



## Achieving Dreams with the help of Ability Beyond Disability



Amanda Ho-Gutierrez began working at Ability Beyond Disability three years ago. She has enjoyed her role as a Life Skills Instructor and found it rewarding to assist others in optimizing their quality of life. Two years ago she decided to pursue her dream of a career in nursing and began the Licensed Practical Nurse program at Henry Abbot Technical School in Danbury. Amanda was motivated by the LPN Incentive Program that Ability Beyond Disability offers to its full-time employees. The program provides an increased tuition reimbursement benefit and a series of bonuses upon completion and successful hire into an LPN position.

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Balancing work and school was a challenge, but Amanda found support in her family and friends and her coworkers at the Eden Drive group home where she worked, a group she considers her second family. Amanda explains that her coworker Danielle Gibbs, who is also a college student, and her manager, Oscar Steadman, were great supports. "Danielle and Oscar would give me little motivational speeches. Unbeknownst to them, their words of encouragement would get me through my days of lectures, studying and clinicals." Amanda says that the LPN Incentive Program also helped by relieving some of the financial burden of going to school.

After receiving her LPN license, Amanda was accepted into an LPN position at the West Street group home in New York earlier this summer and she feels right at home in her new setting. "All of the staff there take so much pride and joy in all that they do which makes it enjoyable to be a part of their team," Amanda reports.

Amanda also appreciates the support that she has received from Workforce Development and from the nursing staff at Ability Beyond Disability. She encourages others to go back to school and pursue their dreams. "Education provides for more options and opportunities. There's nothing too much or too far out of reach. Set your goals and make your dreams a reality." Amanda will continue to reach for her dreams as she begins the pursuit of a degree in nursing at Western Connecticut State University this fall.

**Congratulations to Kelly Harrison and Kelly Novo who also just recently completed their LPN degrees and utilized the LPN Incentive Program!**

For more information about the LPN Incentive Program or other education benefits, please contact Rebecca Cosgrove in Workforce Development at (203) 826-3065 or via email at [Rebecca.Cosgrove@abilitybeyonddisability.org](mailto:Rebecca.Cosgrove@abilitybeyonddisability.org).

## FREE wings and great friends! -by Maureen

Sunday, July 18th was a fantastic birthday! I was able to go home to my sister and brother in-law's house for the beginning of a wonderful birthday weekend. They bought lobster and when they dropped me off home I went to meet my friend Kathy and Ability Beyond Disability employees Debbie, Tara and Wanda at TK's American Cafe (they give out free wings on your birthday!). We dove into some delicious wings, great laughter and fun!

It couldn't have been any better because I am 51 yrs old and feel so much younger! Happy Birthday to all of the July birthday guys and gals at Ability Beyond Disability.



## BRAVO!

Some noteworthy happenings at Ability Beyond Disability

For the first time in Ability Beyond Disability, one of our group homes achieved it's 4th consecutive cite free ICF inspection! Congratulations to the staff at **North Pleasant Rise** for this outstanding accomplishment! Special thanks to **Timothy Plyler, Holly Schultz, Stephanie Marriott, Trish Green, Kendra Tompkins, Mary Lou Grill, Adam Smith, Day and Work, and the support teams.**

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## Upcoming Events!

9/21/2010

Mercedes-Benz Dealer  
Championship Golf Tournament

Ridgewood Country Club  
Danbury, CT

10/20 - 10/22/2010

Disability Mentoring Day  
Celebration

10/21/2010

Hoops for Hope  
Danbury High School

Please visit  
[www.abilitybeyonddisability.org](http://www.abilitybeyonddisability.org)  
for more information



Leir Pavilion

### Celebrating our new mission!

On July 1st we officially launched our new mission:

**Our mission is in our name...  
At Ability Beyond Disability we discover, build and celebrate the ability in all people.**

Our new mission statement tells the world more clearly who we are and what we do. The Mission Validation Committee did a wonderful job in creating a statement that we can all believe in and use to let people know about Ability Beyond Disability.

All of our employees were looking good in their mission t-shirts on July 1st! We hope you'll continue to wear them out in the community and help spread the word about Ability Beyond Disability.

### ADA Celebrates 20 Years!

July 26th marked the 20th anniversary of the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act! We have seen great strides in accessibility over the years, but we at Ability Beyond Disability know that there is a long way to go in ensuring equal rights for people with disabilities. Together though, we can go further than ever before in making a difference!



Kisco Ave.



Lanesville Group Home



Operations Dept.

## Look Who's Joined Our Team

We would like to welcome new additions to our team for July:

- Abdullah, Saidah N., LSI
- Bertozzi, Carly A., LSI
- Carriere, Michael D., LSI
- DaSilva, Kathleen G., LSI
- Gary, Jasmine C., LSI
- Glahn, Christopher D., LSI
- Ho-Gutierrez, Amanda S., LPN
- Jenkinson, Sharon L., LSI
- Knowlton, Alicia R., ARSC
- Mack, Devin M., LSI
- Miller, Alison J., ARSC
- Patten, Elesia K., LSI
- Perrier, Jacqueline M., LSI
- Strawson, Rachel Lee, LSI
- Zerrenner, Eileen K., LSI

## Our Vision For The Future...

Ensuring a successful future for our consumers, families and employees

We are excited and proud to announce the addition of Clapboard Ridge Community Living Arrangement (CLA) to Ability Beyond Disability!

Clapboard Ridge is the newest addition to our CT Residential Service Line located in Danbury. We were awarded the contract to transition this home from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to our operations in December. The home will provide enhanced behavioral supports to all of the individuals who reside there.

Ability Beyond Disability is a big supporter of the privatization of public run group homes. Private providers have a long standing record of providing higher quality services more efficiently, which translates into a better quality of life for the consumers we serve. Also, many of the services provided by Ability Beyond Disability cost less than half as much as similar services provided by state agencies in both Connecticut and New York.

We are thrilled to welcome 8 new gentlemen to Clapboard Ridge!

A big thank-you to each department that has supported this process, from writing the RFP to implementation of the new home. We couldn't have done it without you!



Jordan Young, Golf Chair and Bob Camastro, Friendly Motorcars/Mercedes-Benz Owner

## Mercedes-Benz Dealer Championship

We're very excited to announce that for the first time, Ability Beyond Disability will be partnering with Mercedes-Benz of Danbury in hosting our annual golf tournament! The 2010 Mercedes-Benz Dealer Championship sponsored by Mercedes-Benz of Danbury and Friendly Motorcars, will be held on September 21, 2010 at the Ridgewood Country Club in Danbury, CT. Four winners of the event will move on to the Mercedes-Benz Eastern Sectional Tournament in Pinehurst, NC to compete for a chance to move on to the very prestigious National Final at Augusta, GA.

The day will include lunch, playoffs, cocktail hour, dinner and an awards ceremony. Four brand new Mercedes-Benz vehicles will be awarded to the first four players skilled enough to make a hole-in-one!

All of the proceeds from the tournament, through sponsorships and participants, will come back to Ability Beyond Disability. **If you're interested in volunteering or would like more information please contact Robyn Wicks at (203) 826-3181.**



## "Oh My" Employee of the Month -Tom Wilkes

Tom Wilkes, an Employment Specialist II in the Career Development Department, has been with Ability Beyond Disability since 1998. Tom began as a "sub" after spending years as a carpenter and cabinet maker. He

wanted to try out the job to see if he liked it as it was so different from anything he had done before. After just a short time he knew. He said, "It felt so good to put my head on the pillow every night knowing I did something to help someone. I was making a difference."

He was nominated for the Oh My Award, in part, for his valuable and outstanding contributions to the development of the IPS (Independent Placement and Support) Supported Employment Model and for setting the department standard for documentation and paperwork. Despite the slow economy and difficulty finding employment for the consumers, he likes the challenge because "it means so much more when you get a placement."

On a personal level, Tom enjoys his two Belgium Tervuren dogs, Juno and Mozart; loves basketball, volleyball, hiking, kayaking and "music, music, music." He enjoys everything from rock to blues and gospel to classical.

He wishes he had found this career even earlier in life. He likes the "smiles I put on peoples' faces; they are so proud of earning their own way." and said it "is what I was meant to be."



## August "Oh My" Award Nominees

- Elizabeth Wyatt - Employment Specialist I
- Liz Stroud - Registered Nurse
- Mark Marsh - Employment Specialist I
- Jammie Wright - Life Skills Instructor
- Kimberly Davis - Registered Nurse
- Erin Butkovic - Employment Specialist I

## Anniversaries

Gean Ann Murphy	24	Tanya Warner	3
Donna Sario	23	Amber Jandro	3
Darlene Farmer	19	Alejandra Luna	3
Amy Desmarais	16	Timothy Plyler	3
Latoya Hopkins	15	JaJaira Espinal	2
Daren Copeland	15	Thomas Lounsbury	2
Susan Sheppard	15	Lynette Fulton	2
Wilbert Perkins	14	David Smith	2
Suzanne Benz	14	Christopher Mellers	2
Carol Bonner	13	Kathy Alabre	2
Marlene Mumford	12	Tracey Vater	2
Steven Vance	12	Sarooon E.	2
Jennifer Baskay	11	Teri Hancock	2
Shannon McClary	10	Mary Cukierski	2
John Daly	9	Octavia Burrus	2
Murban Kurlish	9	Norine Otieno	2
Elba Ervin	8	Angelica Macaraeg	2
Falilat Bilewu	7	Tywan Marion	2
Kaysieann Reynolds	7	Robert Solla	2
Marcus Waters	7	Emmanuel Ebnoti	2
Wilson Lamb	6	Andre Gray	2
Jeannie Lewis	6	Claudia Herrera	2
Margaret Connolly	6	Dwayne Williams	2
Priscilla Diaz	5	Yetta Hyman	1
Desmond Allen	5	Mathew Cole	1
Michelle Medeiros	5	Michele Hankamp	1
Margarita Soto	5	Cynthia Grimaldi	1
Ana Zdonczyk	5	Dawn Hibert	1
Lonnie Askew	5	Kevin Chiarella	1
Clint Zicari	5	Robert Caiazza	1
Vernon Blash	5	Pamela Szen	1
Yolanda Parham	5	Madelyn Disla	1
Melba Rivera	5	Ronald Urban	1
Darrien Smith	5	Deanna Mullings-Hurd	1
Kellie Lubinski	5		
Chantel Malloy	5		
Aimee Barnett	4		
LaCresia Johnson	4		
Debra Nardello	4		
Seerojnie Persaud	4		
Denise Gomez	4		
Shayna Perkins-West	4		
Paul Wasserman	4		
Michele Pironti	4		
Vida Aurelien	3		
Dawn Jackson	3		
Laura Weston	3		
Tricia Gillotti	3		
Alexander Zogblah	3		

With diverse backgrounds (including many in the human services field), all of our new hires will be great additions to our organization!