



Note(ability)

Dear Friends,

At Ability Beyond we have a lot to be thankful for during the upcoming holiday season.

In Septemeber, we celebrated our staff with National Direct Support Professionals week. Along with Connecticut and 30 other states across the nation, we recognized the essential services that these dedicated people provide to individuals with disabilities.

In October we are celebrating National

Disability Employment Awareness Month and I'd like to take a moment to thank the members of the business community who have partnered with us to provide employment opportunities to people with disabilities. The workplace is one of the last frontiers for people with disabilities: Employment provides personal identity, pride and a paycheck! Together, we can be a catalyst for a more inclusive workforce.

As we enter the seasons of giving, we celebrate the generosity of people like you who give back to your community and

support Ability Beyond. Everything you do for the individuals we serve makes a difference. Whether you spent a day volunteering with us, attended one of our events throughout the year or made a gift to support our mission, you made a difference. For that, we thank you.

Warm regards,

Tom



impact!

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Pathways to Excellence

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Through Pathways to Excellence, we provide our direct-care staff the chance to strengthen their knowledge and climb the career ladder without compromising the hands-on roles that brought them to Ability Beyond in the first place.

At Ability Beyond we believe our workforce is our greatest asset. It is through their selfless dedication and commitment to the people we support that Ability Beyond is continuously recognized as the provider of choice for people with disabilities in our area.

Investments in our workforce are critical and our award-winning professional development program, Pathways to Excellence, is proof of our deep commitment. Created in 2008 to offer our valued direct-care staff with a meaningful career ladder, reduce turnover rates and, most importantly, improve continuity of care for those we support, the program has proven to be tremendously successful.

Due to the generous contributions of our supporters, to date 272 men and women

have graduated from the Pathways to Excellence program and benefitted from increased pay, advanced training, and the opportunity to build stronger interpersonal relationships with their peers. Among these graduates, our annual retention has skyrocketed to 94 percent—and our overall direct care workforce turnover has decreased from 30 percent when we started the program to 18 percent currently, compared to a national average of 46 percent.

Last year we started our first specialty program called Mentoring & Supervision and 71 men and women have graduated from that program so far. Upon graduation these mentors are matched with new direct care staff to help advise them on where they would be the best fit for the organization.

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Through Pathways to Excellence, we hoped to provide our direct-care staff the chance to strengthen their knowledge and climb the career ladder without compromising the hands-on roles that brought them to Ability Beyond in the first place. We are now witnessing the impact this model program can have within the field helping others like us to reduce turnover rates and improve quality of care. It used to be that career advancement meant a forced transition from direct care into management but through Pathways to Excellence we are demonstrating there is a better way for our employees and those we serve.

Jessica Forgione, one of our staff who was in the first Pathways to Excellence class and was in the first Mentoring & Supervision specialty class has thoroughly enjoyed the programs and the opportunity to be a mentor to our new hires.

“Being a part of the Mentoring & Supervision program has given me the extra tools and confidence to accept a promotion to a supervisory position. It was also fun to mentor a new hire and get her excited about trying something new and working in our Supported Independent Living program. It’s been great seeing her take a full time position and love what she is doing!” - Jessica Forgione



Jessica Forgione, one of our staff who participated in the first Pathways to Excellence class was recently promoted to Residential Services Coordinator.

Disability Solutions Update

- submitted by Kristine Foss, Managing Director of Disability Solutions

At Ability Beyond, we have assisted job seekers in building pre- and post employment skills and with finding jobs in their field of interest for over 60 years. Unfortunately, 79% of people with a disability over age 16 are NOT in the labor force. This makes the Disability Community perhaps the most underutilized minority in the country. So last year, we began to look for ways that we could extend our reach beyond the Connecticut and New York area and to even more jobseekers with disabilities.

We created Disability Solutions, Ability Beyond’s corporate consulting practice. This new team, which is led by Kristine Foss and includes Richard Luby, Kevin McCloskey, Nick Santarelli, Julie Cook, Chris Simler and James Emmett, provides consulting services to corporations - assisting them in building or changing their recruiting and hiring systems, and in developing training programs and community partnerships in order to successfully attract, hire and retain qualified employees with disabilities. We launched our consulting services with our first client, PepsiCo’s Beverage division last year with a national

feasibility study and began a pilot in two locations – Houston, Texas and Burnsville, Minnesota. Since then, we have also helped Pepsi staff a brand new facility in Nevada where over 50% of the employees hired, including a management role for that facility, are people with a disability. A second wave of hiring in the next few weeks promises even more opportunities for many strong candidates. One of the keys to our success has been the strong recruiting and talent pipeline partnerships developed for Pepsi by the Disability Solutions team which include the Wounded Warrior Project, U.S. Vets, Nevada Vocational Rehabilitation Department, and local universities.

We are currently in discussions with several other corporations about how we can help them meet their business and talent goals by hiring people with disabilities. These corporations represent jobs in a variety of business sectors including financial services, manufacturing, supply chain and technology. The roles we will be helping them to fill again range through all departments, experience, education and skill levels.

These are exciting times! It is all about a joint mission – employing people with disabilities. And now, Disability Solutions enables Ability Beyond to approach this mission from the perspective of both the job seeker and the corporation seeking talent!

To help us reach out to new corporate clients, we have launched our new website

www.disabilitysolutionsatwork.org

I hope you take a minute to check out the new site and also look for us on Twitter and LinkedIn. The media section of our website features blogs by team members and guests, videos, articles, white papers and interviews. Please check back often for updated media and help spread the word via your social networks as new blogs and news is shared. If you or others would like to learn more about how Disability Solutions can help your corporation meet business and talent needs, manage changing regulations for government contractors, diversify your workforce, or strengthen your brand within the disability community, please contact Kristine Foss, Managing Director at 203-826-3066 or by email at Kristine.foss@abilitybeyond.org

CEO of PayPal delivers Keynote Address at 3rd Annual Corporate Recognition Breakfast



From left to right: Tom Fanning, CEO & President, Ability Beyond; Dan Schulman, CEO, Paypal; David Kasiaz, Senior Vice President, American Express.

Mr. Schulman’s resume is nothing short of impressive. A former executive at American Express, he helped introduce a prepaid card called Serve, expanding a brand historically synonymous with an affluent customer base to new segments of the market. He also led a similar push at Virgin Mobile USA, where he was chief executive, at the behest of its founder, Richard Branson, introducing a wave of prepaid smartphones to young customers.

In addition to the inspirational keynote, the event honored individuals served and thanked the business community for their continued support of Ability Beyond through volunteerism, in-kind donations, employment and financial gifts. Businesses were nominated for various awards based on their commitment to helping people with disabilities achieve their goals. The nominees this year included Belimo, GE Capital, Maplewood Senior Living, and PepsiCo for the Business Leadership Award; Citrin Cooperman, EY, General Motors, Photronics and Pitney Bowes as Corporate Volunteer of the Year; American Express, AON, Bedoukian Research, Colonial Automotive Group and Microsoft as Distinguished Partner of the Year; and Best Friend’s Pet Care, Cinema DeLux, Dottie’s Diner, Promotion Mechanics and Sodexo as Employer of the Year.

Dan Schulman, newly appointed CEO of PayPal, delivered a powerful keynote speech to the audience of nearly 200 business men and women earlier this month at the 2014 Ability Beyond Corporate Recognition Breakfast. He spoke of his deep commitment to social responsibility and how it has helped him to lead the companies he has worked for to new levels of success. He challenged those in the room to think about how they can partner with nonprofits to further their business goals and feel great about it at the same time.



Left to right: Kris Foss, Nick Santarelli, Rich Luby, Kevin McCloskey, Chris Simler and Julie Cook

News of Note



Laurie Dale has a new technology focused role at Ability Beyond

Over the past few years Ability Beyond has truly developed a reputation for many of our progressive programmatic initiatives related to our vision. To properly advance our efforts in the Assistive Technology arena we have appointed Laurie Dale to Senior Leader of Assistive Technology Solutions. Laurie, a 25-year veteran of Ability Beyond, previously served as the Director of Information Technology Service, where she oversaw the evolution of the agency's technology infrastructure and pioneered the use of assistive technology to improve the everyday lives of the people in Ability Beyond's care.

Due to Laurie's keen understanding of technology and her innovative ideas, we are fast becoming a national model in this arena.

In her new role, Laurie will be responsible for all aspects of assistive technology and for integrating new innovations that will revolutionize the way Ability Beyond supports people with disabilities. She will work to create new bridges between technology and the individuals supported by the organization, identifying and determining what will best allow them to increase their independence.

Since 1989, Laurie, a resident of Sandy Hook, CT, has served in various senior level positions at Ability Beyond. Throughout her career, she has spearheaded many initiatives including growing the agency's technology networks from 50 centrally-located personal computers to 800 wireless WAN units and VOIP across 90 locations, as well as implementing a healthcare compliance system that serves upward of 2,500 people each year, meeting rigorous legislative requirements.

Laurie is a member of the Connecticut Technology Council, the New York Inter-Agency Council Technology Committee and the Best Practices Provider Group, as well as the Information Technology Advisory Committee of the Western Connecticut United Way and the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits' IT Committee. She serves as the chairperson for the New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies (NYSACRA) IT Advisory Committee. She is a frequent speaker at national conferences and is among the few national experts working to better the lives of people with disabilities through technology.

Donor Spotlight: Greg Smith

Greg Smith, Chairman and CEO of Maplewood Senior Living, has been a generous supporter of Ability Beyond for the past several years. As the Chairman of our Board of Trustees, Greg has truly led by example. He has shared expertise, opened new doors and has generously pledged over \$1 million to Ability Beyond and our vision for the future. This generous contribution has allowed Ability Beyond to invest in crucial technology to help the individuals we serve become more independent and to further their goals. This generous gift has also given Ability Beyond the opportunity to invest in our workforce and put more staff through our award winning Pathways to Excellence program. Greg has also introduced Ability Beyond to other very significant donors through cultivation events and by informing others of the integral role Ability Beyond plays within their communities.



Ability Beyond Receives Impactful Grants from Microsoft and the State of Connecticut

Ability Beyond was recently awarded **nearly \$1 million** from the State of Connecticut through its Nonprofit Grant Program. The money will be used to provide much needed renovations and safety upgrades to the five Traumatic Brain Injury homes in Connecticut. The funding will allow for such things as widening doorways, improving security and fire safety systems, purchasing and installing generators to prevent disruption during power outages, as well as other maintenance needs such as new roofs and other renovations.

Ability Beyond was also granted **over \$660,000** worth of software from Microsoft. This investment will help Ability Beyond advance its technology infrastructure so the agency remains at the forefront of the sector while freeing up financial resources to serve more people in need. Among the various investments that will be made is improving internal communications at Ability Beyond among the more than 1,200 employees and 500 volunteers, in part by enhancing the functionality of our internal website. This website is a critical tool in keeping the hundreds of employees working in the field connected to our organization and focused on the mission, while also improving the security of the network, in turn strengthening our already sound compliance.

Nicole Cadovius Appointed to National AAIDD Division

Nicole Cadovius, Director of Connecticut Residential Services at Ability Beyond, has recently been appointed as the Vice President for the Gerontology Division of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD).

Ms. Cadovius brings over 20 years of expertise in providing quality programming for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, aging, and those requiring medical and behavioral supports. As Vice President of the Gerontology Division for AAIDD her focus will be coordinating an Aging Symposium for AAIDD's 139th Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky as well as assisting with division duties. Ms. Cadovius is also currently serving the second half of her term as President for the Connecticut Chapter of AAIDD.

The goals of AAIDD are to enhance the capacity of professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to participate in the development of a society that fully includes individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to build an effective, responsive, well managed, responsibly-governed, and sustainable organization.



Putting the “fun” in Fundraising



Steve Finkelstein makes a great hit!



Setting up a serve

The Shah Family at the Ability Beyond Mercedes-Benz Tennis Event

Our board, corporate supporters and family members have been hard at work spreading the word about Ability Beyond and have been successfully holding events throughout Connecticut and New York to garner new support.

This summer, our Board of Trustees member Saurin Shah hosted the first Ability Beyond Mercedes-Benz Tennis Event at the Four Seasons Racquet Club in Wilton, Connecticut. The event was extremely successful and raised over \$22,000 for Ability Beyond. Over 75 new people were introduced to Ability Beyond to learn about our organization and how they can get involved.

There are also more 3rd party fundraising events coming up in October and November to benefit Ability Beyond.

Stride for Ability 5K

Maplewood Senior Living will be hosting the Stride for Ability 5K on Sunday October 19th at the Berkshire Corporate Park in Bethel, Connecticut. The event is for walkers and runners and all proceeds will come directly to Ability Beyond. To sign

up to participate you can visit the Ability Beyond website and find the details in our Events Calendar. For questions you can contact Jillian Colley at jcolley@maplewoodsl.com.

Walsh Family Spin-A-Thon

Jack and Paula Walsh are hosting the Walsh Family Spin-A-Thon at Phys-Ed Health & Performance in New Milford on Saturday November 1st. There will be two classes held at 9:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. To reserve a bike you can call Phys-Ed at 860-355-4354 or e-mail jamiophysed@gmail.com.

A big thank you to Saurin Shah, Greg Smith, Jack and Paula Walsh, Steve Finkelstein, and Pat Sullivan for helping to make these events so successful!

If you are interested in organizing a 3rd party event on behalf of Ability Beyond please contact Samantha Cosentino at Samantha.Cosentino@abilitybeyond.org or call 203-826-3181.

Our Valuable Volunteers



We rely on the support of the 500 plus volunteers that come to Ability Beyond each year. We have had a busy summer and fall filled with local companies willing to generously donate their time and talents to Ability Beyond and the individuals we serve.

We kicked off our “volunteer season” with the United Way of Western Connecticut’s Day of Action with over 50 volunteers from Pitney Bowes, Photronics and Boehringer Ingelheim. The companies spent their time volunteering at three homes and completed projects such as tearing out fencing and replacing it with a new fence and staining it, landscaping, painting, and fixing a patio in need of repair.

New York based accounting firm Citrin Cooperman generously donated \$8,500 and over 25 volunteers from the company to construct a vibrant garden at our new home in Beacon, N.Y. With the help of a landscape architecture firm, Ability Beyond thoughtfully designed the garden to attract birds through its shrub trees and flowering plants to bring color, joy and sensory stimulation to the residents that live there.

GE Capital also generously donated over \$26,000 for a three-day project with over 50 volunteers to help build a new deck on one of our homes. This deck is now not only another means of egress from the home, but also allows the individuals that live there to enjoy the backyard because it is more accessible. GE Capital also rebuilt the front fence at the home and

completed some landscaping projects.

General Motors of Danbury volunteered their time with over 20 volunteers that helped scrape and paint the interior and exterior of a home. They also helped to fix up the home for “curb appeal” and painted the exterior porches.

The Brunswick School came back for their third year in a row of volunteering at Roses for Autism in Guilford. 100 sophomore boys cleaned out one of the green houses by taking down wood and wiring, sweeping and also painted.

Thank you to all of our volunteers that have dedicated time and their blood, sweat and tears to making the lives of the individuals we serve better.

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