This year’s Dinner Under the Stars fundraiser was tremendously successful in more ways than one. First, the 23rd annual event raised more money than ever. Live and silent auctions produced $254,000. Then for the simple pleasure of giving to a good cause, the 180 dinner guests held up bidding paddles to raise another $237,000 to fuel life-changing services for the event greeters pictured above and close to 1,000 of their peers.

But the dollars raised were not the only way the April 25th evening at the Vintners Inn in Santa Rosa was a triumph. Becoming Independent exists to help people with disabilities live life to the very fullest that they can manage. And BI’s men and women participants who attended our “Viva Las Vegas” bash did just that.

Dressed for the occasion – formal tux wear from the black tie down to black shoes – BI’s finest stepped up, took charge and welcomed the guests as they arrived, assuring them they were in the right place at the right time to enjoy good music, food and drink, and the knowledge that they were placing their money on the best bet for people with disabilities in the North Bay.

And when it was over, it wasn’t over. A 2015 model Fiat 500 car that was auctioned off was given back to BI for another fundraiser, a raffle. See page 4.

Mission in Motion - VIVA BI!

Find out more about us online
www.becomingindependent.org
Mid-Year Report: Much progress amidst many challenges

By Luana Vaetoe, Chief Executive Officer

Half way through 2015 means it is time to check in with the BI community.

There’s good news and not-so-good news to report. But the bottom line is this: Becoming Independent continues to be the North Bay’s largest non profit organization successfully providing vital services to people with disabilities. And we’re breaking new ground month after month.

We’ve recorded another record-breaking fund raising year. We continue to expand job opportunities for BI participants. And we’re very close to conducting a trial run of a new Autism Integrated Services program scheduled for launch this fall.

But challenges remain. State funds for BI services are at rates set 20 years ago, and the state’s system for paying programs like BI has cut our revenues by $1.2 million a year. That hurts. And while funding remains frozen, more demand for BI programs appears likely as the state mulls proposals to close Sonoma Developmental Center and move many of its residents into community programs. Without increases in state support it’s hard to imagine community programs will be able to accommodate more participants should SDC close.

But I am optimistic and here’s why:

Autism – Our newest program for serving adults with autism is ready for launch. Curriculum for Autism Integrated Services (AIS) is getting a road test this summer. AIS doors will open in the fall. There are at least 50 current BI participants on our main campus that we expect to enroll in the inaugural AIS “Passport for Independence” program to train them in skills for successful community engagement. Responses to AIS are very positive from philanthropic supporters and families seeking services for their loved ones. We’re on the right track.

Jobs – Over 300 BI participants are working in the community and here at BI under our Employment Services program, and that roster is growing. More and more employers are recognizing that BI offers real solutions to their staffing needs. They’re coming to us with more challenging work-site jobs and our people are meeting the challenge. See Page 6 for our newest partner.

Seal of Approval – BI programs for serving people with disabilities recently received another three-year certification of approval by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), the gold standard for ensuring that our participants are receiving the best of services.

This is all good news that I can report even as we continue to operate under a state funding formula that is woefully outdated and not sufficient for meeting the needs of the people we serve. But on that front let me assure you that BI is committed to its mission no matter what the State of California does.

We are dedicated to expanding our business relationships and philanthropic support base and fully engaging our generous community of hundreds of friends. This year’s Dinner Under the Stars provides evidence that we are succeeding. Our cover story in this newsletter reports the huge success of this year’s dinner fundraiser. We raised $254,000 from our silent and live auctions and another $237,000 in straight-away cash gifts from our guests. Plus, we still have the raffle for that FIAT 500 automobile, See Pages 4 and 6, and our BI Blend wine sales, see page 7.

All this, and we had all those handsome BI dudes in tuxes at the DUTS party. Makes it hard to complain.

Thank you in advance for your ongoing support and for partnering with us as we elevate human abilities for the mutual benefit of our community. I hope you have a great summer.
A Huge Thank You to All of Our Top Sponsors!

GHD | Gullotta Law Group | MOC Insurance Services
McLea’s Tire & Automotive | Exchange Bank

Viva LAS VEGAS

*More photos available on-line at: http://www.smugmug.com/gallery/n-RXsBKB/

**Pictured on Front (Right to Left): BI Participants Malachi, Terry, Dale, Richard, Greg & Damon
Here's the deal. Ken and Sharon Maiolini donated a 2015 Fiat 500 POP for auction at our Dinner Under the Stars fundraiser in April. Rodney Gothelf of Morton & Bassett Spices won the bidding for $20,000.

Then, get this: Rodney donated his new Italian car back to BI.

What great friends and supporters BI has.

But, what to do?

**RAFFLE!**

BI is going to raffle off this 2015, $14,500 brand new, sporty set of wheels. The car comes with graphite wheels and upgrades inside and out, PLUS:

- A $500 gift certificate to Bob’s Signs for graphic designs you choose
- A $500 gift certificate to 500 Madness, a website about the car
- 5 washes and one complete “detail job” at Auto Pride Car Wash
- 4 oil changes from McLea’s Tire & Automotive

**THE COST: Just $50 a ticket. See ticket insert.**

Select as many tickets that you want to buy, follow the instructions on the back, and mail them in the enclosed self-addressed BI envelope with a check or charge card information.

Then wait for the winning ticket to be pulled at our next Luau at Lagunitas Brewing Company in Petaluma on August 31.

*You could be the new owner of a FIAT that very night.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION: WWW.BIFIATRAFFLE.COM
Yes, Lagunitas Luau

Save the date, Monday, Aug. 31st, for the next annual Lagunitas Luau fundraiser at Lagunitas Brewing Co.

Over 200 friends, BI participants, staff and family members attended last year’s evening of island style fun to help support BI’s programs for close to 1,000 men and women with disabilities. Guests danced, enjoyed live music, delicious island style food, Lagunitas beverages, and watched traditional Polynesian dance performances, pictured below.

We’re planning another exciting event in August. 

*Plus, the winning ticket for the FIAT 500 POP benefit car raffle will be pulled and announced.*

Last year the Luau raised more than $30,000. We hope to surpass that amount this year.

When – Monday, Aug. 31st  
Time – 5:30PM - 8:30PM  
Where – Lagunitas Brewing Company  
1280 N. M‘Dowell Blvd. in Petaluma  
Tickets – *Go on sale in Mid July*

TO BECOME A LUAU SPONSOR OR PURCHASE TICKETS  
CONTACT ANGELA GRECH @ 707-524-6606  
OR AGRECH@BECOMINGINDEPENDENT.ORG
You know the names of many of our contract employers, businesses that have come to BI to help them with staffing challenges.

Keysight Technologies, K-Mart, Mary’s Pizza, Trader Joe’s, and Lagunitas Brewing, among others.

Our newest business partner is Innovative Moulding Inc., a division of Rieke Packaging in Rohnert Park. Eight workers from Becoming Independent’s Employment Services program are punching a clock at Innovative Moulding five days a week, four hours a day, performing quality control on the assembly line churning out plastic lids for packaging products.

It’s a good business deal that works for Innovative Moulding and it works for BI workers.

Call Fred Coleman, Director of Business Development, 524-6642, to see how BI can help solve some of your personnel needs.
Why We’d Love To Hear About Your Legacy Gift Now

Have you already included BI with a bequest in your will or some other type of legacy gift, and not told us? Every so often we receive a surprise gift from a supporter who has passed on. And we didn’t have a clue about this generous decision.

While we’re very grateful, we would love to celebrate while you are still among us. We’ll invite you to join our Legacy Circle where we honor your commitment for stepping forward. There is no minimum gift size.

Your example encourages others to step forward whether they know you or not. And of course, you have the option of remaining anonymous. So please, consider sharing your wonderful plans with us.

For more information: Lisa Folsom-Ernst, (707) 524-6751 or lfernst@becomingindependent.org.

Vintners toast to BI!

Living in the heart of California Wine Country has its advantages, and BI hopes you’ll get involved. Here are two ways to support Becoming Independent and enjoy the best of Sonoma County wines.

**BI Signature Blend**

Lancaster Estate winemaker Jesse Katz is partnering with five other Sonoma County wineries to produce a special Cabernet “BI Blend,” to fully benefit Becoming Independent.

Other participating wineries include: Stuhlmuller Vineyards, Ramey Wine Cellars, Mauritson Family Winery, Goldschmidt Vineyards and Roth Estate.

To order, call 707-524-6606 or go to www.biblend.org

**Get Envolved**

Third generation Benziger winemakers, Mike, Chris and Kate Benziger, are dedicating 20 percent of sales of their Envolve Winery wines to Becoming Independent through September 1st.

To Join the “Get Envolved” community campaign, just use the code words WELOVEBI at the checkout on-line or at the counter of the Envolve tasting room, 27 E. Napa St. Suite A in downtown Sonoma.

For more information, call 707-939-5385 or go to www.envolvewinery.com
OUR PURPOSE
Elevating human abilities for the mutual benefit of our Community.

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IN MEMORY . . .

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