Stone Belt

touchstone

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



In 2020, our community learned how essential Stone Belt workers are to manufacturing and service industries. Despite a statewide shutdown, Stone Belt's Manufacturing department not only stayed open but it also produced a record number of items for Cook Medical in Bloomington and continued producing a variety of items at LARC in Bedford.

In order to continue production, Stone Belt's Manufacturing department quickly sprang into action last March. Manufacturing staff was deployed from Bedford to Bloomington, temporary employees were hired, and internal personnel was recruited to meet production demand. As

days led to weeks and weeks led to months, it became apparent Stone Belt needed its manufacturing team to return to work. A plan was conceived to determine those client workers who could function in an environment set up to keep everyone safe. This meant demonstrating an ability to wear a mask, staying at least six feet apart from others, and practicing universal virus prevention.

Rhonda Duzan, one of the first to return, was so happy to come back to work. Duzan, like many people, needed money to pay her bills. Plus, she missed seeing her friends. Joe Tamewitz, another manufacturing worker was also happy to come back and said he hopes Stone Belt's Manufacturing department never closes again.

Also, throughout the community, thanks to Stone Belt's essential employees several local businesses including grocery stores and restaurants stayed open during a time when the rest of the state, and country, was closed for business.

2020 Production totals

Bloomington Workshop

●Cook Medical...... 5,626,415

Bedford LARC Workshop

●Catalent Pharma

Solutions...... 17.517

General Services

Adminstration...... 75 tool belts

●K & K Sales 14,955

●Lee Valley Tools...... 4,380

Oliver Winery 304

●Printpack 652,127

Rockler & Hardware

Distributors 7,324

The Deer Cage

Company...... 1,206

Bedford TOTAL 697,888



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.
 qov/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

We need your voice. Now more than ever.

By LESLIE GREEN

I would really like to quit writing to you about COVID-19. Perhaps that will be possible in the next few months. Right now we are still challenged every day with the impact the virus has on our mission, people, and operations; but we can see better days ahead.

While we went for several months without COVID-19 infections of people we support or their staff, by October we began to see multiple people test positive. As goes the nation and Indiana, unfortunately, so goes Stone Belt. We are relieved that no one has become seriously ill so far and we hope this remains the case going forward. We still are taking every precaution to prevent infection including closure of our Lifelong Learning programs and reducing exposure for clients in public places. Some services are on "hybrid" status, much like the schools, with sessions being in person where safe, but also on-line when it is needed.

There is good news though. Stone Belt employees that have direct contact with people we support

qualify as health care workers and have been in the first priority group to get the vaccine. Many employees have taken this opportunity that will move us more quickly to "post-COVID" status. Furthermore, with the state's support, we have plans to set up a vaccine clinic for residential clients and hopefully for those living at home at a later date. So we have good reason for hope.

We are pleased, and not surprised to say that so many staff members have

risen to the challenge in recent weeks and months. As people have become ill, front-line DSPs and others have willingly continued to offer comfort and support to those clients, because of the bonds they

have. However, due to numerous staff illnesses on top of our pre-pandemic DSP staffing crisis, our ranks are stretched thin. This puts extra stress on everyone from direct support professionals, to their managers and coordinators, to their program



CEO LESLIE GREEN

directors, and to the administrative staff that support operations. Still, people have pulled together as a team to make sure clients get the best possible care even in extremely stressful situations. I'm proud of the way Stone Belt has responded to one of the biggest challenges in our 62 year history.

Since this pandemic has exacerbated the DSP workforce crisis, it is even more important that we urge our state legislators to support higher wages for this vital workforce. The General Assembly is in

session at the Statehouse right now and they need to hear from you. Please take a few moments to let your legislators know that Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) make a world of difference to individuals with developmental disabilities and it's time their pay reflected the important role they play. Go to stonebelt.org and click on the advocacy tab to find your state legislator.

I hope all of you are doing well amidst this pandemic. Your support through the past eleven months (yes, it's been that long!) has buoyed our

resolve to face forward through the challenges and make it to a brighter day.

With appreciation,

Jesti Grecer

Spiritual Services featured in magazine

An article written by Stone Belt's Spiritual Services Coordinator Sarah McKenney, in coordination with Presbyterians for Disability Concerns, was published in the Janaury issue of *Presbyterian Today*. McKenney is a minister in the PC(USA). An excerpt from the article is republished with the permission of *Presbyterians Today*. The entire article can be found at https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/pt-0121-beloved/.

Building a Better CommunityBy Sarah McKenney

Is your digital ministry leaving out people with disabilities? How to welcome all into the 21st-century church

Here are some interesting statistics that you might not know: In 2018, a Centers for Disease Control report revealed that one in

four U.S. adults — 61 million — had a disability. According to the Collaborative on Faith and Disability, 84% of people with disabilities claim a faith tradition that is important to them. Yet, only 10% of faith communities do any congregation-wide disability awareness. This was before the pandemic. Now in a time of digital worship, Bible studies and meetings, being part of a faith community can be more challenging for those living with a disability.



While in theory, technology provides a more accessible way to tune in to worship for some with disabilities, the theory falls short in practice



for various reasons. Many people with disabilities are working hard to pay their rent and medical bills, and don't necessarily have enough money left over for the tools they need to worship digitally, such as a computer, tablet or cellphone. Some who do can't afford internet service.

Then there are the shortcomings of the actual technology itself. People who are blind, for example, rely on good audio and links and websites that are accessible with a screen reader.

What Mikaela Coppedge from First Presbyterian Church in Bloomington, Indiana, misses about not being able to attend church physically is the opportunity she had to share her gifts by assisting with the church's coffee cart. "We would sell fair-trade hot chocolate, coffee, tea and chocolate. It made me feel like I'm part of the team, because I got to help people and then I got to see their smiling faces. I felt good knowing I was helping out the farmers," said Coppedge, who lives in a group home that has had to follow strict policies to protect the health and safety of Coppedge and her housemates. Her congregation, though, has found ways to include her on Sunday mornings by inviting her to be a liturgist and integrating a recording of her reading Scripture into the digital worship service. Coppedge has taken it upon herself to



SPIRITUAL SERVICES COORDINATOR SARAH MCKENNEY

minister to others by calling church members to "check in on people to see how they are doing."

All churches have a "Mikaela Coppedge" in them — people with gifts who are not given the space to use them, especially those with disabilities.

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 info on becoming a corporate sponsor, visit www.stonebelt.org/giving. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Development Manager Adam Hamel at (812) 332-2168, ext. 269, or ahamel@stonebelt.org.



















THANK YOU DONORS

Stone Belt appreciates our generous donors (January 1, 2020, to January 1, 2021) 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 (812) 332-2168 ext. 269 or ahamel@stonebelt.org.

Cornerstone Society (\$10,000.00 - \$24,999.00)

Carol-Anne, Don & Jonathan Hossler, Lilly Endowment, Smithville Charitable Foundation, United Way of Bloomington & Monroe County

Pillar Society (\$5,000.00 - 9,999.00)

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Limestone Society (\$2,500.00 - \$4,999.00)

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Why I Give...

By BRAD GALIN

Ten Years!

Ten years is a long time to spend working in one place. Yet, I know that ten years is only a fraction of the time that so many at Stone Belt give as they serve the south-central Indiana community. The amount of good that I was able to personally be a small part of during my time as the Director of Human Resources for Stone Belt remains a source of pride and happiness for me and I am glad to be able to provide support now, even living 300 miles away in another state.

Of course, in ten years, it is the relationships with people that make a significant impact. Thinking about the staff and clients who became, and remain, friends is enough to always bring a smile to my face. Whether it's Adam or Dennis, Betsy or Leslie, or Crystal or Ilese, I can always reflect on positive experiences and so many of these experiences require support beyond what state and federal dollars can provide.

The work and creativity that are encouraged, displayed and embraced are elements worthy of our support. Often, we take for granted the ability to live, work, and play in our communities. As the current pandemic continues, it has become more essential than ever that we empower and support everyone in being able to do things that make life worth living. Building relationships, making an impact, and expressing our talents are all important to support however we can. I give because Stone Belt allows so many to do so much.

As my ten years directly working for Stone Belt becomes a more distant memory, I am so honored to continue my relationship with the organization differently so that this organization can continue to positively impact not only those it directly serves but the larger community, for years to come.



a division of Stone Belt

Staying connected with clients during COVID-19

Milestones continues making changes based on current pandemic data and client needs. Many of our services are currently taking place virtually, but that can present a variety of challenges. Some individuals have difficulty reading social cues, which can be exacerbated in online

platforms where you only see a face. And often on a very small screen important details can be minimized. It can also be difficult to look at our own image on the screen. If someone has issues with selfesteem or self-acceptance, seeing their own image for an extended period of time can increase self-doubts and lack of confidence. Another major issue many of our clinicians face is clients being distracted by things going on around them. Many people did not have a private area set up for video calling when the pandemic started, and still don't. There can be siblings, pets, housemates, etc. coming into what should



Julie Miller Milestones Director

be a private therapy space. This makes it very challenging to have an open and honest discussion during sessions. We continue to try to support our clinicians as much as possible and provide resources for ongoing services during these challenging times.



Stone Belt staff have begun receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Earlier this month, we received much-awaited news that the COVID-19 vaccine is now available to those working in a health care setting who have direct face-toface interaction with clients. Many of our staff at Milestones have taken advantage of this opportunity to keep themselves safe as well as the clients we serve. Our staff should receive their second round of vaccines starting the first week of February, and we will continue to follow guidelines set by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to ensure appropriate precautions are taken even after staff has received the vaccine.

Milestones nurses keep staff and clients safe

Milestones employs six full-time nurses that work with our residential clients in a variety of settings. Since the pandemic began they have worked tirelessly to help ensure the safety of staff and clients including setting up a Recovery Suite, under the guidance of Nurse Coordinator Khalil Stewart, at Stone Belt's 10th street location. They have trained staff on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), helped with the monitoring of symptoms for clients, and provided guidance for staff across the agency in keeping up with the latest information on COVID-19. In January, we began receiving rapid COVID-19 tests that our nurses can now administer to symptomatic clients and staff. This helps our agency in two major ways. First, it allows guicker testing, keeping both clients and staff safe and guiding us to the appropriate time to isolate, guarantine, and adjust staffing. Secondly, rapid testing allows us to keep staff working, when it is safe to do so.



Milestones nursing staff have worked tirelessly since the beginning of the pandemic to keep clients and staff healthy and safe.

Many of you have heard of the staff crisis in programs like ours across the country. These have become more severe in recent months, and by testing more quickly, we can identify which staff are safe to be in the workplace sooner than we were before.

We are fortunate to have these nurses working so diligently to keep everyone safe during the most difficult circumstances we have ever encounterd. A huge thank you to all of them for their compassion, dedication, and determination to defeat the coronavirus.

Happy Retirement



After 12 years with Stone Belt Employment Services, John Hanlon is retiring. We wish him the best of luck in retirement.

John Hanlon recently retired from Stone Belt's Employment Services. During his 12 years with Stone Belt, Hanlon placed more than 100 clients in community jobs. Hanlon believed strongly in Stone Belt's mission of preparing, empowering, and supporting persons with developmental disabilities

As a former business owner, Hanlon utilized those connections to find employment opportunities for Stone Belt clients. Hanlon was able to recognize an individual's strengths and worked diligently to find a position utilizing these abilities. Hanlon placed clients at Bloomington Ford, Catalent, Cook Medical, Master Rental, Monroe Hospital, Smithville Communications, Stahl Furniture, and Tasus. These jobs ranged from part-time to full-time jobs with benefits.

Hanlon was dedicated to supporting not only clients but employers as well. He was a team player, mentoring 78 employment consultants during his time with Stone Belt. Hanlon was also actively involved in the Project SEARCH program, providing the training necessary for them to begin their eight-week internships with Cook Medical. During Hanlon's time with Employment Services, he was involved in 14 classes of Project SEARCH, coaching 126 interns in various positions at Cook. On behalf of the many lives he touched, Stone Belt thanks John Hanlon for his services and wishes him the best of luck in retirement.



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www.stonebelt.org











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