Beacon’s mission focuses on employment choices as a way to create the kind of opportunities that will positively impact the lives of people with disabilities. For people with disabilities who are trying their hardest to succeed at work, the odds are sometimes stacked against them in a host of ways: from the lack of appropriate supports and training, to transportation challenges, to disability unawareness among employers. By delivering services that assist and empower workers to find positions where they can thrive, Beacon Group helps to even the playing field.

With Beacon at their side, many individuals who receive our services have embarked on a satisfying career and are enhancing their own lives by including athletic experiences into their routines. Having another channel for personal development, such as an organized sport, can be as much of an added benefit for a person with a disability as it is for anyone, maybe more so.

Beyond improving physical strength, adult participation in sports is recognized as being helpful in developing life skills including communication, cooperation, respect, and perseverance. Furthermore, the confidence and social skills developed through sport can empower individuals to self-advocate.

Special Olympics offers one way for people with disabilities to participate in athletic training and competition. Last year, SourceAmerica, a national leader in creating employment choices for people with disabilities and the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games teamed up to provide employment training for athletes participating in the games. SourceAmerica recognized the opportunity to link athletic skill development with employment outcomes for the population served by both organizations.

The connection to employment is something that Tucson Special Olympics softball coach, Bill Fields, has observed first hand. He’s noticed that many of the thirty- and forty-year-olds on his teams have jobs. Across the U.S., 44% of Special Olympics athletes are employed compared to 28% of people with intellectual disabilities who have never participated in Special Olympics.

“I’m a big proponent of sports for personal growth and social development,” says Coach Fields. “One way that I see Special Olympics coaches have a direct impact on athletes’ lives is by helping them acquire skills that can influence their abilities to obtain employment. Even something as simple as building a network that can enhance employment.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4...
I’ve worked for Beacon Group’s mission for over ten years now. Our mission, the people we serve, and our staff accomplish so many things, but because we are in so many places, I assume everyone knows about Beacon. Many also think that because of Beacon’s well-established history in the community that anyone with a disability who wants to work has that opportunity and already knows about the range of Beacon services. Wrong!

While Beacon is well-established and is proud to have an outstanding reputation, I have learned that most people in the community don’t know that two thirds of working age people with disabilities do not work and don’t know what Beacon Group does!

To help us spread the word and our mission, we recently published the graphic below showing five ways we can create even more opportunities for people with disabilities.

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**Meet Beacon Group and find out more about what we do.**

Our main facility, the Steve and Kathy King Community Center, is just as it’s named — a center open to the community! The Community Center is a quick way to see and understand our mission and the array of employment choices we provide people with disabilities. We love to host visits any weekday, so just contact me or email Marketing@BeaconGroup.org to schedule. Mornings are best to see our workplace in full gear. Another way to see our mission is to visit one of our hundreds of jobsites where we perform work such as at Jim Click Automotive dealerships where our teams wash cars in the lot every weekday morning.

**Hire Beacon to outsource work you need done.**

We do custodial, landscaping, fulfillment, contract assembly and packaging, fleet washing, document and media destruction, and various facilities services for hundreds of different organizations. I recently met with Tyler Ornstein, founder of Tyler’s Coffee, (tylerscoffees.com – give it a try; the coffee is great!) He was so complimentary of the fulfillment work we perform for his business. Just think what Beacon might be able to do for your organization.

**Use Beacon as a cost-free recruiting service to hire qualified people with disabilities.**

We have qualified candidates who want to work for your openings. There are no fees, and in many cases, your company can take advantage of financial incentives such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

**Support Beacon’s mission with meaningful contributions to help fund our work.**

Your donations go 100% to helping support and expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. One example is the recent hiring of a new Employment Specialist in our Ticket to Work Program that is funded almost entirely through contributions. Donating is easy! Just go to www.beacongroup.org/donate/ or use the envelope included with this newsletter.

**Educate your employees on cultural competencies.**

We would love the opportunity to speak to your organization about the value of hiring people with disabilities. We will show how to successfully work side-by-side with people with disabilities and how doing so will enhance the culture of your organization.

I encourage you to find one of the five ways to help us expand employment options for the people we serve!
“Gig economy” and “flex work.” These are terms that have been popularized in the last ten years as more and more workers transition to flexible work arrangements. Today, approximately one third (36%) of all U.S. workers are part of this workforce, according to Forbes Magazine. Similarly, created in 2012, Beacon Group’s on-call employee program is an innovative approach of providing additional, flexible work choices for people with disabilities that meet the needs of the employee along with maintaining production timelines and quality standards.

Currently Beacon has 48 on-call employees, and this number has been as high as 60. The majority of these employees work in Beacon’s contract manufacturing area where Muriel Rutherford, Production Manager, serves as supervisor. Muriel is familiar with each employee’s unique skill set and is able to match that skillset with production needs for that day or week.

“I know the employees and their skillset. They are Beacon staff. Every now and then, they may need guidance and extra coaching. But they are here and ready to work to ensure we meet the production needs of our customers. They are the cornerstone of our production workforce and without them we couldn’t meet our customers’ needs,” says Muriel.

This knowledge and adaptability is a major benefit to Beacon as production needs — especially for Beacon’s major aerospace customer — often spike at the end of the month.

The process to becoming an on-call employee varies. A person may come to Beacon to receive services and find out about the on-call position while others learn about the job opportunity through job boards such as Indeed or via other non-profit organizations such as Tucson Hispanic Chamber, Linkages, Goodwill, and the DES Veterans Unit. All potential on-call employees apply through a formal application process and are interviewed. As a final step, their skill level is tested to ensure the position will be a good fit for the employee and production needs, including requisite speed and accuracy. On-call employees start at $11 an hour and additionally accrue sick time.

For on-call staff, the main benefit cited is flexibility while still being able to earn a wage. Some of the on-calls have a disability, health-related conditions, or transportation constraints that require the flexibility of not working every weekday.

Another key benefit is the invaluable work experience, especially for anyone transitioning into the workforce for the first time, or once again after a long period of unemployment. This work experience has led to some on-call staff progressing to full-time employment at Beacon or into positions with other employers in the community.

Yet another advantage is the camaraderie in the workplace. One on-call employee called it “a godsend” as far as socialization, especially after he spent a year in the house as a “shut-in.”

Sarah Feight is an on-call assembler who wears many hats in production. “I love the variety,” she says, “you go from one job to another job. Usually it’s hustle and bustle.”

In her over a year of experience as an on-call staff member, she has worked on several projects including production and packaging of a consumer product, as an inspector for rivet assembly quality, and currently as a cable assembler. She notes, “I like being really precise. I like it being done right.”

About the position’s flexibility, she adds, “I’m a bus rider, and these buses don’t run on a conducive schedule all the time. Beacon works with my time schedule riding the bus. They really try to work with you and give you the opportunity to contribute.”

Most of all, Sarah cites the invaluable workplace connections and experience she has gained, “I know it’s about the relationships I forged and how I’ve proven myself here. It’s meant a lot to me.”
At Beacon Group, we see the attributes that many of our athlete-workers bring to the job and appreciate how much playing sports contributes to work-life balance.

These characteristics include:

1. **They persevere and learn from challenges.**
2. **They know how to work together as a team.**
3. **They are coachable — eager to improve.**
4. **They are reliable and know that “the team” depends on them showing up.**

We talked to several Beacon workers and their families about their Special Olympics sports experience and how skills learned on the field or court also make them valuable assets on the job...

**Robert Pelikan** demonstrates perseverance and interest in improving in both the work and play aspects of his life. Diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome, Robert, with great support from his family, pushes himself to do his best and doesn’t shy away from challenges.

After graduating from High School in Phoenix, Robert got involved with Special Olympics. Not content with just one sport, he got involved with four — swimming, basketball, bowling and flag football. He also started attending a Day Treatment Program for adults with developmental disabilities where he worked briefly part-time, and demonstrated that he wanted to work a more regular job. Robert’s mom, Laura, found out about Beacon Group from the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). Robert found a regular job with Beacon on the custodial crew at the Bankruptcy Court building in Phoenix, which increased his confidence and motivation — and pays three times an hour more than he made before!

“You can see the difference work makes for his development,” says Laura. She’s grateful for the many job opportunities for people with disabilities that Beacon has brought to the Phoenix area and for Robert’s involvement with sports.

Seven years ago, Robert’s remarkable perseverance was tested when he was hit by a car. The whole right side of his body was crushed. Confined to a wheelchair, Robert showed great determination during his months of rehabilitation. His resolve shows in his work as well as his play. He usually plays wide receiver and running back on his flag football team. The team is practicing hard for Regional Tournament coming up in March.

Work and play can be a great combination for anyone, especially for those who, all too often, have so few chances to pursue either. Beacon and Special Olympics are thrilled to have people like Robert Pelikan on their team!

**Jimmy Quihuis** has been involved with sports for most of his life, playing on Little League teams and at school. His talents and dedication eventually led to winning gold and silver medals at both National and World Games as part of competitive Special Olympic teams in softball and basketball. Jimmy’s coachability and reliability have contributed to his success in both sports and at work.

Jimmy began receiving services from Beacon for help with a disability in his early twenties. He had held a job at a fast...
Mario Escobar knows his teammates depend on him, so he shows up and gives his all. Mario’s family came from El Salvador in 1989 and lived in northern California before ending up in Mesa, Arizona. After Mario graduated from high school, because of his mild developmental disability, he was referred to a Day Treatment Program, which left him bored. He wanted to work, and his family knew he was not being challenged or even given the chance to show what he could do.

One place he was able to demonstrate his abilities was through sports. About 15 years ago, Mario got involved with Special Olympics. He currently enjoys playing basketball and baseball where being part of a team allows him to work on communicating with others and focus on improving key skills. “I like to shoot and make baskets,” says Mario.

Still he wanted to work. After his fourth Adult Day Treatment Program, Mario Escobar’s family was as frustrated as he was bored. Natalia Escobar, Mario’s sister, begged his Support Coordinator with DDD to find a work program for Mario, and they recommended Beacon. Natalia says she, “called right away, and Beacon hired Mario for their City of Gilbert landscaping crew — pretty close to where we live!”

Now, Mario and his friend, Lucas Sheetz, from the Beacon Landscaping crew, play together on a basketball team from Mesa. On the court, they work together as teammates using skills they can transfer to their work on the Gilbert crew where they clean parking lots and streets and tend to the city cemetery.

As much as he loves his sports, Mario says he also likes working and making money. He was already in his forties before Beacon gave him his first chance to work a year and a half ago.

Natalia says, “Mario really looks forward to each upcoming season for Special Olympics. He also looks forward to his work for the City of Gilbert. It’s hard to say how much his attitude from one helps his attitude with the other, but we know Mario is a happier person because of both!”

food restaurant but was looking for work that better suited his abilities and interests. Maybe in part due to his athletic background, he liked physical work, being part of a team, and learning new things. Jimmy found his niche at Tucson Electric Power (TEP), where he works in the glove lab and warehouse. Over the ten years he has been a part of the TEP team, Jimmy has become knowledgeable about the materials and tools specific to the electrical industry and is proud of his work there. He also says that he enjoys the social aspects of work like he does with athletics. Some of his coworkers at TEP also play softball or basketball with him, and they have become good friends. “We get to hang out,” explains Jimmy.

Jimmy agrees that his time on the field helps him with his job. “It’s good exercise and at work you need to be in shape to help each other and lift heavy stuff,” remarks Jimmy.

“When I stay focused I have the time to help out the other guys,” Jimmy quickly adds.

COVER STORY CONTINUES NEXT PAGE...
Memorials and gifts of honor are a special way to remember friends and loved ones as well as make a tax-deductible donation to Beacon Group. An acknowledgment is sent to both donor and honoree. Thank you!

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this listing. We regret any errors or omissions. For a full list of gifts made to Beacon in 2019, please see our website at: www.BeaconGroup.org/donors-2018/

CoverSTORY

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Reliability is also important to Jimmy. “When you don’t show up, you let people down,” he explains. “At softball, the coach will not let you play anymore. I like to start, so I show up. At work, if you are not there you fall behind. You don’t want to get the bosses upset.”

Jimmy’s skills and efforts earned him a place on the Special Olympics statewide Allstar team for softball. He played in the 2015 World Games in Los Angeles, where his team took the Gold Medal. He also earned a Silver at the USA Games in Seattle in 2018.

Jimmy is humble about his achievements on the national stage. Yet, his efforts, like those of other athletes with disabilities, are potent examples of the hard work, determination and team mindset that makes them valuable employees.
Cherry and Dick Harper are longtime donors to Beacon Group. Their son, Rob Bejger, works at Beacon Secure. Cherry shares why she gives to Beacon, especially through the Arizona Tax Credit:

“Beacon gives people with disabilities the feeling of self-worth, and we all need that. By Beacon providing jobs for so many people with disabilities, they are providing a path to greater income, self-esteem, and so much more. I like the fact that Beacon has programs for all levels of disability. They do match the person’s ability with the job. There are a lot of options.”

About the value of the Arizona Tax Credit, she adds, “It’s really a bonus to the donors and the organization. I would encourage anyone in Arizona to donate this way. We have done the tax credit for many years now.”

Arizona provides a nonrefundable tax credit for individuals who make contributions to qualifying charitable organizations such as Beacon Group. These tax credits provide a dollar-for-dollar reduction of your Arizona income tax liability. The allowable 2018 credit is $400 for single and head of household taxpayers and $800 for married taxpayers filing a joint return.

For more information on these tax credits, see https://azdor.gov/tax-credits at the Arizona Department of Revenue website. You can donate and claim the credit for 2018 up until April 15, 2019.

To learn more about donating to Beacon Group, contact Heidi at (520) 622-4874 ext 166, or email: hkirkl@BeaconGroup.org.
The State of Arizona allows residents to obtain a tax credit up to $400 per individual and $800 filing jointly for contributions to a Qualifying Charitable Organization such as Beacon Group. Taxpayers can choose to attribute their contributions between January 1 – April 15 to either 2018 or 2019!

Please consult your individual tax advisor for more information.