

ALLIES

FALL 2015

A MAGAZINE FROM THE BHN ALLIANCE



Decide. Commit. SUCCEED.

The Why

By Stephen L. Williams
BHN Alliance Superintendent



The question “What do you do?” usually comes up within the first minute or two after meeting someone new. I wonder how we would answer if people asked not what we do, but why we do it.

For some time now, we have known changes were coming in the way we support people with disabilities in Ohio. In fact, the boards in the BHN Alliance jumped out in front of some of the changes several years ago. We began to look at the community first for the things people wanted. Why did we do this? Because we believe that people with

disabilities should be included in all aspects of the community.

That is the “why” behind what we do in the BHN Alliance. We believe that people with disabilities have a lot to offer and we have made it our mission to encourage, support and respect each one as they seek the things that matter the most to them within the community.

In June, the changes to Ohio’s developmental disabilities’ system we knew were coming were agreed upon between the state and federal governments. We now begin a process that will, over the next nine years, change the way county boards operate. The changes carry names like “conflict-free case management,” “community integration” and “community-based employment.” What does all this mean? It means choice and opportunity for the people we support.

The BHN Alliance believes in the potential within each person and we believe that choices and opportunities lead to a more natural, fulfilling life. For us, the “why” isn’t about changes in the law and other mandates. It’s about people having equal access to everything the community has to offer.

In this issue of Allies, you’ll learn what access to the community can do. You’ll read about Erik, who is on the job in his hometown and loving it. You’ll read about William, who always wanted to read and is learning how, thanks to a dedicated ABLE teacher. You’ll also read about Shane, whose unique business venture promises to take flight on the wings of his potential.

Why do we believe what we believe? Because when people with disabilities are valued for who they are and what they bring to the community, everyone benefits.

That’s why.

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

Publisher
Stephen L. Williams
Superintendent
740-695-0233
swilliams@bcbdd.org

Contributing Editor and Photographer
Pamela R. McCort
Communications
Coordinator
pmccort@bcbdd.org
740-695-0407, ext 335

**Belmont County
Board of DD**
www.bcbdd.org
740-695-0233

**Harrison County
Board of DD**
www.hcbdd.org
740-942-2158

**Noble County
Board of DD**
www.ncbdd.org
740-732-7144

GETTING THE JOB DONE RIGHT



Zac, now on the job at the Noble County Multi-Agency Building

From receptionists and secretaries to carpenters and carpet fitters, workers with disabilities get the job done right and are ready to put their skills to work for your business.

TALENTED.

Workers of all abilities bring a wide range of abilities and talents to the workplace.

DEPENDABLE.

Lower rates of absenteeism and less turnover mean increased productivity and revenue.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS.

Consumers respond positively to companies with a diversified workforce.

To learn more, call Adam (Nick) Nicholoff at 740-695-0407, ext. 352 or email anicholoff@bcbdd.org.



Belmont-Harrison-Noble County Boards of Developmental Disabilities

Educating William

As Jim Sacco hung up the phone, he wondered what he was getting himself into.

He had just taken a call from Jennie Vera, an SSA with the BHN Alliance, who wanted to know if he would teach a man with a developmental disability how to read. As an Adult Basic & Literacy Education (ABLE) instructor with 16 years of experience, Jim has taught adult learners of all abilities, and while the research suggests that a

“I didn’t know what to expect, but I hate to tell anyone no,” Jim said. “If I have the information to help someone, I want to try.”

ABLE is offered through the Mid East Career and Technology Centers. Instructors teach basic skills like reading, as well as college and career preparation.

While he may not have been prepared to educate someone with a diagnosed developmental disability, Jim said he had resources readily available.

Those resources include training he has taken in various teaching methods and a program designed for people with special learning needs.

The ability to read adds significantly to the quality of life for all people, yet that ability is often marginalized where people with developmental disabilities are concerned.

When Jim met William Sutton, 28, he saw a typical young man. What he heard was something else.

“The thing that surprised me right off the bat was his vocabulary,” Jim said, adding that William was using words he was not used to hearing from someone who cannot read.

William did not learn how to read, yet he loves



William and Jim pictured before class in the lobby of the Belmont College campus in Harrison County.

high percentage of ABLE students have some type of special learning need, this experience would take him into uncharted waters.

He said yes anyway.

learning. William is a history buff and enjoys watching programs on The History Channel. His love of the past and the desire to improve his life made him want to go back to school to learn how to read.

"I want to get better so I can get a better job," William said, adding that his other goals are to get his driver's license and own his own home someday.

In January 2015, William enrolled in ABE classes held on the Belmont College campus in Harrison County. Jim learned what William could do and developed an individualized program for him. William then joined a class with other adult learners of varying abilities.

"ABE is like a one-room classroom, so I told William he would have to do the work," Jim recalled.

Twice a week for the past 10 months the two have worked on basic reading skills as William masters letters, sounds and how to blend them into words.

"Reading is difficult, but I don't let that deter me," William said. "Sooner or later, I will get it."

Jim said William's persistence is paying off. In May, he demonstrated the progress he needed so he could continue in the program.

William said that his cousin often talks about skills like reading as "tools" that will help him achieve his goals.

"ABCs become a super tool," William said. "I keep getting tools by learning how to read."

The ABE program gave him inspiration, too. While learning how to use a computer, William found a video of a man with a disability talking about the obstacles he conquered to achieve his goals.

"He said 'never give up, never give in,'" William said. "I could see myself doing the same goals. He was like me."



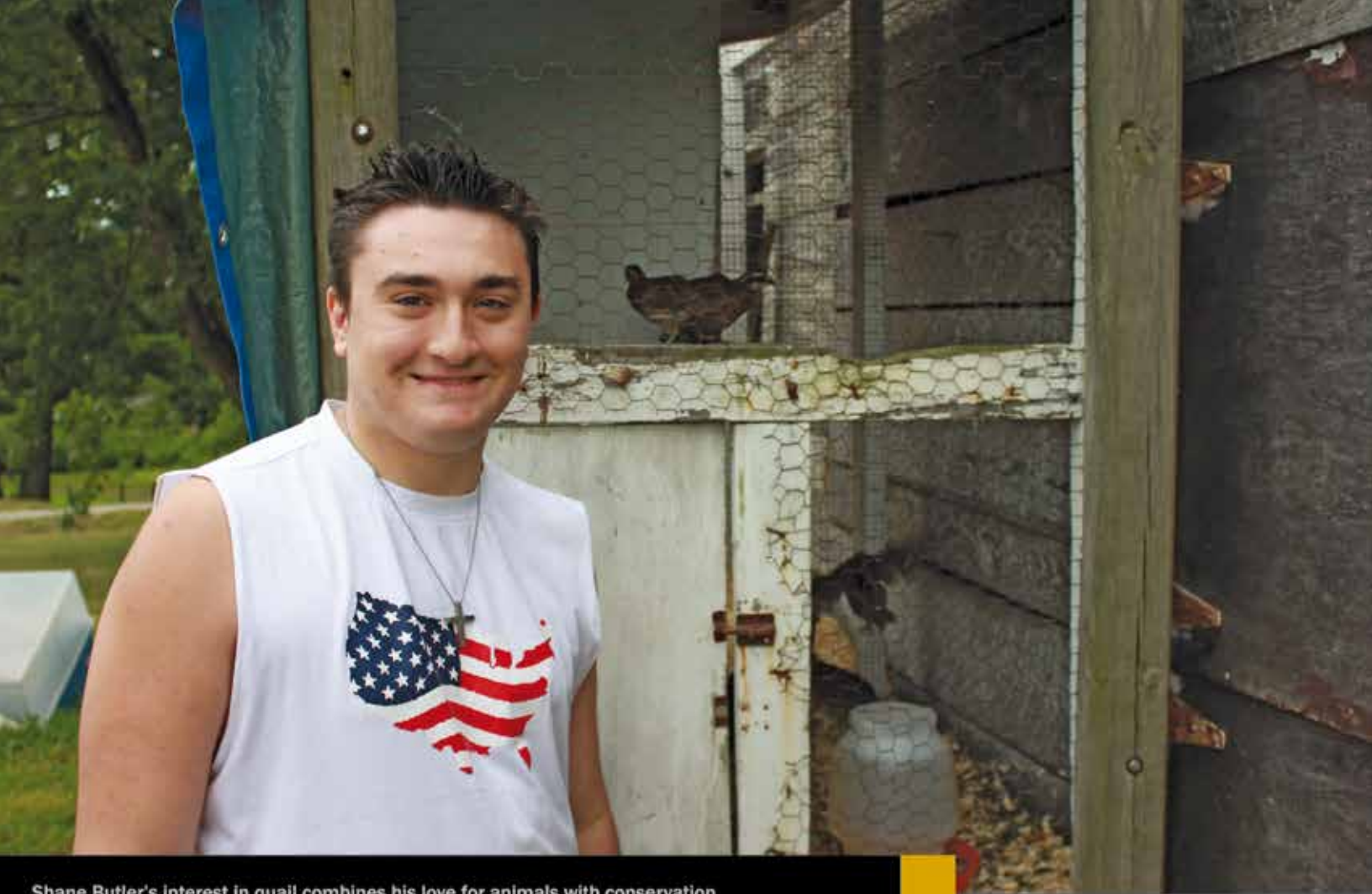
William pays close attention as Jim points out the differences in meaning and spelling of the words there, their and they're.

Jim teaches, supports and encourages William, reminding him that his education doesn't end with learning how to read.

"Education is not a thing you do, it's a way of life," Jim told him.

Community connections like this one bring the things that matter the most into the lives of all people. William Sutton is learning how to read because of Jim Sacco, who was willing to make a connection with him. That means a better job and a better life for William, and he is moving toward his goals, one word at a time.

According to ProLiteracy, there are 36 million adults in the U.S. today who can't read better than the average third grader, making it difficult for them to find jobs, stay healthy and support their families. ABE instructors seek to change that by teaching basic skills like reading, as well as college and career preparation, GED prep and English for Speakers of Other Languages. The program starts with what a student knows and builds from that point. In our area, ABE is part of the Adult Division of the Mid East Career and Technology Centers based in Zanesville. Jim Sacco instructs adult learners at the Harrison campus of Belmont College and in Belmont County in Martins Ferry. To learn more, contact Sacco at 740-633-3509 or email jsacco@mideastctc.org.



Shane Butler's interest in quail combines his love for animals with conservation.

Shane Butler: Watching Over the Flock

Nature surrounds you on the back roads of Noble County. Bird songs, rolling hills and gentle breezes are abundant and it is in this place that an interesting hobby is shaping up to be a potential business for one young man.

Shane Butler, 22, lives on a small farm outside of Pleasant City. It's a place where cows, chickens, horses and dogs are at home. It is also where Shane has combined his passion with a conservation effort by raising the elusive Northern Bobwhite quail.

Quail is a ground-dwelling species that was nearly

decimated by the severe winters of 1977 and 1978. This fact and a loss of habitat have made quail a "species of concern" in Ohio. Conservation efforts are helping and quail have returned to southern parts of the state.

Shane has been looking for a job since graduating from Shenandoah High School. Finding work



Sam, the lone California Quail in Shane's brood, is protector of them all.

hasn't been easy, but he knows that he has what it takes to be an excellent employee. He genuinely likes people and wants to help others. As he waits for an opportunity

to demonstrate his skills, he is not content to sit around. That's why he decided to raise quail.

Shane's interest in the small gamebird was sparked when a friend gave his dad a few quail six years ago. Timothy Butler was interested in helping return the bird to its natural habitat. Soon, father and son were working together.

"Quail is my passion," Shane said, as he looked over a pen of 15 Bobwhites and one California quail, a female named Sam.

Shane's quail came from eggs he purchased and nurtured into fledglings this spring. It takes time, so patience is required. That's not hard for Shane, who loves the birds.

"There is something about (quail) that draws me to them," Shane said. "Some are born with difficulties and I can help them through them. You can look in their eyes and see it."

The quail's whistled bob-WHITE! call is a familiar sound in farmland and brushy pastures. In fact, the birds are heard more often than seen and Sam, the California quail, is a vocal protector of the others.

"She'll call to ones that get out of the pen," Shane said, adding that the wayward birds always return when she calls.

Shane said raising quail takes good feed, a nurturing environment and protective oversight, which he provides in abundance.

Shane's mother, Mary Jane, says he is great with all animals and believes this hobby could become something more.

Domestic-raised quail is considered a delicacy in finer restaurants. Quail are also provided to sportsman's clubs where they are used to train hunting dogs. Those end uses are not part of Shane's overall plan, however. He is considering selling the eggs.

Quail eggs are more nutritious than chicken eggs and popular with people who like a richer taste. For quail egg production, Shane said he would need to increase the number he is raising now. His goal is to have 50 or more over the next few years.

Shane's hobby has made him into a knowledgeable aviculturist and shown him to be an ambitious and hard-working man. He is also caring and kind, all qualities that make up a valuable employee.

"I'm great with people and birds," Shane said with a smile.



Shane has the unwavering support of his parents, Mary Jane and Timothy, as he looks to grow his hobby into a small business.

As Shane looks for an employer who needs and wants what he has to offer, he'll continue to watch over his birds and grow an interesting hobby into something more.

Erik Keylor:

From Sheltered to Self-Determined

Erik Keylor is connected. From the banker on Main Street to the high school football coach, Erik knows people and he gets around in his hometown of Barnesville. So, when he graduated from high school over a decade ago, it would have been natural that he find a job there.

That's not what happened.

Cindy Touvelle, Erik's mom, said she had the same expectations of her son after high school as she had for her other children.

"I wanted him to have a job, get up, get ready for work, and be like everyone else," Cindy said.

Cindy said that he enrolled in a sheltered workshop because that was his only option. She viewed that as a short-term "stepping stone"

to get him out in the community. It ended up being where he would travel each day for the next 11 years.

Cindy serves as vice-president of the Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities, so she understands the challenges people with disabilities face in finding opportunities in the community. For years, adults with disabilities had nowhere to go. Sheltered work settings were created in the late 1960s as a place for people to go and acquire job skills, usually doing piece work at sub-minimum wage. That was the only option for years. People enrolled and never left.

A sheltered workshop wasn't a good fit for



Erik Keylor joined the workforce in 2015 and is now experiencing the benefits of having a job in the community.

Erik. He tried packing screws and other jobs, but was bored and did not like any of them.

“Erik loves to be out there and be involved with people,” Cindy said. “Counting pieces wasn’t good.”

When a position became available in a workshop department that took him out into the community, Cindy sought that for her son.

It was a good move, but Erik and Cindy never lost sight of their original goal – a job in the community.

The push to find one began in earnest in 2013. Job searches were conducted and interviews arranged by SSA Heather Willis and Employment Works (a subsidiary of Belco Works), the provider that Erik had chosen. Everyone understood that it was important for Erik to work in a small business and be able to interact with people. When a job at Wendy’s opened up in Barnesville, he went for it.

“He was thrilled to get a job in Barnesville,” Cindy said.

There was some apprehension on Erik’s part to take that first, self-determined step into the workforce, but Amanda Hagan, Wendy’s General Manager, put him at ease, even sitting with him while he completed the online orientation.

Amanda provided a little extra job coaching the first two weeks of his employment, but he soon learned what was expected of him.

Erik’s duties include washing dishes, sweeping up, bussing tables and helping customers refill their drinks in the dining room. Erik’s outgoing personality quickly emerged and Amanda asked if he could work one extra day a week, on Sunday, to help with the after-church crowd.

Erik has been on the job for nearly a year and Amanda has high praise for his abilities.

“I wouldn’t trade Erik for the world,” she said.

Cindy has seen a different Erik emerge since he

got a job. He talks more when he comes home from work and is enthusiastic about his job, what he is learning, and the friendships he has made there. It’s been a good change and she is matter of fact when she says, “I’m very, very proud of him.”



The crew at Wendy’s in Barnesville.
L-R: Amanda Hagan, Jason Keathley, Dara Butler,
Paul Sheppard, Erik, Laykottaha Taylor, Jodi Connor,
Ariana McCammon

Ohio’s Employment First initiative, signed by Governor John Kasich several years ago, ensures that high school graduates are given opportunities to explore employment in the community first so everyone has access to the benefits of having a job, such as greater independence, improved self-esteem and personal satisfaction.

Cindy and Erik know the benefits first-hand. Cindy also understands the fears some parents have about seeing their loved one go out into the community.

“A lot of times we get in a comfort zone; we get too comfortable,” Cindy said. “It’s important to see if there is something out there your child can do. You have to at least try.”

Erik was given the opportunity to try and because of it, he went from sheltered to self-determined.

It looks good on him.

A Conversation with...

Brent Kovalski of Paramount Support Services



BRENT KOVALSKI

Editor's Note: Brent Kovalski, founder and CEO of Paramount Support Services, was introduced to the developmental disabilities' field after earning his master's degree in business administration. He had been working in the finance department at the Belmont County Board of DD for two years when the board began developing private providers. He seized the opportunity to use his entrepreneurial skills in the direct support of people when he took over the residential provider, Paramount Support Services, in 2005. He has never looked back. Today, Paramount has two offices in St. Clairsville and Wintersville where supports for people residing in Belmont, Coshocton, Guernsey, Noble, Monroe, Harrison and Jefferson counties are coordinated. Paramount provides support to people in their homes through Supported Living, the Level One and Individual Options' waivers. It is also a certified provider of Supported Employment, Day Habilitation, Transportation, Ohio Passport and Adult Foster Care.

Allies: As a young entrepreneur possessing a degree in business and finance, you could have chosen to own and operate any business when you took over the helm at Paramount. Why did you choose to go into the business of supporting people with disabilities?

B.K. Before I took over at Paramount, I worked for the Belmont County Board of DD. At the time, I knew I wanted to go into business for myself. It was natural progression for me to step in at Paramount and work with people with disabilities in another capacity. I recognized, early on, the value of making a positive difference in people's lives and decided I was going to dedicate myself to helping others. At Paramount, we focus on empowerment through choices and opportunities for the people we serve and I can see the difference we make. The progress of the people we serve is a daily reminder of why I chose this career.

Allies: When Paramount began many years ago, it was a provider of residential supports only, helping people do everyday tasks like shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. You have since added other services like transportation and supported employment. How has your involvement in these areas shaped the way you view people with disabilities and what have you discovered?

B.K. My views and opinions have been shaped as the needs of people have changed. Initially, I did not realize there was such a demand for services other than residential. As times changed, the need to provide additional services became apparent. A lot

of discussion was started by the people we served talking about their goals and hopes. Many wanted and needed additional supports. We decided to take the steps to meet the requests. We now offer transportation to over 150 people in seven counties and have expanded our fleet to 25 vehicles including larger passenger vans, wheelchair vans, and mini vans. We also expanded supported employment to four counties, including a specialized Person Centered Employment program operating in Jefferson County. Paramount also creates micro-enterprises like Paramount Snack Services, where people we serve manage and operate the business. We also support close to 40 people working in the community. We continually look to partner with



Amanda and Shane on the Job with Paramount Snack Services

local businesses to find the right fit for everyone we serve and the response has been very positive. People with disabilities are being viewed no differently than anyone else. Employees of local businesses have been very accepting. They are willing to work together to make community employment a positive experience, providing natural supports and becoming friends with their new co-worker.

Allies: Paramount shares the BHN Alliance's value that people should have control over their lives. Paramount's tag line reads "Empowerment through choices and opportunities." What does an empowered person look like and how is Paramount helping people with disabilities become that?

B.K. An empowered person speaks up for himself, makes his own choices, and knows who to ask for help when needed. He is comfortable sharing his goals, hopes, and dreams with staff. He knows that we will work to make them a reality. We support individual independence. We want people to tell us how they want their services to be. We work with people so they can achieve what is important to them. We accomplish this in different ways with our main focus to get people out in the community. We sponsor a WIP (Women in Power) group, and weekly recreation and leisure activities in the community, including trips to Myrtle Beach, Amish Country, and Hocking Hills.

Allies: The Belmont CBDD offers Partnership Grants as a way to support its provider partners, who are willing to create, locate or enhance opportunities in the community for people. With partial funding from a grant, Paramount started two businesses. How are they doing and what have you learned?

B.K. Thanks to our partnership with the Belmont County Board of DD, Paramount expanded employment for people who want to work in the community. The grant has helped people move from supported to independent employment. As a result, Paramount Digital Imaging Services (PDIS) was formed and a partnership with The Dog Wash and Grooming was established. Both resulted in jobs for people we serve. Our experienced job coaches provide job training and mentoring until the employee is competent and comfortable working independently. The job coach then fades and the employee receives natural supports from

co-workers and managers. Additional job coaching is available, if needed.

PDIS employs three people with disabilities who scan and index documents. All three now receive supports based on their individual skill levels. The Dog Wash and Grooming recently expanded, offering a premier pet boarding service. Many people want to work with animals, so this setting is an ideal opportunity. The Dog Wash currently employs one person as a kennel tech with the goal to employ two kennel techs by the end of 2015. There are also job development and volunteer opportunities available for people who love animals.

Allies: Supporting people with disabilities is rewarding as well as challenging. When hiring someone, what qualifications and characteristics do you look for in a person?

B.K. When we hire, everyone must have basic qualifications and undergo background and registry checks. We also provide other trainings, but we go a step further. We look for a person who will complement our team. A positive attitude is important. We want upbeat, friendly people who have a genuine love for what we do. We look for people with compassion. Our employees must have great appreciation for the people we serve, their co-workers, and Paramount. In fact, our staff goes above and beyond what is expected of them because they care. Our 90-day monitoring process lets us see if a new employee is a good fit for our team.

At Paramount, we approach our services a little differently than most. We expect the quality of care to be as high as if we are serving our own family. We expect our employees to take pride in their work. We value our employees. They make a difference every day.



It's all smiles for April and a four-legged customer of The Dog Wash



Congratulations
**NEW HORIZON
ANIMAL HOSPITAL**
St. Clairsville Area Chamber of Commerce
2015 **DISTINGUISHED EMPLOYER AWARD**

Thank you Dr. Jim Moore and Dr. Philip Puskarich for understanding that people with disabilities are capable, hard-working and valuable employees.



Belmont-Harrison-Noble County Boards of Developmental Disabilities