

ALLIES

WINTER/SPRING 2016

A MAGAZINE FROM THE BHN ALLIANCE



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Brunner
Honored**



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ON THE COVER: Caldwell High School Seniors Jenna Porter and Gabby Harriman have been in school together since kindergarten and both are looking forward to graduation this spring. Read more about Jenna and her school experience on page 4 of this issue.

ALLIES

ALLIES is published quarterly by the BHN Alliance (Belmont-Harrison-Noble County Boards of Developmental Disabilities), 330 Fox-Shannon Place, St. Clairsville, OH 43950. Its goal is to spotlight the accomplishments of people with disabilities who are living, working, learning, and contributing in communities across the three counties. Comments and suggestions for articles may be sent to the Editor at the above address, or by e-mail pmccort@bcbdd.org

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Brunner Honored by Community and Friends



Mickey Brunner caught up with his former co-workers at ODOT's Morristown garage. Shown from left are: Rick Angelo, Jim Zupko, Todd Jewell, Marvin Butler, Gordon Loase, Brad Mason, Mickey, Jason Suter, Kim Mercer, Jerry Campbell, and Dave Schafer. Standing in back are Jonathan Bugay and Joe Thompson.

When Dave Schafer picked up the newspaper and read that Powhatan had announced the grand marshal for its 2015 Christmas parade, he assumed it was one more public official or dignitary receiving the honor.

He was wrong.

It turned out that the Grand Marshal was none other than Mickey Brunner, who had worked for Dave at the Ohio Department of Transportation's Morristown garage.

Known to his fellow workers as "Mick," he was employed at the garage for nearly 15 years. Dave, who is garage manager, said that he was good at what he did and well-liked by his co-workers. When Mickey left that job two years ago for a less physically demanding one, he was missed.

Dave saw the parade as an opportunity.

"We all love Mick and

wanted to show our support by attending the parade in his honor," Dave said. "Everyone wanted to be there for him."

An armada of seven painted plows driven by ODOT workers traveled to Powhatan Point on November 14th. Mickey was surprised to learn everyone was there because of him.

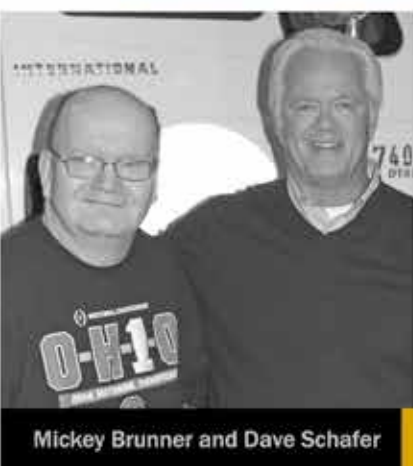
In the newspaper article announcing that he would be the grand marshal, Diane Baker, Mickey's sister, said that he has been part of the community his entire life and has a multitude of friends because of it. His involvement has also positively influenced how others see people with disabilities.

Mickey was selected as Grand Marshal by Tom Nelms, chief of the Powhatan Point fire department, where he is an honorary member. In addition to the fire department, Mickey is a social member of the American Legion Post 229 and VFW Post 5565. He likes the Pittsburgh Steelers and enjoys going to Wheeling Island Racetrack and Casino.

During the parade, Mickey waved from the back of an ODOT truck as those watching called out his name. It was a night and an experience that he will never forget.

The experience had a significant impact on someone else, too.

"It was the highlight of my career," Dave said.



Mickey Brunner and Dave Schafer



Jenna smiles at the antics of her friends and fellow seniors, Halle Sanford (left) and Savannah Carpenter.

The Same, Not Special

The word “special” means distinct in comparison to others. That is probably why its use was adopted to describe people with disabilities, like a child with “special needs” or a service, like “special education.”

While these terms certainly originated from a place of caring, they are labels that separate people, and separation was not what Bill and Amy Porter of Belle Valley wanted for their daughter, Jenna.

From the time she was born 18 years ago, Jenna has been treated like any other child. In fact, if the Porters use the word special at all, it's to describe the distinctive way the Caldwell Village School students, administration, faculty and staff have welcomed and accepted their daughter for the past 12 years.

THE SAME, NOT SPECIAL

Jenna Porter is a senior at Caldwell High School in Noble County. Like her classmates, she has had a busy year and is eager to graduate. Some might even say she and her friends have “senioritis,” that condition marked by an impatience

with all things having to do with schoolwork!

Jenna was born with Down syndrome, a diagnosis that did not change the hopes and dreams her parents had for their daughter. They wanted her to be happy, accepted and given opportunities to learn and grow.

“I just didn’t want her to be treated differently,” Amy said.

For Jenna to have the same experiences as other children, she would need access to the same education and that meant attending public school.

When it was time for Jenna to start kindergarten, a “special,” or segregated, school was suggested in another county. The Porters never considered it. They knew that Jenna’s happiness hinged on the opportunity for her to make friends with children of all abilities in the community where she lived.



Jenna is pictured with her parents, Amy and Bill, and brother, Garrett, before the Caldwell Homecoming game this past fall.

"She deserved the chance to go to regular school," Bill said.

At the age of five, she was welcomed into the Class of 2016 in the Caldwell Exempted Village School District. The friendships her

parents wanted for her began to take shape right away.

"Because these kids grew up in the same hometown, they always accepted Jenna," Bill said.

Jenna has been involved in activities and clubs for years, including National Honor Society and Homecoming Court. In fact, Jenna was crowned the 2015 Caldwell High Homecoming Queen after Laken Figel, her best friend since third grade, drew the winning rose and promptly handed it to Jenna. This powerful show of affection was emotional for her parents and nearly everyone who witnessed it.

Other seniors like Gabby Harriman, Halle Sandford and Savannah Carpenter have also been friends with Jenna since kindergarten. Gabby says that Jenna is a positive influence on her friends and classmates.

"Jenna looks at everyone the same and does not discriminate," Gabby said. "She is everyone's friend, because she believes that no one should ever feel unwanted."

CONNECTIONS

Connie Bond, an inclusion facilitator employed by the

Noble County Board of Developmental Disabilities, has been with Jenna for 12 years and has witnessed the benefits of an inclusive education.

"It's been a joy to see Jenna progress academically and socially as she has matured into the wonderful young lady she is today," Connie said.

Connie said the class of 2016 is distinctive because of the way they treat not just Jenna, but one another, too.

"This class has been the best," Connie said.

Connie, Amy and Bill also praise a supportive school administration and teachers, who welcomed Jenna into their general education classrooms.

"We've had great teachers pushing for more for Jenna," Bill said.



Inclusion Facilitator Connie Bond (center) and Intervention Specialist Erika Copley provided Jenna with classroom support at Caldwell High.

As her parents reflect over the last 12 years, they know that being included and accepted is the reason why Jenna has relationships in her life.

"All these connections will carry on when she is no longer in school," Bill said.

NO EXCEPTION

As graduation approaches, Jenna will be involved in the typical spring activities like prom, commencement and the parties that go along with each one. After graduation, Jenna said she wants a job and her parents are considering a business venture that ties into her love of art.

"We may start a small art supply business for Jenna," Bill said. "I think she could excel at it."

In the meantime, Jenna is honing her skills and doing job sampling through *Bridges to Transition*.

Jenna's parents understood that her future success and happiness depended upon the relationships – the friends – in her life and being included in public school allowed friendships to develop naturally. They knew they would and believe all parents can make that happen for their children with disabilities.

"If you want your child to be involved, you can't treat your child any differently than kids without disabilities," Bill said. "Jenna is just like every other child. She is no exception."



Jenna was crowned the 2015 Caldwell High School Homecoming Queen when her best friend, Laken Figel drew the lucky rose and then presented it to her. The CHS Homecoming Court included the following, front row, l-r: Kayley Barnhart, Sophomore Attendant; Alyssa Leasure, Junior Attendant; Savannah Carpenter, Jenna Porter, Laken Figel, and Cheyenne Brown, Senior Queen Candidates; and Calleigh Moore, Freshman Attendant. Back row: Senior King Candidates Jack Ridenour, Tanner Clark and Kolby Rayner.

Photo by Kreg Robinson, courtesy of The Journal & Noble County Leader.

Partnering to Make Employment Work for People

In business and in life, relationships matter. And if you are in the business of supporting people, relationships are the key to your success and the success of the people you represent.

The relationship between county boards of developmental disabilities and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) is a success by any measure and the proof is in the changed lives and real jobs people with disabilities are now getting in the community.

This partnership emerged in recent years as a result of Ohio's *Employment First* initiative. Signed into law by Governor Kasich in 2013, *Employment First* ensures that every person of working age is given the opportunity to seek employment in the community first. It requires county boards, public schools, vocational rehabilitation providers and others to



This team works in partnership with providers to make employment work for people of all abilities. Pictured from left are: Laurle Simmons, Bridges to Transition Supervisor at the Ohio Association of County Boards; Robert Nicholson, OOD's Central and Southeast Area Manager; Jay Burns, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor; Adam "Nick" Nicholoff, BHN Alliance Transition Director; Julie Horton, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor; and Kara Shutler, BHN Alliance Transition Counselor.

work together to help them identify their goals and find opportunities where they can put their skills to work.

“Before *Employment First*, resources were not substantially available in our community,” said Adam “Nick” Nicholoff, Director of Transition Services for the BHN Alliance. “Now, we build upon one another’s strengths.”

Robert Nicholson, OOD’s Central and Southeast Area Manager, agrees.

“Overall, the Employment First partnership has been a game changer in how county boards and OOD work together,” said Nicholson.

Nick said it’s the “local connection” of the county boards with the people they support, coupled with the resources that OOD brings to the table that has significantly increased the number of people who train for and get competitive jobs.

In fact, *Employment First* has brought opportunities to local job seekers, who otherwise did not have options or pathways to try community employment.

“The partnership works because OOD and the County Boards of DD both have the job seekers’ best interests in mind, and work together to help people obtain and maintain employment,” said Nicholson.

This was not always how things worked.

For decades, it was assumed that people with disabilities could not work alongside people without disabilities in the community. As a result, there was only one option - segregated work settings - where they were paid sub-minimum wage for jobs that may have been well below their actual abilities. Most were soon labeled as unable and uninterested in jobs in the community.

“We continue to evolve in our appreciation of a person’s capability, rather than disability,” Nick said. “The collaboration with OOD allows us to bring to bear the best local resources to promote self-determination.”

The BHN Alliance’s team includes Nick and Kara Shutler, Transition Counselor, who have been helping youth, ages 14 to 25, identify their abilities and explore careers through *Bridges to Transition* since 2010.

Bob heads up the OOD team that works in Belmont, Harrison and Noble counties. It includes Julie Horton, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and Jay Burns, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, as well as Laurie Simmons, *Bridges to Transition* Supervisor at the Ohio Association of County Boards.

“Overall, the Employment First partnership has been a game changer in how county boards and OOD work together.”

Once a person enters *Employment First*, his interests and skills are identified by an OOD counselor, who then works with him to identify careers that match. Trial work experiences are arranged in the community so he can become familiar with what the job is really like. If additional support is needed on the job, OOD provides personal job coaching.

“What is so great about this effort is that it partners the resources and expertise of Julie, the OOD counselor, and the local knowledge of Kara, the transition specialist,” Nick said, adding that all the partners working together allows for multiple perspectives and person centered planning.

The employment journey is not the same for everyone, so it is individualized for optimum success.

“Employers love working with our job seekers, and are continually impressed with what they bring to the table in terms of energy, skills and commitment,” said Nicholson.

For BHN Alliance Superintendent Stephen Williams, the partnership is a prime example of how lives improve when agencies work together for a common goal.

“If we truly respect every person and want them to have opportunities like everyone else, then this is simply the right thing to do,” Williams said. “There are more people on the job earning real wages because of this partnership.”

If you are interested in learning how working can benefit you, call Nick at 740-695-0407, ext. 352, or go to www.employmentfirst.org or www.employmentfirst@dodd.ohio.gov

Kris Scores for Browns' Charity

The "first times" of our lives are always memorable, but not always remarkable. Consider your first day of school or the first time you rode a two-wheeled bicycle. On the other hand, Kris Bowdish's first pro football game was memorable and remarkable. That's because he was on the field!

Kris, 27, earned the on-field pass and recognition as one of the first 10 people to raise \$1000 for the Dawg Pound 5K Dash, a fundraiser to benefit the Browns Adaptive Football League (AFL).

which provides youth and young adults with disabilities opportunities to participate in a competitive developmental sport.

Kris and 18 family members and friends were present in Cleveland for the Browns-Arizona Cardinals' game on November 1, 2015 to applaud and support Kris.

Robin said Kris was happy to be at the game, but not for the recognition.

"He was excited that he got the support he did from those who donated to the AFL because of him," Robin said.

Robin said attending the game itself was an accomplishment for Kris, because he does not like to be in large crowds.

"We weren't sure how he would do (at the game), but we wanted him to try," Robin said.

Kris handled the experience with ease, even when he had to navigate multiple stadium levels, tunnels, and walk among throngs of fans to get to the field.

Kris may not like large groups of people, yet he is happiest when he

is in the community and involved with people of all abilities.

"He has relationships today because he was in public school," Robin said. "He has also met many people from volunteering and working in and around Harrison County."

With the Cleveland event now just a memory, Kris is certain to have another "first time" experience in the community soon.

It may be remarkable, too.



Kris Bowdish of Harrison County is shown with Swagger, the Cleveland Browns' mascot, at the Browns vs. Cardinals game where he was recognized on the field for raising more than \$1500 in support of the team's Adaptive Football League.

The Bowdish family's nephew and cousin, Nate Barnhart, is co-founder of Cerulean Sports Group, which organized the Dawg Pound Dash. Nate and another cousin, Bryan Bowdish, invited Kris to get involved by raising money for the cause.

"When Nate and Bryan contacted us about the race, Kris was really excited and wanted to do it," said his mom, Robin Bowdish.

8 Kris soon raised over \$1500 in support of the AFL,

Meet Scott Atkins

Jewett Scio High
School Graduate

Wrestled in
high school

Works three
jobs

Likes to read
and collect
comic books

Science Fiction
writer

Member of
the Sons of
the American
Legion

What other people say about Scott:

**“Scott’s work ethic is
second to none.”**

“He’s the ‘go-to guy’ at work.”

**“He helps people get the
job done.”**

A Conversation with... Anne Haning of Belco Works



ANNE HANING

Editor's Note: Belco Works, Inc. was founded in 1966 as Belco Crafts, one of many non-profit, sheltered workshops created by county boards of developmental disabilities. From its beginning as an activity center, it has grown into a recognizable provider of supports for people with disabilities in Belmont County. The name changed to Belco Works in 2005 to more accurately reflect the packaging, assembly and document destruction services provided to business and industry. It separated from the Belmont County Board of DD in 2009 and is a private, non-profit provider of employment and community supports for over 130 people. Anne Haning has served as Executive Director since 2006. She has over 30 years of experience in the disabilities field, including community/supported employment, vocational rehabilitation and direct services. She holds a bachelor's degree from Wittenberg University and a master's degree from Villanova. She is president of the Ohio Association of Adult Services Board of Trustees; is a CARF Surveyor of Employment and Community Services, and member of the Ohio Employment First Advisory Committee.

Allies: *Belco Works was founded as Belco Crafts at a time when adults with disabilities were not considered employable and this option gave them somewhere to go once they left school. Explain how Belco evolved to meet the needs and desires of the people it supports and the expectations for the future.*

A.H.: Belco Works has a long history of supporting people with disabilities and we are proudly celebrating our 50th anniversary in 2016. In 1966, there were few, if any, opportunities for people with disabilities once they left school. Our founders wanted something more so they created Belco Crafts as a non-profit organization with an initial goal of offering some type of activity for adults. People made ceramic wind chimes and other crafts at a time when those products were popular with the public.

The developmental disabilities' system began to evolve and workshops like Belco Crafts became training settings where adults could prepare for employment. As the public's interest in crafts began to decline, Belco became a sub-contractor of packaging and assembly to business and industry. The name changed to Belco Works and a leader in the sub-contracting business was born. Contracts with Shamrock Conduit, Homer-Laughlin China Co. and others were consistent sources of work for many years. Ten years ago, Belco employees shipped an average of 410 boxes of china out of the workshop every day and packaged over one million screws annually.

A decline in manufacturing and industry coincided with a significant decrease in the types and amount of sub-contract work available for sheltered workshops. A shift in expectations then began. People we supported wanted opportunities to work in the community. System-wide changes also require that we offer and encourage community-based services as the first option, so we began to evolve to better meet their needs.

Belco Works put effort and energy into its community employment supports as some community-based

jobs became available. A few people were given the opportunity to work in the community. Their successes were shared and the desire for community employment slowly grew.

There is now a higher demand for community-based services, and we are structuring to accommodate it and changes that have occurred. In fact, Belco Works has supported people working in the community for decades. That idea and effort is now promoted across the state.

A lot of change has happened during Belco's 50 years of existence, but none as significant as in the last five years. We now are required by law to offer community-based supports to people before any sheltered, or non-integrated, services can be considered. The heart of the issue is one of civil rights for people who have historically been kept in isolation. We honor our beginnings as a sheltered work setting, while recognizing the abilities of those we support and their desire to be involved in every aspect of the community, especially work. It is clear that the future is community-based employment and activities for people with disabilities. It is also clear that the future is bright for the people we support!

ALLIES: *Belco Works' mission is "to provide resources that promote meaningful employment and community opportunities for persons served." What does this mission look like in a practical sense for a young person who has reached adulthood and is looking for a job? What does it look like for someone who has been in the sheltered work setting for many years?*

A.H.: Young people with disabilities now have many more opportunities to explore and prepare for a job before they graduate from high school. Transition services provided by state and local service providers are designed to begin preparing a student at the age of 14.

Belco Works provides transition services through the *Bridges to Transition* program. This may include Summer Youth programs, Work Adjustment, Community Based

Assessments, or other employment-related services.

People served in the sheltered workshop are offered individualized opportunities as a way to familiarize each one to the possibility of a job in a typical workplace. With the introduction in 2012 of Governor Kasich's *Employment First* Initiative, every person is encouraged to explore community-based employment and our Community Employment program is for those who want those opportunities.

We continue to enhance the sheltered setting to be as much like a real workplace as possible, so people become familiar with what employers expect in competitive work. Likewise, real-world expectations can provide a learning environment for work skills as well as social and independent living skills.

We are also developing a variety of volunteering activities. With support from our staff, people can "test" community-based services, identify their interests for work, and gain valuable experience that could potentially lead to competitive employment. It's working in more ways than one. We are able to observe people in a totally different settings. In most cases, we find that people have many more skills, desires, and interests than were ever shown in the sheltered workshop. They even demonstrate an independence we have not seen before. This has reinforced the suggestion that workshops do not bring out the best in people, and in many cases, increase their dependency.

Employment Works is another option that focuses on job readiness, job search, and community experiences. It brings people together for learning and/or volunteering in community settings. In this way, people are able to "test" community-based choices with the goal of preparing for employment.

ALLIES: *Belco Works made a name for itself by providing contract services to business and industry performed by people with disabilities in a segregated, sheltered workshop. Mandatory changes to the system are altering what day supports look like and how they are delivered in Ohio. What is the future of Belco Works and what are you discovering as you adjust to the changes?*

A.H.: The mandates for the future are clear - supports for people with disabilities will be offered in integrated, community settings. Places where people only interact with other people with disabilities and paid personnel do not meet the state and federal rules.

Service providers like us will become more flexible and experienced in community integrated services. We are preparing ourselves for our changing role in people's lives. We are involved in state associations and attend trainings to learn how to meet their needs. We network with similar organizations throughout Ohio to learn from their experiences in community services, taking the best practices and customizing them for the individual needs of the people we are serving.

ALLIES: *With the shift away from sheltered environments toward jobs in the community, what are some of the supports that Employment Works, a Belco subsidiary, offers and what are the outcomes the people you support are seeing in their lives?*

A.H.: Employment Works offers a totally unique experience that is not available in our workshop. For people interested in getting a job in the community, it has the realistic component of going out into the business community and having a new experience. Employment Works is designed to present opportunities where people can naturally encounter and interact with people in stores, restaurants, and businesses.

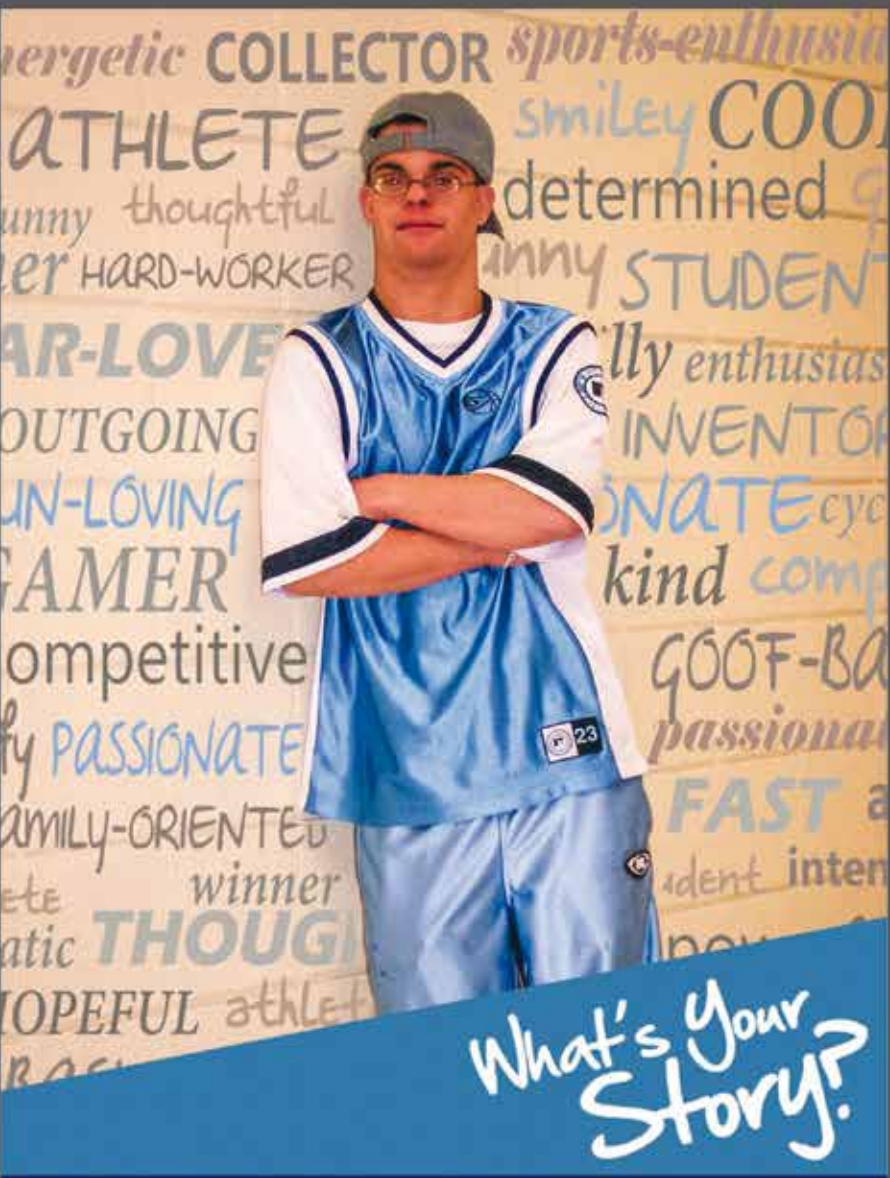
Employment Works provides work and volunteer experiences in combination with classroom time for job readiness training. People are able to learn what interests them and the skills they have. They receive soft skills' training and learn how to get along with supervisors and co-workers. They also learn social skills and other abilities necessary for a successful job experience.



Lacey Fankhouser is gaining skills by sampling a variety of work and volunteer experiences through Employment Works, a subsidiary of Belco Works.



Fred Adkins has been employed for the past 35 years at the Guernsey County Rest Area. His job is made possible through a contract that Belco Works has with the Ohio Department of Transportation.



Meet Brad

It may be obvious from the photo that Brad is athletic, but there is so much more to him than meets the eye.

Brad is employed as a baler in the document destruction department at Belco Works. He is also honing his skills and intends to work in the community sometime in the near future.

Brad is an avid baseball fan and he and his Dad are on a quest to visit every professional baseball stadium in the United States. So far, they have attended games in Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Kansas City, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Toronto (*that's in Canada!*), and Washington, DC. According to Brad, these trips are for "guys only" and he saves his money all year long for them.

When Brad isn't on the job, working out, or traveling the country, he is making music videos, dancing and singing along to his favorite artists, and acting out his aspiration to someday be a "rock star!" He also enjoys being in the kitchen, cooking up healthy dishes and logging nutrition label information into his iPad for future reference.

Brad is family-oriented and there is a little girl named Reagan who calls him "Uncle Brad." He helps babysit her one day a week and she is the apple of his eye. He carries Reagan's picture with him always and proudly shows it to others so they can appreciate just how adorable she is.

Athletic, hard-working, kind and enthusiastic – that's all Brad – *plus a whole lot more!*

Brad George of St. Clairsville was chosen as one of the models for the 2016 Ohio Public Images' Awareness Campaign, *What's Your Story?* Brad's story is printed at right and it can also be found on the Belmont, Harrison and Noble county board websites.

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