



Living Innovations®

Connecting with Our Community



Team Living Innovations—"Ready To Walk" in the 14th annual Walk for Autism!
Photos by: Lacey Shawnee-DeLorey

LI Teams Join In Walks for Autism

BY BEKAH MCINTYRE

It's no secret that the prevalence of Autism has been steadily increasing in recent years. This increase can be attributed to a number of things, one of which is early diagnosis.

Learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of Autism and developmental delay early means that schools, families and providers are able to start intervention early.

Research consistently shows that early intervention leads to better outcomes with individuals who are healthier, more independent, more in control of their own lives. And that's what Living Innovations is all

about: better lives for the people we support.

So, it's no surprise that every year the Living Innovations Maine team gathers together for the Autism Society's **Walk for Autism**. The walk, in its 14th year, raises money for Autism awareness and research.

It's also a great opportunity for Living Innovations to get out into the communities we support, be advocates, get the word out about our work—and have fun!

This year the Living Innovations Southern Maine team decided on a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

NEAL'S VIEW

OLYMPIAN VALUES



Hurrah! I will confess to being obsessed with the Rio Olympics. Sleep-deprived-scream at the television—hooked!

Did you know there are over 11,000 competitors competing for only 306 sets of medals? There is so much motivation in representing their countries and striving to be their best. For most, the possibility of medaling is remote, if not impossible. Yet nearly all of the athletes are brimming with Optimism and Cheerfulness.

There should be medals for that. And a gold medal for overflowing with joy was won by...

I suppose that is "pie in the sky". Our core value—"Optimism and Cheerfulness:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Highlights

- 2** Supporting People Is First
- 4** Don't Dis' My Ability Is Now A TV Show!
- 5** New Managers Named
- 6** Employee Survey Results

CARL'S COLUMN: Supporting People Is First

It has been more than three years since we formulated our Mission & Values, based on a process that invited participation from all of our stakeholders. Now in my travels I see it replicated on a large plaque in each office and also in newsletters, on bulletin boards, and posted in individual cubicles. It speaks well for Living Innovations that the Mission & Values have been embraced in this way, as this is the very foundation that keeps us working toward our common goals.



Primary among the eight values that we identified is: Supporting People is First. That has turned out to be a star to steer by, as we deal with regulatory and funding realities that call for difficult decisions. With fewer discretionary dollars to spend, it is clear that in making adjustments our priority will be to avoid having any impact on the quality of the services that we provide to the people we support.

We have invited our employees to provide suggestions for reducing costs and the results have been abundant: everything from cutting back on purchases of office supplies and coffee, to having less dependence on consultants, and many more. One thing that all of the suggestions have in common is that none of them have a negative impact on the quality of the support that we provide.

One particular cost saving measure has been suggested several times; that is the elimination of our usual summer team building event for managers. While it is agreed that this time together is helpful and productive, it's expensive to bring the entire team together for a day, especially when event and travel costs are added in. While this event will be missed, I see it as a great sign of the maturity of our agency that there is a consensus to opt instead for reducing our expenses in this way.

Another recently discovered cost savings measure is that by using digital templates we can print our letterhead as needed, instead of ordering it in batches of hundreds for each office. With our current fourteen offices, this one small change can save us a few thousand dollars each year.

Do you have an idea for a cost saving suggestion? If so, I would like to hear about it. Please email me about it to: CPufahl@LivingInnovations.com If yours is an original idea and we adopt it, I'll send you a cash award.

Thank you to each and every one of our dedicated and diligent employees who make it a pleasure to work at Living Innovations, and more importantly, make it their priority to put the people we support first.

Sincerely,
Carl

NEAL'S VIEW CONTINUED

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We will be positive, pleasant, and hopeful" might seem that way at times, yet we witness it every day at Living Innovations in the celebration of accomplishments: A youngster in Maine learns to tie his shoes... A young woman in New Hampshire gets a raise... A couple in Rhode Island hold a commitment ceremony...

It is a pleasure to see that our mission and values have become part and parcel of the culture in our agency. In our latest satisfaction survey the great majority view their work as fulfilling our mission. A similar number would recommend Living Innovations to a friend or family member as a good place to work or receive services.

What is the alternative to optimism and cheerfulness? Pessimism and unhappiness? That's a blueprint for 10,000 Olympians staying home. And those attributes would not have helped our great organization reach its twentieth year as a service provider, with buoyancy, pride and good cheer.

Gotta run. Katie Ladeckey is ready for another swim!

LI Teams Join In Walks for Autism

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

colorful unicorn theme for the walk, with the message that each person is unique and special in their own way. This year's shirts were designed by Saco Community Living Coordinator Lacey Shawnee-DeLorey.

The event was held at the University of New England in Biddeford and our team proudly walked amongst hundreds of other supporters, from service providers to family members, to individuals diagnosed with Autism and related developmental diagnoses. Similar events were also held in Farmington, Bangor and Belfast, where other Living Innovations teams participated. Our 15 team members raised \$850 for the Autism Society of Maine, well beyond our goal of \$600, making us one of the top 10 fundraising teams in the state.

"We're already planning a bigger team and a bigger fundraising goal for next year!" says CLC and Autism team coordinator Sarah Wormwood. In total, the event raised over \$56,000 dollars for Autism awareness and research.



Southern Maine LI Team joined the Walk for Autism at the University of New England in Biddeford.



Community Living Coordinator Alyssa Rainey handing out info and backpacks



Eplurbius Unicornum!

Don't Dis' My Ability Is Now A TV Show!

It has been seven years since Living Innovations' DSP Ronnie Tomanio launched the radio show **Don't Dis' My Ability**, as a Community Connections project with an individual he was supporting at that time. That individual has since moved on, yet Ronnie—along with co-hosts Lee Harvey & Pamela Sollenberger—continues to host the show, two times per month on WSCA—Portsmouth, NH Community Radio.

The theme of the show, and its tagline “It’s what you can do—not what you can’t do” have never changed. The purpose is to shine the light on a subject that is rarely discussed in public: what it’s like to live with a disability. Over the years Ronnie has helped his guests to tell their stories about how a wide range of physical and intellectual challenges have affected their lives. In addition to people with disabilities, guests have included family members, caregivers, clinicians and policymakers.

A few months ago Shawn Henderson approached Ronnie and told him that he would be glad to begin videotaping **Don't Dis' My Ability**. In addition to being a talented videographer and WSCA volunteer, Shawn has been a fan of Ronnie's show. Shawn is a virtual “one man band” video production team. He sets up as many as four



Ronnie Tomanio on the air at WSCA.

cameras in the WSCA studio, moving between them as needed to get the right shot. When he has finished editing the footage, it is hard to believe that the result was created by a single individual.

The video version of **Don't Dis' My Ability** was originally picked up by Portsmouth Public Media TV, soon to be followed by community

television stations in Biddeford and Lewiston/Auburn, Maine as well as Concord NH. Each of these stations broadcasts the show three times per week. A recent step that Ronnie is especially excited about is that the show is participating in a project that will make it available to community television stations throughout the country.



Shawn Henderson, videographer for the broadcast version of *Don't Dis' My Ability*.

Todd Diadone Promoted To New Position of Quality Assurance Manager!



Todd has been employed with Living Innovations for the last five years, as a Coordinator in the ME Children's Program.

Prior to assuming the Coordinator position he gained experience as a Behavioral Health Professional (BHP) while working toward his degree in social work at the University of ME in Orono.

Todd went back to school while working as a Coordinator and last year earned his Master's degree in Social Work (MSW). His internship, while completing the MSW process, was as a social worker assisting homeless veterans.

Quality Assurance Manager is a new position. In it, Todd will be responsible for reviewing documentation pertaining to all employees, people we support, home providers and medication records, to assure compliance with our policies, state regulations and relevant statutes.

He will work toward continuous improvement of the Quality Assurance process and will be the point person for following up on the completion of Plans of Correction.

In Todd's own words: "It was a great five years as a Coordinator, working with people who change lives every day. Being a Coordinator prepared me to take on this new role. I understood the service delivery side of Living Innovations and I cherished the opportunity to learn the business side as well. Growing within the organization was important to me."

He continued, "I found that working hard, participating in the Leadership Development Program (LDP), and applying for internal positions when they became available, opened the door. I look forward to getting to know everyone across the organization and improving our quality of service."

When he is not working, Todd enjoys spending time with his fiancée, as well as with his dog (a Boxer named Rocky) and a cat. His other interests include watching and playing sports—especially football, and checking out the latest digital gadgetry. As Todd's new responsibilities are company-wide, if you have not met him yet, you likely will soon.

Welcome Jeff Olkovikas—Our new Training Manager

Jeff Olkovikas recently began work as Training Manager.

Jeff will be taking over for Sandi

Dolbear, who was promoted to the Personnel Services Manager position.

Jeff has a degree in Workforce Education & Development and comes to us following four years of experience as a Training Instructor with the U.S. Air Force. He brings to the position enthusiasm for coaching and adult education, and a depth of skills that will help us to meet our training objectives.

His responsibilities will include identifying, developing and implementing internal and compliance related training needs and he will actively participate in the development of our Continuous Improvement program. He will also be responsible for the ongoing management of our Leadership Development Program.

Jeff lives with his wife of 13 years, his 11 year old daughter, and two dogs. His favorite hobby is photography. Jeff will be based in the Greenland office, but the nature of his position is such that he will have occasion to spend time in many of the branch offices—so you will be likely to meet him in the coming weeks.



Report on Employee Survey

As part of our ongoing process of continuous improvement, we conduct regular surveys of Stakeholder groups. The purpose of the surveys is to assure that we are living up to our Mission & Values, and to capture informative feedback from our Stakeholders in regards to what we are doing well or where we can do a better job. We then develop Action Plans that will lead to improvement in areas identified and will compare the results with future surveys to be sure that we are making progress.

Our latest survey was of Employees and we are pleased to take this opportunity to share the results with you. Please feel free to share this information with others in, or served by, your office

Positive Results

To begin with the positive feedback, see the percentages below of people who responded **“Agree”** or **“Strongly Agree”** to the following statements:

- “I feel I can approach my supervisor for support or with concerns.” **92%**
- “I have input in the development of my schedule.” **89%**
- “I am satisfied with my experience at Living Innovations and plan to stay another year.” **86%**

And the response that we feel speaks most highly to the quality of the support that we provide:

- “The work that I do reflects Living Innovations’ Mission & values.” **94%**

Areas of Opportunity

Next are the themes that were identified as areas of opportunity. Percentages are of people who responded **“Disagree”** or **“Strongly Disagree”** to the following statements:

1. Compensation

- “I feel the pay that I receive is competitive within this field.” **44%**
“Disagree” or **“Strongly Disagree”**

i. Note from Leadership: It is well known within our field that although our work requires dedication, good judgement and professionalism, and is of vital importance to people with disabilities, our compensations lags behind that of people in other fields. This is an unfortunate consequence of that fact that Medicaid funding, which covers the cost of almost all of the services that we provide, is not adequate to allow higher wages and does not even keep pace with rising expenses.

ii. Action Steps:

- Expense reduction—All non-wage related overhead costs will be reviewed and reduced wherever possible.
- Compensation Analysis—We will be conducting a survey of the compensation being provided by other agencies in our field and will strive to be among the leaders in this regard.
- We will take every opportunity to support efforts at the Federal and State levels to raise Medicaid funding, which will allow for increases in employee compensation.

2. Training/Leadership Development

- “I am provided opportunities for professional growth and development.” **30%**
“Disagree” or **“Strongly Disagree”**
- i. Note from Leadership:** Living Innovations has a Leadership Development Program (LDP) which was created specifically to meet this need. Since the inception of the LDP, hundreds of employees have received training and development opportunities, and 26 DSPs have been promoted to Team Lead positions. Another goal of the LDP is to facilitate promoting from within: 18 of our 47 Coordinators, and 2 of the last 6 Program Managers, were hired from internal candidates. However, the response to this question showed us that there is still additional work to be done.
- ii. Action Steps:**

- Learning Management System (LMS) software has been acquired which will facilitate the availability of trainings and help us to be sure that opportunities will be made available to all employees.

→ The LDP is in the process of being reviewed and revitalized to make it more visible, accessible and effective.

→ The DSP recognition program will be revised, in keeping with our core value that we honor our support providers and acknowledge that they are the key to our success.

3. Performance Management Program

• “My annual evaluation is scheduled and conducted in a timely fashion.” **43% “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”**

i. Note from Leadership: This response had a common thread with “I receive recognition for the work that I do” **21% “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”**. We grouped these together for the purpose of developing Action Steps.

ii. Action Steps:

- Coaching Sessions and Annual Evaluations will be prioritized and an improved accountability process will be put in place to assure that these will be carried out on schedule.
- A Newly developed Performance Management Program is being defined and developed. This will ensure a more consistent process for evaluation and compensation review.

In conclusion, please hold us accountable to these Action Steps and the improvements they are intended to bring. The purpose of this effort is to continuously do a better job of living up to our Mission & Values. Your feedback on this survey information, the Action Steps and your individual experience is encouraged.

You are welcome to contact any of the Survey Project Team members. For our part, we will provide you with updates about progress on the Action Steps and the results of future surveys.

Sincerely,

Mari-Lynn Winn Todd Diadone Germaine Hayes
 Living Innovations Survey Team
 Greenland, NH 03840
 Office: 603-319-6600

Our Mission:

Living Innovations provides support to people with disabilities to have a good life at home and in the community.

Our Values:

Supporting People is First

We believe each person is valuable and will put individuals at the center of all we do.

Honor All Support Providers

Our direct support providers are the key to our success.

Strengthen Communities

We believe that by including all people, communities become stronger.

Uncompromising Honesty and Integrity

We embrace the highest standards of ethics in all of our relationships, services and business practices.

Never Give Up

We will work creatively to support lives, building on people’s strengths.

Optimistic and Cheerful

We will be positive, pleasant and hopeful.

Growth Through Innovation

We will find new and better ways to serve people, and grow our organization.

Teamwork

We will work well with others in the interest of the individuals and families we support.

The Secret Shopper Returns!

After a couple of years hiatus, during which she was reportedly someplace warm and sunny, the

Secret Shopper has returned. Some of you may remember that she would call all of the Living Innovations offices, sometimes inquiring about services and sometimes about employment.

The purpose of her calls is not to play “Gottcha!”, but to keep all of us mindful of the Hallmarks of Customer Service that were developed by our employees.

Good customer service boils down to simply treating callers the way that we would like to be treated, or would like a loved one



to be treated if they were calling for assistance.

The Secret Shopper will begin making calls in early September.

Prizes will be awarded to those caught providing exemplary customer service!

Hint: The “official” phone greeting that the Secret Shopper will be listening for is similar to this:

“Good morning, Living Innovations. [Your name] speaking, how may I help you?”

Tired of the Same Old Web Site?

We have good news for you. A new website is almost ready and will soon be coming online. In addition to looking much cleaner and more up to date, the new website will:

- Be easier to use from mobile devices
- Have improved navigation
- Make it easier for job applicants
- Be more visible to search engines, making it easier for people to find us

Keep an eye on LivingInnovations.com!

THANK YOU TO OUR WRITERS!

The Innovator welcomes contributions from the entire Living Innovations community. Feel free to submit a letter, essay, poem, drawing, or photograph.

This newsletter is an opportunity to celebrate the richness and diversity of our community from staff to those we serve. Contributors will receive a gift card for their effort.

For more information, contact Perry Blass, 603-422-7308, pbllass@livinginnovations.com.

Next issue deadline is October 31