



(Melissa and John Hunter)

## Ramping Up for Success

This summer, members of the Vocational Work Team volunteered to build two residential ramps at one of the Prospectus Berco Community Homes. The team was led by John Hunter, Prospectus Berco Board Director, and Volunteer, and worked side-by-side the maintenance crew to construct and install the ramps. Ernie Lopes, Skilled Maintenance Manager said, "it was great working with John. He put his engineering skills to task and came up with a great design for the deck and ramp." John's son Christian is

enrolled in the Vocational Program; father and son have installed many ramps for homes throughout Berks County. While they typically work on ramp projects with their church, John wanted to include the Vocational Work Team in constructing and installing ramps for our Community Homes to provide them with a rich and meaningful experience by helping others. Ernie said "the vocational guys enjoyed getting their hands dirty, using the drills, being outside, and working with us as a team." (Continued on page 3)

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### Executive Director's Message

## Unsung Heroes

*"To our professionals I say, be here for the right reasons, take pride in all you are accomplishing, and know that what you do matters."* Jody Wagner

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## Executive Director's Message

# Unsung Heroes

By the time you are reading this article, Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Recognition Week will have passed, but here's the story behind this important event that happens every September. In 2008 the United States established the second full week in September as National Direct Support Professionals Week to recognize the often-unsung heroes providing direct care to individuals with disabilities and others in need of support. Providers, like Prospectus Berco, are encouraged to implement a variety of appreciation and recognition activities to reward frontline employees who are the heart and soul of this Corporation's mission. Prospectus Berco has always included our frontline managers in the recognition activities since they also provide frequent and ongoing care for the men and women being supported in the programs or components they supervise.

At Prospectus Berco, we have long recognized that our workforce truly is our most valuable resource and the services we provide are only as successful as the quality of the professionals providing those services. That is why I am proud to say that Prospectus Berco works diligently to hire the right people who are here for the right reason—to enrich the lives of the men and women they support. Recognizing individual and team efforts, openly appreciating exceptional job performance, and sincerely saying thank you for the vast and varied contributions our professionals make are essential to ensuring our workforce knows they are valued.

Each year we have implemented different gestures of appreciation such as raffles, gift cards, and food items delivered to programs. This year we incorporated something new. We filmed and posted service recipients sharing heartfelt testimonials of their appreciation for the relationships and support of DSPs in their lives. Additionally, several Prospectus Berco team members expressed admiration and respect for the excellent work our frontline professionals do every single day. These testimonials spoke to the core of exactly why we do what we do.

Working fulltime means spending a lot of waking hours away from home, which is why our chosen careers play a significant role in our quality of life. Providing healthy and ethical working environments, opportunities to grow and make an impact, respectful relationships with supervisors and teams, fair compensation, and appreciation and recognition for efforts, Prospectus Berco strives to be an employer of choice. To our professionals I say, be here for the right reasons, take pride in all you are accomplishing, and know that what you do matters. ■

(Continued from page 1)

The Vocational Team welcomes businesses and community organizations to contact them with projects. The team is eager to lend a hand while gaining useful skills and training through meaningful work experiences.

Ensuring that people have access to public spaces, homes, and businesses is one way we can promote inclusion, while greatly enhancing the quality of life for people residing in our community. ■

## Memorials

### *Jo Ann Bergenstock*

Jo Ann passed away August 9, 2023. She was truly an angel on earth and now in heaven. People who were part of her life knew her for her generous heart, honesty, humor, laughter, and mostly for her friendship. Her dedication and commitment to Prospectus Berco as a former Community Home Supervisor and Life Sharing provider were exceptional. Jo Ann touched so many lives at Prospectus Berco, both staff and individuals. She left us with beautiful memories, knowledge, and broken hearts. Jo Ann will truly be missed.

### *Elizabeth (Betty) Spaar*

Elizabeth passed away on Friday, June 2, 2023. Elizabeth lived in Sinking Spring and attended the Day Services programs until her retirement. She enjoyed arts and crafts. She also enjoyed going to and watching any sporting event including drum majors. Betty liked to get her hair colored and her nails done on a regular basis. One never knew what color Betty's hair was going to be when you saw her next! If you were having a bad day, Betty would always make it better with her laugh or her sense of humor. She loved and was loved by everyone that entered her life. Betty will be missed greatly by her Prospectus Berco family and friends. ■

## Safe Spaces Capital Projects



Prospectus Berco oversees 22 Community Homes in Berks County and owns 14 of them to offer residential living for approximately 70 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We have identified several capital projects for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Many of these projects are necessary for the safety of program participants residing in our Community Homes. According to fire safety regulations, employees must be able to evacuate individuals from their home within two-and-a-half minutes of an alarm sounding.

A few individuals use assistive devices for mobility. The greatest evacuation risk to these individuals is during the evening hours when sleeping and only one employee is working. To help facilitate the evacuation process, we want to construct double doors from bedrooms in four Community Homes. These doors will enable caregivers to evacuate program participants without having to transfer them from their bed to a wheelchair. Installation costs of the doors is approximately \$25,000 per home. Depending on the home's design, additional structures may be needed, such as ramps and decking, to accommodate the individuals once they have been evacuated.

Another project identified is the installation of push-button locks on exterior doors of our Community Homes. These locks will require a passcode to enter the home, eliminating the need to manage house keys. The new locks will also offer greater security since the passcode can be changed as needed to ensure the safety of the individuals residing in the home.

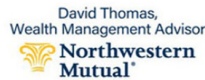
One home needs to have the bathroom renovated to incorporate a wheel-in-shower and a roll-up sink; a second home needs a backup generator. In addition to these capital building projects, we need to replace three vehicles that are used for transporting participants to and from doctor appointments and community activities.

Proceeds from this year's fundraising will go to support these program needs and others. Thank you for helping us achieve these goals with your support. ■

CHAMPIONS

# SPONSORS

## PAVE THE WAY "FORE" SUCCESS



# Tournament of Champions

## Golf Wrap up



(Andrew, Nick, and Meghan Thomas of Capital Blue Cross)



(Doug Wood, Chris, Jose, Kelly Patton, Doug Miller, and Jereck)

This summer, the sun shone brightly on the lush greens of Moselem Springs Golf Club as golfers and supporters gathered for the 29th Annual Charity Golf Tournament to benefit Prospectus Berco. The event surpassed expectations by raising an astounding \$77,000 for Prospectus Berco thanks to the overwhelming support it received from sponsors, golfers, and the many people who purchased raffle tickets and participated in the auction. Prospectus Berco is grateful to all the local businesses, corporations, and individuals that champion our cause, contributing generously to the fundraising efforts in support of our mission.

### Winners were celebrated throughout the day:

#### Top Foursomes

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Herbein + Company: Doug Wood, Herbein Guest, Kelly Patton, and Doug Miller
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Derr Family Foursome: Jim Johnson, Kyle Stoudt, Dave Johnson, and Mike Farrara
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Mike & Brandon Foursome: Michael Billera-Smith, Brandon Shurr, Darrin Krall, and Nate Reed

#### Top Golfers

- Closest to the Pin Hole # 3 John Watkins
- Closest to the Pin Hole #5 Ken Haupt
- Closest to the Pin Hole #13 Jeff Meely
- Longest Drive Hole #12 Matt Freeborn
- Straightest Drive Hole #4 George Violand
- Putting Green Contest Carl Sottosanti

#### Raffle Winners

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place Carol Krater Chose the Brigantine Beach Vacation
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Gina Riggs Chose the Aerosmith Concert Tickets
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Nadine Hohl Chose the Kalahari Package
- 4<sup>th</sup> Place Steve Bobick Chose Bethlehem Hotel Package

Plans are already underway for next year's tournament, and we are eager to build on this year's success. With the enthusiasm and determination displayed this year, there's no doubt that the 30th Annual Charity Golf Tournament will garner even more support from our community. There is no telling what we can accomplish when we come together and swing into action for a good cause. See you July 29, 2024!

## Day Trippers & Vacationers

Alan and Julio spent the summer going on day trips, visiting Baltimore and New York City. Alan especially wanted to see the Statue of Liberty. They had so much fun that when they got a new roommate, Bobby, they took him to see the Baltimore Aquarium as well. While the men enjoyed sightseeing, Betty, Joanne, and Patty enjoyed a beach vacation to Wildwood, NJ. They went to the zoo, boating, and the boardwalk.



## Health & Wellness Fair

The HR Team hosted a Health & Wellness Fair in July. Employees, along with program participants, visited with vendors and took away valuable information to help make informed decisions about their health, finances, and emotional well-being. The fair is one way Prospectus Berco can invest in its' employees, providing them with resources that positively impact not only their professional lives but their personal lives as well.

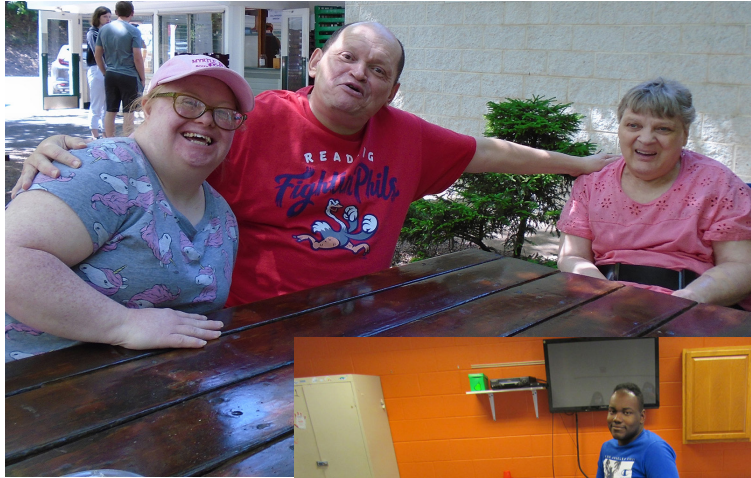
## County Commissioners

Jeff of the Vocational Work Team gives Berks County Commissioners a step-by-step demonstration of packaging weather strips for a local business. Commissioners, Christian Y. Leinbach, Michael S. Rivera, Lucine E. Sihelnik, along with their administrative team toured Prospectus Berco to gain a better understanding of the services the organization provides for people with disabilities and their families.



# Flags Flew for Fourth of July

250 flags lined Wyomissing Park during the Fourth of July celebration thanks in part to the Vocational Work Team who assembled the flags for the West Reading-Wyomissing Rotary Club. John Hunter and his son Christian volunteered with club members to install the flags in preparation of the Field of Honor®.



## Give Us a Minute

The Adult Training Program revved up over the summer, including ice cream trips, musical guests, and visits with four-legged furry friends. (Left) Friends Amanda, Terry, and Wendy enjoy an ice cream trip together.

The fall promises to be a colorful one as well, as the Adult Training programs received a generous donation of assorted art supplies from Holy Guardian Angels, St. Vincent dePaul Society. Pictured are Alisha, Andrew, and Todd helping to divide the supplies for the components.

## Warm Hearts. Yummy Tummies.

The HR team rolled up their sleeves to make over 600 homemade cookies as a sweet treat for caregivers during DSP Recognition Week. They also awarded 48 prizes by drawing a winner for each hour of the day for two days to recognize the work that DSPs provide 24/7. Program participants also took time to show their appreciation by sharing messages throughout the week. Pictured right are Kristy Vigo, Community Services Administrator; Eileen Talmadge, DSP; and, Jen Fackler Adult Training Supervisor. Immediate right is the Vocational Team (back row) Sara, Ashley, Mark, Griffey, Avis, (front row) Jessica, Eloise, and Chris.





Prospectus Berco  
 840 William Lane  
 Reading, PA 19604  
 610-372-4637  
[www.prospectusberco.org](http://www.prospectusberco.org)

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EVENTS

### DSP Recognition Week is Getting Noticed!

At the heart of Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week is the important role DSPs have in human services and the very real DSP workforce crisis. For years, industry leaders and families have been advocating for higher rates to pay workers competitive living wages for the work they do as caregivers. The prolonged effects of insufficient funding have led caregivers to seek other employment opportunities where they can earn higher wages.

There is hope. On September 11, Governor Shapiro announced that the Department of Human Services (DHS) will begin updating the data used to set reimbursement rates for workers who provide home and community-based services (HCBS) for Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism. He recognizes that chronic underfunding of ID/A programs has led to countless families being told their loved ones are eligible for essential services, only to find that providers are unable to hire enough competent DSPs willing to work for existing wages. Governor Shapiro has made both the DSP shortage and the state's waiting list for critical community supports and services a priority in his forthcoming budget. (Refer to the Press Release on PennLive, titled *Gov. Shapiro has provided a beacon of hope to families that desperately needed one* | Opinion: Published: Sep. 14, 2023.)

Thank you to everyone who joined Prospectus Berco in advocating on behalf of the ID/A community and their families. ■

Please scan below and take a minute to join us in thanking the Governor for his support!

