

BFAIR BUZZ

2021 Volume 3

Letter from the CEO **Rich Weisenflue**



What you'll find when reading this edition is something that has become a constant at BFAIR and our community of supporters - positives amid substantial challenges. Side by side with recent grant awards, local businesses and community members have made donations as well as in-kind contributions to support BFAIR's services for people with developmental disabilities, autism, and traumatic brain injury. This generosity and thoughtfulness serve as a catalyst for service enhancements and support our mission to provide quality services.

Moving on to our most concerning challenge, the workforce crisis, we know it is vital that people with disabilities have consistent and well-trained staff, particularly from Direct Support Professionals. Even pre-pandemic, agencies such as BFAIR experienced staffing issues, including high vacancy rates, recruitment and retention struggles stemming from inadequate funding necessary to pay hourly rates commensurate with their considerable responsibilities. For this reason, BFAIR supports our sector's ask of our legislators for 174 million in American Rescue Plan funds to be used to infuse the human service delivery system as we advocate for a sustainable and stable rate structure.

We believe that our staff, Board of Directors, and community along with our legislators working collectively have the capacity to support human service agencies like BFAIR paying wages reflective of our essential workforce's commitment and valuable skills necessary to provide quality care for people with disabilities.

Community Support Warms Our Hearts

Partnerships with local businesses throughout the area are an integral aspect of offering the best services possible for individuals with disabilities and expanding our community of supporters. We are so fortunate to have numerous community organizations and business partners who believe in, champion, and share the BFAIR mission.



Zogics, a local cleaning and equipment supply company based out of Lenox, generously donated disinfectant wipes to BFAIR- 480 rolls to be exact! Especially throughout the pandemic, we have been vigilant cleaning and disinfecting our residences, day programs and offices in an effort to maintain the health and safety of the people we support, our staff and visitors. We are so grateful for the generous in-kind donation from Zogics.



We also had the wonderful opportunity to be the benefactor of two great grocery store programs. Wild Oats Market, a Co-op located in Williamstown designated BFAIR as their featured nonprofit partner for the month of August as part of their collaborative program, Round Up for Change. Throughout the month, Wild Oats encouraged customers to round up to the dollar to benefit people with disabilities served by BFAIR. It sure paid off! In just one month, Wild Oats customers donated over \$3,900 to support BFAIR. We also had the amazing opportunity to be part of Stop & Shop's Reusable Bag program. Over two months at stores in Pittsfield and

North Adams, Stop & Shop gave \$1 for every reusable bag purchased. Decreasing environmental impact and increasing resources for individuals with disabilities is definitely a great partnership!



Another highlight of this summer was working with the NAMazing Initiative, a collective of community members in North Adams. NAMazing initiative brought back the beloved Eagle Street Coffee Hours hosted by nonprofits each Friday. BFAIR had an amazing turnout of over 100 community members, both familiar with and those becoming familiar with our agency. It was a morning of wonderful networking and much needed caffeine (thank you, BrewHaHa!).



With a generous grant from the COVID-19 Resiliency Fund, we constructed two accessible gardens for our Community Based Day Services and Day Habilitation at our Roberts Drive location. This grant was funded in partnership by the Berkshire United Way, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Northern Berkshire United Way, and the Williamstown Community Chest. Program participants had a wonderful time setting up the gardens, planting fall plants, and planning for future growing.



Staff Appreciation

Drive-Thru Staff Appreciation Event



While we couldn't host our annual celebration with a picnic at Windsor Lake with staff and their families this year, we came up with a creative way to celebrate how much our incredible staff mean to the agency and thank them for the hard work they put in all year long. So, what's better than some great food from Tres Niños! We held a drive-thru thank you line starting with staff placing their order, picking up a gift of appreciation from representatives of our management team, Family Advisory Committee and Board, and ended with their taco pick-up on the way out. A socially-distanced thank you was just what the doctor ordered!



BFAIR Named A 2021 Health New England Well Worth It Award Winner

BFAIR is proud to have been selected as a 2021 Health New England Well Worth It Award recipient. HNE's Bronze level recognizes our successful worksite health promotion and employee health improvement initiatives. The award recognizes BFAIR's commitment to their employees' overall health and their achievements in implementing health and wellness programs.



This year's Wellness activities included a variety of workshops we offered our employees such as yoga, healthy eating, and smoking cessation. Also included were a few self-driven challenges such as a walking challenge and a hydration challenge. We also pride ourselves on including individuals served by BFAIR in our Wellness program.



Employees of the Quarter
 Congratulations to our Employees of the Quarter. Your dedication and hard work is second to none!



Terri Blair



Lydia Cox

Direct Service Professional Week

Direct Service Professional Week (DSP Week) happens each year in September. This year it was celebrated the week of September 12-18. Supported through ANCOR, organizations are able to order merchandise for staff, participate in the months' initiatives, and advocate for and thank Direct Support Professionals. "For more than 50 years, the American Network of Community Options and Resources has been a leading advocate for the critical role service providers play in enriching the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)" (www.ancor.org).



During DSP Week, BFAIR celebrated our staff by holding weekly appreciation raffles, and collaborating with our partners like Health New England and OneDigital who donated items in support of the work of our staff. Members from the leadership team also posted Thank You videos to the BFAIR social media pages, to articulate in their own words, how critical a role our Direct Service professionals play in our organization.

Employment Services

Congratulations, Kayla!

A warm congratulations to Kayla Brown-Wood, promoted from Assistant Director to Director of Employment Services.

Kayla began with BFAIR in 2016 in the role of Employment Coordinator and two years later promoted to Assistant Director of Employment Services. Kayla has been pivotal in providing support and placements with local employers for people with disabilities which includes the successful operation of the BFAIR's bottle and can Redemption Center located on Massachusetts Avenue in North Adams. Kayla earned a Bachelor's in Interdisciplinary Studies and a minor in Psychology from Fitchburg State University, is pursuing her Master's in Public Health Administration and is a graduate of 1Berkshire's Leadership Program.



A Fun Summer at the Learning Lab

Summer is all about fun, and that's just what we experienced in our Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program! Students spent their time discovering several important work readiness skills preparation, for example, the use of public transportation provided by Julie Davine from the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority. Special guest presenters included Matt Davis from Hometown Tire. Our Learning Lab staff also partnered with the Berkshire STEM Network introducing students to future opportunities in the Sciences. The STEM educational workshop was offered by Paul Allen, MCLA adjunct physics professor.



Time Flies at the BFAIR Bottle & Can Redemption Center

The BFAIR Bottle & Can Redemption Center was thrilled to welcome a brand-new can counting machine making it easier and quicker than ever for customers to redeem at our center. The machine is capable of counting 500 containers per minute and offers a full-service option for our customers; just bring your bottles/cans to the Service desk and we'll take care of the rest! Our Redemption Center is open Monday – Saturday from 9:00 AM-2:00 PM. Fundraising season is right around the corner – Good luck with your fundraising drives and when the time comes to process the cans and bottles you collected, call Kayla Brown-Wood at 413-663-5056 or email kbrown-wood@bfair.org.





Berkshire Family & Individual Resources

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