Over the last few months, Beacon has sent five of our clients back to school — or at least back into a school — as employees. All the schools are located in the Amphi School District. They have already hired five and plan to hire more — as many as they can! Why they are doing this can teach us a lot about our changing world.

Marc Lappitt, the Director of Transportation and Food Service for the district, and Amy Richards, the District Food Service Coordinator, were at their “wits end” with staff turnover. Specifically, they dealt with high turnover at entry-level jobs in their district. This is a very common complaint from businesses, and it’s getting worse.

Marc and Amy remembered hearing about businesses like Jim Click Dealerships and Safeway who have successfully hired long-term Beacon clients. They decided to give us a call.

Right about the same time, Miguel Geonnotti lost his job at the food commissary at Davis-Monthan AFB. Although he had been a very good employee for two years as part of the food-service crew with The Center for Habilitation (TCH), he and thirteen other people with disabilities lost their jobs because of a new Executive Order from President Obama. The order sets a minimum wage for all Federal Contractors of $10.10 an hour. The Order included people with disabilities, even if they cannot earn that amount. Miguel was earning $10.50 an hour, but he and the other clients were laid off so there would be enough money to pay other clients who had to be paid more.

TCH and Miguel’s Vocational Rehab Counselor, Judith Spiel, felt Beacon could help a worker as good as Miguel find other employment quickly. They were right. Amphi School District had already hired a couple of our clients and were looking for more. In spite of Miguel’s mild developmental disability and his hearing impairment, he had been a very good worker and really wanted to keep working. Like many of our clients — and for people with disabilities in general — employment is often a very high hurdle to overcome; there are any number of barriers and challenges (though fewer than there used to be).

Slowly, the word is getting around that people with disabilities make very good employees. They are grateful for the chance to work, are enthusiastic about their job — however humble it may be — and, aside from their disability, bring fewer problem behaviors with them. They also bring good attitudes, loyalty, and will tend to stay in their job longer than non-disabled workers do. That’s music to employers’ ears.
Amphi School District serves food in seventeen different sites to 10,000 students daily. It’s a large job that requires nothing less than a small army of people to make things happen five days a week. It starts with having people who will show up! Marc Lappitt says he especially appreciates Beacon workers’ “commitments and attendance. It’s been better than what we’ve had.”

Amphi School District has a long partnership with Beacon. A number of years ago, Amphi High School started sending ten to twelve Special Education students each year to work part-time at Beacon during their final year or two before graduation. This process is known as “transitioning.” Our focused program allows students to explore options, gain skills, assess their chance of independent employment and experience the real world of work in a safe, supportive environment.

At Beacon’s annual Holiday Party in December, Amphi Special Education teacher Julie Daniel received our Leadership Award for “Exceptional Teaching and Commitment to People with Disabilities.” Julie, and her fellow educators at Amphi, are known as innovators and leaders in Special Education. To see that commitment carried on in hiring people with disabilities as employees is a credit to the District as well as a sign that more employers are getting the message: “Disability isn’t a barrier to employment, it might even be an asset.”

Miguel has some real challenges that could easily be an excuse to not even try to work. But that’s not Miguel, or others like him. His disabilities won’t stop him. They barely slow him down! He wants to work and be a self-reliant, independent person.

Even rotten luck doesn’t stop him. He’s had three jobs that ended because of business decisions beyond his control. But, each time he came back to Beacon looking for the next opportunity. That’s what is so inspiring about him... Amphi School District’s Marc Lappitt had seen it in their Beacon clients before; he knew Miguel had those same qualities.

Miguel lives by himself, cooks, cleans, attends church, pays his bills and makes a life for himself. He can’t drive, so he takes two buses to get to his worksite at Amphi Middle School. During a recent bus strike he took taxi cabs.

His main responsibility there is to tend to the two salad bars in the cafeteria. With 2,000 meals a day to serve, that’s a lot of salad! Miguel makes sure everything is stocked and that the students are taking appropriate portions.

He’s hoping the District will give him even more hours to work in the future.

“Miguel filled out his paperwork, got his drug test and showed up at our office before he even had an interview. I’m impressed with how he wants to succeed in the workplace,” says Marc. “I would like to take every Beacon prospect for every open position I have,” he added.

Miguel Geonnotti is certainly unique, but he is not alone. Beacon can supply a steady stream of ready, willing and (dis)abled workers who appreciate the chance to work. ...Just one more important lesson we can all learn from school!
Beacon Board Chair Skip Whitley has announced that Steve King, President and CEO, will be retiring at the end of March of 2017 after 37 years of service to our organization. Under his leadership, Beacon grew from a small, local nonprofit into a multi-state model for successful rehabilitation programs.

The Board has already begun the search process to have the new President hired by the end of 2016. We will be sure to share more information of this as it becomes available.

**CIMS Certification Earned!**

In December 2015 Beacon Group earned the *Clean Industry Management Standard Cleaning* (CIMS) with Honors certification. This award is given by the International Sanitary Supply Association (ISSA) and its official registrar, the American Institute for Cleaning Science (AICS).

In 2014 Beacon Group began the process of designing our custodial processes and services to meet the custodial industry standards in both quality and customer service satisfaction. This certification gave Beacon Group the ability to design and implement a strong management framework that we used to develop our customer-centered and quality-driven processes. Our CIMS certification demonstrates our dedication to quality while meeting customer requirements based upon universally accepted custodial industry standards that are the hallmark of successful custodial operations.

Big congratulations to all who worked on this project to obtain this amazing certification. A special thank you to Santiago Miranda (Custodial Project Manager), who also earned his I.C.E. (Industry Cleaning Expert) certification, Chris McNamara (Quality and Risk Manager) and Lenora Mendez (Custodial Supervisor). They jumped-in and worked long hours to move us in the right direction for a successful CIMS audit. Finally, thank you to our Beacon Group’s Senior Management team for providing great support, guidance and encouragement during this process!

**Benefits of Certification to Beacon’s Customers**

- A staff well-trained in state-of-the-art custodial techniques
- The ability to manage daily tasks effectively and efficiently
- Strong quality control processes that ensure customer satisfaction

**In the Community**

As our world becomes more dependent on electronics, we also increasingly need safe methods of recycling them while keeping our personal data secure. Adding electronic recycling to Beacon Secure’s slate of confidential destruction services just makes sense!

We bring our experience with maintaining security and confidentiality to the electronic equipment recycling process. Beacon Secure can provide the recycling and destruction for a majority of your electronic devices, including hard drives, computers, phones, music players, printers and other electronic equipment. Unlike some other e-recycling services, Beacon Secure does not repurpose, reuse, refurbish, or reformat your electronics or hard drives. We will destroy and recycle all items brought to us using our security data destruction processes.

For more information about our electronic recycling services, please contact us at (520) 352-9951.
When Jessica Bedoy had a stroke at seventeen, her plans to attend art school in pursuit of a career in photography were derailed. She endured several years of medical struggles, many of which were life-threatening. Jessica had to learn to walk and talk all over again. Though she was given an honorary high school diploma, her disabilities prevented her from attending college. It was at this point that Jessica came to Beacon Group to help find a purpose and find guidance as she entered her new life as someone struggling with a significant challenge.

Jessica was first employed at Value Village, Beacon’s thrift store, as a cashier. When Value Village closed, she was also hired as an office assistant doing light clerical work while also receiving help to look for another job. Though opportunities presented themselves during this time, Jessica did not feel comfortable with many of them due to her trouble communicating.

During a Marana Chamber of Commerce expo event, I met Dori Stolmaker, owner of Distinctive Cleaning and Maintenance, Inc. Dori was in need of an employee to complete tasks similar to that of an administrative assistant. In June of 2015, Dori hired Jessica to handle payroll, invoicing, depositing checks, invoicing, filing, and entering customer information into a database.

Things were not always easy for Jessica when she started. With help from Beacon, her employer, and through her own hard work, she was able to overcome these challenges and become successful.

Even though Jessica was unable to reach her goal of becoming a photographer, the work she does now has given her renewed purpose and has given her life new direction.

To help her be as successful as possible, Jessica receives job coaching support from Beacon staff while she’s working. This is a cost-free service for the employer. Clearly, the opportunity to fill a position with these benefits goes without explanation, but the benefits Jessica received by having trust placed in her, and the opportunity to prove her worth, displays its value in itself.

Jessica’s story is a testament to how important finding meaningful work is.

Beacon Group’s Employment Services Department is a cost-free recruiting resource available to local businesses.

We use our expertise to provide viable employee solutions for an organization’s hiring needs, and we specialize in specific job matching of pre-screened, qualified candidates who add value to the workforce.

When you partner with our Employment Services staff, you receive the following benefits:

✔ Tax credits
✔ Cost-free recruitment and job coaching
✔ High candidate job retention and a reduction in employee turnover
✔ Diversity opportunities
✔ Training support

Additionally, your business will benefit knowing that it provides purpose for individuals like Jessica Bedoy.
Thanks to the generous support of SourceAmerica’s “Ideas to Work” grant, Beacon Group has begun to re-energize our efforts within a program called “Ticket to Work.” This program’s goal is to give Social Security Disability beneficiaries the opportunity to achieve both financial and professional freedom and independence through competitive employment. It’s completely free and voluntary and is meant to eliminate the inherent fear of returning to work.

Many of us have friends, family members or colleagues who are receiving these benefits and who hold a “ticket” from Social Security. Maybe they don’t know they have a ticket. Or, perhaps they discarded the idea for fear that they simply don’t have what it takes to return to the workplace after an accident or illness that made work nearly impossible.

Social Security benefits provides these folks a way to pay rent, get around town and see a doctor. Going back to work, though, typically means the possible loss of all or some of what they receive.

But, with “Ticket to Work,” these fears can be alleviated. While enrolled in the program, beneficiaries can go to work and not be subject to continuing disability reviews. ...And, they will not lose Medicare/Medicaid benefits for at least five years!

Between Tucson and Phoenix, there are 145,000 Social Security “Ticket to Work” beneficiaries. Beacon is the only Employment Network in Tucson (and one of only a few in Phoenix) that can offer services through this program. It is designed specifically to provide professional development and assistance in finding a job, benefits counseling and continued on-the-job support to help maintain employment.

Last year, Beacon Group helped place fourteen ticket holders in competitive positions throughout the Tucson and Phoenix metro areas. These clients represent a diverse range of people, educational backgrounds, employment histories and disabilities as a whole. This year, we are setting a goal of getting jobs for forty-eight ticket holders.

A good example is Tina Anderson who came to Beacon in 2014 looking for employment. She was not at all confident an employer would be willing to hire an individual such as herself with a disability. Gradually, Tina came out of her shell and eventually accepted a position at the Coyote Grill at the San Ignacio Golf Course. In December 2015, Tina celebrated nearly a year in that job, and was presented with Beacon Group’s Award for Outstanding Achievement in recognition of the progress she has made in pursuing her goals.

Taking the extra step to reach a larger number of ticketholders, Beacon has hired two new Employment Services Specialists responsible for our Ticket to Work program. We welcome both Emily Pratt (Tucson) and Catherine Hilgers (Phoenix).

Emily and Cat have already started working with a number of ticket holders, but we know that there are more out there. Please tell your families, friends and former colleagues about Beacon. Working together, we can create opportunities for people with disabilities.
We regret any omissions or errors. To make a donation, contact Beacon’s Patrick McCarthy at (520) 622-4874 extension 166, or pmccarthy@BeaconGroup.org, or visit our website.

**The 2015 “Drive to Thrive” Campaign**

Beacon would like to recognize and thank all our generous donors including those who supported last year’s successful “Drive to Thrive” year-end campaign. The following list reflects donations received through 12-31-15.

$10,000 and Up
- James H. Hillman Charitable Trust
- The Schmidt and Barton Family Fund
- W.E. Schmidt Charitable Foundation

$2,500 to $9,999
- Michael & Anna Belton
- Steve & Kathy King
- Skip & Cindi Woodward

$1,000 to $2,499
- Edward Beggy
- Contact One Call Center, Inc.
- Dorothy Early
- Diane Frisch
- Jack & Deborah Gracie
- Amy Knorr
- Phillip Krider
- LES is More
- Greg & Penni Natvig
- Sandra & Matt Pevarnik
- Pima County ECAP
- Raytheon Charitable Giving
- SaddleBrooke Community Outreach, Inc.
- The Ashton Family Philanthropic Fund
- Dwight & Lille Whitley
- Rick & Deborah Williams

$500 to $999
- John & Barbara Bentley
- Susan Bring
- CARE Coordinators, Inc.
- CARF International
- Janet Lesher
- Jim & Danie McCallum
- Frances Merryman
- Kudagal & Swarna Murthy
- Dee Oneil
- Max & Juanita Pensinger
- Jimmy & Diane Quihuis
- David Schach
- Sierra Southwest Coop
- Marc & Debra Simon
- Harold & Kathleen Snyder
- Vogel Foundation
- Jon Weissman
- Wells Fargo Community Support

$100 to $499
- Charles & Jean Ares
- Arizona CFC
- Julie Auvil
- Richard & Vickie Babbitt
- Winifred Baran
- James & Deborah Barnett
- Deanna & Robert Bates
- Betsey Bayless
- Charles & Theresa Beggy
- Carl & Joan Boesewetter
- Catherine Bradley
- Kenneth Brailsford
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- Sheryl Brown
- Benjamin Burns
- Lee Cauble
- John Cho
- City of Tucson — ECAP
- David & Sara Clement
- Carolyn Cluff
- Stephen Cohen
- Sherry Collins
- Thomas & Marilyn Comer
- Janine Contestable
- Theodore Cordery
- Mary De Jong
- Robert Denison
- Desert Southwest CFC
- Terry Dewald
- Diversified Design & Construction
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- Dorothy Hess
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- Dana Holt
- Ronald & Fonda Holtmyer
- John & Janet Hughes
- Dorothy Jennings
- Veronica Johnson
- Kalil Bottling Company
- Edmund Krider
- Phillip Krider
- Linda Landers
- Garvin Larson
- Vern Legvold
- Robert & Elizabeth Leko
- Dan Levitt
- Joan Levitt
- Patricia Liaupsin
- Jane & Albert Lockwood
- Robert & Penny Macauthur
- Patrick & Shannon McCarthy
- Fay McCormick
- Donald & Caroline McMahon
- Christopher McNamara
- Alpa & Nirav Merchant
- MITC
- Sarah Moffett
- James & Nancy Murtagh
- Anthony & Ann Marie Nespoli
- John & Susan Nord
- Marilyn Olander
- Dee O’Neill
- Gwen & Dan Pendergrass
- Ronald Peterson
- Joshua Pevarnik
- Pima County
- John & Peggy Prugh
- Kenneth Radbill
- Jacob & Judith Redekop
- Theresa Riess
- Pamela Roberts
- Butch & Denise Ryan
- SAAVI - Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired
- Joyce Santiago
- Mary Shields
- Ronald & Helene Showalter
- Jeris Slayback
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- Arnold & Kathleen Snover
- Robert Snyder
- Ronald Stearns
- Kirsten Stephens
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- Brenda Stokes
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- Katie Svetlik
- Robert & Audrey Thomassen
- Charles & Sharon Tiller
- Carol Tracy
- Brad Trainer
- Michael & Ruth Van Vleet
- Elizabeth Von Isser
- John Weierman
- Michael Welborn
- John & Helen Wilcox
- Trudy Wilson
- Sandra Wong
- Ruth Wylie
During our annual Holiday Dinner Party and Dance celebration in December, Beacon Group recognized the staff, clients, businesses and community leaders that made 2015 yet another noteworthy success. We’d like to express our gratitude and congratulations to all of our proud recipients and winners!

Building new relationships with both government and Beacon personnel. During our short period of time on the contract, we have received positive reviews from some of our government representatives regarding our employees’ work.

The employees complete such work as painting, minor electrical, changing light bulbs, hanging pictures, scrubbing floors, using forklifts, and assembling desks.

The opportunity to work on this contract has been a life-changing experience for many of our employees. Some have been able to purchase new homes or gain new independence by moving out of their parent’s home. A few have also been able to begin pursuing additional schooling to help them identify potential career paths.

Here at Hill Air Force Base, Beacon’s mission statement is very much alive. We are not only providing job opportunities for individuals, we are also opening the door to so many other possibilities that, for many employees, previously seemed unattainable.

Supporting the Troops!

By Rafferty Bennett, Site Supervisor Hill AFB

Beacon was awarded a new contract through the AbilityOne Program to provide services at Hill Air Force Base in Utah. The contract launched on October 1, 2015 and has been going quite well. We were able to overcome some early hurdles and provide exceptional service from day one.

The team is comprised of 21 individuals, the majority of whom have disabilities. These individuals have done an amazing job and have been able to learn new skills and hone existing ones while building new relationships with both government and Beacon personnel. During our short period of time on the contract, we have received positive reviews from some of our government representatives regarding our employees’ work.

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As part of our new flagpole plaza, *Dedication Pavers* will be incorporated into the surrounding base. Individuals, families, organizations and interested businesses can sponsor one or more pavers. Each sponsor’s name will be etched into a paver as a lasting tribute and thank you.

Three different sizes of pavers are planned. The smallest size (4x8”) is available for $250 each. Medium and large pavers are priced at $500 and $1,000 respectively.

To sponsor a paver, contact Patrick McCarthy at (520) 622-4874 ext 166, or email pmccarthy@BeaconGroup.org