire as a way to let everyone participate in the celebration.

DSP Recognition may be over for another year, but the commitment to providing exceptional care and support to Stone Belt clients remains.

Mark-Anthony John: Executive Milestones Director

Meet Mark-Anthony John, the new Executive Milestones Director who joined Stone Belt in August. John comes to his new position with a wealth of experience in healthcare administration, collaboration, and growing services.



Mark-Anthony John
*Executive
Milestones Director*

As Executive Director, he will support Milestones' Behavior Management services, Recreational Therapy services, and Nursing services. He will also assist the Clinical Director of Milestones Leah Walden.

John's previous experience includes:

- Serving as Chief Operating Officer for The Aria Group, LLC-S in Indianapolis.
- Working as a Case Manager for Indiana's Department of Child Services.

He has a MBA with a concentration in Healthcare Administration and is currently studying for a doctoral degree in public health.

Welcome to the team!

New Leadership at Milestones Clinical & Health Resources



Milestones new leadership team—Mark-Anthony John and Leah Walden—pose outside of Milestones in Bloomington.

In August, Stone Belt's Chief Executive Officer Bitta DeWees announced that Mark-Anthony John would become the new Executive Milestones Director and that Leah Walden would become the Clinical Director with Milestones. Together, they will lead Milestones in a future of growth and quality services.

As Clinical Director, Walden directly supports Stone Belt's Advanced Practice Nurses (APN) and therapy and skills services. She will also actively provide supervision hours to Associate level Clinicians working to obtain licensure within the agency.

"Leah brings a wealth of clinical knowledge to this position," said Stone Belt's CEO, Bitta DeWees. "She has done an amazing job of supporting all of Milestones as we developed new strategic initiatives."

In 2018, Walden joined Milestones as a Licenced Social Worker (LSW), and became a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) while serving as a therapist. As Assistant Clinical Director, Walden worked to provide support and encouragement to the multiple teams at Milestones. She provided therapy services and worked in collaboration with the Agency task force to help develop the latest strategic initiatives.

Walden wants to elevate the agency's visibility within the Bloomington community by working collaboratively with Milestones' team to become the primary resource for services catering to individuals with diverse abilities, mental health concerns, and dual diagnoses.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

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.

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Mark Calendars Now for Upcoming Art Shows

Fall is everywhere and that means only one thing. . .the holiday season is rapidly approaching. Don't panic because Stone Belt will be showcasing client art throughout the community.

"Fall in Love with Stone Belt Art" the theme of November's art showcase at the Engraving and Stamp Center, Inc. (218 Madison Street in Bloomington). Stop by the venue during the Gallery Walk's First Friday Opening Reception on November 3, 5-8 p.m. to get started on that holiday shopping.

Stone Belt's Annual Holiday Art Show is bigger and better than ever this year offering two days of shopping—Friday, December 8, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and Saturday, December 9, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.—at the 10th Street (2815 E Tenth Street) facility in Bloomington. Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services) students will be on-hand to assist with gift wrapping.

All of the proceeds go directly to the artist. Remember that art from Stone Belt artists make great gifts. It's the gift that keeps on giving!



2023 Annual Award Celebration attendees choose Amber Teulker's (Columbus) artwork to be featured on the cover of Stone Belt's 2024 Art Calendar. Congratulations, Amber!



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