

touchstone

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

Employment is essential to all

According to an American Community Survey taken by the US Census Bureau in the last decade, there are 463,300 working-age Hoosiers with disabilities. The survey found that less than 40 percent of these individuals were employed. Stone Belt wants to change this statistic because we believe employment is an essential part of adult life. With that principle in mind, we are currently implementing an “*Employment First*” strategy throughout the organization.

What is *Employment First*?

Employment First is a belief that employment should be the first and preferred option in services for adults with disabilities. This belief also recognizes that all people are capable of working and contributing to their communities. Stone Belt is embracing this initiative and redefining all of our day services to have an employment first focus.

Tonya Vadivier, newly appointed Executive Employment First Director, has been instrumental in mapping out how to implement this strategy across all Stone Belt programs. Manufacturing and Lifelong Learning programs will begin implementing training that teaches pre-employment skills to clients. These will include basic daily living skills, advocacy skills, career exploration, work readiness skills, and hands-on work experiences.

Stone Belt’s Community Employment program will continue helping clients find jobs in the community and will share curriculum and knowledge with other programs. The long-term plan is to increase the number of clients referred to Community Employment from the other day programs.

Shifting the focus of Lifelong Learning and Manufacturing services will be a process that takes place over time. Stone Belt will work with clients to develop individualized plans focusing on the areas most important to them. We will also continue to work with staff to understand teaching and training and how almost any class or activity can have a work skills focus. We look forward to gathering ideas from both clients and staff on the best options and on ideas for how to move forward with this transformation.

Indiana’s *Employment First* initiative

The state of Indiana passed legislation regarding *Employment First* in 2017. The *Employment First Act* pertains to state agencies that provide services and support to help obtain employment for individuals with disabilities. The *Employment First Act* requires those agencies to effectively implement this policy to advance competitive, integrated employment outcomes, including self-employment, for individuals with disabilities of working age, regardless of the nature or severity of the individual’s disability. These state agencies must collaborate with other agencies in doing so, and share data and information to track progress where feasible.



Pre-Employment Training Students (Pre-ETS) wash a Rural Transit Bus during Career Exploration Week. Participation in Pre-ETS is a great opportunity to ensure students have access to meaningful career planning in order to help with the seamless movement from high school to employment or postsecondary training.

Employment First Goals & Strategies

- Collect data to benchmark current performance and measure progress
- Find and support employers to hire individuals with disabilities
- Promote effective school-to-career transitions
- Align government policies and funding to promote employment
- Develop quality employment services and supports for competitive, integrate employment
- Create high expectations and economic self-sufficiency among individuals with disabilities

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/>. Contact these individuals for concerns at the state level, such as funding for the direct support professional workforce.

In Washington:

To express your concerns about the changes in the Medicaid program or other federal issues, contact these federal 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

Preparing for the future

In July, Stone Belt started a new fiscal year and we also have a new strategic plan. As we carefully re-emerge out of the pandemic, we have set some new priorities for services and supports. I'd like to give you a quick overview of the highlights:

Stabilizing our workforce

As you know from reading our newsletter, staffing levels have been at crisis points for several years. COVID-19 has exacerbated that crisis in significant ways, creating more turnover, leaving more open positions, and putting pressure on remaining staff. All this impacts clients whose activities are sometimes limited and who continually lose the staff they had come to know and trust.

Fortunately, due to local and statewide advocacy efforts, we were successful in getting the Indiana General Assembly to approve rate increases for services in the state budget. This allowed us to increase salaries for staff that provide direct services in most of our programs. Along with the rate increases, we are working to improve the onboarding of staff and strengthening the skills of our supervisory staff.

We see good training as essential to improving the employment experience for the staff and the outcomes for those we serve. COVID-19 put limits on how we did our training and we look forward to returning to more in-person, in-depth training for all staff.

Employment First

As you'll read in this edition of *Touchstone*, Stone Belt is taking a proactive approach in helping those we support learn employment skills and gain integrated, competitive employment. Anticipating that Congress may phase out 14c regulations in our manufacturing program we want to provide smooth transitions and good outcomes for those currently working in the manufacturing program that may be affected. In this edition of *Touchstone*, you can learn more about Tonya Vandivier's vision as the newly appointed Executive Employment First Director.

The future of Milestones

We know Milestones provides critically needed services to people with developmental disabilities who need psychiatric and behavioral supports. Over this next year, we

will assess Milestones' role as a behavioral health provider and determine what changes, improvements, and possible expansion we should consider. This assessment and resulting recommendations of a dedicated task force will provide the vision for Milestones going forward.



CEO LESLIE GREEN

Strengthening our partnerships to serve more children and youth

Several of our programs serve young people, including the Milestones clinic, Recreation Therapy, Skills Development Services, and Pre-Employment Transition Services. We will be working with our partners such as the schools, down syndrome support groups, autism support groups, and others to make them more aware of the services and benefits Stone Belt offers to school-aged children. We have seen continual growth serving children and their families, but with increasing numbers of young people receiving Family Support Waivers, we know there are unmet needs for this population and we have the capacity to expand these services.

These are the main highlights of our Strategic Plan for FY 2022-2023. You can see the complete plan on our website at www.stonebelt.org/.

Please hold the evening of October 13 on your calendar for our annual celebration at the Starlite Drive-in. It's a great way to celebrate the wonderful accomplishments and contributions of clients, staff, and community partners. And there will be fireworks!

I hope you are all enjoying a great summer full of renewed opportunities to be with friends and loved ones. Thank you for your ongoing support. We couldn't have made it these past 18 months without you.

Warmest Regards,

Celebrating excellence at Stone Belt

Every day Stone Belt staff make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities through their dedication and vision. These five exemplary employees were recognized for going above and beyond during Stone Belt's *Awards for Excellence* ceremony on June 30 at the Switchyard Park Pavilion. Each recipient was recognized by their supervisor during the celebration and awarded a \$1,000 check.

2021 Awards for Excellence recipients

Kim Shepard, Recreational Therapist with Milestones

Stacy Holwager, House Manager with Supported Living in Columbus

Preston Hughes, Human Resources Manager

Brandy Quillen, Lifelong Learning Supervisor in Bedford

Daleno Cantrell, House Manager with Supported Group Living in Bloomington

Brandy Quillen, who has worked for Stone Belt for more than 27 years, delivered heart-felt remarks about what the last year has been like for clients and staff. She has graciously allowed Stone Belt to share her remarks with you.

By Brandy Quillen

It is such an honor to be nominated for this award after all of the challenges that we faced in the last year. Everything was unknown concerning the future of the virus, our health, and the health of our clients, family, and co-workers. Our jobs changed dramatically from where we worked to how we attempted to keep our clients and ourselves safe from illness.

We shut down our day program and sent everyone to our residential programs. We asked our staff to wear protective gear, sanitize, and practice social distancing. We looked different with all of our gear on and some of our clients thought we looked scary. We checked everyone's temperature and screened for signs of illness. We struggled to find Lysol, bleach, and toilet paper.

Our clients were unable to see their families or go out into their communities leading to increased anxiety issues and depression. However, our community in Lawrence County received support from sponsors with gifts



Brandy Quillen, one of the five Awards for Excellence recipients, is a fearless champion for everyone she works with and she makes sure everything runs smoothly for clients and staff at LARC.

and gift cards for meals and entertainment generously donated to our residential clients to brighten their days.

Our staff found themselves working to provide activities and a schedule to give a sense of normalcy and routine. And then the virus made its way into our residential programs and our clients and staff began to get sick, leading to quarantines, more staffing shortages, and even a few hospitalizations.

And yet, we had staff picking up extra shifts even while coworkers were beginning to test positive. We became very familiar with N-95's and full protective gear. We had staff willing to sit with positive clients at home and in the hospital. Our staff encouraged each other and our clients.

We were given the opportunity to spend quality time with our clients. We learned to slow down and appreciate the simple things. Most importantly, we got through this together. It took all of us with our different strengths and personalities. The planners, the health specialists, the good listeners, the fun-loving dancers, the bankers, the singers, the cleaners, the encouragers, the patient, the problem-solvers, and the compassionate.

I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to spend time in our residential programs during the closure and on a personal level to work with clients. I am thankful to be a part of Stone Belt. I can't imagine doing anything else.

SPONSORSHIP

Becoming a corporate partner is a premiere way to show support for people with disabilities and vital in helping Stone Belt staff and clients reach farther than resources allow. Contact Development Manager Adam Hamel at (812) 332-2168, ext. 269, or ahamel@stonebelt.org for more information.



THANK YOU DONORS

Stone Belt appreciates our donors (6/30/20-6/30/21) and their continued support. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy of this listing. If there is an omission, please accept our apology and contact Adam Hamel at ahamel@stonebelt.org or at (812) 332-2168 ext. 269.

Cornerstone Society \$10,000 - \$24,999

Jonathan, Carol-Anne & Don Hossler, Lilly Endowment, Smithville Charitable Foundation

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CFC Properties, Inc., Hylant Group, IU Credit Union, Jim & Mary Kenny, Randall & Rae Kirk, Old National Bank, Donald & Carolyn Snyder, Janell & Pete Yonkman

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

Lisa Baker, DDS., Malcolm Brown, Community Foundation of Bloomington & Monroe County, Crowder's Institutional Pharmacy, Jim & Joyce Grandorf, Bill & Mary Ann Maxwell

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

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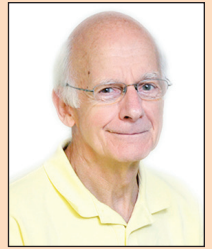
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Why I give...

By Mike Horvath

For 43 years, I have had the opportunity to watch Stone Belt evolve and grow. When I began working with the Monroe County Community School Corporation, public school classrooms for students with substantial disabilities were at Stone Belt because it was thought a separate classroom was the most appropriate environment for students with milder disabilities.



MIKE HORVATH

Thankfully, times changed. Professionals recognized that a more inclusive approach for teaching and training children and adults with disabilities was more effective, normal, and humane.

Stone Belt has made inclusion its 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 people with developmental disabilities and their families to participate fully in the life of the community."

This has not been an easy journey, but Stone Belt has maintained its focus and made determined efforts to provide services that accomplish this mission.

Throughout all these years, it has been rewarding to watch Stone Belt's clients become more and more included in the community. From clients being valued employees at such businesses as Cook, Upland, and the Monroe County Clerk's Office, to clients living independently throughout the community, to clients performing at *I Am You*, to the mental health services provided at Milestones, to the important work DSPs do to support the clients, Stone Belt is woven into the cloth of the community.

All these efforts need visionary, hardworking staff and leadership. All of this requires and deserves support.

Thus, I give.

Resuming face-to-face connections

Milestones is a busy place this summer as we continue to see service provision moving back toward pre-pandemic levels. The majority of our appointments are in person at this time, and our goal is to have everyone back in person unless a client's specific situation is best handled virtually. The State of Indiana has continued that ability for licensed therapists, and we will continue to monitor state guidelines. The best part of all of this is being able to see more people in the building, moving through the hallways, and resuming that human connection.

Milestones Recreational Therapy continues to grow. I would like to congratulate Recreational Therapist Kim Shepherd for receiving Stone Belt's Award of Excellence for her commitment to her clients and team. Kim serves as a role model and this type of commitment is essential in building these new programs.

In other growth news, the Skills Development program is in high demand in all three of the counties (Bartholomew, Lawrence and Monroe) we serve. We have been able to hire staff from within the agency to fill positions within the Skills Development program. These individuals are bringing valuable experiences to the positions and it is wonderful to be able to support their career goals while keeping them within the organization. We welcome these new clinicians to our program.

In the Milestones clinic, our therapists and Nurse Practitioner remain extremely busy with waiting lists for all services. This is indicative of what we see around the country as mental health needs have become more prominent over the past year. We will continue to work through these lists, and connect to other community resources as appropriate, to help those in need.



Julie Miller
Milestones Director

Healthy Relationships Group

As face-to-face activities resume, Milestones is offering more support to groups we have worked with in the past. Starting in August we will be working with a Healthy Relationships group. This group is led by two of our therapists, Leah Walden, LCSW, and Sierra Hofmann, LMFTA. Both Leah and Sierra have experience working with individuals with disabilities and feel strongly that this curriculum is a vital component of learning for our clients.

Healthy Relationships is divided into two parts with a one-week break between sessions. Individuals may choose to participate in one or both sessions of this group. The first course will cover topics such as types of relationships, boundaries, appropriate touch, and consent. The second half focuses on hygiene, communication, sexual abuse, and safety.

In the past, these topics have been considered taboo among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We now know the importance of everyone



understanding what a healthy relationship looks like, whether it be friendships or romantic relationships. Knowledge of boundaries supports the goal of keeping everyone safe while allowing individuals to make choices in their relationships and daily interactions.

Empowering individuals to explore these topics with support is a valuable opportunity. Another section of this group will be offered later in the year for those that want to continue the discussions and explore further information. Please feel free to reach out to Leah Walden/lwalden@stonebelt.org or Sierra Hofmann/shofmann@stonebelt.org if you know someone who would benefit from this opportunity.



Robbie Denning, Milestones Recreational Therapist Kim Shepard, and Associate Director of Milestones Mari Shawcroft at the 2021 Awards for Excellence luncheon where Kim received an Award for Excellence.

HAPPY RETIREMENT



Stone Belt thanks Director of Lifelong Learning programs Susan Russ for all of her contributions over the last 27 years. Susan has worn many hats during her tenure with Stone Belt including coordinating marketing efforts for the Supported Employment Division, as well as, leading the employment training program. She also held the position of Region Director where she provided services to persons with disabilities in their homes and at Stone Belt's day program facilities.

Susan has been a national surveyor of agencies, like Stone Belt, through the Council on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). In this role she provided consultative feedback and assessment based on the standards established by CARF. Susan has been a passionate advocate for people with disabilities in communities and will continue serving Stone Belt on a part-time basis as a training consultant working with supervisors.

We wish Susan all the best in her retirement!



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