



**THANK YOU!**

*U.S. Senate Resolution highlights service of direct support workforce the week of September 14*

In recognition of the hard work, dedication, and commitment of this crucial workforce, the U.S. Senate has passed a resolution recognizing the service of direct support employees across the United States. At Ability Beyond Disability, we want to take this opportunity to thank you for the positive impact you have in the lives of the individuals we serve each and every day. Having a nationally recognized week to celebrate the direct support professional is a positive step in spreading the message to the greater community and our decision makers on each level of government about the critical importance of this workforce.

Our organization strives to recognize our workforce throughout the year and to continue to develop and implement workforce initiatives that will support, encourage, engage and promote long and successful careers for our employees. We thank you and honor you for the work you do each day.

**New education program for Employees!**

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new partnership with Post University! As a new participant in Post University's Partners in Education Program, we will be able to offer our employees and their families access to quality higher education at a reduced tuition rate.

Employees of Ability Beyond Disability will be able to earn an associate's, bachelor's or master's degree by enrolling in one of Post University's Accelerated Degree Programs at a 10% discount off of the regular tuition rates. This discounted tuition rate will also be offered to immediate family members of Ability Beyond Disability employees.

Additionally, all eligible full-time employees are entitled to utilize our Tuition Reimbursement benefit, which offers a 50% reimbursement on tuition costs, up to \$1500 per calendar year.

"Workforce Development is always working to identify opportunities for our employees to develop their careers and further their education," said Rebecca Cosgrove, Workforce Development Supervisor. "This program is just another way that we can help encourage our employees in their educational pursuits which will help them to advance their careers."

Employees will have the option of taking courses at one of the university's regional

**BRAVO!**

Some noteworthy happenings at Ability Beyond Disability

The Access and Sensory Day programs in NY received a cite free inspection from OMRDD in June! The inspectors noted 6 good practices on their exit conference form. Great job, keep up the good work!

North Pleasant Rise achieved its 3rd consecutive cite free ICF inspection in June! The house staff was complimented for their impeccable care and approach with consumers. Way to go!

The Service Coordinators in NY received a cite free and recommendation free OMRDD audit back in June. Congratulations on a job well done!

Carpenter Ave. received a great OMRDD recertification audit in June. The auditors were pleased with the interactions between the consumers and staff and how much the consumers enjoyed their living arrangements provided by the agency. Great job to all involved!

Ridge Road completed a cite free ICF inspection in July! During the observation one of the inspectors noted that, "As far as group homes go, it doesn't get any better than this!" Congratulations to the entire team!

Nelly Sanchez and Florence Harding from Millington were featured in Med World Pharmacy's July newsletter because of their devotion to the medical needs of the home. They were applauded for their kindness and dedication to the residents, their families and fellow staff members. Congrats and keep up the good work!

locations or completely online. They can earn a master's degree in as little as 14 months, and a bachelor's degree in as little as 18 months. Ability Beyond Disability Employees will also receive college credit for select, pre-approved internal in-service trainings, as well as for courses taken at other accredited colleges or universities.

"We are delighted to offer this partnership to our employees and will continue to work towards identifying similar opportunities in Connecticut and New York," said Cosgrove.

For more information please contact Rebecca Cosgrove at (203) 826-3065

**Upcoming Pathways to Excellence program dates**

For more info contact Tania Ferraz at x3064

**November 2009 Program**

- Accepting Applications Starting: 9/14/2009
- Application Deadline: 10/16/2009
- Program Start Date: 11/12/2009  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Graduation Date: 4/21/2010  
3:30 – 4:30 pm

- **February 2010 Program**
- Accepting Applications Starting: 1/5/2010
- Application Deadline: 1/29/2010
- Program Start Date: 2/24/2010  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm
- Graduation Date: 7/28/2010  
3:30 – 4:30 pm



**SMASH THE ASH!**

Ability Beyond Disability is committed to creating a healthy environment for you, our employees, as well as our consumers and visitors. We want to lead by example and be the model of wellness and healthy living in our communities. Therefore, Ability Beyond Disability campuses in Bethel and Mount Kisco will become "Smoke Free" as of November 19, 2009. This means there will be no smoking permitted on any of our Leir, Park Lawn, or Kisco Avenue properties. Smoking cessation can be difficult and most people try many times before succeeding. Recent evidence shows that combining multiple methods leads to the best chance of success. Over the course of the next couple of months, we will be providing tools along with our insurance partner CIGNA to assist you with quitting smoking. There is no time like the present!

**Inside This Issue**

2

Vision 2013 update  
Family Giving Circle

3

Injury prevention success  
National Suit Drive

4

**BRAVO!**  
Pathways to Excellence dates

**Upcoming Events!**

9/18

LUAU!

Teddy's Nightclub, 5-9PM

10/21-10/23

Disability Mentoring Days

10/22

Hoops for Hope

Danbury High School, 7PM

10/29

Celebration of Ability

PBG Headquarters, 7:30PM

Please visit  
[www.abilitybeyonddisability.org](http://www.abilitybeyonddisability.org)  
for more information



**"If you could see what I see" -written by Tricia Gressel**

These words mean a great deal to Ed Cannistra a brain injury survivor who recently published a book of poems. The name of the book is extremely significant to Ed who became blind due to a car accident. Ed lives at home with his mother and attends our ACCESS day program in Mt. Kisco. Ed created these poems after his injury and works on a voice activated computer at home. His goal is to sell his book in order to buy a voice activated computer program that he can use during the day at Access. The book includes his artwork which he designed as a child. Ed worked on this book with the assistance of his mother Jean Cannistra and graphic artist Hillary Popp. The book has been Ed's dream and he is very happy that it has come to fruition. The book is full of wonderful thoughts, humor and sensitive topics. It captures the essence of Ed who is an extremely friendly, happy man and one of the most courageous people I have come to know.

Over the past 10 years I have worked as Ed's Service Coordinator. His main goal has been to help keep other people safe. Ed was the victim of a car accident at the age of 15. He was the passenger in the car and his friend at the time, was a reckless driver behind the wheel. Ed suffered severe injuries, was in a coma for months, and attended rehabilitation facilities for several years. Ed regained the use of his legs but walks with a limp and is deaf in one ear. He has muscle weakness in his left lower and upper extremities and suffers from short term memory loss. Ed requested going to local schools to speak to people about his injury. He wanted to tell teenagers what happened to him in his own words because he didn't want the same thing to happen to anyone else. Ed felt that if he could prevent one kid from having an injury he would be doing something worthwhile. Ed has been going to the schools with me to work on this goal for the past 6 years. He receives countless letters from kids thanking him for his efforts to teach them how to be safe. He is an excellent presenter and speaks from his heart. His honesty and strength also teach the kids about all the obstacles he has had to overcome. It gives them a renewed respect for their lives and makes them feel thankful for what they have.

I wanted to publish this article because I felt that Ed's selfless deeds should be recognized. He deserves to be known an incredible human being and someone that I am very proud to work with.

Ed will be 41 years old this month. Happy Birthday to you Ed!

If you would like to purchase one of Ed's books please contact Virginia Kearns at x2324.

## Look Who's Joined Our Team

### Ability Beyond Disability would like to welcome new additions to our team for August:

Ashley, Angela, Ast Res & Svc Coord  
Bradshaw, Sharon M, LSI  
Bravo, Erica G., LSI  
Brown, Amanda R., LSI  
Brown, Glenna E., Emp Specialist I  
Clarke, Jessica L., LSI  
DaCosta, Cynthia A., LSI  
DeFreitas, Jason Jerry, LSI  
Dube, Mary, LSI  
Lede, Kristin A., LSI  
Light, Carolyn A., LSI  
Moore, Dwayne T., Emp Specialist I  
Mullaney, Alisha M., LSI  
Oliveira, Quirino D., LSI  
Porter, Ashley Ann, LSI  
Roscoe, Dennis M., LSI  
Sant'Ana, Ann, LSI  
Shaw, Chantel R., LSI  
Smalls, Angela, LSI  
Sterling, Simone L., LSI  
Stokes, Tyrone E., LSI  
Thurlow, Abigail E., LSI  
Tompkins, Adrienne Nicole, LSI  
Vilamarim, Tina L., LSI  
Young, Crystal, LSI  
Young, Jacqueline R., LSI  
Zoller, David A., LSI

*With diverse backgrounds (including many in the human services field), all of our new hires will be great additions to our organization!*

*If you would like to submit a story for consideration in Connections, please contact Danielle Hundt at x3178 or dhundt@abilitybeyonddisability.org*

## Vision 2013...

### Ensuring a successful future for our consumers, families and employees

*Through Vision 2013 Ability Beyond Disability is committed to doubling the number of people it serves by growing existing services and pursuing much-needed specialty services. We will develop facilities designed to meet the special needs of aging adults with disabilities, expand our employment and supported living services and add additional service sites for young adults and youth with disabilities. In addition to growth in services areas, Vision 2013 focuses on strengthening and expanding our workforce, implementing new technologies and financing our future through diversified funding. Vision 2013 is our answer to the challenges that lie ahead in serving people with disabilities.*

#### The Future Starts Now:

- We must continue to balance our commitment to quality services today with the commitment to invest in our future; ensuring that we are able to help those we serve today, and that we will be around to help those who will turn to us tomorrow.
- We must continue to grow and find innovative new approaches to providing services to increase and diversify our funding sources as public funding lessens.
- Service expansion not only meets the needs of more consumers, but it also generates new revenue to help support existing services.
- Vision 2013 will not only help us to survive...but to thrive!

We remain absolutely committed to the goals of Vision 2013 and to the future of our consumers, families and employees... but we cannot ignore that the current economic climate has posed additional challenges to our implementation plan. A leadership retreat of executive management, the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees has been scheduled for later this month to help determine our plans of action so that we can continue to achieve the goals of our Vision 2013.



## Introducing the Family Giving Circle

The Development Department has launched a new family fundraising initiative called the "Family Giving Circle". It has already seen great success and enthusiasm from our families as many have jumped on board!

As an organization that was created by family members we feel strongly that our families will continue to play a key role in our organization. Because of that, the Development Department is asking all of our families to reach out to their family members and close friends to form their own "Family Giving Circle".

Each circle consists of a minimum of 5 members and each member agrees to a tax deductible donation of at least \$10 per month for an initial period of 12 months. That's a minimum of \$600 per year per circle to support Ability Beyond Disability!

*If you or a family member you know would like more information please contact Mark Marsh at: (203) 826-3173 or mmarsh@abilitybeyonddisability.org*

## FY 2009 - year in review

Together we accomplished the following towards the goals of Vision 2013:

- Achieved significant growth in SIL and Employment Services
- Held our first National Disability Mentoring Day celebration – creating awareness about employment opportunities for people with disabilities and building community support
- Expanded DMHAS residential services and opened 2 new DCF homes - diversifying our funding sources
- Received approval for NY aging project and 2 other homes are scheduled to open in early FY10
- IT strategic plan was developed with 4 major areas that are key to supporting our growth
- Placed an emphasis on communicating with our employees - improvements in employee communication will be implemented throughout FY10
- Extended our services through the launch of "Growing Possibilities"

## Friendships grown from a garden

by Juliana Cecera



*"I walk with my mom a lot around town and we always pass by the Ability Beyond Disability house on Blackman Ave. I noticed that the house was gorgeous but the yard did not compliment the house well. When I decided to do the Girl Scout Silver Award, I struggled on finding a project that would meet the criteria and that I would enjoy doing as well. My dad started to work for Ability Beyond Disability and told me many touching stories about the people he works with there. This gave me the idea that maybe I might want to work with them too! I had seen the residents of Blackman Ave. many times around town on walks or car rides, so I recognized some but did not actually know them. Ever since I was a little girl I always dreamed of having a garden and actually keeping it alive, since I don't really have a green thumb! This was the opportunity I needed to learn how to garden and to get to know the residents of Blackman Ave. better. Two of my goals could be achieved with this one project and I had fun while doing it! Now I can say 'hi' to Jimmy or Perin when I see them in town and I can stop by with my dog to talk to Frannie or Pete anytime since we have gotten to know each other."*

-Juliana

Juliana lives in the same neighborhood as the consumers at Blackman Ave. in Connecticut. She recently planted a beautiful garden at the home as a service project for her Girl Scout Silver Award - and to her delight - even made some new friends.



*Pete, Juliana, Frannie and fellow Girl Scout, Amanda*

## National Suit Drive!

Ability Beyond Disability has teamed up with Men's Wearhouse throughout the month of September to help collect thousands of articles of professional attire to help as part of the 2nd Annual National Suit Drive. The items that are collected will help those consumers who receive vocational supports to have the clothes they need to make a lasting impression during job interviews.

Men's Wearhouse will accept donations of gently used suits, dress shirts, sport coats, slacks, ties, belts and shoes for Ability Beyond Disability at their location in the Danbury Fair Mall in Danbury, CT throughout the month.

**On Thursday, September 17th some of the Career Development staff will be at the store promoting the drive and accepting donations for Ability Beyond Disability from 12-5pm. Stop by - and if you have any of the above items, please bring them with you! The store will offer a discount to all those who donate.**

## Injury prevention a success!

Since 2007 we have been collaborating with our workers compensation carrier, Liberty Mutual, to reduce the number of behavior related injuries sustained by direct care employees.

A group of Ability Beyond Disability employees, representatives from our insurance broker, Rose and Kiernan, and representatives from Liberty Mutual have been working hard to create a system that will better help us to understand, track and prevent such incidents.

Two years later we are happy to report that the program has been a total success! The number of behavior related incidents has decreased drastically – so much that it even lowered our insurance premium.

Final reports will be presented to all of the participating programs and displays highlighting the report findings will be placed at Leir, Park Lawn and Mt. Kisco by the end of this month.

To learn more about our success in a field that has continuously stumped providers around the country please visit: [www.abilitybeyonddisability.org](http://www.abilitybeyonddisability.org)

## Anniversaries

Thomas H. Fanning	35
Susan Ackell	25
Elizabeth Baumgarten	22
Debra Schiavo	17
Sue Doiron	17
Fred Randall	15
Frances Ferrusi	13
Tania Jimenez	12
Radames Velez Jr.	11
Monica Masesa	11
Peter Lane	10
Mary Ellen Lydem	10
Cynthia Vogel	10
Edwin Cruz	10
Joann Robinson	8
Jennifer Smith	8
Thomas Mboya	7
Kathleen Travis	7
Cari Garnette Lee	6
Vincent Smeragulio	6
Wandalynn Short	5
Husam Odeh	5
Alanna Licursi	5
Aaron Mirochine	5
Sonya Whitfield	5
Robin Westby	4
Vincent Carmignani	4
Tabbatha Rivers	4
Krystle Gaudiosi	4
Tania Ferraz	4
Shaileen Brighton-Ortiz	4
Lorna Samuelson	3
Jacqueline Reina	3
Barbara McBride	3
Claire Van Valen	3
Tonya Greene	2
Amanda Ho-Gutierrez	2
Kathy Hofler-Davis	2
LySandra LeSane	2
Jessica McCavanagh	2
Raymund Bautista	2
Ronald Consigli	1
Cheryl Therrien	1
Anthony Cecera	1
Adrian Ramirez	1
Christopher Norlander	1
Quineshia Brown	1
Julian Centeno	1
Sandra Ribeiro	1
Jennifer Santiago	1