



BEAVERBROOK STEP BULLETIN

Enriched Lives...Enlighted Communities

85 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Watertown, MA 02472

617-926-1113

www.beaverbrookstep.org

Fall 2017



A Message from STEP's Executive Director

Dear Families and Friends,

We celebrated the summer season in style again this year. Self-Advocates enjoyed another outstanding cruise to Bermuda. All adults and staff in attendance enjoyed the fine weather, on-board and island activities. It's a summer perennial that never ceases to please everyone who goes.

In addition to summer vacations, individuals also enjoyed other local trips and many outdoor events such as cook-outs, swimming, sports, walking, day trips and sight-seeing (see pictures throughout this newsletter). STEP will extend many of these activities and new ventures throughout the year as part of our commitment to work with family members, staff, self-advocates and community citizens to further the development of strategies that promote social and community inclusion for adults with disabilities.

During FY 2018, Beaverbrook STEP will continue to collaborate with our community and health care partners, funding sources, local government officials, self-advocates, families, friends and citizens to:

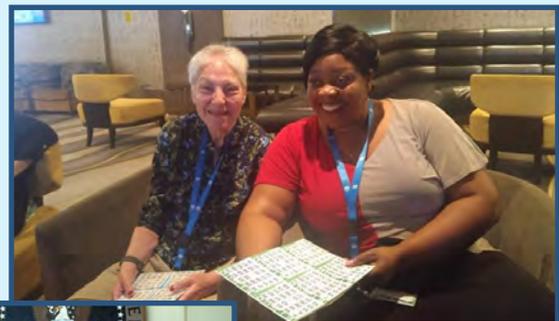
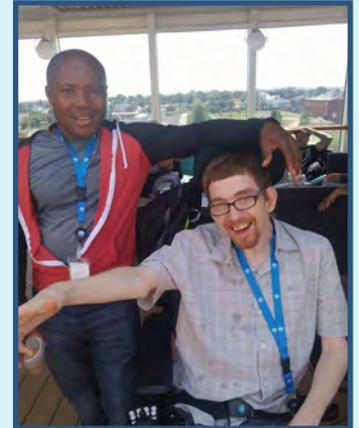
- Advance real social inclusion (see Social Brokering article) for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities;
- Promote person-centered, long-term residential planning and supports for adults with disabilities via a variety of new collaborative initiatives including:
 - ⇒ "Self-Advocates Building Homes Together" a group of self-advocates designing their own residential environments and personal supports;
 - ⇒ "Advancing Lives Collaborative" a group of Metro Boston DDS providers focused on expanding and sharing resources to promote long term housing solutions and creative support services in the community, including Shared Living opportunities.
 - ⇒ Developing additional supports for individuals/families designed to ensure inclusive, community living and advocacy supports when family members are no longer available or able to do so.
- Continue to address the challenges faced by providers as managed care initiatives expand, the number of individuals needing supports increase and government resources shrink.

Your input and support are always valued and appreciated.
Thank you.
Sincerely,

Virginia A. Connolly, Executive Director

"The level of staff commitment is greatly appreciated and has a major impact on my son's quality of life."

Beaverbrook STEP Family Member



Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.

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Positive Behavioral Supports

(excerpts from DDS Informational Bulletin on PBS, October 2013,
<http://ddsllearning.com/dds-pbs-initiative>)



Over the past few years, providers have been working closely with the MA Department of Developmental Services to advance a new approach to behavior management called Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS). Positive Behavioral Supports emphasize "gaining a broad understanding about the meaning of behavior and its function... This approach builds on the principles of choice, self-determination and person-centered planning to enhance a person's quality of life. The goal is to achieve meaningful social outcomes that will lead to a person being able to become better engaged with their community."

The philosophy of PBS is one of recognizing that "people exhibit maladapted behavior because it serves a useful purpose for them in their current situation. People exhibit these behaviors for many different reasons... PBS focuses on prevention of behaviors... often using clear guidelines and protocols... Only when prevention is 'not enough' is a highly individualized behavioral plan developed."

Providers need to create "environments and patterns of support that make the challenging behavior irrelevant, ineffective or inefficient. Procedures used to insure safety, while necessary and important, should not be misunderstood to substitute for procedures that provide positive behavioral supports."

"PBS is evidence-based, system-focused, function-based, teaching focused, and culturally responsive. It is a positive approach that identifies 3 tiers of support: Universal, Targeted and Intensive.

A. **Universal** (primary) interventions which always are available for all individuals. Preventing problem behavior involves dedicating considerable effort to ensuring individuals are in **positive, proactive and responsive** environments, i.e. ones in which they are less likely to engage in problematic behavior due to lack of access to preferred activities, boredom, frustration, lack of an effective communication system or an unrecognized health problem.

B. **Targeted** (secondary) interventions which are put in place quickly and are for anyone 'at risk' of problem behavior designed and implemented by a Team in consultation with a qualified clinician for an individual who needs additional support beyond universal interventions.

C. **Intensive** interventions are put in place only for those few individuals who need support beyond Universal and Targeted interventions... individuals with the most complex behaviors who require a well-developed comprehensive Positive Functional Behavioral Assessment (that) looks beyond the behavior itself for the cause of the behavior (the function). It is the process of gathering and analyzing information about an individual and his/her behavior in order to determine the purpose or intent of the action."

The DDS PBS system requires each provider to create a Leadership Team to oversee the implementation of the program. Comprised of administrators, managers, family members, individuals served, staff and qualified clinicians, this team meets regularly overseeing the organization's implementation plan. DDS assists Beaverbrook STEP with technical supports and resources (for more information go to: <http://ddsllearning.com>).

Beaverbrook STEP's PBS Experience

For the past 3 years, Beaverbrook STEP has enthusiastically embraced the theory, philosophy and direction of the DDS Positive Behavioral Supports system. STEP currently has an advanced PBS initiative and our progress has been nothing short of remarkable. STEP has a well developed PBS Leadership Team comprised of parents, staff, ABA clinicians and individuals served. The overall long term goal this team has established for Beaverbrook STEP is to reduce individual behavioral events by establishing and implementing a comprehensive process to assess and ameliorate the environmental, social and other circumstances that precipitate such behaviors. Our Leadership Team has been trained, meets regularly and is currently visiting all STEP programs.

Our process includes surveying, identifying and evaluating the particular circumstances surrounding each individual's behaviors and then modifying/changing these circumstances to reduce and/or eliminate said behaviors. For example, changes might be made to an individual's environment; new supports could be provided; and/or modifications to staffing, staff roles, and/or staff responsibilities could be implemented. This process incorporates data collection, charting and analysis for on-going evaluation of the effectiveness and efficacy of interventions.

Additionally, Beaverbrook STEP has partnered with Melmark New England and UMass Boston to advance services for individuals needing behavioral interventions and ABA services, including adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. A formal university affiliation was made with the certification and educational training services offered by the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston. STEP became an official continuing education provider for UMass Boston's program; we have completed our first credentialed training course for Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT).

The Positive Intensive Behavioral Supports policies and procedures are really working and STEP is well on its way to reducing behavioral events. Over the past fiscal year, the number of behavior plans went down from 16 to 7, a reduction of 45%.

All staff have been trained in PBA methods and Safety Care (positive focus) and STEP has three BCBA analysts who supervise and train staff working with individuals served.

Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.

Building Social Capital Through Social Brokering

Social Inclusion is a popular topic these days. People with disabilities need assistance from staff, volunteers and family members to help them attain success—with work, recreation, community services, home life, transportation and relationships. Like everyone else, people with disabilities need to build social capital, social relationships and ties that expand their choices, provide opportunities and offer options that enhance their quality of life.

Social Capital is using relationships to help find a good job, a more desirable home, a compatible housemate, as well as, develop connections within our community. The more social capital the better!

Social Brokering is one strategy for building Social Capital. Social Brokering can be fun and fulfilling for everyone. Invite people with disabilities to join you in your own favorite activities, support them as they try new activities and use your own social network to help them find jobs, housing and other community resources. Some ideas:

- Volunteering**
- Coaching**
- Employment networking**
- On-line social media**
- Clubs, organizations**
- Church**
- Education**
- Self-advocacy**
- Sports and social activities**
- Explore housing options**



Members of Beaverbrook STEP's Board of Directors enjoy our annual community BBQ with Self-Advocates and family members.



**“My Apartment
Looks Perfect.
I like everything
about my
home.”**

***Self-Advocate,
Beaverbrook STEP***

**When people discover what they have,
they find power.**

**When people join together in new
connections and relationships they build
power.**

**When people become more productive
together, they exercise their power to
address problems and realize dreams.**

When People Care Enough to Act: Inclusion Press.



SHARED LIVING: PROVIDING NEW AVENUES FOR INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT FOR ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Shared Living is an option increasing in popularity with individuals who want more affordable housing options that offer choice and individuality, as well as, the opportunity to design their own personal vision for community living. Shared living empowers adults with disabilities, allowing them to determine where and with whom they want to live.

Beaverbrook STEP provides support to several men and women who live with a shared living provider (roommate, family, caregiver). **Shared living is a carefully arranged situation in which an individual with a disability shares a home with one or more non-disabled persons, enjoying the benefits and responsibilities of this lifestyle.**

The relationship between the shared living provider and the individual is a mutually beneficial one in which each person is seen as having unique gifts to offer each other. Shared living providers receive a stipend in exchange for providing the specific supports needed for the individual to live successfully in the community. However, the true motivation for shared living providers is not monetary; providers as well as individuals with disabilities are looking for long-term, fulfilling and meaningful lifestyles that enhance the quality of their lives.

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Beaverbrook STEP staff provide support to the household in areas negotiated between all parties. These services often include assistance with medical appointments, community membership and coordination of respite care. Successful living situations provide healthy relationships, sharing of life experiences and shared planning for the future.

Melanie and Heather, both 62 years of age, have lived together for the past 7 years. Melanie was searching for more meaning and quality in her life; she desired to share her life with a person with special needs. Heather was looking for a new home. She had been in a shared living situation that was not working for her.

Heather had grown up in a dysfunctional home; many of the details of her childhood are unknown. Born with disabilities related to her mother's alcohol consumption during pregnancy, Heather struggled with social relationships and behavioral issues that often got her into trouble in the community.

She was angry that she had an unhappy childhood and often refused to give her name because her name reminded her of this sad period in her life. Heather could be demanding and obstinate, but she also loved animals, making friends and earning money; she was curious about everything and had a passion for learning and books.

The first time they met, Heather presented Melanie with a list of 25 things she wanted from a shared living relationship.

She wanted a person who loved dogs, reading, shopping and had a good sense of humor. She also desired to live near stores and recreational activities.

Fortunately, Melanie fulfilled 20 of the 25 criteria on the list! They shared the same interests (movies, thrift shops, manicures, Florida, Greek food, etc.) and even had the same favorite television shows (Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy).



And so their story began. Over the years, they both grew to care about and carefully consider each other. An emotional and loving bond was forged. Initially they moved into an apartment that they selected together. When the annual rent increases became prohibitive, they found a new apartment in Watertown.

Heather hated her name so intensely that Melanie suggested that she should change her name to a name she liked. After conferring with the DDS case manager and attorney, **Heather legally changed her name. This change empowered Heather and motivated her to begin working through old childhood issues with Melanie's help.**

Melanie encouraged Heather to adopt an attitude of turning negatives into positives, providing incentives to help her. Heather and Melanie now share chores and activities. Heather has room to store her precious books and she loves swimming in the community pool where they live. Heather earns money by re-cycling and she independently walks to her hairdresser's salon and shops in the neighborhood.

Asked about her friends, Heather talks about her best friend who lives nearby, her friends at her day program and friends she has made in her apartment building. She takes The Ride to her day service and to medical appointments. Heather is also a member of Beaverbrook STEP's Human Rights Committee, a position with responsibilities that she takes very seriously.

Because of her insatiable curiosity, Melanie recently bought Heather an Amazon Echo device (a hands free speaker controlled by voice that connects the user to the Alexa Voice Service). Now Heather has instant access to the latest information, news, music and other applications.

Currently, Heather and Melanie are saving money for their 2 week annual trip to the mid-west to attend the Family Reunion. Heather is eager to re-connect with her 'adopted family' (over 125 relatives attended last year). They also vacation each winter in Clearwater, Florida where Melanie's mother lives. Heather enthusiastically describes the retirement complex there where she visits with friends from past vacations and where she and Melanie drive around the area in a golf cart.

Asked about the future, they both look forward to eventually retiring to Florida. But until then, Heather and Melanie agree that they will "keep living together, loving each other. They are family and it works!"

*Want more information about becoming a Shared Living Provider?
Call us at 617-926-1113 for more details.*

Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.



A DREAM COMES TRUE: MAJOR RENOVATION PROJECT AT 37 BANKS STREET WALTHAM Funded by



Thanks to funding from MassHousing, a long awaited construction project at 37 Banks Street in Waltham is on the horizon. As a joint project of the Waltham Housing Authority and Beaverbrook STEP, the property will soon undergo a major \$630,000 renovation and expansion. The 5 individuals supported by STEP who live at Banks Street are extremely excited about this 7 month project which commences on November 15, with completion scheduled for June, 2018.

Project leaders are Mark Johnson, Assistant Executive Director, Waltham Housing Authority, Rick Currier, Senior Director, Beaverbrook STEP and Ola Tunde Ojuolape, Banks Street House Manager for Beaverbrook STEP. The \$630,000 Banks Street renovation project includes:

- ◆ A first floor addition and re-structuring to create a larger, accessible, open floor plan with a new living area, kitchen, bedroom and bath plus a new handicap accessible ramp at the back of the home.
- ◆ The second floor bedrooms will be remodeled with additional storage and an accessible bathroom.
- ◆ The third level efficiency apartment will be totally renovated with new kitchen, bath and bedroom, along with a new additional interior staircase that will become a second means of egress for the apartment, allowing the spiral exterior stairs to be torn down.
- ◆ The lower basement level will be improved and a new, accessible bathroom added.
- ◆ The home will have all new systems (electrical, plumbing, heating, central air conditioning), new lighting fixtures, new appliances, new flooring and new paint.
- ◆ The exterior will be remodeled and painted with a new roof, siding, landscaping and driveway.

A more difficult challenge for the individuals currently living at Banks Street is the fact that they must move out of the home during the 7 months of construction. STEP has planned for 4 of the individuals to move to our beautifully appointed, 4 bedroom, second floor apartment at our new Belmont Community Service Center in Belmont. The 5th individual who needs an accessible site, will move into a supervised apartment at Irving Street in Watertown.

[Stay tuned for future updates!](#)

Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.
Holiday Dinner
Please join us for our annual holiday
celebration on
Thursday
December 7, 2017
6:00 - 9:00pm

at the
Hellenic Cultural Center
25 Bigelow Avenue
Watertown, MA 02472
Dinner and Dancing

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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.

Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.

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Contact Us

Beaverbrook STEP, Inc.
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Watertown, MA 02472
(617) 926-1113

www.beaverbrookstep.org

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

Serving Communities in Eastern MA
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