

ALLIES

SPRING 2014

A MAGAZINE FROM THE BHN ALLIANCE



Running with the Big Dogs

On the Job
with Crystal

In It Together
Partnering to
Improve Lives

PLAY
More Than
Fun and Games

**Beyond the
Boundaries**
Tim's Story

Welcome to ALLIES

Welcome to ALLIES, the new BHN Alliance magazine. The Belmont-Harrison-Noble County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, the BHN Alliance, is unified in its approach to arranging supports for people with disabilities. That's why it is fitting that we create one publication where we report on how we do that and how it helps people live better lives. We were the first county boards to join together in this way, and our model is acknowledged across Ohio. The key to our success lies in our shared philosophy that is based on respect for the people we support.

In 2013, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities reviewed the Belmont, Harrison and Noble county boards. This simultaneous review of the supports we fund or provide was unprecedented in the Department's history. It was a lot of work, for the on-site reviewers who traveled hundreds of miles to visit with people we support, their families and providers, as well as our team that coordinated dozens of schedules to make it happen, yet it made sense. Our three counties share 10 administrative functions, so assessing how we support people as a whole was the only way to judge us at all.

After the comprehensive three-day evaluation, the review team met with us to discuss their findings. In that meeting we heard comments like:

"The key principles of choice, opportunity, and respect are lived here."

"You had so many success stories."

"You empower people."

This is what we do. We listen to what people tell us they want and together, with our provider partners, we locate opportunities that match their skills. The result is that people with disabilities are in the fabric of our community, living, learning, working and contributing, and getting what they want out of life.

I am pleased to announce that on January 3, 2014, the boards of the BHN Alliance were granted a five-year accreditation award from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. This is the highest honor accorded by DoDD to county boards that demonstrate excellence and best practices.

We share this honor with the providers, who supply the support that enables people to achieve their goals and we thank the employers, neighbors, co-workers and friends, who offer opportunities for people with disabilities to live, learn, work, and volunteer in the community.

The collaboration that exists between the boards of the BHN Alliance and our community partners gives people greater access to their community where the people, places, and things they want are found. That is the outcome when choice, opportunity and respect are given, and that's what being an 'ally' is really about.

“We listen to what people tell us they want and together with our provider partners, we locate opportunities that match their skills.”



Stephen L. Williams,
Superintendent, BHN Alliance

Running with the Big Dogs: Crystal Finds Her Dream Job

Employment First, the initiative that makes meaningful jobs in the community the expected outcome for young people with disabilities, is creating the type of change that is lasting and meaningful. This is truly evidenced in the way supports were arranged for Crystal Schramm.

Crystal was in the *Bridges to Transition* program while a student at the Belmont Career Center. Through *Bridges*, Crystal explored different jobs, working at fast food restaurants, a long term care facility and a retail store. None of those jobs was the right fit for Crystal, because her dream was to work with animals.

As graduation approached, Crystal's job developer from Belco Works, approached Wheeling Island Hotel, Casino and Racetrack to see about a job working with the greyhound racing dogs. The track gave Crystal the opportunity to work as a "lead out" in the summer of 2013. It was a fit for employer and employee and several months later, Crystal was hired by Wheeling Island Racing.

Crystal's responsibilities include putting the coats and muzzles on the greyhounds. She and the other lead-outs then walk the dogs to the gates and load them into the boxes for each race. Crystal does this multiple times every day she works, and never tires of it.

When asked what she likes best about her job, Crystal's eyes light up and she says, "my babies, the dogs." Crystal has the satisfaction of a paycheck, yet her job is much more. She's living her dream and experiencing the joy that comes from doing something she loves.

Mary, her mother, is equally pleased and proud of her daughter, whose future was uncertain for some years.

"I didn't think Crystal would work anywhere," Mary said. "I was so excited when she got this job."

When Crystal reached 22, the age when adults with disabilities enter the County Board system, a Service

and Support Administrator (SSA) talked with her and her mom. She explained what life would be like with and without County Board SSA supports and then let her decide. Crystal and her mom decided they did not want formalized supports of the system, so we offered a less intrusive approach.

Today, the county board is available to Crystal, but in a different way. A SSA checks in from time to time to see if she needs anything. This "follow-along" support is natural and keeps Crystal and her family in control.



We do not pull people into the system, offering or providing services they do not need or want. Instead, we have casual conversations, ask questions and learn what is important to each person. And together with our provider partners, we locate opportunities that will enhance their skills and help them reach their goals and ambitions in the community. We then *get out of their way* so they can live life like everyone else.



“...opportunities make all the difference...”

Beyond the Boundaries:

Tim's Story

The BHN Alliance seeks creative ways to help people with disabilities achieve what they want out of life. This means we often look beyond the usual constraints and boundaries of the system when arranging supports. Tim's story is one example of what a difference this can make.

Tim, 43, moved to Cadiz with his parents in 2006. He likes to work and held jobs in the Portage County community where he lived before. Tim hoped to find similar work in Harrison County, but the sheltered workshop was the only choice available. Tim enrolled, but it didn't offer opportunities that were right for him, so he withdrew from others and spent most of the time off by himself.

When Amanda Tharp, Tim's SSA (Service and Support Administrator), could not find a job where Tim could use his talents in the Harrison County community, she was not discouraged, because she had other options.

Amanda and all SSAs in the BHN Alliance have the freedom to look beyond geographic boundaries when arranging supports for people with disabilities, so she began exploring options in Belmont and Noble counties. She soon located a job in Belmont where Tim is now realizing his potential as a scanning operator at

Paramount Digital Images. The leisure activities Tim wanted were found at Tomorrow's Corner, also in Belmont, where he experiences art, music, learning, nature, and exercise on the days he does not work.

Through a self-directed budget and the creative use of the funds available to him, Tim now has what matters the most to him and he is happier and more content. On the days he works, he is eager to get there and the other days are filled with learning new things, having new experiences, and socializing with the friends he has made at Tomorrow's Corner. These opportunities have made all the difference in Tim's life and his family and others who know him say the changes have been exciting to watch.

We listen to what people tell us they want and need and then look beyond the boundaries of the system to locate opportunities for them wherever they are found. This way of supporting people with disabilities is not traditional, yet it yields positive results.

Meet Joe Newell

Works at
**D&J Pizza
Barnesville**

as a
Dishwasher
Box Folder
Busboy

Shenandoah
High Graduate

Lives in Noble
County

Discovered his
abilities and
found a job
through *Bridges
to Transition*

Why Joe likes to work

**“I get more money now
and the people I work with
are my buddies.”**

What Jan, his employer says about Joe

**“Joe doesn’t have to be told what
to do. He just does it. I am so glad
Joe works here.”**

Strong Families, Safe Communities

A grant given by the Ohio Departments of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health & Addiction Services

The BHN Alliance arranges the things people with disabilities need and want in their daily lives. On any given day, we can be found meeting with a young person to identify his skills so he can find a job, helping a middle-aged woman find a place to live, and arranging the transportation both will need to get to work, home, and everywhere else.



Reviewing the *Strong Families, Safe Communities* grant details are BHN Alliance Superintendent Stephen Williams and Mental Health and Recovery Board Executive Director Linda Pickenpaugh (seated) and BHN Alliance Team Leader Darlene Pempek (standing left) and Maura Mappin-Dubus of the Mental Health and Recovery Board.

There are times, however, when people need more because they are in crisis. That's when our partnership with others provides the net into which a person can safely fall until things get better again.

In recent years, uncertain and often difficult situations involving youth with mental illness and/or a developmental disability have occurred. In most, if not all cases, the situation had gone from bad to worse and the child had to leave home to seek help. We were then tasked with finding a residential setting for the child to live for a time while in treatment.

Unfortunately, appropriate residential treatment is located far from the three-county region, placing the youth many miles away from home. This puts additional stress on the child and his or her family.

This is changing for the better in 2014, thanks to a *Strong Families, Safe Communities* grant the BHN Alliance received along with its partners, the Belmont-Harrison-Monroe Mental Health and Recovery Board and the Monroe County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

The grant, given by the Ohio Departments of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health &

Addiction Services, is providing the funding needed to offer care and treatment close to home. The grant is putting resources in place locally that will stabilize the crises, reduce the risk of harm, and keep the family together.

“With this grant, we will now be able to deliver a person-centered model of care, the likes of which has never been seen in southeastern Ohio,” said Stephen L. Williams, BHN Alliance Superintendent.

A team of professionals who understand these issues, headed by a mental health clinician, is now in place and a home in a rural setting has been renovated into a safe, comforting environment. Staff who will work with the children are being specially trained to understand the issues they face.

This partnership between the BHN Alliance and the Belmont-Harrison-Monroe Mental Health and Recovery Board was one of only seven collaborations across Ohio to receive a *Strong Families, Safe Communities* grant. All seven grant recipients meet regularly to share ideas and will identify best practices and models of care that can be duplicated to benefit all counties and all Ohioans.

For more information about *Strong Families, Safe Communities*, contact Darlene Pempek at 740-695-7433.



PLAY:

More Than Fun and Games

Electronic devices are in nearly every home and aspect of our lives, making the simple act of playing a game of “hide and seek” seem out of step with the times. Research proves, however, that creative play is still important for a child’s social and emotional development. For children with autism, play can be the bridge that brings them into relationship with others. Dr. Rick Solomon, a pediatrician, understood this when he developed the PLAY project.

PLAY, which stands for Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters, is an evidence-based, early intervention

for young children with autism that emphasizes the importance of playing in early development and helps parents develop a better connection with their children by engaging them in fun activities. One of The PLAY Project’s core beliefs is that parents are the experts on their child and that intervention is most effective if performed by the parents themselves. For this reason, Home Consultants are trained to empower parents to become confident and effective players.

When the BHN Alliance committed to a family-centered, relationship-based early intervention, it chose the PLAY Project. The Ohio Department of Developmental

Disabilities provided a grant to enhance the collaboration and fund staff training. The BHN Alliance's Developmental Specialist, Aimee Craig, underwent extensive instruction under Dr. Solomon and became a full-time PLAY Project Home Consultant in 2013.

"Helping parents connect with their children with autism is extremely important to the well-being of the entire family," Aimee said. "PLAY is a proven method and we have seen incredible results."

As a PLAY Home Consultant, Aimee teaches parents techniques to connect with their child using games and toys the family already owns in the best learning environment, the child's home.

For Mary Echels and her six-year-old son, Bransten, playing together has developed his skills and brought him into relationship with her and others.

Bransten did not speak until he was three years old, and then only in short, unfinished sentences. He would ignore or shove his mother away when she tried to play with him, preferring to be alone, making the same motions over and over again with the same toy. Mary took Bransten to various clinic-based therapies and doctors, yet his social and emotional development did not change.

Mary tried different ways to enter Bransten's world. She bought age-appropriate games like "Candyland" and "Chutes and Ladders," but Bransten would get frustrated and throw the pieces across the room.

"It made me sad and depressed not to be able to get to him, and I wanted to give up," Mary said. "It felt like he didn't want me, but he just didn't know how to connect with me."

Mary was willing to try a different approach when Peggy Malcomb, the Developmental Specialist at the Noble County Board of Developmental Disabilities, suggested she and her family try PLAY.

Aimee met the family in March 2013 and began working with Mary and Bransten twice a month, coaching and providing advice on how she could reach Bransten and improve his social skills and development by playing with him.

In PLAY, every session is recorded by the Home Consultant, who brings the videos back to the family with written notes and recommendations. The first video Aimee recorded clearly showed the distance between Mary and Bransten. Aimee said there was virtually no relationship between mother and son, and Mary saw it, too.

"When I saw the 'give up' look on my face in the video, it really woke me up," Mary said.

As Aimee provided feedback on how to include the fun and effective methods and techniques of PLAY, the relationship between mother and son began to blossom. Instead of shoving his mother away, Bransten wanted to play with her. Mary also learned how to enjoy their play time.

Mary said the ideas and support Aimee provided gave her hope that life could be better for Bransten and the entire family.

"Aimee helped me open that box of "Candyland" and play differently with Bransten," Mary said.

His dad and teenage sister also applied the techniques and were able to draw closer to Bransten.

Over eight months, Bransten's social skills improved. He now enjoys the company of his family and other children. He has friends in his kindergarten classroom and recently attended a birthday party. Mary said that Bransten is happier and so is the family.

Her advice for families who are looking for a way to connect with their child with autism is simple.

"Step back and allow Aimee to help you," Mary said. "You'll learn that playing with your child is important and that it means much more than you think."

Enrollment in the PLAY Project is available for eligible children through age five who have an autism diagnosis and reside in Belmont, Harrison, Noble and Monroe counties. To learn more, contact Aimee Craig at 740-695-0407, ext. 354, or email acraig@bcbdd.org

Early Diagnosis Vital: Early diagnosis of autism is vitally important. That is why the BHN Alliance has partnered with the diagnostic team at Wheeling Hospital's Pediatric Rehabilitation Center. This team offers a process and structure for a timely diagnosis so early intervention supports like PLAY can begin as soon as possible.

This team is composed of two pediatric physical therapists and a speech and language therapist. All have undergone extensive training in developmental testing and autism diagnostic observation schedule testing. Dr. Judy Romano is the team's medical partner and she provides a complete developmental and medical evaluation and participates in the interpretation of the testing.



Cindy is an artist whose work can be found at The New Corner Store, a gift shop funded, in part, by a Partnership Grant from the Belmont County Board of DD. She is pictured in front of a Mixed Media piece of the four seasons that hangs in the lobby at the Belmont County Board.

In It Together

Partnering to Improve Lives

Oppportunity, partnership, and choice are buzz words that inform how the BHN Alliance arranges supports for people with disabilities. When the Belmont, Harrison and Noble county boards adopted self-determination as a guiding philosophy, we began to measure what we were doing for people against those words. We realized that the traditional approaches were not giving people with disabilities the opportunities and choices they wanted. We started to ask different questions and learned that people didn't want another county board "program." They wanted to live, learn, work, volunteer and play alongside everyone else. In short, what mattered the most to them was found in the community. This information informed the following goal in our 2011-2016 strategic plan:

Develop and nurture relationships that will create opportunities for people with disabilities to learn, live, and work alongside every other member of the community

To achieve this goal, we turned to our provider partners, who were already making things happen in the community for the people we support. We created Partnership Grants to strengthen and help fund community-based opportunities our provider partners were locating or generating for people with disabilities.

"Our community partners have the creativity and know-how to help people achieve what is important to them," said Stephen Williams, Superintendent of the BHN Alliance. "Our partnership grants are also a more efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars."

Partnership grants to providers, community organizations and public schools have funded opportunities the Board could not do alone. Grant recipients have developed small business enterprises and enrichment opportunities within the community. The start-up of Paramount Digital Imaging Services, which employs two workers with disabilities, was partially funded by a Partnership Grant. The New Corner Store, a gift shop that sells "outsider art" created by artists with disabilities, was also funded by a partnership grant. Grants have also helped pay for accessibility projects, adaptive equipment, and transportation costs within the public schools across Belmont, Harrison and Noble counties.

Partnering with others in this way continues to strengthen relationships, create new opportunities, and improve the lives of people with disabilities across the Alliance.

Self-Advocates Bring Real Value to QA Process

The BHN Alliance's Partnership for Quality Services Initiative measures how satisfied people are with the supports they receive. This process helps us discover what people think about their lives and what they want out of life.

Through surveys, we have learned that what adds quality to a person's life is accomplished, in many cases, by simply paying attention to the little things. That's why we ask questions like *"Does your driver say 'hi' to you each morning?"* and *"Do you feel respected in your planning meeting?"*

Our surveys are created so people of all abilities can complete them, yet there are still times when people need a little help. In 2012, we hired several self-advocates to serve as reviewers who can help others complete the surveys. This peer-to-peer interaction has enhanced the information-gathering process and promoted self-determination and self-advocacy for everyone involved.

The surveys are mailed quarterly and the Quality Improvement Coordinator, Dawn Barnhart, follows up with those who have not responded and schedules an interview with a self-advocate reviewer. This follow-up has resulted in a 20 percent increase in the number of surveys returned over the previous year.

Reviewer Cindy Browning of Hopedale had never been involved in the self-determination movement, so this is an opportunity for her to learn about self-advocacy as she serves others.

"I'm freer to express opinions and ideas of my own now," Cindy said. *"It makes me more independent."*

Reviewer Brian Kozak of St. Clairsville, who is a member of People First, added that he gets a lot out of helping others as well.

"I love doing it," Brian said.

Dawn said the feedback she has received about the self-advocates' work has been positive.

"People, as well as their families, really like that we are asking them questions about the services they receive and then listening to what they have to say," Dawn said. "The reviewers make people feel comfortable and so it's easier to talk to them."

Cindy and Brian agreed that one must be a good listener to be a reviewer.

"You can't be afraid of people's reactions," Cindy said, adding that she now has a better understanding of matters that affect people's lives.

The self-advocate review team meets regularly to practice their skills. They do brain teasers and create techniques that make the review process comfortable for everyone.



Self-advocates are bringing a new perspective and real value to the quality assurance process across the BHN Alliance. Brian Kozak of St. Clairsville and Cindy Browning of Cadiz (standing), pictured here with Quality Improvement Coordinator Dawn Barnhart, are two of six self-advocates hired to assist others in completing satisfaction surveys.

Becoming a self-advocate reviewer was a competitive process. The job expectations were shared and those who expressed an interest were interviewed. Cindy and Brian were hired as well as Cindy Armstrong, Mike Baker, Jesse Burian, and Pat Jobb.

Thanks to these self-advocate reviewers, the "little things" are being noted and lives are improving across the BHN Alliance.

There are 18.9 million working age people with disabilities in the U.S.

YOUR Next Best Employee COULD BE AMONG THEM.

TALENTED.

From clerical work to grounds-keeping and maintenance, workers with disabilities have the skills and rated average or better in job performance compared to employees without disabilities (*DuPont study*).

DEPENDABLE.

Employees with disabilities have lower rates of absenteeism and less turnover than those without disabilities, which translates into increased productivity and revenue for companies that hire them.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS.

American consumers respond positively to companies with a diversified workforce. In fact, 87 percent of the public prefers to give their business to companies that hire people of all abilities (*Source: UMass Boston, Center for Social Development & Education*).

To learn how your business can benefit from hiring workers of all abilities, contact Adam Nicholoff at 740-695-0407 ext. 352 or email anicholoff@bcbdd.org



BHN Alliance ALLIES

ALLIES is a publication of the BHN Alliance (Belmont-Harrison-Noble County Boards of Developmental Disabilities)

BELMONT

330 Fox-Shannon Place
St. Clairsville, OH 43950
www.bcbdd.org
740-695-0233

HARRISON

82480 Cadiz-Jewett Rd.
Cadiz, OH 43907
www.hcbdd.org
740-942-2158

NOBLE

18506 Woodsfield Rd.
Caldwell, OH 43724
www.ncbdd.org
740-732-7144