Finding a good job and keeping it takes effort. Anyone who works would agree that having support — for motivation, development, and communication on the job — makes things a lot easier. Beacon Group works with hundreds of employers throughout Arizona who are embracing inclusive hiring practices. In many circumstances, the bridge to effective hiring and retention of people with significant disabilities is an employment model that provides appropriate, ongoing support necessary for success in an integrated, competitive work environment. This is called Supported Employment.

**Wells Fargo’s** Chandler Corporate Campus, the largest in Arizona, has a busy event center and needed someone to assist with room flips (set-up changes) and furniture cleaning. They were looking for someone reliable who could work part-time to assist conference center staff in a variety of tasks. In search of a provider familiar with the supported employment model to help their contracted vendor, they reached out to Beacon Group.

**Safeway** came to Beacon Group in 2007 with staffing needs throughout the Tucson area. On-site at our main Glenn office, Beacon set up a training area that is essentially a replica of Safeway grocery aisles and a checkout area to simulate the experience of working at an actual store. By creating a conducive space with support from an employment specialist, candidates can “try out” the job and see if it is a good fit. Through the process of placement and training assistance coupled with ongoing supports, Safeway hired 70 great employees that year and has continued to look to Beacon for dependable employees now for over a decade.

Similarly, **Amazon** created a new staffing program tailored to meet the needs of individuals who have traditionally faced obstacles to both entering and advancing in the workplace, beginning with people with disabilities. The Alternative Workplace Supplier Program (AWSP) at Amazon in Phoenix works directly with Beacon to support job candidates by matching skills and interests along with supporting the transition into the workplace by providing services such as coaching where needed. Beacon’s simulation center in Phoenix helps place candidates in both sortation and fulfillment positions.

The success of these programs hinges upon providing essential supports to individuals with disabilities. To learn even more, visit www.BeaconGroup.org and click on the BrightSpots eNews link.
Wow! Our mission continues to expand. Think of all the ways...

**Types of disabilities served** — Not too many years ago our mission served almost exclusively people with developmental disabilities. Now we serve all types of disabilities. Our mission has especially grown building a substantial capability helping people challenged with mental illness, first in Phoenix and now in Tucson. We help this group live healthier and fuller lives by being successfully employed.

**Array of choices** — Our business operations now include job choices for people with disabilities ranging from facilities management services to washing boats. In fiscal 2018, over 750 people with disabilities received paychecks from Beacon Group — more than ever! We now have new programs such as Ticket to Work and customized employment to help people find work at other organizations and be successful in that work. Over time, most of the individuals we now serve end up working for other organizations, a big part of the array of choices.

**Places we serve** — Beacon Group was founded in Tucson, and we continue to serve a growing number of people in the area. We are expanding even faster in Phoenix, and now have over 100 workers in the area. And that’s not all. We continue to serve many in more rural areas. Just in the last couple of weeks, I have spoken with others regarding our work in Benson, Douglas, Sierra Vista, Coolidge, Nogales and Casa Grande. Also, I can’t forget the great work our 25 dedicated employees do in Utah for our military base contracts there.

**Number of people served** — We have continued to build the programs that have been around for many years, and along with the addition of new programs, our mission is touching many more people. Not so long ago — in the 2012 fiscal year — we served under 1,100 people with disabilities. By comparison in the 2018 fiscal year, we served over 1,800!

The result is creating more opportunities for people with disabilities — our mission. We still have a long way to go! Of the more than 400,000 working-age adults in Arizona with significant disabilities, two-thirds do not work. That’s over 260,000 people that we can potentially serve. Help us keep our mission expanding!

One important note: The article that appears on the following page highlights the career of Chuck Tiller, our Vice President of Rehabilitation Services, who is retiring in February. Chuck has been in the middle of the expansion of our mission. Much of the progress and growth that you read about above and elsewhere in this edition of Beacon Times has been possible wholly because of Chuck’s efforts and dedication.

Chuck, congratulations on your retirement. We will miss you!

Chuck Tiller, V.P. of Rehabilitation Services, meets with (from left to right) Beacon Board Members Rickey Williams, Alayne Greensberg, and Nichole Walla, Phoenix Director of Operations, to discuss our future program development.
“It takes a special kind of person who is committed to serving people with disabilities... I really mean serving people with disabilities. You may give up a lot to be in this business, but the rewards are immeasurable.”

So advises Chuck Tiller, Beacon Group’s Vice President of Rehabilitation Services, when asked about newcomers to the rehabilitation field.

And with that, after more than three decades of service, Tiller has announced his retirement with his last day being February 28, 2020.

During those years, Tiller has witnessed Beacon Group’s exponential growth in becoming the robust, innovative organization that it is today — serving over 1,860 people with disabilities annually. There’s no doubt that he and his entire team have been an integral part of that growth.

Tiller first entered the rehabilitation field in 1975 in Twin Falls, Idaho at Magic Valley Rehabilitation Services (MVRS) with a colleague and friend, Jeff Crumrine, who started MVRS in 1974. Tiller stayed at MVRS for twelve years when he accepted the position as the Director of Rehabilitation Services at Tetra Corporation in Tucson in 1987.

One of Tiller’s major accomplishments as a part of Tetra was the opening of the Phoenix office in 1997 “on the day,” he fondly interjects, “after the University of Arizona Wildcats won their national basketball championship.”

This office alone has grown to numerous staff and an annual rehabilitation budget of nearly $2 million.

Tiller has been part of three mergers during his time at Beacon, the most significant one being between Tetra Corporation and Beacon Foundation in 2003. He cites both organizations being CARF accredited and also having similar approaches to serving different populations of people with disabilities as being key to a seamless merger and transition to the larger Beacon Group.

During his tenure at Beacon, Chuck has been instrumental in phenomenal growth of the rehabilitation department from a total budget of $500,000 annually for both the Phoenix and Tucson offices to $8 million annually which now covers many more sites throughout Arizona and Utah.

For Tiller, this expansion should always go back to “mission first.” He explains:

“The growth in Phoenix, the growth in custodial... It all expands opportunities for people with disabilities. But it all goes back to the philosophy: Clients come first. You run it like a business with mission in mind always. It has to be that way.”

One of the main ingredients in his department’s success is the many dedicated staff members, who are among the most loyal and longest serving at Beacon.

“I have a really good staff,” Tiller credits. “They have mission, they have employment choice in their blood. It’s something that they believe in, too. I don’t have to teach them that.”

This staff now numbers 130 among all of our sites.

As Tiller prepares to close his long career, he looks forward to traveling more and spending time with his family. But it’s not without a little advice for his successor, which he offers with a smile from behind his familiar desk.

“You’ve got to challenge yourself and challenge your ability to be creative and come up with new ideas... As far this organization is considered, I see no ceiling in terms of what we can do!”

BELOW: Chuck (at center) with staff in 2007.
Beacon Group continues to shine a light on... creating opportunities for people with disabilities!

"It is important for my brother to have a reason to rise in the morning, go to a place where he can see friends and colleagues, and work on projects that help others." – Sister of a Beacon Program Participant

66% of the people we serve have developmental disabilities:
- Developmental Disabilities
- Mental Illness
- Learning Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities

Top 4 Disabilities Served: Beacon serves individuals with ALL types of disabilities!

People served by Beacon Group in Fiscal 2018: 1,868

Supported employees in Customized Work Teams at over 200 locations

New Jobs Last Year (for people with disabilities in new independent community jobs):

430 individuals received Job Coaching Services through Beacon to support their employment.

87 people with disabilities in Skills Training Programs

750 people with disabilities received paychecks through Beacon Group in various employment settings.

"Beacon Group offers a wide array of employment options for people with significant disabilities. We help people find jobs. Then, once they have the jobs, we help them maintain success in work by providing supports."

– Greg Natvig, President/CEO Beacon Group
Two-thirds of adults with significant disabilities are out of work, despite their ability, desire and willingness to work and participate in community life.

There is a documented need for supports, services, and employment programs to serve approximately 400,000 working-age adults with disabilities in Arizona.

Arizona's employment rate is far behind many states, currently ranking #32 out of all states.

"Being unemployed when you have a disability is challenging, especially if you have a difficult time filling out job applications and trying to get interviews. When our son worked with Beacon it was life changing for everybody!"

– Parent of Beacon Program Participant

TICKET TO WORK

Number of Adults over 18 on SSI and SSDI:

16,000,000

Among these adults are many who could work, and become independent of federal aid, especially if provided with proper incentives and training.

Helping people who are both willing and able to seek significant, gainful employment.

"I am a sales associate/retail cashier. I’m a hard worker. Ticket to Work is how Beacon helped me find the right job, and sustain a job... It is really helpful." – Person Served by Beacon’s Ticket to Work Program

People Who Rate Their Jobs as FULFILLING:

Workers in general........ 33%

Beacon Group workers... 81%

96% Beacon respondents who indicate "My Work makes an impact that matters to me"

89% Beacon respondents who indicate "I am growing personally and professionally at work."

According to a recent survey by the National Council of Source America Employers (NCSE)

Through this federal program, beneficiaries receive free support services including career counseling, job placement assistance and coaching through work transition.
**Supported Employment (SE)** is a model established by the federal government in the 1980s with the goal of increasing the success of individuals with significant disabilities who are seeking employment. SE seeks to help each person to prepare for, identify, attain and maintain competitive integrated employment of their choosing. The multifaceted concept has many variations, making it highly adaptable to both the individual and work environment. In general, SE starts with preparing a person to engage in meaningful work-related activities and continues with ongoing support during employment.

Preparation can include a myriad of actions such as: overall career/educational counseling, job shadowing, assistance in the use of educational resources, training in résumé development, job interviewing, improving study skills, work activities, how to dress professionally, managing time, and assistance in finding employment from a community-based service provider such as Beacon Group.

Most of Beacon’s referrals for Supported Employment come from Arizona’s DES Division of Developmental Disabilities with additional referrals from the behavioral health system and Vocational Rehabilitation. Beacon also accepts private referrals for all of its services.

While on the job, Job Coaches provide ongoing support to facilitate completion of initial job training and/or maintain employment. Services may include monitoring and supervision, assistance in performing job tasks, work-adjustment training, identification of appropriate job modifications including assistive technology, working with the employer to solve communication or social problems and providing supportive counseling.

People working with Beacon through SE enjoy an increase in workplace independence knowing specially-trained Beacon Group job coaches are available as needed to offer guidance and support. Job coach guidance and support is delivered in two main ways — group-supported and individual-supported employment. Safeway, Wells Fargo and Amazon’s hiring practices are examples of **Individual Supported Employment (ISE)**.

ISE allows an individual with significant disabilities to access real world positions with short- or long-term supports such as a one-on-one job-coaching, help with acclimation and training, establishing natural accommodations and other services for on-the-job success. The job coach is provided without cost to the employer, who pays the employee directly under the same considerations as other employees at that organization.

Another type of supported employment is called **Group Supported Employment (GSE)** which includes on-site supervision of a small group of members working in a community setting. Groups can range from two to six individuals. Some groups work at the same organization routinely, while others travel as a mobile crew to various work locations. Each employee is working towards their personal employment goals and vocational independence under the guidance of a Job Coach.

During a building reorganization, the Arizona Republic sought out a better way to handle their mail and package-receiving needs. Beacon offered a competitive proposal for two workers and a job coach to deliver the needed services. The experience demonstrated how Beacon’s commitment to provide solutions that work, combined with industry knowledge and cooperation from the customer, can deliver stellar results.

For over thirty years, Beacon has supplied **Southwest Gas** with workers at their warehouse and satellite locations. Currently, there are two crews consisting of eight workers who sort and assemble meter parts, stock and clean materials, process paint can recycling and destruction, and keep the dock and warehouse clean and neat at all times.

Five full-time Beacon crews power wash and dry vehicles at **Jim Click Automotive dealerships** Monday through Friday throughout Tucson (pictured below). Over forty people employed in this GSE setting participate in periodic staff meetings at the worksite, receiving recognition and acknowledgments along with other Click team members. Hundreds of workers have progressed through employment over the thirty years that Beacon has worked with Jim Click.

Beacon also employs workers under supported employment in our **Landscaping** and **Custodial** enterprises. Anywhere from seven to nine landscaping crews maintain the look and appeal of properties in Tucson and Phoenix through tree and bush pruning and trimming, vegetation and debris removal, and plant replacement. **Custodial** work has been a cornerstone of Beacon’s job placement and training programs for decades, and today about 15 custodial crews provide professional custodial services at dozens of sites for commercial, Federal Government and State Government customers. Some workers who start out through GSE in these positions move into staff positions with expertise gained in their specific work area.
Wells Fargo’s goal for Supported Employment was to place 30 individuals this year through their vendor, Compass Group. In August 2019, Compass hired Selena Soltero through Beacon for the Porter position at the Chandler Wells Fargo event facility. Selena was number 30 for Wells Fargo nationally!

Once hired, Selena’s Job Coach, B’Etta Euler, worked with her supervisors and Selena to establish work routines that were efficient for everyone along with helping Selena follow instructions easily. Since a porter position requires attention to detail to ensure the venue is well-maintained, this included developing a special notebook with various room set-ups and scenarios illustrated and color-coded in plastic sleeves. Each day, Selena’s instructions are noted with a dry eraser in the notebook, so she can work independently with very few directives.

Initially, the instructions were type-written on several pages each day, something which was too challenging for Selena to easily interpret. Selena mastered the new system in two weeks and went from daily job coaching to her current schedule — visits as needed, usually every-other week!

“Selena has become very independent. She does a good job at taking direction and is super friendly,” says John Fallon, Supervisor, Connections Phoenix, at Wells Fargo. “Having Selena has been helpful in that it frees up staff to focus on other needs and maintenance projects that weren’t previously getting done.”

Supported employment is a means by which people can be successful in employment that fits their talents, interests, and abilities. With support from employment specialists at Beacon, workers find the journey that includes meaningful employment, and progression towards independence is not only possible but also gratifying.
The Arizona Charitable Tax Credit is an easy way to donate without costing you anything. Here’s how:

1. Make a secure online donation at www.BeaconGroup.org/Donate
2. File your Arizona taxes and take the credit
3. Receive your income tax credit and feel the love!

The State of Arizona allows taxpayers to take a dollar-for-dollar tax credit off their 2019 taxes when donating to a Qualified Charitable Organization like Beacon Group*. Your qualifying donation of up to $400 per individual/$800 if married filing jointly may reduce your taxes by the same amount, meaning you can help Beacon and get it all back!

*Beacon Group is QCO# 20348. As always, please consult your personal tax advisor for your specific tax situation.