

Dear Friends and Supporters,



The fiscal year 2011-2012 was a period of change and opportunity for Becoming Independent, and it was for me as well.

This is my first annual report as Agency Director of this great organization, and I am proud to be able to bring it to you – our participants, families and supporters. But I wouldn't be able to do this, and BI wouldn't be able to do what it does, without the work and support of our great staff. If there is one thing I've learned over the past half-year or so at the helm of this ship it's this: We have a fantastic crew.

The transitions we have experienced in the past year presented challenges to the organization and to myself. But soon after I moved into the corner office, I realized that BI stands on a firm foundation that makes us a rock in this community. It's not about who sits in this office. Our organization is, and always has been, about the people we serve. Our roots go back more than 40 years to a group of parents who saw the clear needs of their loved ones, and had specific ideas about how to meet those needs. By following the lead of those parents, BI has grown to become the North Bay's largest provider of services to people with disabilities, and we continue to grow.

We have survived the difficult economy and an ever-dwindling state budget, and now we are well-positioned to return to the fundamentals of business as the recovery continues. We applaud our fellow Californians for recognizing the needs of people with disabilities and approving Proposition 30, which will save BI from additional trigger cuts.

I'd like to take a little space here to report just a few of our successes in the face of financial adversities in the past year, using a single highlight from each of our core programs:

Community Living Supports – In June, CLS took their largest group ever to the People First of California Statewide Convention in Sacramento. The convention is organized and facilitated by people served by organizations such as BI and each year it attracts hundreds of individuals living independently.

Employment Services – In December 2011 BI received a three-year certification from the International Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, a requirement for Department of Rehabilitation funding.

Day Services – Received a \$10,000 Thomas J. Long Foundation grant to develop a digital gallery that will enable on-line art sales.

Transportation – Received a \$596,500 grant from the 5310 Federal Transportation program. This grant will allow BI to purchase nine new vehicles and upgrade radio communications across our entire fleet.

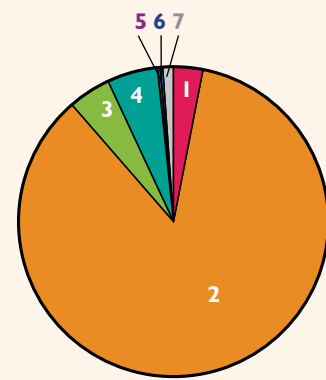
And, last but not least, our **2 Cool 2 Fail** campaign has generated \$1.4 million toward our \$2 million goal as of this writing.

Of course, our overall goal is always to improve the services we provide and evolve to meet the changing needs of the community. In the coming year, we plan to develop and enhance programs to serve the growing number of adults living with autism. We will continue our commitment to develop and identify meaningful internal and external employment opportunities for our participants. And we will expand our efforts to maximize exposure for the talented participants of our pro-arts program.

Change and opportunity always have gone hand-in-hand at BI. My pledge to you is that we will continue to embrace the former and to seize the latter. As always, the needs of our participants will determine the services that BI provides, and our evolution will reflect the changing nature of the community we serve. Who can argue with that?

Sincerely,

Luana Vaetoe, Agency Director
Becoming Independent



Outcomes of BI Services

Success and progress experienced by individuals and families served by Becoming Independent are measured in real terms. BI tracks the number of people served, how many hours of service they received from staff, the number of hours of work they performed and wages they earned, and their level of inclusion in mainstream community activities. BI also gauges overall satisfaction with the Becoming Independent experience.

Number of people served	2,342
Number of families served	505
Hours of Service	725,007
Hours of Work	135,728
Wages	\$837,732
Hours of Inclusion	227,576
Rate of Satisfaction	91 %

* 125 people per month were served at community dances through a partnership with Santa Rosa Parks and Recreation Department.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2011 - 2012

Support and Revenue

1 Contributions	\$ 383,487	3.0 %
2 Service Fees	\$ 12,106,949	85.72 %
3 Educational Subsidies	\$ 629,481	4.40 %
4 Employment Income	\$ 740,030	5.20 %
5 Investment Income	\$ 30,480	.21 %
6 Other Income	\$ 32,342	.22 %
Total Unrestricted Support & Revenue	\$ 13,922,766	98.75 %
7 Net Assets Released From Restrictions	\$ 177,260	1.25 %
* Total Unrestricted Support, Revenue, And Assets Released from Restrictions	\$ 14,100,026	100 %

Note: BI's annual gala fundraiser Dinner Under the Stars was moved to August. Results will be reflected in next years annual report.

Expenses

1 Programs

Community Living Supports
Continuing Education
Employment Services
Family Resource and Advocacy Center
Transportation Services

Total Program Services \$ 12,409,506 88.75 %

2 Supporting Services

Administration \$ 1,299,433
Fundraising \$ 271,481

Total Supporting Services \$ 1,570,914 11.25 %

Total Unrestricted Expenses \$ 13,980,420 100 %

Increase in unrestricted net assets \$ 119,606

Becoming Independent's most recent audited financial statement and tax return are available at www.becomingindependent.org.

Who are the people at Becoming Independent?

They are the largest and most diverse minority in the world. They are all ages, genders, religions and ethnicities. They come from all socioeconomic levels and sexual orientations. And they are people with different disabilities.*

Autism

Down syndrome

Learning and physical disabilities

Mental health conditions

Cognitive disability and developmental delay

And they are like everyone.

They want to be free, happy,

independent and respected full

members of the community.

They are people.

*Adapted from "People First Language," by Kathie Snow, www.disabilityisnatural.com; and used with permission.



ArtWorks & The Gallery of Sea and Heaven

Becoming Independent's ArtWorks program in Santa Rosa, Sonoma and Healdsburg programs pair our participants with professional instructors who provide inspiration, encouragement and opportunities for exhibitions and sales. The art, in turn, provides a unique bridge to the community at large, advancing BI's mission of full community inclusion and participation for people with disabilities.

BI's Gallery of Sea and Heaven continued to flourish during this fiscal year. In August 2011, a gallery Advisory Committee was formed to support increased art production, sales and visibility. Members include educators, collectors and fellow artists from Santa Rosa's SOFA (South A Street) arts district. Under the guidance of Co-chairs J Mullineaux and Alice Warnecke, the Collectors' Circle was formed with the intention of elevating BI artwork to a new level of understanding and appreciation while simultaneously raising funds to support the Gallery of Sea and Heaven.



Employment Services



Ask Pedy Lawson how things are working out with her new employee, Andrew Howard, and her hand goes to her throat and tears come to her eyes. "He's amazing," Lawson says, choking back the tears. "He brings a lot of joy to all of us."

Howard, a 34-year-old Rohnert Park resident, is served by Becoming Independent's Employment Services program. He is one of about 40 participants who hold down jobs in the community with the help of placement services and ongoing job-coaching from BI staff.

Lawson, who owns and operates Pedy's Petals flower shop in Santa Rosa, had never worked with a BI participant before she was contacted by BI's Lora Seidler last fall. She agreed to an interview with Howard, and immediately knew she wanted him to work in her shop.

"I wish all of my employees were like him," she says. "He comes to work on time or even early. He never hesitates to do any job. He's very organized. And he's just so sweet!"

Howard, who Seidler described as a "superstar" when it came to nailing job interviews, couldn't seem to find a willing employer after several attempts last year. But the job at Pedy's was worth the wait for a man who likes working with plants and spending time outdoors in the garden in front of the shop on Montgomery Drive.

"I love it!" he says. "And she's a great boss."

As Seidler says, employing a BI participant is almost always "a win-win."