As we celebrate our 50th year providing transformative services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, our name, Becoming Independent, is more relevant than ever. Becoming Independent is...becoming independent. In order to lessen our future dependence on governmental support, we are excited to announce that we have launched our Social Enterprise Division. This division is comprised of microenterprises which will generate new revenue streams, while also providing authentic, community-based employment opportunities for the people we serve.

Keeping in step with the essence of BI, we innovate. With our strong foundation under us, we challenge ourselves to imagine a future in which resources and opportunities abound. BI’s founders possessed a pioneering mindset, and it’s an ethos that continues to infuse our programs today. Because of this, we are able to live up to our - name now more than ever!

Cheers to 50 years,

Luana Vaetoe
Chief Executive Officer

Find out more about us online
www.becomingindependent.org
From its inception in 1967, Becoming Independent has been a leading innovator in the field of human services. Founded 50 years ago by a group of parents determined to create an alternative to institutionalization for their adult children with disabilities, BI has grown to become the largest provider of services in the North Bay.

Initially operating as the Manual Skills Training Center, this vital organization began operating under the now familiar name of Becoming Independent in 1980. Within just a few years, BI expanded to provide services in Napa and Solano counties, and to include an employment program.

Now, in our 50th year of operation, we find that the services we provide are as vital as they were the day that group of parents first got together to assemble a library of resources for their family members. Becoming Independent’s services are designed with a single purpose: elevating human abilities for the mutual benefit of the community, and to that end, we have created mutually beneficial partnerships with other organizations that foster improved life, social and vocational skills through continued education, volunteerism, and employment in an increasingly competitive Bay Area job market.

Thanks to a generous $500,000 grant from the Ernest L. & Ruth W. Finley Foundation, Becoming Independent will take our inclusion model for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities more broadly and deeply into the Sonoma County community. This commitment to human dignity, community, and empowerment is at the heart of our new Social Enterprise Division that will create sustainable earned income through both mobile confidential document destruction and coffee businesses.

This exciting new foray into community-based enterprise allows BI to provide participants with dynamic and enriching opportunities for community inclusion.

Coffee Business
Now, at the launch of our Social Enterprise Division, BI has partnered with the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) to operate the newly branded BI Buzz on board the train, providing a daily snack and beverage service for riders. This SMART Train contract is a game-changer for Becoming Independent. Not only will BI generate an ongoing earned income stream, but also we will be the first agency to partner with a commuter train system in order to provide people with intellectual and developmental disabilities community-based employment.

Still on the horizon is a new partnership with Kaiser Permanente in Santa Rosa, awarding BI the coffee kiosk in their soon-to-be-built facility just up the street from BI’s Santa Rosa campus.

Mobile Confidential Document Destruction
BI’s confidential document destruction business now has a solid customer base, yielding us an average revenue of $6,000 per month. However, demand has
outgrown capacity, and we are committed to realizing our maximum potential.

Acquisition of a mobile document destruction truck, proper bins, security, and training will enable us to dramatically increase our average monthly shredding revenues. At full capacity, the mobile truck will bring in $50,000 per month in revenue, while simultaneously providing workers with an authentic reason to engage with others.

These two enterprises are a natural progression from our current transition to full community inclusion. BI will generate income to support programs while simultaneously creating dozens of job opportunities that allow us to continue moving work experiences out of congregate settings and into natural environments within our community.

“The commercial enterprise may seem an odd one for the nonprofit, but according to the officials it is a perfect marriage of industry and altruism. The revenue Becoming Independent earns from concession sales will be used for services benefiting about 1,000 [people with disabilities] living in Sonoma, Marin and Napa counties.”

-Derek Moore, Staff Reporter
Press Democrat
2017 Annual Gala

Over the years, we have hosted many events at our Santa Rosa campus, but none quite like our 25th annual gala!

Becoming Independent has cultivated a strong presence in our community, but we always want to keep our focus on the individuals we serve here at BI. And so, our decision to bring the gala home this year and invite the community to celebrate with us in our beautifully redesigned garden was the perfect marriage. We made Becoming Independent this year’s theme, and it was evident that our guests were in full support as together we raised over $450,000!

This year, the commitment to BI’s services and to the people we serve was stronger than ever, as demonstrated by the largest amount of individual gifts made during the Paddle Pledge in the gala’s history, resulting in nearly half of the event’s proceeds being given during this portion of the evening.

Thanks you!

Gala 2017 Highlights:

- Over $450,000 raised for programs
- 250+ guests attended
- 50+ volunteers contributed
- Highest number of individual donors in paddle pledge to date
In the beginning, there was a wine barrel.

During Bill Reinking’s tenure as Becoming Independent’s Board President, there wasn’t much of a garden on the Santa Rosa campus. While taking his friend, Dennis Hunter, on a tour of our facilities, Dennis inquired about the wine barrels he saw outside behind South Campus. When Bill informed him that those barrels were the sum total of our garden, Dennis replied, “We can do better.” And they did.

Dennis rallied his friends from the building industry and together, one by one, they arrived with in-kind contributions. They leveled the ground, delivered rock and built raised garden beds, and soon there was a beautiful garden that our consulting psychologist dubbed “the best therapeutic tool on campus.”

The garden was well loved and utilized for many years by even more people. Eventually, time and temperature took its toll on the beloved space. As we reimagined what the garden could be, we decided to design it as a space that could also be used to host events.

What resulted was a beautiful venue in which we were proud to host our 25th annual gala. Visitors in the garden can meander and find a meditation garden, and just beyond that, a scents path. Benches are thoughtfully placed throughout, framing no-mow lawn patches. Just north of the unique and functional planter boxes we will soon install a functional outdoor kitchen. Becoming Independent is grateful to the Estate of Norman Chalmers for making this enhancement come to life!

From barrels to bountiful, we couldn’t be more pleased with the garden’s transformation. If you haven’t visited our garden yet, please make it a point to do so! The peaches are nearly ripe, the butterfly bushes are in bloom, and there’s a bench with your name on it.

Thanks to Ken & Sharon Maiolini for gifting us with this beautiful garden structure, designed by Lena Bowen!
Becoming Independent is the largest and strongest resource for adults with developmental disabilities, and as such, we are well-known in Sonoma, Solano, and Napa counties. If you are reading this newsletter, then most likely you already know about the wide range of services BI offers the community every day. But did you know that word of BI’s cutting edge reputation is about to spread much, much further than just the Bay Area?

BI was chosen to be featured in the 2017 season of *The Visionaries* – a nationally broadcast PBS television series hosted by Sam Waterston that profiles the work of non-profits all over the world. Earlier this year, a film crew arrived and spent three days on and off campus gaining insights into all the things that make BI such a unique and magical place to be. They attended our much-loved BI Talent Show, and we welcomed them as our guests at our Winter Formal. They conducted interviews, gathered footage, and absorbed that “fairy dust” that blankets BI.

Jody Santos is the Senior Producer for *The Visionaries* and has reported for television and print news for the last 20 years. When asked about her experience working among our staff and the people served here, she said, “Filming the episode of Becoming Independent was one of the most uplifting experiences of my career. The organization is upbeat and high energy, and that spirit shined through in every one of my interviews, from participants and their families to staff. The highlights were the dance and talent show - such unbridled joy in one room. It was so clear to me the many different ways, subtle and obvious, that Becoming Independent is making a difference in people’s lives.”

**BI Talent Show**

Backstage, Passport to Independence student Derek prepares to “Wow!” the audience with his one-man magic show held at the Finley Center in Santa Rosa, CA.

**Box Office Hit**

Coming soon to a theater near you! The full 15-minute documentary film showcasing Becoming Independent. The Director’s Cut was viewed by a limited audience at this year’s gala, and received rave reviews!

**Jody Santos**

Jody is an award-winning author, journalist and documentary filmmaker. Her work has been focused on shedding light on the social injustices of the day.
Luau at BI!

Becoming Independent’s 4th annual Luau will be held on Saturday, September 23, 2017 in Becoming Independent’s garden space. Enjoy Polynesian dancers, live music, raffles, libations and an authentic Polynesian feast while supporting BI’s vital services! We hope you can join us!

Tickets are on sale now! Purchase your tickets online through our secure website, stop by BI’s Santa Rosa campus, or call Dalton Wiley at 707.524.6567.

This is one of our most popular events of the year and tickets sell out quickly, so be sure to purchase your tickets early!

We look forward to seeing everyone there!

WHEN – Saturday, September 23rd, 2017
TIME – 5:30PM to 10:00PM
WHERE – Becoming Independent’s Garden
1425 Corporate Center Parkway, Santa Rosa
TICKETS – becomingindependent.org
or in person @ BI Santa Rosa
INFO/SPONSORSHIPS – Contact Dalton Wiley
707.524.6765 / dwiley@becomingindependent.org

Proceeds go to BI!

For information on how you or your business can sponsor our 2017 Luau, contact Dalton Wiley at 707.524.6765 / dwiley@becomingindependent.org
50 years

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**Our Purpose**

Elevating human abilities for the mutual benefit of our Community.

**Who We Are**

Leading innovators in the field of human services.

**Newsletter Credits**

Design: Jeney Pribyl

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Remember BI in your will.

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