

# touchstone

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

## Third Annual Belt Out Loud! Benefit Concert featuring Hank Ruff was a huge success



Country musician Hank Ruff performed for a record-setting audience during the third annual Belt Out Loud! Benefit Concert held on Saturday, May 13, at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. Ruff entertained the attendees with original songs including "If the Boot Fits" and "Whiskey Always Wins" along with covers of country legends like Garth Brooks and George Strait. He even belted out a Taylor Swift to the delight of the audience.

Ruff thanked the dancers—which included several clients—for their enthusiastic dancing in front of the stage throughout the one and a half hour concert. The singer, who had performed during a special event at Stone Belt earlier this year, invited everyone to sing along with him. Sometimes, it was hard to hear him over the chorus of audience members singing along.

Funds raised by the show will be used to help Stone Belt improve the lives of those we support, including providing employment services and increased community involvement through volunteering and self-advocacy. Belt Out Loud! was sponsored by Old National Bank and IU Credit Union.

*Country musician Hank Ruff rocked the Buskirk-Chumley Theatre during the 2023 Belt Out Loud! Benefit Concert for Stone Belt.*

## 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](http://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](http://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

# Making a Difference. . .

By **Bitta DeWees**

***"We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in our hands to make a difference."***

– **Nelson Mandela**

All of you who work for Stone Belt make a difference every day:

- By choosing a job that empowers others to succeed
- By showing up for work every day
- By helping people to discover their hopes and dreams
- By teaching people the skills they need to reach their goals
- By supporting people to live their best lives

And people with disabilities make a difference every day:

- By being a part of the workforce and improving the community
- By volunteering with local organizations
- By producing medical products for Cook
- By creating art that opens minds and communicates new ideas
- By being good neighbors and friends

The people we support show the strengths, talents, kindness, and joy they bring to our shared community every day.

And people who support Stone Belt make a difference:

- By donating your resources
- By sharing your time and talents
- By attending events sponsored by Stone Belt
- By telling others what you appreciate about Stone Belt and the impact we make

And our Board of Directors makes a difference:

- By providing invaluable leadership
- By sharing so much of their time, knowledge, and resources
- By providing strategic direction
- By caring for this organization and all those who are part of Stone Belt

And advocates for people with disabilities make a difference. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of so many, we had a GREAT legislative session. The following information is a summary from The Arc of Indiana's priority bills signed into law by Governor Holcomb:

- House Enrolled Act 1342- Direct Support Professional training and registry
- House Enrolled Act 1160- Manufacturing Pilot Program for Hoosiers with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- House Enrolled Act 1591- Requires schools to discuss alternatives to guardianship, including Supported Decision Making, as a student approaches the age of 18
- House Enrolled Act 1454- Adjusts the age to acquire an ABLE Account from 26 to 46 and establishing a tax credit to incentivize employers to hire and retain Hoosiers with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- House Enrolled Act 1001- The state budget bill, which includes an increase for disability waivers and First Steps

So, I will close with a list of suggestions that make a difference each and every day. Together, let's commit to using some of these ideas and supporting each other.

- Praise someone
- Speak positively about yourself and others
- Spread kindness
- Foster awareness of the talents of everyone
- Make someone happy every day
- Lift people up
- Show appreciation to everyone
- Give people the benefit of the doubt
- Listen deeply
- Be there for others
- Ask people how they are doing

We are all capable of making a positive difference for those around us. Being kind and respectful can ripple out to inspire this behavior in others. It's important because this is how we create the positive change we want to see in our communities.

***"Be the change you want to see in the world."***

–**Mahatma Gandhi**

Best,



**Bitta DeWees**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

# Hoosiers for Good + Stone Belt = Big **FUN!**

Indiana University soccer players Brett Bebej and Maouloune Goumballe received a jubilant welcome from Team Stone Belt during a soccer clinic held on March 31 in Stone Belt's gymnasium at the 10th Street location in Bloomington. The soccer players shared a few of the game's fundamentals with some very excited participants who lined up and waited patiently for Bebej (defender) and Goumballe (forward) to share their soccer skills with them. Everyone was decked out in their Hoosier red to show their appreciation of IU Athletics.

After the clinic, Stone Belt's CEO, Bitta DeWees, took the athletes on a tour of the 10th Street facility while sharing information about the organization's history and mission. The players signed countless autographs for their fans and were given posters created especially for them to take home. Bebej and Goumballe were deeply touched by all the fanfare they received throughout the afternoon.

The two soccer players have teamed with Stone Belt through the "Hoosiers For Good" initiative. The unique initiative was established in March 2022 to raise awareness for charitable causes throughout Indiana—by partnering local charities with community-minded Hoosier student-athletes who choose to use their platform and influence to amplify the philanthropic work that helps our community thrive.

"Hoosiers For Good" allows IU student-athletes to benefit from the recently implemented name, image, and likeness (NIL) opportunities through collegiate sports in a way that allows them to use their time and talent to do good—and provides the athletes with mentorship experiences to become lifelong community-minded leaders.

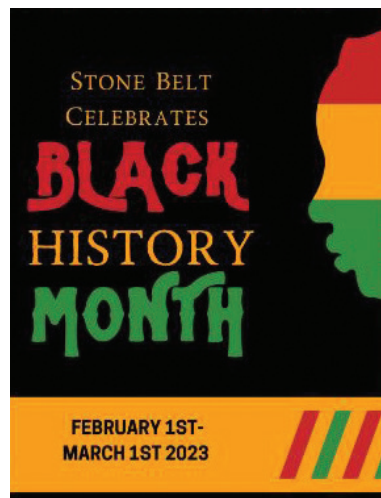
Stone Belt looks forward to working together with these talented athletes to support and empower people with developmental disabilities and their families in the future. Welcome to our team!



*Picture provided by Austin Schmidt with Hoosiers for Good—Maouloune Goumballe, IU Soccer player, assists Dennis Oakley during a soccer clinic held at Stone Belt in March.*

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion initiative

Stone Belt recently implemented a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative celebrating and honoring the differences among people, such as age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, values, and beliefs. Stone Belt is committed to growing as an organization, that is entirely equitable and inclusive.



In 2023, Stone Belt has celebrated National Black History Month, Women's History Month, Autism Acceptance Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, and PRIDE Month. A dedicated team of staff members, self-advocates, and directors leads the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative.

Through June, Employment Fundamentals and Residential programs learned about the history related to these movements and held inclusive gatherings celebrating cultural events like Cinco de Mayo in Bloomington, Bedford, and Columbus. Artists at Stone Belt even created artwork around the cultural heritage marked monthly.

The team is working on promoting the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in July, Hispanic Heritage Month in September, National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, and National Native American Heritage Month in November.

We recognize that our community is defined by more than disability. It is about all the identities that make us who we are. Everyone belongs. With their intersecting identities, all members of the disability community are valued, respected, and celebrated for who they are.

Stone Belt will continue to celebrate and honor the differences, alongside the similarities, among us.

# Why I Work at Stone Belt . . .

By Tamika Fair

I did not think so many people would remember me when I returned work at Stone Belt. I had began working at Stone Belt in 2016 and had to leave in 2020 due to COVID-19. I missed all my clients and co-workers, and I was afraid for them. I knew when this pandemic was over that I would return, but not seeing the same faces every day was hard for me.

When I returned to work and walked through the door at Stone Belt, the greeting and warmth of the clients' smiling faces when I saw them were amazing. A client I didn't have much contact with welcomed me by name, and I was almost in tears because when I was here in the past, he kept asking my name and telling me his. In training, Karen Freeman was so funny and warm, I felt a part of the atmosphere, and going into the halls, I felt like a celebrity. I was happy to see everyone. Thank you, everyone, for the warmest welcome. I'm so glad to be back.

*Direct Support Professional Tamika Fair poses with Cindy Anderson, a client she supported in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.*



## Create your legacy

With a bit of planning, you can cement your legacy with Stone Belt. Dedicated families and supporters have helped build and strengthen our mission since 1959. A planned gift is a beautiful way to create a lasting legacy at Stone Belt, an institution that matters to you. Preparing a well-considered estate plan will help you determine the best way to continue your support for Stone Belt but can also help avoid problems associated with the absence of an estate plan. There are many reasons why you might choose to include Stone Belt in your estate plan.

- 1) You value Stone Belt's work;
- 2) You are honoring a loved one who was cared for by or who worked for Stone Belt;
- 3) You want your money to go to a local organization;
- 4) You want to take advantage of tax benefits associated with charitable giving;
- 5) You want to ensure that Stone Belt can continue a particular service;
- 6) You know that Stone Belt is a well-established, well-run organization that will manage your gift wisely;
- 7) Your heirs are already taken care of, and the gift establishes a legacy of generosity and empathy;
- 8) You want your heirs to know how much you valued Stone Belt.

Want to learn more about how to start planning for the future? Contact Stone Belt's Director of Community Engagement Adam Hamel at [ahamel@stonebelt.org](mailto:ahamel@stonebelt.org) or via phone (812) 332-2815, ext. 269.

## 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](http://www.stonebelt.org/giving). If you have questions, please contact Adam Hamel, Director of Community Engagement via email [ahamel@stonebelt.org](mailto:ahamel@stonebelt.org) or phone (812) 332-2168, ext. 269.

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# Exciting opportunities abound in Columbus for Employment First programs

By *MaryEllen Noe, Director of Employment*

Employment Fundamentals in Columbus has been celebrating the warmer weather by taking strolls around the home of our program, the beautiful United Way campus, and the nearby Bartholomew County School Cooperation HQ, with fountains and blossoming trees. We've also been taking advantage of the free fixed transit system, ColumBUS. Participants are learning how to use the Mill Race Park hub to connect to points of interest in their city.

We've been taking full advantage of the Bartholomew County Public Library's adult activity schedule, which includes Gentle Yoga, Skill Builders, sensory observant films, and various types of music therapy. We have also been volunteering at agencies like the Humane Society, and we look forward to developing more volunteer opportunities in the future.

In our classrooms, we are enjoying the monthly "Tea with Bre" webcasts, where we gather one Friday afternoon a month to learn about employment possibilities while socializing with tea and popcorn. Our art program has enjoyed spring as a muse, and that expression can be seen throughout the building. Employment Fundamentals is a place where friends meet up every day.

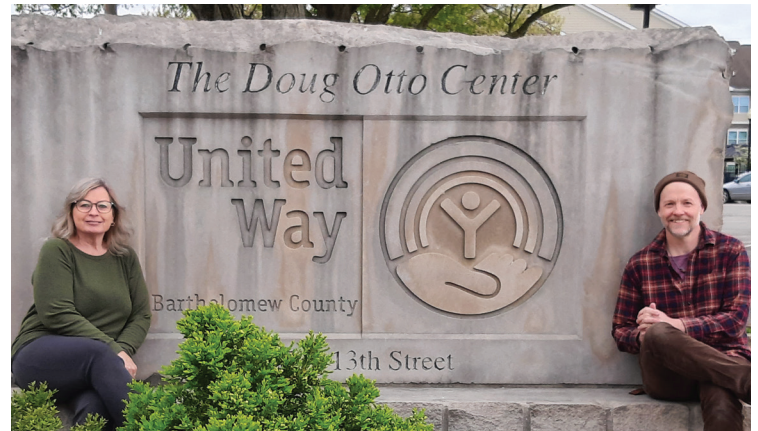


*Jason Harris enjoys working at Angottis Italian Restaurant in Columbus.*

Employment Fundamentals is undergoing some changes. As we leave the pandemic protocols behind and return to a community connections-focused schedule, we are presented with a new landscape with many new provider choices for our clients. As we continue to learn about ourselves and our strengths, we seek to refine our offered services with a keen eye on Stone Belt's mission to connect our clients and their families with the communities they live in.



*As part of his job, Kent Donathen looks through music CDs at Bartholomew County Public Library.*



*Eric Ford, Employment Fundamentals Senior Coordinator & Terri Roessing, Employment Coordinator pose for a photo in front of the United Way Building in Columbus.*

Stone Belt's Employment First team has broad experience developing new partnerships in the community. Terri Roessing, Employment Coordinator, will work with the office of Vocational Rehabilitation and handle all referrals for employment. Miranda Brandes, a registered behavior technician, is working with clients in Employment Services and Pre-ETS (Employment Transition Services). Jesse Derringer recently became an Employment Consultant. Jesse has been a staff member with Stone Belt Employment Fundamentals for the last four years making him familiar with services and clients.

# RSVP for Stone Belt's 2023 Annual Awards Celebration in September

Join Stone Belt as we recognize the extraordinary achievements and contributions of clients, community partners, staff, and volunteers at the 2023 Annual Awards Celebration.

Monday, Sept. 11, 5:30 to 8 p.m.  
Show up a little early to enjoy the Stone Belt gallery exhibit.

Monroe County Convention Center  
302 S. College Ave., Bloomington, IN

**RSVP**



*Award recipients from Stone Belt's 2022 Annual Awards Celebration pose for a photo during the event.*



Stone Belt Arc    @StoneBeltArc    812.332.2168

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