Purpose in Practice

Elevating human abilities for the mutual benefit of our Community. That is Becoming Independent’s purpose and mission, and it reflects our commitment to each person served through our organization and to our community.

Though we have our campuses planted in locations throughout the North Bay, the people we serve are out in full force in their communities every day, continuing to become increasingly more integrated as we steer away from old service models of having congregate settings and lean into the new wave of community-based services. We are intentionally creating a strong presence outside of our doors in our communities as we embrace this transformation.

How does this shift from congregate settings to community-based services manifest on a daily basis? Here are some examples.

Kate and Noe, individuals served in Healdsburg and pictured above, joined the volunteer forces at Farm to Pantry, an organization dedicated to providing fresh, healthy and affordable food to everyone. Kate and Noe glean from local farms and orchards alongside community volunteers, doing their part to ensure that none of the harvest is wasted. Kate and Noe’s service has strengthened their community by connecting neighbor to neighbor, abundance to need.

Find out more about us online
www.becomingindependent.org

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By Luana Vaetoe,  
Chief Executive Officer

If pressed to use only one word to sum up this last fiscal year, the word would be Transformation.

Over the decades, we’ve undergone numerous changes here at Becoming Independent. Many of you have been here to witness each one. Changes in staff, changes in programs, changes in locations. Changes. But change isn’t transformation.

Change focuses on the past. It’s what you do when you look back on a project, determine it could use some improvements, and implement changes to ensure that in the future, this project has better results. In doing so, your future will merely be an improved version of your past.

Transformation begins with the belief that our actions today create our future tomorrow. In transformation, we choose our future, and then create ways to bring it about.

Change fixes the past. Transformation creates the future.

We have transformed our organization by looking ahead, envisioning the landscape into which we will emerge. Then we took the steps to create that future.

We rebranded. Nothing remained untouched. Everywhere there was old, you’ll find new. Our logo, our letterhead, our website, our swag! These are all things that were reimagined for the purpose of bringing about the future we envision.

This future was brought into sharper focus as a result of a banner year for our Fund Development team. For the first time in the history of BI, we secured over $1,000,000 from non-governmental sources to fuel our services. Of this total, $550,000 came from eight local funders, allowing us to expand the services we offer. As a result, we created the innovative Passport to Independence program, a state of the art wing with curriculum to match. Young adults with autism in our region now have a wonderful resource, empowering them to attain their greatest level of independence through this customized and person-centered training and education.

Meanwhile, we have looked beyond our doors and witnessed the changing landscape. The old paradigm of congregate service settings is being phased out in favor of inclusive opportunities for work, social and leisure activities that are both individualized for people served, and integrated throughout the community. We are creating a model that will provide more visible socially inclusive engagement opportunities for the BI community to interact with the nondisabled. These opportunities can only strengthen our local partnerships, as we share facilities, experiences, and events with a wide array of Sonoma and Napa County institutions, including educational, civic, recreational, political and employment settings. Ultimately, by improving the community’s environment for social inclusion, this program will help all local residents and will have a lasting impact for generations to come.

At Becoming Independent, we believe every social investment has the potential to be broadly transformative. Transformation occurs not in isolation, but through partnership. Thank you for yours!
Miko, an individual served in Sonoma Valley, works alongside his peers as he follows in his father’s footsteps as an employee of Mary’s Pizza Shack, together they complete tasks at this beloved local establishment.

Melissa, a bagger for G&G Market, and Caleb, a farm hand at Field of Greens Farms, are both served by BI’s programs. They work alongside friends and co-workers to help serve the community in ways that are personally significant to each of them. Melissa and Caleb are among many of their fellow peers who hold down individual paid and volunteer jobs in the community and who are working in their preferred jobs.

Erik, Maria & Gina were determined to live independently, and through self-advocacy and assistance through BI’s Community Supports Services, they have succeeded. Maria moved into her first apartment without live-in assistance. Erik is able to keep on top of his finances, tracking income and expense, through the use of adaptive equipment. Gina is raising her beautiful son and living in her own apartment.

You can find the people served by Becoming Independent all around the North Bay, and their contributions are woven into their communities as they continue to realize and further BI’s purpose of mutually beneficial community environments. We look forward to seeing you out & about town!
A Dream Realized

It is possible for someone to be fiercely independent, and remain community-minded. This is the case with Sandra Madsen, who is served in multiple BI programs. Sandra, or Sandy, can be accurately described using words like “powerhouse,” or “dynamo.” Never one to sit idle, Sandy found employment at Elnoka Nursery, and worked there right up until the nursery closed its doors. Once that door closed, she found a volunteer opportunity at Java Joe’s coffee shop.

In 2007, after living independently in her childhood home for 13 years, she found a two-bedroom apartment in town, walking distance to shops and parks. It was quite a contrast from her large home on 3 rather secluded acres, and it allowed her more time to spend forming friendships and being of service to her community. If you ask her what she has planned for the coming weekend, you’ll likely learn that she will be busy at work helping with the potlucks and craft fairs that her complex regularly organizes, or working on a project of her own.

Sandy found another kind of home in 2007, when she found Becoming Independent. She purposefully sought out services that would allow her to socialize, contribute, and broaden her creative skills. Sandy, a life-long learner, found that BI’s Professional Arts program was able to match her love of knowledge with her keen artistic ability. Through BI, she has been able to find her place among a tight network of peers, while also finding her place within our county’s shared community.

Recently, Sandy joined other supporters who have included Becoming Independent in their will or trust. She said she thought about it for a while before making this important choice. Sandy’s decision to join the Legacy Circle is especially poignant, considering her perspective as a person served by BI. It is one thing to say, “Becoming Independent helps others,” and quite another to state, “Becoming Independent has helped me.” Ultimately, she had experienced how Becoming Independent had contributed towards her own ability to live a life of dignity and freedom, and chose to do her part to ensure the same life-changing experience would continue to be available to others. Sandy says with pride, “Becoming Independent has helped me. Now I’m helping BI.”

When asked if she had a favorite person at BI, she replied in typical Sandy fashion: Directly and without hesitation. She simply stated: “I like everyone I’ve met, and I’ve met a lot of people.”

For information on BI’s Legacy Circle, contact Lisa Folsom-Ernst / 707.524.6751 / lfernst@becomingindependent.org
Aloha!

Mark Monday, August 1st as Tiki Time! Becoming Independent’s 3rd annual Luau at Lagunitas fundraiser is right around the corner, and you won’t want to miss out on the fun!

Last year, over 250 people came out to enjoy dancing, live music, Lagunitas beverages, Polynesian dancers, and of course - a big island style feast! *It was a hula-va good time!*

Ticket prices vary from our $25 ticket, which includes admission, an insland-style dinner, and hours of entertainment, to our $50 ticket, which includes the same as our $25 ticket and 10 raffle tickets. Purchase your tickets with ease at BrownPaperTickets.com, from the link on our BI Luau Page on our website, or by simply stopping by our BI Santa Rosa location from 9am - 5pm (1425 Corporate Center Parkway).

We look forward to seeing everyone there!

**WHEN** – Monday, August 1st, 2016

**TIME** – 5:30PM to 8:30PM

**WHERE** – Lagunitas Brewing Company
1280 N. M’Dowell Blvd. in Petaluma

**TICKETS** – brownpaperticket.com/event/2561708 or in person @ BI Santa Rosa

**INFO/SPONSORSHIPS** – Contact Angela Grech
707.524.6606 / agrech@becomingindependent.org

100% of all proceeds go to BI!

*Interested in advertising your business at our Luau?* Contact Angela today to find about how your family or business can become a sponsor!

Mahalo to Lagunitas Brewing Co. for being an exceptionally generous supporter of BI!
2016 Annual Board of Directors Meeting

We welcomed over 100 guests to our Annual Meeting, hosted by our Board of Directors. This year we were especially pleased to introduce our newest member, Ann Hudson. Ann is the Senior Vice President of Retail Banking at Exchange Bank, and we are very fortunate to be able to list her among our other well-respected members of our board. As usual, there were several tearful moments, a few laughs, and encouragement for all friends, family members, staff, and community members in attendance.

The award portion of the afternoon was inspiring. See award winners below.

We introduced our new brand and mark, which was created to feel vibrant, forward-thinking, and fresh, while still honoring BI’s pioneering past and solid foundation. We are very proud of our updated look.

Finally, we unveiled the cover of our Annual Report (picture to the left), featuring 12 BI participants, and a modern feel. Gracing the cover are Drew, Anna Maria, Audrey, Patti, Sean, Damon, Isa, Terry, Marc, Zach, Krista, and Patty (top to bottom, left to right). They all took the stage to unveil the large-scale canvas print of the yearly report.

June Waite
Spirit of Philanthropy

Awarded to the Flat Tire Club. The members of this classic car club embody the spirit of philanthropy with their authenticity and big hearts.

Volunteer of the Year

Awarded to Shaun Ross. Shaun has been tireless in his service to Becoming Independent. This quote by Elizabeth Andrew sums up his service: “Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.”

Employer of the Year

Awarded to Reike. Reike is a company dedicated to building diversity in the workplace. Reike employs several people served by BI, who now earn a paycheck and gain valuable experience.
Another gala has been planned, partied, and packed up. The 2016 Black & White annual gala, held on April 23, 2016 at Vintners Inn, was a smashing success. Jesse Katz, the event’s Honorary Chair, brought us new friends and added interest.

Gala 2016 Highlights:
• Over $400,000 raised for programs
• 160+ guest attended
• 50+ volunteers contributed

We are especially delighted to report that $181,000 of the over $400,000 raised was given during the Paddle Pledge portion of the evening. This portion of the gala has taken off during the past several years, with donors giving money directly to benefit the people we serve here at Becoming Independent.

Our auction included incredible items such as a vacation at a private villa in Italy, a beautifully restored 1965 convertible Skylark, and a package that included tickets to the sold out Adele Live concert.

For the second year in a row, Jesse created the exclusive BI Blend, featuring art from BI Artist Denee Locke on the label. This year’s blend features Cabernets solely from Aperture Cellars. To purchase your magnum, contact Angela Grech at 707.524.6606 or agrech@becomingindependent.org.

The 25th annual gala, which will take place during the 50th anniversary of Becoming Independent, will be held at a new venue, which will be suitable for such an occasion! Watch for details.

So many thanks to everyone who played a role in making this gala a night to remember!
We believe we inspire others through our actions.

Donations were made in memory of these friends...
Gloria & Austin Avery
William (Bill) Blanchard
Brad Bryon
Todd Thomas Burrell
Mark Stanley Crump
Kathleen Anne Emery
Donald Henon
Larry Hulsman
Ann Joergenson
Earl Sandstrom
Edgar Smith
James & Helen Snell
Dan Usher
Lenote (Joe) Vigare
John Weir
Lawrence (Larry) Wilmoth
John S. Wright.

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: Angela Grech
Reportage: Jeney Pribyl