

BFAIR BUZZ

Summer 2020



HEROES WORK HERE

“Crisis always shines a light on those with heart, integrity, and courage. The BFAIR staff embody these characteristics and are truly making a difference. Sincere thanks for your continued commitment to serving those most vulnerable in our community.”

- Ira Grossman, Vice Chair,
BFAIR Board of Directors



Letter from the CEO & Board Chair



Rich Weisenflue
CEO



Alex Kastrinakis
Board Chair

At BFAIR, in-person contact is essential to meeting the needs of the people we support. Bridging the gap to maintain contact when the pandemic forced the closure of many of our services relied heavily on the creativity and steadfastness of all direct care, administrative and management staff. There's little doubt that the positive innovations, developed initially out of necessity, are exciting and will continue. However, working closely with people with developmental disabilities, autism and acquired brain injuries, whose quality of life depends on direct care, will remain a critical aspect of the services we offer. For both; direct care when the safety and well-being of our residents and staff was paramount and for the inspiring work to provide services remotely, Alex, Chairperson of our Board of Directors and I would like to thank all BFAIR staff. You have our pledge to do our utmost in support and recognition of your outstanding work.

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Join Our Team!

BFAIR is currently hiring full-time and part-time direct care positions in our Residential and Community Living Departments as well as Adult Services Behavior Specialist and ABI Program Supervisor positions. BFAIR is a premier human service organization offering exceptional benefits including: Medical/Dental/Vision/Short & Long Term Disability/Life Ins, 403(b) plan, vacation pay, and educational assistance. Visit www.bfair.org today to apply or contact Laura Baran, Recruiter, at 413.664.9382 x141. AA/EOE

Caregivers Wanted

BFAIR is licensed to provide Adult Family Care (AFC) Services, a MassHealth funded program designed to support people 16 years of age and older who have medical, physical, and emotional needs. AFC Caregivers are offered a tax-free stipend, training, case management and care coordination, home visits by our registered nurses, and respite services. This program is wonderfully supportive for families that are already providing care for a loved one in their home. Interested in learning about how you can become a caregiver in your home? Contact Jasmine at jrivera@bfair.org or 413.664.9382 x132 today!

BFAIR Online Programming

Our Employment Services programs began online programming quickly after the closure of supported work sites in mid-March. It was an opportunity to be creative and deliver services in an innovative and creative way that would keep folks engaged and supported while continuing to build work related skills. Program participants are offered three sessions a day that cover soft skills, like how to communicate effectively, health and wellness skills such as proper handwashing techniques, employment skills, and a daily social group where folks get to see each other and talk freely. Despite being a new venture for our Employment department and the agency as a whole, the smooth transition from in-person to virtual programming allowed us to continue to deliver services, and for the people we support and staff to stay connected.



Our Community Based and Day Habilitation programs also utilized online programming in the same way by creating inventive programming for individuals to stay engaged, active, social and build skills while the programs were closed as a safety precaution, also beginning in mid-March.

Katrina Cardillo, Director of Marketing, led our online implementation by setting up the BFAIR website for participants to access the daily calendar of activities and the virtual curriculum sessions with links to corresponding events.

Day Program Reopening

Our Day Habilitation and CBDS programs celebrated its long awaited reopening to participants on Monday August 3, 2020. Prior to doing so, we conducted surveys with the families to gain their input and received some great feedback to incorporate into our planning. The participants who reside in some residential homes have not returned as people were prioritized in such a way to evaluate the risk to their health vs. the benefit of in-person services. In addition, the program is only operating in a way that allows 40% capacity to adhere to the to 113 sq. feet per person requirement. Those who have returned in the first several weeks have really enjoyed seeing one another, their faces filled with excitement as they get back to a routine again. The direct care staff have also been very happy to return to their day program routines as well. Although a different model than they left back in March, everyone seems excited to be back and delivering in-person services. The participants engage in the online sessions and have the opportunity to see and interact with everyone who might not be on site. The virtual sessions now have folks in group homes, at home with families, and in person at the programs. This has been one of the most successful and exciting elements to be added to the reopening, one that we had not anticipated!



For those who are not ready to return full time, we are offering remote programs or a hybrid model where they attend a few days in person and then join everyone remotely on the off days. The participants in the program are able to also join these activities with those who are doing this remotely.

The participants start the day with an exercise program or a morning chat with the nurses. We have reading groups, culinary arts groups, and communication groups. We end the day with a fun activity such as a dance party, Bingo or a trivia game. The transition from participants attending remotely to in-person services has gone very well, and we plan on offering in-person services to more participants in the upcoming weeks.

BFAIR Bottle & Can Redemption Center

After being closed since March, the BFAIR Bottle & Can Redemption Center reopened for business on June 16th. Several precautions have been established and are being followed to ensure the safety of our staff, program participants, and customers alike. All redemption services are currently set up outside to manage capacity restrictions inside the building and face coverings are worn at all times by anyone working at or redeeming cans and bottles at the center. In an effort to control volume inside, a temporary limit of 300 containers per customer remains in effect.

Entry and exit walkways have been set up to establish one-way foot traffic and ample signage has been posted to ensure proper social distancing. Service tables have been positioned six feet apart, each equipped with gloves, trays, and sanitizer. Tables and sorting trays are disinfected immediately after customer use.

For staff and individuals working at the center, wellness screenings are completed upon arrival. Workstations are assigned to adhere to social distancing guidelines. The Center receives a thorough cleaning at the end of each day to prepare it for the next.

The precautions established upon reopening in June have been followed stringently which has allowed the redemption center to remain open. We are committed to keeping everyone safe all while continuing to serve our customers and reduce waste!

If you are looking for a way to help, donating your containers is a convenient and contactless service. Donations can be dropped off during business hours in the marked area on the Protection Ave. side of the building and are not limited to any amount. Donations are being used to offset the cost of protective equipment for the employees of the Center and BFAIR staff and are greatly appreciated!



Current hours of operation are Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm. Closed Sunday and Monday.

The Community Gives Back to BFAIR

Thank You!

Thank you to all of our donors who have been so generous, especially during this time of the pandemic. We have received many donations to help offset the cost of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), which the agency has spent in excess of \$65,000 to protect staff, our residents and program participants.

Also received were several grants from organizations such as MEMA, Health New England, and the COVID Emergency Response Fund for Berkshire County, a coalition of philanthropy and business partners including the Berkshire United Way, Berkshire Taconic Foundation, Northern Berkshire United Way and the Williamstown Community Chest.

We are so appreciative of the ongoing support of our Mission every year, but it's times like these when we see friends of BFAIR, our business partners and supporters banding together in extraordinary fashion and giving of their time and donations, that we really understand how much the community gives back to BFAIR and the individuals we serve; it warms our hearts.

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If you are interested in making a donation, please visit www.bfair.org/donate

Self-Advocacy Cookie Dough Fundraiser

The BFAIR Self-Advocacy Group, "We Are The People", set their sights on raising funds for their efforts by selling smiley face cookies during the month of July. Their "Raise Some Dough" fundraiser was very successful pulling in over \$1100 with over 40 cookie orders. Erica Bailey from Bailey's Bakery made all of the tasty treats! Be on the lookout for her storefront at 57 Main Street in North Adams.



Cookies were picked up using a contactless method at the BFAIR main office, with the help of the individuals in the Self-Advocacy Group, outside under the mezzanine to be as safe as possible during the pandemic.

Maria Netti, Treasurer of "We Are the People", and the highest seller with over 20 orders, said of the experience "I really enjoyed fundraising, and hope that our funds can be used for things like providing food at our meetings, and helping our group attend events in the future."

The Self-Advocacy Group meets every third Thursday of the month at the main office in North Adams. There are currently six members in the group, who are learning the three parts of self-advocacy; knowing yourself, knowing your needs and knowing how to get what you need. The self-advocacy group goal is to support each other and others to gain confidence to speak out for themselves, and to be educated not only on their rights but their responsibilities.

The Group has goals to attend legislative events, advocacy events, and plan an annual group outing when circumstances allow after the pandemic.

New Brain Injury Home Opening - Southampton

We are excited to announce the opening of our third home for individuals with acquired brain injury (ABI) in Southampton, and our 13th home as part of the BFAIR family of residences.

Meeting the needs of the growing adults with ABI residing in the Pioneer Valley and achieving an agency strategic initiative, this beautiful home is much more than that; a place to welcome four people into its doors and to call it their home.



2020 Annual Meeting



Julie & Michael Warrington
Keynote Speakers

During this challenging time with the COVID-19 pandemic, we made the difficult decision to cancel our 2020 Annual Meeting. As I'm sure you can understand, while we much prefer to hold our meeting publicly to recognize our staff, report our achievements and thank our community partners, our focus and attention must be on protecting the health and safety of the people we serve with disabilities, the amazing staff who care for them, and our community.

Our Annual Report was sent out to our supporters through the mail, electronically, and posted on our website. We hope you had a chance to review our Annual Report and watch the wonderful video from our keynote speakers, Julie and Michael Warrington, who would have kicked off our meeting. The Warringtons are part of over fifty individuals and their families supported by the Family & Individual Support Program at BFAIR. This program offers a wide variety of personalized support focusing on medical advocacy, empowering people, reducing vulnerability, and equal opportunities. Julie and Michael count on BFAIR to assist with daily living skills and social interaction to help them be successful and live independently in the community by helping them to meet their personal goals.

This year's awards were handed out at our main office in a socially distanced fashion. Categories included Years of Service in recognition of employees for their dedication to BFAIR's Mission, Quintal/Crosby Award, two Self-Determination awards given individuals whose stellar accomplishments are recognized, and the community awards recognizing those who support BFAIR's Mission in a variety of fashions.

The **Volunteer of the Year** is presented to a community business, group, or person that has worked closely with BFAIR and its program participants to advance the agency's Mission.

The **Employer of the Year** is presented to a business that has provided employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities.

The **Quintal/Crosby Award** is given annually to a staff member who embodies the deep commitment to community service and advocacy that former BFAIR employee George Crosby possessed. This employee shows exemplary commitment to supporting the dignity, human rights, and quality of life for people with disabilities.

Employee Recognition & Awards

Board Award



Melanie Moran

Crosby/Quintal Award



Tonia Canavan

Volunteer of the Year



Attorney Greg Howard
Donovan, O'Connor, & Dodig



Employer of the Year



The Log by Ramunto's

Edward Frampton Self-Determination Award



Tim Franchere

Edward Frampton Self-Determination Award



Patty Moran



Length of Service Awards

5 Years of Service

- Carrie Treece
- Deborah Cook
- Kimberly Horsfall
- Debra Lemaire
- Paul Barbeau
- Candice Adams
- Sierra McLearn
- Martha Labbee
- Casandra Magner
- Leanne Martin
- Kaitlyn Wheeler

15 Years



Melisa Larabee

20 Years



James Labonte

30 Years



Brenda Hawkins

30 Years



Jamie Williams



Berkshire Family & Individual Resources

771 South Church Street | North Adams, MA 01247

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers:

- Alex Kastrinakis, *Chairperson*
- Ira Grossman, *Vice Chair*
- Sherry Galbraith, *Treasurer*
- Patti Messina, *Clerk*

Directors:

- Kim Baker
- Lisa Birge
- Dr. Gray Ellrodt
- Alex Figueroa
- Susan Gold
- Peter Mirante
- Martha Montgomery
- Dana Mullen
- John Toole
- Carter White

KEEP UP WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Proud Member Agency of:



Human Rights Committee

With the human rights of the people that we serve a top priority for our organization, BFAIR's Human Rights Committee meets regularly to support the agency's work to ensure the dignity and full community inclusion of people with disabilities as well as the fundamental rights of equality, safety, home and privacy for all people served. Many thanks to the members of the committee comprised of people served, community volunteers and BFAIR staff.

Current committee members include: Dodi Denette, nurse and chairperson; Attorney Gregory Howard; Dr. Deborah Foss, Professor of Psychology at MCLA; and program participants: Candace Mills, Robert Sartori, and Lisa McSheen. Many of these members have been on the committee for at least five years. Consultants to the committee include: Deb DiDonna, Human Rights Coordinator; Erin Shea, VP Quality Compliance; Terry Blair, BFAIR Senior Human Rights Advocate; and Julia Phykitt, Assistant Director of Clinical Services.