

Winter 2023 Newsletter



Behind the Gears!

From The Corner Office: A little something from our President

In Loving Memory of Brian Strickland...

It was with heavy hearts that the OWC family learned that Brian Strickland, a long-time participant in our DSO program, passed away unexpectedly over the Presidents' Day weekend. Brian attended OWC's day program for over 10 years. In fact, he was one of two individuals, originally in the GSE program, who brought to light the need to initiate a DSO program. In subsequent years, Brian grew with the DSO program while the program also grew to meet his (and others') needs.

One of Brian's needs was to have a customized work area. I relished the challenge of figuring out and then constructing appropriate spaces to keep Brian both safe and comfortable. I was also able to utilize some of our donated corks to fashion a special stand for Brian's ipad. And with his needs met, there would be a big, happy smile on his face

Brian will be dearly missed by all of us at OWC. We are thankful for his time in our midst and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family.



Sincerely,

Bill Paluska



New Hires

Chris Garcia

Worked at Bradley International Airport

Lives in Hartford CT

Has a family with a brother and sister

Likes to watch sports

Likes learning something new every day
at OWC



Gustave Matthews

Worked at the University of Connecticut in
Storrs CT

Lives in Mansfield Center CT

Has a family with a wife, 3 children, 2 in
laws, brother in law, and sister law.

Likes to take walks and read

Likes that OWC is a lifelong learning center



Daniela Vergara

Worked at Kingswood Oxford in West Hartford
CT

Lives in Hartford

Has a family with a husband and a bunny rabbit

Likes to do candles, watch movies, and read

Likes helping People, Crafts



New Hires (Continued)

Anthony Harris

Worked at SSC Security

Lives in Hartford CT

Has a family with 8 brothers and 7 sisters

Likes to cut hair at a barbershop

Likes making a difference with individuals, better themselves outside of OWC



Sandra Hollingsworth

Worked for Head Start in Southbridge Massachusetts

Lives in Thompson CT

Has a family with a husband, 2 daughters, 4 grandchildren, and a dog named Hank

Likes to go fishing, read, and walk her dog

Likes the team effort and how people care for each other and likes all the smiles



Julia Breton

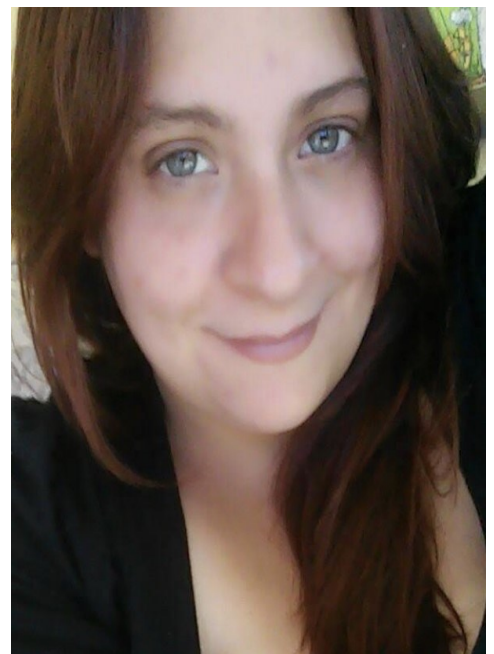
Worked at a cat Sanctuary

Lives in Windsor Locks CT near a airport

Has a family with a husband named Will, daughter named Aliza, son named Theodore, son named Benjamin, a dog named brownie, and a fish named NOVA.

Likes to sleep and hang out with family, and watch ghost adventures

Likes how everyone is very welcoming, and seems happy working here



Group Supported Employment (GSE)



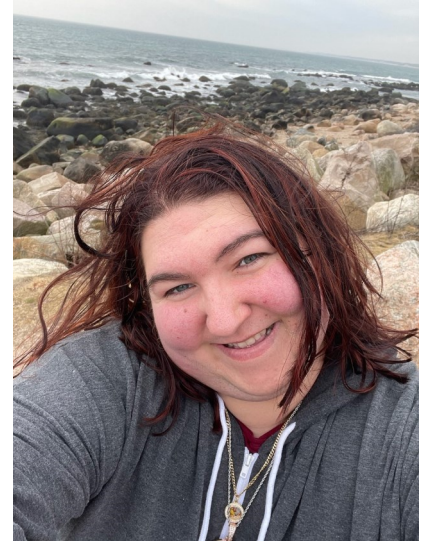
Designing group showcasing custom items, such as figurines, cards, and town signs.

Justin and Julio are seen celebrating their hard work in the woodshop. Matthew is refabricating an old table.

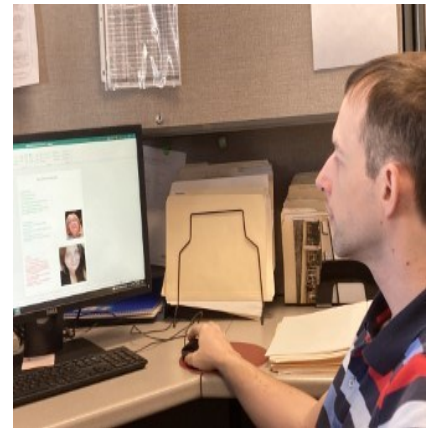
All 3 GSE components (Material Handlers, Woodshop, and Designing) are always working hard to meet our customers expectations. Both the Woodshop and Designing can provide custom products. Our Material Handlers, can pick up your shredding and recyclables.

Individual Supported Employment (ISE)

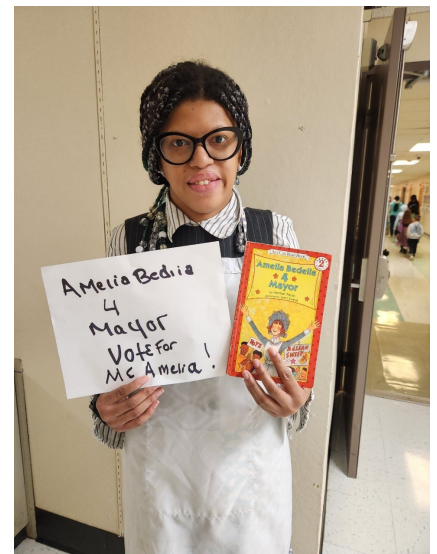
The Stafford Walgreens store where Jessica had been working for 15 months closed on Feb. 15. When she learned of the upcoming change, Jess requested a transfer and was offered a cashiering position at one of the two Walgreens stores in Enfield. As the closing date drew near, regular Stafford customers let Jess know that they would miss her. She began her new assignment on Feb. 19 and has made a smooth transition to the busier store, having already learned the basics. She's even encountered some of the former Stafford customers who are happy to see her again!



Scott is in his second year as an Office Assistant in OWC's front office. He answers the phone, transfers calls, makes PA announcements, restocks the two office copiers with paper, shreds documents, publishes the quarterly newsletter and makes copies to be taken home, updates the staff phone list, files various documents, processes fundraising mailings, and copies / assembles various packets as needed. Scott is learning a variety of clerical tasks!



Shanice works at Kenney Street Elementary School. She distributes breakfast to the kindergarteners, takes attendance for each classroom, supervises the lunchroom, and reminds students of appropriate lunchroom behavior. Students and staff enjoy having her there. As you can see here she also dressed as Amelia Bedelia for a school-wide reading parade. That's the spirit



ISE (Continued)

Logan works at Geissler's Supermarket in Somers, where she has been a steady employee for 7 years. Her duties include bagging groceries, assisting customers, retrieving carts, restocking shopping baskets, and both trouble-shooting and emptying full bins in the bottle room. Her helpfulness and pleasant attitude make her a favorite with customers and co-workers alike.



Elias Medina has been employed by OWC for 12 years!!!! Elias works in the Operations Department at OWC and you will always see him doing chores just about everywhere at 45 West Main St. Whether its stocking toilet paper, cleaning heating filters or moving stuff for Bill or Stacey, Elias is on the case! Elias' dream is to obtain his CDL and drive 18 wheel trucks over the road. He is currently enrolled at NETTTS Tractor Trailer Training school and is working toward his dream job!! Elias favorite part of working at OWC is working with people with disabilities and learning their strengths and seeing them accomplish great things. Elias is also proud of how much OWC has grown over the years into the agency it is today!



Transitional Services



Shane can be seen with father time



Tamieka and Ime with Santa.



Darryl, Brendan, Navya, Chelsea and Brendon enjoy a luncheon hosted by WAIM.



Matthew, Lexi, and Jacob practicing knife cutting skills in our Cooking Group. Baked potato created in the cooking group.

Our Transitional Program has been busy the past few months. We kicked off December with an introduction to reading menus, job listings and postings, learning how to read a pay stub and practicing elapsed time. The individuals practiced life skills such as, filling out an important form, editing and correcting emails, and learning about debit cards and budgeting. We ended the month with a holiday party for the individuals and they got their picture taken with Santa! January ushered in new OT students to work with our individuals on various soft and interpersonal skills, as well as mock interviews with staff, greater or less than and comparing grocery store prices. In February, we received Chromebooks for our Transitional program for our individuals to gain insight/knowledge about computer keys, email and typing practices. We will also practice things like looking up the weather in our area, looking at job postings and learning how to build resumes. There are great opportunities coming to the Transitional program in 2023 and we are excited to watch the growth in all our individuals.

Bay Path OT Intern Program

OT CORNER Despite the cold weather, there is still the opportunity to participate in indoor activities that can benefit your overall health and well-being. Winter time and cold weather can limit our engagement in activities which can lead to stress, isolation, depression, weight gain, and an overall decline in our health. As occupational therapists, we believe that engagement in activities improves the mind, body, and spirit so that we can live prosperous and productive lives. Here are some benefits and things to do (away from the cold!). The benefits of keeping our minds and bodies active...

- ◆ Lower stress levels
 - ◆ ● Stay engaged with others
 - ◆ ● Increase mood
 - ◆ ● Improve memory and concentration
 - ◆ ● Improve endurance and strength
 - ◆ ● Improve self-satisfaction and self-esteem
 - ◆ ● Create a healthy routine of positive habits
 - ◆ ● Enhance communication and social skills
- 10 things you can do to be active inside...
- ◆ 1. Go bowling at your local bowling alley, or set up a bowling alley with household items.
 - ◆ 2. Going out to a movie or plan a stay-in-home movie night.
 - ◆ 3. Try a new simple healthy recipe, such as Egg Muffins- beat some eggs, mix in cut up veggies of your choice and cheese, and bake in a greased muffin pan at 350 degrees for approximately 10-15 minutes (until no longer runny in the center) and Voila!
 - ◆ 4. Playing board games or working on puzzles, such as: Uno- works on turn-taking, math skills, social and self-regulation skills Memory (can use regular playing cards)- works on memory, visual scanning and attention Monopoly or Pay Day- works on money skills, life skills and social skills Rush Hour Traffic Jam Brain Game- works on visual perceptual skills, organizational skills and problem solving
 - ◆ 5. Use apps such as Facetime and Words with Friends to connect with friends and family. 6. Set aside time to chat with family and friends. 7. Find a new workout - Youtube Yoga, aerobics, cardio Check out any of the 'Fuzion Fitness' videos on YouTube 8. Start a book club with others that enjoy reading or begin reading that book you've been waiting to read. Also check out free audiobooks at your local library! 9. Learn a new hobby, and teach the people in the house how to do the hobby. Knitting, painting, scrapbooking, journaling 10. Volunteer in your community or for a family member/friend.⁸ Cornerstone Shelter A local food pantry A local animal shelter

Development Director, Stacey

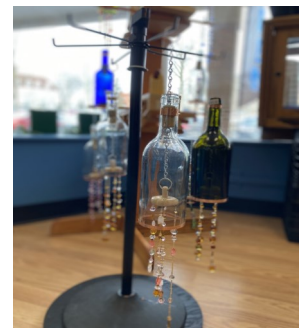
Wow what a few months it has been!



Let's start with the florist. **Floral and Gifts of OWC** has had, and is on track to having, its best fiscal year yet! We have partnered with 1-800 Flowers, Teleflora, Florist Network and Door Dash to maximize the traffic to our flower shop. Christmas and Valentine's Day orders far surpassed last year's orders! As business continues to grow, we are looking for talented individuals to come work with us at this site.

@lunch with OWC continues to serve the community at the courthouse with delicious breakfasts and lunches. Both workers at the courthouse and the people who seek the courthouse's services stop by to pick up a bite to eat.

Gifts of OWC is holding its own. The store had a great December sales month and continues to add new products from our wood Marketing is currently working on getting our on-line store back up and running.



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Fundraising is having a successful Munson's Chocolates fundraiser for Easter! Now we are working on getting items for our upcoming Mother's Day May raffle - our event flyer will be coming out shortly!

Rebecca the Physic will return on April 28th! All who have attended her shows are always amazed at her ability. Tickets always sell out so don't delay once they go on sale!

We have lots of stuff coming in the near future, so stay tuned!

From The Director's Desk:

Could it be that this was a fairly mild winter? OWC is finally coming out of COVID, finally seeing all of our family back together! Our transitional program is seeing a lot of motion. We are working with 2 agencies on exploration opportunities with Meals on Wheels and CVS Inc. and are hopeful that we will be able to start with these locations in the near future. OWC is dealing with the changes that need to be made in our agency to stay relevant to DDS's mission of *Employment First*. Many changes are happening in the employment services support areas across the state and the country and we will be sharing more with our families, as well as seeking cooperation from all of our participants, for the changes coming down the road. These changes include things like technology, program times, transportation and more.

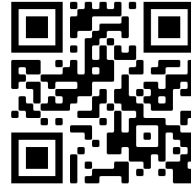
Reminder: Next parent Group meeting is May 17th, please submit topics of interest to me asap rlambert@owct.org

We have had a successful Capitol Campaign this year, raising just over \$10,000! Please feel free to support OWC and our programs in the upcoming year by utilizing the attached donation card or go to www.owct.org and give on our website. Other ways to support us are to purchase our beautiful handcrafted items from *Gifts of OWC* soon to be ON-LINE or purchase creative floral arrangements from Floral & Gifts of OWC or their website: putnamctflorist.com. Coming soon to Gifts of OWC as well! We have an Amazon wish list link on our website with many items to assist our DSO programs as well as items needed for the completion of the Sensory room. We are working on a 5-year strategic plan for the health of the agency and look forward to sharing it with you in the coming months. I thank everyone for all of your support through all the good and bad times we have shared over the years. Here's looking forward to a transformative few years. As always, reach out with any questions!



“It’s not about perfect. It’s about effort. And when you implement that effort into your life. Every single day, that’s where transformation happens. That’s how change occurs. Keep going. Remember why you started.”

Jillian Michaels



45 West Main
Street Rockville
CT 06066

Helping people with *amazing abilities* lead whole-
some roles in their communities.

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 (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 45 West Main St Vernon, CT 06066