



# connections

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[www.abilitybeyonddisability.org](http://www.abilitybeyonddisability.org)

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## How Ability Beyond Disability Weathered The Storm

At Ability Beyond Disability we stand together in the face of inconveniences and misfortunes. When the majority of our group homes and SIL locations lost power due to the end-of-October storm employees across the organization came together to coordinate care and shelter for the people we serve.

Over thirty group homes and SIL locations had to find shelter and many relocated to Hotels. Because 1.7 million people in the Northeast were also without power, the hotels close to the areas we serve were full, causing consumers and staff to stay at hotels up to 50 miles away!



### There's No Place Like Home

After spending a few days at staff member's houses, the men of Ritch Dr. spent close to four days in Rm. 123 of the Connecticut Leir Pavillion. As one would imagine, this posed many inconveniences. They slept on air mattresses and showered at nearby group homes. Meals were eaten out or pre-cooked.

Individuals with a traumatic brain injury or a developmental disability often learn from and find comfort in routine. Matthew Hossan, RC of Ritch Dr. says, "The guys at my group home are TBI for the most part, and due to that, routines really help with their memory deficits. Being completely out of their routines was difficult for them." For this reason, Ability Beyond Disability homes serve as more than just a place to stay but are a place where individuals can learn, grow, and feel safe.

Similarly, consumers who call Dodgingtown their home felt discomfort and inconveniences when they lost power and had to stay at a hotel. Although their stay was only for one night, these men and women found it difficult to be outside of their routine and discomfort over staying in an unfamiliar place. One woman even refused to sleep in the hotel bed!

Electricity is essential for the men and women who live at Dodgingtown due to their medical needs. For example, one man uses an oxygen concentrator which most effectively runs on electricity. Many of the Dodgingtown residents have motion sensor alarms on their beds to ensure safety but allow privacy during the night—these had to stay at home as well. Staying in a hotel created difficulty in completing personal care activities because the showers and sinks were not accessible, unlike the way our group homes are designed. In addition, planning meals was difficult without food processors or a large supply of fresh foods.

### The Aftermath

After a little over a week all homes regained power but the destruction is still evident. The storm created unexpected costs for the organization due to damage created by fallen trees, overtime, hotel fees, and spoiled food in group home refrigerators.

Our Year-End Appeal to our donors discusses the costliness of the events of the storm, which totaled \$100,000.

### Bringing Us Together

Along with employees who welcomed consumers into their homes during the power outage, a tremendous amount of employees stepped in and exhibited an extra effort to ensure the care and safety of the people we serve.

On-call service managers, residential coordinators, nurses, and employees from the operations department, and many direct care staff had around-the-clock dedication. Many employees worked a complete 24 hours in a day in order to ensure care and coverage.



## Upcoming Events!

4/28/2011

*The Up, Up, and Away 2012  
Gala*

Amber Room Colonnade  
Danbury, CT

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

## Our Vision For The Future...

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

In the 1950's the average life span of someone with a disability was just 18 years, but today people with disabilities are living well into their seventies. As this population continues to grow, Ability Beyond Disability is committed to serving people with disabilities who are aging. We believe that people with disabilities deserve the opportunity to age in place; continuing to live in a familiar environment, surrounded by people who care about them and are attuned to their unique needs.

As part of our Vision for the Future, we are leading the way in providing services for people who are aging with disabilities. We recently partnered with the CT chapter of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) to host an aging conference in January.

The conference will be held on January 19, 2012 at Ability Beyond Disability's Leir Pavilion in CT. The title is "Doing More With Less" and will focus on how technology can impact service delivery for those who are aging. Speakers will include Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services, Terry Macy, along with representatives from Ability Beyond Disability and AAIDD. The event is open to the public and invitations will be sent to other providers in our service area. Attendees will share information, resources and generate ideas on best practice methods for serving the aging population.

### Finding One's Dream Job Can Make All The Difference *Michael D's Half-Time Speech At Hoops For Hope 2011*



Thirty years ago, I was diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome and Bipolar Disorder. I used to have violent mood swings and was hospitalized 149 times. I faced many difficult challenges and for a long time felt hopeless, lost, and all alone. It was a very dark time in my life and no one seemed to be able to help me. When I wasn't in the hospital, I would spend all my time isolating myself in my apartment.

My family was amazingly supportive but they didn't fully understand what I was going through.

They did everything they could to help me but even the best doctors and hospitals at the time couldn't figure out what I was going through either. I spent many years in pain, sadness, and turmoil.

But one day, for reasons I still cannot fully understand, I worked up the courage to join a support program offered through Danbury Hospital. This was the first step in my amazing recovery.

I soon found myself getting out of my apartment, meeting new people, joining new groups and experiencing life in a positive and exciting way.

I volunteered to co-chair an Advisory Board that advocated for people with mental illness and was voted Vice President of the New Height's Sunshine Committee, a group which provides free psychosocial rehabilitation services to people recovering from mental illness. I wanted to find a job that would give me an opportunity to help people facing similar challenges. I knew my experience and my recovery would be helpful to share with other people who are struggling.

However, finding a good job in this economy after all I had been through was going to be very difficult. I had never tried to find a job on my own and I didn't have a formal training in my chosen career field, so I contacted Kevin Cooper at Ability Beyond Disability for help.

I now work at the Center for Human Development with a great salary, benefits, a terrific supervisor, great co-workers, and awesome clients.

Ability Beyond Disability helped me find my dream job. They provided me with hope and the resources to help me reach my goals. The experience has changed my life for the better. I truly appreciate everything Ability has done to help me and the countless number of other people with disabilities whose lives have benefited from this terrific agency.

## “Oh My” Employee Of The Month

### -Mayra Halladeen

Mayra is a Life Skills Instructor in the Day and Work Services and has been with Ability Beyond Disability for 10 years.

Mayra was chosen for the award because when she was working with a consumer at Stop and Shop in Ridgefield, a woman observed how closely she was working with the consumer and admired her personal attention while overseeing skills development. The woman asked Mayra what organization she works for and after she said Ability Beyond Disability, the woman researched Ability as a place for her son to receive services.



Because of her interaction with Mayra, the Ridgefield mom has chosen Ability Beyond Disability as the organization to help her son.

Mayra says that she loves working with the people we serve on a daily basis and feels that she makes a difference every day in all of their lives.

In her free time Myra enjoys making crafts and candy.

Congratulations Myra! Thank you for connecting individuals and families to our organization!

## BRAVO!

Some noteworthy happenings at Ability Beyond Disability

A sincere Thank You to **Operations** for their dedication throughout the October storm!

A Thank You To **Jeremy Rivera** who helped Squire throughout the storm!

Congratulations **Deer Hill**, for achieving their 3rd consecutive Cite Free DPH-ICF Survey!

## December Anniversaries

James D. Wilson, 24	Shantrice D. Byrd, 5
Marie A. Neale, 24	Edgar D. Almanzar, 5
Diane K. Strom, 21	Susana D. Monteiro, 5
Garry Rogers 21	Janice Madera, 5
Meredith L. Schiller, 20	Anna M. Reinhardt, 4
David J. Slater, 19	Martin A. Rodriguez, 4
Charles A. Coburn, 19	Tanisha Sandoval, 4
Jinky G. Bingham, 18	Jeremy J. Rivera, 4
Edward L. McCall, 17	Michele Lynne Smith, 4
Ruben Guevarez Jr, 14	Angela A. Boyd, 3
Florence E. Iyen, 14	Jennifer L. Staton, 3
Latisha R. Council, 14	Brandon L. Dilday, 3
Thomas J. Wilkes, 13	Sheena D. Addison, 3
Kelly T. Harrison, 12	Tumika S. Langhorn, 3
Robert J. Pappolla, 12	Kelly M. Dandorph, 2
Jason R. Layok, 12	Jennifer N. Arrington, 2
Maxine Coachman, 11	Shamare D. Fraser, 2
Maryann P. Estefani, 11	Eric R. Castillo, 2
Pamela C. Arturi, 11	Eileen S. Hall, 2
Virginia K. Peterson, 10	James D. Dietter, 2
Doron Schy, 10	Ashley M. Sieling, 2
Sarah Ann Pullen, 9	Sally L. Kilcran, 2
Jessica R Forgione, 8	William C. Jenkins, 2
Julia Mendez, 8	Chrisner Menard, 2
Liz J. Sunners, 8	Lori L. Cadmus, 2
Nicole Reynolds, 8	Steve J. Alves, 2
Judith A. Malin, 7	Kathleen Grosse, 2
Cherryl Ann Marie Shaw, 7	John F. Watson, 2
Tanya L. Medve, 7	Kenneth M. King, 2
John F. Dankwa, 7	Kristine L. Velez, 2
Louie R. Cordeiro, 6	Sharnette T. Wade, 1
Ana Y. Duffy, 6	Shanna N. Blissett, 1
Yahaira Rodriguez, 6	Tommy J. Gordineer Jr, 1
Tara S. Shapiro, 6	Traceyann Lyons, 1
Julia Bara, 6	Joseph L. Dobbins, 1
Patricia Ann Foisy, 6	Allison E. Shuchat, 1
Katherine A. Cebik, 6	Debra M. Carlucci, 1
Laura B. Bernardi, 5	Kathleen M. Kroha, 1
Deborah A. Parks, 6	Ashley L. Penn, 1
Kanika Thomas, 5	
Cuthbert H. Abraham, 5	

## Success at Our 4th Annual Harvest Festival

If you were able to stop by our 4th Annual Harvest Festival on 11-11-11, you probably couldn't pass up the chili dogs, baked potatoes, and the popular chocolate "Oh My Guy" parfaits!



...Or a massage coordinated by *Brookfield Health and Injury*.

Your friends and family will love the scarves, bags, jewelry, and beautiful ornaments created by talented individuals at Clapboard Ridge, Whippoorwill, and Day Services.



Twenty-Four Employees Spun The Wheel as a New *Money Club* Member!



Yet, the best part is we raised **\$6,000** towards, **Money Club** which will make dreams come true for the people we serve! [Sign Up Today!](#)

### Look Who's Joined Our Team

- Kamoy A. Allen, LSI
- Catherine Bolduc, LSI
- Candice Bryant, LSI
- Davina C. Carter, LSI
- Jason T. Chapman, LSI
- Nicole Crouse, LSI
- Victoria A. Kunze, LSI
- Alice Meenan, Family Outreach
- Dominique Nelson, LSI
- Nakeena K. Pight, LSI
- Claire Slattery, LSI
- Courtney Stroman, LSI
- Denise Akinsanya, LSI
- Scott D. Arthurs, LSI
- Melissa D. Diano, LSI
- Donovan Edwards, LSI
- Steven Heng, LSI
- Scott Lefebvre, LSI
- Sarah Lower, LSI
- Crystal Meng, LSI
- Brittney Peters, LSI
- Jacqueline Poore, LSI
- Matthew Clifford, Emp. Spec
- Heather Daniels, LSI
- Luis Datil, LSI
- Andrew Fleischman, Transp. Aide
- Lovely Ingramm, LSI
- Ruth Nawasreh, LSI
- Barbara Pearce, LSI
- Kaitlyn Profeta, Emp Spec
- Andrea Williams, LSI
- Ransford Wright, LSI
- Megan E. Lyons, BA

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