



# The Competitive Edge

BCRC, Inc., 131 Pleasant Drive, 2nd Floor, Aliquippa, PA 15001-3515

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## Christina's Star Rising as Entrepreneur and Employee

by Frank Shialabba

Christina Bruce has worked at Snyder's Flower Shop in Beaver for less than a year, but she already has her own line of handmade greeting cards on sale. According to WIN Services' Supervisor of Habilitation, Jonni Kichta, Christina has become a



beloved employee at Snyder's who is an integral part of their store.

Christina was officially hired as an employee of Snyder's in August, 2016. However, she had helped out at the store a few months before that. She was hired as a floral assistant to do the extensive preparation that is required before flowers become part of a beautiful arrangement. This

involves taking flowers off the stems and organizing and sorting supplies. Christina also cleans the work area so it is ready for the next day's production of arrangements. Ms. Kichta states, "Christina does really well and they love her at Snyder's."

The staff of Snyder's often display their love for Christina by buying her lunch or giving her balloons. Christina is often overwhelmed by this generosity and one day decided to express her appreciation through a homemade thank you card. The staff were so impressed with Christina's card that they asked her to make some for sale in the store. This was the beginning of Christina's new enterprise for which she receives all the proceeds. She now makes a variety of cards for different occasions and fills orders for a particular type of card when supplies get low. Ms. Kichta feels that Christina has learned a lot through her small business. She explains, "With some guidance, Christina has learned to keep track of her sales and purchases. She keeps receipts and monitors her spending for each card in relation to its cost. She's learned to shop for bargains and she has also made great strides in improving her communication as part of a work team that shares ideas." In other words, Christina has become a business woman who takes great pride in her new found knowledge and her contribution to making this world a more beautiful place.

Congratulations to Christina and the staff of WIN Services for a job well done! ■

## Building the Future of BCRC

by Mary Jo Sanders



There are many exciting changes being made as BCRC clients and staff move to their new home at CenterPlace.

One of these major improvements will be the installation of two automatic twelve foot sliding glass doors which will lead into the client lunchroom, enhancing both the visual appeal and making the area accessible.

A two-level elevator will be installed to serve the clients at the east side of the building, and 16 additional offices will be added near the landings; these will be the future homes of our program specialists as well as many others.

Contractors will renovate three existing bathrooms and add four new single unisex accessible bathrooms, that will address the needs of both the clients and staff.

These improvements are necessary as BCRC welcomes our clients and staff members to CenterPlace. The construction should be complete by the end of this year and will provide a pleasant, accessible, and comfortable work atmosphere for all involved! ■

## This is Jordan!

I have had the honor of job coaching Jordan Leheny since January at his new position at eEquip Books. This is his first ever paying job, and pictured is his first ever pay day. He had volunteered at the Beaver Library for seven years, and was very apprehensive about beginning his job with eEquip Books. Jordan has done a fantastic job, and I see his confidence grow each day. He has even brought up possibly asking for an increase in hours.

I am so happy to be a part of Jordan's success story. I knew he could do it!  
*Sadie Camp,*  
*Employment Specialist, WIN Services* ■



## “He Can Do That and He Will Prove It”

by Gina Alberti

To say Steffan Caplinger was unsure about attending Basswood Initiatives’ Extended School Year program last August is an understatement. “I just didn’t know”, says Steffan. He is a quiet person who was not certain that the program was something that he would enjoy.



**Steffan in the front office training to the answer phone.**

Steffan, however, has made great strides since he entered the program. He is now a confident, ambitious young man who eagerly accepts work assignments, engages his Basswood family, and carries himself with self-assurance. Aside from answering phones and greeting visitors at BCRC’s CenterPlace location, Steffan has distributed parts and monitors

through JTBC, designed bookshelves from old boxes and sorted packages at two local community businesses.

Steffan's community work experience has further enhanced his confidence and he hopes his many talents can be utilized at a competitive job in the community. He raves about his friends at Basswood, proudly stating that he knows the other students on a deeply “personal level”. Steffan applauds BCRC for not associating him with a ‘disability’. “[The word ‘disability’] makes me feel ‘not able’,” he admits. But Steffan refuses to let such a label define him; when facing a new task, he proudly exclaims, “I can do that and I will prove it”. ■

## Keeping it Classy at Aurora Services

by Laurel Baker

Psychiatric Rehabilitation is mainly educational, helping participants develop the skills and supports necessary for healthy growth and success in daily life. It focuses on four primary domains of an individual’s recovery journey. Specifically, classes and interventions address the living environment, educational satisfaction, occupational endeavors, and socialization. Total wellness can be a domain in itself, but more often, is present within all the other categories. Therefore, creating each new schedule, which runs eight to ten weeks in duration, is a collaborative effort in order to ensure appropriate representation of all the domains. The practitioners also face the challenge of making it fresh, fun, and inclusive of the participants’ current needs and wants. Input from the participants is a vital part of this process: if anyone has an idea, the practitioners absolutely work it into the schedule, provided it is beneficial to the recovery journey. ▶

The end result of a marathon session of brainstorming is the Aurora Services Class Schedule. This is a visual offering of topics, days and times offered, and a brief description of the group. Often times evidence-based curriculums are utilized, as in the Illness Management & Recovery class, but practitioners also spend a great deal of time researching for the most updated factual information to incorporate into inspirational groups such as the Smooth Transitions or The Gifts of Nature.



These groups tend to be a bit more unique to the practitioner as each staff member has a different skill set and presentation style. As the program is voluntary, participants can attend the classes that make sense to them, and sometimes the most unexpected ones end up being the most popular. The current winner is Living Alone & Being Content, facilitated by Lisa Polidora. She has been generating Standing Room Only!

For enrollment information, please contact Aurora Services at 724-775-2298. See insert for a copy of our current schedule. ■

## Spotlight on: Dawn Conti

by Kelly Newhouse

Dawn Conti began her career with BCRC two years ago as an administrative assistant. Having previously worked as a merchandiser, an office manager, in human services, and for a design and building firm, she brings with her a wealth of experience. Dawn is especially skilled at developing spreadsheets and reports, and using other available software tools. Staff quickly became reliant on her organization, communication, and great business skills. She works closely with the director of client services, program specialists, job coaches, and of course the clients. You will often find them



visiting her in her office to get the latest information or share some of their thoughts. Dawn states that she enjoys the interaction with the clients, their families, and the supports coordinators. To say the least, her workday is full.

On a personal note, Dawn has been married to her husband Conrad “Kevin” for 28 years. Kevin is a 35 year veteran and currently a platoon sergeant for the PA Army National Guard. When not working, they are extremely active with family life. Their son Nathan is a student at Geneva College, Julia, a senior in high school, and Eva will begin her freshman year in high school this fall. She beams with pride and states, “they bring me the greatest joy in my life”. ■

## Calling All Employers! Chris is Strong, Intelligent and Hard Working

by Frank Shialabba

One of the first things that you notice about Chris Confer is his physical strength. Not so obvious, however, is his prowess as a worker, his innate intelligence and his ability to fix anything mechanical.

Chris is a valued member of BCRC's janitorial crew at CenterPlace, who according to Job Coach Paula Hart, "Is willing to do any job asked of him, has excellent attendance and enjoys interacting with staff and others." Our maintenance department has often called upon Chris and his physical strength for assistance with some of their heavier jobs.

According to his program specialist, Jillian Brickley, "Chris is actively seeking competitive employment. He is a highly intelligent and capable young man who loves to help out and recently assisted in the transfer of sheets of plywood." Chris' ideal job would utilize his physical strength and involve the use of machinery. A warehouse job that requires the use of a fork lift would suit Chris just fine.

In his spare time, Chris earns money repairing and selling lawn mowers, cutting grass and enjoys building and painting model cars. He spends some of his hard earned money buying CD's and video games.

Calling all employers! Chris Confer could very well be the man your looking for! ■



## BCRC Clients Embark on New Community Initiative

by Sabine Kane

BCRC has begun implementation of Pennsylvania's Community Participation initiative. This movement involves inclusion of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in work, recreation or leisure activities in the community.

In Pennsylvania, Community Participation for people with intellectual or developmentally disabilities begins officially on July 1, with a grace period until March of 2019 for programs to come into compliance. After that, 25% of the client's time must be spent in the community, in clubs, organizations, wellness classes, volunteer opportunities, and similar activities. Kathy Davis, Director of Client Services, states that "the goal is to make meaningful connections in the community which could lead to employment." Participation is client-optional: clients may opt out. The client also determines where they would like to go, and staff will expose them to as many different opportunities as possible. Everyone has the right to be heard, experience self-fulfillment, and enjoy self-esteem and confidence. Community Participation enhances social competencies and decision-making ability. It adds value to people's lives and decreases negative attitudes, stereotypes, stigma and discrimination in the world at large. Involving clients in working, performing community service, or taking part in leisure activities within the community enhances their enjoyment of life as well as their skills, and helps integrate them into the community.

Taking clients into the community will mean additional staff, and vehicles. One staff person is usually required for every 2-3 clients, but some may need 1:1 staff. Staff involved in community participation must be certified within 60 days of their hire date.

Ms. Davis believes that "there are people who will have fun in the community. I think they will learn and grow with their exposure to the community." Staff has been supportive and ▶

encouraging. All clients and their parents have been receiving community participation information for more than a year.

For more information about community participation, please contact Kathy Davis at 724-378-4750 or [kdavis@bcrc.net](mailto:kdavis@bcrc.net). ■

## New Brighton Clients Move to CenterPlace

by Jessica Rusak

May is moving month...for the clients and staff of our 601 New Brighton location, that is.

An agency decision to consolidate buildings and centralize programming has CenterPlace welcoming many new faces to their building. Approximately 117 clients and 26 staff made the move to their new site. In an effort to ease the transition, multiple moving dates were scheduled throughout the month. The designated space at CenterPlace is much larger and offers a work space that will undergo some construction in order to fit the needs of pre-vocational and transitional services. "It (the new space) will be a temporary set up for now" said Kathy Davis, Director of Client Services. "Then once construction has been completed, we can set up the shop and develop a new routine."

With CenterPlace being conveniently located near the BCTA (Beaver County Transit Authority), clients will now have more opportunities to access different parts of the county. "We are not as land-locked as our New Brighton location," Davis said. Davis has worked in the New Brighton facility since its introduction over 15 years ago. Sometimes change in program locations, routines, or transportation methods can cause fear and frustration. To address this, clients and their families were provided with trainings and transportation arrangements. "Luckily, most of our clients are very excited and positive about the move," Davis said. "I think they see it as an adventure." ■

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*Executive Director*

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**Need A Job? WIN's Got Them.**

WIN Services in Beaver has a number of immediate openings for a variety of positions. WIN is currently hiring for employment specialist, clerical staff and summer support staff. The hours for summers staff are flexible and do not require any driving. WIN's Jonni Kichta states, "We are extremely busy with a variety of programs that provide community support for persons with disabilities." Persons interested in employment at WIN should contact BCRC's Human Resources Department at 131 Pleasant Drive, Aliquippa, PA, 724-378-4750 or fill out an application on line at [www.bcrc.net](http://www.bcrc.net). ■

**Employee of the Month**



**John Whitslar**  
*April 2017*



**Shaun Reid**  
*May 2017*



**Catherine Thomas**  
*June 2017*

**SHOP TALK**

Basswood Initiatives staff and 13 school districts, represented by 94 students, attended the final YAP (Youth Ambassador Program) event of the year which was held on May 2 at Penn State Beaver in Monaca, PA.



Twenty-four BCRC staff attended the Opioid Training held at CCBC, Aliquippa PA, on May 11. Ken Montrose, counselor at Greenbriar Treatment Center, was the presenter.



As the school year ends, Basswood Initiatives prepares for the start of its 4th Extended Summer Year (ESY) program.

**SAFETY LIGHTS**

**From the Safety Committee**

Should we ever be in the situation of an active shooter: **Remember:**

**RUN, HIDE, FIGHT.**

▶ If you are not close to where the shooting is happening and can get out... GET OUT, **RUN.**

▶ If you are too close to where the shooter is but are out of sight, find a secure area, close the door, turn out the light, and barricade yourself. - **HIDE**

▶ If you can't do either of the top two, the last resort is to **FIGHT.**

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