



Special needs workers are good employees for local businesses

Employee Kyle Lawrence (right) and Luis Sanchez, a job coach at Beacon Group who works with new hires, clown around between customers at the Fry's Food Store in Sahuarita, AZ.

Jobs aren't always just about the money or meeting ever-increasing production demands. They're also about serving the community, and two examples are at work in Green Valley and Sahuarita.

Meet Tina Anderson and Kyle Lawrence. They don't know each other but have some things in common.

Both are transplants from California who now reside with their families in Sahuarita and, despite having developmental setbacks, found employment through the Beacon Group, a nonprofit organization active in Tucson for 63 years. It helps provide counseling, training, job development and placement for people with severe disabilities.

Tina, 39, and Kyle, 24, have limitations, but also the ability to help others and commitment to their duties. In addition to applying skills they've learned through Beacon Group, they are making friends with coworkers, and doing something worthwhile.

Tina works primarily in the kitchen at Green Valley's Coyote Grill, where she occasionally buses tables and converses with customers. With her quick smile and lively brown eyes, she's up to the task and seems to thrive on staying busy. Mainly, she's a dishwasher, but helps put the clean dishes away, empty trash, clean the restrooms and perform other bits of housekeeping

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From the **PRESIDENT**

As many of you already know, I will be retiring from my responsibilities at Beacon Group in Spring of 2017. You have given me the opportunity to serve persons with disabilities in Tucson, Phoenix and the surrounding areas; I have enjoyed, grown from, treasured — *truly loved* — those opportunities for 37 years!

April 1, 2017, will be a bittersweet day for me. While I anticipate the adventure of retirement, my heart and soul will be flooded with the memories of the many clients and parents served, the staff and board relied upon, the vision, dreams and purposes realized during my tenure at Beacon. I am forever grateful for this life-long ride!

With this event approaching rather rapidly, several of you have inquired as to the process and timelines of finding a successor, and rightly so! I want to assure you that the Board of Directors is committed to finding the best qualified and best matched person for the next President/CEO.

Skip Whitley, who incidentally was a member of the Board which first hired me way back in November of 1979, has assembled a search committee of six; the ball is rolling. Five Board Members and one Tucson community representative make up the group: Board members Jan Leshner (*Search Committee Chairperson*), Dr. Rick Williams (*also a client parent*), Judy Wood, Meredith Hay and Skip are joined by Steve Touché, president of Lovitt & Touché, who is representing community input.

Postings for the position have brought in well over 100 uniquely-qualified persons, from all parts of the country, providing the search committee with varied and exciting prospects to lead Beacon Group into the next phase of service. Interviews will be conducted in September and early October with the goal of having the new leader on board by early 2017.

Now, on to a critical issue of which you have read in previous issues of this newsletter: *Choices!* For nearly 65 years, Beacon — as well as other like-minded programs and providers — have served persons with disabilities with employment opportunities in primarily two ways that are each tailored to the needs of the individuals served. Those choices: *Competitive employment* in the community, *or in-house center-based employment* (often referred to as “sheltered employment”).

Over the past five years, a growing contingency of folks has tried to promote the idea of *everyone* working in the community with minimum wage pay. Now at first glance, this appears to be wonderful and progressive... But, reality and experience tell us that *not all* persons with disabilities can handle — or want — to be a part of the competitive community work force!

This group backing competitive, minimum wage work situations was not able to float the idea. The proponents resorted to making the Department of Labor’s 14(c) provision very difficult to use by then influencing the regulations of a new law, WIOA (*Workforce Investment Opportunity Act*), in an effort to accomplish their desired results. Under these new WIOA regulations, anyone 24 years of age or younger *must* go through the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services to undergo assessment and placement at a job in the community that pays at least minimum wage. This “one size fits all” offers no other choice of employment. Only after repeated failures at a community job can a person then be given the opportunity to participate in a program such as those offered at Beacon. Dignity and



STEVE KING, President/CEO



personal choice are cast aside in this limited options plan!

I have ranted and raved about this issue before and you may be tired of hearing about it again. But, to stand by and let this happen is disastrous to all those who currently have *choices*. Please reach out to your federally-elected officials and tell them simply that persons with disabilities — and their parents — *must have choices* and alternative work opportunities. Call or email me if you want more information or seek other avenues to tackle this issue. I can be reached at (520) 622-4874 extension 122, or sking@beacongroup.org.

Everyone is entitled to the dignity and fulfillment that *appropriate* work affords, CHOICES *must* be maintained!

Client financial news: They can finally start saving money to support themselves!

For those who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through Social Security, it has been impossible to ever save any money. You can't give money as a gift; your child is at risk if she receives a small bonus from work. The reason is that there is something called a "resource limit" of \$2,000 that, if exceeded, means that Social Security can take away not just her SSI, but also the Medicaid health insurance that goes with it.

However, there is now a way to save money and keep your SSI and Medicaid. In December of 2014, the President signed the *Achieve a Better Life Experience* (ABLE) Act into law. For the first time, people who are on SSI are able to save significant amounts of money to help them have a better life.

It is now possible for those on SSI to save money for future needs. You can give your child money to save towards a house. You can save money towards education. Your child can work and not have to spend every penny buying unnecessary things just to stay under the resource limit.

ABLE accounts allow you to have up to \$100,000 in them, without losing SSI or Medicaid. For 2016, you can put in up to \$14,000 per year, from any source. If you exceed \$100,000 in the account, then your SSI benefits stop, but they will restart if the balance drops below \$100,000. And, the money earned on the investments in the account is *tax-free!*

To qualify for an ABLE account, your child must have a disability that began before their 26th birthday, and

meets the Social Security Administration's (SSA) definition of disability as it applies to adults. If they are receiving SSI, SSDI, AHCCCS (based on disability) or AHCCCS Freedom to Work, then they already meet SSA's definition of disability.

Here is how it works: ABLE accounts are only available through state-designated programs or institutions. As of now, only three states have established ABLE programs: Ohio, Tennessee and Nebraska. You do not have to be a resident of one of these states to establish an account. Arizona has passed legislation, but the program is not yet operational, with no timeline yet for when it will be. You will be able to transfer your ABLE balance to Arizona once the program is established, but you do not have to. ABLE accounts differ by state, so it is important to compare them.

There *are* some limitations on how the money can be spent. If the money is being used for life expenses, which include daily living expenses, clothing, housing, education, transportation, assistance with getting and keeping a job, healthcare costs, etc., then the expenses qualify. It is important to keep your receipts for money that is spent. You can keep either the paper receipts or scan them in to a computer so they don't get lost. This is in case the Internal Revenue Service should ever ask for backup for the expenses.

If you have a child who is on SSI and he is working, or perhaps you wish to give him money, or if perhaps he may receive money from your or someone else's will, then an ABLE account may be right for your child.



It is now possible for those on SSI to save money for future needs!

While researching an appropriate bank for your needs, here are a few important questions to ask:

- \$** How easy is it to put money into and withdraw money from the account?
- \$** How is the customer support for each account?
- \$** What investment options are available?
- \$** What fees does the program charge?

For more information, you may contact
Beacon Program Manager
Ken Brailsford
(520) 622-4874
extension 158

before closing. In the high season, she typically works four days a week. Her parents, Marilyn and Jim Alden, usually bring her to work, as Tina doesn't drive.

Tina previously bused tables at Hometown Buffet in San Diego's Clairemont community. When her parents retired and relocated to Sahuarita four years ago, the family began looking for vocational employment. They learned of Beacon through a local group rehabilitation program. Tina submitted her résumé and "was

snapped right up," her mom said. She'd been out of work for three years and is thrilled to have a job again at Coyote, where she's been for more than a year.

Tina likes work, but she likes her coworkers even more. "They're really nice," she said.

Sous chef Gerry Ramirez described her as "reserved but interacts, never late, never complains, is an amazing worker who asks if there's anything else that needs doing when she's done, and comes back to see if she did it correctly.

"We're really happy with her."

About six months ago, Beacon awarded her with an Outstanding Achievement plaque for progress she's made pursuing goals. A coworker wrote on San Ignacio Golf's Facebook page, "We are honored to employ a great gal with such a wonderful work ethic!"

"She's an incredibly loyal worker," Marilyn said. "It kills her when she only works one day. It is a long week. She likes working more."

Beacon client Tina Anderson in San Ignacio's Coyote Grill kitchen.



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Beacon client Kyle Lawrence is truly a “pro” when it comes to bagging customers’ groceries.

Kyle Lawrence bags groceries at Fry’s in Sahuarita. He’s generally there from 9am to 1pm, two days a week. For Kyle, who has Down syndrome, it isn’t just about bagging groceries, it’s about keeping pace with the ebb and flow of checkout lines. He preps the bags on the rack, getting them ready to fill, and moves from lane to lane, according to customer flow. Kyle readily adapts when customers bring their own, reusable bags, and that frozen items go in the insulated ones.

He rolls with it all, getting smiles and thank yous. Customers call him by name and occasionally stop, shake his hand or give him a hug. Some make a point to get in his lane.

Kyle has been at Fry’s going on four months. He has a job coach from Beacon who comes and spends about half the shift helping better acquaint Kyle with the work environment, observe how he interacts with people and assists him

with carryouts to the parking lot.

Fry’s staff were hesitant to start him on a checkout stand because the work can get fast-paced when the store is busy, Kyle’s mom, Penny, said. But from day one, that’s what he wanted to do. “When he first started, they said, ‘We’ll create a job for him, bagging is way too stressful,’ but from the moment he stepped in the door, that’s all he’s done,” Penny said. “They all think he’s some sort of a rock star.”

“Kyle caught right on, listens well and has no issues with bagging,” store manager Louie Schaum said. “For Kyle, it’s not about the money, it’s building his self esteem.”

Kyle moved to Sahuarita six years ago with mom Penny and dad Tony. He attended Sahuarita High School where he was involved in Project Inspire, which helps special needs students learn job and life skills. Before Fry’s, he worked at Rancho Sahuarita Clubhouse for two years with special events “which varied a lot and was great experience,” Penny said.

He may always have had the food business in mind, as “He’s been bagging the family groceries since he was eight,” Penny said. “So many people know him by name, the managers... everyone is so nice to him. It shows how wonderful our community is.”

“It gives him that real sense that he belongs. That’s what’s fabulous about it,” Penny said.

Fry’s employs many workers with disabilities throughout Arizona, said spokeswoman JoEllen Lynn of the company’s corporate office near Phoenix. She’s not sure others have worked directly with Beacon but have come through similar programs.

The only problem? “Getting them to take vacation,” she said. “They love working and being part of the community.”

Nevertheless, both Tina and Kyle travelled with their families during time off this summer, which both also enjoyed. When it’s back to town, though, it’s back to work, and they don’t mind a bit!

Beacon welcomes three new Program Managers



Please help welcome our newest Program Managers!

Carla Sanchez (*right*) was born in Mexico but raised in Tucson. She graduated from the University of Arizona in 2012 with BA in Psychology, and recently graduated from the University of Southern California with a Masters in Social Work. She has worked for Beacon since 2013 as a job coach. She also interned for a year at a behavioral treatment facility for women with alcohol and substance abuse.

Maynard Stout (*center*) is a Tucson native raised in Wisconsin. He graduated with a BS in Vocational Rehabilitation from the University of Wisconsin Stout. He has been working in this field for over 30 years — in both residential and vocational settings. He was an agency trainer for eight years at two different agencies, and worked in behavioral health for six years. He supervised a psychiatric hospital for two years, and did intakes and crisis calls for four years.

Yee Sun Armstrong (*left*) worked for DES for over 12 years. During that time, she worked almost six years at the Division of Developmental Disabilities, two years at Child Protective Services, then four years with DES/CPIP (Community Partnership and Innovative Practices). In 2014, Yee Sun received Beacon's annual Leadership Award for her outstanding work on behalf of our clients.

A big congratulations go out to Carla, Maynard and Yee Sun!



The D.R.E.A.M. 2016 Job Fair is coming Wednesday, October 12 to an all-new location!
Join us from 10am - Noon at the Tucson Convention Center's Turquoise Crystal Ballroom in downtown Tucson.

Don't Miss this FREE EVENT! • More details to follow.
Look for the latest updates online at www.DREAMJobFair.org

Beacon gratefully acknowledges the generous gifts and memorials made from July 2014 through June 2016 for the following individuals.

Our sincerest apologies for any inadvertent omissions!

IN MEMORY OF...

HELYN BELTON

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-Dwight & Lille Whitley
-Ann & Robert Winegar

Gifts and memorials honoring family, friends, acquaintances and Beacon clients may be made online at www.BeaconGroup.org or through the U.S. Mail.

Please include your contact information as well as the party you (optionally) wish to be notified of your gift.

For more information, please contact Lish Silver at (520) 622-4874 extension 121.

Donations made to Beacon Group qualify for the Arizona Tax Credit! Donors can receive a tax credit up to \$400 for individuals and \$800 for couples.

The credit is automatic; you don't need a special form. The acknowledgment you receive from Beacon for your gift is all that is needed to verify your tax credit.

In addition, you may still deduct your gift on your federal tax return.

Time to GIVE!

Beacon has recently installed an impressive 35-foot high flagpole in front of our main facility in Tucson!



As part of our new flagpole plaza, *Dedication Pavers* have been incorporated into the surrounding base. Individuals, families, organizations and interested businesses may 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 available. 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 Lish Silver at (520) 622-4874 ext 121, or email esilver@BeaconGroup.org

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Beacon Group is proud to be accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

www.BeaconGroup.org



FREE EVENT! For details visit www.DREAMJobFair.org

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE 6th ANNUAL JOB FAIR EVENT! WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12th, 2016

TUCSON CONVENTION CENTER
Turquoise Crystal Ballroom • 10am - 12 Noon

DISABILITY & REHABILITATION EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH
OCT 2016

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