“Success Spotlight”

Moving Forward’s residents have many vocational success stories. Each of our residents work hard to learn job skills, volunteer, gain work experience, become job ready, and gain competitive employment. This month, ‘Momentum’ is shining a spotlight on one of our very hard working and successful residents:

Chris B. is the ‘Momentum’ employee of the month!

Here is Chris’ success story in his own words:

Hi, I’m Christopher Bennett. I work with Wine Bev Services. I work at the Meritage Resort and Spa, doing grounds-keeping and housekeeping five days a week. Meritage employees come with us to supervise our grounds-keeping crew. We have worked as the parking lot crew that is known as the “Lot Crew” for six months to a year now. I’m proud to be employed at Wine Bev Services, and to work at the Meritage Resort and Spa. ( I am also proud to be in an relationship for 5 years, on this New Years Eve, with my girlfriend Theresa. I am a proud uncle to my brother’s son, my nephew Timothy ).

At work, I’m very helpful to other clients. I support them and encourage them to participate in work opportunities with the Meritage. We have other crews at the Meritage including in the kitchen and the laundry room.

Wine Bev Services is enrolled with the Solano College for work related classes. We learn the value of being employed and employment skills. I have learned other work skills, in the past, from my parents. They both have a good work ethic. I learned from working in the family business with them and by watching them at work. I learned about being employed, the value of making money for the future, and how to make a good first impression. I have also learned that it is important to find work that can accommodate your needs, and that fits with your abilities and skills. I have learned to not focus on what I cannot do, due to my disabilities.

Moving Forward introduced me to Napa Valley Support Services and the Department of Rehab for employment opportunities. These include assessments and employment support with the Regional Center. Moving Forward and the Regional Center introduced me to Wine Bev Services. Wine Bev opened more work opportunities for me, especially with working at the Meritage Resort and Spa. I learned a lot about working at a five star resort and with the resort management that work with our crews. They provide us with uniforms and our equipment to do our jobs at their resort. I provide five-star, guest-first treatment to the resort guests. I make them feel welcome during their stay at the hotel. I like my managers and my crew I work with every day.

I have been attending the National Down Syndrome Congress Conventions annually. Through this, I have learned a lot about how to mentor self advocates about how to be active at our conferences and in their own lives. Since I learned how to mentor others with the NDSC, as of January 2018 I will be mentoring new clients at my job at Wine Bev. I am starting the “Wine Bev Mentors” program. In this program, I and others will be mentoring new clients starting out a new job at Wine Bev. We will teach them about Wine Bev, the Meritage Hotel, and what work opportunities are available for them. We will give tours to them and introduce them to our supervisors and other clients. We will help them to learn about their new job.

I am proud to start this new program at my work to help others!
Thank you to the NDSC, Moving Forward, and Wine Bev for your encouragement! Thank you for having faith in me, for helping me get my job, and for helping me start a brand new program at Wine Bev: the “Wine Bev Mentors”.

Chris B.
Recently, in a RAC Advisory Meeting, I learned of the plan to move the State Council on Developmental Disabilities office from our regional location in Vallejo, all the way to Ukiah Ca. I decided to get involved because I wanted to make a difference, to help those people that would greatly suffer if the office were to move. I wrote a speech and traveled to Sacramento with Moving Forward’s Community Resource Specialist, Barbara M., and gave my speech, during “open comment”, in support of keeping the office in Vallejo. I felt really confident during this speech. I was thinking about my grandfather who I inherited public speaking skills from. He is the reason I want to do more in public speaking and why public speaking is personal to me. Barbara and I met with Gabriel Rogin, the Chief Deputy Director of the SCDD (State Council on Developmental Disabilities). I then delivered my speech.

Below is the speech I presented.

Hi, my name is Ellen Sweigert and I’m a self-advocate for the Regional Advisory Committee representing Napa County. I am here today to appeal to you to keep the State Council on Developmental Disabilities office in Vallejo open, and also to let you know what terrific work Lisa Hooks has done in that office. Ms. Hooks has been providing support to self-advocates, family advocates, and professionals in the field of advocacy. The Vallejo office serves not only Solano, Sonoma, but Napa County too. Ms. Hooks provides opportunities for training, a source of information and support for the disability community and is a great resource for all. Ms. Hooks is a great person who respects the work of self-advocates and the special needs community.

Moving Ms. Hooks to Ukiah would leave our communities without a representation for 88.65 miles away. How often will we have meetings or access to local resources with our office in Ukiah? We must keep our local office so that we may continue to have Lisa Hooks and her trainings, attend RAC meetings, represent State Council on Developmental Disabilities with a office in Vallejo, and attend to other needs of our disability community. I assure you the $100,000 saved by closing the Vallejo office will not help our communities or save money.

How does a satellite office make the disability community feel? My answer to you is: “Why depend on a satellite office when we already have a good regional office in Vallejo?”. You have the power to say “no” to this closure and tell your children that you kept this regional office open to provide services and knowledge for all of us, not just the disability community. You have the power to make a difference in our lives. A satellite office can’t make such a big impact on us like a regional office in Vallejo can. It tells us you care and are listening to the disability community by keeping the Vallejo office open.

Thank you for your review of this matter.

The result:

The office was not moved to Ukiah!! The Vallejo office was saved!!!

When I heard the news I was overjoyed and emotional because I felt like I helped a lot of people that would be affected by the removal of the office. I felt like I did the right thing and knew right away that I had made a difference!
“Happy Holidays from Moving Forward!!!! By: Drew and Jill

Holiday Party Interview with Drew

Drew, what did you do to help get ready for the party? I helped set the table with napkins, forks, and cups. There were flowers and candles on the table too.

What was your favorite game we played? The candy cane game! We put a candy cane in our mouth and had to try and scoop other candy canes into a bowl. It was hard!

What was it like singing in front of your friends and staff? Scary at first, but then I had fun! I like to sing loud and dance!

What else did you enjoy about the party? The food was yummy. I loved the bread and the homemade cupcakes!

Below are some pictures from the party:

Our singing group treated everyone to an amazing Holiday Song Sing-a-long. Here is our resident, Jill, speaking about the opportunity to perform:

“Every Monday I participate in the Moving Forward singing group with Jack and Ken. At the holiday party our group sang Christmas songs for the other residents. I have been singing and dancing for 23 years, so this was a lot of fun for me. My favorite song we sang was Jingle Bells.”

- Jill P.
“Thank you, Parents’ Association!!!”
By: The Moving Forward Staff

On a cold, yet not rainy night, the Moving Forward staff gathered together in the back dining room of Norman Rose Tavern in Downtown Napa for the Annual Staff Holiday Party. At this event, sponsored by the Moving Forward Parents’ Association, staff members enjoyed a meal together as they celebrated the previous year of hard work they all gave to Moving Forward and its residents. It is a celebration of the Holidays, but also of the consistent and amazing teamwork the Moving Forward staff put in year round to help our residents reach their goals in furthering their independence. The night is also a blast to be a part of! It is an opportunity to commiserate with our coworkers outside of work and to continue our bond as a close-knit team. The staff participated in a “Secret Santa” gift exchange and laughed together all night long. Thank you, Parents’ Association for making this night happen each year! We truly appreciate it greatly!!!

-Moving Forward Staff

“Photographer of the Month” Ross L.

Location: CIA at Copia (Culinary Institute of America) in Napa, Ca.

Subject: Painted Piano Art

[Photography Class elements in this photo]

Line: “This photo has many lines. It has horizontal and perpendicular lines.”

Color: “I enjoy the colors in this photo!”

Abstract: “We have been practicing taking photos that are “close-ups” of our subject. The photo is supposed to look like an abstract painting, and you cannot tell what it is. It is just supposed to look like a piece of art.”

I like this photo because of:

“The colors. I like all the different colors the most”.

-Ross L.

Have a Happy New Year!!!! See you in 2018!!!!