



Behind the Gears!

Summer 2022 Newsletter



From The Corner Office, A little something from our President

Summer is upon us. The days are longer and the weather has been exceptionally hot. Here at OWC most of our individuals have returned and are eager to continue their road to success. I think this is the perfect time to say thank you to all our staff, new hires, managers, and drives – your job is never easy! You have proven time and time again that you shine when you are needed. A special shout-out to Rene for her years of experience, stamina, and perseverance to get us where we are today! THANK YOU!

Now I would like to give you a quick update on our sensory room. The sheet rocking and taping have been completed and all the walls have been primed and made ready for paint. The ceiling has been installed and we are awaiting funding to complete the final painting and flooring. We are still hoping for completion by fall.

If you have any bottles and cans, please feel free to drop them off any day between 9 AM and 4 PM, and if you have a large quantity, we can arrange to pick them up. While here, be sure to stop in the store and check out all the new items our individuals have been working on.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me personally.

Sincerely, Bill Paluska
President and Co-founder



New Hires

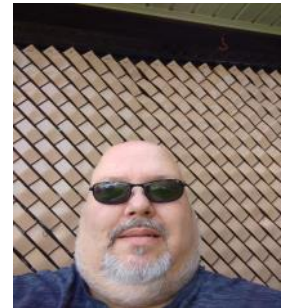
Brittany Kellner-Transitional Classroom Coordinator

Worked at Walgreens, lives in Stafford Springs, she is the only one in the family with a mom and dad, likes to read, workout, and hang out with friends. She likes that OWC is very inclusive. The staff and individuals are friendly.



Doug Duarte-Florist Delivery guy

Worked in Auto Parts, lives in Central Village CT, he is the only one in the family, likes to read, travel, walk around sand and oceans, he likes a new day experience, seeing his friends learn, and helping the public



Robin Norfus-DSH

Worked for HARC, lives in Vernon, has two kids and a husband, likes to cook and play games, and she likes that everyone is friendly at OWC



Darryl Walker-Transitional Support Staff

Works at Pratt and Whitney third shift
Lives in Hartford CT
He's the only one in the family
Likes to read the bible, watch basketball and football
Likes the friendliness of staff and co-worker



Theresa Mehl-DSO Support Staff

Worked at a doctor's office, lives in Somers CT, has a mother, brother, sister, 3 dogs, and lots of chickens. Likes to go camping, cooking, riding a motorcycle, and gardening. Likes individuals and fellow staff doing crafts



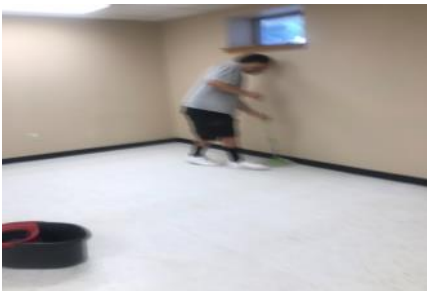
Dave Caron, Operations Coordinator

Operations Department Update:

The walls for the new sensory room have been removed and have been taped and skim coated. Soon the new ceilings will be installed, and painting will be completed. Next up, flooring and electrical.



The expansion of our OOA space is almost complete. OWC's Operations staff have painted the walls as well as waxed and carpeted the floors providing more floor space for the individuals of OOA in addition to a new locker room for all DSO individuals to store their daily belongings.



The former Bay Path learning store has been moved and rearranged for easy access for all to use and practice skill development.



Transitional Program

In June, the Transitional team welcomed Brittany Kellner as our new Classroom Coordinator! To date, Britt has created weekly themed classroom schedules, assigned curriculum, and supported staff and individuals, as well as cross training at Transitional partner sites. We look forward to Britt growing in her role. Also in June, we began a new partnership with Lu-Anne's Café. Individuals gain experience in a full line production bakery. The group of 3 individuals and their staff leave OWC at 730am and arrive at Lu-Anne's for 8am. This demonstrates flexibility needed to obtain community based employment.

The Transitional program would like to thank the following community partners for their support in welcoming our individuals into their spaces.

Josh Virkler of Luann's Bakery & Café in Ellington, CT
<https://www.luannsbakery.com>

Adam Baez of The White Oaks in Manchester, CT
<https://holidayseniorliving.com/retirement-communities/holiday-white-oaks-manchester-ct/>

Kristin Fortier of WAIM in Willimantic, CT
<https://waimct.org/>

Karen Perna of The Rockville Public Library in Rockville, CT
<https://www.rockvillepubliclibrary.org/>



Brianna and Ime can be seen scooping cookies.

Renata Bowers & Paula LaJoie of The Story Barn in Somers, CT
<https://friedab.com/pages/the-story-barn>



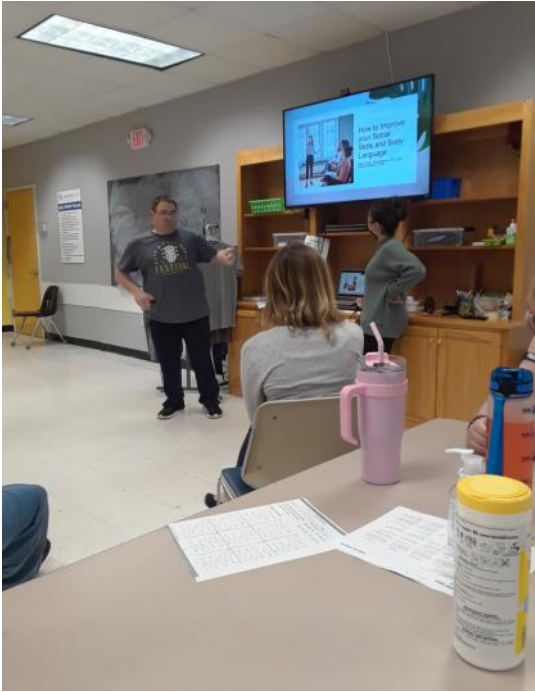
Sean can be seen preparing butter to be softened.



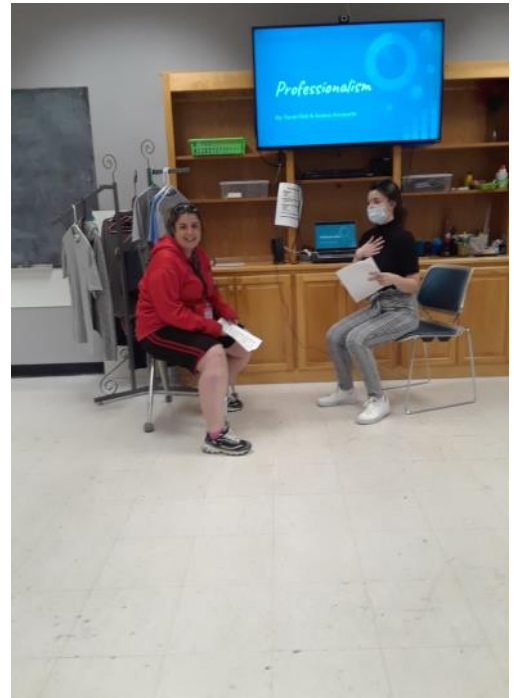
The White Oaks held a pizza party for our folks as a way to say thanks (Way to go Ime, Clarissa, Sarah, and Sean!).



Jacob is seen offering a hydration presentation.



Matthew can be seen offering a presentation on appropriate social skills



Sarah is offering a presentation on professionalism



The Lu-Annes group enjoying breakfast at the Café where they can taste their hard work.

GSE



Hercules, Kris, and GT are seen donating to the Cornerstone Soup Kitchen on behalf of OWC's recent food drive

The Material Handlers have been busy visiting local campgrounds (Sun Valley <https://www.sunvalleybeachclub.com/> & Pepper Tree <https://peppertreecamping.com/>) picking up their cans and bottles that we sort and return to an area redemption center. The Material Handlers average \$200.00 a week in recyclables, that's 4,000 cans and bottles a week!!! We are always seeking more donations- clothing, cans and bottles, wood, you name it...we will probably take it!

OWC will be partnering with Rockville to help keep our green areas clean and safe by collecting and disposing alcohol nips and garbage starting in July. Our Material Handlers will support this site. They have created the "NIP Patrol" for this purpose and will be sporting a tee-shirt of their own design while out in the community.

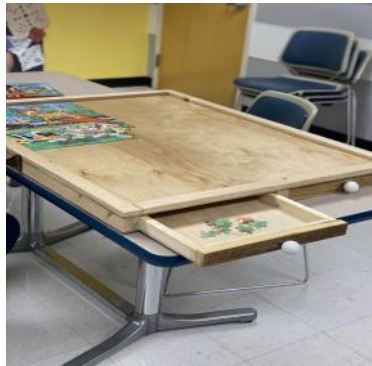
News from the Wood Shop



Matt and Fred sanding down a custom table that was made in our Woodshop.



Our custom tables enjoying their new home at The Groton Long Point Association, Inc.



Another Woodshop masterpiece for all of you who are puzzle(ing).

The Woodshop is always in need of donated wood, it's greatly appreciated! This talented group not only makes birdhouses, but custom orders such as tables, Adirondack chairs, lawn games, bar tops on whisky barrels, ect...if its made of wood, OWC can make it! Reserve a custom order today (first come first served).

Our Designers are busy making an array of crafts/designs that can be purchased in our store. Some of these crafts/designs include: key chains, cards, scarfs, tic-tac toe boards, and canvas paintings.

The Designers and the Woodshop work in a collaborative spirit supporting each other's department. The Woodshop will send items to the Designers for final touches. Both departments are creating pieces for our upcoming vendor shows at the Garlic Festival (10/8 & 10/9) and the Mohegan Sun Christmas Show (11/5 & 1/6). We are seeking volunteers for both events, hope you can help support us!

ISE

Individual Supported Employment



In the photo, Clarissa is being recognized for her 10th anniversary at Walgreens in Willimantic! Recently, OWC put in a one-time to assist Clarissa with becoming independent on the cash register. Our ISE staff Ingrid Boedecker reports that Clarissa is well on her way to checking customers in and out independently! Ingrid, also supports Jessica at Walgreens in Stafford. Additionally, Ingrid will float to other departments as needed. Shanice, who is supported by Donna Enders, is on summer break from working for the Manchester BOE... nice gig Shanice, summers off! Donna also supports Logan at Geisler's and Diane in Vernon. Like Ingrid, Donna floats to other departments too (2 Jill's of all trades).

Bay Path Update

Melanie and Nancy would like to thank everyone at OWC for being so kind and supportive to our OT students this past 6 months. We would also like to thank the following students who helped carry out our OT services from April- July 2022: Transitional/GSE: Andrea A, Davis M, Dana M & Karyna H DSO: Laura L, Melanie W, Jackie J & Maddie D Our next group of students is scheduled for January 2023. In the meantime, Melanie and Nancy will be providing OT services to both programs. If anyone has any questions about the OT services at OWC, please contact mmorrisonriddle@baypath.edu for DSO and nanclark@baypath.edu for Transitional or GSE.

Gifts of OWC

Happy summer! Boy is it hot and we have some hot handmade items in the store just for you.

Store hours are: Monday – Friday 8:30 am until 4:30 pm

Every 1st Saturday of each month from 10am until 2pm.

Please come down and shop. I would love to help you.



Floral and Gifts of OWC

We are so excited to announce that we have a NEW WEBSITE!! Please check us out for all of your ordering needs. We can now benefit from orders that you place to leave our area of service on the new website!

<https://www.putnamctflorist.com>



Camp Q Horticulture Program



Camp Q is flourishing during these hot summer days (except the grass)! Our individuals enjoyed assisting the state Camp Q campers with many therapeutic activities this camp year

Camp Q - continued



2022 Summer fun with DSO!

DSO kicked off the summer season by exploring the great outdoors!

With so many parks to visit, places to see, and things to do, DSO has enjoyed the sunshine and fresh air after an extended period of indoor activities.



Eli, Ian, Brendan, Thomas, Joe, Donna & Bonnie stopped to smell the flowers at Elizabeth Park in West Hartford



Willie loves the zipline!



Joey & Isaac watch the plane fly in



James & Matt at Henry Park



Glen enjoying the day at Adam's Adventure



Aaron, Willie, Laura, Thomas, RJ & Maya walking the trails at Charter Oak Park



Eli made it to the top!

The Artists



Avery's sunshine art



Joe and Donna show off their microphones



Alicia proudly presents her artwork

STEM Activities!

Each month, we challenge the groups to work together on a themed based project using recycled materials. These are a few of their recent creations. From Mardi Gras floats, campers, farm animals, dinosaurs, cars, log cabin, and more, the creativity is endless!



DSO's Got Talent!

The June talent show put on by the OT students with performances by the individuals, was a huge success! From juggling, hula hooping, singing, poetry, arts, and dancing to name a few, the audience was captivated by watching the diverse talents everyone had.

The Singers



The Performers



In July, DSO had special guests from the Vernon Fire Department. After providing us with helpful information on how to prevent & escape from fires, the department was kind enough to let us touch the equipment, explore the truck, and ask questions. We would like to thank our home town heroes for taking the time to come and visit!



Music Therapy With Bruce John!

We danced and we sang to some of our favorite songs played by Bruce John.



From the Development Directors Chair

Floral and Gifts of OWC in Putnam has just contracted with Teleflora to get a floral website that will be part of their network to help increase visibility in our area and ease of ordering flowers on our website. Stay tuned!! Also, they have new hours and are open on Saturdays! Monday through Friday 9-5 pm and Saturdays from 10 am to 2 pm .

@Lunch with OWC is expanding their menu and soon it will be up on our website with daily and weekly specials that can be ordered by our staff, or anyone interested in going to the courthouse to eat

The Gifts of OWC is open 8:30 am to 4:30 pm weekdays and open the first Saturday of the month from 10 am to 2 pm. Come see our selection of items!!

Eventing has taken a big leap this year and we are going to be at two very large events!! The Bethlehem Garlic Festival October 8th and 9th and the New England Crafters event at Mohegan Sun on November 4-5 and 6th!! Come support us at an event!!

Fundraising: We will be doing our Mum fundraiser this year again! We ordered double what we ordered last year because they sold out so fast!

Marketing: Our new website is up and running and much easier to navigate! We soon will be adding an ecommerce piece to it also so you can purchase your favorite items and have them directly to you!!



From The Director's Desk:

As you can see, we have been very busy this quarter! We are continuing to grow our partnerships in the community through our Transitions Program and we are moving forward with the agency transformation to Employment First that began last October. Floral & Gifts of OWC has become a premier florist, which allows us more deliveries and orders, a brand-new website and we are now open on Saturdays with an individual working the shift!

We are in the middle of discussions with Smile Farms out of Long Island NY. They are an agency that was developed by the founder of 1-800 Flowers, who has a son with Down Syndrome for whom he wanted meaningful work. For us they are a funding source for making changes and additions to our Camp Q and Floral & Gifts of OWC locations. They are looking for affiliates outside of NY and we are looking for some expert assistance with growing and selling at our greenhouse location. The process will be long, but I am hopeful that within a year we could be affiliates of Smile Farms. If you'd like to check them out, go to YouTube and search Smile Farms, Long Island NY.

Our Sensory Room is painted. The next steps are the ADA compliant bathroom, flooring and electricity. Also, we are working on a wish list with Flaghouse, a sensory supply company for state-of-the-art IT programs and materials. Keep an eye out for the link coming soon!

As we move into fall and look forward to the cooler weather and NE foliage, I hope you are all well, happy and safe!

“Your mind is a garden, your thoughts are the seeds you can grow flowers, or you can grow weeds!” Anonymous

Rene' Lambert, ED





Helping people with *amazing abilities* lead wholesome roles in their communities.

www.owct.org

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OWC Equity Statement

Everyone is welcome. Diversity. Inclusion. They are the hard-and-fast principles guiding how we build our teams and cultivate our leaders. Through inclusion we are building a culture where differences are valued. We strive to build & nurture a culture where inclusiveness is a reflex not an initiative and where everyone can bring their full, authentic selves to work.

Our Mission

Opportunity Works Connecticut, Inc. (OWC) is a non-profit agency that supports people with intellectual and physical disabilities in Eastern Connecticut. We are committed to providing the best individualized supports to assist everyone to find meaningful vocational activities and/or gainful employment opportunities that fit with their personal goals. We work together to foster a sense of respect and dignity which enables our participants to work and live with quality of life.

Please consider a tax deductible donation to OWC's programs

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Address: _____ How much do you wish to give?
 _____ \$20__ \$40__ \$100__ Other: _____

Email: _____

Card : MC VISA AMEX DISC

Card #: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Security Code: _____

Or make checks payable to: Opportunity Works CT