

Transformation Project Opens Doors and Knocks Down Walls

All around were the sounds of crickets. Now, before you suggest we call the exterminator...allow us to explain.

On Wednesday, March 2nd and Thursday, March 3rd the CHANGE Employment program experienced a wonderful event; an empty building! The individuals who receive services in our employment program were ALL out in the community.

Individuals were busy with their normal course of business with one major change. They were ALL working, volunteering, or involved in employment and community exploration outside of the confines of the Employment Center.

CHANGE, Inc. recently launched a new program strategy which will transform how we provide services and support to our clients in the community. This strategic decision has enabled CHANGE to launch a program model that emphasizes community employment, job training, discovery, and community integration for the individuals we serve and support.



The employment training center sits empty.



Individuals receive important paperwork as part of the on boarding process at Golden Living Retirement Community.

These landmark changes WILL improve employment opportunities for our clients, and as a result we have developed and executed an organizational strategy that has transformed our sheltered workshop and vocational training programs. Our new strategy focuses on community learning, and employment exploration and placement. Our new strategy also dictates that all of the clients who participate in our Employment Services program work, volunteer or train within the community.

Through Community Learning, individuals in our employment program participate in activities that allow them to decide where their interests lie. This important component of the program provides individuals the opportunity to interact with others in the community and enables the individual to build relationships and discover activities they enjoy. This portion of our program also educates the community on the abilities of individuals with an intellectual disability.

CHANGE strives to give individuals with whom we work opportunities to participate in new experiences, and build relationships and life experiences within our communities. Clients first, employment first...always a part of our mantra. As an agency we are honored to have been chosen as one of six organizations State-Wide to participate in Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Transformation project and represent the Western Region. We have been very fortunate to receive tremendous support and guidance from the Western Maryland Regional Office (WMRO) Team. Our work to transform the way we deliver our Day, Vocational and Employment programs is congruent with the strategy of the Administration's Project.

Through the Transformation Project we will receive support through an Office of Disabilities Employment Policy (ODEP) grant and receive guidance and mentoring provided by Ashlea Lantz, a subject matter expert in the field.

One significant hurdle for CHANGE will be the buy-in from our families. We need to ensure that as key stakeholders, families and individuals we serve are provided with sufficient information and assurances about how the transition will be beneficial and successful for their family member. Ensuring that the community is able to partner with CHANGE is another key factor. And, providing the right level of additional support and guidance to the team will be critical in helping them search for alternative methods and pathways to a successful transformation.



Individuals interested in working on a farm, toured a local dairy farm as part of a Community Learning activity.