



INCLUSION & EMPLOYMENT

Bucks County Employment Coalition

October 29, 2021

Edition 1, Volume 1

Bucks County Employment Coalition: *Welcome to the 1st Edition of our Newsletter*

The mission of the Bucks County Employment Coalition is to promote the expansion of employment opportunities and supports for individuals with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) in Bucks County.

The Coalition's work includes: the discussion of employment-related issues and trends, sharing of information and resources, development of interagency relationships, engagement with the business and broader community and the collection and sharing of employment-related data.

The road to employment starts with a willingness to include individuals with ID/A in the fullness of civic and community life. Individuals with disabilities have so many unique gifts, talents and perspectives that our world needs and misses out on when neglected.

Employment is a vehicle for pursuing greater purpose, independence and financial security. These are all important and noble reasons to support expanding employment opportunities for individuals with ID/A. However, employment has more than this individual focus.

Employment is one of the pillars of community life. It is where we participate and share in lives of our customers, co-workers and neighbors; creating connections, relationships and friendships that enrich our communities.

Expanding employment opportunities for individuals with ID/A helps us create a more inclusive world---a world that's better; better than normal.

We ask that you join us in the goal of expanding vocational opportunities for individuals with ID/A and laboring together to build a world that recognizes, honors and nourishes the contributions that individuals with ID/A have to offer.



PORTRAITS OF EMPLOYMENT: BRIAN'S STORY

It was a chilly walk for him on the morning of Thursday February 7, 2019. The commute concluded at Cornerstone Fitness in New Hope, PA. Janice (Gym Manager) gave him a warm welcome inside and proudly handed him his nametag, which indicated "Housekeeper", and in even bigger letters above the job title, read "Brian".

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. It is Cornerstone Fitness in New Hope who has been an active leader in creating an inclusive workplace for their employees. The U.S. Department of Labor states "disability is a natural part of diversity". Diversity allows us to experience life as ever-changing. It is in our nature to adapt and evolve to what is around us. This is your invitation to break down barriers, extend a welcoming hand, and take on a new practice in your journey.

As of October 1, 2021, Brian has successfully completed 276 shifts, trained two new-hires, wiped down hundreds of exercise machines, and received countless compliment cards. Cornerstone Fitness has created the

opportunity for Brian to take on responsibility and independence towards the completion of his tasks (mopping floors, folding towels, cleaning mirrors, filling sanitizer wipe buckets, etc.). Brian is grateful for the opportunities he has been given and strives to make a difference in other's lives.

The bond that Janice and Brian share has been imperative to his success as an employee. Janice learns what it is which brings out the best in people, and she aligns herself with them. Brian knows that Janice is approachable in times of questions, happy on a dreary day, and is supportive of his life goals. Janice believes that everyone deserves to grow, to learn, and be celebrated no matter what level of experience they are starting off at.

While October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Cornerstone Fitness of New Hope ensures the inclusive practices and awareness are implemented yearlong!- Brynn Zwickel



National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October 2021 is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year's theme is *America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion*. It's purpose is to "celebrate workers with disabilities and recommit ourselves to dismantling barriers to access and inclusion."

On October 20, 2021, the Bucks County Commissioners made a Proclamation in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Below is a link to the National Disability Employment Month website and a link to the 10/20/2021 Commissioners Meeting.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam>

<https://www.buckscounty.gov/129/Commissioners-Meetings-Agendas-Minutes>

Project Search Bucks County

This school year the County of Bucks embarked on a collaboration to further enhance employment opportunities for individuals with ID/A called Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is a one-year, high school transition program that provides training and education leading to employment for students with disabilities. The cornerstone of Project SEARCH is total immersion in a large business and the County of Bucks is serving as the business host site. Each day, students report to the host business, learn employability skills and job skills while participating in three internships during the school year. Students also participate in monthly progress meetings to define their career goal and plan necessary steps to achieve that goal. The ultimate goal upon program completion is competitive employment in the community utilizing the skills learned on the internships and throughout the program.

Upcoming Employment Coalition Meeting

November 8th at 2:30 (via Microsoft TEAMS)

Contact Us

If you would like additional information on the coalition, Employment First, or Supported Employment services, please contact Nicole Van Reymersdal at nvanreymersdal@buckscounty.org

Better than Normal By Everyday Cries

I'm different, not less
I'm different when I'm at my best
I can be awkward and I can be shy
I can be honest when others may lie
But that helps me be better
Better than normal

I'm not looking for sympathy
and I'm not your project
You can expect great things from me
When you honor my dignity
and give me space to be better
Better than normal

We're different, not less
We're different, and this is not a test
We can be caring and we can include
We can be gracious and we can be true
We can choose to welcome and not to exclude
Then our world will be better,
Better than normal