



BEAVERBROOK STEP BULLETIN

Enriched Lives...Enlighted Communities

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Spring/Summer 2019



A Message from STEP's Executive Director Friendship



Dear Families and Friends,

Welcome to a time of renewal, growth and promise for all of Beaverbrook STEP's constituents—individuals served, family members, volunteers, staff and community members. Over the past several months, Beaverbrook STEP has been very busy with numerous projects, activities and initiatives including:

- ⇒ STEP's **'Self-Advocates: Building Homes Together'** project is moving ahead full speed. Currently STEP is working with 5 self-advocates to plan, fund and fulfill each person's vision for community living. With the assistance of our Community Broker and our community partners in real estate, banking, recreation and health care, we expect all 5 to move into their own homes with the necessary support services! (Page 3)
- ⇒ **Friendships**—making friends, joining in community activities and exploring the world around us has been enhanced for STEP individuals thanks to our newly formed Activities Committee members, our dedicated interns from Lesley University, staff, family members and volunteers all of whom help to promote Community Inclusion and Advancing Real Lives. STEP is also participating in The Pathways to Friendship Project, a collaborative effort with The Arc of MA, MA DDS and 24 agencies, whose mission is to advance relationships and friendships that elevate social inclusion. (Page 4)
- ⇒ We have launched our **Beaverbrook STEP Facebook** page fulfilling our promise to provide timely updates on happenings at our organization, as well as, information about products, services and technology of interest to people with disabilities and their families. **Find us on Facebook and 'like' our page so you can be part of our community building initiative!**

STEP has also been busy successfully responding to government Requests for Responses (RFR's) for day and employment services issued by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Mass. Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and Mass. Commission for the Blind (MCB). Every 10 years, providers of day and employment services must submit comprehensive proposals in order to renew approvals to provide these services.

This huge undertaking positively affects all of the individuals served in Beaverbrook STEP's Community Based Day Services (CBDS), Individual Supported Employment (ISE), Group Supported Employment (GSE) and Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) programs. Read more inside this newsletter!

Thanks to everyone for your support, inspiration and assistance.

Sincerely,
Virginia A. Connolly

Options Employment & CBDS Program: 25 Years of Growth

History & Overview

Options Employment and Community Based Day Services (CBDS) program began 25 years ago with the opening of a small day and employment program for 15 individuals. The program soon became well known for providing participants with intensive staff supports, using local generic services, and facilitating natural supports and community inclusion.

During these years, Options Employment and CBDS program expanded tremendously with Options currently serving over 100 participants at 4 embedded community sites (about 25 participants per site):

- ⇒ Options Alternative (A) on Main Street, Watertown;
- ⇒ Options Employment (E) in Waverley Sq., Belmont;
- ⇒ Options Unlimited (U) in Cushing Sq., Belmont; and
- ⇒ Options Community (C) in Belmont Center.

Options also developed 3 business affiliations that employ both non-disabled staff and Options participants:



Gifts at Peppermint Place a beautifully appointed retail business that sells artwork, children's apparel, small household goods and handcrafted gifts.

Sweet Deals Boutique a small retail store selling gently used clothing and accessories.



Re-Use-Able Initiatives a business that sorts, repairs and re-sells usable household items, home décor and children's clothing.

Specialized Services

Options is well known for its specialized services and supports. Today Options serves adolescents, adults and elders with I/DD, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), dual diagnoses, medical, social/psychological needs, brain injuries and behavioral needs. We also serve many individuals with sensory, hearing and communication needs.

Options' dedicated staff are highly skilled, well-trained and committed to working as a team to provide flexible, person-specific services. They are supported by outstanding clinical, social work, curriculum, IT and behavior specialists (3 Board Certified Behavior Analysts and 5 Registered Behavior Technicians).

Options also has 2 outstanding training and education affiliations with Melmark NE and UMass Boston.

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HAPPENINGS & EVENTS

Excerpts from STEP's Facebook Page of events organized by STEP's Activities Committee
Send Facebook Information to [Nora Forziati](mailto:nforziati@beaverbrookstep.org)
nforziati@beaverbrookstep.org

Expressive arts have many therapeutic benefits, in addition to being just plain fun!!



Friends sharing a meal at a local eatery.



Our agency-wide Activities Committee hosts wonderful celebrations! Everyone enjoyed karaoke, bingo, and we even had our first Ugly Sweater Contest!



Interns from Lesley University have been leading a cooking group and social hour each week! This has been a great opportunity for individuals, friends and staff to gather at one of STEP's residential programs, making new friends and learning new skills.



Oh what fun we have at our parties! Individuals, staff and families gather for dinner, dancing, and merry-making!!

Welcome Phoebe Goodman: Community Inclusion Specialist

Beaverbrook STEP recently engaged Phoebe Goodman as our Community Inclusion Specialist. With over 15 years of inclusion experience in disability services, Phoebe will work closely with staff and individuals at every level of our organization, advancing a comprehensive community and social inclusion initiative for STEP. We are all very excited to work with Phoebe starting this summer. This significant, long-term project continues STEP's long-term commitment to our strategic vision of "Advancing Real Lives" in the community.



Self-Advocates: Building Homes Together

Beaverbrook STEP's project 'Self-Advocates: Building Homes Together' is funded by a grant from The Becker Family Trust and The Arc of Massachusetts. STEP's Community Broker who coordinates the project has been recruiting Self-Advocates who want to plan and direct their own, inclusive housing and personalized support services. The Community Broker helps each Self-Advocate fulfill his or her vision for community living including selecting and securing housing; identification and recruitment of support service providers; and arrangement of other community services.

The project has made significant progress. STEP's Community Broker has organized the project's self-advocacy team (self-advocates, family members and community partners). The goal for this group is to identify specific properties that fulfill the needs and preferences of the self-advocates. At present, Beaverbrook STEP is working directly with 5 individuals and their family members, all of whom have made commitments to live in 3 newly identified residential locations. One of these residences is a repurposed setting currently undergoing renovations. Service assessments and fees are in process and moves are scheduled to begin.

One of the Self-Advocates has chosen to live with a friend in an accessible, yet familiar, location that accommodates his recent mobility decline. Another individual is returning to community living from a more restrictive mental health setting, choosing to live more independently. Also included are 2 brothers who have been living with their parents; they have chosen to share a supported living apartment in the community. The apartment they have selected has required further negotiations for additional subsidized funding.

Our goal is to develop a flagship, self-directed, community support model for Advancing Real Lives for Self-Advocates in our service area. We will keep you posted as the project continues.

Cultivate Inclusion!

BEAVERBROOK STEP PROGRAMS & SERVICES

LIVING & HOUSING SUPPORTS

24 Hour Residential
In-Home/Supported Living
Shared Living
Agency with Choice
Family Support
Respite Services
Dept of Ed/DDS Children's Services
MCB, MRC, DDS, Medicare Residential
Services

OPTIONS EMPLOYMENT & COMMUNITY BASED DAY SERVICES

Individual Supported Employment
Group Supported Employment
Competitive Employment
Community Based Day Services (CBDS)

RECREATION, SOCIAL & SELF-ADVOCACY SERVICES

Recreation, Sports & Social Events
Mentoring & Education Services
Community Advocates Board
Positive Behavior Supports Committee
(all constituents represented including an active
family network)

SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Clinical & ABA Services
Nursing/Health Services
Autism Spectrum Services
Elder & Alzheimer Services

Corporate Guardianship Program

Self-Advocates: Building Homes Together
Project

AFFILIATIONS

UMass/Boston
Melmark New England



Friendship: Gateway to Inclusion



Friendships are fundamental to true community inclusion for everyone. However, a child, adolescent or adult with an intellectual, developmental or a related disability often needs support and assistance from staff, family members and advocates with establishing friendships. Without support, individuals with disabilities often feel isolated and separated from mainstream society. They desire friendships both casual and intimate just as much as people without disabilities. According to Angela Novak Amado, Ph.D., author of *Friends: Connecting people with disabilities and community members*, (University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, 2013):

“Even people who live in a home in the community, or in their own apartment, or who have a community job, often face isolation and separation.... One of the most important reasons to work on building bridges between community members and people with disabilities is to alter this structure, this current paradigm.”

Dr. Amado’s approach to successfully connecting people with disabilities with members of the community includes challenging family members, staff and advocates to find more people to bring into the person’s life. Her manual on friendship suggests that the approach to nurturing friendships needs to change from one that is ‘activity’ oriented to one that is ‘relationship’ oriented. What is needed is a focus on matching the interests, skills and attributes of each person with a community person with similar interests and skills. Individualization is critically important too. An important tip for success from Dr. Amado is the ‘One Person, One Environment’ rule:

“If a place is welcoming toward one person with a disability.... It is THAT person’s place. That community organization is welcoming of ONE person. A big group of individuals with disabilities becomes overwhelming. Even two people with disabilities creates a “them-ness” — both for the individuals with disabilities and for the rest of the community group.”

Tips for success

- ◆ See the person as their interests and gifts
- ◆ Seek out relationships rather than activities — who can the person get to know there?
- ◆ Introduce one-to-one
- ◆ Become an “asker” — “It never hurts to ask”
- ◆ Apply the rule: one person, one environment



SEVEN STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. Identify who the person already knows and where the relationship can be strengthened and deepened.
2. Identify who would appreciate this person’s gifts.
3. Identify where you can find an interested person.
4. Identify associations and clubs.
5. Identify community places where people engage in one of this person’s interests.
6. Identify community places that are hospitable and welcoming.
7. Identify places where the person can fit in just the way they are.

Source information on this page from “Friends: Connecting people with disabilities and community members” authored by Angela Novak Amado, PhD, 2013, Research & Training Center on Community Living at the Institution on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. This excellent manual includes simple step by step instructions and suggestions for identifying and supporting friendships that build bridges between community members and people with disabilities. Easy to read with simple exercises, this publication is designed for use by individuals, staff, family members and advocates. This manual can be downloaded at:

https://rtc.umn.edu/docs/Friends_Connecting_people_with_disabilities_and_community_members.pdf



Options Employment & CBDS Services (Cont'd from Page 1)

Options Employment Program

Options Employment Program serves men and woman in both Individual Supported and Competitive Employment. Currently 88% of participants are placed in community jobs with 60% receiving higher than minimum wages and 40% receiving minimum wages. Participants are employed in both entry level and more advanced jobs in local businesses such as BJ's Wholesale Club, Whole Foods Market, Russo's, Fessenden School, and Leavitt Corporation.

Options Community Based Day Supports



Options CBDS program advances meaningful and full community inclusion; individuals served have considerable flexibility and choice in the design and selection of their daily activities. Although many activities are focused on employment objectives, participants have a wide variety of artistic, recreational, volunteer and career exploration options available too.

Of the 100 individuals served, 70% are employed at least part time in the community. Off-site, community activities are available every day and special activities are offered weekly. Health & nutrition, personal safety, daily living skills and self-advocacy are primary components of the program curriculum; community environments such as health clubs, Y's, banks, grocery stores, restaurants, libraries, senior centers, post offices, parks, recreation centers and museums are used as learning environments whenever possible.



Options' 4 embedded program sites enable participants and staff to walk to or take public transportation to many daily activities. Transportation is also available to travel to various community locations. Over the long term, our goal is and always has been to effectively utilize inclusive community locations for a significant portion of each day. Options currently has over 100 community connections with local government, financial, retail, entertainment, business & industry, cultural and volunteer programs. Options CBDS program also offers supervised paid work opportunities via 3 Options business services:

Meals on Wheels is an Options business supported by a contract with Springwell Elder Services that employs 25 participants from all 4 sites. Individuals deliver meals to the homes of 300 senior citizens on 15 separate neighborhood routes during weekdays. This highly successful Options Employment service has operated for 16 years.

Business & Office Services is another small Options service that provides 8 to 10 Options participants with staff supported, paid employment performing office cleaning and clerical services for private community businesses.

Mobile Crew Business Mailing Services provides a small Mobile Crew with temporary, part time paid employment performing business mailing and clerical services at Advisor Investments LLC in Newton.

Options: Looking to the Future



Options Employment Services is planning to expand services in 2019 and 2020 by establishing a new Group Supported Employment (GSE) program component. Options staff will train and supervise Mobile Crews and negotiate contracts with service industries that provide clerical, janitorial, maintenance, food service, laundry and housekeeping services at local area businesses. These embedded worksites may be located at colleges, hospitals, hotels and company cafeterias.

Options plans to start several Mobile Crews over the next year. Each crew will have an assigned Options Employment Specialist who supports 2 to 5 crew members at the vendor company's work site. Work crews are paid at least minimum wage and work side-by-side with other employees who are not disabled.

As Options continues to grow, we also anticipate opening a 5th Options program site in a retail or downtown location. This new site will accommodate expansion of all of our Options Employment and CBDS services.

Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.

Beaverbrook STEP will open a beautiful new home this September. This spacious residence with 1st floor accessibility is located in the lovely Lyman Estate area in Waltham. It will be the future home of 5 young women who are part of the advancing real lives movement and eager for community living. All the women will be supported by our skillful team of clinical specialists.



Incorporated in 1973, Beaverbrook STEP's mission and philosophy focus on empowering individuals to make their own personal choices and decisions about their lives to achieve full community inclusion.

Using a person-centered planning approach, STEP focuses on strengthening relationships among individuals, families and communities — relationships that support the people we serve, helping them to realize their dreams and live meaningful lives.

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Contact Us

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Virginia A. Connolly, MEd, LCSW, LMHC
Executive Director

Serving Communities in Eastern MA
Including: Arlington, Belmont,
Boston, Brighton, Brookline,
Cambridge, Newton, Waltham,
Affiliated with:



Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.
85 Main Street, 2nd Floor
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PLACE
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HERE

ADVANCING REAL LIVES