



Volume 2
February 2
2024

DD News and Updates Newsletter

BLACK HISTORY Month



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Black History Month

This year's theme is African Americans and the Arts. Focusing on fields of visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, and more. To learn more about Black History in Rhode Island go to [the Visit Rhode Island website](#).



We want to learn from you!

We want to continue to learn from the community. Share your feedback about our newsletter by completing our [online newsletter survey](#). We will keep the survey open to make sure we keep getting your feedback.

DDD Updates

DDD Community Forum Dates



The dates for the DDD Community Forums are in! All forums will take place online using Zoom. The forums are free, but you must register in advance. For the latest updates about the Community Forums visit our [DDD Events Webpage](#). For details about the 2024 Community Forums, read below.

- Tuesday, March 19, 2024 from 3:00pm to 4:30pm
- Tuesday, June 18, 2024 from 3:00pm to 4:30pm
- Tuesday, September 17, 2024 from 3:00pm to 4:30pm
- Tuesday, December 10, 2024 from 3:00pm to 4:30pm

Technology Fund Update

DDD Participants that received technology such as ipads or laptops, from the Technology Fund Rounds 1 through Rounds 4, will be asked to complete a survey to learn about how you are using the technology. An email will go out the first week in February to you or whoever helped you request the technology. If someone other than the DDD participant gets the email with the survey link, we ask that you help the individual fill out the survey.

Participation is extremely important! Information from this survey will help guide learning opportunities, trainings, and identify community needs related to technology use. When you complete the survey, you will be asked if you would like to enter a raffle for a \$25 gift card.

BHDDH Know Your Rights Program



BHDDH is committed to servicing the community. This includes giving you information you can use throughout your daily life. One of our goals this year is to make sure you know more about your rights and how to protect them. To do this, we are launching a year-long campaign centered around your rights.

The Know Your Rights Program will give you information about what your rights are in different situations. Each month this year will focus on a different category of rights. For example, you will learn what your DDD service rights are in February. Other topics you will learn about are your right to safety, relationships, healthcare, and more. Everyone deserves to have their rights respected, and learning what they are is the first step to protecting them. To learn more, visit [page 4](#) and [page 5](#) of this newsletter.

Your Life, Your Rights



Everyone deserves to have basic human rights.
Learn what your rights are and how to protect them.

Your Life, Your Rights Program Topics:



February 2024:

DD Bill of Rights



August 2024:

Housing Rights



March 2024:

Safety



September 2024:

Voting Rights



April 2024:

Antidiscrimination



October 2024:

Employment Rights



May 2024:

Healthcare



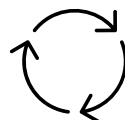
November 2024:

Being Stopped by Police



June 2024:

Relationships



December 2024:

Program Wrap-up



July 2024:

Disability Rights

Follow us on social media for updates on the Your Life, Your Rights Program.





Your Life, Your Rights

DD Services Bill of Rights



Know Your Rights

All people with disabilities have the same rights as anyone else. These include:



Freedom to be yourself
and make decisions



Not be treated unfairly
because of who you are



Live a safe, meaningful,
and free life



Be treated with dignity
and respect

Your Rights and DD Services

Your life is your choice. This is also true for DD services you get.

You have rights when it comes to your DD services that are called the **DD Bill of Rights**. The DD Bill of Rights make sure you are treated well and get the help you want so you can live the life you choose. The DD Bill of Rights are:



You plan your life
and pick your
services and
providers



You understand
your services and
can ask questions
at anytime



You can let your
provider or DDD know
if you are unhappy
with your services



You are
protected from
abuse and
mistreatment



Your privacy is
protected



You can get your
record at anytime



You live in a safe and
comfortable home



You can take risks
and make mistakes



You wear clothing,
own items, and eat
food you want



You can have
relationships and
people can visit you



You will have safety
plans that have the
least restrictions



You are involved in your
community and choose
the activities you do

**If you feel your rights have been violated, please contact the
Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights by visiting their website.**

Community News

Rhode Island's 2024 Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference



WE BELONG → HERE! ←

**RI's 2024 Statewide
Self-Advocacy Conference**
Thursday, May 9th - Friday, May 10th



Rhode Island's 2024 Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference is a yearly event hosted by Advocates in Action. The conference is scheduled from Thursday May 19th to Friday May 10th. The conference theme this year is "We Belong Here."

The first conference day (May 19th) is free and will take place online using Zoom. The second conference day (May 10th) includes a Dinner Dance Party at the Providence Marriott Downtown. You must buy a ticket for the dance party.

Visit the [Advocates in Action website](#) for the latest updates about the Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference. You can also learn about last year's event and catch up on all the other great work Advocates in Action is doing by visiting their website.

Accessibility Tip

According to the [World Health Organization \(website\)](#), Assistive Technology (AT) are tools that help people do their daily tasks. AT can help people do things like communicate, move, and take care of themselves. AT not only helps people do the things they want to do. It can also improve people's health, wellbeing, and how active they are in the community.

Some examples of AT are magnifiers, communication boards, and screen readers. There are a few ways BHDDH can help you buy AT. One way is through the Technology Fund, which is a one-time fund. Visit the [BHDDH Technology Fund webpage](#) to learn more.

Community News

Looking Upwards

Looking Upwards Kicks off Construction on 2 Hammett Court Specially Designed Accessible & Affordable Housing Development in Jamestown



On January 22, 2024, in Jamestown, RI – Looking Upwards and its collaborating partner, SWAP, Inc., along with federal, state, and local officials kicked off construction on 2 Hammett Court, the repurposing of a commercial building into specially designed accessible and affordable apartments in Jamestown’s downtown.

An innovative pilot, 2 Hammett Court will provide opportunities for individuals with

intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and other Rhode Islanders to live more independently with access to community.

“The shortage of accessible rental options in Rhode Island, coupled with skyrocketing rental costs, locks many individuals with disabilities out of the possibility of living with maximum independence and participation in their communities,” said Carrie Miranda, executive director of Looking Upwards. “As an organization with deep roots in the Jamestown community, we are pleased to have the opportunity to expand housing options for individuals with disabilities and other Rhode Islanders in the heart of town. We appreciate the support from the Town of Jamestown and our funding and project partners in working with us to make this vision a reality.”

To [make sure] that the building is welcoming and comfortable for everyone, the Hammett Court apartment building, designed by Union Studio, will [have] universal design features, such as braille signage, dimensions to accommodate wheelchairs and attention to sensory details. Each apartment unit will have the option of customized accessibility features to support each resident’s independence in their home.



Community News

Looking Upwards

Looking Upwards Kicks off Construction on 2 Hammett Court Specially Designed Accessible & Affordable Housing Development in Jamestown

“Although the housing crisis in Rhode Island is multi-dimensional, 2 Hammett Court is unique. It represents a commitment to address what has been a growing problem - the lack of accessible and affordable homes for those with disabilities. The apartments are integrated into the community within walking distance to shops, bus routes and grocery stores. SWAP, Inc. is pleased to collaborate with Looking Upwards and we hope this model will be duplicated time and again in our state,” said SWAP executive director, Carla DeStefano.



The \$5.1 million-dollar Hammett Court project is made possible with the support of federal, state and local officials who recognize the devastating impact of the housing crisis, and who continue to prioritize important developments.

“I commend all the community partners who worked collaboratively to launch this exciting project. A safe, affordable, accessible home of one’s own is the cornerstone of independence for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With this new housing development, Jamestown is reaffirming its commitment to fully including, respecting, supporting, and welcoming people with differing needs and recognizing their contributions to the community. When it’s completed, 2 Hammett Court will help reduce housing barriers for people with I/DD. It will help them put down roots, strengthen the community, and increase the number of housing units in Jamestown that are affordable and accessible,” said Senator Jack Reed, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee who worked with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and their colleagues in the Senate to successfully deliver \$3.3 million in federal funding for the project through the American Rescue Plan Act.

To read the complete press release go to the [What's Up Newp website](#).

Visit the [Looking Upwards website](#) to learn more about their great work.

Community News

Disability Employment TA Center



The AoD Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center's (DETAC) National Community of Practice (CoP) is hosting a webinar, "Supporting Self-Employment for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities: Family Perspectives." The webinar is scheduled on **Tuesday, February 13, 2024, from 3:00-4:30 P.M. ET.**

This event highlights the importance of family support for people with disabilities who own their own businesses. The webinar will recap the work done by DETAC to make self-employment opportunities better for people with disabilities.

Rhode Islands own Sue Babin, from the Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) will facilitate a panel (group of experts) session featuring three family members of entrepreneurs with disabilities. They will offer their points of view and opinions on how to best support loved ones with disabilities who want to own their own businesses.

The presenters include:

- **Sue Babin**, Special Projects Coordinator at the Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC)
- **Sue Baron**, Mother of Bryan Baron (Bryan Baron is the owner of Double-B Photography)
- **Iraida Williams**, Mother of Alton Stuckey (Alton Stuckey is the owner of Alton Stuckey Art, Portraits and More)
- **Karen Rasnick**, Mother of Rachel Rasnick (Rachel Rasnick is the owner of Rachel Rasnick Art)

Please [register for this self-employment webinar online](#). Registration is required.

Community News

Greater Providence YMCA Settles with the Department of Justice Over ADA Complaint



“The U.S. Department of Justice has reached an agreement with the Greater Providence YMCA to resolve allegations that it violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by denying a child with cystic fibrosis the opportunity to participate in its Camp Fuller summer program because of his disability.” (Mulvney, 2024).

The article in the Providence Journal highlights the challenges faced by people with disabilities and how important it is for the community to know their rights. In this case special accommodations were granted to the child in 2022 to self-administer pancreatic enzyme supplements. A year later, the Greater Providence YMCA told this family that they could no longer accommodate or allow the child to self-administer medication. As a result, there was a question of whether a violation occurred by not allowing the child to participate in the camp. In the end a settlement was agreed upon and the Greater Providence YMCA and its affiliates agreed that their staff must be properly trained to administer medication when needed.

Read the full story on the [Providence Journal website](#).

Chance to Join a Research Study

If you are an adult with autism you have the chance to join a research study. The research study is about skill-building resources. The researchers are trying to find out how helpful their resources about different topics are. The resource topics include relationships, employment, advocacy, and more.

You must be between 18-28 years old to join the study. You will be asked to look at resources and complete online surveys. You will be paid for your joining the research study.

If you are interested in learning more, visit the [research study webpage](#).

Report Suspected Abuse

QA Hotline 401-462-2629

Mandated Reporting

Reporting suspected occurrences of abuse, neglect, and mistreatment of individuals with developmental disabilities

To **report abuse and serious incidents** call the BHDDH Quality Assurance (QA) Unit **hotline at (401) 462-2629**. The hotline is open 24-hour hotline, seven days per week, 365 days per year. Staff respond to reported incidents of abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and financial exploitation.

BH Link is Here for You

BH Link's mission is to ensure all Rhode Islanders experiencing mental health and substance use crises receive the appropriate services they need as quickly as possible in an environment that supports their recovery. Visit the BH Link website at www.bhlink.org.

If under 18 CALL: (855) KID (543)-LINK(5465)

VISIT the 24-HOUR/7-DAY Triage Center at:

975 Waterman Avenue, East Providence, RI

Call 911 if there is a risk of immediate danger.

If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text **988** or chat 988lifeline.org



For More Information on DD Initiatives

Newsletters: sign up and view old newsletters on our [News and Updates webpage](#)

Consent Decree: <https://bhddh.ri.gov/developmental-disabilities/consent-decree>

Conflict Free Case Management (CFCM): [EOHHS CFCM website](#) or [DD Initiatives-CFCM](#)

RI DSP State Workforce Initiative: <https://riswi.org/> or [DD Initiatives-SWI](#)

Hours of Operation

Monday – Friday

8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Contacting DDD Staff

See the full Division Contact List attached to this newsletter. Send general questions to

BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov.

Please do not email critical issues.

Website: www.bhddh.ri.gov

Phone: 401.462.3421

Email: BHDDH.AskDD@bhddh.ri.gov

ESPAÑOL: 401.462.3014

Division of Developmental Disabilities - All Staff Contacts

Main Phone #: (401) 462-3421
Fax: (401) 462-2775

TDD: (401) 462-3226
Spanish Line: (401) 462-3014

Website: <https://bhddh.ri.gov/>
BH Link: (401) 414-5465

To report abuse/neglect:
(401) 462-2629

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SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT PROGRAM



VIRTUAL EVENTS

2024

JAN 30	Community Information Session Benefits Planning and Work Incentives presented by the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities
FEB 27	Self-Direction Connection Online community of practice for consumers, family members/caregivers, and professionals
MAR 5	Fiscal Intermediary Panel Who are they? What do they do? How do you connect?
MAR 26	Community Information Session Advocates in Action: Why I chose Self-Direction
APR 30	Employment Success Meet some individuals self-directing and hear about their employment journey



selfdirectedsupport@ripin.org



ripin.org/selfdirectedsupport

RIPIN

SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT PROGRAM

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



FEBRUARY 27TH



6:00 - 7:00 PM



VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

**Join the RIPIN Self-Directed Support Program
for a collaborative and engaging experience.**

Help us build **Community Connections** during our online Community of Practice. This session is designed to foster a supportive network among individuals who self-direct, their family members, and professionals in the field.

REGISTRATION



BIT.LY/30IYCPS



SCAN ME



Families at the Center of a Connected Community

JOIN *Us*

as we kick off a new effort in
Rhode Island, led by families, to
build more inclusive experiences
for their children, their
communities and themselves!

Monday, February 12
6:00 - 7:00 PM

Register for the virtual session Here:
<https://bit.ly/3vxKELP>



fAmILy

COMMUNITY

BeLonging

Hear stories, lessons, and
practical tips from other
families of children with
disabilities...And learn how
you can get support and
funding to do it in your
community!

Need to connect?
nithya@starfirecouncil.org



RHODE ISLAND
Developmental Disabilities Council
Charting a New Course

starfire

SELF-EMPLOYMENT ONLINE Classes for People with Disabilities, Families and Community Agencies

NEXT CLASS STARTING April, 2024



Do you know a person with a disability or other individual who has a hobby or idea for a possible business or who needs more support for an existing small business? If so, our **FREE ONLINE ZOOM Business Classes** can help the person to learn all about self-employment and available resources for their business idea and financial future! Traditional employment in jobs may not be the best option for some people with disabilities. Small business ownership is another option and great choice to do work that has *real meaning* for the person. It is something people can control themselves and to sell a product or a service they really love. There are over 100 people with disabilities in RI and many others who have started their own businesses in the last few years.

Here's what Michael Coyne, business owner of "*Red, White and Brew Café*" in Warwick, RI has to say:

WHY CHOOSE SELF-EMPLOYMENT?

1. I love being my own "BOSS", meeting new people and spending my time working on something I really enjoy every day!
2. I decide my own flexible work schedule and hours.
3. The Business Classes helped me to learn skills for problem solving, communication, marketing, and self-advocacy. I met other great people with disabilities who also own their own businesses. I received a few grants from the Project and the Fogarty Foundation to buy the materials/supplies I needed for my business.
4. I have assistance through my personal support network, my Business Team and RIDDC who are there to help me with my business.
5. I am no longer "*volunteering*" my time at a job, but instead I have my own business making money and I now have a steady income!



The RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) offers a FREE Business Development Series of 8 Classes, ONLINE through ZOOM Meetings. The new Series will start in early April and scheduled every week for 9 weeks. The classes will assist people to learn the right business skills and access resources to become profitable RI small business owners! Mini-grants up to \$1000.00+ are available to people completing classes, homework and starting their businesses from DLT funding and the Fogarty Foundation.

The Classes provide business advice, resources and ongoing peer and staff support to participants, families and staff and contact with experienced Business Advisors. They know how to work with people to develop good business plans, marketing ideas, and set goals the person can achieve in the industry he/she launches. The Series includes: 1. Is Entrepreneurship Right for You? 2. Steps to Start a Small Business, 3. Identifying Your Target Market, 4. Creating an "*Elevator Pitch*" about Your Service/Product(s), 5. Writing a Good Business Plan, 6. Finances, Bookkeeping, & Community Resources, 7. Marketing, and 8. Using Social Media to Promote your Business.

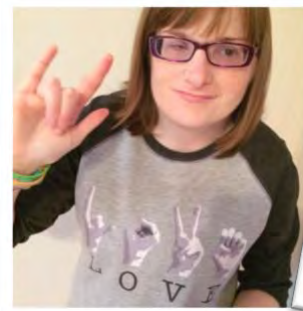
To Register for this Class or For More Information Call Claudia Lowe at 738-3960 or Sue Babin at 523-2300. (Participation Is Limited!)

This project is funded by DLT's and the Governor's Workforce Board's (GWB) "Real Jobs RI" initiative.



RI's Self-Employment Project

Learn How You Can Start Your Own Business!



Why Choose Self-Employment?

Self-employment offers people with disabilities and others flexibility and control that traditional jobs do not, such as meaningful employment in an area the person has a *real passion* for, setting their own flexible work hours, being their own “Boss”, determining their actual place of employment, working at their own pace, and increasing each person’s self-esteem.

Traditional 9-5 wage jobs and various types of workplace environments may not be the best option for some individuals with disabilities. “*Self-employment and the spirit of individual enterprise*” can match a person’s dreams, hobbies and skills to start their own business earning competitive wages, facilitate diversity and inclusion, and build each person’s financial future!

What does the Project Include?

This Project provides ongoing support for aspiring entrepreneurs to develop their business idea, launch or grow their small businesses, and improve their financial futures. It includes:

- 8 Business Development Classes through ZOOM Meetings in interactive formats people can understand
- Project Staff and Peer Mentor Support
- 1-1 Business Support from Business Advisors for Marketing; Business Planning; Business Card, Facebook or Website design; Accounting/Finances, etc.
- Mini Grants up to \$1000. for start-up expenses, materials, supplies, etc.
- Weekly Entrepreneur’s Forum with practical information and networking ideas
- Opportunity to participate in various local community Vendor Marketplace Events
- Completion of a Business Planning Portfolio



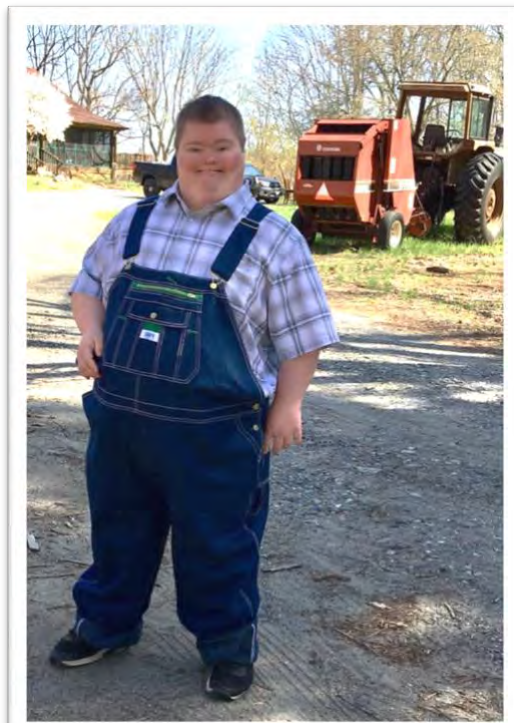
In RI there are many individuals with disabilities who have figured out creative ways to leverage their talents, skills, resources and connections into their ideal job... not through finding jobs, but by creating their own employment and small business!



What Do You Need to Get Started?

- A hobby, talent or skill that you want to pursue as a possible small business
- An interest in learning more about the steps to start a business and necessary ongoing business support
- Ability to connect on a laptop, computer or I-Pad for 8 weekly ZOOM Business Classes
- Family, friends or support staff who can be a part of your Business Team to assist you with the business classes and other business development resources you may need to explore

**ANYONE can be a small business owner
with the right resources and support!**



How Did this Project Start?

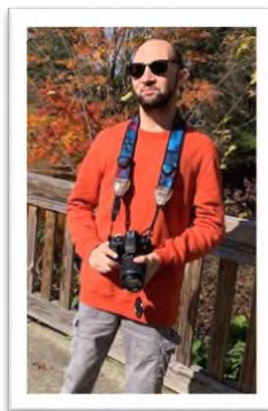
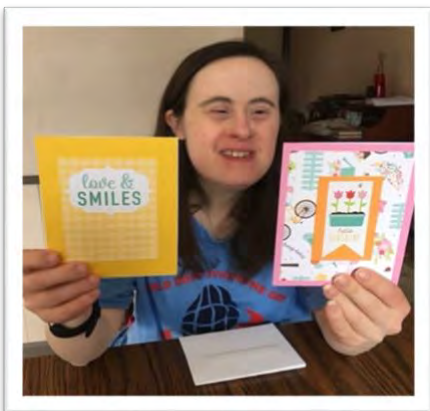
The RI Department of Labor and Training (DLT), Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) and "*Real Jobs RI*" has provided funding to the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) since 2018 to administer this Project and organize the ongoing business development support people with disabilities need to successfully start up or grow a small business. The Council provides additional in-kind resources to support the operational components and other activities to help promote entrepreneurs with disabilities and their businesses.

Where Can I Get More Information?

The next round of the Business Development Series and 8 Classes starts in April 2024.

To see more information on this Project and read about some great success stories of people with disabilities and their individual businesses in RI check out the RIDDC's website at www.riddc.org and click on the Self-Employment tab. You will be inspired by these RI entrepreneurs who have made their dreams into reality through business ownership!

You can also contact Sue Babin, Project Director at 401-523-2300 or Project Staff Claudia Lowe, at 401-737-1238 for more information.



Transformation Grant

RI WINS (Workforce Investment & New Solutions) is the name utilized by the RI Cross Disability Coalition for our DD Transformation Grant in collaboration with the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) and Skills for RI's Future. This newsletter provides information on the status of implementation of the goal areas within the project and efforts to educate and provide support to people with disabilities, staff from community agencies, and RI employers on creating sustainable change for meaningful and inclusive lives for individuals with disabilities.

Tramell's Journey: A Sneaker Enthusiast Finds Fulfillment in Retail Employment

In the heart of Rhode Island, a unique partnership between a youth transition service and the Salvation Army has paved the way for individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to pursue their passion for work. One such inspiring story is that of Tramell, a young man whose love for sneakers led him to a fulfilling job at the Salvation Army Retail store.



Tramell working the Bell Ringing Campaign

The Path to Success

Tramell's journey began with the youth transition services at the Fogarty Center, a program focused on one-on-one employment opportunities within the community. Within just six months of starting the program, Tramell realized his dream of working in retail, specifically at the Salvation Army's Pitman Street location in Providence. Despite potential challenges, he embraced a partially customized job, dedicating nearly 20 hours per week to his newfound role.

What makes Tramell's story even more remarkable is the organic connection that played a crucial role in his hire. Christopher Correa, a job coach with prior experience at the Salvation Army, leveraged his personal and professional network and social capital to facilitate a solid hire. This connection highlights the importance of networking in career development and underscores the positive impact that mentorship and support can have on individuals like Tramell.

Weathering Challenges with Enthusiasm

Tramell's commitment to his work was evident when faced with challenges. His mother, concerned about the weather, contemplated whether he should go to work. However, Tramell's enthusiasm prevailed, showcasing his dedication to the job and his sense of belonging at the Salvation Army Retail store.

The partnership extended beyond regular employment, encompassing seasonal hiring opportunities like the Bell Ringing campaign. Collaborating with local businesses such as Stop and Shop, the program provides a chance for individuals with limited employment experience to gain valuable skills in customer service while contributing to the community. The money earned during these seasonal engagements directly supports local initiatives, creating a meaningful cycle of giving back. Major Steven Lopes agrees that "building relationships within the community is the most valuable way to raise awareness of the program and is built upon the strength of the people we serve and support".

David Reiss, CEO of The Fogarty Center fully supported the expansion of youth in transition services within the organization, "quoting the television show, the A Team, 'I love it when a plan comes together' is so similar to the relationship between the Salvation Army and the Fogarty Center. Mutually respectful of each other's missions

Tramell's Journey (cont.)

over the last 25 years, these two long standing non-profit agencies have formed an alliance that encourages and supports community participation and inclusion, aiding society as a whole. It is heartening to see people in need working hard for the benefit of all. Everyone has an opportunity to contribute their unique skills and gifts in this world! It is these types of business relationships that keep our community vibrant."

Exceeding Expectations

Tramell's success is a testament to the effectiveness of the youth transition services. The goal of the program is to have individuals employed within a year of starting the service, and Tramell not only met but exceeded this goal. His story reflects the positive impact of personalized employment support and the importance of community partnerships in creating opportunities for individuals with I/DD.

For more information contact Kie O'Donnell,
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Michael E's Journey to Success in the Office Environment

In today's workforce, diversity and inclusion are essential components of a thriving workplace. Companies that embrace the unique strengths of individuals with different abilities contribute to a more vibrant and innovative work culture.

Michael E.'s journey began when he was referred to a job opportunity in office services. Michael, who is on the autism spectrum, had distinct needs and preferences, emphasizing his organizational skills and attention to detail. He was clear about his goals and wanted to work in a role different from typical positions for people with similar diagnoses, like bagging groceries.

The Power of Networking

Networking played a pivotal role in Michael's employment journey. A colleague referred him to an administrative position at CareLink, an opportunity that perfectly aligned with his skill set. Despite initial reservations about his fit within the team, Michael's unique abilities and commitment to the job quickly dispelled any concerns.

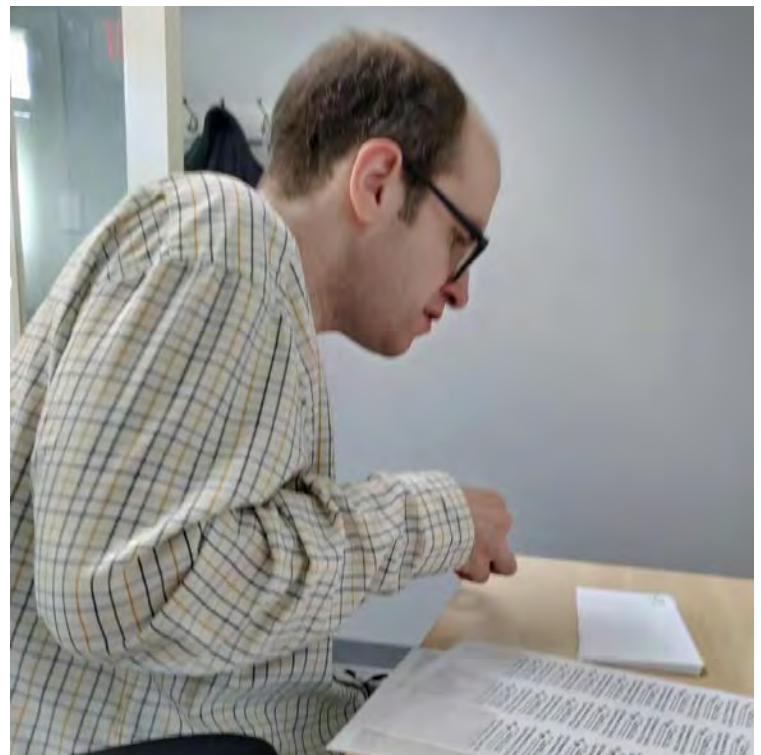
Overcoming Initial Hesitations

During the hiring process, Michael's potential employer expressed concerns about effectively communicating tasks to him, given his placement on the autism spectrum. However, the supportive approach the hiring team took, guided by a commitment to treat him like any other employee, proved to be the key to Michael's success.

Jennifer Fraser, Associate Director, Workforce Development, AccessPoint RI, was crucial in preparing Michael for his new role to ensure a smooth transition. They worked on various aspects, from refining communication skills to addressing potential challenges that might arise in a professional setting. Michael's preparation for the interview showcased his eagerness and aptitude for the job.

Since his hire in September, Jennifer checks in bi-weekly to ensure his success. "He has strong tech skills, using Excel, but also YouTube videos of his photography," notes Jennifer. He is responsible for taking inventory of office and kitchen supplies for multiple locations. He fills in the excel sheet and forwards it to his supervisor to order products. The HR department enlists his help to make folders for new hires, gathering binders for training, printing each curriculum as he's advised of upcoming projects.

Working together, Michael and Jennifer planned a daily



Michael Working at CareLink

Michael E's Journey (cont.)

visual checklist, the best system of tasks to keep him focused. Of course, he typed it out and laminated the document. At work, he has his own laptop, desk, and shares office space. He also coordinates his own transportation, including the sporadic changes that come along with his work schedule. He also adapted nicely to his very active physical routine as his work required.

His social growth has been noticeable. Greeting his co-workers in the hallways and cordially asking visitors who they're coming to see are among his soft skills now. Not surprisingly, there is also a boost in his self-confidence. "He bought new clothes, comes in with his shirt tucked, and looks great. He completely dresses the part." "He's fantastic," according to Jen. That says it all.

A Positive Workplace Environment

Michael's responsibilities at CareLink include answering phones, interacting with representatives, redirecting visitors, handling mail, and managing calendars. His role as an office assistant underscores the versatility of employment opportunities for individuals with diverse abilities.

The support and understanding provided by his colleagues, especially the Operations Coordinator, have been instrumental in his success. His manager, Brooke Huemann, said, "Michael brings such positivity to the office, it's been a wonderful experience. He greets everyone when he walks by and wishes them a great day."

Championing Diversity in the Workplace

Michael's story challenges preconceived notions about the types of roles individuals with disabilities can excel in. His success serves as a testament to the importance of workplace diversity and inclusion, demonstrating that with the right support and understanding, individuals with unique abilities can contribute significantly to any

organization.

Michael's journey to success in an office setting highlights the significance of creating inclusive workplaces where individuals with diverse abilities can thrive. As we celebrate stories like his, we move closer to a future where everyone, regardless of their background or abilities, has the opportunity to pursue fulfilling and meaningful careers.

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For More Information on the Transformation Project and collaborative partners RI Cross Disability Coalition, RIDDC or Skills for RI's Future contact:

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- Sue Babin, RIDDC, suebabin@riddc.org***
- Danna Spencer, Skills for Rhode Island's Future, dspencer@skillsforri.com***