

## Technology Promotes Independence

Research shows that on average a person speaks between 2,000 and 6,000 words per day, but at Ability Beyond Disability we know that this isn't the reality for everyone. Many of the people we serve cannot communicate through traditional methods. While these individuals often communicate by writing, signing or generic gestures, expressing oneself in the community or with new people can be difficult. Communication devices have been used as an aid, but these are often bulky, expensive and not customizable. However, a new, popular device is transforming communication technology: the iPad.

Eddie, a young man who lives with us, had been using the same communication device for over 10 years. Because of its age, the device did not work as well as it should. Ability Beyond Disability staff had been researching and testing the iPad for use in our programs for some time, and along with Eddie's family, they decided it would be a great new technology for him to use.

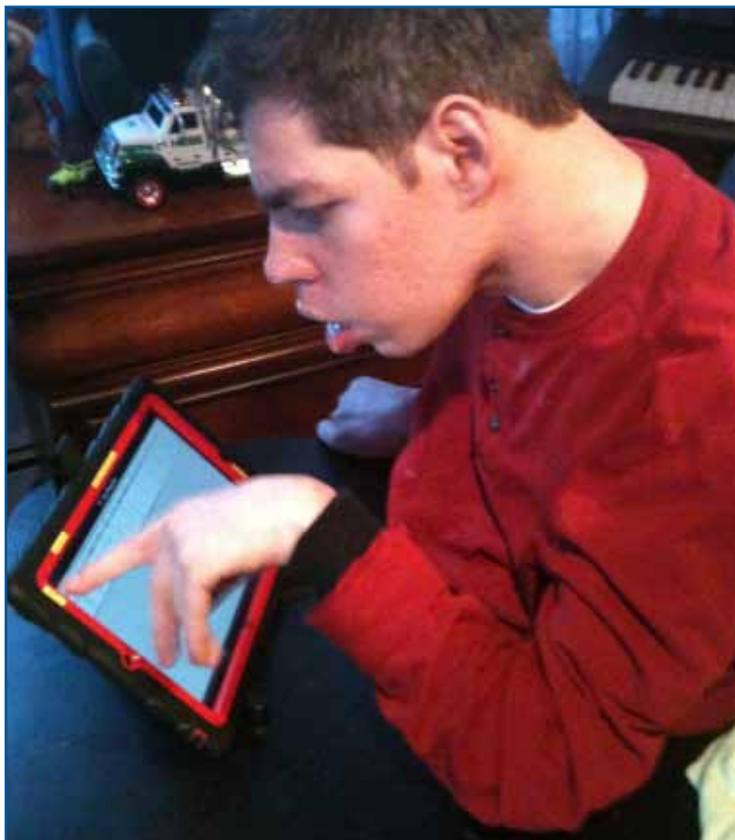
The Residential Coordinator at Eddie's group home says that staff at the home know Eddie so well, they are able to communicate through nonverbal communication and sounds. However, this is challenging when in the community.

Eddie was assessed by a speech pathologist and occupational therapist to determine how the iPad would be programmed to best meet his needs. Eddie and his staff have all been trained on how to effectively use the iPad by the therapy team.

Across the organization, new technology is being implemented to promote independence for the people we serve in many different ways. iPads have proven to be a great tool that can be customized for each individual. Along with the communication software, there are a variety of apps designed for individuals with disabilities to learn life skills and become more independent.

iPads have already been incorporated into the day program's activities for exercises in learning social and life skills, and the young adults in one of our residential programs are learning to access transportation and budget money through educational iPad apps!

Technology changes the lives of each of us. At Ability Beyond Disability, our commitment to developing and implementing new technology into our programs is making a very positive difference in the lives of the people we serve.



*Eddie using his new iPad*

## Craig's CARES Raises Over \$6,000

*Craig's employees: Laura Verses, Kimberly Hansen, Laura Baldwin, Bill Craig and Marlene Langer, with Ability Beyond Disability volunteer Elaine Cox and Board member Jerry Garavel*



This past summer, Billy Craig, owner of Craig's Fine Jewelry in Ridgefield, CT, launched a series of fundraising events to benefit several local nonprofits.

For each Craig's CARES event, Craig's Fine Jewelry donated 20% of all the proceeds during a one-night sale to a pre-selected charity. In addition to the funds raised through proceeds, each organization received a \$2,000 donation directly from Craig's Fine Jewelry.

## Roses for Autism is Growing Again

With the help of a \$750,000 grant from the State of Connecticut, Roses for Autism is expanding through major renovations taking place at Pinchbeck's Rose Farm in Guilford.

The renovations will allow the farm to increase operations by expanding the retail facility, creating greater packing room space and improving the efficiency of the greenhouse. The bond money will also be used to purchase a new van, which will help increase flower distribution.

The vision of Roses for Autism is to create a replicable model for employing adults with autism, so the expansion project also includes the creation of a classroom environment for individuals who participate in the organization's career training program.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held at the rose farm on Wednesday, January 18. Connecticut State Representative Pat Widlitz was in attendance along with Ability Beyond Disability and Roses for Autism Board members and employees. Widlitz, who serves as House Chair of the Legislature's Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee and a voting member on the Bond Commission, worked closely with the state department of Economic and Community Development to help secure the funding.

On November 17, a Craig's CARES event raised over \$6,300 for Ability Beyond Disability. The funds will go towards the purchase of a generator for a group home in Ridgefield. The residence is home to six men who were without power for several days following the snowstorm that pummeled the Northeast back in October.

Craig says, "Ability Beyond Disability is one of the many local organizations that we have supported for many years, so they immediately came to mind when we began planning the Craig's CARES events. And I could not be happier to hear that the money raised will be going to provide a generator for a group home, right here in Ridgefield."

The Ridgefield community has always been very supportive of Ability Beyond Disability. The town recently welcomed a supported apartment in which Ability Beyond Disability is providing support to young adults. In addition, many Ridgefield businesses have employed people served by the organization for years, including Stop and Shop, Town Hall and Boehringer Ingelheim.



*Lori Gregan, Retail Manager; Tom Pinchbeck, Owner; Tom Fanning, President/CEO of Ability Beyond Disability; Rep. Pat Widlitz; Julie Hipp, Manager; Jim Lyman; and Ability Beyond Disability Board members Peter Davis, Donald Whitham and Sam Hyman*

Widlitz says that the grant money and renovations are going to translate into more opportunities for people on the autism spectrum.

"Roses for Autism is about helping people help themselves to become more independent and this grant will allow more people to benefit from this important and compassionate mission," she says.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony is being planned at the farm in April, once the renovations have been completed.

## Looking *Beyond* Disabilities

Red Oak Transportation, one of the largest limousine companies in Westchester County, NY, has supported Ability Beyond Disability for the past several years. But a few months ago, Ability Beyond Disability approached the company's Owner and President, Ed Stoppelmann, about another way he could support people with disabilities.

Stoppelmann did not hesitate to say yes to the idea of offering Red Oak's Port Chester office as an ongoing employment assessment site for people with disabilities. At an assessment site, an individual completes work under the supervision of an Ability Beyond Disability Employment Specialist. The person is assessed over a period of time to determine job-readiness skills and the resources that will be needed to help him or her enter the workforce.

An assessment site has the potential to benefit many different people with disabilities, not just one or two. Over time, many individuals will utilize Red Oak as a stepping stone towards finding a permanent job. We have already received several requests from people who would like to be assessed at Red Oak.

Without on-going partnerships like this one, Ability Beyond Disability's employment team would constantly have to seek out businesses willing to participate in an assessment. This process could leave someone in need waiting for weeks. The partnership with Red Oak means that we can help more people more quickly.

Stoppelmann says he agreed to host an assessment site because it allows him to give back to the community in a unique way and really see the difference his company can make in people's lives; people like Katrina.

Katrina is a young woman who suffered a stroke four years ago, when she was just 23 years old. After she recovered, Katrina struggled to re-enter the workforce. She was left with speech



*Ed Stoppelmann, Owner and President of Red Oak; Katrina, assessment employee; Shaileen Brighton-Ortiz, Day and Employment Manager at Ability Beyond Disability*

challenges and now requires a walker to help her get around; she is also unable to drive. Katrina turned to Ability Beyond Disability for help and recently completed a one-week assessment at Red Oak. She worked in the office completing clerical and bookkeeping tasks alongside Red Oak's employees.

"Everybody was really friendly and helpful, and it was a really warm environment to work in," says Katrina.

Stoppelmann says that having Katrina in the office was mutually beneficial. While she had the opportunity to be assessed and develop new skills, the experience was eye-opening for Red Oak employees. He is hopeful that this partnership will help break down stereotypes and bring diversity to the workplace.

*This past month, Katrina began receiving employment services from Ability Beyond Disability and is applying for jobs in clerical and administrative work settings. Her time at Red Oak has prepared her for the challenges and the rewards she will experience on the road ahead. We wish her the best of luck on her journey!*

## ***Thank you to the following funders for your support through recent grant awards:***

**\$10,000 - The George Link Jr. Charitable Trust - for General Operating Funds**

**\$7,500 - The Town of Ridgefield - for Ridgefield Programs and Services**

**\$5,000 - The Kohlberg Foundation, Inc. - for General Operating Funds**

**\$3,000 - The Albert and Helen Meserve Memorial Fund - for Augmentative Communication/Technology**

**\$2,500 - Savings Bank of Danbury - for Supportive Independent Living**

**\$2,272 - Frederick DeLuca Foundation - for the Special Olympics Program**

**\$2,000 - The Daphne Seybolt Culpeper Memorial Foundation, Inc. - for General Operating Funds**

# The 2012 Up, Up and Away Gala

Reaching *Beyond* the Horizon



Thank you to the following companies who have already signed on to sponsor this year's event:

## Premier Sponsors



COLONIAL AUTOMOBILE  
GROUP OF DANBURY



We invite you to join us for a spectacular evening of dinner, dancing and fundraising in support of a great cause!

Our 29th Annual Gala, "The 2012 Up, Up and Away Gala... Reaching Beyond the Horizon" will be held on Saturday, April 28 at The Amber Room Colonnade in Danbury.

Last year's Gala had over 600 attendees and raised over \$720,000 in support of people with disabilities.

The Co-chairs of this year's event are James Arconti, Arnold Finaldi and Paul Palanzo of Rose and Kiernan, Inc. The evening will honor Stew Leonard, Jr. with the Robert S. Young Humanitarian Award and will feature both silent and live auctions, entertainment by Nik & The Nice Guys, dinner and dancing.

For sponsorship or ticket information, please call Samantha Cosentino at 203.826.3181.

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Co-chairs Arnold Finaldi, Paul Palanzo and James Arconti

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## Have You Seen These?

At Ability Beyond Disability, we help over 900 people with disabilities seek, obtain, and maintain jobs in the community each year. We couldn't do this without the help of hundreds of businesses who support the employment of people with disabilities!

Businesses that are employing people served by Ability Beyond Disability are now proudly displaying these decals on their storefronts to let you know of their support!

## GE Capital Real Estate Spreads Holiday Cheer



*Santa and Stephen*

Stephen received something for Christmas that he had wanted all year long: A New Orleans Hornets' cap! Fifty other individuals who call Ability Beyond Disability their home also received just what they were wishing for this holiday season, thanks to GE Capital Real Estate of Norwalk, CT.

On December 15, ten GE Capital Real Estate employees hosted holiday parties for eight of our group homes, filling them with decorations, food, and gifts. GE Capital Real Estate made all of it possible through a \$3,000 donation which was used for purchasing food, decorations, and gifts.

GE Capital Real Estate employees volunteered at the parties by hanging up decorations and serving food, as well as singing karaoke and decorating gingerbread cookies with the people we serve. One employee even dressed up as Santa!

The event was coordinated by James Luton, VP of Marketing Operations. This is the second event that Luton has coordinated for Ability Beyond Disability. In June, GE Capital Real Estate made a donation of \$4,000 for a BBQ at three group homes to purchase lawn furniture, grills, tents and food.



*GE employees: John Oliver, Elaine McCormack, Camille Protano and James Luton*

## Clark Construction Employees Donate Time & Skills



*Owner Tim Clark with employees Jorge Diaz, Mario Flores and Fernando Pineda and Tanya Medve, Ability Beyond Disability Services Manager*

women served by Ability Beyond Disability. The apartment was in need of a fresh coat of paint as a result of typical wear and tear.

Tanya Medve, Services Manager says, "Community support is so valuable because it establishes a deeper connection between the individual and his or her community. Volunteerism is a great way to build a network of support and bring awareness to the diversity of needs among community members including those who may have a disability. It benefits the individual receiving the service and also strengthens the cooperative spirit shared by those living in the same community."

This past December, Clark Construction, Inc. of New Milford gave a gift to Ability Beyond Disability! Several employees from the company volunteered their time and skills to paint the interior of an Ability Beyond Disability supported apartment in New Milford.

Clark Construction employees painted the living room and kitchen of the apartment, along with completing all the prep work in advance.

The supported apartment is home to two

## Family Giving

In 1953, a small group of families gathered to discuss ways they could help their children have a brighter, more secure future. The result was the founding of Ability Beyond Disability.

We have not forgotten that families are at the core of our organization; that is why we created the Family Giving Circle program. We are asking all of our family members to reach out to their family and friends for the purpose of forming a circle that will raise money to support programs and services.

This program is so unique because it encourages sustainable giving through monthly, quarterly and annual commitments. Sustainable giving is essential to the success of nonprofit organizations like ours.

To learn more about how you can raise funds for your loved one through the Family Giving Circle program, please contact Alice Meenan at 203.826.3182 or [Alice.Meenan@abilitybeyonddisability.org](mailto:Alice.Meenan@abilitybeyonddisability.org).

## Planned Giving

Charitable giving is not just about outright gifts. There are other giving options available that can allow you to support Ability Beyond Disability well into the future.

These options are known as planned gifts, and they can include a wide variety of gift assets from cash and marketable securities to a family home or other real estate to closely held business assets, mineral rights, and intellectual property.

Whether you are concerned about lifetime income, the continued beneficial use of a property, or providing for family members, a planned gift may be the solution you need.

To learn more or to set up your planned gift please contact Kim Bragoli at 203.826.3185 or [Kim.Bragoli@abilitybeyonddisability.org](mailto:Kim.Bragoli@abilitybeyonddisability.org).

## New, Innovative Program Is “Without Walls”

In Mt. Kisco, NY, Ability Beyond Disability staff have begun a new, innovative program for young adults and students transitioning out of high school. What’s so innovative about it? It literally exists without walls.

The Without Walls Day Program is designed to help individuals explore their community while learning job skills and promoting independence. Unlike traditional day programs, Without Walls does not have a “home base”. Instead, participants are out in the community for the entirety of the program each day.

Without Walls is focused on employment opportunities; however, the overall goal is to help each person successfully transition into adulthood and become a contributing member of the community. While engaging in a recreational or social activity, participants will learn life skills to help them become more independent. For example, when going out to lunch, participants are practicing money management, social skills, and healthy eating.

Each day participants volunteer at nursing homes, restaurants, retailers, and hospitals to gain job-readiness skills and build stronger ties to the community. An Employment Specialist teaches a weekly Job Development Class where participants create resumes and engage in mock interviews. Participants also spend time in the public library to develop computer skills such as sending/receiving emails, typing, and using search engines. Once a week, participants have a “cooking day” and learn a new recipe each week.

Currently, five people are participating in the program, and without the need for a site base, the program has much potential for growth. We hope to begin providing the Without Walls Day Program in Rockland County within the next few months, expanding Ability Beyond Disability’s services into a new geographic region!



## Ability Beyond Disability Wins Gold

For the second year in a row, Ability Beyond Disability has been recognized by the Business Council of Fairfield County’s Healthy Workplace Employer Recognition Program!

The 2012 Healthy Workplace Employer Recognition Program applauds the efforts of area employers who have implemented cutting-edge programs to promote a healthy workplace and assist their employees to live healthier lives.

Ability Beyond Disability is committed to promoting healthy living to its workforce. Over the past year the organization has created an internal “wellness committee” to help educate and engage employees in health and wellness. We also made free biometrics screenings available, as well as mammogram screenings and held our annual walking competition.

The Business Council of Fairfield County sees healthy workplaces as a way to reduce costs. “Health is a business issue. As costs related to health and health care escalate business has responded in a variety of ways,” commented Tanya Court, Vice President, Public Policy, The Business



*Erin Harrison, Benefits Coordinator; Dorothy Leary, HR Business Partner; and Robert Janes, Director of New Sales at Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Chair of the program*

Council of Fairfield County. “By recognizing the efforts of employers to promote healthy lifestyles, we hope to serve as a catalyst for other employers in both the private and public sector to take action.”

Ability Beyond Disability was honored to receive the Gold level award alongside companies such as Deloitte, Sacred Heart University and the American Heart Association.

## Marketing Company Helps Roses for Autism Bloom



Amplitude Marketing Group is an independent, experienced, full service marketing agency based in Newtown, CT, that has been donating its creative services to Roses for Autism since September 2011.

Amplitude Marketing Group employees including Mark Macchiarulo, Owner; Luis Benitez, Chief Creative Officer; Rich Cottrell, Executive VP of Business Development; Nicole Lenti, Senior Director of Marketing; and Victor Iraola, Creative Director, donated their time and professional talent to create the marketing plan for the Roses for Autism "Blooming with Benefits" campaign. The company is committed to voluntarily executing this plan through January 2013.

Through the generosity of Amplitude Marketing Group, Roses for Autism is benefiting from \$850,000 worth of professional services. The goal of this cause-based marketing campaign is to increase rose sales, which will increase revenue and allow the program to help more people living on the autism spectrum.



## Danbury National Honor Society Students Raise \$240 for Ability Beyond Disability

Allison Murphy and Alaina Marques are members of the National Honor Society at Danbury High School in Connecticut. The girls were required to complete an Independent Service Project in line with their individual talents and interests; a project that emphasizes the need for cooperative effort in service to the community while providing an opportunity for individuals to discover and develop their unique contributions.

For their project, Allison and Alaina chose to raise money for Ability Beyond Disability by holding a raffle at a Danbury High basketball game.

*"We chose Ability Beyond Disability as our charity because we thought the organization was unique and deserved the funds we raised. We highly believe in the purpose of the charity and we think it's important to support people with developmental and physical disabilities so they may grow to their potential," said Allison.*

The night of the game, Allison, Alaina and several other NHS members set up a table outside of the gymnasium. They sold silicone bracelets for \$2 each that read "Go Hatters! #DHSBasketball."

*"We picked one of the biggest games of the year, since we knew that there would be a large turnout," said Allison.*

Everyone who bought a bracelet had the chance to be chosen for a halftime competition to win 50 percent of the funds that were raised from the sale of the bracelets. The contestant lost the competition, so Ability Beyond Disability received all the funds raised that night, totaling \$240!



*Allison Murphy and Alaina Marques, fundraising in action!*



### Attention all family members: We're trying to get in touch with you!

As part of our efforts to better engage the family members of the people we serve, we've been trying our best to keep in touch via email. BUT, we only have a handful of email addresses for our family members, so we're asking each of you to send yours today! You can send your address to: [family.outreach@abilitybeyonddisability.org](mailto:family.outreach@abilitybeyonddisability.org), and you can expect updates soon!



Dear Friends,

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; these are the unalienable rights born to every citizen of the United States of America. At Ability Beyond Disability, we are constantly seeking to ensure that these rights are not denied to people with disabilities.

Last month, I had the honor of meeting someone who has worked diligently to secure the rights of people with disabilities while working at Ability Beyond Disability for eight years – and then fought for all of us as a member of our armed forces in Afghanistan.

Before he left for Afghanistan, Sergeant Thomas Mboya nominated Ability Beyond Disability for the 2010 Department of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award, because of our support of his military service.

At Ability Beyond Disability, we do our best to support our employees who serve in the armed forces because we respect and honor their commitment to protecting and preserving the rights of every single person in this country.

Thankfully, Sgt. Mboya has returned home safely, but before he left Afghanistan he was presented with a flag that was flown over his camp. On January 31, Tom presented that flag to Ability Beyond Disability. In the presence of members of our staff, our Board, the people with whom he worked prior to his deployment, and his wife and two young daughters...the flag was presented with full military ceremony.

In making the presentation, Tom said that he did a lot of thinking while he was in Afghanistan. He said he came to recognize the parallels between his job at Ability Beyond Disability and his job in the military. He reflected on how much he had learned about what is really important while working with Ability Beyond Disability. "The principles of this organization, the belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to have a better life, are the principles of this country," he said.

In accepting the flag on behalf of Ability Beyond Disability, I have never been so honored.

I would like to leave you with Sgt. Mboya's words; words that reflect our commitment to continue fighting for the rights of the people we serve: *"In Afghanistan, it was not easy. But I always had hope. Nothing, not enemies, no one, can destroy your hope."*

Warm Regards,

Tom

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