Last year, Beacon had almost 70 businesses or government locations in and around the greater Tucson area where workers, supported by Beacon Group, provided a wide range of services that are specifically customized to the needs of an individual company, government department or organization. We call these Customized Work Teams (CWT). CWTs allow an organization to hire two or more employees on a regular weekly schedule that meets the needs of the business for whatever tasks are desired by the organization. The team is trained and supervised by a job coach at no cost to the organization.

Just a couple of years ago, we had only one CWT site in the Phoenix area. Determined to expand opportunities, we actively began marketing our services to businesses as well as to federal, state and local governments in Phoenix and other cities and towns in Arizona. As of the first of the year, over 10 sites in the Phoenix area were utilizing Beacon teams. Today, Beacon teams are working at 70 facilities in and around the Phoenix area.

We are very proud to report that our success in providing jobs for people with disabilities in the “real world of work” has now gone from good to great! The main reason for the phenomenal growth was demand for custodial services. For the last 13 years, Beacon Group has had a contract to provide custodial services for 23 different

COVER STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4...
The backbone of Beacon Group is our Direct Support Professional staff including job coaches, rehabilitation supervisors, rehabilitation techs, and others.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are people who work directly with people with disabilities with the aim of assisting the individual client to become integrated into his/her community or the least restrictive environment.

We have over 100 Direct Support Professionals at Beacon who provide support for over 500 people we serve. These are difficult jobs! We are fortunate at Beacon Group to have so many Direct Support Professionals who not only overcome the difficulty, but find the work rewarding.

Consider the challenges that each of our Direct Support Professionals face:

- Knowing the needs and individual support requirements for clients served.
- Knowing the requirements of the customer that the clients are doing work for.
- Ensuring good outcomes for the clients and customers.
- Completing hundreds of hours of training and meeting certification requirements.
- Following safety procedures, administering first aid, and practicing safe driving skills (with a car full of people).
- Being responsible for the health and safety of other human beings (like a parent!)
- Helping clients make friends.
- Allowing clients to take risks while at the same time protecting them from harm.

Visiting worksites and programs, I am constantly amazed at examples of mentoring, training, supporting, and human kindness that Direct Support Professionals impart each day. I see examples of great work we do for our customers as a result of the training and guidance our Direct Support Professionals provide. I see examples of our Day Program Direct Support Professionals creating a community environment that fulfills lives each day, including:

- Every day, Kevin, a custodial job coach, transports his crew to worksites in Coolidge and Maricopa. The overwhelming positive feedback we have received from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the United States Department of Agriculture is a testimony to the great work Kevin and his crew do each day.
- One of our vans was recently involved in a serious accident when another vehicle ran a red light. Despite suffering injuries in the accident, our job coach, María, made sure that the clients in the van were calmed down and safe before she allowed herself to be transported to the hospital.
- When there are special events at the Steve and Kathy King Community Center, Kaleena, Britney, Jerell, Adam, Amber, and John from the Desert Quest Day Program involve the people they work with in catering and serving outstanding snacks and meals to meeting attendees, including our Board of Directors for our Board Meetings.

This newsletter highlights other examples and celebrates the many contributions that Direct Support Professionals make to our mission. If you have the opportunity, join me in recognizing these incredible staff members with gratitude.
Beacon is proud of the services we provide people with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. We also are proud of the many successful enterprises we operate that provide quality business services to our community, while creating jobs for the people we serve. However, some of our program and business services are underfunded from other sources, and without donations, would not exist to offer the broad range of employment possibilities to the people we serve. Your gifts that maintain these underfunded services allow us to “Keep Calm and Do Good”!

“We donate to Beacon in order to give special needs people opportunities to be employed, learn skills, and be productive members of society that they would otherwise not have.”
— Jim & Danie

While we appreciate the generosity, compassion, and belief in our work, which all influence our donors to give generously to Beacon Group, we know that tax benefits are also a key consideration. Nationally, many non-profits have feared that the latest tax reforms will have a negative impact on overall contributions, while others have argued that changes will incentivize taxpayers. To add to the confusion, recently the U.S. Treasury Department proposed a new rule on Charitable Contributions and State and Local Tax Credits.

As proposed, this recent FEDERAL regulation DOES NOT affect the Arizona State Charitable tax credit — only how those same donations are treated on a federal level. You will still be eligible to claim a credit against your Arizona state income taxes. While the proposal has not been finalized as of the writing of this newsletter, Beacon Group is encouraging donors to begin considering tax implications for their 2018 charitable giving strategy.

Because options to deduct gifts vary from state to state, as well as within different tax brackets, it is more important than ever that donors understand these changes and how they may be affected by them. Speaking to your financial advisor or tax consultant early to discuss the best strategy to continue supporting your favored charity, may make a difference for you and the non-profit.

Some topics for discussion might include:

* Will making a donation to an Arizona Charitable Organization benefit my tax situation?
* What proof of support for my charitable tax donation do I need for tax filing?
* Should our family consider creating a Donor Advised Fund for charitable giving?
* As a retiree, should I consider a Qualified Charitable Distribution from my retirement account?

With many recent tax rule changes it’s important to emphasize the many benefits that come with providing support to Beacon Group. As one of the largest programs employing people with disabilities in Arizona, Beacon’s mission drives widespread economic improvement as we help the people we serve:

* Increase earnings — without Beacon, those we serve would likely not be working
* Increase tax contributions — Beacon helps people receiving benefits become tax payers
* Reduce public assistance use and costs — We help reduce dependence on benefits

Our country is a philanthropic society. The ability to identify and exercise one’s values in giving and volunteering is one of our country’s hallmarks. Even at the height of the Great Recession, charitable giving in the U.S. exceeded $300 billion; a great example of keeping calm and doing good.

We know there will continue to be people, like you, who recognize and support the documented need for employment services to help the approximately 400,000 working age adults with disabilities in Arizona. Your financial commitment to our mission of creating opportunities for people with disabilities is the greatest encouragement we can receive to keep calm — and keep doing good work!

“I value the work that Beacon does to provide human dignity for all members of community. My son works for Beacon and I have been extremely pleased with his progress. He is so proud and happy to work in the community.”
— Lucille W.
Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) buildings/sites in the Tucson area. Based in part on our successful history with ADOT in Tucson, Beacon was selected to provide custodial services at ADOT facilities throughout Arizona. This required hiring and training 60 new employees — the majority of which are people with disabilities, many who had previously received services from Beacon — for full and part time positions, including supervisory positions such as job coaches (see related article on page 6). Many of the workers with disabilities are referred to Beacon by Mercy Care (behavioral and mental health), Vocational Rehabilitation (RSA) and the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DES).

To support all of the new employees, supervisors and vehicles, Beacon has leased a new 3,200 sq. ft. facility in mid-Phoenix as our Business Services Center. We also needed 12 new vehicles just for this work (as 90% of the crew members do not have their own transportation). Often, workers take public transportation to the Business Services Center and then ride with their job coach to their work sites. Most of these custodial and landscaping teams work night shifts (6pm to 2am). A few are day shifts (8am to 5pm). Some work at a single large facility, others at up to four smaller facilities during a shift.

Beacon custodial services has a long, proud history of cleaning offices, courthouses, warehouses and other buildings. Among the 5 million square feet of public spaces this division now cleans in over 100 locations, there are many places you may be familiar with. For instance, Beacon crews clean the federal courthouses in both Tucson and Phoenix, many nonprofit locations, and the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) offices throughout the state. Beacon custodial teams might be responsible for daily, weekly and/or monthly services including sweeping, vacuuming, mopping, emptying waste baskets, cleaning breakrooms, lounges, offices and bathrooms. They also clean walkways, window blinds, drapes, floors and furniture. Each quarter they shampoo carpets and mats as well as strip and wax floors. Semi-annually they clean all windows and screens. Additional duties include refilling supplies in breakrooms and bathrooms.
Now employing close to 140 people, Beacon’s custodial division boasts Certification with Honors for Cleaning Industry Management Standards (CIMS), which was recently renewed since first becoming certified in 2015. Quality is one of the aspects that Beacon’s custodial managers’ credit for creating the growth Beacon has experienced.

Alex Calabrese is the Assistant Project Manager for Beacon’s expanding custodial services in the Phoenix area. Prior to this, he was a job coach for the custodial team that served the Federal Courthouse in Tucson, which is the largest office building in the city. In January, Alex agreed to move to Phoenix to accept this new assignment. He says, “I love that our track record is furthering Beacon’s mission, but this is also an equal opportunity for me. The organization is showing faith in me too.”

The new ADOT custodial contract may well be an even bigger opportunity for custodian Vance Brendle. A former coach and kitchen manager in California, Vance moved to Arizona in 2000 with the promise of a job. Unfortunately, that job didn’t happen. Vance, who has been diagnosed with Bi-Polar Disorder, depression and a learning disability, and has diminished hearing, has received services for over a decade in another rehabilitation program. His dream was to find full employment again. He was referred to Beacon in January by Mercy Care hoping to get one of the new custodial jobs.

Vance immediately impressed Assistant Project Manager Alex Calabrese, by working both day and night shifts for the first couple of months. After just one month, Vance was promoted to full employee/staff member. He was no longer a rehabilitation client. Vance drives one of the team vans to get his team to the job site. This summer, Vance was promoted again to lead custodian!

Vance, who lives in an apartment in Mesa, looks forward to growing with Beacon. “The people at Beacon are kind and concerned about you. If you work hard for them, they work hard for you.” He says his next goal is to become a supervisor with Beacon’s custodial team.

Out of the 1,600 people with disabilities served by Beacon each year, roughly two thirds are served through outside employment in business or government settings. The chance to earn more money, interact with other employees or customers, and to gain the confidence and self-esteem that comes with holding a job, can be the ignition to find a full independent life. It may be a “long and winding road,” but our people are showing they have the “drive” to succeed!

Alex Calabrese is Beacon’s Assistant Project Manager for custodial services in Phoenix.
Beacon has a total of 377 employees. These employment numbers have consistently landed Beacon on the list of Top 200 employers based in Tucson. But what is more impressive, is that of that total, 124 are considered “Direct Support Professionals.” These are staff who have direct contact with our clients on a daily basis. Among these are our 75 job coaches who help people with disabilities learn, accommodate, and perform their work duties. They are critical to everything we do at Beacon!

In group supported employment, depending on the type of work being done and where it is being done, there is a specific number of clients for each job coach. The ratio can be as low as one-to-one, or as high as eight-to-one. With individual supported employment, the job coach may not be with the employee every day, but will provide supports on a monthly or weekly basis. Rehabilitation standards ensure that vulnerable clients get the personal attention and support they need to function in a safe environment.

The job coach helps workers with disabilities develop, learn and succeed through employment, while ensuring the work performed meets the needs of the customer. A job coach must have the ability to represent the job seeker as a valuable asset to businesses while also being able to identify and facilitate the necessary supports for the individual to become a successful employee. That is not an easy balancing act. But, the very thing that makes the job so challenging is what also makes it so rewarding!

Certainly there are a lot of expectations and requirements that come with a job coach position. As with all our Direct Support Professionals, they need a lot of patience, respect, creativity, flexibility, compassion and cooperation. The best professionals are role models first. Each and every moment they are teaching with each action, word and attitude they use.

Nationally, the turnover rate for Direct Support Professionals annually is almost six out of ten. At Beacon, we are very proud to have a turnover rate only half the national average! That says a lot about the work Beacon Group’s dedicated job coaches and our enthusiastic clients can be found in many places throughout the community in a variety of settings, specializing in any number of tasks!
We asked our job coaches about their challenges. Above are some of their thoughts on what the job entails.

Our job coaches come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. The job requires a high school diploma or the equivalent, and at least one year of work experience. Individuals in this position must be able to obtain an Arizona fingerprint clearance, and to complete “Job Coaching 101” training that we provide. A valid driver’s license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance is highly desirable but not mandatory.

Beyond these “basics,” the ideal job coach has a simple willingness to help others to grow into self-sufficient, independent people who happen to have a disability. People who have the desire and skill to teach work skills as well as interpersonal skills will find being a job coach is a very rewarding work experience!

Karyn Buser, whose son is a long time Beacon client and works at a local grocery store, recently expressed her appreciation for Sarah Hogan and the entire Beacon Job Coach Team in a letter saying, “We are so appreciative and in awe of the job coaching staff! We recently witnessed how well the team works to support and advocate for our son and stay ‘on top of everything’ — from taking our panicked calls regarding the schedule, being a liaison with the employer to communicate our son’s needs and then coordinating with co-workers to cover shifts — my husband and I have nothing but praise and deep gratitude for Beacon Group and the fulfillment it has afforded our son.”

Beacon may be considered a “big” business, but if you spend any time watching our job coaches at work, you’ll realize our real claim to fame is that we’re a “helping” business!
Finding qualified candidates for your company’s job openings might be as easy as being in the right place at the right time!

To find a room filled with ability, eagerness, dedication, loyalty and gratitude, be sure your company has a presence at the 2018 Disability & Rehabilitation Employment Awareness Month (D.R.E.A.M.) Job Fairs!

Year after year, many local employers have interviewed and networked with local residents with disabilities to find dozens of qualified and motivated employees.

Now its your turn... Register today!

www.DREAMJobFair.org
(520) 571-8600
info@linkagesarizona.org

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Inside Story: Beacon's Dedicated Job Coaches

Triumphs & Challenges!