

SNAPSHOTS OF IMPACT



2012



Burton Blatt Institute
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

SNAPSHOTS OF IMPACT 2012

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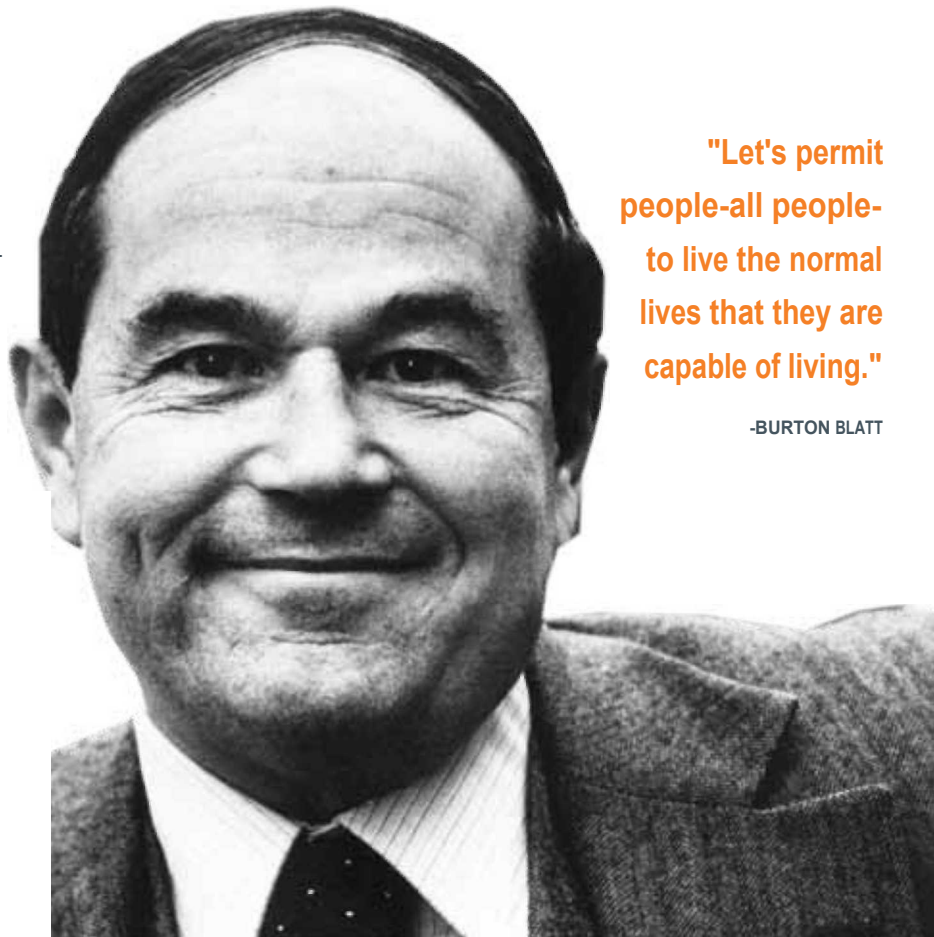
ADVANCING THE CIVIC, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University reaches around the globe in its efforts to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities. BBI builds on the legacy of Burton Blatt, former dean of SU's School of Education and a pioneering disability rights scholar, to better the lives of people with disabilities. Given the strong ties between one's ability to earn income and fully participate in their communities, BBI's work focuses on two interconnected Innovation Areas: economic participation and community participation. Through program development, research, and public policy guidance in these Innovation Areas, BBI advances the full inclusion of people with disabilities. BBI has offices in Syracuse, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

About **Burton Blatt**

Burton Blatt (1927-85) was a pioneer in humanizing services for people with intellectual disabilities, a staunch advocate of deinstitutionalization, and a national leader in special education. Blatt was dean of the School of Education and Centennial Professor at Syracuse University.

He is perhaps best remembered as author of the photographic exposé *Christmas in Purgatory* (1966), a searing portrait of life in an institution that brought national attention to the abuse of people with intellectual disabilities in America's institutions. In this and more than 300 other books, chapters, and articles, he emphasized the humanity of all people, regardless of the nature or severity of their disabilities.

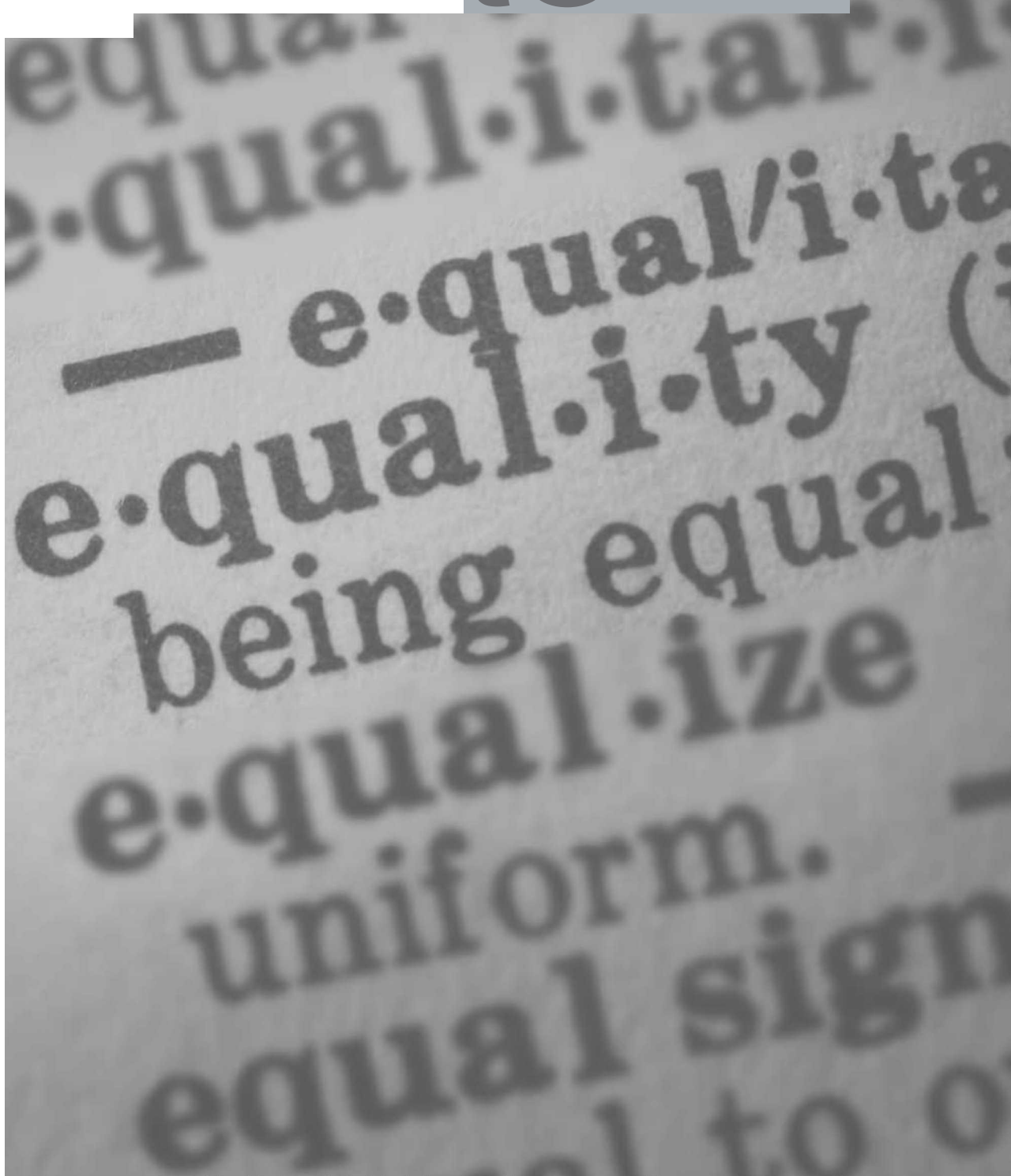


**"Let's permit
people-all people-
to live the normal
lives that they are
capable of living."**

-BURTON BLATT

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to



DEAR FRIENDS,

You will see in the inspirational stories in this issue of *Snapshots of Impact* magazine that the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University is making a measurable impact on the lives of people with diverse disabilities and their families. Impact drives my colleagues and us as BBI reaches around the globe to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities.



Peter Blanck

During the past two decades, important legal and policy gains—including the Americans with Disabilities Act and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities—were made by and on behalf of people with disabilities, affirming their rights to full participation in society. Despite these advances, many people with disabilities continue to live in isolation from the mainstreams of their communities.



Michael Morris

Given the strong ties between one's ability to earn income and fully participate in their communities, BBI's work focuses on two interconnected innovation areas: economic participation and community participation. Through innovative program development, cutting-edge research, and public policy guidance in these innovation areas, BBI advances the full inclusion of people with disabilities. BBI believes community inclusion does not only mean living in the community, but also that people with disabilities have opportunities to be "of the community"—with the rights,

privileges, and opportunities that any other citizen may enjoy. You can explore our innovation areas and related resources by visiting our new web site (bbi.syr.edu).

The BBI team works as members of and part of the disability community. We are motivated by the determination and perseverance of people with disabilities to overcome physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers to be more productive, independent, and included. You too will be inspired by their stories in this magazine. Through their eyes, you will explore a

world where the possibilities for people with disabilities are limitless. The story of Kieffer Krichbaum, a young man with autism, is one such example (page 8). Kieffer's life has been transformed thanks to BBI's innovative customized employment program in the southeastern United States. The program has allowed Kieffer and other young adults to thrive in the workplace—and life.

We also invite you to explore our work on the international front. In the Engaging the World section, we highlight how BBI's global impact continues to grow. Around the world, BBI experts have created and translated new knowledge to produce solutions that enhance quality of life for people with disabilities. BBI had the pleasure of hosting the World Bank General Counsel to campus this year. Through BBI's close partnership with the World Bank, we are facilitating the inclusion of disability in mainstream development initiatives. BBI also continues a key leadership role in an Israeli initiative to more effectively assimilate persons with intellectual disabilities into community life.

BBI's success would not be possible without SU's longstanding commitment to inclusion and its pioneering work on disability issues. BBI builds on the legacy of Burton Blatt, former dean of SU's School of Education and a pioneering disability rights scholar. Through its offices in Syracuse, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, BBI's impactful work seizes on Chancellor Nancy Cantor's notion of Scholarship in Action.

In honor of our namesake, Burton Blatt, it is our mandate to continue to create innovative solutions to the challenges faced by people with disabilities. We invite you to join us on our journey. We invite you to make a more inclusive world where all people are valued. On behalf of all of us at BBI, thank you for your continued support.

Cheers,

PETER BLANCK

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AND BBI CHAIRMAN

MICHAEL MORRIS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THANK YOU

for taking the time to read through BBI's *Snapshots of Impact* magazine.

You may have a disability or have a family member or a friend with a disability. You may be an advocate for a disabled person who does not have equal access to the rights and opportunities you have. You may have been inspired by the determination and perseverance of someone with a disability. Whatever your reason for looking through this publication, we encourage you to learn more about BBI's impact and the challenges facing people with disabilities and their families.

BBI's work is more relevant now than ever before. Today, one in every seven people in the United States lives with a disability of some kind. That ratio will likely increase significantly in the next 30 years as advances in medical technology increase longevity and as the baby boomer generation enters the later stages of life when the risk of disability is the highest. The future of disability in America depends on how this country prepares for and manages a complex array of demographic, fiscal, political, legal, medical, technological, and other changes in society that will unfold over the next several decades. BBI's work is critical to this effort.

Corporations, elected officials, public agencies, community organizations, other universities, and individuals as well as other countries look to BBI as a leader in solving a broad range of disability issues. Through our offices in Syracuse, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, BBI fosters relationships at all levels of the disability spectrum. BBI develops and manages projects that have attracted more than \$36 million in public funding over the last six years. BBI currently has grant applications in the pipeline totaling more than \$17 million. BBI's success in attracting public funding, even during public sector cost-cutting phases, is evidence of the level of confidence external stakeholders have in BBI.

As co-chairs of BBI's Board of Advisors, we are passionate about and committed to seeing that BBI not only sustains but amplifies its impact in the lives of people with disabilities and their families. One way we are doing this is by building BBI's endowment so BBI can continue to solve real problems for people with disabilities without relying so heavily on public funding. In the months to come, you will hear more about our goals and objectives in building BBI's endowment as well as other capital raising initiatives.

Thank you again for showing an interest in the work of BBI. We welcome your input. We also hope you will join our network of supporters and find ways that you, too, can make a difference.

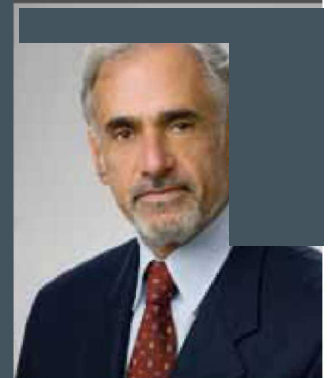
Sincerely, fl

JOSHUA HEINTZ, ESQ.
CO-CHAIR, BOARD OF ADVISORS
THE BURTON BLATT INSTITUTE



LAURENCE SILVERMAN, ESQ.
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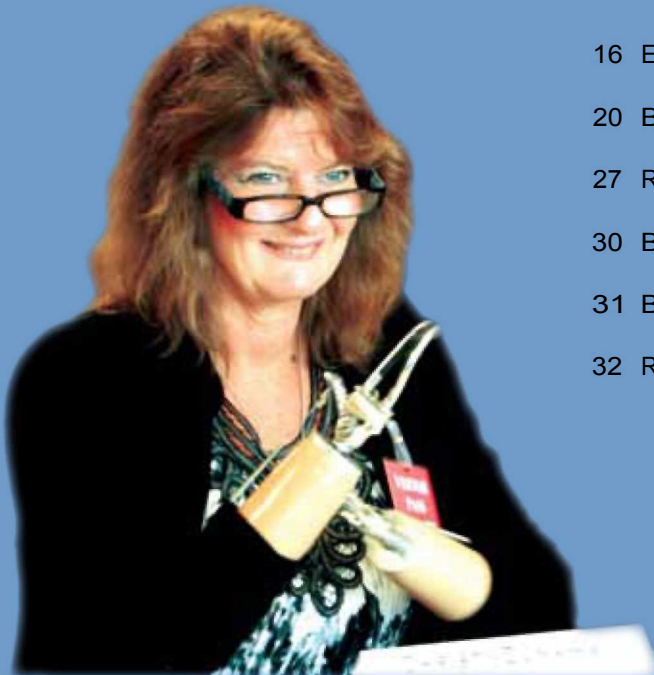
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Burton Blatt Institute
Syracuse University

SYRACUSE
UNIVERSITY
SCHOLARS
IN ACTION



SHATTERING BARRIERS

Nothing stops Jerry Robinson. Nothing. After graduating as salutatorian in college and landing a job with a global financial company, Robinson continues to do what he knows best—shatter barriers.

The budding scholar, born with cerebral palsy, is now pursuing a doctoral degree at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies (iSchool) and conducting research with the BBI team. It's an incredible feat for someone who nearly died at birth.

"My parents were told I wouldn't live long, but here I am," says Robinson, 30, who suffered brain damage after the umbilical cord became wrapped around his head. His parents and doctors didn't notice the signs of cerebral palsy until Robinson had difficulty walking and talking as a toddler.

Robinson could easily hang his head and complain about his challenges. But, he doesn't.

Everyone has a disability, he says, but they are not always visible. "With me it just so happens that you can see the condition. It's very easy to focus on what I don't have or can't do. I've decided to focus on the positives."

Even though Robinson sometimes felt marginalized growing up, he learned to thrive off his ability to overcome obstacles.

He started in a school for special needs children before moving to one where he was integrated with students of all abilities. "It was difficult because many kids would stay away from me. I just wanted to be accepted and be a friend to others," he says.

Robinson, inspired by an elementary school teacher's determination to see him succeed, realized education can open a world of opportunities—regardless of the challenges you face. Emboldened by his teacher's encouragement and armed with his can-do attitude, Robinson became a classroom standout, graduating as salutatorian of his class at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

JPMorgan Chase recruited him for its New York City office, where Robinson worked for five years as a human resources data analyst until coming to Syracuse. Robinson is not one to sit still. He has long aspired to

earn a doctorate, and he found a perfect fit at SU. "When I first visited the iSchool and BBI, I had a sense that this is somewhere I can grow and be groomed to become a researcher or professor," he says.

After spending years shattering barriers, he is now on his way to helping others follow suit. Robinson collaborates with the BBI research team, putting what he learns in the classroom into practice—with a positive impact for people with disabilities. "It's one thing to do assignments from a book, but it's another to actually be able to apply what I learn," Robinson says.

Robinson has conducted literature reviews and data analysis for one of BBI's projects, the Center on Effective Rehabilitation Technology, to better understand how people with disabilities can obtain and use rehabilitation and assistive technology to increase the quality of their lives, especially through employment.

"He's getting a bird's eye view and real practical experience in what it means to do applied research—research in action that can lead to measurable impact in people's lives," says Meera Adya, BBI director of research.

From his experience at BBI grew Robinson's interest in Universal Design, an approach that advocates buildings and consumer products be accessible for all people. During the summer of 2012, Robinson further developed his research agenda, thanks to a fellowship funded by the iSchool. He plans to investigate how the practices of designers and architects impact people with disabilities.

Robinson's advisor Murali Venkatesh, iSchool associate professor, describes him as a critical thinker who helps faculty and classmates understand disability from a unique perspective. "Jerry brings clarity in his writing and discussions. He's also a big thinker—he loves big ideas," says Venkatesh.

Indeed, the sky is the limit for Robinson. Reflecting on his life, Robinson never wavers: "I'm often asked if I would change anything about my life, and I always reply without hesitation, 'absolutely not.'"

To watch a video profile of Robinson, visit www.youtube.com/BurtonBlattInstitute.

—Anthony Adornato

"I'm often asked if I would change anything about my life, and I always reply without hesitation, 'absolutely not.'"



THRIVING

WORK

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM TRANSFORMS THE LIVES OF YOUNG ADULTS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

Inside Hinds Community College's main library, near Jackson, Mississippi, Kieffer Krichbaum pores through hundreds of boxes filled with historical photographs, books, newspaper clippings, and more that were packed away for decades. Kieffer, 21, has meticulously organized the college's archives during the past year. His passion for books and attention to detail proved a perfect fit for the job.

"Because of his interest in books since he was a child, it has always been our dream for Kieffer to work in a library," says his mother, Adele Krichbaum, reflecting on the challenges of raising a son with autism. "Even today, a collection of books lines his bedroom walls."

The experience is about more than just a job. In the process of bringing Hinds Community College history to life, Kieffer found part of himself. "This work environment has finally allowed him to thrive in life," Adele says. "He feels a sense of purpose, and that is nothing short of a miracle. What a transformation of a young man."

Her son previously worked gluing boxes together in a community rehabilitation program. "It was assumed he enjoyed that type of work," she says. "Through the customized employment process we learned that there might be a better fit, and there was." Kieffer

landed his library position thanks to a customized employment pilot program launched by the Southeast Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE), a project of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University, and the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services.

Customized employment is a flexible five-step process that personalizes the relationship between a job candidate and an employer to meet the needs of both. The hallmark of the approach is the discovery phase, designed to create a vocational picture of a job seeker and to guide job development. "This is a highly individualized approach," explains Chip Kenney, director of BBI's Southeast TACE, based in Atlanta. "The process takes into account a person's entire life experiences rather than isolated indicators of ability based on comparative testing."

In collaboration with state vocational rehabilitation agencies, school districts, and other partners, Southeast TACE staff members have brought customized employment pilots to the southeastern United States. Southeast TACE provides a range of supports, including project management, training, and evaluation.

PLACE-AND LIFE



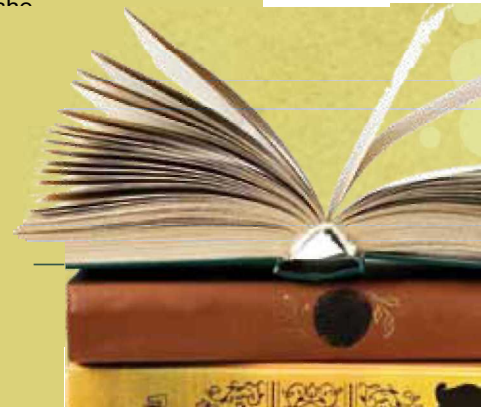
Mississippi were trained in customized employment as part of Southeast TACE's pilot program in the state. "With the expertise of Southeast TACE, we are implementing customized employment into the agency as a whole," Walters says.

Young adults in Florida, Georgia, and Kentucky are also reaping the benefits of the pilot program. Just ask Marian Sundstrom. Following the customized employment process, Marian noticed a marked difference in her son, Michael, 22, who is autistic. Michael, a fitness enthusiast, landed a job at a gym in an Orlando suburb. "One of his teachers couldn't believe how well he was doing when she

"Customized employment is one of the most successful tools we have had," says Stephanie Walters, an employment coordinator with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services. She guided Kieffer and his family through the customized employment process.

According to Walters, approximately 100 vocational rehabilitation employees across

target the employer, and then negotiate to meet their unmet needs," says Norciva Shumpert, a



consultant with BBI's Southeast TACE. "This is a powerful experience for the job seekers, their families, and vocational rehabilitation specialists."

Customized employment leads to desirable outcomes for persons with disabilities for a number of reasons. Wages are higher, on average, than for individuals in sheltered work environments, which employ people with disabilities separately from others. In addition, there are social benefits.

"The job has allowed Kieffer to be more outgoing. His language, for example, has gotten better—it's all because of that job.

He gives so much more now than 'yes' or 'no' answers," says Adele. In fact, Kieffer took science and arts courses at the community college, and he has his

Other states see the success of customized employment, it will become standard. This represents a system change—a new way of helping youth with severe disabilities," notes Kenney.

—Anthony Adornato

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

The pilot program launched by BBI's Southeast Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (see page 26), based in Atlanta, has transformed the lives of young adults with significant disabilities.

Customized employment is a flexible process that personalizes the relationship between a job candidate and an employer to meet the needs of both. Unlike traditional job evaluations, it is a highly individualized approach. The process takes into account a person's entire life experiences rather than single instances of performance based on testing.


For more information on customized employment, visit <http://tacesoutheast.org/projects.php>.

Working in Teams





Supporting the Spirit of Inclusive Entrepreneurship



Rich Setiembre is the CEO of Way Cool Product Company. He's also the chief financial officer, assembly technician, and the marketing department.

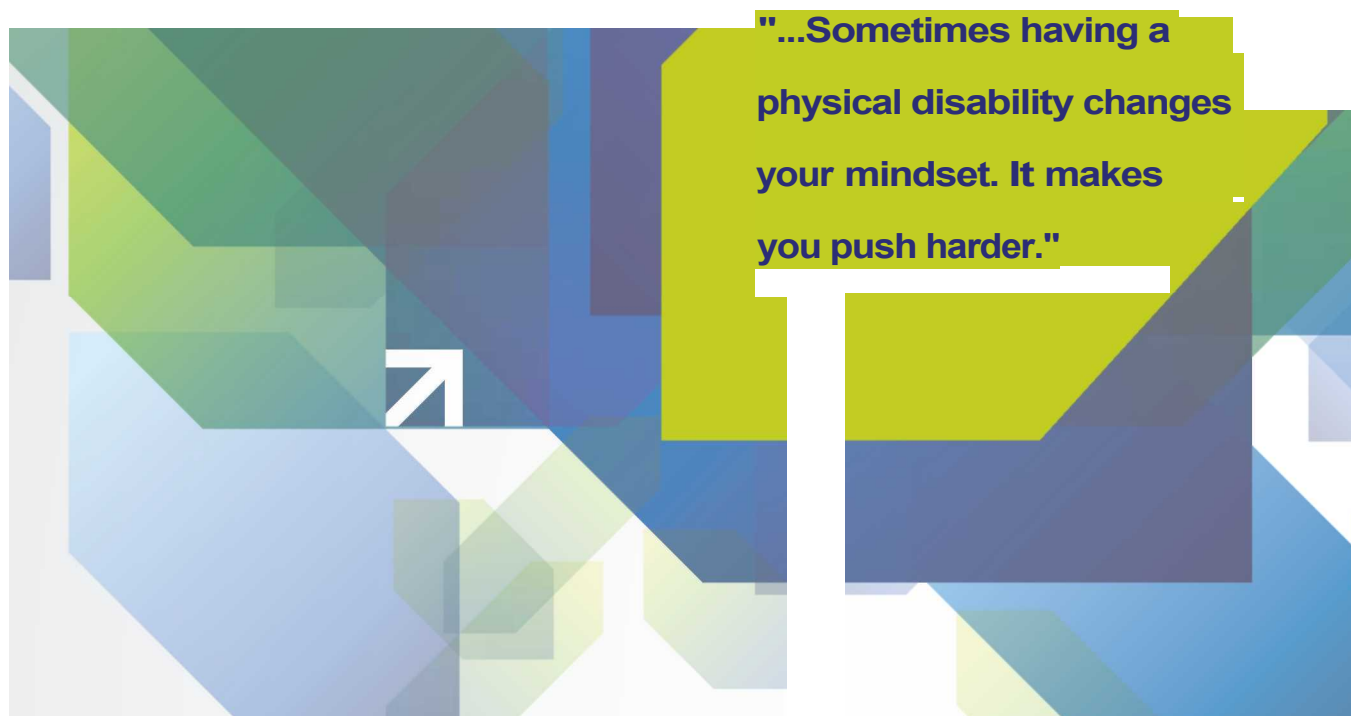
As with many entrepreneurs, Setiembre has worked tirelessly on developing his products—high-efficiency tools that remove snow, water, and sludge—and plays many roles to bring his creation to the marketplace. "I have all the corporate functions of any-sized company," he says. "It's almost impossible for a single person to do all these functions without spending a ton of money and having other people do it."

So when an opportunity arose for Setiembre, who has a disability due to a spinal condition, to have business consultants review his operation, he took it. The consultants were a team of Syracuse University students in the spring 2012 Inclusive Entrepreneurship Consulting course, jointly taught through BBI and the Martin J. Whitman School of Management. Student teams work with entrepreneurs, who have diverse disabilities, to evaluate their business needs; develop a plan that meets those needs in such areas as marketing, operations, and accounting; and submit a

final, formal consulting report to faculty and the entrepreneur.

In its fourth year, the course, which won a Chancellor's Award for Public Engagement in 2010, has enabled 125 students to work in student consulting teams with 24 entrepreneurs. "The entrepreneurs are gaining access to talented consultants for free and getting support from individuals who are very interested in what they are doing," says adjunct Whitman faculty member Gary Shaheen G'86, who is director of employment policy for the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at SU. Shaheen, formerly a BBI senior vice president, developed the course with Whitman faculty during his time at BBI. "Students are learning new ideas about entrepreneurship and being challenged to think if there really is such a thing as 'disability'—or is it something that we can eliminate by changing the environment and expanding opportunities when it comes to entrepreneurship."

Students can see how people with different abilities have developed other abilities to compensate and excel—making a disability irrelevant, Setiembre says. "The only real obstacles to our progress and self



"...Sometimes having a physical disability changes your mindset. It makes you push harder."

advancement are usually located in our minds," he says.

Simon Choi G'12, an accounting major and one of the five students working with Settembre, had his own shift in thinking during the course. "I had thought people with disabilities were citizens who we needed to provide assistance to, but their point of view is that they just see the world differently—and that's why there's opportunity for them," Choi says. "That was the wow factor for me."

The need to provide a support system for those with creative spark, but with different abilities, is great. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities in the United States is between 65 to 90 percent, and self-employment isn't a widely used option for people with disabilities for reasons that may include not enough personal or financial support or fear of failure. But this course establishes

a sustainable mechanism to assist entrepreneurs with disabilities to start and grow businesses, Shaheen says.

The course developed through a grant from SU's Campus-Community Entrepreneurship Initiative (Enitiative), funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the work of Start-Up NY. A partnership between BBI, the Whitman School through its South Side Innovation Center, and Onondaga County, Start-Up NY assists entrepreneurs with disabilities in Onondaga County gain access to business development resources.

BBI and Whitman have a history of collaboration with such programs as Whitman's Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Disabled Veterans, says Whitman Senior Associate Dean Randal Elder, who was involved in the course's development. "We have long recognized that entrepreneurship is a source of opportunity for those with

disabilities, and this course allows our students to assist these entrepreneurs and learn more about their challenges and opportunities," he says.

In the coursework, students learn entrepreneurship principles, the consulting team process, and how to work with entrepreneurs with disabilities. They assess the entrepreneur's operations through the Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Support model, which gets to the core of the entrepreneur, including why they are pursuing their business and how they spend their time.

For entrepreneur Linda Erb, who has cognitive difficulties and worked with an earlier class, the consulting students surveyed merchants who might be interested in using her online retail store, *OhGoodyGoody.com*, which sells gift certificates to local businesses. "The foot work they did and the ground work they laid

out is still opening doors for me," Erb says.

Settembre opened his books and gave the students his formal business plan for Way Cool, which he launched in 2010. The student team, made up of Xibei Cao G'12, Amit Chaudhari G'13, Choi, Wenyan Li G'12, and Andrew Serota G'13, pored over his books, scrutinized his plan, and reviewed his product and assembly process. His initial creation, the Roof Blaster, a long-handled

tool with a metal blade and squeegee edge to push and pull snow, has since inspired his other creations—the Sidewalk Blaster, Rink Blaster, and Waste Blaster.

The team, which presented its plan to Settembre and the entire class at the end of the semester, made suggestions in the areas of operations, financing, and exploring new markets. The students also created a Facebook page, Twitter account, and other new ways of marketing his products.

The course is increasingly attracting students from diverse academic backgrounds who bring a range of various interests and skills, which enhances the final plan for the entrepreneur. Serota, who is a College of Law student and hopes to start his own business one day, saw the course as a way to learn about building a business but was inspired

by much more. "I always thought starting a business was challenging enough, let alone trying to overcome some sort of physical challenge," Serota says. "Rich sees it not as a crutch or a problem to overcome, but just as trying to take charge of his life."

Settembre, who taught special education and took coursework with Burton Blatt in the School of Education, wants students to realize anything is possible. "If you are laid off, if you get sick, or if you are just impassioned about an idea, there is opportunity to pursue your idea," he says. "I tried to convey to them I have certain advantages, because sometimes having a physical disability changes your mindset. It makes you push harder."

—Kathleen Haley

Rich Settembre, of Way Cool Product Company, (center) demonstrates a Rink Blaster, which he developed to safely remove slush and water from ice rinks, to his student consultants from the BBI/Whitman School of Management course. From left are the following: Thomas Howland, Settembre's spring intern from the Whitman School and a 2012 graduate; Wenyan Li; Xibei Cao; Settembre; Andrew Serota; Simon Choi; and Amit Chaudhari.

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BBI REACHES AROUND THE GLOBE to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities. BBI collaborates with partners to analyze and strengthen disability related law, regulations, and policies in several regions, including the European Union, South Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East. BBI is also replicating some of its successful programs and knowledge to further the economic empowerment, income generation, and social participation of people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries.

BBI CHAIRMAN KEYNOTES GLOBAL UNIVERSAL DESIGN CONFERENCE

CREATED TO WIDEN THE CONCEPT OF ACCESSIBILITY Universal Design (UD) principles transcend the disability universe, considering other populations with needs, such as aging baby boomers. The UD approach advocates that all built environments and products be useable by all people.

At a global conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil, University Professor and BBI Chairman Peter Blanck and key partners highlighted how the Global Universal Design Commission (GUDC) is leading a worldwide effort to build support for the voluntary adoption of UD. Blanck delivered the keynote address on "Universal Design in the World."

Blanck, University Trustee and BBI Board Member Joshua H. Heintz L'69, and his law partner, William J.

Gilberti Jr., founded the GUDC to create UD standards—consensus-based, innovative performance guidelines that go beyond minimal compliance with law and provide ease of use to all. The GUDC standards are modeled on the green standards for the built environment, designating a level of accreditation for a project based on its usability, safety, health, and inclusiveness.

"The GUDC's presence at the conference comes at an important time. Brazil is considering adoption of GUDC standards to guide development for its 2014 World Cup facilities and its 2016 Olympics and Paralympics," says Blanck. "Brazil's interest is an exciting development, and we hope it will bring international attention to the importance of the GUDC standards."

BBI HOSTS WORLD BANK VISIT

BBI is a founding partner of the Global Forum on Law, Justice, and Development

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With this partnership, BBI becomes a pivotal member of a new global community of experts catalyzed by the World Bank."

-SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY CHANCELLOR
AND PRESIDENT NANCY CANTOR

BBI AND CAMPUS PARTNERS ARE engaging in an unprecedented new collaboration with the World Bank to establish the Global Forum on Law, Justice, and Development (GFLJD). The global forum, of which BBI is a founding partner, will provide developing countries with legal solutions to development issues. The GFLJD's interactive web-based platform will connect developing countries to experts from academic and financial institutions as well as international organizations.

During a campus visit in March, World Bank General Counsel Anne-Marie Leroy and World Bank Senior Knowledge Management Officer Marco Nicoli discussed the global initiative with SU Chancellor and President Nancy Cantor, Vice Chancellor and Provost Eric Spina, and BBI leadership. Other campus partners participating in the discussions included the School of Information Studies, the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, the College of Law, and the Graduate School.

"BBI was honored to host the World Bank. The partnership is a unique opportunity for BBI and Syracuse University. Our presence in Washington, D.C., with our Executive Director Michael Morris, builds these important relationships that create exciting

additional opportunities for our campus collaborators to be engaged and have an impact across the world," says University Professor Peter Blanck, BBI chairman.

"With this partnership, BBI becomes a pivotal member of a new global community of experts catalyzed by the World Bank," Cantor says. "The GFLJD fills a critical gap by pooling legal knowledge and experience globally to take on challenges locally in collaboration with organizations from across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Their collective efforts will bring BBI's expertise to

bear on communities around the world where it is needed most."

This partnership builds on BBI's previous collaborations with the World Bank. In 2008, BBI and the World Bank signed an agreement to support activities of the Global Partnership on Disability and Development, a global effort to reduce poverty for an estimated 400 million people with disabilities living in developing countries.

For more information about the forum, visit <http://globalforumljd.org>.



Left to right: BBI Chairman Peter Blanck, World Bank General Counsel Anne-Marie Leroy, SU Chancellor and President Nancy Cantor, and Vice Chancellor and Provost Eric Spina



PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN GHANA

People with disabilities in Ghana experience an average unemployment rate of almost 90 percent. BBI and Eastern Washington University have teamed up in hopes of reversing this statistic by helping more people with disabilities to develop their own businesses or worker-owned cooperatives.

Former BBI Senior Vice President Gary Shaheen G'86, who recently joined SU's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, and Romel Mackelprang, Eastern Washington University professor, traveled to Ghana in February 2012 to build partnerships and develop resources to replicate Inclusive Entrepreneurship. Inclusive Entrepreneurship, a program developed by BBI and several partners, provides training and technical assistance to people with disabilities that enable them to become self-employed, often with the assistance of students enrolled in the joint Whitman School of Management and BBI Inclusive Entrepreneurship Consulting course.

The proposed project would provide technical assistance and micro-loans to

emerging enterprises. The goal is to help approximately 45 people with disabilities per year start businesses using the Inclusive Entrepreneurship approach in Ghana. The project also includes creating an on-site and distance learning entrepreneurship curriculum, which would enroll students from Ghana and the United States in experiential learning. The students would serve as business consultants to entrepreneurs with disabilities.

"This project is another example of the way that BBI and the Whitman School create partnerships across the country and around the world to improve civic, social, and economic inclusion of people with disabilities," says Shaheen.

"Dr. Mackelprang has extensive experience working throughout Africa on accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities, the Whitman School and BBI bring entrepreneurship experience, and our partners in Ghana have scholarship, local connections, and the respect and trust of Ghanaians with disabilities and agencies that serve them. This is a winning combination that will result in real and significant improvement in the lives of Ghanaians with disabilities."

Kwame Nkrumah University; the Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation Studies; the Knust School of Business; non-governmental organizations; and foundations, including Engage Now Africa, are collaborating on the program.

INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY RESEARCH NETWORK

The Global Research Network on Disability (GRND) is a new initiative created by BBI and the Centre for Disability Law and Policy at the NUI Galway School of Law. GRND promotes collaborative research and knowledge sharing between disability researchers from around the world.

"GRND is envisioned as a system of research networks to support knowledge creation, sharing, translation, and use among researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and people with disabilities and their families worldwide to advance valued inclusive outcomes in terms of social, economic, and civic participation," says Deepti Samant Raja, BBI director of international programs.

The National Advisory Commission for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Argentina and the Global Partnership for Disability and Development invited BBI and GRND to host a seminar on "International Disability Research and Knowledge Exchange: Collaborative Research between Governments and Academia to promote Disability in Development."

The seminar, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was aimed at academics and government personnel in that country. The National Advisory Commission for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Argentina is eager to advance the inclusion of disability in mainstream academic curricula and research, and is interested in learning about best practices in collaboration between governments and academia to promote disability research in the country.

Samant Raja discussed the continuing need for rigorous research on specific challenges for people with disabilities in developing countries. She presented the need to develop strong collaborative research and knowledge exchange networks to facilitate the sharing of effective practices among different countries and regions as states implement the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

BLANCK, OTHER EXPERTS SUBMIT RECOMMENDATIONS TO ISRAEL

Led by University Professor and BBI Chairman Peter Blanck, BBI is working with the Government of Israel's Welfare and Social Services Ministry to address the right of Israelis with disabilities. The ministry appointed Blanck to co-chair an international committee of experts on community living for people with intellectual disabilities.

Earlier this year, Blanck and other committee members submitted a final report to the ministry. The expert panel examined and reported on ways to further the transition of Israelis with intellectual disabilities from institutional to community living. The committee used the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as the benchmark for its recommendations. The CRPD, adopted in 2006, is the first treaty of its kind to reaffirm that persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Blanck's co-chair is leading Israeli academic Arie Rimmerman, the Richard Crossman Chair for Social Welfare and Planning in the School of Social Work, Social Welfare and Health Studies at the University of Haifa in Israel. The three other internationally recognized members of the panel include Gerard Quinn, of the National University of Ireland (NUI) at the Galway School of Law and director of the Centre for Disability Law and Policy; Joel Levy, formerly CEO of the YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities; and Meindert Haveman, of the University of Dortmund in Germany, who is in the Department of Rehabilitation and Education for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.



BBI MAGAZINE WINS AWARD

SNAPSHOTS OF IMPACT, THE annual magazine of BBI, received a Platinum Award in the Hermes Creative Awards 2012 competition. The Platinum Award recognizes the magazine as one of the most outstanding entries in the publications/magazine category. In 2011, BBI launched *Snapshots of Impact* in partnership with Syracuse University's Office of Publications.

The Hermes Creative Awards is an international competition for creative professionals involved in the concept, writing, and design of traditional and emerging media.

\$100,000 GIFT SUPPORTS BUDDING DISABILITY LEADERS

STEPHANIE WOODWARD, A SECOND-YEAR STUDENT AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF Law and a research assistant with BBI, has been selected as the inaugural recipient of the Olinsky Law Group/Burton Blatt Institute Fellowship. The fellowship was established through a generous gift from disability law attorney Howard D. Olinsky L'85, a member of BBI's Board of Advisors and its executive committee.



"The fellowship will provide invaluable practical experience each academic year for a law student interested in the field of civil rights law. Stephanie was chosen for her passionate commitment to disability rights and advocacy," said Olinsky, principal of the Olinsky Law Group.

Woodward, who was born with spina bifida and uses a wheelchair, is pursuing a joint degree in law and education. She is president of the Disability Law Society at SU College of Law. As a student representative for the Accessibility and Universal Design Committee for the new College of Law building, Woodward is working to ensure the facility is accessible for all people.

"Stephanie is dedicated to disability issues on campus and in local communities. This fellowship advances BBI's commitment to training the next generation of disability leaders by offering Stephanie and future recipients an opportunity to hone their skills through research and work on legal matters," said University Professor Peter Blanck, chairman of BBI, who also is a professor at the SU College of Law.

The fellowship will allow Woodward to learn about disability law cases with the Olinsky Law Group and continue as a BBI research assistant. "I'll be able to build on my experience at BBI. The Olinsky Law Group works on cases related to Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income, and on the Americans with Disabilities Act. These are complicated issues that I gained knowledge of through my research at BBI. I will now apply what I learned to real cases," said Woodward.

Woodward aspires to be a disability rights attorney concentrating on issues in accessibility of transportation, businesses, employment, and housing. "I will use my legal skills to create communities where people with disabilities are fully integrated," she said.



Howard D. Olinsky L'85

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS, INTERNS RECOGNIZED



BBI congratulates six research assistants and interns who graduated in May. From left to right: Paris Peckerman, Karl Inners, Meredith Passaris, Tovah Miller, and Jonathan Schnader. (Not pictured: Brandon Hill)

BBI LAUNCHES NEW WEB SITE

BBI'S HOME ON THE WEB, BBI.SYR.EDU, has a new look! The new BBI website went live in July, coinciding with the 22nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In keeping with the goals of BBI, the website was developed to provide a significant number of accessibility features. These features complement the use of assistive technologies and help make the site usable to the broadest possible audience.



MCDONALD RECEIVES EARLY CAREER AWARD

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION ON INTELLECTUAL and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) selected Katherine McDonald, associate professor of public health in Syracuse University's David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics and faculty fellow at BBI, as the recipient of the 2012 Early Career Award. The award recognizes McDonald for her achievements and many contributions to the field of developmental disabilities. AAIDD is the oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization of professionals and citizens concerned about intellectual and developmental disabilities.

McDonald joined SU in 2011. Her dual appointment reflects a unique and unprecedented partnership between SU's colleges and BBI toward infusing disability awareness across disciplines. McDonald's current research examines the inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities in research, participation in online communities and its relationship to autistic adults' social connectedness and well-being, health disparities experienced by autistic adults, and community participation among persons with disabilities.

INCORPORATING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES INTO THE WORKPLACE

EMPLOYER RESOURCES, A TOOLKIT DEVELOPED BY BBI UNDER the Employer Demand Project, is now available online. The toolkit is designed to provide employers with resources on incorporating people with disabilities into the workplace and improving employment outcomes for all workers. Exploration of these issues strives to positively influence the employment of people with disabilities. The toolkit includes two webinars, "Inclusive Culture and the Workplace" and "Employees with Disabilities: Recruitment, Hiring, and Training."

To access the toolkit and learn more about the project, visit bbi.syr.edu/employertoolkit.

GOV. CUOMO VISITS SU

GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO VISITED SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY MAY 16 to present proposed legislation intended to protect New Yorkers with disabilities. University Professor and BBI Chairman Peter Blanck introduced Cuomo to an audience inside SU's Schine Student Center. Cuomo spoke about his first-in-the-nation Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. "We will not allow people in the care of New York to be abused. Period," Cuomo said at the event.

According to Cuomo, the initiative would establish the strongest standards and practices in the nation for protecting people with special needs and disabilities. The Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs would investigate, collect, and prosecute abuse allegations at facilities using state money to provide homes, care, or classes for people with disabilities and the elderly.



TECHNOLOGY RESEARCHER NAMED FELLOW

disciplines with impact for people with disabilities.

Foley works with University Professor and BBI Chairman Peter Blanck and colleagues at SU's Setnor School of Music and the School of Information Studies on a project that provides innovative, inclusive, and accessible informal learning opportunities to K-12 students. "This partnership with Alan Foley is an exciting cross-disciplinary collaboration, building on BBI's interdisciplinary approach at SU," said Blanck.

Foley's expertise includes assistive and adaptive technologies, technology development, and web accessibility/usability. His current research is in the development of mobile and cross-platform learning environments that ensure access for all learners. Foley has been actively involved in efforts to make technology accessible to people with disabilities since the late 1990s.



FILMMAKER RECEIVES BBI ARTS AWARD

THE 2012 BURTON BLATT INSTITUTE PRIZE FOR ARTS LEADERSHIP was awarded to Sharon Greytak, an independent filmmaker and film professor at SU's College of Visual and Performing Arts, for her entire body of work and its importance to the international arts community. The *Stone Canoe* journal and BBI grant the prize annually to an artist or individual who promotes or exemplifies the value of inclusiveness within the arts community of upstate New York.

Greytak has written, produced, and directed feature-length fiction films, documentaries, and experimental shorts. Greytak's newest feature film is *Archaeology of a Woman*, starring Oscar-nominated/Golden Globe winner Sally Kirkland and Tony winner Victoria Clark. Her films also include the award-winning international documentary *Losing It*, which explores quality of life issues and physical disability. Greytak has used a wheelchair since contracting rheumatoid arthritis during her childhood.



BBI SPONSORS SYRACUSE STAGE PRODUCTION

DOUGHNUTS, PROFESSIONAL GOLF, AND A PRIZED RING OF KEYS are just a few of the quirky yet endearing sources of humor in *The Boys Next Door*, a play written by Tom Griffin. BBI sponsored Syracuse Stage's production of this gentle and touching comedy that peers into the lives of four men living with developmental disabilities in a group home. Set in the 1980s, *The Boys Next Door* sheds light on the progress that has been made for people with disabilities. The play's run also included a post-show discussion about that progress, as well as the history and current state of group homes.



A project of BBI

Located in Atlanta, the Southeast ADA Center provides information, training, and guidance on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and disability access tailored to the needs of business, government, and individuals at local, state, and regional levels in the southeastern United States. The center also conducts research to reduce and eliminate barriers to employment and economic self-sufficiency and to increase the civic and social participation of Americans with disabilities.

For more on the Southeast ADA Center, visit <http://ADAsoutheast.org>.

NATIONAL ADA SYMPOSIUM

THE SOUTHEAST ADA CENTER CO-HOSTED the 2012 National ADA Symposium in Orlando, Florida. The symposium provided the latest information on ADA regulations and guidelines, implementation strategies, and best practices through dynamic, interactive sessions.

L. Elaine Sutton Mbionwu, Southeast ADA Center assistant director; William Myhill, BBI director of legal research and writing; and Kelly Bunch L'09, BBI law and policy research associate, presented four workshops at the symposium.

TO CONTINUE LEADERSHIP OF ADA CENTER

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH awarded BBI a \$6.2 million, five-year grant to continue its leadership of the Atlanta-based Southeast ADA Center. Established in 1991 and operated by BBI since 2006, the Southeast ADA Center serves an eight-state region (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee). It is one of 10 regional centers dealing with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and accessible information technology.

Although the ADA legislation was enacted 22 years ago, there are remaining questions concerning compliance with this civil rights legislation, and people with disabilities still need clarification about their rights under the ADA. The Southeast ADA Center provides guidance for those with rights and responsibilities under the ADA.

The center offers training and technical assistance to promote voluntary compliance with the ADA, including information about the rights of people with disabilities and the responsibilities of businesses as well as state and local governments to provide them with equal opportunity to participate. The Atlanta office is staffed by nationally recognized ADA experts, researchers, and information specialists.

"The strength of the BBI-led Southeast ADA Center is critical partnerships in the eight states with over 100 nonprofit organizations, employers, universities and colleges, and government agencies," says BBI Executive Director Michael Morris. "We look forward to continuing to broaden our impact to benefit people with disabilities and other important stakeholders in the region."

DISCUSSION WITH NATIONAL **SOCIAL SECURITY ADVISORY BOARD**

Christy Dunaway, representing the Southeast ADA Center, participated in the panel discussion

THE SOUTHEAST ADA CENTER TOOK PART in a panel discussion on the effectiveness of Social Security Disability programs with the national Social Security Advisory Board in Atlanta in May. The advisory board is an independent, bipartisan entity advising the U.S. President, Congress, and the Commissioner of Social Security on matters related to Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs.

Christy Dunaway, chair of the Southeast ADA Center's Affiliate Council and director of Living Independence For Everyone of Mississippi, a center for independent living, represented

the Southeast ADA Center. "The current disability insurance program has yet to find the right mix of incentives, rewards, alignment, and coordination with other disability support programs and systems that will allow people with disabilities to work and meet their essential health and living needs,"

maintain even modest savings or assets in order to qualify for benefits as key obstacles keeping nearly one-third of all persons with disabilities living in poverty.

Speaking from personal experience

as both a person with a disability and an employer of individuals with disabilities, Dunaway said health care costs are a major issue, and can account for a majority of a person's salary. "Any one of my staff will tell you 'it's not about the check, it's about the health care,'" Dunaway revealed. "I can pay

The current disability insurance program has yet to find the right mix of incentives, rewards, alignment, and coordination with other disability support programs and systems that will allow people with disabilities to work and meet their essential health and living needs."

them more than SSA can in most cases, but I cannot pay them enough to purchase the medical supplies that private health insurance will not cover, and to also pay for personal assistance if needed."

To help persons with disabilities advance their fiscal independence, the Southeast ADA Center recommended moving beyond a focus on employment as an 'end goal' but rather as a means to advance economic self-sufficiency. Other suggestions offered to the advisory board by Dunaway, in collaboration with BBI Executive Director Michael Morris, include: raising asset limits for federal programs such as SSI and Medicaid to allow recipients to build a modest pool of savings to take steps out of poverty, indexing asset limits to inflation, and increasing the level of earnings for SSI recipients to remain eligible for Medicaid waivers.





Students feel the raised lines that guide speaker Nancy Duncan when she writes checks (left) and attorney Crystal Beelner shares stories about her life as a mother and disability advocate (below).



PILOT PROJECT **INSPIRES CHILDREN TO DREAM BIG**

EVERY CHILD WHO HAS ACHIEVED his or her personal best has had a dream—a vision for the future that was nurtured by their parents, teachers, friends, and circles of support. This philosophy inspired the development of "I Have a Dream: Creating Your Life Portfolio," a pilot program designed by the Southeast ADA Center to raise disability awareness and foster understanding among students while encouraging children with and without disabilities and their parents that anything is possible for their futures.

The Atlanta-based Southeast ADA Center joined forces with Nesbit Elementary School in neighboring Gwinnett County, Georgia, the school's PTA, and local education and community organizations to pilot the year-long program that yielded a

how-to manual to help other schools replicate the project. The program consisted of three phases: 1) Disability Mentoring Day and Career Expo (October) where students with and without disabilities were mentored in small groups by adults with disabilities from the community who have achieved their dreams personally and professionally; 2) Parent Engagement Week (February) where parents of students with and without disabilities were encouraged to be involved in their children's educations through family events and activities, including a dance, family dream exercise, and breakfast briefing; and 3) Exceptional Children's Week (May) where students with and without disabilities enjoyed a week of arts-centered activities, including inclusion skits,

musical performances, writing and art contests, an awards breakfast, and a perception activity to foster understanding and inclusion and to celebrate diversity as well as every student's gifts and talents.

The Southeast ADA Center's how-to manual will serve as a technical assistance resource for other Atlanta-area elementary schools interested in replicating the project. Future plans include piloting the program throughout the center's eight-state region in collaboration with the center's affiliate network.



Southeast Technical Assistance & Continuing Education Center

A project of BBI

The Southeast Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (Southeast TACE) provides capacity-building services to Vocational Rehabilitation agencies in eight southeastern states in order to improve the quality of employment services to individuals with disabilities. Led by Chip Kenney, Southeast TACE is one of 10 regional Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. Southeast TACE serves Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

AUTISM LEARNING SERIES

SOUTHEAST TACE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA'S CENTER FOR Inclusive Communities hosted a learning series titled, "Improving Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders." Held in July 2011 and January 2012, the series consisted of webinars, companion dialogue sessions, and a final project. Archives of the autism and employment learning series are available online at <http://tacesoutheast.org/autismseries>.

The series provided vocational rehabilitation (VR) professionals with information about autism spectrum disorders (ASD), gave specific examples of cases from both consumer and provider perspectives, and reviewed effective employment practices. The series helped to expand southeast VR professionals' awareness of employment possibilities for individuals with ASD. Southeast TACE continues to support the participants in integrating effective ASD practices into their services, and is helping them track resulting improvements in employment and economic self-sufficiency outcomes for individuals with autism.

EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH IN TRANSITION

SOUTHEAST TACE HOSTED THE "Employment for Youth in Transition" conference in conjunction with TASH's national conference about challenges facing people with disabilities in the current economic climate. The conference, held in Atlanta, for disability community professionals and advocates from across the country was also attended by an unprecedented number of federal and state vocational rehabilitation (VR) leaders.

Southeast TACE organized live streaming to 250 participants who were unable to attend, underwriting free remote access for all VR partners from southeastern states. The conference set a new standard in bringing the VR community together with practitioners, advocates, and employers to build a new and improved network serving youth with the most significant disabilities.

>> BBI is globally regarded as a leader in disability research

ONE OF BBI'S STRENGTHS IS ITS ABILITY TO CONDUCT SCIENTIFICALLY RIGOROUS AND YET PRACTICALLY RELEVANT RESEARCH, PRODUCING STUDIES THAT HAVE INFLUENCED PUBLIC POLICY AND POSITIVELY ADVANCED THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

Southeast ADA Center Community Participation Research Project

INVESTIGATORS: Katherine McDonald, Pamela Williamson, Sally Weiss, and Meera Adya

SPONSOR: National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)

BACKGROUND: One of the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is to remove barriers to and promote equal participation in communities for individuals with disabilities. Despite almost two decades of ADA-related efforts, research indicates that although some improvements have been made, barriers remain. As a result, persons with disabilities experience participation disparities in multiple life domains and feel isolated from their communities.

As part of a NIDRR five-year grant award to the Southeast ADA Center, a project of BBI, this study sought to more fully understand the nature of persistent barriers in local government facilities and services. Using participatory action research—a research approach that brings academic researchers and people with disabilities together—researchers with and without diverse disabilities attempted to complete activities at five Title II entities. Title II of the ADA covers public entities, which include state and local governments and any of their departments and agencies.

Specifically, the research team surveyed ADA Title II public entities—city hall, civic center, park, public library,

and police station—in 12 communities to document firsthand experiences with programmatic and physical accessibility from the perspectives of individuals with and without diverse disabilities. Researchers assessed 48 of the 60 facilities using the ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal.

Among all 48 facilities, two entities were free of accessibility concerns. The team found another 12 entities to have accessibility problems on 5 percent or less of the checklist items. Access to goods and services as well as rest rooms presented the greatest number of access barriers. The most common areas of barriers to accessibility were availability of signage to accessible entrances and bathrooms, accessible features of stairs, enforcement of parking procedures, the slopes of ramp rises, and the height of counters. Parks appear to present the greatest number of access barriers, followed often by civic centers.

IMPACT: By design, this research is poised to make a difference. First, involving diverse researchers with disabilities led to more relevant research focus and data collection strategies. Moreover, many of these researchers reported learning a great deal about their rights under the ADA and about the stubborn obstacles that challenge people with disabilities as they seek to participate in community life. Lastly, the findings reveal the unevenness of access for persons with specific types of disabilities, and point to areas in need of targeted improvement to achieve the goals of the ADA.

Center on Effective Rehabilitation Technology (CERT)

INVESTIGATORS: Michael Morris, Marcia Scherer, Deepti Samant Raja, Meera Adya, and Mary Killeen

SPONSOR: National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research

AMOUNT AWARDED: \$2.5 million

BACKGROUND: Rehabilitation and assistive technology (RT/AT) can increase the independence and the quality of life of people with disabilities. Many people with disabilities can productively use RT/AT to enhance functioning in activities related to daily living, recreation, mobility, and employment-related skills. Nevertheless, people with diverse disabilities still experience a critical gap in awareness and use of suitable technology products.

Few technology access solutions are customized to user needs, appropriate for the user and environment, and meaningfully involve the user in the design and delivery process. The lack of an appropriate match and customization between the technology and the consumer often leads to the rejection or abandonment of technology solutions.

The main objective of CERT is to conduct rigorous participatory research on the effective delivery of RT/AT services to obtain successful employment outcomes for people with significant disabilities. CERT's two overarching goals address system, organizational, and individual-level factors impacting the delivery and use of RT/AT to improve employment outcomes in measurable ways for individuals with significant disabilities.

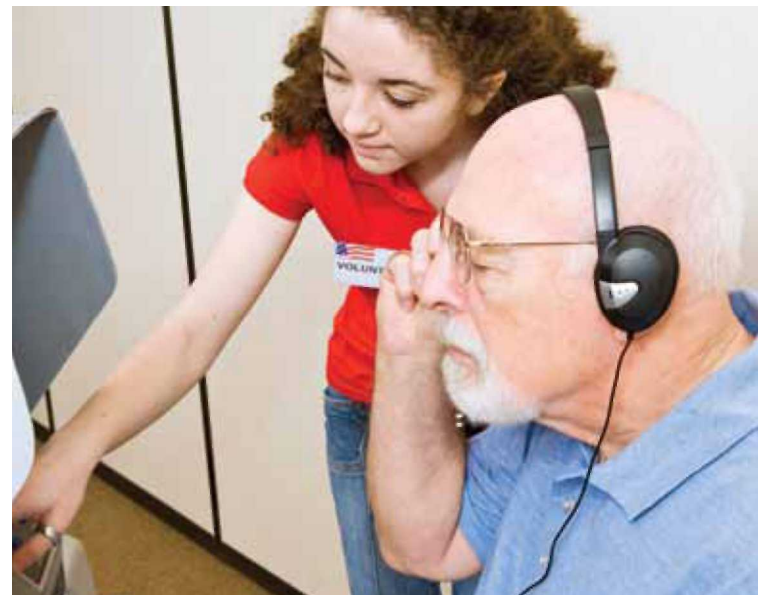
To accomplish these goals, the research team focuses on evaluating different organizational models and systems, and understanding the interplay between key actors and forces within those environments. In addition, researchers develop scientifically rigorous and practically useful tools and measures to assist individuals within those systems to better provide and use RT/AT toward improved employment outcomes.

Research partners include the Institute for Matching Person and Technology, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America, Rehabilitation Technology Associates Inc., National Council on Independent Living, and AbleLink Technologies.

POTENTIAL IMPACT: CERT is expected to have a national impact by generating new knowledge on the systematic supports needed for effective RT/AT service delivery, promoting changes at state and local levels through replication of effective practices, improving sustainable collaborations among key stakeholders, and improving informed decision-making to better match RT/AT with the individual's needs and preferences.

Outcomes will include:

- >> A model policies and procedures template for effective service delivery.
- >> A quality indicators self-assessment check list for service delivery programs.
- >> Development of a new RT/AT assessment tool and measures designed to create a better match between consumers and technology to advance employment outcomes.
- >> Technical assistance and training opportunities based on research findings.





Supporting Veteran Employment: Best Practices

INVESTIGATORS: Michael Morris, Meera Adya, Deepti Samant Raja, and Mary Killeen

SPONSOR: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

AMOUNT AWARDED: \$769,642

BACKGROUND: Since 2001, about 1.9 million U.S. troops have been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite today's military experiencing multiple deployments to a war zone, most men and women return successfully and adjust to civilian life. Others experience difficulty transitioning to employment within the civilian workforce, pursuing education, or adjusting to family life upon their return.

In order to better assist veterans as well as National Guard and Reserve members in making a successful transition to the workforce, there is a need for an improved understanding of "what is working" and "what is needed" by employers. This includes an investigation into successful on-boarding and retention strategies, use of affinity or employee resource groups, mentorships, workforce education, and effective management practices with regard to the psychological health related challenges (or perceived challenges) among returning veterans.

The goal of this project is to identify promising and emerging best practices with regard to supporting the success of veterans in the workplace. The information gained from participating companies will be used to develop toolkits, resources, and online materials for both employers and veterans to help facilitate the hiring and retention of veterans and support their long-term careers.

In the course of the project, researchers will document the hiring and retention practices as well

as the current policies and programs that employers across the country, including Fortune 500 companies, have in place with regard to military veterans. The team will assess employers' understanding of the mental health and related needs of veteran employees as well as employers' knowledge of the supports that facilitate veteran employees' productivity and advancement.

In addition to BBI, the project team includes Corporate Gray, a veteran-owned business connecting employers with veterans nationwide, and the US Business Leadership Network. The research team also works closely with staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the project's Advisory Board, which consists of veterans, corporate executives, employee assistant program experts, human resource directors, leaders of veterans' advocacy groups, and representatives from the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor.

POTENTIAL IMPACT:

- >> New knowledge on best practices that support the success of veterans in the workplace.
- >> High rates of use by companies, nationwide, of state-of-the-art online toolkits and other support materials to refine and improve current and future initiatives, practices, and programs.
- >> Greater hiring and retention rates of veterans in companies that put these resources to use.
- >> High rates of use by veterans, nationwide, of state-of-the-art online toolkits and resources that support their transition to the workplace and their long-term career goals.
- >> Greater rates of retention and career advancement in the workplace among veterans.

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Since its inception seven years ago, the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) has experienced a trajectory beyond what could have been imagined at that time. This rapid growth necessitates an even stronger and more engaged partnership with BBI's key stakeholders in terms of strategically shaping and supporting BBI's vision to advance civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities. One of BBI's most influential and insightful groups of stakeholders is its Board of Advisors, led by co-chairs Joshua H. Heintz L'69 and Laurence Silverman. BBI's board consists of 18 members- each brings a unique perspective from their own life's experiences and a passion and commitment for enhancing the lives of people with disabilities and their families. BBI looks to its distinguished board members for ideas and strategic thinking on how the board and BBI may create a stronger, more engaged presence as well as assist in identifying opportunities for other key stakeholders to become involved in BBI's impactful work.

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THE BURTON BLATT INSTITUTE (BBI) gratefully acknowledges its donors for their commitment and generosity in support of BBI's mission to positively impact the lives of people with disabilities and their families since our founding in 2005.

\$1+ MILLION FOUNDING GIFT

Hammerman Fisch Foundation

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