New Home Opens in Middlefield, Connecticut

Ability Beyond is helping young adults develop successful, independent lives in the community.

In a quaint neighborhood in Middlefield, Connecticut sits a beautiful, remodeled barn that still retains charming characteristics reminiscent of its previous purpose.

This spacious three-bedroom home, complete with a rustic feel, looks out to many acres of farmland and rolling hills and is home to three young men, Ryan, David and Eli, who are transitioning out of school in to their own home for the first time.

The families of these young men came to Ability Beyond looking for a residential program that would meet the similar needs of their loved ones. The search for a suitable home began right away and staff immediately started working with the young men and their families to ensure a smooth transition once the home was ready for them to move in. Staff worked closely with each one of them to gain a better understanding of their needs, interests and individual goals.

During this time they were able to get to know their housemates and the staff that would support them in their new home. They have now been living together for the past several months and are really enjoying the friendships they have built and the experiences they have had so far.

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In recent years, we have seen tremendous growth in the number of young adults looking to move out of their family homes and into a place of their own with Ability Beyond.

While this transition can seem daunting for the individuals and their families, we work hard to ensure the process is as seamless as possible. With our support, these young adults enjoy the opportunity to live in a safe, structured environment that promotes positive decision making and leads to a successful, independent lifestyle.

Across our residential programs we support people with a range of needs at various stages of life. Whether it is supporting young adults like Ryan, David, and Eli, or someone in their older years, our goal is to make sure each of our homes are safe, accessible and provide the supports needed for each person to meet their highest possible level of independence. Through research and testing we have developed a replicable, leading-edge home model that meets the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional needs of those in our care. This model is used when opening new programs like the one in Middlefield and will also be used to guide future renovations of existing homes.

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**Save the Date 2015 Gala**

**Passage to India**

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

Ability Beyond’s 2015 Gala: Passage to India will be held on Saturday April 25, 2015 at the Amber Room Colonnade in Danbury, Connecticut.

This year’s event is being **co-chaired by David & Bonnie Kasiarz** and the **Robert S. Young Humanitarian Award will be presented to Ginny Young** for her tireless efforts in support of Ability Beyond’s mission.

The evening 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.
Creating Opportunities Across the Country

Disability Solutions, Ability Beyond’s corporate consulting practice, has successfully been at it for over a year and we are proud to report some very positive initial results!

Since Fall of 2013 Disability Solutions has been providing consulting services to corporations to assist them in meeting their workforce diversity goals, specializing in disability and inclusion.

In January 2014 we launched the co-branded Pepsi ACT (Achieving Change Together) initiative. So far, more than 60 employees have been hired at various Pepsi sites across the United States.

Work with Pepsi began with a feasibility study that informed a strategic national roll-out within Pepsi Beverages. Starting in two pilot sites to achieve a business goal of decreasing turnover and time to fill positions, we focused on two targeted positions - Loader and Merchandiser.

We are proud to say that Pepsi has already witnessed increased retention and decreased time to fill these positions since working with us. The first post-pilot site involved staffing skilled specialty and management roles at a brand new facility in Las Vegas, Nevada. This new facility is one of only a handful of Certification Centers across the country and was designed as a state-of-the-art example of productivity.

The roles in the Certification Center were skilled specialist positions that required a high level of mechanical aptitude. The Disability Solutions team assessed the qualifications of the roles and built local partnerships designed to bring forward qualified candidates for the new facility. Those partnerships included the Wounded Warriors Project – Warriors to Work, US Vets/Goodwill and the Nevada Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

As a result almost half - 21 employees of the total 46 needed to staff the facility - were hired from the referrals from those partnerships including a key management role.

The team has successfully transitioned the Vegas site to its partners so that Pepsi will benefit from great talent referrals for years to come. The newest Pepsi ACT site in Winston-Salem, North Carolina is a large call center focused on inside sales and equipment services with over 100 job opportunities annually.

While we are seeing a rise in the number of people with disabilities entering the workforce there remains a large untapped pool of qualified talent out there. Through Disability Solutions we further our mission to help people with disabilities gain employment and assist corporations in strengthening business by enhancing the talent lifecycle and broadening market reach through disability hiring and engagement.

We are thrilled to be able to work with Pepsi on this exciting initiative and pleased to announce our newest client, American Express. Together with our corporate clients and national and regional talent partners, we look forward to continuing to help reduce disability unemployment on a national level.

To help support our client growth, we are delighted to announce the hiring of Domonique Churchill. Domonique will be working as a disability hiring and engagement consultant and comes to us with experience as a Diversity & Inclusion consultant at Walgreens and as a Compliance Officer for the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) at the U.S. Department of Labor.

Did you know? 10 years ago we closed our sheltered workshops and made the ultimate commitment to focus on community based employment.
Donor Spotlight: Jane Hardesty Poole

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Support through recent grant awards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
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<th>Project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$48,000</td>
<td>The City of Danbury</td>
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<td>$40,000</td>
<td>The John H. and Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust</td>
<td>for Young Adult Residential Programs</td>
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<td>The Harold and Rebecca H. Gross Foundation</td>
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<td>$1,500</td>
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2015 Marks a Few Important Milestones

1995: This year marks our 20th year of providing services in New York. We began supporting individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury in 1995 at the request of the state. Ability Beyond was the first organization in the area to provide these services.

1995: Our Interlude Recovery Program, the first of its kind in the state of Connecticut, is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Ability Beyond is the only organization in Western Connecticut that provides residential support to individuals with co-occurring mental health challenges and addiction.

2005: This year we celebrate our 10th anniversary of closing our sheltered workshops. We were one of the first organizations in the country to commit to community based employment.

2014: Howland, our first state-of-the-art home in Beacon, NY celebrated their one year anniversary this past December! The fourteen men and women living there were excited to celebrate the holidays together as a family for the first time this year.
Donor Spotlight: Jane Hardesty Poole

Jane Hardesty Poole is a caring and passionate woman; a loving mother, generous philanthropist, avid collector of Japanese porcelain, and a valued member of the Board of Trustees of Ability Beyond.

Jane’s greatest passion lies with her daughter, Josephine. Josephine, now 38 year old, is Jane and her late husband Harrison’s only child.

She was the light of their lives and continues to be for Jane. Born with a developmental disability, Josephine was lovingly cared for at home for the majority of her life.

When Josephine reached her teen years, Jane recognized how important it would be for Josephine to develop relationships with her peers and receive the support she needed then, and in the days when Jane would no longer be able to care for her. It was a difficult decision for Jane but one that she knows was an important one for Josephine’s future.

“After a lot of work, tears and despair, I found Ability Beyond” said Jane. “Having done a lot of research and thinking, I have decided that they are the best in their field and deserve my support in any way that I can provide.”

Jane has been a loyal donor and advocate for Ability Beyond since joining the organization and feels strongly that families need to lead the way in securing the future of Ability Beyond for the sake of their loved ones.

To date, Jane has generously pledged over $1 million to Ability Beyond and our vision for the future. Through her generosity she is providing for a new home to be built that will become the standard for all new homes for individuals with developmental disabilities as they age.

In addition to Jane’s financial commitments to Ability Beyond, she has been instrumental in spreading awareness throughout Greenwich, New York City, and Westchester, of the important role we play for those with developmental disabilities. Most recently, Jane hosted an event at the Metropolitan Museum of Art where she thanked many of her friends who have contributed to Ability Beyond and introduced others to the organization.

Discover the Possibilities

For individuals with disabilities, technology has the power to open unprecedented doors - and it could mean the difference between independence and relying on someone else for the fulfillment of everyday needs. Across our program lines we are testing and implementing technology that enhances care and promotes autonomy. Ability Beyond is looking at technology differently through an exceptional grant opportunity.

The Harold & Rebecca H. Gross Foundation generously granted Ability Beyond $34,500 to kick-start our “Discover the Possibilities” initiative. This project will expand the traditional definition of “assistive technology” for people with a variety of disabilities and Ability Beyond plans to share the findings and best practices with a broader market.

Ability Beyond has found that thoughtfully-integrated technology can both generate cost-savings, which frees up financial resources to be re-allocated to serve more people in need, while providing more customized, effective care. We are looking for the life-changing potential in technological tools that were not designed for individuals with disabilities in mind, but which have a clear benefit to the individuals we support.

Some examples of technology we will be using include: the Vocc, a voice-controlled lighting system, or the Alba, a lightbulb that learns and adapts to its owners’ household habits - and generates upward of 80 percent energy savings; RogerVoice, an iPhone app that subtitles phone conversations in real time and can allow the hearing impaired to make calls independently; TRILOC, a GPS-locator watch that could improve the safety of our clients while encouraging more autonomy; and many more.

This grant will allow us to integrate a new wave of assistive technology into our programs while also laying the groundwork for a high-tech library and consulting service that will offer the opportunity to help even more people. We are very excited about the possibilities for the individuals we serve and will be giving periodic updates. Stay tuned as we get underway with this initiative!
Ability Beyond Receives 3 Year Accreditation

This past fall Ability Beyond once again received a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, (CARF) which we have done consecutively for over 35 years.

The three-year accreditation represents the highest level of accreditation that can be awarded to an organization and shows substantial conformance to the CARF standards. An organization receiving a Three-Year Accreditation has put itself through a rigorous peer review process and has demonstrated to a team of surveyors during an on-site visit that its programs and services are of the highest quality.

CARF recently surveyed Ability Beyond to evaluate the services provided by the agency in both Connecticut and New York including their employment services, residential services, services coordination and supported living services. This year there were five surveyors from across the country that came to evaluate Ability Beyond’s standards for quality in the provision of human services.

The surveyors found many strengths that are unique to Ability Beyond including the expansion and creation of new programs and services to allow the individuals supported by Ability Beyond to explore different career paths and learn tangible skills.

Other notable items included Ability Beyond being proactive in strategic planning which has resulted in tremendous growth for the agency over the past several years, the enthusiasm of the staff at Ability Beyond and in turn the individuals supported by the agency expressing sincere appreciation for not only the services but the support they receive from staff members.

Our team of surveyors from CARF

Ability Beyond was also noted for the active participation of board members, the long-tenured leadership and management staff, and the success in fundraising among many other things.

One surveyor noted, “Your board is very committed to you as an organization. They work very hard and they volunteer very hard on behalf of the people you serve...and I think your success in the fundraising area is remarkable. Way, way above what I see in most organizations.”

We are very honored to have received so many compliments from the surveyors and we are truly fortunate to have so many dedicated board members, family members and community members that support our mission at Ability Beyond.

Marvelous Mentors

This past year we launched a Mentoring & Supervision certification course for direct support staff that have already been through the initial Pathways to Excellence Career Path Program. This course was created for staff interested in helping new hires get better acquainted with the programs and culture at Ability Beyond. The mentors help the mentees with any questions they may have and are there to assist the new staff as needed.

Heaven Johnson has been a direct care staff with Ability Beyond for just over three months. During her third week of orientation, she was matched with Denisse Goris as her mentor. Having been with Ability Beyond for nearly 5 years, Denisse has proven to be a valuable role model for Heaven.

When asked why she wanted to become a mentor, Denisse recalled her start at Ability Beyond – she remembers a young woman who showed her the ropes, and it inspired her to want to give that same experience to someone else.

Heaven was drawn to work for Ability Beyond due to a love of helping people. Because of her busy schedule, Heaven opted for a flex position, where she has the opportunity to juggle being a mom, being in the Army Reserves and holding another job.

Through this experience Denisse and Heaven have been able to build a friendship they both value. Denisse has been able to offer insights as to how to build a rewarding and successful career at Ability Beyond. Although Heaven has transitioned into her official position, Denisse is just a phone call away for any advice or guidance she may need.

This is just one of the many success stories we have seen at Ability Beyond through our Mentoring & Supervision program and we look forward to see the continued benefits of this program.
Tis the Season

We are grateful that the holiday season at Ability Beyond is full of generous companies, volunteers and community members helping to make the season bright for the individuals we support.

For the past several years three local organizations have generously provided gifts to the individuals supported by Ability Beyond around the holidays. The individuals receiving these gifts would not otherwise have presents to open nor do they have families to visit during the holiday, which makes these groups so special to us!

The Quota Club of Candlewood Valley, the members of the YMCA of Western CT and the “Caring Hands” group at Siemens helped to make the holidays special for over 100 individuals supported by Ability Beyond.

For the second year in a row Ridgefield Academy’s 5-8th graders put on an incredible band and chorus concert for over 50 individuals in our day programs. They put them in the holiday spirit with traditional carols, sing-a-longs and some fun tunes for them to dance to. Afterwards they enjoyed some homemade treats and were able to spend some time together.

GE Capital Real Estate of Norwalk also came to Ability Beyond in December to celebrate the holiday season by volunteering time and making a generous $2500 donation. Over a dozen volunteers planned a special day for over 100 individuals supported by Ability Beyond. The day included a wonderful holiday lunch and lots of fun and games. The men and women benefitting from the party were grateful for the time and kindness of the volunteers who helped brighten the holiday season for them.

If you or your company are interested in volunteering at Ability Beyond please contact Samantha Cosentino at 203-826-3181.
Dear Friends,

As we begin a new year, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to our growing family of supporters. Ability Beyond enjoys a very positive reputation locally, regionally and nationally for the work we do in providing opportunities for people with disabilities to reach their potential. Much of our success is due to your generosity. In spite of diminishing governmental support, we have been able to continue to grow and create new approaches to service which are both more effective and efficient...because of philanthropic support. Rooted in our 62 year history, we remain committed to the core values of our founders in providing the best possible services to each individual we serve, each and every day. At the same time, we are committed to change, improvement and the pursuit of new ways to discover, build and celebrate the ability in those we serve. Your generosity has made the difference for us in the past and we look forward to greater success in the years to come, thanks to your continued support.

May 2015 bring you joy and good health. Together, the journey of Ability Beyond will continue with great success!

Happy New Year!

Tom

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