

For Immediate Release



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***Becoming Independent Expanding Workforce Development
to Help Bridge Employment Gap in Sonoma County***

Santa Rosa, Calif. (May 20, 2021) – [Becoming Independent](#) (BI), the Santa Rosa-based nonprofit social impact organization that supports adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, is set to expand workforce training and development in the North Bay.

Becoming Independent’s Program Headquarters will be a 24,000sf training ground for workforce development in the hospitality, food, administrative, manufacturing, and agriculture industries and will provide vocational training in a professional environment that mirrors real-world employment. The space will include a commercial kitchen that will allow BI clients with an expressed interest in the hospitality and food industry the opportunity to train using restaurant-quality equipment. For those interested in obtaining industry specific certifications, assistance will be provided. A 10,000sf flexible indoor/outdoor event space will be available for the community to rent, and BI clients who are entering the hospitality industry will be available for staffing at market wages.

“People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have always been eager to receive training, support, and most importantly, gainful employment. We’re excited to expand our workforce development program, and as a result, help to fill the workforce gap that our local industries are currently experiencing across a broad spectrum of services.” says Luana Vaetoe, Becoming Independent’s Chief Executive Officer.

Danny Nooris, Executive Chef at Oakmont of Villa Capri shared “It has been a great benefit employing a BI client. Garrett has been a tremendous and positive asset in the department. He comes to work positive, full of energy, and always willing to help the team. The BI support staff have been a great help with guiding Garrett to fulfill his highest potential in the work that he does. The qualifications that we are looking for in a potential employee are developed through the BI program and it has been beneficial for our department. I would recommend BI clients to anyone looking to fill any employment gaps in any number of job fields and markets.”

Becoming Independent is currently providing services to over 600 individuals in the North Bay; one third of whom are receiving job training and employment support at employer sites as well as at BI, with many more interested in joining Sonoma County’s workforce. Long standing partners currently employing BI clients include Morton & Bassett Spices, Mary’s Pizza Shack, Villa Capri, Keysight Technologies, Oliver’s Market and Wildman Farms. With the redevelopment of their Program Headquarters, Becoming Independent will be primed and ready to provide additional job opportunities for more clients and the community.

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About Becoming Independent

Becoming Independent is one of the North Bay's strongest nonprofit organizations serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Established more than 50 years ago by a group of parents determined to create an alternative to institutionalization for their adult children with IDD, BI helps people live meaningful and productive lives as engaged and productive members of their community.