



Transitioning Together: Ability Beyond's New Program for Families

Alice Meenan, Manager, Family Outreach and Transitional Services; Shaileen Brighton-Ortiz, Services Manager; Kate Travis, Assistant Services Director; Dr. Leann Smith; Michele Smith, Services Manager; Carrie O'Connell, Director of Day and Work Services; Donna Schneider, Assistive Technology Specialist District Wide of Brewster Central Schools; Selena Fischer Ph.D., Brewster Schools Director of Special Programs & Services and Elizabeth Kennedy, School Psychologist

Upcoming Events

Corporate Recognition Breakfast

Thursday, October 15, 2015

7:30 – 9:00 AM

Belimo
Danbury, CT

Annual Autumn Breakfast

Thursday, November 12, 2015

7:30 – 9:00 AM

Ethan Allen Hotel
Danbury, CT

To register or to see all of our upcoming events at Ability Beyond visit www.abilitybeyond.org/news-events/calendar/

This fall will kick off Ability Beyond's eight week pilot program called "Transitioning Together" for families and young adults with disabilities. We will be partnering with the Brewster School District to support students with disabilities and their families as they prepare to transition out of the public school system.

Planning for what happens after a child ages out of the school system is very confusing and scary for parents and students

The program involves eight weekly education and support group sessions for parents as well as eight weekly social skill group sessions for teens. Parent group sessions cover topics such as transition planning, problem solving, and legal issues. Adolescent group sessions involve a variety of games and activities to target skills such as engaging in conversation, recognizing social cues, and using problem solving strategies.

Earlier this year Ability Beyond staff met and trained with Dr. Leann Smith from the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin who founded the "Transitioning Together" program after working with families that had a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Ability Beyond is the first nonprofit to offer the Transitioning Together program and the Waisman Center is excited to see the outcomes of the program at a nonprofit in conjunction with a local school.

"Planning for what happens after a child ages out of the school system is very confusing and scary for parents and students," says Carrie O'Connell, Director of Day and Work Services at Ability Beyond. "We are delighted to be able to offer our expertise through this pilot and help schools and parents better prepare for success after graduation."

Grants from the Carvel Foundation and Aramark are funding the pilot program and have allowed us to offer families the chance to participate without incurring any cost.

Note(ability)



Dear friends -

I've recently announced my plans to step down as President/CEO of Ability Beyond this coming June. At that time, I will be 70 years young, celebrating my 42nd year of leading

this wonderful organization and looking forward to more flexibility in my life. And, with new directions in service delivery on the horizon in coming years, Ability Beyond will have new opportunities. Simply put, now is the right time for the organization to have new leadership.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to meet countless terrific people over the years. I have learned many values from all – courage and perseverance from the people we support...devotion and dedication from family members...commitment and generosity from Board members and volunteers...and passion and selflessness from our employees. It has truly been a remarkable journey for me and I am grateful to everyone who helped me along the way.

Looking ahead, I want you to know that Ability Beyond is in great shape. We have a strong management team that has been beside me in building Ability Beyond to its position as a leader in Connecticut, New York and nationally in serving people with disabilities. Our front-line staff is among the most caring and committed group of people you will ever meet, carrying out our mission every day by helping the people we support to fulfill their dreams. Our Board and volunteers bring invaluable expertise and experience to help guide the organization. The Ability Beyond team will assure a healthy future for many, many years to come.

Our Board of Directors has initiated a search for my successor, seeking the best possible person to lead the organization. Once this individual has been selected, I will work closely with him/her through the transition period. Beyond that, I hope to continue to play a role in the organization's future thereafter – my heart will always be with Ability Beyond.

Thank you for your support over the years... and, above all, thank you for your continued support of Ability Beyond!

Sincerely,

Aramark Invests in the Future of Young Adults with Disabilities



Just like their peers in high school, young people with disabilities dream of finding jobs, living independently and shaping their adult lives around their interests and talents. Yet instead of achieving their potential, many of these teenagers fall off a well-documented cliff after graduation because they simply weren't prepared for the realities of life beyond the classroom.

We see a different way forward for these young adults. So does Aramark, one of the nation's leading providers of food service, facilities and uniform services. Earlier this month, the corporation made a generous investment of \$225,000 to help Ability Beyond change the status quo for school-to-community transition.

Thank you to Aramark's philanthropic team, led by Bev Dribin, vice president of public affairs.

Aramark's gift—which will translate into \$75,000 per year, for three years—will help us get more students over the cliff by engaging them, their parents and their schools in a research-backed approach.

Ability Beyond's transition program will include:

1. **Supports families** by teaching them advocacy skills and educating them on the importance of transition planning, their children's rights and available resources. This will include an eight-week series for 12-to-20 families developed by the University of Wisconsin Waisman Center of Excellence. We will also promote the development of family support groups around the initially-trained families.
2. **Partners with schools.** With the engagement of families and representatives from the business community, we will work with schools to develop transition curricula that truly address the competitive realities of the workforce and the expectations of independent adult life. We will also consult with school systems on individual student cases.
3. **Expands our training programs** as resources and alternatives to in-school transition programming, when appropriate. Our training programs will expose young adults to real work environments in the community

The Ability Beyond transition team is currently researching best practices and is working to develop a model program to support the growing number of students who will require transitional support services in the future.

Donor Spotlight: Kevin and Elaine Cox



Ability Beyond has been lucky enough to have Kevin and Elaine Cox as generous supporters and advocates for more than 15 years. Together they have provided generous financial contributions and countless volunteer hours to the organization. They have introduced many donors, volunteers and corporations to Ability Beyond to help us build relationships within the community and to spread our mission.

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Kevin served as the Chairman of our Board of Directors and was a key leader in fundraising for our 50th Anniversary Campaign. Following his retirement from the Board, he was named Director Emeritus and continues to offer invaluable guidance and support to the organization today.

She continues to inspire others to get involved with Ability Beyond: her passion for helping others is absolutely contagious. ”

Elaine is one of the most devoted volunteers we have. She continues to inspire others to get involved with Ability Beyond: her passion for helping others is absolutely contagious. Her energy and enthusiasm as a long-time leader of the volunteer committee that plans and organizes our Annual Gala – our biggest fundraiser – has brought us a circle of friends that are only a phone call away when we need a few extra helping hands.

In addition to their overall support of Ability Beyond, the Cox family has a special relationship with the residents of one of our group homes in Ridgefield. The six men who live in the home have benefitted tremendously from Kevin and

Elaine's generosity over the years - a totally remodeled kitchen, holiday gifts, a new patio set, a flat screen TV and much more. Their generosity over the years has truly made this residence feel like home.

This is a couple who truly want to make a difference. They do so much more than provide financial support, they open their hearts and devote their time and energy to those who need it most and they do it all without the desire for recognition. Best of all, Kevin and Elaine believe in instilling these qualities in younger generations and encourage their children to get involved and give back to their community as often as possible. Kevin and Elaine's unparalleled dedication to our mission was recognized at our 60th Anniversary Gala in 2013 when they were honored with the Robert S. Young Humanitarian Award. They not only want to make a difference...they DO make a difference in the lives of the people we serve. We are grateful for their incredible support and fortunate to have them as friends of Ability Beyond!

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Support through Recent Grant Awards

\$31,838	United Way — to support mental health services, career training and independent living
\$8,500	CitrinCooperman — to support volunteer project in Beacon, NY
\$8,000	The Barden Foundation — for General Operating
\$7,019	Town of Ridgefield — for services in Ridgefield
\$5,000	Town of Bethel — for services in Bethel
\$4,000	Pitney Bowes — for Employment Services
\$3,000	Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities — for an individual to reach entrepreneur goals
\$1,125	Ridgefield Community Foundation — for services in Ridgefield
\$1,000	Gen Re — for General Operating

Ability Beyond welcomes back Dr. Jacqueline Reina



Ability Beyond is thrilled to announce that Dr. Jacqueline Reina has returned to the organization to lead New York services.

As New York Services Director, Dr. Reina

will be ensuring the quality of services and facilitating person centered planning for each individual supported by Ability Beyond. She will be overseeing day-to-day operations and managing a team of over 100.

Dr. Reina has a strong history and connection with Ability Beyond as she was previously the Director of Clinical Services over both New York and Connecticut. During her seven year tenure, she assisted in the development of clinical residential programs, oversaw programs and services, and led many initiatives. Dr. Reina has a broad range of experience working with children and adults with developmental and neurological disabilities as well as chronic psychiatric and personality

disorders. Additionally, she has in-depth knowledge of cognitive and behavioral interventions as well as extensive training in administration and interpretation of cognitive psychological assessments. She has expertise in developing behavior modification plans and in training staff on how to collect data and implement behavioral plans.

Dr. Reina, a licensed clinical psychologist, earned both her Doctorate in Clinical and School Psychology and her Master's in General Psychology from Hofstra University. She has experience as a clinician, administrator and leader in the nonprofit community. Dr. Reina has provided clinical services in both the private and public sector for over ten years.

Mercedes-Benz Tennis & Golf Tournament

At the end of June, for the second year in a row, Ability Beyond board member Saurin Shah partnered with Mercedes-Benz of Danbury to hold our second annual tennis event at Four Seasons Racquet Club in Wilton, Connecticut. This year Saurin attracted over 50 players, including players all the way from Westchester and raised over \$25,000. The community support for this event was truly inspiring and Saurin rallied his friends and family to come out for a great day of tennis in support of Ability Beyond.



Jeff Mitchell, Rambo Vallabhajoyasulu, Saurin Shah, Danielle Troiano



***This summer
we raised over
\$125,000 through
our partnership with
Mercedes-Benz
of Danbury***



For the past six years Mercedes-Benz of Danbury has partnered with Ability Beyond to host our annual golf tournament and this year was a year of records! We had record heat (in the 90s!) and a record number of players (over 140!). [We are happy to announce we also raised over \\$100,000.](#) Despite the heat, everyone was in good spirits and enjoyed their round of golf. Thank you to Bob Camastro, Owner of Mercedes-Benz of Danbury, for your continued support of Ability Beyond.



Mercedes-Benz has 350 dealerships nationwide and raises over \$1 million through their Dealer Championships each year. We're proud to say that we raise more than 10% of the overall number with Mercedes-Benz of Danbury!



Bob Camastro, Owner of Mercedes-Benz of Danbury, Scott Mackay and Jordan Young

The winners of the tennis tournament were Rambo Vallabhajoyasulu and Jeff Mitchell and the winners of the golf tournament were Jordan Young and Scott Mackay. These four will advance to the Mercedes-Benz Sectional Event held at Pinehurst Resort this fall.

New York headquarters has MOVED!

Our New York headquarters moved in to new digs at Chappaqua Crossing on August 25th from their Mt. Kisco location. We are now located at 480 Bedford Road in Chappaqua also known as the old Reader's Digest building. All phone numbers will remain the same.

62 YEARS OF GOING BEYOND THE EXPECTED



We hope you will come check it out at this year's **Annual Meeting & Technology Showcase on September 24th!** The event will serve as our official open house and ribbon cutting ceremony and will celebrate our 20th year of providing services in New York. We are also thrilled to be able to showcase some revolutionary assistive technology that we have been using to innovate services and build better futures for people with disabilities.

To find out more visit our website at:

www.abilitybeyond.org/technologyshowcase and to RSVP to the event please contact **Samantha Cosentino** at 203-826-3181 or Samantha.Cosentino@abilitybeyond.org

Labor of Love

Ability Beyond relies on the support of more than 500 volunteers each year, whether it be from corporations, groups of students or individuals just looking to give back. Starting in early summer, we have had an influx of local companies who have been willing to donate their time and talents to complete much needed projects for the individuals we serve.

We kicked off our “volunteer season” as we usually do with United Way Day of Action! We had nearly 40 volunteers from [Branson](#), [Boehringer-Ingelheim](#) and [UTC Aerospace Systems](#) spend a day at homes throughout the Danbury area and they accomplished quite a bit of work. They painted an entire house, put a fence around a pool and painted it, installed much needed shelving for storage and cleaned an entire home.

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For the second year in a row accounting firm [Citrin Cooperman](#) visited our home in Beacon, New York and generously donated \$8,500. Seventeen volunteers spent the day building and filling raised planters, prepped the butterfly garden and cleared space for a concrete walkway to make the outdoor space accessible for the individuals living in the home. Thank you to Mary Paladino and Ed Roberts for helping to organize this!

[American Express](#) and [Mercer](#) teamed up again for a volunteer day in Yorktown Heights at one of our homes. Not only did American Express generously contribute \$2,500, but the volunteers repaired and stained the back deck, built raised flowers beds and finished some yard work. Thank you to David Kasiaz of American Express and Timothy Roof of Mercer for making this possible!

We are looking forward to a busy fall with [GE Capital](#) sponsoring a day of carnival fun for the individuals we serve as well as working on a big home remodel and volunteers from [General Motors](#) and [Eversource](#) coming as well.

If you and your company would like to volunteer at Ability Beyond please reach out to Samantha Cosentino at Samantha.Cosentino@abilitybeyond.org or 203-826-3181.



Team Amex / Mercer



Team Boehringer-Ingelheim



Team Branson



Team Citrin Cooperman



Team UTC Aerospace Systems

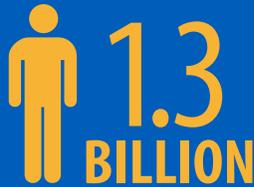


Disability Solutions Roadshow

Disability Solutions is hitting the road! Kris Foss, Managing Director of Disability Solutions and Julie Cook, Senior Consultant of Disability Solutions are teaming up with Rich Donovan, CEO of the Return on Disability Group on the Emerging Giant Roadshow. This national event will provide education and networking opportunities for executive leaders

interested in maximizing revenue and talent opportunity in the disability market. They will be stopping in Toronto, New York City, Plano, Texas, San Francisco, Washington D.C. and Chicago. For more details about each visit contact Meaghan Gilmore at Meaghan.Gilmore@abilitybeyond.org.

DISABILITY MARKET: THE FACTS



GLOBAL CONSUMERS SELF-IDENTIFY AS A PERSON WITH DISABILITY, ABOUT THE SIZE OF CHINA



PERCENTAGE OF CONSUMERS INCLUDING FRIENDS & FAMILY THAT ARE DIRECTLY TOUCHED BY DISABILITY



GLOBAL CONSUMERS WITH DISABILITY, CONTROL OVER \$8 TRILLION IN DISPOSABLE INCOME



OF LARGE COMPANIES IN NORTH AMERICA ARE ACTING ON THE DISABILITY MARKET



U.S. FIRMS THAT "DO DISABILITY WELL" OUTPERFORMED THE STOCK MARKET ANNUALLY

GUEST SPEAKERS



RICH DONOVAN, CEO
THE RETURN ON DISABILITY GROUP



KRIS FOSS
MANAGING DIRECTOR
DISABILITY SOLUTIONS@ABILITY BEYOND



JULIE COOK
SR. CONSULTANT
DISABILITY SOLUTIONS@ABILITY BEYOND

Secretary of Labor Visits PepsiCo Winston Salem



PepsiCo in Winston Salem received a visit from Secretary of Labor Tom Perez earlier this summer after the Pepsi ACT project was recommended as a model employer by the state workforce agency! He toured the facility and learned more about the Pepsi ACT project and what Pepsi is doing to employ people with disabilities.

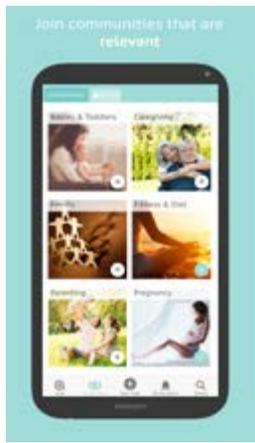
Disability Solutions in Forbes



Kris Foss, Managing Director of Disability Solutions was included in an article with Kevin Cox, Chief Human Resource Officer of American Express, Marty Bean, Senior Vice President of Field Sales for PepsiCo North American Beverages and Rich Donovan, CEO of the Return on Disability Group regarding individuals with disabilities being the next frontier for employers. Visit <http://abilitybeyond.org/forbes/> to view the full article.

Hiring and engaging people with disabilities isn't about being nice, or being charitable. It's smart business that can positively impact your bottom line and your talent needs from the mailroom to the boardroom.

- Kris Foss



Ability Partners with Ola Health to Pilot New App

As part of the Transitioning Together program, Ability Beyond has partnered with Ola Health to pilot a new app designed for healthcare providers to create a private patient community. The app allows for peer-to-peer support and discussion, and to direct questions to the community provider.

Each community is 'unlocked' with a private passcode that the provider gives to each user. Ability Beyond will use this private community as a place where family members in the Transitioning Together program can ask each other questions or to have discussions. Ability Beyond program staff will monitor discussions and answer questions the families may have.



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