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CONVERSION TO  
INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT:  
CASE STUDIES OF  
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Bonney Enterprises

United Cerebral Palsy Association  
of Capitol Area

Independence Association

*Volume I*

edited by

John Butterworth  
Sheila Fesko

*March 1998*

CONVERSION TO INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT: CASE STUDIES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE Vol I Butterworth Fesko

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**Conversion to Integrated Employment:  
Case Studies of Organizational Change**

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March 1998

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## Conversion to Integrated Employment: Case Studies of Organizational Change

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Methodology

These three case studies are part of a larger study of six organizations that have closed a sheltered workshop or a nonwork, segregated program and replaced it with integrated employment or other integrated, community-based activities for individuals with disabilities. The organizations vary with respect to size, geographic location, and the characteristics of persons receiving supports. The purpose of our inquiry was to examine the process of organizational change and the internal and external factors that influence it in order to assist other organizations interested in pursuing a similar goal. Site visits were conducted over a period of two full days with each organization, during which interviews were conducted with key players in the conversion process and representatives of the major constituencies affected by the change including program participants, program staff, family members, board members, funding agencies, employers, and other community agencies.

#### Site Visit Procedure

This project was designed to answer three primary research questions:

1. What are the motivators and barriers that have influenced program's decision to convert from segregated employment to community employment?
2. How did each organization approach the planning, communication, and implementation of the conversion process?
3. What obstacles have organizations experienced and how have they responded to these obstacles to maintain the conversion process? What strategies and variables have had a positive impact on maintaining organizational change efforts?

**Sample Selection.** A comprehensive national sample of agencies engaged in a conversion process was developed using a combination of a national nominations process and results from a survey of the day and employment services provided by 643

## 2 • Conversion to Integrated Employment

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community rehabilitation providers in 20 states in 1991<sup>1</sup>. National experts in integrated employment services were asked to nominate organizations that, to their knowledge, had either successfully completed conversion of facility-based services or had closed one facility. These procedures generated a list of 133 organizations. Twenty five organizations were selected randomly from this list to participate in a detailed telephone interview. Because some of the original 25 organizations did not meet the criteria of completely closing a facility, several additional programs were added to the list and screened by phone. The final sample was selected to provide diversity across geography, location (urban/suburban/rural), and organizational size. The organizations selected are listed in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1**  
**Participating Organizations**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Size</b>
Bonney Enterprises Corvallis, OR	Northwest	Suburban	Small
Community Enterprises Northampton, MA	Northeast	Urban/Suburban/Rural	Large
Life Skills Foundation St. Louis, MO	Central	Urban	Large
UCPA of Capitol Area Austin, TX	South	Urban	Large
Independence Association Brunswick, ME	Northeast	Suburban/Rural	Small
MetroWest Mental Health Ashland, MA	Northeast	Suburban	Large

**Data Collection.** Data collection consisted of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Preliminary information was gathered on each site through a phone interview with a lead contact, usually the executive director. At that time available written background information was requested including annual reports, strategic plans, or program descriptions. Project staff worked with the executive director to identify the key stakeholders in the conversion process that were relevant for their agency. For most visits the stakeholders included at least program staff, consumers, family members, employers, funders and members of the organization's Board of Directors.

Primary data collection took place during a two day site visit with each organization. Programs received a stipend for their participation in the project and to compensate for staff time and effort in organizing and hosting the visit. The project also reimbursed the

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<sup>1</sup> McGaughey, M. J., Kiernan, W. E., McNally, L. C., Gilmore, D. S., & Keith, G. R. (1994). Beyond the workshop: National perspectives on integrated employment. Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion (UAP).

program for site visit related expenses. Four senior research staff participated in the site visits, with a minimum of two attending each visit. These staff were experienced in both participant observation and qualitative research. All staff had substantive experience in conducting research related to the employment of individuals with disabilities. Three staff had direct experience in providing and managing employment services and providing training and technical assistance to community rehabilitation programs, while the fourth staff person had direct experience in providing and managing related community-based services.

The project used in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives from each of the stakeholder groups to gain their perspectives on the conversion process. Several members of each group were interviewed at each site either in small groups or individually. In addition, project staff visited work sites and interviewed individuals at job sites when appropriate. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Organizational documents examined included annual reports, consultant reports, mission statements, organizational charts, policies and procedures, and strategic plans. Information from transcripts, observer notes, and source documents were used to describe the organization and the process of organizational change. Key themes that characterize the change process and significant factors that influenced change were identified. A draft of each case study was forwarded to the executive director for review and comment before the document was finalized.

## Summary

Each of these organizations experienced unique circumstances that influenced the decision to close a facility-based program, and each has used a variety of approaches to accomplish the changeover process and create opportunities for community employment. Despite these differences, there have also been consistent themes across the organizations that speak to the factors necessary for successful completion of a change process. Themes are identified in each case study.

The decision to close a facility-based program requires courage and a willingness to take concrete and often risky steps toward that goal. As more organizations develop strategic plans that include the goal of closing a facility-based program, it is our hope that these summaries will provide both guidance and the determination to take substantive steps in the change process. Some of the themes that have repeated across successful organizations have been a value base that prioritizes community employment, willingness to take risks, and the evidence of clear substantial decision points in the conversion process. Bonney Enterprises, for example, proceeded with its target date for workshop closure despite not having finalized a location for one of the new businesses. A summary of these common themes will be available as a separate monograph.



## Chapter 2

### **Bonney Enterprises<sup>2</sup> Corvallis, Oregon**

Date of Site Visit: May, 1995

John Butterworth  
Martha J. McGaughey  
Sheila Fesko

#### **Description of the Organization**

In 1969, Bonney Enterprises was established as a work activity center to provide services to five individuals with severe disabilities who were not accepted by the local sheltered workshop in Corvallis, Oregon. Corvallis has a population of approximately 45,000 and is located in the Willamette Valley in central Oregon. Numerous recreational and cultural activities are available in the area as well as Oregon State University, Oregon's first institution of higher learning. The entire area is growing rapidly, with unemployment hovering around 2%. Some individuals commute from as far as Portland, a 90 minute drive, because the availability of housing has not kept pace with the expanding job market.

The agency mission focuses on enhancing the quality of life of adults with developmental disabilities through meaningful employment and nonwork experiences in the community (see Table 2.1). The organization uses a participatory management model based, in part, on the principles of continuous quality improvement (also referred to as total quality management). Examples of the implementation of participatory management include self managed teams, peer procedures for addressing performance problems, and participatory goal-setting and decision-making opportunities for both employees and individuals with disabilities who receive supports.

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#### **<sup>2</sup> Acknowledgments**

The contributions and insights of the many service customers, staff, family members, board members, and other associates of Bonney Enterprises made this case study possible. Their willingness to give us as much time as we needed and to share both the celebrations and struggles of the change process made this report possible. In particular we would like to thank Tim Rocak, Bonney Enterprises President, who hosted our visit, and all of the staff who helped coordinate interviews.

**Table 2.1**  
**Bonney Enterprises Mission Statement**

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Bonney Enterprises, Inc. is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for adults with developmental disabilities by enabling them to more effectively contribute to their communities and by providing them with employment opportunities.

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A significant characteristic of Bonney Enterprises' approach to organizational change is reflected in the decision to establish or purchase free-standing businesses in order to address the employment needs of service customers (the term used for individuals with disabilities who receive supports from the organization). According to the president, "We didn't see the community as ready to hire everyone into individual jobs, so the businesses were a way to provide those jobs." Furthermore, one of the organization's goals was to reduce its substantial reliance on government revenues, and the new businesses offered a mechanism for addressing this. Currently, approximately half the agency's support is derived from the businesses and the remainder from government sources.

At the time of the two-day site visit in May, 1995, the organization was operating seven businesses: a bakery (Taylor Street Ovens), a bookbindery (B & J Bookbinding), a mall-based push cart where items from the bakery are sold, a packaging operation, a landscape maintenance service, a greenhouse and nursery operation (Colorwheel Gardens), and a courier service. Staff in the businesses are responsible for most administrative functions of their operations, including marketing, securing new contracts or customers, billing, hiring and supervising employees, and production. Business revenue is channeled through the administrative department of the organization, where appropriate accounts are maintained. In addition to these businesses, the organization maintains a supported employment department with two major components: 1) career development and job placement services (both for jobs in the Bonney Enterprises businesses and for other businesses in the community) and 2) the Community Connections program, offering temporary, paid or volunteer work experience in the community as well as a retirement component linking seniors to generic senior activities.

Overall, at the time of the site visit Bonney Enterprises supported 67 service customers, including 52 employed in agency-owned businesses, five employed by other community businesses, and ten participating in the Community Connections program. Approximately five persons were participating in the retirement component of the Community Connections program. The structure of services at Bonney Enterprises is reflected in the organizational chart in Figure 2.1.

Bonney Enterprises has approximately 89 employees, including 67 individuals with disabilities who receive job-related supports. On the whole, the organization provides supports to individuals with significant disabilities. Sixty-five percent of the program participants have a label of severe or profound mental retardation and approximately 80% have lived previously in state-operated institutions. In its organizational structure Bonney Enterprises makes distinctions between staff who provide supports to individuals with disabilities, including developing and monitoring Individual Service Plans (ISPs), employees of the businesses who technically provide no social service

supports, and service customers, individuals with disabilities who purchase supports. Service customers may be an employee of a Bonney-owned business, an employee of an outside business, a member of the Community Connections program, or a recipient of career development services through the Supported Employment Department. If the latter is the case, they could be obtaining paid or unpaid job experience through the Community Connections program, which might include working in one of the temporary positions that exist in each of the businesses for that purpose. Some individuals with disabilities are involved with more than one aspect of the agency. For instance, an individual may receive retirement services and also work part-time in one of the businesses, or another may volunteer in the community as well as work part-time.

Employees of Bonney Enterprises, including service customers, vary in their wages and benefits according to job category. In general, staff receive more substantial benefits than individuals in the other two categories, whereas employees receive hourly wages based on market conditions that, in some cases, may be higher than staff rates.

## **Business Site Visits**

Each of the major businesses run by Bonney Enterprises was visited by the site visit team. Visits typically included an opportunity to observe the operation of the business and to interview employees and service customers. When appropriate, employees from neighboring businesses were also interviewed.

**Taylor Street Ovens.** After it was decided that expanding into other businesses would be the most effective way to provide jobs for individuals with disabilities, a business plan was developed to target specific industries. In May of 1990, the bakery, Taylor Street Ovens, was the first business purchased.

Taylor Street Ovens is located in a small building and shares space with several other businesses. There was some initial trepidation about the business being operated by a social service agency and the fact that individuals with severe disabilities also would work there. These concerns were eased as employees with disabilities began to interact with persons in the other businesses, taking them "reject" cookies and establishing relationships. Employees of the other businesses now frequently inquire about individuals with disabilities working in the bakery if they haven't seen them recently, parties are held regularly to celebrate a cluster of birthdays, and the social culture is generally open and warm.

The bakery is a relatively small operation which produces gourmet cakes and desserts, cookies, and specialty products developed on a trial basis. The range of baked goods offered was impressive. A large freezer was stocked with items ready to be shipped to restaurants and other businesses in the area, including Portland. A special Valentines Day promotion combined an orchid from the greenhouse with a heart-shaped cookie from the bakery. Creative packaging using Scottish plaid boxes has been developed to market shortbread, which is sold through a network of brokers. They also advertise in a trade magazine, shipping shortbread as far as Florida and Hawaii (17 states in all). Staff currently are working on a mechanism for expanding the sales area even further.

Seven employees with disabilities (service customers) and seven employees without disabilities staff the bakery's shifts. Minimum wage certificates from the Department of Labor, which allow employers to pay less than minimum wage based on productivity, are used for some employees with disabilities in this and the other businesses. At the time of the site visit, the general operation was relatively quiet and people seemed involved in their work, although a shift-change occurred during the visit. Employees with disabilities were involved in a variety of tasks including making baked goods, dish washing, stocking shelves, and delivering items to local businesses. The supervisor noted her interest in having employees expand their ability to perform an even broader range of production tasks.

One service customer, who is essentially nonverbal, was busy at his job washing utensils and baking pans. He had previously lived in a state institution, where he was diagnosed as deaf. Although this turned out to be inaccurate, he communicates mostly through sign language and has been labeled autistic. The president used this individual as an example of the way in which business people can improvise training techniques when they need to get a product completed. "They did it by showing him. When he was weighing something on the scale, they would write the number on a piece of paper, put it next to the scale, and he would match it."

The bakery supervisor was hired for her experience as a baker and had no previous experience working with individuals with disabilities. Human service system supports such as case management and individual service plan development for service customers are maintained outside of the businesses, and are handled by staff from the Supported Employment Department. With respect to on-the-job training, the president noted,

*Sure we know some stuff around training techniques, but it's not rocket science, it's training. It's something that business people do very well once they know they're going to be around people. In terms of specialized techniques, that's the job of our employment specialists, to give that kind of support to business folks. When we bought the bakery, we purposely didn't tell any of the employees much about what this disability thing was . . . We tried to alleviate some fears and then didn't load them up with all this stuff. The reasoning being that we didn't want them to act like social service people. We wanted them to have normal relationships.*

The previous bakery supervisor had developed a friendship with the employee with a disability described above and would share her lunch with him. When she left, he apparently expected the same thing from her replacement and started giving the sign for "more", thinking she would have something extra for him in her lunch. According to the president, "The supervisor turned to him and said, 'I'm sorry, I don't know sign. If you want something from me you're going to have to tell me'. Although he almost never, ever talks, he said, 'moorre'. He probably wouldn't have done that for me. He has rules about where I fit in too. I'm one of those social service people who will buy into his nonverbalness."

At other points in the site-visit, the president referred to using some of the same techniques with employees at the other businesses and community employers. He stressed the importance of assisting employers if they need additional skills to work more effectively with an employee with a disability but felt they shouldn't be loaded down (or, to

use his term, contaminated) with unnecessary information or an excessive emphasis on disability.

**B & J Bookbinding.** The book-bindery was purchased in 1991. In 1994, the operation was moved to a site adjacent to a local bookstore, that allows bookstore customers to view the book-binding process and provides book-bindery employees with opportunities to interact with other members of the community. Three employees with disabilities work at the book bindery with two individuals who do not have disabilities. Jobs at the bindery include cutting covers, pasting material on covers, securing the manuscript inside the cover, setting type, and refurbishing old books. The Manager and the other employee without a disability received one month of training from the previous owner after the business was purchased. Neither had any previous experience, in book-binding or repair.

When the bindery was relocated to the present site, employees of the bookstore were concerned about security issues that might be involved with having individuals with disabilities working in the same location. One concern involved whether money would be safe (i.e., if a cash register drawer were left open) with individuals with severe disabilities working nearby. These concerns proved to be irrelevant, and employees of both businesses have expressed pleasure in being able to view the other's operations from their work site as well as having the opportunity to interact.

The Manager of the book bindery previously was employed as a production supervisor at the Bonney workshop. Her assessment of differences between the two environments included,

*My relationship with my employees with disabilities has changed dramatically. It is a more normal working relationship. Communication is good. These are things we didn't have before . . . I really like where we're going and the growth is beautiful . . . When Tim (the president) first started talking about converting to supported employment, . . . I was concerned . . . I was actually pretty excited and scared. But it's working out beautifully.*

The three service customers appeared involved with and interested in their work. One individual mentioned that she had done janitorial work before coming to the bindery but preferred her current position. Another was busy setting type, even though he couldn't read. According to the Manager, all employees are involved in all aspects of the bindery and helping to meet deadlines. "When there is a lot of work, all of us are a lot happier and more productive. Because there are so many of the steps to binding that all of my employees know, we all just pitch right in and we get it done. "

**Pastry Cart.** During the spring of 1995, the agency leased a cart in a local mall where items from the bakery are sold. There is a contract with the school system to provide or find jobs for three students who will soon be graduating. These students staff the pastry cart for two to four hours several days a week, working with one coworker who does not have a disability. During our visit, the student with a disability sold bakery items to a couple of customers and made change for them although he essentially had no verbal language skills.

The coworker was a staff member of the organization. She was hired after the changeover primarily to develop volunteer positions and provide supports in the Community Connections program. She expressed excitement about the opportunity to run the pastry cart and provide supports in a business setting. Her biggest adjustment since joining the organization was related to participating in the self-managed team as a member of the Supported Employment Department. The Manager was not replaced in the department upon leaving the organization, and the coworker mentioned the challenges faced by participating in a decision making process and set of responsibilities that were new to her. Yet she took on the challenge of running the pastry cart, one which she may not have considered prior to the change in management structure. As she commented, "The thing I remember the most about my interview was that they told me I needed to be flexible. I just didn't realize that I needed to flex quite so far."

**Packaging Plus.** The remaining businesses (except for the courier operation) offer substantially fewer opportunities for interacting with coworkers or community members without disabilities. For example, the packaging business provides jobs for eight employees with disabilities, who were supervised by a woman without a disability. As such, it resembles a small sheltered workshop. The majority of employees with disabilities are transported to work by contracted van services or through residential staff.

The employees with disabilities generally expressed liking the work they were doing. Those who had previously been in the workshop noted they had more work in the packaging operation and received better wages. In spite of this, some observed there were times when work was slow at the packaging plant or there was nothing to do. Jobs ranged from applying shrink wrap, setting up boxes, packing items, conducting quality control checks, etc. Several of the employees with disabilities work part-time at the packaging plant and are involved in other activities during the remainder of the week. One individual attends a retirement program on his days off; another assists with delivering bakery goods during part of the day. One employee with a disability mentioned that she had worked at the bakery for a while but left because she had grown tired of the job and had problems with another coworker. When asked if she would like to return to the bakery, she responded, "In a way I would" but did not appear to know how this might be pursued.

The supervisor of the packaging plant had been there for two years and was hired as an employee of the business, rather than as a staff member of Bonney Enterprises. As such, her primary responsibilities include overseeing the business operation, rather than advocating for or being involved in service planning for the employees with disabilities. However, she does participate in some organization-wide activities such as staff retreats, planning meetings, and fundraising. She is responsible for bringing in contract work and described her involvement in local business and service groups where she focused on networking to expand contract opportunities. "I stop everyone I know and everyone I don't know and give them the whole Bonney spiel." She had placed an ad in the Yellow Pages and described how she had decided to improve this the following year.

When asked about her reaction to her job, the supervisor said she felt this was where she was meant to be at this point in her life. "I like my job a whole lot! There are parts of it I don't like, but they don't phase me." She attributed some of her satisfaction to the organizational culture of the agency, "There's no careening over other people to get to the top kind of thing here . . . I feel acknowledged here."

**Landscaping Business and Colorwheel Gardens.** Three landscaping crews are operated by the agency, employing 14 service customers and 5 employees without disabilities. The landscaping business, as well as the greenhouse/nursery, was in operation prior to the workshop conversion. Several vans pick up service customers at the office site and transport them to jobs around the area, including maintenance of a city park. The landscaping team is responsible for securing and maintaining their own accounts. Landscaping operations were viewed only briefly during the site visit, but consideration is being given to bringing more employees without disabilities into these crews as well as into the garden/greenhouse operation.

Colorwheel Gardens is a greenhouse/nursery operation which employs 12 service customers and 2 individuals who do not have a disability. The Site Supervisor at Colorwheel Gardens is considered a staff member of the organization, although she eventually wants to turn over her ISP responsibilities and focus on developing the business. The Manager of Colorwheel Gardens was not replaced upon leaving the agency, and the site supervisor is now responsible for marketing, developing new projects, and generally overseeing the business. She talked about numerous ideas for new projects, including a mushroom growing business.

One theme that emerged during these discussions was the Site Supervisor's desire to continue an established practice of involving community members in new projects. For example, a local resident donated his extensive orchid collection, and the flowers are sold at various functions (including the joint orchid and cookie promotion with the bakery). The man who donated the collection had only one stipulation -- that he be allowed to work with the plants whenever he wishes. He visits regularly and has established relationships with the employees and service customers as well as teaching them about growing rare plants. When we visited, trees were also being planted for a joint project with another local resident, who then purchases the trees and markets them himself.

A number of employees were busy packaging a potting soil mixture inside the greenhouse. Several of the service customers had challenging physical or behavioral disabilities, and staff acknowledged that a stronger presence of employees without disabilities would have been beneficial. This goal of increased integration with people without disabilities has been raised in the organizational visioning process.

Finally, the Site Supervisor relayed a story about a service customer that highlights her flexibility as a supervisor and her interest in generating a growth-enhancing atmosphere:

*Donna<sup>3</sup> started in the greenhouse. Very articulate, and she was asked, 'who do you want to supervise you?' She says, 'I don't want to be supervised.' She doesn't; she's a very independent gal. Once we got away from that mind-set, that everyone had to have a job coach and follow a formal training plan, we just stepped back a moment and now we say, 'Donna, do you want to fill dirt today or do cuttings?' And she'll tell you what she wants to do. She's done well. We just had her ISP meeting yesterday and her wages have tripled in the past year. And she's gone from being*

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<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms have been used to identify service customers in this report.

*considered a difficult person to work with, even aggressive, to . . . being a very productive person. We depend on her to get work done.*

The president remarked that Donna's desire not to be supervised would have been considered "noncompliant" behavior in the workshop.

**Courier Service.** A courier business was created for an individual with challenging behaviors (including significant self-injurious behaviors). The courier position involves making deliveries with a staff member to local businesses as well as to those owned by the agency. It was described as being flexible enough that someone else can assist with deliveries if the courier is having a bad day, and he remains in the van.

## **Supported Employment Department**

The Supported Employment Department provides technical support to service customers and manages interactions with the formal human service system. The department has two primary divisions: 1) career development and job placement services, and 2) the Community Connections program. At the time of the site-visit, ten staff members were providing supports to all service customers working in the agency-owned businesses, five persons employed by other community businesses, and ten participants in the Community Connections program. Approximately five persons were participating in the retirement component of the Community Connections program and several others typically are involved in career exploration services.

**Community Connections.** The Community Connections program was established to provide volunteer experiences and other community integration activities for individuals who have not yet established specific career goals, including integration with generic senior activities for persons over age 55. Typical community activities include volunteer work at the library or a local nursing home, and involvement in community recreation activities.

A conflict noted by the president was the potential tension between the roles of caregiver and empowerer, that skills needed to address personal care or other health needs and those needed to help individuals build relationships in the community are quite different. A Certified Nursing Assistant was hired to meet self-care and other health and safety needs for individuals in the Community Connections program when they are not participating in community activities, leaving other staff free to focus on community integration and volunteer opportunities.

Four or five Community Connections program participants typically spend some time during the day on-site at the administrative offices. The site was established at the administrative offices because staff acknowledged this aspect of the program does not address community integration and personal growth needs in a valued way. They wanted to be reminded of that through the daily presence of these consumers and have been searching for ways to reduce the amount of time spent at the office site.

**Career Development and Job Placement:** The career development division provides job support both to service customers in Bonney owned businesses and in community jobs. Two individuals on the supported employment staff are responsible for job

development, although one was only recently hired to focus on the school-to-work transition program. Conversations with the senior staff member in this role revealed her preference for developing mechanisms to interact naturally with employers versus conducting “cold calls”. Like the president, she described her involvement with the local Chamber of Commerce and other attempts to connect with employers through common interests, such as a seminar on quality management:

*I like to find out more informally about potential employers, like the kinds of supports they would offer their employees, do they engage in company-sponsored events like softball games, picnics, etc.? I have interviewed some employers that I just did not get a good feel about by soliciting this information. If I find a place where I wouldn't want to work, why would I want to help someone else get a job there?*

Although only five individuals were employed by other community businesses at the time of the site visit, as many as eight or nine have been in the past. The need to increase employment in businesses not owned by Bonney Enterprises was articulated throughout the interviews. As the job developer stated, “Potentially, the way I see it, everyone working in one of our businesses could work elsewhere.”

In general, the agency philosophy has focused on developing natural supports at the job sites rather than providing intensive on-site training by agency staff. This worked extremely well in one business until the Manager was replaced. Several other human service agencies had also placed consumers in this business. Some of the agencies provided more extensive on-site training and supports, leading the new manager to begin to expect this service. According to the job developer, “The new manager wants me to do one-on-one training with an employee who has been there five years and knows the job as well as I do.” Still, other job sites were described where employers took ownership and did not desire much direct intervention from agency staff. Concerns about Bonney's emphasis on natural supports, such as the possibility that a job could fall apart more quickly, were raised in discussions with staff from one of the funding agencies, although no specific instances were mentioned. Alternatively, conversations with an employer showed a high level of satisfaction with the manner in which agency staff maintained contact with him.

### **History of the Conversion to Integrated Employment**

In 1987 the agency's board and staff set a goal to close the segregated facility and replace it with employment, volunteer work, or other community activities by 1991. According to the agency president, “The purpose was about everyone having a choice to make a meaningful contribution, not about closing the facility. This allowed us to be more creative . . . The money available through the statewide systems change grant was an incentive but not enough to complete the changeover. I think we changed in spite of the system not because of the system.” As the closure deadline of October, 1991 approached, two subcontracts with Hewlett-Packard were replaced with jobs in the company for some service customers.

Impetus for the conversion to integrated services initially came from the president, who joined the agency in 1986. He was hired to bring more production work into the

workshop. Once that goal was accomplished, he began to focus on integrated services. Staff and board planning retreats were held early in the process, and, ultimately, the changeover goal was owned across these groups. According to one board member, "I think people could see that the kind of repetitive work that was happening at the center wasn't really leading people anywhere . . . I think maybe we were ripe for it then." The process was driven by an emphasis on clear values, as articulated by the president, "At both the board and staff levels, the question was: 'What is the right thing for the people that we serve?' Not whether we were going to do it or could get there from here. We had agreed on [the conversion] based on our values . . . and on results that we had seen." Relationship-building with a variety of individuals and groups (e.g., family members, residential providers, funding agencies) was pointed out as critical to the ultimate success of the closure process.

Bonney Enterprises did receive funds from the Oregon supported employment systems change project to support conversion activities. These funds were consistently characterized as helpful, but as not representing a significant factor in the organization's decision to convert programs.

The workshop closure date was set for October 31, 1991, and was marked by a celebration ceremony and the burning of simulated work in the workshop parking lot. The workshop closure proceeded despite a variety of unresolved issues. For example, as the closure celebrations were proceeding on schedule, the president was still negotiating on the telephone for a site for the packaging business. Although they had considered continuing to lease part of the workshop space for administrative offices or the packaging business, these ideas were discarded due to the stigma associated with the building. This willingness to take risks was an integral part of the process throughout.

The bakery and bookbindery were purchased to facilitate the workshop closure, whereas the pastry cart and courier businesses were established more recently. Other businesses are being considered, although recent attention appears focused on expanding job placements within other community businesses (a result of the organization's ongoing vision development and planning process).

## **Organizational Structure and Evolution**

The staff role in the change process evolved from participation in planning to maintaining a critical role in managing the businesses and departments via self-directed teams. Staff independence has increased over time through concerted efforts by the president to loosen his direction. The principles of continuous quality improvement have been used as a guiding philosophy to increase the input of all staff into organizational decision-making. These principles are grounded in the concept that the quality of a "product" (or, in this case, service) is directly related to the extent to which all employees are truly invested in and responsible for the outcomes. Moreover, quality improvement is a constant, ongoing activity. Training and a vigorous program of self-improvement are key to the development of leadership, which is critical to helping people do a better job. Driving out fear is another essential organizational activity, so that everyone may work effectively for the organization.

A number of events and activities help to amplify this process. Planning retreats began when the changeover decision was being made but became a more integral part of the organizational evolution after the workshop had closed. Moreover, the staff role in planning and running these meetings has increased markedly. The president remarked, "At first, I pretty much planned it and ran it. As the organization changed, we ended up with teams of people who developed the agenda. This year, I wasn't involved in planning the agenda at all. The retreat committee did it all." The annual retreat also represents some of the most successful involvement of service customers, who are invited to participate along with employees without disabilities not considered part of the social service "staff". Staff are currently examining other ways to involve service customers in the management of the organization in a meaningful way. For instance, service customers at Taylor Street Ovens have contributed to some of the self-management team meetings, although mechanisms for making this involvement more meaningful are still being examined.

Self-managed teams represent the heart of the participatory management model at Bonney Enterprises and are in various stages of being implemented across the agency. In two cases (the greenhouse and supported employment department), management positions were eliminated when the current manager left the agency. The overall goal is to have a flatter organizational management structure. The Training Director commented, "You can do self-directed work teams and still have a supervisor. Most places do. It's hard not to have a supervisor and be a self-directed team until everyone has the skills to do what needs to be done. My guess is that took a year and a half to two years." Teams that do not have managers are facilitated by the president or by the Training Director. The teams develop their own budgets, set strategic planning goals, and develop quality indicators with various degrees of independence (depending on where they are in their learning cycle).

The president commented about the role of facilitator,

*You can have a self-managed team with or without a manager. The role of the manager needs to change if you still have a manager or supervisor, and if you don't, you need somebody to fill that role. It's to help them get through the process of decision making, somebody to make sure the team meets and gets through the meetings effectively and who has the tools they need to make decisions. That people's niches are understood, and if there is a process that needs to be developed, somebody who is able to say, 'Wait a minute!' A hundred things need to be available, but it is a support role, rather than a directing one . . . I facilitate the Supported Employment Department team for a number of reasons. Some by default, because there wasn't anyone else. And also because of my stake in that department -- I am concerned about that getting lost in all the businesses, and that is kind of the heart of who we are. It is also one of the toughest departments to work with. Because they don't have a clear product, some of the issues are harder.*

He also talked about the challenges of developing the self-managed team when a manager leaves the organization,

*Not having all of that support built in, but just starting with the manager leaving, it is a real challenge to implement something like that. The textbooks around self-managed teams would not necessarily suggest that you get rid of your department*

*manager to implement the process, but we viewed this an opportunity to get the team to move forward. When I'm asked to speak at places on self-directed work teams, I might tell people this is what we did, and I'm not going to recommend that you do that. On the other hand, if you have a manager, then you have the additional challenge of helping staff who may be more comfortable with a traditional relationship figure out, 'Gee, I have a different role in relationship to that manager,' and the manager having to figure out they have a different role. In some ways, the process might be slower.*

A staff member in the Supported Employment Department commented, "What we did when the manager left was get together and divide up the work load, and each person took on different things."

Another staff member described the challenge of adapting to the self-managed teams, "I was comfortable with managers -- after all, that's what I was used to. I basically had a three-step hierarchy of management. And all of a sudden, we were empowered and had to make decisions, and I'm thinking, 'I don't like this. I'm just not used to this.'" She went on to say she had grown a lot as a result of the experience, even though the process wasn't always comfortable. "It's a real supportive environment, that you can say what you would like to do and really try and make it happen."

Hiring the Training Director (who previously provided technical assistance in TQM to Bonney through the University of Oregon) represents another milestone for the agency, because the president is now able to take a more participative role in some of the management and planning activities instead of being the prime facilitator. As he acknowledged,

*Part of why I really worked to bring Karen into the organization is that I was the "expert" in quality improvement and there wasn't anybody to regenerate me and I didn't have anybody to bounce things off of. All that process stuff had to run through me, because I was the only one at the time who could figure out how to get through this thing, how to use the tools. It was too slow and cumbersome . . . Not only did I need the support, but if we were going to work on a problem, I had to facilitate the meeting . . . Also, if you are working on driving out fear with people who are used to being given orders and told what to do, the meeting will be a little bit different if I facilitate it. Karen is less threatening in some ways, because she is further removed and more objective.*

The Training Director has skills in utilizing TQM tools, and also has been training other staff to facilitate meetings. In addition, an introductory-level quality improvement training for new employees has been developed.

A process has been established for addressing performance problems, where individuals who have a problem with something a coworker does are to approach that person first to discuss the issue (using conflict resolution guidelines developed by the staff). If this is unsuccessful, a performance team exists to address the issue on a group level. Performance evaluations are handled differently by the various teams, although the primary emphasis is on professional and personal goal-setting rather than evaluation. A guiding principle is based on results of management research showing that only 7% of the

errors or problems in a business are under the control of the individual. The president remarked,

*Management controls the systems so if the individuals can actually affect 7% of the process, then we need to hold them accountable for it. But if they are not performing, is it because they are not performing, or because the system needs to be fixed? . . . When we get into a performance evaluation system, you are really evaluating the system, so what we are headed toward is not just talking with the employee about their goals, but also about how we are supporting them. Evaluate the support system as much as the employee.*

Although he was talking about staff evaluation, this philosophy also applies to the support system affecting service customers.

Another administrative change involved replacing the management team with a planning group. The most recent strategic development has been a set of planning meetings to develop a new organizational vision. This represents a critical element of the ongoing organizational development at Bonney Enterprises. As the president aptly stated,

*Changing over the workshop, we got a lot of consensus and a lot of people pulling in this direction. Then we got to this thing now that we are doing which doesn't have a nice tidy picture to it. You can't go to a book and pull it out and say this is how you do it. So, there is all this uncertainty and changing of roles. Our old structures don't work anymore. We had all this decentralization at the same time that the changeover happened. It was messy and we didn't have a new vision . . . So we started seeing turnover really increase again and some of the grumbling around the corner. What we realized was that we hadn't developed a new vision, we had just left that gap there and, without that, we didn't have consensus on what we were here to do together. So we've been working really hard this year in building a new vision. We've had three individual vision meetings and that's beyond the planning group. They had their own. Then at the retreat, we put the results together for everyone to see the feedback from the different groups, prioritize some of the vision statements, and start working on actions that relate to that.*

Major themes generated through the organization's "Visioning" process include: potentially broaden the disability categories of individuals served; enhance community involvement; create diverse job opportunities; get everyone employed in integrated, community jobs of their choosing; balance organizational emphasis on providing employment with jobs in other community businesses; and provide consultation to industry. Barriers and needs identified in relation to these priorities include freedom to choose "non-ideal" alternatives and staff periodically doing production work, among others.

### **Participant Perspectives on the Change Process**

Project staff asked Bonney Enterprises to arrange opportunities to interview representatives of each of the major constituency groups who were either involved in or affected by the process of organizational change. Some of these interviews took place in the process of visiting program sites, while others represented formal interviews. Project

staff were particularly interested in talking to individuals who had a wide variety of perspectives on and opinions about the change process, and the opportunity to sample this range of points of view was specifically requested.

**Service Customers.** Individuals with disabilities who were interviewed about the difference between working in one of the business sites and the workshop generally noted greater satisfaction with the job tasks and wages received at the businesses. One person observed that his biggest fear in leaving the old workshop was the thought of moving to a job where he couldn't take breaks. Another noted that she thought they had "kind of divided the place up into different organizations" and made the following observations about the workshop, "They did a lot of shrink wrapping there too . . . and they had different kids working there, that sometimes aren't capable of doing that kind of work." Others stated that, compared with the workshop, they preferred working in smaller, more intimate environments. A couple of individuals discussed being afraid to leave the workshop setting but were glad they had. Still others didn't remember their experience from the workshop or had difficulty making this connection to their past.

**Family Members.** Three family members were interviewed about their experiences with the agency, two of whom had experienced the changeover process. All of the parents described the current opportunities available to their son or daughter through Bonney Enterprises as positive. They cited a number of concerns of their own and others prior to the closure of the workshop including the need to adjust to different work schedules for a son or daughter living at home and concern about the way in which the changes were communicated.

One parent expressed disappointment that plans were fairly well developed before they had heard anything about the expected closure. The president explained they had believed, at the time, that it would be preferable to notify families after plans were fairly firm in order to alleviate some of the fear associated with uncertainty. Unfortunately, however, news slipped out informally prior to a reception for family members, and many heard about the proposed closure from their son or daughter. The president commented that if he were to do it over again, he didn't know whether he would wait as long to inform families.

Following the closure, one parent stated that her daughter had been employed as a janitor and was now working at the bakery. She felt she was lucky due to the level of her daughter's skills but that other parents whose children were in more subsidized positions (like the greenhouse or the Community Connections program) were concerned about potential budget problems at the state and county levels. Another parent commented that her son had participated in the Community Connections program for several years until he passed away last year. He had not participated in any formal programming for 40 years, because she didn't feel he was ready for what the workshop had to offer. She praised his growth through the volunteer activities with the Community Connections program and felt the smaller size of the program was more conducive to what he needed. He had picked up and sorted mail (a paid position) and volunteered at a nursing home where he developed a number of friends.

Another parent also discussed her daughter's experiences in the Community Connections program. Her daughter had never been in the workshop, and entered the

program upon leaving high school. She felt that her daughter had benefited greatly from participating in legitimate volunteer jobs in the community, particularly since her employment skills had not yet been identified. She is nonverbal and has difficulty walking but could push a grocery cart or a wheelchair with someone helping her guide it, which had been part of a volunteer job at the nursing home. Currently, she is volunteering at the library, where she pushes a library cart and shelves books with an aide's assistance. According to her mother,

*Things still need to be developed to make it a super notch program, but it's well on its way. This is an important option for someone who loses the sheltered workshop and is not able to find employment per se, for whatever reason. That doesn't mean they never will . . . You know maybe a job would turn up, let's say in a hospital, pushing carts down the hall . . . "*

The third parent had a daughter with autism who had lived in the state institution before moving to a group home in Corvallis and entering the sheltered workshop. She stated that prevocational training was one of the most difficult aspects of her daughter's experience in the institution:

*I realized that, quite often in those days, prevocational training didn't lead to anything. They spent their lives getting them ready for something that never happened. The combination of the sheltered workshop and the group home was a big improvement over the institution . . . Now she works in the bakery which is a big improvement over the workshop, mainly because it's a smaller place and she gets to know the other employees intimately.*

She had not been that concerned about the workshop closing, because she had felt her daughter was one of the people who might benefit from a smaller, more integrated environment.

**Residential Providers.** Response to the changeover from residential staff reflected initial fears and concerns about how they would adapt, which generally evolved to a very positive outlook. As one provider stated,

*We were excited and we thought it was a wonderful idea but we thought it was somewhat grandiose. And I can recall the convenience and how nice it was to have one place where all of our residents went to learn job skills. We were a little fearful because of the change, and the change that clients had to experience. We knew some would transition well and others would not. And that didn't come to be. In looking back on it, I think what I really appreciate is the doors that have been opened for the clients. Not just in the fact that they have opportunities to work in positions that are more suited to them but that they've had an opportunity to try a lot of different types of jobs . . . We said for a long time with one of our mutual clients that they'd never find a job for him and they did.*

She was referring to the individual with challenging behaviors who now has the courier job. She went on to state, "It became a very valuable part of his day . . . The changeover required us to initiate making changes that we didn't really want to make because it wasn't convenient. We actually went to a rotation shift in order to provide

twenty-four hour coverage in our group homes, which is now one of our most popular schedules." She also acknowledged that the changes resulted in a better working relationship between her organization and Bonney, establishing a team that is truly focused on the needs of the individual with a disability. "We continue to grow in that area where we're really talking about and looking at quality-of-life issues and choices and it's a positive change in the long run."

Another provider added, "Before we knew it, our focus had changed . . . it wasn't a matter of this is just too hard, but how are we going to do this, no matter how hard it is. It's not always easy. Staff turnover makes it very difficult for everyone. One of the things we continue to do is have liaison meetings between programs. We don't wait until the annual staff meeting or until something is a crisis." She also discussed a recent shift in her agency from group homes to individualized supported-living services, stating that they had learned from discussions with Bonney Enterprise's staff about issues encountered in shifting from more-structured, congregate programs to an individualized support model. "It's almost the same stuff. It's really interesting to sort through that together."

Recreational and socialization needs were referred to as an issue for people who secured evening jobs, and residential staff felt a heavy responsibility to address these needs. Challenges related to facilitating natural supports also were mentioned, including the fear that an individual might lose a job as a result of not receiving enough job-related supports. Yet, the residential provider noted,

*I think that's a learning experience, because then you have people who are out there on their own and doing a great job. As frightened as we were that our mutual clients were going to fall on their faces, we saw just the opposite. Self esteem started to build almost before our very eyes. And you don't normally see that kind of growth very quickly. Clients were coming home and talking about their jobs -- really talking. They weren't talking about so and so yelling at them at the workshop but they were talking about what they learned today . . . Actually they were fitting into the world.*

Residential service providers indicated that a number of factors influenced Bonney's successful transition including an overall vision, a committed staff, good internal and external communication, and public education efforts. One provider highlighted the importance of external communication, noting "It's not that you want other people telling you how to do the change process, but you want to share in the procedure, because people who aren't buying into the change can sabotage it."

**Funding Agencies.** Changeover issues emphasized by representatives from the state Vocational Rehabilitation and MR/DD agencies included the importance of parental involvement, access to transportation resources, the need for a "back up plan" for individuals who may lose their jobs, and the importance of judicious use of natural supports. State VR agency staff noted that state dollars were available to support the changeover, but that their agency was not actually responsible for it. They had been concerned that some individuals might be left without supports once the workshop closed. There was acceptance of the idea that when someone wants to change jobs "we really have to problem solve and find something else and, over time, I think we're getting

better and better at this . . . Whereas before, when they were in a group. . you kind of just had them do a different job (in the same location)."

Funding agency representatives also substantiated comments that fewer public financial resources currently exist to develop innovative programs. One individual voiced concerns related to a potential decrease in funding for the Community Connections program, "Because it's a difficult population to work with, I don't think we have all the correct answers. I'd like to see something different but I'm not able to fund that or orchestrate that or have the mechanism to do that." In general, funding agency staff appeared more concerned about the stability of the placements than about the level of integration in businesses such as Colorwheel Gardens and Packaging Plus.

**Board Members.** Board members emphasized the role of the president in the change process and the need to focus on the broad aspects of Bonney Enterprises as a business. Board members repeatedly mentioned the importance of a strong president with good leadership skills and the ability to operate on the cutting edge. They also discussed the dual priorities that both the board and the president must be able to respond to in affecting change: "The president must be able to deal both with the business and the social service aspects of the organization. Tim's ability to deal with these two different aspects is what helped us succeed. I don't think we could have done it without this combination."

The board must also be able to adopt this dual perspective. As one member observed, "Coming into this organization, although it's still somewhat oriented to social service issues, it is also a business . . . These are changes that a board member might have to make as they make the transition into community jobs -- they have to be more business oriented." The importance of board flexibility and willingness to take risks was also emphasized. Bonney Enterprises hired a supported employment program director when there was no clear funding for the position because they were willing to take a risk and hoped that by the end of the fiscal year a funding mechanism would be available. Finally, board members echoed agency staff in their self criticism of Bonney's performance in developing individual jobs.

**President.** The president described a strong consensus about the changeover among board members and staff, which he partly attributed to a participative and self-evaluative organizational culture. "It wasn't so wonderful what we were doing before. We didn't have this nice workshop. Our consumers didn't value it either." Staff ratios in the workshop were 1 to 10, work was sporadic and the available jobs were not suited for everyone. The president perceived the changes as being good for staff as well as service customers. He remarked that staff were specifically asked what they would like for themselves. A staff person who had been with the organization for 18 years was a production manager when the changeover process started. Her current position is to support the businesses by helping them fine-tune their systems; this involves learning about each operation and its accompanying challenges.

The president observed that "Our changeover was approached generally as a business venture, although we also intended to incorporate all the positive aspects of human service management into this venture. We did, however, have doubts about whether we were on the right path and the system wasn't reinforcing us for some of this stuff. There was a lot of support among the board for trying something different."

County and state funding was not perceived as playing a significant role in the change process. The president noted that while the Vocational Rehabilitation agency became more involved with the organization as a result of supported employment, the amount of money involved is still minimal. As of 1995, they receive only \$5000-\$7000 annually from VR. With respect to state MR/DD services, he noted, "The intention faded, the momentum faded, and there were always mixed messages."

Clear goals and values lead to conscious decisions not to invest resources in maintaining and developing the workshop prior to closure. The president emphasized that "One of the things that we tried to do in the changeover is base decisions and changes on where we were going, not on where we were. And so, we would make budgetary decisions based on this. I've talked about this a lot, about not fixing up the workshop, not developing better simulated work, even though in the meantime, it might be nice to have something like that, but we got good at calling a spade a spade and acknowledged that wasn't what we wanted to be doing."

Simultaneously Bonney Enterprises was willing to take risks to ensure that resources that supported the changeover were in place. "We hired a Supported Employment Director and hired extra staff to take people into the community, so they could learn what the individuals wanted, the individuals could learn more, and we could make some better decisions about how to find a round hole for that round peg, instead of trying to squeeze him into a square hole." Staff recruitment was one area in which risk-taking was evident. The president stated that he tended to hire one more person than he thought he needed during the changeover. Moreover, his ongoing attitude toward staff recruitment is one of openness: "One of the things around recruitment that we worked on was looking for talented people to bring into the organization all the time. Not really based on having a position open . . . But if we find somebody who wants to sign up and be part of our organization, who has the sort of qualities we're looking for, generally we'll try and find a way to bring them into the organization."

In response to a funding agency representative's criticism of their use of natural supports, the president noted, "I think they thought initially we were doing that because it saved us money. I think they thought it was a financial decision, rather than a values decision, when actually it was all about how to have a higher quality employment situation . . . what we are trying to do is to set up a natural connection between an employer and an employee that uses the employer's practices and gives control to the employer . . . It is exactly like I characterize my change of giving away control in the self-managed teams." However, he also admitted there may have been times when they could have responded more quickly to an employment situation.

The importance of communicating with external organizations and families was emphasized during all of the interviews. The president described this process from his perspective, "We've worked on relationship building a great deal. We've been more successful with some and less with others, depending on the relationships. In the early consensus-building meetings with group homes, the direct service staff bought into that very readily because they saw the same things that we did for these individuals. As things got more complicated and supervisors got involved with caboshing this and that, we had to work on this relationship stuff in earnest."

When asked about consumer response to leaving the workshop, the president mentioned that a few did leave and go to another segregated setting. However he added,

*There were a couple of people who were a little hesitant, but you know, I hear a lot of workshop people ask, 'but what about those people who don't want to go?' Well it's only how you ask. So you offered them a job in the community and they didn't want to do it, (so you assume), 'I guess they want to stay in the workshop -- maybe they don't want to do something else.' But how much fear came from people other than them? You know if they heard a residential provider state their fear, or a parent state their fear, how much of it actually came from that person (with a disability)? I don't really remember anybody resisting. I think of April as the person I remember being fearful. She was always slow to want to change and take risks and the first step was for her to go out to work at Hewlett-Packard (when the contract was moved there), because it was a lot like what we were doing at the facility . . . So that was a chance for April to stretch a little bit, and I thought because it was so much like what she was doing in the workshop it would be a risk that she could take. Well, we got her to agree to go one day and try it, and if she didn't like it, of course, she could come back and do something else. And then she stayed out there. And then, a year or so later, she said she didn't want to work there anymore. We were convinced it was the best place she could have ever worked.*

After trying to address different aspects of her job that they thought might be causing the problem, she still wanted to leave,

*So, finally, we helped her resign her position and she said I want to work at Taco Bell. Now, who wants to go from working at Hewlett-Packard to Taco Bell, for crying out loud? But April did. So we helped her apply and basically she got a job at Taco Bell. Well, what happened is she skipped over the fear stage somehow in all of this because we got her to go to Hewlett-Packard, and then she didn't want to work there anymore. But she never talked about going back to the workshop, it was to another job. She had broken that tie and also had seen her friends get jobs, and that is what they were talking about."*

He also commented that they arranged for people who were working in the community to come back and visit the workshop in order to visit friends they may have lost contact with, and to help other people in the workshop see the kinds of experiences that were available to them. "I mean it was just kind of understood that this is where everybody is going and you want to be doing the same sort of things. It wasn't like we told them so much as their friends would talk about their experiences." With respect to consumers who couldn't verbalize what they wanted, the process was more difficult, because staff had to interpret what they wanted. However, as the president noted, "I think we heard that people were happier than where they were in the first place."

Customer satisfaction was a theme emphasized in discussions with the president. He talked about a quality improvement project which revealed that "some internal customers were dissatisfied some of the time and when we got down to what the root cause of that was, both staff and service customers with disabilities were dissatisfied . . . about the same things. It was the lack of assistance to allow people to move (into different positions based on their preferences) . . . We knew that choice and being able to flow between the

businesses and the supported employment department needed to be part of that model but we didn't have it all laid out." He noted they were further along in the process and ready to implement a customer satisfaction survey that would measure job satisfaction and preferences in a systematic manner, instead of waiting for an individual to complain or for a crisis to develop.

**Bonney Enterprises Staff.** Staff comments around the changeover process related more to what might be considered ongoing program development issues than to conversion of the workshop, in part because many of them were not present during that period. However, one staff member commented about the workshop, "As far as work went in the workshop, it was really sporadic, and even when we had an abundance, it just wasn't suited for everyone. We did the best we could, but the reality was that we had deadlines. Usually the most productive people would work on the jobs . . . When Tim first started talking about converting to supported employment, he came out on the floor and talked with different supervisors . . . There was a concern on my part, but I didn't feel real threatened."

A second staff member who has been there for 18 years described her experience with the organization: "When I first started they were making scrubbies for dishwashing and doing baskets. So, our job was to teach people appropriate skills. In the late 1970's, we started doing subcontract work . . . Then I became a Production Coordinator. So, my job was half production and half skill training. Then, when we converted, I began to work more directly with the businesses to help them."

The supervisor of the landscape business commented that the operation had become more business-like since the conversion. Before the changeover, employees were more reluctant to go to work when the weather was bad; now they are more likely to view it as a job responsibility. Another staff member reflected about the overall process of change, "You can't ever just get locked into one thing, because as soon as you do, we go a different direction. So I've learned to enjoy that, and become as time goes by more flexible . . . if things weren't working, there was a lot of support, and the way that we handled it, we looked at it as . . . an opportunity for change and growth . . . instead of dwelling on the negative part, looking at the positive part and seeing it as a chance to make things better. And that's the focus that we keep."

**Employer Advisory Board.** The organization has an active Employer Advisory Board that originated from a meeting to discuss the needs of students transitioning from school. The president maintains direct involvement in this committee, reflecting the organization's emphasis on networking and resource development, and views his role as facilitating, rather than guiding, the group. The committee has established a process for contacting other employers regarding their willingness to interview a service customer for a potential job. There is also a mechanism for communicating with staff from the provider agency and for making follow-up contact with the employer. The long-term vision is to offer the advisory board's expertise to other service providers.

The Employer Advisory Board has taken a proactive role in initiating outreach and influencing Bonney's approach to business. One member of the board said,

*My expertise is only that I am an employer and can offer my experience to other employers, things they might want to be concerned about, etc. If I were just your normal employer out there and I tried to hire someone with a disability and it isn't quite working, I may feel that I am failing. The Employer's board allows them to contact another employers and discuss the issues, to provide a sounding board, especially for new employers . . . My biggest pet peeve about service providers is the need to stay in contact. One agency I worked with, the person I had been in contact with left and never informed me of that. Now, Bonney works just the way I want them to. The only thing to add is that maybe certain providers should start asking more questions. Don't tell the employer how to work things; he'll tell you what he needs to make it work.*

In February of 1993, the Employer Advisory Board sent a survey to 450 employers in the area which focused on their attitudes toward hiring individuals with disabilities. Thirty-five percent of the sample of employers responded, with highest percentage of respondents (49%) answering "yes" to the following statement, "You believe employing a person with disabilities will create more work for supervisors and coworkers." On the other hand, anecdotal responses described many positive experiences related to employing persons with disabilities.

Finally, the Manager of Maintenance Services at the University described the social inclusion of a service customer he supervises, "He's quite well known, and as classes change, the new students know who he is. He's a guy who had enough courage to go up to a brand new coach to see if it would be okay if he attended practice. He's got jerseys, jackets, all kinds of stuff from the athletic department. I am just waiting for him to meet the new basketball coach, because I would like to get tickets!"

**External Resources.** The president and staff received technical assistance from consultants at the University of Oregon around implementing TQM principles in a human service setting. This has included ongoing meetings with a group of providers from around the country who are attempting to implement the same model. Utilization of this technical assistance and the addition of one of the University trainers to the staff of Bonney Enterprises a year and a half prior to the site visit seem to have made a substantial impact on the growth and empowerment of both staff and service customers.

### Critical Themes in the Change Process

The change process at Bonney Enterprises as remembered in these interviews reflects clearly defined organizational values, strong support for the direction of the organization across all major constituency groups, and the presence of a leader with a strong vision for both change and for the development of a participatory management structure. While actual closure of the workshop was almost 4 years prior to this site visit, there was very little evidence of disagreement or conflict during the closure process. The major factors cited as influencing the change process were also primarily internal to the organization, although Bonney invests heavily in external input, such as through consultation from the University of Oregon and through its employer advisory board. External influences such as funding and the priorities of funding agencies were described primarily as having a neutral impact on Bonney's changes. This section will review significant factors and themes

which appear to have influenced the closure of the workshop and the continued evolution of the organization.

### **Theme 1: Strong Individual Leadership**

A common theme in the literature on organizational change is the presence of a strong leader who sets organizational values and direction. Members of every constituency group indicated that the leadership of the president was the most significant factor in initiating and implementing the change process. The president's ability to stimulate and nurture consensus around a shared vision for the organization is one part of this role. Bonney Enterprises maintained a clear focus on the goal throughout the change process, while simultaneously providing substantive opportunity for participation in defining the path to that goal.

### **Theme 2: Clear Connection between Organizational Vision and Decisions about Resource Allocation and Priorities**

The organization at all levels reflected a clear and shared vision regarding the goals and values of the organization. This is particularly apparent in the establishment of clear benchmarks for the change process, and in the specific decisions made during and following the change. These include the establishment and willingness to set a firm date for the closure of the workshop, the shifting of resources away from the workshop during the period prior to its closure, and the decisions to not fill supervisory positions in the small businesses in order to advance the emphasis on participatory management.

The foundation for this connection was the presence of a clear value base and vision for the future. This value base was internally driven, with a broad consensus about both the goals and direction of the organization. While supporting the change, external factors such as state agency priorities or funding apparently had minimal effect on the goals and decisions made by staff and board members. The commitment to a shared vision is also evident in the organizational investment in an ongoing visioning process.

### **Theme 3: Separation of Business and Human Service Functions**

Bonney Enterprises maintains a clear separation between the roles and functions required to run the small businesses and the tasks of individual support and case management for their service customers. This theme includes a strong value for the expertise of business personnel both in Bonney businesses and external companies, and for the capacity of businesses in general to support individuals with disabilities. This theme is reflected in the distinction made in both job roles and benefits between staff and employees, and in the use of specialized resources such as a certified nursing assistant to address the self care needs of service customers. The president also repeatedly indicated concern about "contaminating" employers by overemphasizing disability issues.

### **Theme 4: High Tolerance for Risk Taking**

A number of respondents discussed situations where Bonney Enterprises took risks in its decision making in order to advance the change process. These included hiring individuals for positions that did not have long term support, maintaining the deadline for workshop closure despite not having space established for one of the small businesses,

and the investment in small businesses. Both the president and board members indicated that these were risks assumed consciously as organizational decisions. Tolerance for risk taking exists as a cultural value at both an organizational and individual level. Individual staff emphasized repeatedly their own decisions to take risks in the roles they assumed in the organization during the change process, and changes in their comfort with risk taking.

### **Theme 5: Entrepreneurial Culture**

Related to the high tolerance for risk taking has been an emphasis on encouraging entrepreneurial activity at all levels of the organization. In giving individual staff greater autonomy in managing their businesses or activities, the organization has also explicitly encouraged and reinforced an emphasis on seeking business opportunities. This emphasis may be viewed as both one of Bonney's greatest strengths, but also has the capacity to be in conflict with its core mission to support individual employment outcomes.

### **Theme 6: Establishment of Free-standing Businesses to Provide Employment and Revenue**

Bonney Enterprises invested a significant level of organizational resources in the procurement and development of a network of small businesses. This strategy has both supported and impeded the ability of Bonney to meet its overall organizational goals. The businesses, and in particular Taylor Street Ovens and B & J Bookbinding, provide a range of interesting employment opportunities, and contribute to the ability of Bonney to meet its closure deadline. At the same time the businesses were cited as restricting opportunities for inclusion and choice in several cases, and the resource investment has significantly slowed Bonney's ability to develop individual community jobs for service customers. At the time of the visit only 5 individuals were working in paid community employment outside of the businesses.

A potential drawback to this approach is the fact that the human service organization controls the employment of persons with disabilities for whom it also provides supports. Yet, by establishing its own businesses, the organization had a great deal of control over the facility-closure deadline and over their ability to offer supports in more integrated settings. The businesses also provide greater control over their total income stream.

### **Theme 7: Emphasis on External Relationships and Community Connections**

Despite relying on internally defined values to drive the change process, Bonney Enterprises maintained a strong outward focus that recognized the value of learning from and maintaining alliances with external resources. These alliances included the use of external resources for training and technical assistance such as the relationship with the University of Oregon for training in Total Quality Management, use of the employer advisory board, and Bonney's relationship with residential service providers. Outreach is also evident in other areas, such as the orchid grower who works with Colorwheel Gardens.

### **Theme 8: Emphasis on Individual Relationships and Natural Supports**

Bonney Enterprises is also cognizant of the role of Community Connections for its service customers. On several occasions staff discussed the importance of the physical

location of businesses. At Taylor Street Ovens, efforts were made to reach out to other businesses through sharing extra baked goods, and the bindery was relocated next to a book shop. While not central to the change process, Bonney staff emphasized the significance of the decision to emphasize natural supports in employment as part of their service delivery strategy.

### **Theme 9: Participatory Management Model**

One of the primary strategies for establishing consensus has been a focused effort to implement a participatory management model that occurred concurrent with the implementation of the workshop closure. Elements of this emphasis are reflected a variety of ways. Bonney Enterprises has invested significant resources and time in training and technical assistance for staff on team process and decision making. This emphasis was also reflected in hiring a staff person from the University of Oregon as Training Director for the organization. It has also been implemented in direct ways as the organization works to flatten itself. A flatter organizational structure has been identified by a number of writers as an effective management approach in supported employment. Bonney has chosen to eliminate supervisory positions as staff members leave, in an effort to address this goal, and has implemented self-managed work teams as an alternative structure.

### **Current Organizational Challenges**

The process of organizational change has been a continuous one for Bonney Enterprises, characterized by a culture that encourages self criticism and entrepreneurialism. Most of the organizational challenges indicated in this case study have also been identified by staff and employees as part of a long term emphasis on organizational development and, in particular, a process of redefining the vision and goals of the organization that was ongoing at the time of this site visit. Particular areas of focus include the varying roles of staff and employees, the inherent tension between Bonney's roles as a business and as a caregiver, and efforts to expand individual job opportunities and integration of some of the businesses.

The varying roles and functions of staff, employees, and service customers lead at times to confusion about the roles and purpose of Bonney Enterprises as an organization. In part this reflects tension that all human service organizations experience between the role of caregiver and facilitating empowerment. On a practical level, the need to provide a safety net or place for service customers to go leads to individuals hanging out at the program offices without a clear focus.

There is also some confusion associated with the provision of social service functions within the agency's businesses. Much of it stems from their attempt to locate these capacities within the Supported Employment Department in order to allow business employees to concentrate on operational tasks. Staff acknowledge that the lines of distinction are often sometimes unclear, and coworkers or supervisors who are not considered "staff", but rather "employees" actually may be participating in individual service planning or providing other, more formal support to service customers. In some cases, employees receive higher hourly rates (depending on market conditions), whereas staff receive more substantial benefits. The president acknowledged that the situation was murky, stating, "When you get people doing a little of this, and a little of that, all those

boundaries that I've been talking about (are less clear), and you start to get a sense of why we have to undo some of that."

Some service customers employed by other community businesses get paid by Bonney Enterprises rather than through the employer. Although a service customer survey revealed they did not care who issued the check, the arrangement disqualifies them from receiving the same benefits as other employees.

Inclusion and the opportunity for meaningful interaction with individuals who do not have disabilities remains a challenge. Although the organization has closed its sheltered workshop, two of the businesses provide minimal integration or interaction with other employees without disabilities. This situation was acknowledged by a number of staff as needing attention. Furthermore, only 5 individuals were employed by other community businesses (although several more had been previously). Both board and staff members expressed a desire to increase these numbers. The Community Connections program (primarily nonwork services) offers some interesting volunteer options for persons who have not yet identified their own career goals. However, there were minimal activities available during the time spent in the administrative office area, where a core group of four or five typically were present. Issues related to this aspect of the program were acknowledged by the president. At the same time, state budget problems may threaten continuation of the program in its present form, which would be unfortunate, as several parents praised the growth of their children who have participated in this service.

In general, funding for employment or vocational services presently appears tenuous in Oregon. The state MR/DD agency has reduced their financial support of integrated employment, and state VR funds remain relatively flat. One of the goals generated during the visioning process is to decrease reliance on state funding, another advantage of operating the agency businesses. The president also noted a disparity between regulations enforced by the state mental health agency and the agency's goal of developing innovative services responsive to individual needs.

## Conclusion

Bonney Enterprises has weathered the process of closing a sheltered work activity program and establishing integrated employment and nonwork services for individuals with very significant disabilities. This has been accomplished, in part, using a participatory management model fueled by TQM principles which engender respect and empowerment for both employees and service customers. The values that comprise the bedrock of this model have generated an organizational atmosphere which is open, nonthreatening, and growth-enhancing. The current focus on developing a "new vision" underscores the lack of complacency. As such, their experiences and practices have much to offer other human service providers considering conversion. And yet, they offer much more, because workshop closure represents only a first step in what is becoming a significant and far-reaching process of change within a human service organization supporting individuals with disabilities.



## Chapter 3

### **United Cerebral Palsy Association of the Capitol Area<sup>4</sup> Austin, Texas**

Date of Site Visit: October, 1995

Sheila Fesko  
Martha J. McGaughey

#### **Description of the Organization**

United Cerebral Palsy Association of the Capitol Area (UCPA) began as an adult day care program for individuals with physical disabilities, and has expanded to provide supported living, supported employment, community integration services, and architectural barrier removal services. It has grown from a staff of 8 and a budget of \$80,000 in 1969 to over 115 employees and a budget of \$5.6 million. The mission of UCPA of Capitol Area is to "support community integration for persons with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities." In addition to individuals with physical disabilities, UCPA serves individuals with cognitive and sensory impairments. UCPA is also an affiliate of the national organization United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc.

UCPA is located in Austin, Texas, which is the state capitol. Austin proper has approximately one half million residents with an additional half million people living in outlying counties. UCPA serves Austin and those counties surrounding Austin. Austin has a high Hispanic population representing approximately 23 percent of Austin residents.

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#### <sup>4</sup> Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the consumers, staff, family members, board members, and other associates of United Cerebral Palsy Association of Capitol Area who participated in this site visit. Their willingness to give us as much time as we needed and to share both the celebrations and struggles of the change process allows us to present this complete picture of their experience in closing down an adult day care program and creating opportunities for employment in the community. We would particularly like to thank Norman Kieke, UCPA's Executive Director, who hosted our visit and all of the UCPA staff who helped coordinate interviews and opportunities to learn from them.

Approximately 55 percent of the individuals served by UCPA are Hispanic. In their original office space UCPA was based in a primarily Hispanic section of town, but moved out of this area when they moved to larger offices. The executive director expressed concern about moving out of the community and hopes that eventually the agency can establish a branch office back in this neighborhood.

The following services are currently provided by UCPA of the Capitol Area. See Table 3.1 for additional project description information.

**Central Texas Accessible Design Alliance.** The Architectural Barrier Removal Program began in 1980 and is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. They provide modifications to 220 homes per year within the City of Austin. On average, these home modifications cost approximately \$1,000 per home. This project also provides home modifications for individuals who are served under the Medicaid waiver in the CLASS project. In October of 1995, they began a new grant where in addition to their work in home modifications in Austin, they will be able to work with individuals in six outlying counties. Covering this additional area has provided an impetus for the name change to Central Texas Accessible Design Alliance. There are three staff persons who work on this project, and they have a waiting list of up to one year for services.

**Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS).** The CLASS project is a Medicaid waiver funded program and provides home and community-based services to individuals who previously resided in or who may be at risk of being placed in institutions. Ninety people are served annually including thirty-seven children and fifty-three adults. Consumers of CLASS services are supported by a habilitation trainer who helps them with living skills, budgeting their money and shopping, and using public transportation. The Medicaid waiver also allows participants to access additional services such as therapy, counseling, nursing, respite, adaptive equipment and minor home modifications. Some individuals from this project are also employed and receive support from employment staff. There is a five to seven year waiting list for these services.

**Austin Community Integration Services (ACIS).** The ACIS program provides a broad range of services which include supported community integration, supported living, and community group activities. There are ten people who receive supported living services under this project. The ACIS program works with four new people each year as they continue to provide follow-up services to those already served. Individuals who receive day services through this program participate in volunteer jobs and community group activities that include one staff person and three or four consumers. In the past, a project known as Community Connections was a part of this program. Community Connections was a one-to-one service where an individual received assistance in becoming better integrated into their community through activities that interested them. The funding for Community Connections has ended, although there is interest in obtaining alternate funding in order to offer this service again.

**Table 3.1**

**Project Descriptions  
United Cerebral Palsy of the Capitol Area**

Note: This table is based on projects at the time of the site visit in October, 1995.

	<b>Number of Consumers Served *</b>	<b>Number of Staff</b>	<b>Project Start Date **</b>
<p><b>Central Texas Accessible Design Alliance</b> Housing counseling provides information on accessible housing for persons with mobility impairments. The program also renders homes barrier-free. The service is available to eligible City of Austin residents who meet program eligibility.</p>	320	5.5	10/79
<p><b>Austin Community Integration Services (ACIS)</b> Provides a wide array of services for adults with severe disabilities including supported employment, supported community integration, supported living, and community activity groups.</p>	40	6	10/91
<p><b>Austin Supported Employment and Rehabilitation Technology (ASERT)</b> Supported employment program for adults with developmental disabilities. Provides individual job placement in the community, job-site modification, job training and related supports for the individual.</p>	50	8.5	5/91
<p><b>Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS)</b> The CLASS program provides home and community-based services to people with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities. Services may include habilitation, attendant services, respite care nursing, psychological assistance, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, adaptive aids, and minor home modifications.</p>	90	120***	2/91

**Notes**

- \* Person with disabilities and their families are also served through the Information, Referral and Follow Along service as well as advocacy efforts. (500+ per year)
- \*\* Start dates do not reflect the historical presence of UCPA in central Texas. The chart represents the start dates for current services.
- \*\*\* These are not all full-time employees.

**Austin Supported Employment and Rehabilitation Technology (ASERT).** ASERT provides community employment services for individuals with disabilities. Since the inception of the program in 1991, ninety individuals have been served and continue to receive follow-up services on their jobs. The ASERT project is currently funded by two federal grants from the Department of Education. The Projects with Industry (PWI) grant is for people with physical disabilities who have at least a high school education. The PWI grant also focuses on assisting people with career development. An Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) grant funds services for individuals with more limited educational backgrounds. Individuals served through the OSERS grant are also identified as having more significant disabilities. The goals for the two grants call for twenty-seven individuals to enter competitive employment each year. Nine staff work in ASERT and there is currently a twenty person waiting list for services. During the upcoming year, the ASERT program will begin to take fee-for-service payments for individuals who need placement services but can not be served under the grant due to limited resources.

When an individual is referred to the ASERT program for services, employment staff will meet with them for up to twenty hours to get a true sense of the individual, their interests and their goals before they start job development. A vocational profile is used to gather information about the person's likes and dislikes. A planning meeting is held with the consumer, and in most cases his/her family and friends, to help define their goals and determine what resources may be available to help with the job search. The intention of the vocational profile and planning meetings is to ensure that job development is participant driven.

UCPA has made a commitment to doing personal future's planning with the consumers of their services. Personal future's planning is a person-centered planning process. This planning process is required in the CLASS program. Employment staff explain that their program "uses a modified futures plan to develop the vocational profile. They use it really to gather information about the network, and who can we pull into this employment process." The use of this planning approach is heralded by employment staff as well as by funding representatives for developing a more holistic sense of the individual.

Consumers are involved in the job search process with the employment staff and the nature of involvement is individualized. Once they have obtained employment, a job coach is hired to provide training on the job, if appropriate. The job coach is contracted to work with a specific individual at their work site and is not a part of the regular UCPA staff. The employment staff person is responsible for supervising the job coach and maintaining contact with the employer and consumer to ensure that the job is working out.

The job coach may also assist the individual in learning the public transportation system to get to their job. There is a Special Transit System that can provide transportation for individuals who are unable to use public transportation, however, this is not available in all areas and there can be an extensive waiting period to receive this service.

### **Administrative Structure**

The organizational chart for UCPA (See Figure 3.1) lists consumers at the head of the table with the executive director and Board of Directors reporting to them. The executive

director has been with UCPA since 1969 (for one year), a second year in 1973, and returning for good in 1979. He became executive director in 1984. There are three other top-level management staff. The Program Director is responsible for overseeing all programs and program administration, grant writing, and community outreach. There is also a Development Director, who is responsible for fundraising, community education and outreach, and a Financial Director.

The management team meets every two weeks and includes the executive director, Program Director, Development Director, Financial Director, directors of the four programs, and the Office Manager. Everyone on the management team, except the executive director, meet for a supervisor's meeting which is held over lunch and is primarily an opportunity to discuss supervisory issues. There are multiple teams that cross over project lines and are intended to bring diverse staff together and offer them a role in the overall organization. These teams include the interview team, computerization team and accessibility team. When new staff are brought into the organization, the orientation includes meeting with all management team members, who provide basic agency information as well as background on the philosophy which drives services.

### **History of the Conversion to Integrated Employment**

United Cerebral Palsy Association of the Capitol Area was originally incorporated in 1957 as United Cerebral Palsy of Texas. During the 1950's, there were philosophical differences among members of the Board of Directors, with some wanting to focus on adult services and others on children's services. The groups split, with UCPA focusing on adult services and a second group forming a child development center that ultimately merged with Easter Seals. The Easter Seals program worked with the school district and school children and individuals who moved to one of several sheltered workshops after completing school. In 1969, UCPA received Title XX funding from the Texas Department of Human Services to develop an adult day care program to serve the individuals who had severe disabilities and were felt to be unable to benefit from sheltered workshop services or who could not enter workshops due to extensive personal support needs.

There were multiple factors that contributed to the conversion of UCPA's adult day care services to community-based employment including philosophical changes and financial considerations. The philosophical change began as UCPA staff saw alternatives to the adult day care services they were providing. As they learned more about supported employment and realized the opportunities that were available to individuals with significant physical disabilities, they began to feel they were not providing the kinds of services they wanted for their consumers. This philosophical change was lead by the executive director, who became the driving force in the conversion process. A board member credits the executive director as "managing to pull the agency forward in times of severe economic crisis".

Figure 3.1

# United Cerebral Palsy Association of the Capitol Area, Inc.

Consumers

Board of Directors

Board President

## Executive Committee (President, Officers, Immediate Past President & Committee Chairs)

- Campaign Committee
- Capital Campaign Committee
- Finance Committee
- Legislative & Consumer Affairs Committee
- Nominating Committee
- Professional Services & Program Committee
- Public Information & Education Committee

Executive Director

Development Director

- Development Coordinators
- Campaign Volunteers

Financial Director

- Financial Assistant
- Finance Volunteers
- Accounts Manager (CLASS)

Office Manager

- Receptionist/Secretary
- Secretary
- Clerical Volunteers

Programs Director

- Program Coordinator, Architectural Barrier Removal Program
  - Modification Specialist
  - Housing Counselor

- Program Coordinator, Austin Community Integrated Services
  - Community Activity Group Coordinators
  - Supported Living Specialist

- Program Co-Coordinators, Austin Supported Employment & Rehab. Technology Prog.
  - Employment Specialists

- Program Coordinator, Community Living Assistance & Support Services
  - Administrative Assistant
  - Attendant Coordinator
    - Attendants
    - Attendant Trainer
  - Adaptive Aid Specialist
    - Professional Therapists
  - Habilitation I & II Providers
  - Modification Specialist
  - Nursing Coordinator

At the same time, significant financial concerns made the executive director and Board of Directors realize they needed to change the structure and services of their organization if they were to survive. Some internal bookkeeping issues created a problematic financial situation at the same time that there was concerns about the continued availability of Title XX funds for adult day care. In 1989 UCPA began to expand into community living services through a grant in conjunction with the United Cerebral Palsy of Texas. The executive director explains this as the "first move into supportive living with some of the participants in our daycare. And once we saw the change that occurred in individuals, in some cases overnight, once they got their own home. That really fueled the fire for us and the board to continue to move in that direction. "

In 1990, UCPA received a three year demonstration grant from the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities to begin providing supported employment services to individuals served in the adult day care program. During the three years prior to the grant award, they had been discussing the use of Title VI funds for Supported Employment with the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC). During this three year period when they were working on securing funding for supported employment services, UCPA looked at other programs to help them determine service priorities. The Program Director indicated that there were specific principles that they committed to early on:

- 1) They would only provide individual placements
- 2) Placements would be within the competitive market
- 3) No placements would be at sub-minimum wage
- 4) Admission into the program would be zero-reject
- 5) They would need to provide follow-up and career development services to individuals once they obtain their jobs.

Once the funding was in place and the program was operational, some counselors from TRC were hesitant to refer people with more significant disabilities. They didn't think these individuals would be able to work in the community, but as UCPA demonstrated that they were able to obtain jobs and people were successful, supported employment referrals increased.

Title XIX (Medicaid) funding was received in 1991 along with "skeptical permission from funders of the day care to use these day care funds differently". This, in addition to the supported employment grant, was what allowed UCPA to close their adult day care center. "CLASS (Community Living Assistance and Support Services) came in the Medicaid waiver which allowed us to provide some one-on-one supports to people out in the community who were in the employment process but weren't employed yet. The Planning Council grant for supported employment came on so we could start doing employment. "

The Medicaid funded CLASS program was viewed as critical to the conversion from adult day care to community employment.

*CLASS Program was a big part of the conversion. The timing was perfect. We knew that we were going to get this grant. That people in the day care would have the option of going into the Medicaid Waiver Program and really having the opportunity to explore the community, to learn how to use their leisure time as well as to be able to have the funds to buy equipment they might need, to then consider getting into these employment programs.*

UCPA staff described themselves as being humbled when they look back at services they were providing prior to the conversion. "We felt like it was a very progressive facility for what we had and what we supported. But it's wonderful to see this change overnight in individuals, once they have their own home, and they have their own job, and start making their own friends."

In introducing the conversion from adult day care to supported employment, program staff looked at multiple ways to talk with people about the change. It had been suggested that they call a meeting to inform consumers, families, and residential staff all at once, but they opted to make the transition on a more individual basis. They began to use personal futures planning with participants in the adult day care program. When they were discussing people's dreams, it became clear to UCPA staff, consumers, and families that the dreams of individuals with disabilities were not to spend the rest of their time in the program. A staff member's recommendation to other programs interested in making the transition is:

*Don't tell people you're doing a conversion. Just use personal futures planning. Talk about people's dreams and goals. That will convert it, if you listen to what their dreams and goals are. If you really look at their lives and see how isolated they are, how impoverished they are and how they're going to continue to be, unless they have employment.*

As people began to get jobs in the community, other consumers would ask where someone had gone, and were given the opportunity to visit friends at their worksite.

UCPA staff reported that while there was initial hesitation or concern about the feasibility of converting from adult day care to community employment, there were limited barriers to the conversion process. Since the conversion was discussed with families and consumers in terms of individual choices and goals to move to the community, there was less of a sense of concern that the facility would be gone. There were some families who were anxious about the change and in some cases they decided not to continue to receive services from UCPA or decided to try community integration services through ACIS.

Prior to the conversion, 36 people were receiving services in adult day care. Two of these people decided to leave the organization entirely and go to a sheltered workshop. Thirteen people did not want to go into employment at that time and transitioned to the ACIS program (which is described in the previous section). Seven of these thirteen individuals have since moved to employment. The remaining twenty-one people from the original group in day care divided into two groups. Some elected to receive employment services in the community. Others were accepted into the CLASS program where employment services were an option.

The six individuals who were in adult day care at the conversion point, but did not want employment, are members of the community activity groups. These groups typically involve one staff person and three consumers who attend a social activity or volunteer in the community for the day. The intention is for these community groups to fade out in the next year, with all participants engaged in more individualized activities. The staff is not taking new referrals for the community groups, since they don't anticipate providing this service in the future. Some members of the community groups are looking for employment and staff describe the delay as a combination of hesitancy from families and difficulty in finding the right jobs for these individuals. "We had always envisioned the community activity groups as short term . . . for people who had the most severe disabilities while we learned how to do employment." For individuals currently served in the community groups who do not want employment, staff will work with them in defining what activities they want to engage in individually, instead of doing whatever the group decides.

**Business Advisory Council.** In 1992, UCPA developed a Business Advisory Council (BAC) to help develop their connections with community employers. A member of the Council describes their mission as,

*To be a liaison between UCPA and the business community, through our contacts and the people we know in the business community, to make introductions and try to help open doors for the employment specialists to come in and be able to tell the employers what they do, and to talk about these issues.*

There are currently 15 to 20 active members of the BAC, each of whom serves a three year term.

When they join the BAC, members agree to attend quarterly meetings, meet individually with an ASERT program participant and employment specialist once a month, and provide the participant with two business contacts per month. Activities for the monthly meetings with program participants include a social activity one month, a practice interview the second month, and a profile meeting the third month. BAC members began working individually with participants during the previous year to help increase their networking opportunities. BAC members reported liking this individual contact, since it allows them to target their business contacts to better match the individual's needs and "be part of the core team to help problem solve or create, or do whatever this participant's dream is. Become active."

When an individual becomes a council member, they are asked to sign an agreement to participate in the activities described above. For one meeting a year, BAC members are asked to bring a business associate to increase UCPA's exposure. Originally, meetings were held at UCPA or hotel function rooms, but they began rotating among employer's businesses represented on the BAC so that people in different workplaces can learn more about council activities.

The BAC has also sponsored employer luncheons around a specific topic. One luncheon included a lawyer who spoke on issues concerning the ADA and small employers, and other sessions focused on diversity. Fifty to seventy-five employers attended these sessions.

## Participant Perspectives on the Change Process

Project staff asked UCPA staff to arrange opportunities to interview representatives of each of the major constituency groups who were either involved in or affected by the process of organizational change. Some of these interviews took place in the process of visiting employment sites, while others represented formal interviews. Project staff were particularly interested in talking with individuals who had a wide variety of perspectives about the change process, and the opportunity to sample the range of points of view was specifically requested.

**Executive Director.** The impetus for change from adult day care to supported employment services came after seeing examples of successful programs at other UCPA affiliates. When staff attended national conferences and saw what other UCPA affiliates were offering in the way of supported employment, they began to re-evaluate the services they were providing. The executive director described it as "Let's tell the truth about what we're doing. People we're serving in the adult day care center are not becoming more independent . . . We're providing attendant care during the day for them in groups."

The executive director reported that staff reaction to the transition was positive with most people being excited about the possibilities. One person was laid off because his values and skills were not consistent with what they were trying to do. There was also lateral movement among the staff at that time with some people who had been providing housing services moving into employment services. Staff as well as families were concerned about how and when this change was going to be made, as one staff member observed, "we owned that we didn't know how, it was like, 'Well, we're going to figure it out as we go,' and that was real scary." The executive director felt that what "helped a lot was the staff members just being supportive of each other with the acknowledged support of the Board of Directors and working as a team to make this conversion happen."

The executive director identified two resources that were helpful in the conversion process. He stated about the UCPA national organization, "I can't speak enough about the national organization. I really am proud of the work that they do, and really appreciate the affiliation". Since UCPA of the Capitol Area is an affiliate of the national organization, they receive training resources, legislative updates, lobbying efforts and consultation services from the national association. The second resource was consultation UCPA received from Cary Griffin of the Center for Technical Assistance and Training (CTAT) at the University of Northern Colorado. He worked with staff for one year on the development of self-managing teams.

Through their affiliation with the national organization, UCPA has been able to provide training with a limited expense for their staff, as well as others in the rehabilitation community. Staff from the national office have also served as a resource around program areas or employment issues. Michael Callahan, who is on the national staff, has contact with programs throughout the country and shares national information with individual providers like UCPA. The UCPA national office also maintains a government activities staff who lobby for legislation that affects service provision, and keep the local organization informed about relevant legislation. The executive director described an "advantage of National is that we get those grant announcements probably 2-4 weeks earlier than anybody else in Austin. And many times, by the time we get the grant announcement,

we'll already know that it's coming in through talking to somebody". The National Business Advisory Council which began 18 months ago has sponsored "three teleconferences a year, and one meeting, and from that meeting they brought new ideas for us" in working with employers. Two volunteers from Austin serve on the national UCPA Business Advisory Council.

The UCPA of Capitol Area became aware of consultation services that were available with Cary Griffin (a national expert in supported employment) through the Texas Planning Council. He was able to provide one year of consultation around the development of self-managed teams. In addition to working with the management team, there were representatives from different projects who were a part of a core group that received training. Mr. Griffin worked with this core group as well as the ASERT team for two full days, every three months. He also provided "Management from Within" workshops that were open to other agencies.

The ASERT staff has implemented a self-managed team to the greatest extent within the organization. While this movement to a self-managed team has been viewed as a positive development, the executive director discussed some difficulties they have experienced. Because of the strict job descriptions established through Medicaid, this design is more difficult to establish in the CLASS program. Also, since duties are distributed by individual preferences, it is viewed as being "difficult to replace somebody when they leave, and try to find that person that's going to build that niche, or get the team back together and see how willing they are to re-define each of their roles." The executive director also reported that sometimes the direct line staff have had difficulty adjusting to this new management style. He indicates that "a lot of them, I think, didn't really believe that it was an opportunity for them to take part in decisions and to really be given some responsibility".

As the agency has grown, the executive director has been concerned about maintaining communication among staff. Since some consumers are served across projects, it is important that staff between projects work well together. There have been different in-service training sessions that cross projects and an effort has been made to keep them fun and allow people to learn in a casual and relaxed manner. For example, when a new procedure manual was developed, people were grouped in teams modeled after Family Feud, and were asked questions about what was covered in the manual. UCPA employees also take advantage of after-work Spanish or Sign Language classes offered on-site or they can elect to be part of the volleyball or softball teams.

One component that the executive director has found to be helpful in maintaining the collaboration among staff in different programs is cross-organizational teams such as the interview team and access committee. He illustrates this benefit of the interview team:

*[the]..interview team is probably one of the best integrators -- if you're one of the front-line staff people who is on the interview team, during the course of that twelve months, you're likely to hire somebody into each program. So you're going to see job descriptions and interview supervisors and learn more about the job, and what are the unwritten job duties that come up.*

As needed, organization-wide planning sessions are initiated to address current challenges and future concerns of the organization. According to the executive director,

*. . . [that] year that was the most fun, for about a month we had butcher paper on the walls in the building. And I would write topic ideas, and then people went by, they'd grab a marker and write down an idea or something. We brought in a facilitator, and he had already looked at all the butcher paper, but he came in with stickers that staff could use to vote at this retreat that we did . . . everybody got five stickers, you had a sticker with one vote, two votes, three votes, four votes, five votes. And you could put your stickers anywhere. You could put all your points on one idea. And we all voted, we took those ideas, and put the top vote-getters on the top, and developed a plan from there.*

**ASERT Direct Staff.** Employment staff were interviewed as a group and also as part of the consumer and employer visits. The majority of employment staff were not working for the organization at the time of conversion, so their perspective is based on current services. During the previous year, employment staff incorporated a self-management team approach in their division. Each employment staff person works with an average of eight consumers in job development or follow-up services. One staff person who works 25 hours a week is responsible for career enhancement services for the PWI project. She primarily assists people who are currently working but are looking to change jobs or to advance with their current employer.

The ASERT staff was able to incorporate most components of the self-managed team concept into their operation. They do have a program manager, but other aspects of program functions are decided by the team. Prior to this consultation, all of the employment staff had job descriptions that required their involvement in all aspects of employment services. Through their work with Mr. Griffin, individual strengths were identified and job functions were shifted based on the individual staff person's interest and abilities. Instead of having individual placement goals, the team now has an overall goal, and staff work together to accomplish the goal. One staff member explains the benefit of the team approach as "when it comes down to the crunch, everybody pulls in, because the bottom line is, the team wants the team to succeed." The self managed team structure allowed one staff person to negotiate her time so that she could work on writing a grant to serve a group not previously receiving support from UCPA.

When they first began to provide supported employment services, the employment staff emphasized that they provided job coaching services. As the ASERT Director illustrates, they were telling employers,

*You will get 2 for 1, you will hire this employee, and you will have two because the job coach will come to help you train this person at no cost to you. And now, we realize that this way the employer do not make a relationship with the employee or other coworkers don't get close to them; on the contrary, they see the employment specialist, the job coach, the assistive technology company coming in and surrounding that person with disabilities. And they think, why do so many people need to be around this person?*

The staff decided to move away from the job coach model when they realized employers were not making a commitment to their employees with disabilities and there was some resentment from coworkers. The Program Director described it as "job coaching issues becoming controversial. Coworkers are coming forward and asking why they can't have

someone who works along with them." While the staff is pleased with a move toward using the natural supports at the workplace instead of job coaching, there are still some employers who are aware that job coaching was provided in the past and would like that service again. Staff are also experiencing some situations where it is difficult for coworkers to take on support roles and they are struggling with how to best serve these employees with disabilities. The role of job coaching versus natural supports is a challenge to staff as they define individual support for their consumers.

Two major concerns for employment staff providing community employment services were around the availability of resources to provide follow-up services and to help individuals find replacement jobs, if they lose a job or want a job change. The current system of funding for supported employment services through the Texas Rehabilitation Commission pays for job development but not for follow-up services. The contract with TRC requires the agency to provide or arrange for follow-up services for the lifetime of the job. Staff are working with consumers to develop Plans to Achieve Self Support (PASS) to help fund the follow-up services independently. Under the grants, employment staff can assist a person in finding another job if they have lost their job or are ready for a job change. Once the fee-for-service system is utilized to a great extent, replacement jobs will need to be negotiated with TRC counselors on an individual basis. Staff were concerned about not being able to respond to individual needs because of constraints from the funding. "I think that putting people with disabilities in a box as related to employment is the reason why so many people fail, and why there is not much longevity on the job and in replacement jobs."

Employment staff have become involved and have taken a leadership role in community organizations that support employment for individuals with disabilities. A number of employment staff people are active with the Association for People in Supported Employment and this involvement has been encouraged by UCPA. An employment staff person indicated that career development opportunities are encouraged by the organization and that staff are allowed a specified amount of money per year to use for training purposes.

**Parent.** One parent described her experience in dealing with the conversion from adult day care to community integration for her daughter. She remembers her daughter's experience in adult day care:

*They did games, arts and crafts for the ones who could, they did some menial, I think, school work . . . they had a hot lunch served to them and at times they had to take their lunch . . . And we thought it was the greatest program that ever was. And then . . . it came up that they were going to change the program to what it is now. And I was really frightened. I really was. And I thought, Oh, my goodness, it's just going to be horrible. But it has been one of the best things that has ever happened to my daughter. She's just bloomed out. She's gotten more grown up so to speak. I think it's because of the association with many other people in all other capacities of life. The exposure to a lot of new things and volunteer programs that they've done.*

When asked how she first responded to the idea of closing the adult day care she, reported: "Oh, I panicked. I thought what are we going to do . . . I guess that was probably

a normal reaction because we were so used to her going there. We were in this routine. She was happy there. And you just think, oh my, I don't want to upset all this."

Her daughter has taken part in the community activity group but will be moving into employment. In the community groups, "they go to different places and do volunteer like at the food bank. They went to the heart association and they've done a lot of volunteer there". As her daughter begins the process of moving into employment, her mother explains her trepidation.

*Now, I have signed up for the work program and frankly, I'm a little bit leery about that too. But I'm sure that -- I'm willing and I'm sure that they'll find something that is appropriate for her. When you just have one child and your whole life has been taking care and providing for that one child, you're very protective and you're afraid of new things.*

Her advice to other parents concerning this type of change for their child is,

*Just don't be afraid, listen to it and with an open mind, because I kind of made up my mind, No, this isn't going to do -- no, this isn't. And it did, so I would say that enter it with an open mind and hear about it and find out if there'd be an alternate thing if this doesn't work."*

**Consumers.** Individuals who receive employment support services expressed satisfaction with their services. One individual who had previously received services in the adult day care program and was currently in ACIS reported she liked her volunteer jobs but is starting to think about getting a paid job. Several other consumers who were interviewed in their homes reported liking their jobs, though they indicated they work a limited number of hours per week and would like to increase their hours. The social components to the jobs were reported as most important to these individuals. They talked about their relationships with coworkers and supervisors as being important. Individuals who had been in adult day care, reported missing their friends from the center. They seemed to rely on the staff of UCPA to help them in maintaining relationships with other consumers. Despite the effort of the staff to encourage people to contact their friends directly, individuals continue to attempt to use UCPA as an intermediary between consumers.

Interviews were conducted with a number of individuals who had started working with UCPA after the adult day care program closed. For these individuals, the emphasis had always been on community employment. These individuals with disabilities reported satisfaction with their jobs and appreciation for the support they received from UCPA. In one case, the individual had been on the job for a brief period of time and was receiving more intense job coaching services while in another case the person was established and received only monthly follow-up contact. In either case, consumers reported that the support provided matched their needs at the time and was important in helping them maintain their jobs.

**Funding Source.** Counselors from the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) and Texas Commission for the Blind reported considerable satisfaction with the new

employment emphasis of UCPA services. One counselor describes the early movement to employment.

*What it looked like in real terms was the handful of individuals that no one else could place . . . in most instances, UCPA was able to place these folks and did very good job matches, which led to long term employment for these individuals. So my initial experiences with them were very very successful, working with what we considered the most difficult individuals that we had . . . I feel real comfortable with the placements that are made are firm placements.*

Representatives from the funding sources were not involved with UCPA when they provided adult day care services since Texas Rehabilitation Commission cannot fund this service.

The comprehensive nature of services that are provided through UCPA were also cited as being beneficial. Through the personal futures planning process, staff take into consideration all of the individual's needs, whether "its social, residential, medical . . . someone's whole life, looking at their whole life . . . Actually listening to the person, what do you want, what would stop you from doing this, what kind of support do you have." A counselor from TRC indicated that while she can purchase employment services from many providers, she uses UCPA because they "look at their whole life, and I think that's maybe the biggest difference in making good placements, good matches". "UCPA and TRC have also worked together with ARCIL, which is the Austin Resource Center for Independent Living, and they do transportation training on the Metro system. They do money management training." This holistic approach is viewed as strengthening job matches that are ultimately obtained.

The TRC counselors we spoke with were particularly impressed with the UCPA staff.

*I've never seen a bunch of harder working employment specialists in my entire life. They're driven . . . workaholics. Driven, driven in the value and the philosophy and truly believing in inclusion in the community of all people. Embracing diversity.*

One counselor expressed concern that people with the most significant disabilities were not having opportunities for employment in the community (particularly individuals who were involved in the day care program at the time of the conversion and are still not employed). These individuals might work with one employment staff member, but if that staff person leaves, they would have to start over. The counselor felt that staff turnover was most disruptive for persons with significant disabilities.

Another counselor was disappointed that the Community Connections program was no longer available for consumers. People who may only work a limited number of hours need to have support to access community resources.

**Board of Directors.** Representatives from the Board of Directors reported two principle reasons why UCPA completed the conversion from adult day care to supported employment. The primary reason they identified was the leadership provided by the executive director. He was credited with having the vision for this goal and being able to bring the board to the point where they are today. One board member remarked that "I

think it's more than just vision. It really is courage. Because it wasn't the easy way, wasn't the easy thing to do. And like you said, there's a real comfort factor in doing things, the way they've been."

The second motivating factor was that the agency was experiencing significant financial difficulties and was unlikely to be able to continue on their current path. The financial concerns were partially internal problems with a troubled bookkeeping system and staff changes, but there were also external funding pressures. "When other agencies are panicking over funding cuts and budgetary cuts, Norman [the executive director] is pushing everyone in the direction of, 'Look at something new'". At the time of the conversion, the program was laying off staff and was dependent on the Architectural Barriers Project to keep them operational. Payments to the national association of UCPA were behind, and board members received a letter from a lawyer requesting payment. That pressure was enough to cause one board member to resign.

A board member admits some trepidation from the funding sources about this type of conversion.

*We'd go each year [to United Way] and talk about what we did and request some funds. And at that point, [the executive director] mentioned how he saw the changes, the services changing, that it'll be moving towards supported employment, supported living, probably doing away with the daycare center-- and I just remember their reaction . . . almost incredulous.*

With the funding from the CLASS program and the supported employment grant, the agency was able to re-establish itself and grew from a half million dollar budget to their current \$5.6 million budget between 1989 and 1994. Board members would suggest to other organizations "if your programs are going to substantially change the size of the organization, make sure that your underlying accounting system is intact" and look for resources to fund computerized accounting resources and bookkeeping staff.

Board members reported that during the conversion period they were operating at an information level, with staff handling more of the nuts and bolts. "We looked to [the executive director] and the staff that he has assembled to help us be educated and make policy decisions, and then we left it to the agency and to [the executive director] , to actually carry out." One member describes the board's reaction to the conversion as being positive and open-minded:

*The board's involvement in the conversion is that we philosophically very much supported the conversion. And at the board, we're all relatively young and very involved people, and a number of us have personal experience with disabilities and cerebral palsy. So I think that as a whole, our board is able to embrace some of these ideas more readily than, perhaps, other boards embrace unusual and - and new ideas.*

At the time of the conversion, board members were concerned because some staff left, staff who were viewed as irreplaceable. However as new people were hired and they were able to pick up these responsibilities readily, the new staff showed the same dedication and commitment to integrated employment as the people they replaced.

## Critical Themes in the Change Process

UCPA of the Capitol Area took a hard look at the services they were providing in their adult day care program and were not satisfied that what they were offering was in the best interest of the participants. Through a process of person-centered planning, they identified individuals' dreams to be more involved in their community and went to work at changing their organization to respond to these dreams. Through this process, they closed their segregated day services and developed the capacity to now provide support to individuals in their own jobs. The following themes have been critical to the process of conversion and growth at UCPA and contribute to their current focus.

### **Theme 1: Clearly Stated Values and Focus of the Organization**

Across the organization, individuals articulated the organizational values of consumer choice and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in their communities. This vision has been implemented in their service delivery and is manifested in the organizational commitment to only have individual jobs in the community with at least minimum wage. In addition to focusing on developing initial jobs that respect an individual's desire, they are also committed to working with individuals on career development and movement beyond their first job. This vision is not only clearly understood within the organization. Outside stakeholders, such as representatives of the funding sources, can see these values in their interactions with staff.

### **Theme 2: Leadership of the Executive Director**

The role of the executive director was identified as being key to conversion to community employment and the ongoing success of the organization. His leadership style is very participatory and appears to be manifested more through one-to-one interactions than a dynamic or dominating style. His leadership is demonstrated through his willingness to empower his staff to take more responsibility and control over their own jobs and willingness to support and encourage them through this process. Members of the Board of Directors credit the executive director with keeping the organization together during their fiscal crisis and giving them new direction at a time when other executive directors may have played things safe. They describe the executive director as having a real passion for serving the needs of individuals with disabilities and the "courage" to accomplish the goal of community employment.

### **Theme 3: Empowerment of Staff**

Throughout the conversion process and the development of self-managed teams, UCPA has made a commitment to their staff and encouraged their development and creativity. Staff are empowered to be actively involved in planning activities, cross-organizational teams and self-managing teams. While at times people have struggled with the responsibilities that accompany these initiatives, staff report great satisfaction with being able to control more aspects of their jobs. Through the use of self-management teams in the ASERT program, staff have been able to redefine their job descriptions to better suit their strengths as well as their interests. Staff and managers feel that these adjustments have been very successful and allow individuals to work at their best potential. The team approach to goals has also been identified as creating a more

successful work environment and has allowed staff to develop previously unrealized talents.

The quality of the staff was identified by representatives from the funding agencies as being a key component to the success of the program. The commitment of the staff was viewed as a key resource and a reason counselors prefer to refer individuals to UCPA for services.

#### **Theme 4: Emphasis on Person-Centered Planning**

Staff identified using a person-centered planning approach to discuss the closure of the adult day care program. They emphasized the importance of listening to individuals' hopes and dreams, and through this process it became clear that people did not want to continue in adult day care on a long term basis. As they continue to develop employment plans for individuals referred to the program, the ASERT staff uses a modified person center planning approach to develop a vocational profile with the individual. This profile considers all aspects of the individual's life and the areas in which they may need additional assistance or support. Counselors for the funding source report this holistic approach of considering needs of the individual to be very successful and may be a component in the quality of job placements that are obtained.

#### **Theme 5: Use of External Resources**

Through their affiliation with the national organization of United Cerebral Palsy Associations, UCPA of the Capitol Area was able to benefit from the experience of other community-based organizations. Their initial exposure to supported employment was through other UCPA affiliates across the country. That exposure served as motivation to improve their own services. In addition, the resources and the support from the national office has been useful in terms of training, lobbying and information sharing about upcoming grant competitions. UCPA also used the consulting services of Cary Griffin to help in developing self-managed teams. By using each of these external resources, UCPA was able to define and develop their mission while gaining the skills to implement the changes required by the conversion process.

#### **Theme 6: Fiscal and Philosophical Influences to Closing the Adult Day Care**

While UCPA was undergoing a philosophical shift toward community-based services, they were also experiencing a substantial fiscal crisis that would not allow them to continue providing the same services. This combination of factors was key to the new array of services offered by UCPA. Funding support through Medicaid for supported living and community integration as well as the supported employment grant from the Texas Planning Council were timely in allowing UCPA to accomplish their conversion.

Members of the Board of Directors emphasize the importance of considering the fiscal implications of this type of conversion. They state the importance of organizations making sure that they have a sound financial structure to handle the new billing and administrative demands.

### **Theme 7: Active and Involved Business Advisory Council**

UCPA's Business Advisory Council has been an effective tool in connecting their services to the community. Staff at UCPA have structured the group and the commitment that members make to ensure that members have a real connection with individuals looking for employment. By having each member meet regularly with consumers of UCPA's services, business members are providing a real service to individuals, not just a symbolic affiliation with the organization. This regular contact with individuals from UCPA also helps BAC members have a true sense of the purpose and needs of the organization.

### **Theme 8: Staff Working Together and Having Fun**

The administration of UCPA emphasizes maintaining team spirit between different projects and adding fun to the process. They use structured activities to bring staff together such as the cross-organization teams, but they have many informal means of building the camaraderie of the staff. Activities like the organization softball team and optional classes allow individuals throughout the organization to meet and interact in a fun and relaxed manner. This style creates a more homogenous organization despite the variety and disparity of different projects.

## **Current Organizational Challenges**

As they continue to grow and respond to the needs of the individuals they serve, there remains some challenges that UCPA is addressing. The issues of follow-up services and replacement jobs are a concern for the employment staff. TRC and project grants provide funding for the job placement and short-term follow-up, but the commitment is that employment staff will provide support for the lifetime of the job. At times, consumers' ongoing support needs create work load challenges for the staff. They are also concerned about being able to assist people who may lose their job or choose to make a job change. In addition to the existing funding resources, staff are working with consumers on developing Plans to Achieve Self Support (PASS) so they can independently fund additional support services as necessary. The struggle concerning follow-along support and replacement jobs is defined by employment staff as being inconsistent with their vision of supported employment. "When TRC talks about supported employment, what they're saying is that, 'We're going to support them, and this is the support. It's time-limited, it's fund-limited.' But that is not the concept. That's not the concept of what supported employment is all about. People don't get one job, keep one job. People fail. People need help."

Some individuals served by UCPA work a minimal number of hours in their community jobs. Several people interviewed were working less than six hours per week. There were multiple reasons for this, including other habilitation needs and the nature of supports that individuals need to perform their jobs. Consumers expressed an interest in working more hours, which may be an area of growth both for the individual as well as for UCPA.

The challenges identified above are similar to the challenges facing most providers of community-based employment services for individuals with significant disabilities. While continuing to develop their responses to these challenges, UCPA has also made a

commitment to exemplary practices that allow the greatest empowerment and integration of consumers. During their original conception of supported employment, the UCPA made a commitment to secure only individualized placements (as opposed to group placements) of individuals with disabilities. This commitment means that all consumers of ASERT services are working in jobs where they are integrated with nondisabled peers.

### **Conclusion**

United Cerebral Palsy Association of the Capitol Area engaged in a self-evaluative process where they considered the hopes and dreams of the individuals they were serving and learned that these dreams could only be met in community jobs, not in the adult day care program they were providing. With this vision they closed their segregated day program and focused on developing individual jobs for people based on their individual choices and goals. This emphasis on the individual carries through their orientation to service provision and the holistic approach the organization takes toward working with consumers. This shared vision, participatory leadership and collaborative group process are the characteristics that have allowed UCPA to complete their conversion from segregated services and will be key to their continued success in meeting the needs of the individuals they serve.

## **United Cerebral Palsy Association of the Capitol Areas**

### **Austin, Texas**

#### **Addendum**

This addendum will update, as of August, 1996, the description of services offered by UCPA of the Capitol area (UCPA/CA) at the beginning of this document. These are changes in the services since the site visit.

#### **Central Texas Accessible Design Alliance (CADA)**

The Architectural Barrier Removal Program provides two additional services, (1) housing counseling to 100 persons with disabilities each year to assist them with their housing needs and, (2) maintenance of a directory of accessible housing which has been surveyed by staff. Home modifications are now being provided in the seven county area served by the agency. Funding for expanded services, titled Project Access Central Texas (PACT) is from the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. PACT allows UCPA to perform up to \$25,000 of modifications in each home.

CADA staff also conduct accessibility surveys for persons not eligible for services and for businesses. Surveys are conducted and recommendations for modifications are developed for a fee of \$65.00 per hour.

UCPA/CA is also part of the Texas coalition which will implement a federal program, Home of Your Own, to assist people with disabilities in purchasing their first home. CADA staff will be involved by making the homes accessible for their new owner. They project that an average of \$20,000 may be spent on each home.

#### **Austin Supported Employment and Rehabilitation Technology (ASERT)**

The ASERT program has begun billing for reimbursement on a fee-for-service basis with the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) and the Texas Commission for the Blind. Staff have been hired who have specific experience working with individuals with visual impairments. Also the agency was awarded one of the TRC Systems Change grants, and has implemented activities in rural Caldwell County to assist with the conversion of a sheltered workshop to community-based supported employment. This service is entitled C3EI, the Caldwell County Collaborative Employment Initiative.

#### **Austin Collaborative Community Enterprise for Support Services (ACCESS)**

The ACCESS program replaces and expands the ACIS program described in the original conversion report. A funding application for 1997 was submitted in cooperation with the ARC of Austin, with UCPA/CA as the lead agency, prompting the name change. ACIS services described in the report are still in place, but ACCESS now also includes the following components:

**Citizen Advocates.** Coordinated through the ARC of Austin, this service matches volunteers, one-on-one with persons with disabilities. The volunteers are trained to assist the person with whom they are matched to access the local community, take part in new activities and take care of routine business such as grocery shopping and banking.

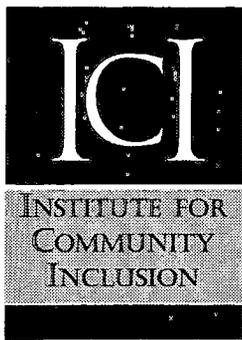
**Liberation Station.** A technology and toy lending library, the service provides a room full of computers and toys which persons with disabilities may borrow and take home for a limited amount of time. All loanable equipment is suitable for children and adolescents with disabilities, or may be adapted (e.g., larger switches or buttons for persons with limited range of motion), for the specific individual.

**ConvoMania.** This service, funded by Apple Computer and supported through a local foundation, is offered in conjunction with UCPA of Texas. ConvoMania offers Internet access to children and adolescents with disabilities, whether they are seeking information, or just want to have fun communicating with others. Computers are permanently installed for use at UCPA/CA and at the Austin Children's Hospital. Computers are also available through the state UCPA on a loan basis.

**Fee-for-Service.** Supported living services are being reimbursed through contracts developed with the Commission for the Blind and Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. UCPA/CA was certified as a "Mental Health Authority" in order to contract with Texas MHMR.

**Home of Your Own.** This service is also offered in cooperation with the UCPA of Texas, the state agency serving as the successful lead organization in a federal application for loan assistance for first time home buyers who are also persons with disabilities. Low interest loans will be provided through the Federal Fannie Mae program administered through Bank of America and NationsBank. Down payment grants and funds to cover move-in costs will be provided through the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. The Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities will fund case management and coordination services, part of which will be the responsibility of ACCESS staff from UCPA/CA. As described in the CADA section above, home modifications of approximately \$20,000 per home will be funded through the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

**VISTA.** A grant has been awarded by the Corporation for National Service to provide VISTA volunteers to conduct a service needs assessment in three central Texas Counties. The application was developed cooperatively between UCPA/CA and Austin's Independent Living Center, ARCIL.



## Chapter 4

### Independence Association<sup>5</sup> Brunswick, Maine

Date of Site Visit: August, 1995

Sheila Fesko  
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#### Description of the Organization

Independence Association is a nonprofit agency located in Brunswick, a suburban/rural community in Maine. The organization was formed by a group of parents in the 1960s to provide services to adults with developmental disabilities. The mission of Independence Association is to provide "support for persons with mental retardation and other disabilities and their families to live and work in their community. Independence Association promotes relationships between businesses, community organizations, neighbors and persons who face personal challenges in the areas of communication, learning, mobility, self direction, economic sufficiency, capacity for independent living and self care". This is realized through a broad array of services including employment, supported and independent living, respite, social and recreational activities, educational opportunities, and advocacy.

While Independence Association primarily serves individuals with developmental disabilities, it has expanded to a wider variety of disabilities including individuals with traumatic brain injury and mental illness. Although a small organization, Independence

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#### <sup>5</sup> Acknowledgments

Completion of this case study was made possible by the generosity and good will of the many consumers, staff family members, board members, and other associates of Independence Association. We would particularly like to thank Jim Pierce, Independence Association Executive Director and Lisa Strutevant, Director of Employment Services, who hosted our visit, and all of the Independence Association staff who helped coordinate interviews and allowed us to learn from them.

Association has doubled its client base since its inception and currently provides day and employment services to over 100 individuals. Approximately two-thirds of these individuals have mental retardation. Sixty individuals who receive day services from Independence Association are employed in the community. Other individuals receive support with living in the community, participate in Spindleworks, or participate in the Community Connections program. Some individuals receive services through multiple programs offered in the organization. At the present time, Independence Association does not have a waiting list for persons in need of services. Independence Association employs seventy-one full time equivalent staff positions in all of their programs and has an annual operating budget of approximately \$2.2 million dollars.

Independence Association receives funding for employment and day services through the Maine Department of Mental Retardation and the Maine Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. Independence Association also reports that annual contributions are granted by the municipalities of Brunswick, Topsham, Freeport, Harpswell, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, and Richmond. Residential services are supported through Medicaid Title XIX funds. In addition, financial support, volunteer assistance, and community outreach resources are also provided by the United Way of Mid Coast Maine. Finally, individuals and local civic and religious groups have also made contributions. Organizations within the community have supported the activities of Independence Association and they received \$80,000 of unsolicited donations in 1995.

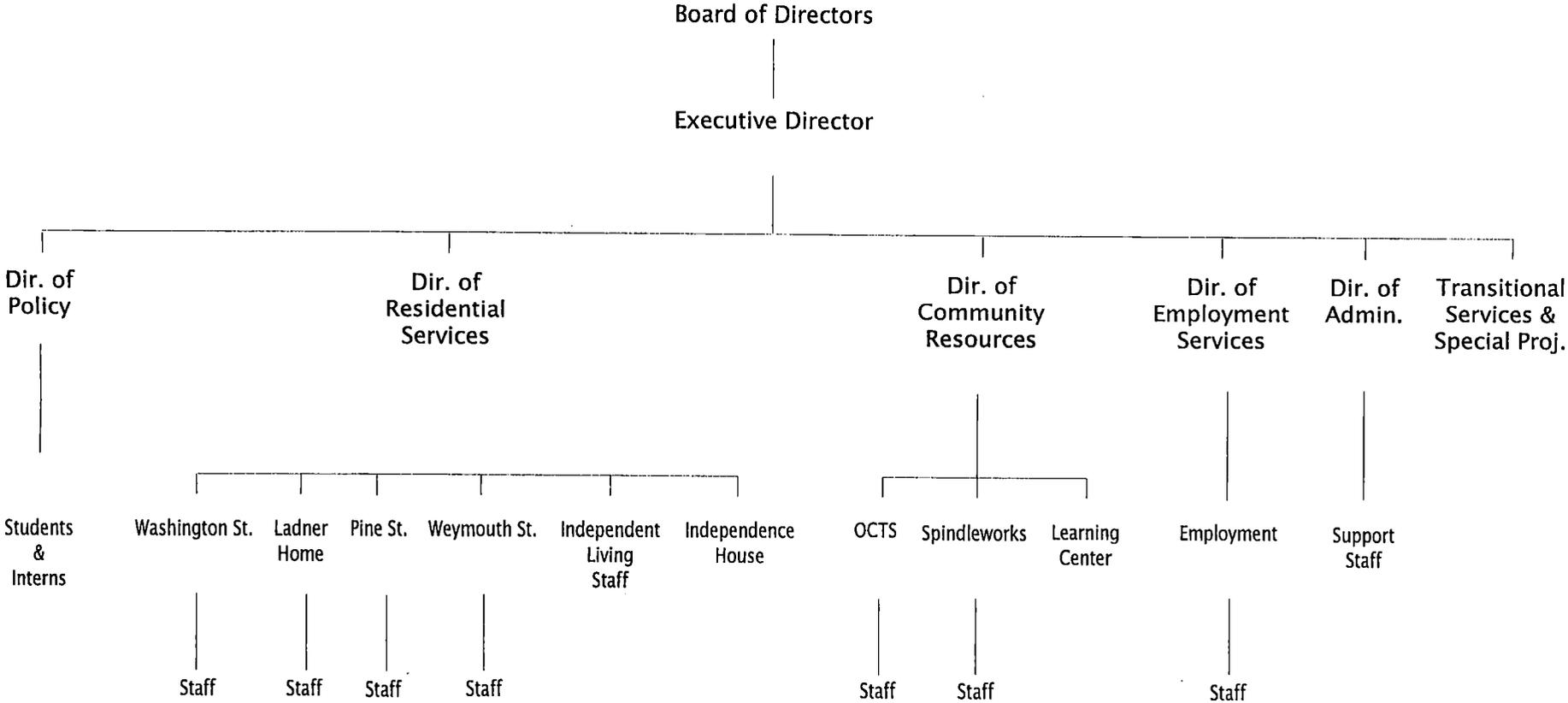
Independence Association is located in Brunswick, Maine which has a population of approximately 15,000. With the addition of surrounding communities including Bath, Yarmouth, Topsham, and Freeport, Independence Association provides support in a community of approximately 20,000 residents. The local economy depends heavily on tourism, with a large influx of tourists visiting during the summer months. The two largest employers in the community are Bath Iron Works located in Bath, Maine and the Brunswick Naval Air Station located in Brunswick. In addition, Bowdoin College and Mid Coast Hospital also employ a substantial workforce. The Independence Association staff reported an approximate a six percent unemployment rate, and indicated that many of the employment opportunities are seasonal in nature due to the tourism industry.

### **Administrative Structure**

The senior management team for Independence Association is comprised of the directors of various departments (e.g., employment and residential services) and a policy and planning staff person. All program directors report directly to the executive director which is a change that occurred in the year prior to the site visit. (See Figure 4.1 for organizational chart) Previously, there was a Director of Programming to whom all directors reported and this individual reported directly to the executive director. Directors stated that this structure has been very helpful in improving communication and being able to get questions or concerns dealt with directly. Each program director is then responsible for the supervision and administration of their specific program.

Figure 4.1

# Independence Association, Inc.



While there are discrete programs within the organization, all staff reported that there is significant collaboration and communication across programs. If an individual is in multiple services within Independence Association, the employment staff person typically takes a lead in a case management role. All staff involved with the person attend planning meetings to ensure that there is a collaborative effort and that services are not in conflict with each other. Staff reported that it is typically easier when an individual in employment is receiving residential services from Independence Association rather than from another residential provider since there is more internal flexibility to address the individuals needs.

Multiple staff indicated that they have worked in several components of the organization, so they have an understanding of the demands in each program. Staff have been given opportunities to make job changes that better suit their personal preferences and abilities as well as increase their career development. Several individuals reported being promoted within their programs and given greater responsibilities. In a few cases, individuals had opportunities for promotion, but preferred to continue with their current responsibilities and these preferences were respected.

## Current Services

**Supported Employment Services.** Of the approximately one hundred individuals served by Independence Association in day and employment services, roughly sixty have individual supported employment and eight work in group placements. Group placements include locations such as a hospital dishroom where several individuals who receive support from Independence Association may be working at the same time. Supported employees have a variety of occupations such as librarian assistant, baker assistant, janitorial, groundskeeping, food service, housekeeping, and newspaper delivery. Individuals receive assistance with job placement and receive job coaching on their jobs as needed. When an individual is referred for employment services, an intake is completed by a member of the senior management team. Through this intake process the consumer is informed of all the available services at Independence Association and consideration is given to the scope of services the individual may need. The staff describes the holistic nature of the services provided and the consumer is asked about their employment, residential, health, education, legal, and financial needs during the intake and annual review process. Services are then coordinated to address this range of needs. Staff emphasized the importance of the consumer being involved in their employment decision. Once the individual has identified their job goal, they are encouraged to be actively involved in their job search process. Staff do job development for individual consumers, but are attentive to the needs of other consumers not on their caseload. A job development meeting is held to review anyone who is engaged in a job search so all staff can be considering possible openings. In looking at job opportunities, the Employment Supervisor indicated that they need to be attentive of the individual support needs and the availability of support to cover the work schedule. Individuals who have intensive support needs are generally encouraged to work less hours at first and long term support needs are considered.

Employment staff reported that most of them provide both job development and job coaching to every individual who receives employment services. Some of the newer staff begin with just job coaching responsibilities, but over time they become more involved in

the process of helping individuals find jobs. They report a very collaborative effort in their work together as a team. People share job leads, so that if the job is not appropriate for someone they are working with, it might be useful to another staff person.

**Community Connections.** Approximately twenty-five individuals served by Independence Association are enrolled in the Community Connections program. Community Connections is a nonwork program that operates from the agency offices during the daytime. This program is available to individuals who choose not to work for a variety of reasons, the most common of which appeared to be advanced age (i.e., greater than 60 years old). While the majority of participants in Community Connections are older, the program is taking new referrals and has several transition-aged youth. Many of the participants in Community Connections experience significant multiple disabilities. Activities are designed to be age-appropriate and of interest to persons enrolled in the program. A second feature of the program is that all program activities are conducted in the community. Independence Association staff transport persons into the community to participate in activities open to the general public. In addition to involvement in community activities, some of the participants are involved in volunteer activity. Finally, Community Connections incorporates the provision of therapeutic services including occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy and skill development.

**Spindleworks.** Spindleworks is an additional program available to Independence Association participants and has been in operation since 1978. Spindleworks is an artists cooperative that specializes in watercolor painting, fabric construction and handweaving through the use of wooden looms. A number of local artists spend time at Spindleworks providing ideas, training, and interaction with program members. Spindleworks artists have created such items as intricately designed hand-woven rugs, pillows and fabrics, skirts and blouses with brightly colored dyes, and a variety of watercolor paintings. All Spindleworks artwork is priced, displayed, and on sale at the shop on a commission basis. In addition, Spindleworks products are exhibited in a number of community locations where they are also available for purchase. Of the total amount of money derived from the sale of Spindleworks art, 75% is distributed to the artists and the remainder is used to buy materials. As an artist who creates and displays her own work, Spindleworks' Director ultimately wishes to make Spindleworks a professional art gallery. As part of achieving this goal, Spindleworks is having an art opening in conjunction with two other community galleries, and is receiving attention from the local newspaper.

While Spindleworks is considered one of Independence Association's business ventures it is not fiscally self-sufficient. The Spindleworks program depends on grants from local community foundations including an artist-in-residence grant from the Maine Arts Commission. The Director also indicated that Spindleworks was awarded a small grant from the town of Brunswick to hire musicians to assist with the expansion of Spindleworks activities. She noted, "We actually hired one musician, someone to play the bagpipe, so it's sort of spreading, it's sort of trying to connect with the community in a more natural way."

Spindleworks artists either work on their art full time or part time in addition to working part time in other employment settings. Spindleworks artists have also made a number of contributions to a book of poetry entitled, *Spindleworks Journey* (1991). In addition to

poetry, a monthly newsletter is published which includes contributions by Spindleworks artists and is entitled, *The Almost Maine Street News*.

**The Learning Center.** The Learning Center provides individuals with the opportunity to take a variety of classes at the Gilman Avenue Residence including photography, dance, first-aid, bicycle maintenance, basic sign language, specialty cooking, weaving, woodworking, and sports (e.g., basketball, bowling, swimming). The purpose of the Learning Center is to offer classes to help consumers become more independent. The Learning Center was also developed to address individuals' needs regarding "socialization, recreation and life long learning." In an effort to build the relationship with the community, the Learning Center Coordinator recruits volunteers and other professionals from the community to teach the subjects offered, instead of hiring a specific teaching staff. According to the executive director, this provides direct links between people with disabilities and people in the community who actually perform the activities of interest. This in turn promotes social networks between people with and without disabilities and creates a sense of investment among participating community members.

**Volunteer Services.** Individuals served by Independence Association are offered the opportunity to become involved in their community as volunteers. According to the handout provided to potential service consumers, volunteer experiences offer opportunities to ". . . make friends, go to events in the community, build community contacts, gain new work skills and to enrich your life through helping others." Volunteer sites have included the American Red Cross, a local soup kitchen, the animal shelter, the Meals on Wheels Program, the American Cancer Society, area nursing homes and day care centers. According to the Director of Residential Services, volunteering has provided opportunities for individuals to experiment with different types of jobs without a long-term commitment. The Director of Residential Services also suggested that volunteer work provides opportunities for persons to learn the responsibilities associated with employment and to understand employer expectations such as accountability for performance and attendance. At the time of the site visit, the position of Volunteer Coordinator was open and the executive director was undecided about whether to fill it.

**Residential Services.** Independence Association also provides a range of residential services in addition to their day and employment services. Independence Association owns approximately 20 housing units which include a six person group home in Freeport, Maine, a four unit apartment building, an eight unit apartment building, independent living situations in community-based apartments with support as needed, and supported living situations in which 24-hour staff support is provided. Some individuals receive both residential and employment services from Independence Association, while others receive just residential support. A large majority of referrals for residential services came from Pineland State School, before its closure. In 1994, Independence Association closed an Intermediate Care Facility for individuals with Mental Retardation (ICF/MR) and all of the persons residing in this facility were moved into supported living arrangements.

Historically the residential staff has been required to provide transportation to individuals who lived in the residence and were working in the community. The Director of Residential Services indicated that Independence Association staff used to spend almost 35% of their time transporting people to community locations. Thus, movement into integrated employment where working hours were determined by employers created a

significant challenge. One solution involved Alpha One, a grant to a local taxicab company to provide transportation for individuals to and from work. This has decreased the expenditure of Independence Association staff's time on transportation to approximately 10%, according to the Director of Residential Services. The Alpha One grant is time-limited, and new resources will need to be identified once that grant ends. Independence Association also uses Coastal Transportation, a local transportation company that operates separate services for people with disabilities.

The executive director indicated that he felt offering residential services can play a key role in the survival of an organization which exists in an environment of shrinking fiscal resources. Organizationally, there has been a greater emphasis on the development of residential services and the Director of Employment Services indicated that Independence Association had shifted its emphasis from the development and expansion of employment services to that of residential services. She noted that four or five years ago the emphasis had been on employment services but that these services had stabilized for the present.

To address the needs of youth who were transitioning from schools into adult services, Independence Association has created a new position of Transition Coordinator. This position is being funded through community resources and is intended to begin working with students and their families when the students are freshmen and sophomores. Beginning this early allows them to help get youth connected with funding resources so that they will not have to wait for services when they complete school. In the past, the state Vocational Rehabilitation Commission has had a waiting list of up to two and a half years, so the Transition Coordinator helps people get referred earlier so their time on the waiting list is used up before they graduate from school.

### **History of the Conversion to Integrated Employment**

Services originally offered through Independence Association included a wood working program and sub-contract work in a sheltered workshop. Subcontract work was acquired from companies located in Brunswick and other surrounding communities. The work included furniture refinishing, woodworking, construction of yarn, cards and windchimes, and packaging, stapling, and sorting paper. As in most workshops, consumers were paid based on a piece rate. The executive director describes becoming aware of the trap of contract work since organizations become dependent on the income and then pull back from community employment. They were cognizant of that threat and looked to alternative funding sources.

The process of developing community employment options and closing the sheltered workshop was gradual and occurred over more than ten years. A counselor from the Maine Commission for Vocational Rehabilitation, who was involved in the original efforts at providing community employment, reported that at the time they were not thinking about these efforts leading to the closure of the workshop, but rather meeting the individual needs of one consumer. The decision to close the workshop came over time and with increased success at finding jobs for individuals in the community.

The organization's first efforts toward community-based employment began in 1978, when individual jobs were found for some individuals, while the majority of employment services continued to occur in the sheltered workshop. Individuals who were assisted in

obtaining jobs in the community were typically students leaving public school who were interested in receiving employment services that were not center-based. Some of the early funding for these services came from "aging out" grants. Independence Association began efforts to close the sheltered workshop in 1981, but it was not until 1990 that the last individual moved into an integrated employment option. The woodworking component of the program was closed in 1986 and all of the individuals served in this program moved into jobs at Bowdoin College. People were working in a variety of departments at the college, including dining services and the library. During the first year that people were in these jobs, Independence Association provided funding to Bowdoin to support wages, but this funding faded out over the year. A job developer was hired to assist in obtaining jobs for these individuals in the community and the evaluation of her performance was based on the number of jobs obtained. Fifteen individuals continued to be employed in the sheltered workshop, and contract work continued until each of these individuals obtained a job in the community or elected to participate in Community Connections. The last two individuals left the workshop in 1990 and that was the point where the workshop closed and contract work ended.

The executive director described the process of closing the workshop as being difficult for some staff. He indicated that new staff needed to be brought in to make the conversion, since "the leap" was too substantial for staff who were "too grounded in center-based work activity, sheltered employment . . . all of structures were based around transportation systems that ran between nine and two". Staff who could not make this shift in service models typically continued with the agency, but moved to positions in Community Connections or Spindleworks. All of the staff in the supported employment department are new to the organization since the closure of the workshop.

Two of the original employment sites, a hospital and college, were established in the community and were considered transitional sites. The plan was for individuals to receive training and then move to other jobs in the community. Since these sites were successful, funding sources wanted to continue to place additional people, but the agency refused, since it would reduce the amount of integration with other workers without disabilities. Since individuals were successful on their jobs and were not interested in moving to other jobs in the community, the agency elected to discontinue transitioning people in and out. When this move toward more permanent employment for people occurred at a second site, it was difficult for supervisors and coworkers to adjust. They were used to always having a job coach on site to provide training and as this decreased, they did not always treat the employees with disabilities with sufficient respect. Agency staff describe themselves needing to work more with the site staff than with consumers. As new people without disabilities were hired in the department, they have been more supportive since they don't have the expectation of job coach support.

During the time that individuals from segregated services were moving to community employment, staff at Independence Association participated in various state-wide initiatives related to supported employment. Staff became involved in the Governor's Commission on Supported Employment in 1984. The executive director also participated in a conference presentation that involved a debate comparing segregated versus integrated services.

The majority of community jobs that have been obtained are individual jobs. In some cases there are two individuals working different shifts doing the same job or splitting the job. The Director of Employment Services described the commitment of the organization to have individuals being paid on the employer's payroll instead of being on Independence Association's payroll. All individuals are making more than minimum wage, though one site continues to hold a labor certificate and pays people based on their productivity. In this situation, the individuals' production is such that they are earning close to the prevailing wage.

### **Participant Perspectives on the Conversion Process**

Project staff asked Independence Association staff to arrange opportunities to interview representatives of each of the major constituency groups who were either involved in or affected by the process of organizational change. Some of these interviews took place in the process of visiting employment sites, while others represented formal interviews. Project staff were particularly interested in talking with individuals who had a wide variety of perspectives about the change process, and the opportunity to sample the range of points of view was specifically requested.

**Executive Director.** The executive director has been with Independence Association for eighteen years. In working with individuals moving toward community jobs, the executive director mandated that staff listen to families' concerns. The value of community-based employment continues to be a theme in service planning for individuals who are not working, but who take part in the Community Connections program. The option of employment is re-evaluated each year at individuals' annual meetings and the executive director indicates the "belief that everybody can work whether it's one or two hours or forty hours a week . . . if they choose to do that".

The executive director noted that the communication of his organization's value base was carried over to relationships with other organizations including funding agencies. For example, he noted, "I think that we work closely with people who have similar values systems to ours in terms of their service delivery systems, and there are a couple of people around the state that I work with closely and talk with closely about the development of services." Staff from the funding agencies report this close collaboration as well, and when the Department of Mental Retardation was developing a Quality Assurance tool to be used with all providers, they used Independence Associate to test the model.

Since Independence Association had begun to develop community-based jobs in the late seventies, when funding became more available for supported employment services, they already had a track record of success. Over the last several years funding has become more constrained in the state of Maine, but the executive director describes fear as an obstacle to change. "It's a fear to take a risk and to try to change an organization in this type of fiscal climate that holds people back." Due to the strong relationship Independence Association has with its funding sources, the agency has been able to deal with this fear and move forward. The executive director describes the relationship with DMR as,

*trust that's built up between our organization and the system that we've been willing to take some risks that with other kinds of administrators I wouldn't have*

*been willing to take, and I don't think the staff would have been willing to take. But because there is a trust there that we will figure out a way to do this, and we'll figure out a way to fund it, and let's not hold the service away from the consumer until we do that, because if we do, we'll always be behind.*

During periods in the past when the state Vocational Rehabilitation system did not have funds to maintain support of individuals who were in community employment, Independence Association used surplus funds from community fundraising to continue providing job coach support. The executive director noted, "One of the things that we have always tried to do is provide the service and worry about the money later."

The executive director indicates that one of the challenges they continue to work on is how to support staff effectively when they are dispersed throughout the community. The executive director describes a conscious need to set up an organizational "infrastructure to support staff who are supporting the consumer in isolated situations". An additional challenge is finding appropriate opportunities in the community for individuals to pursue their chosen activities. The executive director stated that Independence Association pursues a holistic approach in working with consumers, so that they can "look at a person, not in terms of 9 to 5, but we can look at a person seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and say 'When do they want to do this, and when do they want to do that?' And what skills would they like to develop, and how do we provide that opportunity? Do we do it--does the community do it?" When working with an individual, the staff considers these questions and the scope of resources that Independence Association has to meet these needs.

**Consumers.** Individuals who receive supports from Independence Association were interviewed in their work settings. Several individuals were interviewed at Spindleworks while they were in the process of developing their products. Individuals were involved in weaving materials to be sold as scarves or used as parts to vests, dresses or hats. In addition, some members were painting or working on painting fabric to be used in the clothing. The designs and color selection for all of these products were determined by the individuals and in most cases they independently completed the products. Individuals who were interviewed reported great satisfaction in their work at Spindleworks and were pleased with the development of their creative abilities. One individual who has worked at Spindleworks for thirteen years reports that in his designs, he uses colors that he sees in his dreams. Another artist described having previously worked at the workshop but greatly prefers her work at Spindleworks. She reported pride in being able to help others in setting up their looms. Individuals also reported strong social and personal ties with the other artists at Spindleworks. One individual who was interviewed reported having met his wife through his work and they continue to work together at Spindleworks.

Other consumers were interviewed at their jobs in the dishroom of a hospital and in the Bowdoin College library. Two of the individuals who work in the dishroom reported having worked in the workshop for many years before obtaining this job. They both expressed a preference for their work in the community. One individual describes the importance of having Fridays off so that he can have lunch with his girlfriend whom he met through Independence Association. He indicated that staff have helped him to coordinate this schedule in order for him to be able to maintain this relationship, which is important to him. The other individual reported liking her job very much, but wishing that

she was able to work more hours. She seemed unclear about how she might be able to change this situation. They both report that they see a job coach from Independence Association several times a week, but work independently as well.

The individual who works in the library of Bowdoin College works full time and is responsible for locating and retrieving books from the stacking, sorting and reshelving materials, conducting computer searches and sending materials via computer to other libraries. He has gradually expanded his job tasks and receives all of his training and support from people at the library. This individual expressed great pride in his work and a strong preference for this job over the workshop. He did not enjoy the woodworking tasks at the workshop. While it has taken some time for him to adjust to all the new people he works with, he has become more comfortable and his supervisor describes him as an important part of the department.

**Parent/Family Members.** The parents of two consumers of Independence Association's services were interviewed on their experiences with the organization. In both cases, their children received both residential and employment support services, but neither child had been involved in the sheltered workshop component of the agency. One individual was described as having two part time jobs, but the parents expressed concerns about his not having enough work hours in the week. They described that program staff were working with him on the possibility of an additional job. The second parents were also concerned about the number of hours their child was working. They acknowledged that hours were particularly limited during the summer and will increase in the fall, but even then the work schedule will only include several hours a day. While they would like to see these work hours increase, they were pleased with the other activities their daughter engages in, such as volunteer work and socializing with peers.

Beyond their concern about the hours worked, the parents were extremely positive about their experience with Independence Association. They cited the executive director as one of the main reasons for this success. One parent noted

*He has great compassion for these people. Not only that, but he has got a good business head. And he is not afraid to take risks and I don't mean a risk with anybody's safety or anything like that, but he is willing to let people try new things . . . They will never reach their potential unless they are allowed to try. And that's the idea behind most of what happens at Independence Association.*

The staff was also identified as being very "dedicated" and committed to their work with consumers of Independence Association services. "They go out of their way to do things that you wouldn't if you had a 9 to 5 job, but these people aren't like that . . . they take the consumers home; they have picnics with them . . . they do recreational things and they weren't really hired to do that". The commitment of the staff to individual choice is also emphasized as a strong component. The parents referenced a situation in which a consumer wanted to have her own bedroom instead of sharing with a roommate, and staff worked with the funding source to create extra room so her request could be granted.

Two areas of ongoing concern for parents were the impact of future funding cuts and limitations in their ability to access information about their adult child. The funding concerns particularly related to anxiety about what will happen when the parent is no

longer alive and can not advocate for the service needs of their child. They feel that this advocacy would be taken over by current staff, but if current staff were no longer with the agency, they question whether their child's needs would be protected. The second issue was described as being based on limitation of the information they can obtain about their child's services due to the Privacy Act. While this has not been a significant issue for them with Independence Association, they are concerned that the law will restrict their access to information about their adult child's services.

**Employment Staff.** Staff who provide employment services at Independence Association came to the organization after the workshop began the process of closing. The Supervisor of Employment Services, who at the time of the site visit was changing positions and becoming the Transition Coordinator, joined the organization with the explicit goal of finding jobs for the remaining seven individuals who were part of the segregated work program. The focus at that time was obtaining jobs for these individuals, but once they were placed, emphasis shifted to individuals who were receiving services in Spindleworks but also wanted employment. The employment staff continue to support individuals who are working in the community, individuals referred through Community Connections and Spindleworks, as well as external referrals that come into the agency. With this increase in new referrals, additional employment staff were added. As staff joined the agency, they completed an employment specialist training program offered through Southern Maine Technical College. This program is required by state regulations.

Employment staff and staff from other components of the program report the collaboration between departments as being very helpful to their success. This collaboration is described as being more than just coordination of funding resources or administrative, "but the residential counselors and employment specialists have the people information, and that's really the most critical because it tells us what we need specifically". Staff also verbalized a strong sense of community within the organization. All staff know each other, their job roles and responsibilities, how other staff responsibilities might affect their own, and who to go for when they need help or support. The Director of Employment Services indicated that the close proximity of desks and office space has helped build this sense of community. She reported there is usually food in the employment office so "people in the agency see this as a meeting place".

A recent grant to develop person-centered planning with some individuals in employment services has helped staff appreciate the importance of individuals being actively involved in their vocational choices. Staff describe one experience with this planning process.

*In the personal futures planning, he said, well I want to . . . go to the air traffic control tower in the airport. I want to go to a radio station. So he went to all these different places, and it was really amazing that this guy was able to make his choices, . . . And he got to go up in the control tower out at the base, and went to the air traffic control center. They made him an honorary air traffic controller. They made him an honorary weather person. We went to all these places that were so interesting . . . and what that helps me with is to see that jobs do not have to be janitorial . . . get people to expand their awareness of what's out there.*

This value carries over to all employment services, and staff suggest that other organizations in the process of developing community-based employment services need to make a commitment to allow the individual with a disability to make decisions about appropriate jobs.

Staff report that the nature of the Brunswick area economy is such that employers hire mostly for part time positions and are "more willing to create something a lot of times for someone who wants to work less hours and doesn't want . . . a full 20 hour week". In some cases, staff do "job shaving" where an individual does a component of a job and works a small number of hours per week. Individuals who work five to ten hours a week typically take part in other aspects of Independence Association services. Seasonal work is also very prevalent in Brunswick, but staff try to avoid having individuals in seasonal jobs since there are limited options for them when they are laid off. Employment staff felt the Brunswick community has changed over the last five years, as more individuals are working in the community. An employment staff person indicated,

*... attitudes have really changed too, seeing that people do have abilities and it's just not a disability. That you can't look at a person and say that that's what they are, their disability. You have to look at them as a person. And everybody that we've worked with seems to have an ability to do some sort of work and everybody wants to work.*

The agency's connection to the community has also been helpful with job development. "We really do know a lot of people, and that may not be a person that helps us, but they may know someone who knows someone. And it's a lot of referrals from other people, contacts that we already have and have a positive relationship with these people." The staff is trying to build on these relationships and obtain jobs that can utilize natural supports for the individual rather than being dependent on job coach support. Staff are trying to move away from providing a "hundred percent" job coach support at the start and then trying to add natural supports, but to "place more people with the idea of only doing job coaching if it's absolutely necessary, but try natural supports."

Staff who have recently joined the employment services department expressed that a challenge in their job is dealing with the state-wide threats of limited funding and uncertainty as to their job security. Staff who have been there longer feel that they have dealt with these state funding crisis enough that they are less anxious, and are convinced that the organization will find a way continue to supporting people through funding constraints.

An additional concern expressed by staff is dealing with coworkers or supervisors at community businesses who are not particularly supportive of employment for individuals with disabilities. While staff feel that Brunswick is an accepting community, there are periods of frustration when the attitudes of one or two people create a problem for an individual with a disability. This is particularly frustrating when a supervisor supports the hiring of an individual, but there is a coworker who is not supportive. One employment staff described this struggle as "trying to help them understand that the person that has a disability is a human being, not a disability".

In the future, staff would like to see the development of therapeutic resources for individuals in relation to their work. A staff person suggested the need for in-house physical and occupational therapy services for consultation on job accommodations. They currently use consultants or consumers' health services to meet these needs, but that can take an extended period of time.

**Community Connections Staff.** A number of individuals currently working in Community Connections used to be workshop staff and were involved in the closure. One staff person described staff reaction to the conversion.

*The word came down that we were going to move people out into the community and into jobs and staff's first response was, 'well they can't do that because it just hasn't been done before.' So a lot of it was staff resistance at the time. Thinking that staff might lose their jobs . . . And then I remember I went to different worksites with people and that helped me get over the feeling that people aren't going to be able to do that, and that also made my job feel safe.*

This staff person described being initially uncomfortable with the change because he had always worked at the workshop, was comfortable there, and wasn't sure he could adjust to being away from the workshop. During the initial transition, staff were involved in assisting individuals with disabilities obtain volunteer opportunities. Once they were able to see individuals with disabilities in the community being accepted and successful in their volunteer jobs, it was easier for staff to move toward more employment services. Staff describe the use of volunteer jobs as being very helpful in the conversion since it reassured consumers, parents and staff that it was going to be successful.

Staff who were part of the conversion to integrated employment acknowledge that the flexibility around staff positions was helpful in their adjustment to the change. Long term staff of the agency report that they have held a variety of positions within the organization and have been largely able to work in components of the agency where they are most comfortable and feel the best match to their skills.

During the closure of the workshop, staff reported that parents were concerned about the impact of working on their son or daughter's Social Security benefits. Staff also indicated that a secondary concern for parents was if the consumer "left and got a job and the job didn't work out, could they still come back to the workshop or would they be stuck at home? They wanted to know that there would be something there." Employment staff worked with families on these concerns, so Community Connections staff were not as involved in this process.

Loss of socialization opportunities due to consumers not working in the same space has been a concern for Community Connections staff. They report that people still view the physical site of Independence Association offices as being a meeting place for staff and consumers. Some individuals are picked up for their transportation to work at Independence Association offices. While they are waiting for their ride they can socialize with staff or members of Community Connections. Staff has also helped individuals coordinate social activities and people will meet at the offices and then go out to lunch. The agency offers several large social events, such as barbecues and holiday parties. These activities have allowed individuals to maintain their social relationships.

As the organization continues to grow and develop, staff continue to struggle with change. At the time of the site visit, the Community Connections project was adding more intensive therapeutic support services for individuals and staff were uncertain about the impact of this change. One staff person describes the response to change.

*People always squawk when a change is going to happen, but after you start and get the process rolling, at least for the staff that I've worked with, once they see that it's going to be all right for everybody, and people aren't going to lose out on anything, it usually comes together, and people want to work toward common goals . . . the biggest thing is to let people know that jobs are going to be safe, that they're going to have support, they're going to have training.*

**Board of Directors.** Several members of the agency's Board of Directors were interviewed in order to get their perspective on the conversion process. Members reported feeling that the transition to community employment happened very gradually and was not viewed as a master plan to close the workshop. They described individuals moving into the community and after seeing the success of these first individuals, there was more effort to create this opportunity for others. Gradually, there were less people in the workshop and there seemed to be less benefit in maintaining that service. Members of the Board of Directors view themselves as a policy-making group that reviews and supports directions established by the Executive director and staff. They are pleased with their level of interaction with staff and feel that people are always responsive to their questions and concerns.

Another key role of the Board of Directors is as liaison to the community of Brunswick. Most members of the board are parents or business people who work in the community. Their connections to the community have been helpful in fundraising as well as keeping the organization informed and attentive to the needs of the community. One board member expressed personal satisfaction in seeing individuals who receive support from Independence Association in the community. She has gotten to know several individuals well and has served as a natural support as they take a more active role in their community.

**Funding Agency Representatives.** A representative from the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) and the Maine Commission for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) were interviewed. Both were involved with the agency through the time of the conversion to community-based services. The VR counselor described first becoming aware of community employment for individuals who were served in sheltered employment when Independence Association's Executive director participated in a conference debate on the pros and cons of community employment. This presentation interested the counselor and they began work on developing community jobs for several individuals and then it "grew from there". This process was described by the VR counselor as being gradual, and there wasn't a point where "...anybody came in and [said], 'Boy, we've just got to shut this place down.' It was like all of us working towards it. It's just sort of more of a gradual process as people started to leave and get jobs and they told others". These initial successes began to build on each other. As the case manager from the DMR described it,

*There was some real risk taking here, because I think there was an attitude of, well, let's go ahead and do it. Let's not stumble through a maze of regulations. Let's get*

*a few situations that we can reflect back on and show success. And the people who went out there and worked, the clients were the leaders here. I mean, they had the success and they started talking to their friends and buddies that they'd lived at Pineland with or had been in the group home with, and other people wanted that. It sort of self-perpetuated itself a bit. They taught us that the time had come, that it's time to get out.*

During this initial period, there was a collaborative agreement between DMR and VR that required approval for short and long term funding for each individual. An elaborate paperwork system was set up, but people became frustrated with the delays caused by this process. The new contract with DMR and Independence Association gives a flat dollar amount to the agency and allows them to shift resources to people as necessary. Quality control over this system has been maintained through quarterly meetings between the DMR supervisor and the Employment Manager. This funding system has allowed for greater flexibility and services are negotiated on an individual basis. The DMR case manager feels this strong working relationship between the staff at Independence Association and DMR has contributed to successful services.

The representatives from the funding sources felt that Independence Association has demonstrated strength in the Executive director's "ability to find funding outside of the normal flow of dollars from the state". This funding is viewed as particularly critical for students transitioning from high school. The addition of the Transition Coordinator to Independence Association staff was viewed as a bonus in ensuring funding for these students. A paramount concern for the VR counselor is transition-age youth, since he fears that with less available funding, there will become a "two tiered system . . . of have and have nots". He describes the need for resources.

*We are tapped out and the people who are coming out of the school system, who is the class that we have been waiting for that is never going to see the insides of a sheltered workshop. Unfortunately, they are going to see the insides of the bedroom because that is where they are going to be sitting it we don't come up with additional support for them somehow and I guess we have to look at our allocations and try to figure out a way to be more equipped with the supports we have if we are going to continue client funding on decreased budget. How in the heck are we going to find the support for these new folks that are coming our way?*

The quality of staff was cited by the DMR case manager as a major reason for the agency's effectiveness. "They have some very dedicated people, people who have not been part of the turnover. There's a real stable staff here who get reward from what they believe in doing . . . A real dedicated, good workforce." The commitment of the staff is described as being consistent whether they are working with individuals who need minimal support or those who have the most severe disabilities. For the VR counselor, the nature of the relationship with the staff has contributed to the success. He describes it as "a kind of feeling of friendship between the people around here. We have a pretty good relationship and we work together fairly well and that is because we are on the phone with each other. We are talking with each other. We are fostering that relationship".

Other components that were identified as contributing to the successful closure of the sheltered workshop include the use of outside consultants. The VR counselor described

that “we brought in people from out of state who were pushing the envelope”. The agency’s “willingness to take a risk” and the leadership of the Executive director were also cited as contributing factors. The DMR case manager described the leadership of the organization as “. . . saying we are going to go ahead and people are going to be in the community and they are going to tell us what it is that they want and then we are going to find support, built around those needs to do that”. They support the need for “holistic rehabilitation” which addresses all components of the individual’s life. For example, options such as Community Connections allow some elderly consumers the opportunity to maintain social relationships.

A challenge that the funding agencies continue to face arises when an individual is interested in changing jobs but needs funding in order to do so. If the individual’s case has been closed with VR, they may be eligible for post-employment services, but some individuals require more intensive support than this mechanism can provide. If a new case needs to be opened, they return to a waiting list status with VR. The DMR case manager feels this will be an issue that they will continue to struggle with in the future. The Supervisor of Employment Services indicated this continues to be a challenge for these individuals who receive support from Independence Association.

The VR counselor felt that the development of job coaching training provided through Southern Maine Technical College was important in helping provide better trained job coaches to work with individuals in the community. This training is required for all staff who will be providing job coaching. Prior to its inception in 1988, the VR counselor described all “we were hiring at that time was a lot of people with good intentions and big hearts and high school diplomas, who tried really hard, but in some instances, they would end up doing a job and the client would stand back watching them. Because we didn’t have a good handle on job coaching.” When asked what recommendations they would give for other organizations going through the process of conversion, both individuals emphasized the importance of relationships between the funding sources and the agency and between different funding sources. The VR counselor describes it as “get your ducks in order. Get your act together. Get that cooperation going and get those communication lines set up in advance, so you don’t have to go through inventing forms after the fact like we have done”. The DMR case manager suggested the importance of community education through the Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club. When they originally began the process of moving people from Independence Association’s sheltered workshop into the community, they did not have a sense of how far it would go. The VR counselor states,

*We weren’t particularly looking at it as changing the world. We were merely looking at it as doing some things with some people and seeing if we could do it—accomplish a mission . . . It was a lot of fun too. And I think if anybody is going to go into this, they have got to go into it with the idea of it is going to be a challenge and it is going to be fun. If you are going into it with a doom and gloom attitude, you are bound to fail and you are not going to do your clients any good at all.*

## Critical Themes in the Change Process

Independence Association was different from other organizations that have closed segregated services and moved to community-based employment, in that their conversion was gradual and more individually focused. During the early period of conversion, the focus was on creating individual employment opportunities and not on closing the workshop. As their success increased and people began to see community employment as a desired outcome, there was a greater increase in placements and more focus on closing the sheltered workshop. This focus on individual choice and personal outcomes is a consistent theme throughout Independence Association services. The following themes summarize the process Independence Association has used in their conversion process and continues to maintain through their ongoing services.

### **Theme 1: Leadership of Executive Director.**

Most stakeholders in the conversion process have identified the leadership of the executive director as being key to the closure of the workshop and movement to community employment. He is cited as having begun this process in the mid-1980's when supported employment was first being identified as a strategy. While working toward his vision of community employment, the Executive director also emphasized working collaboratively with the community, families and funding sources. As changes began to occur, each of these entities felt they could trust the executive director and were willing to be more flexible and accepting of the change.

The executive director continues to look toward future trends and to help his organization be prepared to respond to new demands and directions. The executive director has value-based principles that govern his actions and drive the services provided by the agency. These values are articulated to staff and reflected in the everyday functioning of the organization. When describing the original movement toward providing community employment, he states that they did it "because it was the right thing to do . . . and people that could work in a sheltered workshop could work anywhere."

### **Theme 2: Conversion was a Gradual Process.**

Most individuals reflect on the closure of the workshop as being a gradual process and therefore less anxiety-provoking. It is described as occurring on an individual basis, and then as people become more aware of individuals successes, more people wanted to participate. Since there was a foundation of successful placements to build from, parents were able to talk with other parents and have their concerns addressed. The executive director emphasized that staff were instructed to work with families and if the parents had concerns about their son or daughter moving into a community job, that staff needed to listen to the parent and not push for community employment. Over time these parents received support and encouragement to consider this option, but it was not forced on them. This gradual approach is still utilized with members of the Community Connections program. While these individuals have expressed the desire to focus on volunteer and community activities, the option of employment continues to be presented to people.

### **Theme 3: Commitment to the Community.**

Independence Association is a key part of the Brunswick community and values those ties. The executive director noted that "this organization was developed as a strong community organization with a strong commitment to families, working with families around the issues of disabilities." Staff are involved with service clubs and have been part of the Chamber of Commerce for a long time. Board members represent "different churches, people who represent Bowdoin College, the general community. Half of the board are parents." These connections with the community have been important to organization in their fundraising efforts. They have received \$80,000 from United Way and local donations and these funds have allowed them to continue or expand consumer services when there are limited state funds. In addition to fundraising, this level of connection with the community has been useful in developing jobs. These connections to employers allow the organization to work on changing the attitudes about individuals with disabilities.

The Learning Center has contributed to the organization's outreach in the community. By making classes open to people in the community as well as having community members teach classes, the organization has developed a natural interaction that supports inclusion. Spindleworks' collaboration with other artists and galleries has also contributed to the people of Independence Association playing a key role in their community.

### **Theme 4: Holistic Approach to Employment Services.**

The staff at Independence Association emphasize a holistic approach to services so that all aspects of an individual's life are considered in developing a rehabilitation plan. After an individual is referred for services, he/she receive information about the range of services offered and the multiple opportunities with which one can get involved. The staff person also talks with the individual across the scope of life issues such as residential, medical, legal and therapeutic to ensure that these needs are being met. If services are being provided through other agencies, staff serve a case management role to make sure that communication and collaboration occur. The staff have begun to use person centered planning as a way to define goals of individuals and help them in arranging supports to reach those goals. In developing plans with individuals, staff have been attentive to assisting individuals in maintaining social relationships that they value. In addition to emphasizing the whole person in this process, staff respect and honor the individual's choices. A number of people supported by the organization have elected to combine work with volunteer activities or time at Spindleworks. Some individuals have chosen not to work, and continue to get support from the organization through Community Connections.

### **Theme 5: Collaboration with Funding Sources.**

During the initial period of movement toward community employment, there were some small grants that supported these activities. While this funding was not a driving influence in the change process, the use of grants for students leaving schools laid a foundation of community employment that could then be built upon. Since that time, the collaboration between Independence Association and its funding source has strengthened and allowed for creative service provision. There is a mutual trust and respect that is

shown through new funding structures as well as personal interactions. Staff and funders seem to genuinely like each other and are willing to work together to achieve a common goal.

### **Theme 6: Openness to Risk Taking.**

The staff and the executive director are described as willing to take risks to create change. The executive director describes his approach to community employment, "you just need to do it cause it's the right thing to do". With this belief they started the process and then later figured out ways to support people and to continue to fund these services. While the conversion process happened gradually in this organization, at different stages the executive director pushed funding agencies to take risks and try collaborations and funding strategies previously not considered. He identifies the importance of finding and working with people at the funding agency who were willing to try things in a different way. The executive director encourages families and consumers to challenge themselves in the same way and take a risk and try something beyond what they think they might be capable of doing.

### **Theme 7: Identify Need and Look to Internal Resources to Address Need.**

When the executive director began to focus on community employment, he hired a job development person using internal funds and then created the services. They have continued this focus and at the time of the site visit, were creating a Transition Services Coordinator position. This position is by funded by Independence Association's community resources, with funds raised at the local level. The Transition Services Coordinator will work with freshmen and sophomore students so that Independence Association can anticipate and acquire services and funding resources before students exit school. The need for this service was also identified by representatives from the funding source, and they were impressed with Independence Association's responsiveness to the problem. Staff have strong linkages with the schools and have offered a summer youth employment training program for transition age students, which is funded through the Job Training Partnership Act.

### **Theme 8: Use of Fundraising Resources to Meet Their Mission.**

Multiple examples were cited where Independence Association used funds raised in the community to support activities that were critical to them. When VR ran out of money two years ago, Independence Association used their own funds to continue supporting people. Since there are not restrictions tied to these funds, this arrangement has allowed the organization flexibility to fill needs that are not addressed by state funds.

### **Theme 9: Commitment and Value of Staff.**

The staff of Independence Association has been credited with having a very strong value base and commitment to individuals, which has allowed the organization to be successful. The Employment Services Coordinator indicated that they hire people based on their values, because the skills they need for the job can be taught. The organization has also shown a commitment to staff and provides opportunities to adjust to changes over time, either through shifting roles and responsibilities or through moving into other

components of the agency. Staff were assigned to roles that met their needs as well as the needs of the organization. There is also collaborative effort across different aspects of the organization. Although staff roles and responsibilities were clearly defined in terms of a specific area such as residential, employment, or Community Connections, staff tended not to confine their responsibilities and involvement to only these areas. Thus, residential staff and Community Connections staff clearly assisted employment staff and vice versa.

### Current Organizational Challenges

As Independence Association continues to provide employment services to individuals in the community, they will continue to struggle with the following issues.

**New funding resources.** The executive director indicated that in terms of maintaining ongoing employment, a critical need is to allow for conversion of Title XIX (Medicaid) funds to be used for community-based employment. Maine currently has a waiver which allows for the use of these funds for individuals who are moving out of institutional settings, but the executive director would like to see this available for students transitioning from schools. He reports that throughout the state, there are students who have graduated from school but are sitting at home because there are no available services. Independence Association does not have a waiting list and is actively working with school age youth to connect them with services prior to graduation. Their establishment of a Transition Coordinator position has helped address this issue locally.

**Shrinking fiscal resources.** Staff expressed concern about the declining level of resources for services for persons with disabilities. The Director of Employment Services described the cuts that were threatened by the State of Maine as being a result of a fiscal deficit. While some staff that have been through these fiscal crises in the past, it has been very anxiety provoking for newer staff. The executive director indicated that other programs are moving back toward more segregated services because more individuals be can be served with less funds, and he finds this to be a disturbing trend. He feels it is critical for his organization to continue to build the residential component of their services, as this will give them more financial stability through difficult times.

**Transportation.** One of the most significant challenges faced by Independence Association is related to transportation resources. There is limited public transportation because of the rural community. The solution of transportation services being provided through a grant from Alpha One has helped address this issue, but as to the long term funding of this initiative, transportation continues to be an ongoing concern. As a result, staff attempt to find employment opportunities within close proximity to employees' homes. Thus, many Independence Association supported employees walk to work and may ride bicycles during good weather.

**Opportunities for employment and more hours.** A number of individuals served through Independence Association are working a minimum number of hours a week. Some parents and consumers expressed concerns about this and wanted assistance in obtaining more hours. Staff have made the commitment to encourage people to work as many or as few hours as they decide, but staff need to be able to support those people who choose more hours.

**Consultative and therapeutic services.** A number of staff and the executive director indicated a need for access to more therapeutic services and consultation. These included services such as occupational, physical and speech therapy. These therapeutic services will be added Community Connections' range of services. The executive director indicates that more individuals with traumatic brain injuries are being referred to Independence Association and they will continue to need to expand their services in this area.

**Eliminating barriers to integration.** While the executive director is pleased with the organization's progress to this point, he feels it is critical to reach a point where the community can provide the supports individuals need and Independence Association's services are no longer necessary:

*...as much as we try to knock those walls down and try to blow those walls out of the way . . . the walls are there. I really believe that programs like these are the last barriers to true integration, that we in fact create walls in the process of trying to knock them down.*

The goal of eliminating these walls is the next challenge for Independence Association.

## Conclusion

Throughout the process of closing their workshop, Independence Association focused on individuals needs of consumers served rather than the organizational change process. Creative and collaborative efforts with their funding sources allowed them to create opportunities for individuals to work in the community and be able to provide the supports that they need. Some of the funding arrangements that they have established at Independence Association are now being used as a model throughout the state. The commitment and involvement in their community is another key component that contributed to Independence Association success in closing their workshop. Their staff are involved in local organizations and the agency has worked to contribute to the educational and artistic needs of the area. With the continued direction and vision of their executive director and committed staff, Independence Association moves forward in their efforts to respond in a holistic manner to the needs of individuals they serve.