



Spring 2022 Newsletter

Behind the Gears!

From The Corner Office,
A little something from our President



Left to Right Bill, Matthew, GT, Chris, Justin, Fred, Kristoffer, Julio Stephen

It indeed is May and Spring has finally sprung. The days are getting longer, the weather is getting warmer, and the flowers are starting to bloom.

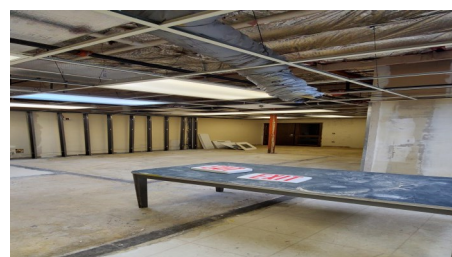
To many of us it's the time of year we all wait for. Our new transition program has found its stride and is moving forward very well. We are all looking forward to the many outings that are planned for the upcoming months. Within this program we have been speaking to several business owners about possible job site locations. We are trying to work out the many details so our individuals may have the opportunity to participate in employment skills. In the woodshop we have completed our 100th Adirondack chair the first week of April.

The crews in both the craft area as well as the woodshop have been working diligently on making new items for sale in our store and online. When in the area please stop in and check them out. You will be amazed with their workmanship and quality to detail.

Our planned Sensory room is moving forward and taking shape. At this point all of the demo and rough out is complete and we are just waiting for the final sheet rack and taping. We then hope to be able to move forward with the ceiling and painting. If everything goes according to plan we hope to have it completed by end of this year.

If you have any bottles and cans or shredding please feel free to drop them off any day between 9AM and 4PM and if you have a large quantity we can arrange to pick them up. As always if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me personally.

Sincerely, Bill Paluska



SEI/IDV Program



Jessica Dusza was awarded Employee of the Month at Walgreens. We are all very proud of her. Since then, Jessica has joined the Walgreens team as a permanent associate.



Shanice Watkins has accepted an offer from the Board of Education in Manchester, CT. Shanice distributes lunches to the students at Keeney Elementary School. In the photo, we can see Shanice showing school spirit during a theme week dressed as Junie B Jones.

Stacey Dias is employed at Mansfield Discovery Depot, an early childhood educational center. Stacey works as a Teacher's Assistant and loves her new job!

Scott Langner continues to grow in his role as OWC's Office Assistant. A big responsibility of Scott's is this newsletter that you are enjoying now!

Elias Medina is OWC's jack of all trades completing multiple projects daily. He can be seen supporting all departments at OWC.

Transitional Program

We would like to send thanks to our continued partnerships with The Story Barn (<https://friedab.com/pages/the-story-barn>), WAIM (<https://waimct.org/>), and The White Oaks (<https://www.holidayseniorliving.com/senior-apartments/connecticut/white-oaks-manchester>). Your partnerships allow our individuals to explore real work experiences and expectations.

We look forward to our upcoming partnerships with RBH Designs (<https://www.rbhdesigns.com/pages/about-rbh-designs>), LuAnn's Café (<https://www.luannsbakery.com/pages/our-story>), and Willington Name Plate (<https://wnpinc.com/>).

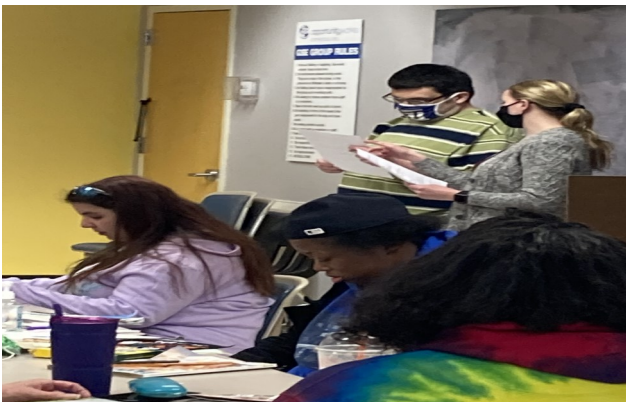
Chris Donald, Employment Manager



Ime is about to sample homemade pancakes she and her Kitchen group made, topping it off with blended fruit.



If you have ever made pancakes from scratch, you will appreciate how much work goes into making a healthy breakfast! Sean can be seen getting ready to flip the flap jacks!!!



The purpose of the library group is to gain exposure to technology. A few skills our folks are learning: using online search engines, sending emails, and internet safety. Massimo is providing a presentation on internet safety. Massimo also created a worksheet that he passed out to peers.



Left to right; Massimo and Dan



GETTING TO KNOW DAN BRYAN

By Massimo Sparagna

It was my pleasure to interview Dan, who has been working and sharing his artistic abilities at Opportunity Works for 8 years. I would like to thank Dan for this interview.

Q: How did you get started with sculpting? A: When I was a kid in elementary school, I had an art teacher that taught me clay sculpting, drawing and painting.

Q: What are your most important artist tools? A: A pencil and a black fine tip marker to go over the pencil after.

Q: How did you become so talented? A: Drawing runs in my family. My father and brothers taught me when I was little. I practiced on an Etch-a-Sketch when I was about 2.

Q: What do you like to create the most? A: For clay sculpting, I really enjoy making Guardian-of-the-Galaxy. For drawing, I really enjoy E.T.

Q: What advice would you give an artist who is just starting out? A: The advice I would give is to start out simple. Start with basic shapes and lines. If needed, use a 'How to Draw' book or go online and use YouTube.

Q: What is your favorite movie? A: I have two of them. One is E.T. and the other is Spider-Man: No Way Home.

Q: What do you like about OWC? A: The people. I know money is important, but I am here for the people.

Q: What are you excited about this summer? A: Not excited for the heat waves, but excited for the swimming.

Q: What are your other hobbies? A: Drawing, sculpting, puppet building, building with Legos, video games, Star Wars action figures and collecting.

Q: Who is your favorite artist that inspires you? A: I don't have a favorite artist, but my favorite creator is Jim Hansen.

Q: What is your dream job? A: Comic book studio puppeteer

Happy spring from DSO!

While we are happy to see the beginnings of spring emerging with warmer temperatures and sunshine, we enjoyed our diverse winter activities!

The individuals & staff in DSO took part in making beautiful patriotic cards with notes of thanks and gratitude which were given to local Veterans. We also participated in the "Angel Card Project" where personal messages and drawings in over 175 holiday cards were made. They were mailed all across the US who those who were disabled, alone, hospitalized.

With so many celebrations occurring in the winter months, we took the opportunity to explore and celebrate both traditional & non-traditional holidays & festivities in various cultures. We had a visit from Santa and his Elf,. DSO serenaded Santa and his elf with classic holiday carols before gathering around to hear him read The Polar Express and receiving their personal gift bags.

We listened to the music, learned about the cultures & customs, made crafts, took virtual field trips, and decorated the program for Dia de los Muertos, Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year, & Chinese New Year!

We put together relay races for our own OWC Olympics, built cardboard floats for Mardi Gras, and even designed our own cereal boxes for National Cereal Day!

Amy Szozda

DSO

Mardi Gras



James DSO

Jessica

St Patrick's Day



Avery, Mike, Brendon

Doug, Avery, James, Issac, Joey, Jessica, Abi

Ian, Joey, Brendon, Eli

DSO Christmas Gift Exchange



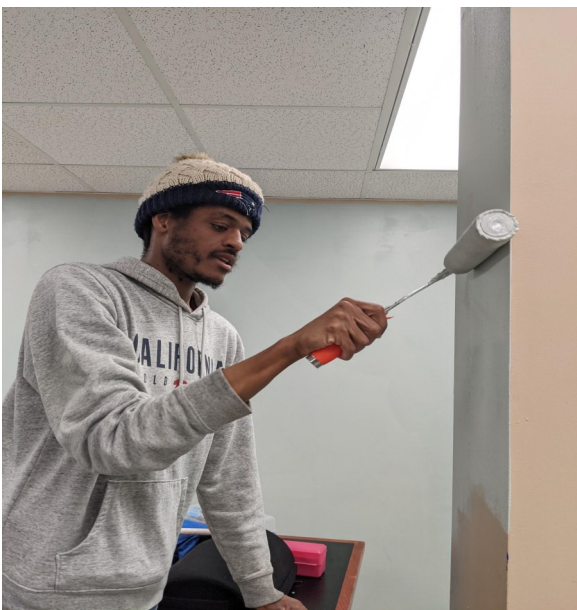
Brendan with Santa's Elf



Group Picture with Santa



Matthew with Santa's Elf



Willie Painting



Avery, Mike, Brendon
Mardi Gras

All 3 GSE teams are working in unison! Our Woodshop and Designers have worked collaboratively in designing and producing OWC's famous Birdhouses and Tic Tac Toe Boards! Buy yours today and explore nature in your backyard while playing a classic board game. The Woodshop is also available to make and design custom projects. Act soon, so your project can be featured in your favorite space. Our Material Handlers are available 5 days a week to pick up your donations. Wood is in high demand, as well as recyclables, and shredding projects. Help keep our employees busy! No donation or shredding project is too big or small! Join us Mother's Day Weekend on Saturday May 7th, at The 4 Town Fair Grounds. Meet our Designing team and buy mom something she will cherish for years to come!

Chris Donald



Chris, Bill, Bill, Rene, Amy, Jon, Brian, Chris, Jules, Amber, Kianna, Tammy, Colleen, Nancy, Kim, Kaly, Ingrid



In the woodshop OWC workers along with Chris Malone and Brian make lots of birdhouses that can be put on display inside the OWC Store so lots of people can buy one right after the birdhouses have been sanded, and of course painted

OWC Store



OWC Store

OWC Store

Hi all! My name is Kianna.

I would like to introduce our store's hours Monday—Friday 8:30 am until 4:30 pm and every 1ST Saturday of each month from 10am until 2pm.

Please come on down and shop. We have great handmade gifts and much more. I would love to help.



OWC Store with birdhouses



OWC Store



The first picture is a handmade Oak Barrel Bar Table Top for \$450.



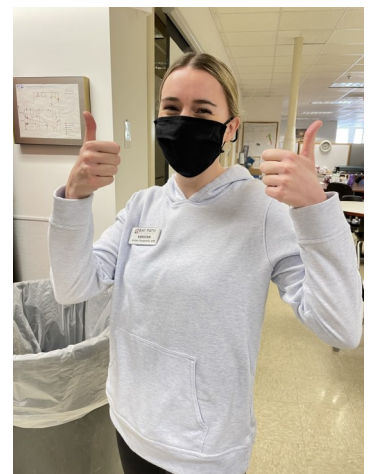
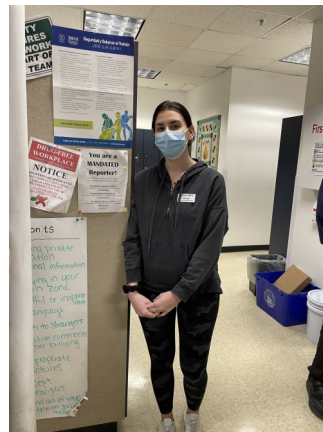
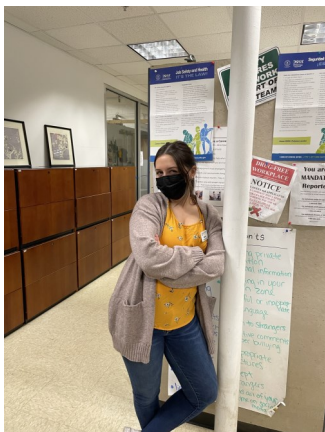
The second and third pictures are a seeded Bird House and a Feeder Board. These are great gifts with simple instructions. You can use white, nontoxic Elmer's glue or peanut butter to safely stick seeds to the feeder board.

\$29.99 and \$7.95

OTs Melanie and Nancy would like to recognize all the hard work and efforts by our Bay Path students who have been with us since January of this year. We wish them all the very best in their careers as OT's and hope they will always keep a special place in their heart for OWC, as we will surely do the same for them! Many thanks again to the following Bay Path students:

DSO students: Annie, Becky, Brittany, Erin, Kadeem and Kelley.

Transitional/GSE students: Caroline, Jules, Kayla, Kelly, Kirsten and Rachel



The Florist



Camp Q Agriculture



From The Director's Desk:

It seems, we may actually be welcoming a bright & beautiful spring as we start seeing warmer days, greener grass, and blooming flowers. With all that humanity has been through over the last couple of years these changes in seasons, the back side of COVID and getting life back to normal, have never been more welcomed!

OWC (Opportunity Works Connecticut) is welcoming changes as well! We are growing our transition program as we build more relationships with more community partners and work with our Bay Path Interns to create new task boxes and programs to promote employment independence. Our GSE (Group Support Employment) workers are finding new creativity and working towards vending at large multi-day events & developing new creations. Our DSO (Day Support Option) programs in Vernon and Camp Q have most of their participants back from COVID absences and are participating in our revamped programs and starting to go back into the community. We are seeking staff to add to the OWC family to provide support to the many graduates we will be taking on this year.

As if that is not enough, we are working on raising funds for our new state of the art Sensory room. We recently completed phase one of three and are excited to be moving forward. We are also moving our website so we will be able to make it more user friendly, including an increased e-commerce ability making it easier to sell more of our handcrafted items online.

April's parent group had 4 presentations on different forms of transportation options for the people that we support. Please join our parent Facebook page to receive the link or reach out to me rlambert@owct.org for further information on this presentation or to offer a suggestion for another meeting

We continue to seek grants and hold fundraisers to supplement our programming dollars so we can continue providing top notch programs and community inclusion.

I want to thank all our staff, individuals, family and supporters for their dedication, commitment, and continued support to OWC as we navigate our changing supports. You are all greatly appreciated, we would not be who or where we are today without all of you. Please feel free to use the donation form included in the newsletter or our "donate" button on our website www.owct.org to show your support.

I will leave you with this thought-on change....

"We cannot be afraid of change. You may feel very secure in the pond that you are in, but if you never venture out of it, you will never know that there is such a thing as an ocean, a sea."-C. Joy Bell

Rene' Lambert, ED





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 www.owct.org

Our Vision

Helping individuals with disabilities lead wholesome roles in their communities.

Our Mission

Opportunity Works Connecticut (OWC) is a non-profit agency that supports people with intellectual, cognitive and physical disabilities in Eastern CT. We are committed to enhancing the lives of people through meaningful and gainful employment services. We embrace the idea that all people can live a fully productive life within their community.

OWC supports these adults in their journey to live successfully by setting the standard in providing program excellence, skill training, mentoring and advocacy. OWC provides services that aid in positive self image which will foster a sense of respect and dignity for the individuals we serve and enable them 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