Addressing the Aging Phenomenon

The elderly population in the United States is expected to reach 72 million by 2030, representing nearly 20% of the total population. This number has more than doubled since 2000. Evident by these statistics, Americans in general are living longer and so too is the population of people with developmental disabilities. In fact, in 1920 the life expectancy of someone with a developmental disability was 18; in 2000 it had grown to 72.

Ability Beyond Disability has been providing the highest quality of care for people with developmental, physical and mental challenges for 60 years; however, our existing resources don’t often allow us to care for individuals with complex medical conditions as they age. Many individuals with disabilities are unable to remain in their homes in the community and are forced to move into nursing facilities that are not equipped to care for individuals with developmental disabilities.

As an organization, we have always been at the forefront of providing innovative solutions to society’s challenges, and we anticipated the great needs of aging adults with disabilities years ago. We began developing a plan to meet the specialized needs of this population and have recently seen great progress!

We are excited to announce that we are currently building a model aging facility that will provide seniors with developmental disabilities a community-based home for the intensive care they require. Within the home we will provide twenty four hour nursing care along with direct care staff, day programming, physical therapy, occupational therapy, dietary, and behavioral supports.

This home in Beacon, NY will support fourteen individuals with complex medical needs. The home will incorporate both best practice design and cutting-edge technology to best support the individuals who live there.

By incorporating a universal design approach we will ensure accessibility throughout the home, regardless of physical ability. Technology such as; biometric tools connected to remote monitoring stations will monitor breathing rates without interrupting people’s activities, bracelets and call systems will ensure that staff members are alerted if someone gets out of bed at night, or minimize the wandering tendencies of people with dementia.

For many families whose loved ones are aging with a disability, this home is like a wish come true. One family wrote to us, saying, “You cannot know the joy and peace it brought to our hearts when we read of your plans.”

The property was purchased in 2011 and we’re planning the ground breaking to happen in the spring of this year. It is our goal to open the home and begin supporting the people who need our help by next winter.

This home, the first of its kind in New York State, will serve as a model for other community-based homes that can support people with disabilities as they age. It is our goal to open several more homes that can meet the needs of this growing population.
Holiday Giving at Ability Beyond Disability

This holiday season we saw an outpouring of support from our community!

This past December, Quota International of Candlewood Valley, Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics and the YMCA of Western Connecticut, Greenknoll Branch all participated in our annual giving tree.

A great number of the people we serve do not have family members or do not have the funds needed to enjoy the holiday season in the way that many of us do. However, because of the kindness of these organizations, many of the people living in our homes had at least one present to open this year. These groups donated gifts that made sure the holidays were special for 67 of the individuals that we serve.

On Tuesday December 11th a local company sponsored a holiday party that benefitted 30 individuals in the supported independent living program at Ability Beyond Disability. Volunteers, staff and consumers all shared a delicious meal together and each of the individuals we serve received a gift. Volunteers put on a bingo game, and five lucky winners went home with gift cards!

This same company also made possible a holiday party for 160 individuals in our day programs in both CT and NY!

A big thank you to all of these groups for bringing so much joy and hope to the people we serve.

If you would like to support next year’s giving tree, please contact Samantha Cosentino at 203.826.3181 or Samantha.Cosentino@abilitybeyonddisability.org.

Norwalk Café Raises Funds and Awareness

This holiday season Café Turnier in Norwalk, Connecticut generously raised funds for Ability Beyond Disability. Every Friday starting with the last week in November and leading up to Christmas, Café Turnier donated 15% of their sales to Ability Beyond Disability for both dine in and take out customers. They also sold pin-ups that said “I believe in Ability Beyond Disability” and hung them all around the café!

Café Turnier is committed to the community and wanted to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities who live and work in Norwalk. They were able to raise over $260 for Ability Beyond Disability. Thank you to Café Turnier for your kindness and generosity!

If you or someone you know would like to help raise money for Ability Beyond Disability, please contact Samantha Cosentino at: 203.826.3181 or Samantha.Cosentino@abilitybeyonddisability.org.
Employees Give Back

Every fall a dedicated group of Ability Beyond Disability employees put together a harvest festival for staff and individuals we serve. The goal of the event is to raise funds for Money Club, an employee giving campaign, with all of the funds going directly to helping wishes come true for the people we support.

The Money Club makes it possible for many of the individuals we serve to attend summer camps, purchase bus passes, purchase clothing for job interviews, make emergency payments on rent and for other necessities that they may not be able to afford.

Our 5th Annual Harvest Festival was held on Friday November 9th at the Leir Pavilion in Bethel. There were a variety of outside vendors that donated their services and time for things such as manicures, massages and other spa services. There were many raffles as well that gave people the opportunity to win tons of great prizes!

Employees and individuals from programs throughout Connecticut baked snacks and made crafts to sell at the event in addition to putting together game tables and organizing the recycling.

Most importantly, the staff raised over $6,500 for Money Club which will make dreams come true for the people that Ability Beyond Disability serves!

Thank you to the following funders for their support through recent grant awards:

- $159,955 - Connecticut Department of Transportation - for Transportation Needs
- $50,000 - City of Danbury - for Home Renovations
- $20,000 - The George Link Jr. Charitable Trust - for General Operating Funds
- $5,000 - Connecticut Community Foundation - for Employment Services and Technology
- $4,500 - Town of Newtown - for General Operating Funds
- $3,000 - Savings Bank of Danbury - for Supportive Independent Living
- $2,500 - Praxair, Inc. - for iPads for Individuals Served
The 60th Anniversary Gala

This year Ability Beyond Disability is celebrating our 60th anniversary with the 60th Anniversary Gala… celebrating 60 years of individual triumphs!

The gala will be held on Saturday April 27, 2013 at the Amber Room Colonnade in Danbury, Connecticut. This year’s event is being chaired by the Honorable Rudy Marconi, First Selectman of Ridgefield and the Robert S. Young Humanitarian Award will be presented to Kevin and Elaine Cox.

A kick off for the event was held on Tuesday January 22nd at the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield. There was a great turnout and this gala promises to be the best one yet!

We would like to extend our gratitude to this year’s Diamond Sponsors:

![Sponsors Logos]

For sponsorship information or to donate to our auction, please contact Samantha Cosentino at 203.826.3181 or Samantha.Cosentino@abilitybeyonddisability.org.

Rally to Protect the Safety Net

On January 30th, advocacy organizations across Connecticut organized a rally at the State Capitol in Hartford to protest future budget cuts that could affect human service providers such as Ability Beyond Disability.

People came from all over the state to make their voices heard about protecting “the safety net” from additional budget cuts. There was a great turn out from Ability Beyond Disability.

Staff, family members and even some of the individuals we serve went to Hartford to ensure that legislators understand the importance of organizations like ours and the impact we have on the people who need us.

For more information about our advocacy initiatives and how to get involved, please contact Alice Meenan at 203.826.3182 or Alice.Meenan@abilitybeyonddisability.org.
New Program Supports Young Adults with Autism

We’re excited to announce the opening of our newest residential program in Connecticut. A house in Georgetown has become a home for three young men on the autism spectrum.

The house was purchased and renovated by a Georgetown family who was looking for services for their son, Gianni. The Lombardi family took the lead in making the home suitable for individuals with autism, and after much searching, chose Ability Beyond Disability to provide the services. Together, they found two other young men to live in the home and be a part of this innovative program.

This is the first residential program at Ability Beyond Disability that is focused solely on individuals with autism. The program is also unique because the Lombardi’s will continue to serve as the landlords for the home, with their son and two young men as renters.

The program will support the active lifestyle of these young men as they transition into adulthood. Georgetown is the perfect location, with lots of community activities for them to get involved in.

Together, the Lombardi family and Ability Beyond Disability would like to thank the Georgetown community for being so welcoming. A very special thanks to Bill North of Redding, who volunteered many hours on this project. His hard work and advice made a tremendous difference in the renovations to the home. Thanks also to Dempsey Partners of Wilton, for a generous donation, which was used to purchase equipment to further adapt the environment to the needs of the individuals in the home.

We are thrilled that the Lombardi’s chose us to provide the critical supports needed for these young men and we are excited to welcome them into the Ability Beyond Disability family!

Please visit our website to see an article about the new program in the Redding Pilot: www.abilitybeyonddisability.org.

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.

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 and become a member of our Legacy Society please contact Alice Meenan at 203.826.3182 or Alice.Meenan@abilitybeyonddisability.org.

The house in Georgetown, called “Honeyvale Cottage”

Gianni in his new home
Technology Fosters Independence

Ability Beyond Disability has been working hard to incorporate technology into our programs to help people with disabilities achieve more independence. Over the past year in Yonkers, New York, Ability Beyond Disability has implemented the use of iPads and smart home technology for independent living in an innovative program for young adults.

The Yonkers program was created to help these individuals develop independent living skills and eventually transition to living on their own. The iPads have been instrumental in decreasing the need for support and increasing the independence of each person that lives there. They have seen so much success that some of the residents were even featured on the front page of the Journal News last month!

It has been easy for these young adults to transition to the use of iPads to help them become more independent. This generation has grown up with technology being a big part of their lives. They use their iPads for budgeting with apps such as iCheckBalance and iBank; for keeping track of their medications and learning about each one with PharmacyX and for keeping track of their medical history with MyMedical.

Ability Beyond Disability is committed to helping the people we serve live as independently as possible. As new technology becomes available, we will continue to research and implement it so that we are providing support of the highest quality.

If you would like to see the Journal News article, please visit our website: www.abilitybeyonddisability.org

Roses for Autism Annual Open House

On Saturday January 26th, Roses for Autism hosted an Open House that was attended by more than 300 members of the Connecticut shoreline community and beyond. Attendees came for public tours and a behind-the-scenes look at the farm as well as to learn more about the career training program.

Joan Volpe, Executive Director of Roses for Autism, greeted a steady stream of new faces and of all ages at the event. Attendees roamed the premises to learn from the staff and career training participants about how the flowers are planted, pinched, cut, graded, marketed, packaged, shipped and/or otherwise sold to customers.

Many people were interested in seeing the rows and rows of Forever Yours roses growing for Valentine’s Day in the greenhouses. With such a great turnout for the event, plans are under way to host more open houses in the future.

Keep Roses for Autism in mind for your next holiday celebration or event. Roses for Autism can ship roses for next day delivery anywhere in the Continental U.S.

Visit them at www.rosesforautism.com!

Guests taking tours of the greenhouse
Mental Health Expertise

At Ability Beyond Disability we pride ourselves on offering our employees the most up to date certifications and trainings to keep them informed of the newest information in our field. One of the many courses we are currently offering is called Mental Health First Aid. This training program is not geared towards people in the mental health field, but is designed to inform a variety of audiences on how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a crisis.

This is the first time Mental Health First Aid is being offered to all employees at Ability Beyond Disability, instructed by Michelle Weinstein, a Residential & Clinical Services Manager who has been with the organization for nine years. The 12-hour training course is designed to build mental health literacy as well as help the public identify, understand, and respond to the signs of mental illness.

“This training is not designed for clinicians; it is geared towards non clinical staff that may have interactions, but haven’t had formalized training,” says Michelle Weinstein. “The probability is high that the average person will run in to someone facing a mental crisis, so this training is very beneficial.”

Mental Health First Aid was created in Australia in 2001 and is now taught worldwide and has been replicated in countries such as Cambodia, England, Finland, New Zealand and others. Recently, President Obama endorsed this specific training. “As part of his recommendations to protect our communities from gun violence, President Obama today rightly called for Mental Health First Aid training,” said Linda Rosenberg, President and CEO of the National Council for Behavioral Health.

“There is a huge stigma around mental health,” says Michelle. “People think that mental health is only an issue for someone with severe challenges and that these individuals are extremely violent and aggressive. This is not a true indicator of mental health. It is you, me, everyone. There isn’t anyone who wouldn’t benefit from this training. This class crushes stereotypes and helps to normalize struggle.”

People across the world are working hard to promote this training and the hope is that someday, Mental Health First Aid will become as common as CPR and First Aid training.

Dance With Me!

Jill and Kristina, Seniors at Brookfield High School are spreading their love of dance with the people served by Ability Beyond Disability! These young ladies created dance classes at their school for people with special needs and decided to take what they’ve learned out into the community. They’ll be holding a dance class for individuals at Ability Beyond Disability twice a month.

“We held a similarly structured class at our school as part of Kristina’s Gold Award Project,” said Jill.

“At the time, I thought it would just be fun to all dance together...but it turned out to be REALLY fun and I thought we should do it somewhere else too,” said Kristina.

Their first class was a huge success! Individuals from across our program areas were moving and shaking with the help of their staff and incredible instructors.

Gilberto, one of the dancers told us, “I loved it and I will definitely come back!”
Dear Friends,

The phrase “new normal” is heard often these days. In our field that means fewer resources available to meet greater needs. The “new normal” isn’t a transitory phenomenon: organizations that serve people with disabilities need to make fundamental changes in the way we operate. It doesn’t mean that we need to compromise our goals or our commitment to quality but it does mean that we need to do things differently.

While the accomplishment of which we are most proud is the fact that we assisted well over 2,100 individuals achieve greater independence and personal fulfillment in 2012, we are also proud of the fact that we actually reduced the average cost of supporting the individuals we serve! And, we didn’t accomplish this by cutting services: we did it by increasing staff training and embracing technology and automation.

Historically, you wouldn’t find “technology and automation” in the same paragraph as “health and human services”. Frankly, you still don’t see the connection enough throughout our field. I’m proud that we are on the cutting edge in utilizing tools that weren’t available a short time ago to increase our operational efficiency and to enhance the personal autonomy and independence of those we serve, less expensively.

Early returns from our investments in the automation of our Human Resource Information System and the development of an Electronic Consumer Record System are very positive: administrative costs are down and critical staff time is being freed to devote to supporting our consumers. As these systems become more fully developed and embedded, we will see even greater efficiency. Similarly, we piloted consumer assistive technology with extraordinary results: individuals who began 2012 requiring 24 hour staff support to live in the community are now thriving with very limited staff support...achieving greater personal autonomy, dignity and pride...at less cost!

The “new normal” isn’t easy but it’s not a show stopper. Even though the challenges are great and will not lessen, our commitment and our organization are stronger than ever. The show will go on at Ability Beyond Disability!

Warm Regards,

Tom

Ability Beyond Disability Board of Directors and Board of Trustees, 2012-2013

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