

# -PathNotes-

A Publication of Pathways to Independence - Fall 2012

## **Holly Expands Her Network through Variety of Learning Opportunities**

"It made me feel good that others wanted to do things with me and that I could call people and invite them."

Holly Brown came to Pathways to Independence (PTI) seeking friendships, self-confidence, and a better ability to relate to others. If you talk to her today, you will hear that "I can" attitude and bursting confidence that says she has taken the right steps to reach her goals. Recently, participants were offered another method to learn some of the skills they are trying to attain. Through groups of 4 people or less, one person takes the lead planning an activity in the community. Many times, the one person taking the lead will also receive one-to-one training in how to best plan that activity, invite others to join and be the host throughout the event.

Holly was quick to give this new style a try. Since she enjoys the group programs so much, she was ready to take the next step of strengthening relationships with those she has met and expanding her network to other people in her community. She first met with PTI program Manager Rose Piel to more clearly identify her purpose and direction. From there, she outlined some personal interests, places she wanted to go and who she wanted to invite. She had seen The Painting Spot, a ceramics shop where you can personalize various pieces in an open studio format, and decided this would be her first venture into new territory. Holly received just the amount of coaching from staff necessary to start a plan. "I didn't know where it was. We looked it up on Google. I typed in "painting ceramics", called to get user fees, reservations, other information," she said.

The next step was to determine who may be interested in joining her on this mission. After thinking through some contacts she had made in the organization and considering who lived relatively close by, she then received further coaching to invite three others to join her. On her own, she followed up with those who didn't respond. Two of the three were able to make it. Her first self-directed learning opportunity was formed.

Ann, Mike and Holly made plans to meet at The Painting Spot, walk to Jimmy Johns for lunch and then go back to do their projects with encouragement from one another. Knowing they had a trained professional to guide them through each situation and encounter gave them the confidence to interact more independently in the community not only with each other, but with those they came into contact with.

**For the remainder of this story, see page 3 and find even more about Holly's successes by visiting [www.ptistl.org](http://www.ptistl.org)**

Holly (on right) with Ashley



## **Pathways to Independence (PTI) to Celebrate 25 Years**

On October 22, 1987, Pathways to Independence was officially formed under the name Living Independently For Transition (L.I.F.T.) After a couple years of meetings by very dedicated parents and concerned community members about what their children would face upon leaving the school system, they felt it was necessary to join forces to ensure proper housing options would be available for this group who were more independent than many of their peers in the classroom.

What they soon realized after forming L.I.F.T. was that it more important at this stage in of these young adults' lives to maintain and build their social network. Thus, they shifted focus and renamed the organization Pathways to Independence. From this point in 1989 until today, PTI has existed to help adults with learning disabilities build relationship skills and be active citizens in their community. While the structure of how that takes place has evolved, the mission has stayed true to the ideas expressed and brought to fruition by this forward-thinking group of parents and community members.

This October, PTI marks 25 years of services. In the year ahead, we will celebrate our history and celebrate the achievements of many of our participants. We will reflect on those who have excelled and encourage those who are actively pursuing their dreams. Please join us in this celebration and watch for a special event in the fall of 2013 to honor this occasion.

# -PathNotes-

## Pathways to Independence Board of Directors

### Officers

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Steve Dedrickson Treasurer  
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### Pathways Staff

Craig Strohbeck	Executive Director
Rose Piel	Program Manager
Gloria Rodgers	Program Specialist
Kathi Manegre	Program Specialist
Millie Cova	Program Specialist
Kristen Cox	Program Specialist
Natasha Tucker	Program Specialist
Beth Gartin	Project Monitor
Beth Causey	Accounting

### Office Address

Pathways to Independence  
200 South Hanley, Ste. 103  
Clayton, MO 63105  
314-863-0202 Phone  
314-863-7865 Fax

## BOARD BUSINESS

Board meetings are typically held monthly on the  
**4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at 4:30 p.m. (excluding June & December)**

Anyone interested in attending a meeting should call the  
PTI office at 314-863-0202 for additional information.

## Our Mission:

Pathways to Independence supports, educates and empowers adults with learning disabilities and associated disorders to obtain the personal growth, enhanced social skills and greater self-reliance needed for productive employment and meaningful personal relationships.

We accomplish our mission through experiential education, employment preparation, recreational programs, community events, volunteer activities and family support programs.

## Our Vision:

Adults with learning disabilities will enjoy a fullness of life through:

- Living in a community which is accepting and offers choice
- Attaining self-realization, independent living, health and security
- Engaging in healthy relationships and using good judgment, &
- Contributing to the community with a sense of purpose, passion and responsibility.

Pathways to Independence's NEW web address:

**[www.ptistl.org](http://www.ptistl.org)**

Like us on Facebook and stay up to date on happenings:



**[www.facebook.com/ptistl.org](https://www.facebook.com/ptistl.org)**

### PLEASE ADD PATHWAYS TO YOUR CONTACTS:

Executive Director, Craig Strohbeck: **[craig@ptistl.org](mailto:craig@ptistl.org)**  
Program Manager, Rose Piel: **[rose@ptistl.org](mailto:rose@ptistl.org)**  
Program Specialist, Natasha Tucker: **[natasha@ptistl.org](mailto:natasha@ptistl.org)**  
Project Monitor/Admin. Assistant: **[office@ptistl.org](mailto:office@ptistl.org)**

"Six months ago, I would not have invited others to do this. I feel more responsible. I have a more positive outlook. Due to some recent experiences combined with my time at PTI, I have learned this different outlook. PTI has taught me to plan my expenses better and be nicer to people. PTI's influence has shown me to have fun in my life. It gave me the motivation to try things again and do things I wouldn't have done before." - Holly Brown, PTI Participant

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## Board President's Report

As the new President of the Board of Pathways to Independence (PTI), I would like to first thank past President Joe Wilder for his two years of service. Through his leadership, we have grown the number of participants we serve, increased our fundraising, enhanced PTI's involvement and recognition in the community and commenced developing a strategic plan.



This is an exciting time to be President of the Board. Recently, PTI received approval for funding to provide services to St. Charles County residents. Also, with commencement of the strategic planning process, we have an opportunity to step back, revisit the mission under which PTI was established 25 years ago, incorporate what we have learned over the years, evaluate new ideas, and determine how best to serve the needs of our constituents in the future. The Board is looking forward to sharing with all our families and friends the results of our Strategic Plan in early 2013.

I would also like to thank all of our supporters for your passion and support of PTI. Soon it will be time for our Annual Appeal and two of our largest fundraisers: the trivia night in the winter, and the Walk Run 'n Roll in spring. With your help, we can continue to improve our success in all of these endeavors.

There are many ways you can continue to help Pathways to Independence continue to be a thriving organization. We are always in search of:

- talent to add to our Board,
- volunteers for our fundraising committees and
- help with special projects in the office.

Please do not hesitate to contact Craig or me if you are able to help.

Holly B. (Continued from Page 1)

Holly states, "it made me feel good that others wanted to do things with me and that I could call people and invite them." SUCCESS!

In Holly's words, "This experience has given me the confidence to try other opportunities. It is giving me the confidence to try things on the calendar I wanted to do, but was afraid to try. This month I will try the candle making class. I had tried it on my own one time and had a bad experience. This time, I'm sure it will be better."

## Gus Thrives in St. Louis City

Gus Majtas has been a participant of PTI since 2009. Throughout his few years of being a part of the program, Gus has grown in many ways. When describing himself, Gus says he used to be shy. Through attending PTI events he has been able to talk to more people, he is more comfortable in social situations, and he knows more topics of conversation to use when speaking to others.

Using these skills, Gus has made a friend with another PTI participant. Gus gets together with Ben once a week to watch anime shows, read comic books, and enjoy other activities. Gus stated that he likes having someone to hang out with that has common interests.

One goal Gus is working towards is moving out on his own. Right now he lives with his family in South City. Gus says he likes living in the City and would like to find a place to live close to where he is living currently. His favorite thing about the city is that there are more shops and things to do.

Gus has taken many steps towards achieving his goal. Last year Gus took cooking classes to help him learn the basic skills he needs when cooking for himself. He was glad he tried something new and says he would like to receive more one on one instruction to learn other skills.

Another step Gus has taken is finding a full-time job working maintenance at Wal-mart. When asked about his job he said he likes having money. He also said it is better to have a job instead of sitting around the house all day. He likes having more structure in his life.

Gus is one of the many participants of PTI working towards personal goals. PTI wishes him success in achieving his goals and will be there along the way to help him.

Gus (right in blue shirt) and Omer hang out at a PTI party.





## Contributions & Tributes April 1, 2012- August 2012

Our deepest gratitude goes to all those who continue to support Pathways to Independence. Please note: every attempt was taken to ensure accuracy in this list and any error or omission is unintentional. Please contact the office if you locate any error.

### Leadership Gift

Kevin & Betty Beckmann

### Millennial Society(\$1000+)

Tom & Debbie Hilton  
Tom & Sharon Kircher  
Joe & Anne Tolan

### Supporter (\$300-\$499)

Martin E. Gordon, M.D.  
Stanley and Lucy Lopata Charitable Foundation

### Sponsor (\$150-\$299)

Lee and Lois Miller  
Bob & Kathy O'Loughlin  
Craig & Jenifer Strohbeck

### Friend (\$75-\$149)

Herschel and Shirley Asner  
Sue Davenport  
Joan and Marcus Sessel  
Mr. and Mrs. William Sanford  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bond  
A.L. Case  
Mr. Joe Vaccaro

### Contributor (Up to \$75)

Ms. Florence Beckwar  
Kristen Cox  
Mr. and Mrs. Lewis J. Hizer  
Mrs. Sandra Kapsar  
Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence E. Langsam  
Mrs. Mary Ann Lee  
Kari McAvoy  
Leah Meriwether  
Lydia Mikoff  
Norma O'Toole  
Francis & Dorothy Piel  
Mr. Christopher Roberts  
Dawn Weber  
Joan Meriwether

### In Kind Contributions

Aegis Professional Services  
Laure Hullverson

### Matching Gifts

Covidien

### Corporate Gifts

Evans & Dixon, LLC—"Jeans Day"

### Foundation Gifts

**In Honor of Scott Clark**  
Sandberg, Phoenix & Von Gontard, P.C.

### In Honor of Susie Hall's Birthday

Alice Walther

### In Honor of the 50th Anniversary of Jim & Flora Paster

Blair & Selma Balk

### In Honor of Mike Walther

Ann & Mike Case

### In Honor of Mike and Alice Walther

Ann & Mike Case

### In Honor of Joe Wilder's Excellent Presidency

Blair & Selma Balk

### Foundations & Grants:

Combined Federal Campaign  
St. Louis Philanthropic Organization, Inc.

### In Memory of Ted Balbach

**In Memory of Rick Balk**  
Blair & Selma Balk

### In Memory of Eileen L. Berg

Kate Hill

### In Memory of Robbie Finger

Martin E. Gordon, M.D.

### In Memory of Rachael Gilard

Blair, Selma, Jeff & Tim Balk

### In Memory of Stanley Hirsch

**In Memory of Alex Kerckhoff**  
Mrs. B. K. Werner

### In Memory of Fairfax Pollnow

Richard & Christy Bond

### The Many Supporters of the Walk Run 'n Roll including but not limited to:

Ameren Missouri  
SSM Rehabilitation  
Favazza's  
Green Harvest Ingredients  
LMI Aerospace  
Lodging Hospitality Management  
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Kristin Crayton  
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Beverly Fields  
B. Fischer  
Mali Gartin  
Jerry Gibbs  
Matt Gibbs  
Kathy Glowksi  
Charlene Goedde  
B. Gordon

## Millennial Society Inaugural Class

PTI has recently established the Millennial Society as a way to recognize those individual donors who have made a contribution of \$1000 or more during the past fiscal year (July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012). We treasure all our contributors whose gifts over the past several years have made it possible for us to not only to maintain our programs in the face of rising costs, but to expand them. The significant amounts provided by the Millennial Society have, in addition, financed:

- capacity building such that we serve an additional 25% more people than we did four years ago,
- a 51% increase in the number of events offered in a given year from 2009-2012,
- our first strategic plan in six years,
- the necessary insurance and funds to operate an in-house transportation program to approximately 25% of events,
- allowed the agency to expand to adequate office space, more than doubling square footage,
- upgrades to technology and software to operate more efficiently, and
- now to add two full-time staff members to even further increase capacity to serve more individuals in the coming year.

For all this, we give our special thanks to our inaugural Millennial Class:

Anonymous (M/M A.)  
Anonymous (M B.)  
Anonymous (M/M J.)  
Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Beckmann  
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Benton  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bond  
Mr. and Mrs. John Dubuque  
Mr. and Mrs. John Finkeneller  
Mr. and Mrs. Duane Hercules  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hilton

Mr. and Mrs. George Newman  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert O'Loughlin  
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Siteman  
Dr. Raymond Slavin  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Tolan  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tschudy  
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Walther  
Mr. B. Werner  
Mrs. B.K. Werner  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Wilder

Jeff and Debby Gordon  
Kevin and Allison Haar  
M. Haverman  
Dick and Jan Hellwege  
Howard and Sherry Hill  
Tom and Debbie Hilton  
Donald Hong  
Tom Howard  
L. Hullverson  
Jim and Laure Hullverson  
Nilda Kaatman  
Nikki Karcher  
C. Keller  
Mr. J. Kircher  
Jim and Julie Krekeler  
Laura Kubiak  
Robert Kubiak  
Laura Lambert  
Joan Lamping  
Donald Larson  
Garnett Leary  
William and Lauren Levinson  
Brian Lich  
Katherine Manor  
Kevin McCarthy  
F. McKinley  
Mary Migneco  
M. Miller

Art and Charlotte Oakes  
Roman and Chanda Ocegquera  
Robert and Kathy O'Loughlin  
Tom and Pat O'Toole  
Amy Parrott  
Carrie Pessina  
C. Preusser  
Katrina Prutch  
Do Reis  
Nancy Rohan  
O. Rosenblith  
Milton Sawyer  
Joseph Shea  
P. Steger  
Patricia Steger  
Jenifer Strohbeck  
D. Sullivan  
Margie Terry  
C. Terry  
Sarah Wallis  
Diane Weidle  
C. Werner  
C. Whitaker  
Joe and Laureen Wilder  
Jay and Karen Wohlschlaeger  
**The Multitude of Volunteers**

**The Many Supporters of Macy's Shop for a Cause**

## Pathways to Independence Included in Combined Federal Campaign

Please include PTI in your CFC designation forms. PTI will be a recipient of CFC funds and we ask that you and your friends support the individuals by listing **CFC Code # 13139** on your forms. CFC is a way all federal employees can contribute monthly to the charity of their choice.



### Enjoy the Benefits of Volunteering:

Volunteering rewards you with many benefits. Some of those benefits might include: intrinsic rewards of supporting a cause, building relationships, being an important part of change, using your personal skills, strengthening your resume, the opportunity for creative expression, building job skills and participating in your community.

### PTI - Kirkwood Theatre Guild Fundraiser

The Kirkwood Theatre Guild has allowed PTI the opportunity to raise much needed funds by donating 100 tickets to our organization for their opening show of the season that runs November 2nd-4th. PTI will benefit from the sale of these tickets. We invite you to join us for:

### The Red Velvet Cake War



The team that cooked up “Dearly Beloved,” “Dearly Departed” and “Southern Hospitality” stirs up another pot of Southern charm—and chaos—when the Verdeen cousins set to havin’ a family reunion. Take a heapin’ helpin’ of colorful Texas personalities, a brush with a tornado and a high-stakes red velvet cake competition and bake it all up in one of the hottest days in July and you get one satisfyin’ comedy.

Nov. 2nd-4th  
Robert G. Reim Theatre  
Kirkwood Theatre Guild  
111 S. Geyer Road  
Kirkwood, MO 63122

Ticket Prices:  
\$18 per ticket to the play

Contact the office at 314-863-0202 ext. 4  
to get your tickets today.

**Volunteers needed to assist as Ushers and with Concession Sales. To volunteer, please contact the PTI office at 314.863.0202**

### Volunteer Corner

One family that has been very important to PTI in the past year is the Gartins. In many ways, they have gone above and beyond to reach out to our participants and to the community to make them aware of our services. Tim, Beth, Mali and Marissa share in our mission of making sure that individuals with learning and developmental disabilities (including Asperger’s Syndrome) receive the necessary supports to gain successful social interaction skills and to be involved in their community.

Beth has been an employee since last September, recently leaving us to manage the family business full-time. Outside of work hours, she volunteered on the Trivia Night Committee and put in many hours of her own time, doing special projects, recruiting volunteers and sharing our services with others. With Beth came her family. Tim, Mali and Marissa staffed the finish line water station at the St. Louis Track Club Half Marathon in November. Tim and Beth donated and were the popcorn poppers at our Trivia night. Mali took photos during the Walk, Run and Roll while Marissa distributed water. Marissa has helped in the office doing a variety of organization tasks. Mali has sold wristbands that supported PTI and helped with additional special projects. The Gartin family deserves recognition for stepping up when extra levels of support were needed. We are grateful for their involvement and look forward to continuing to work with them to accomplish all of our goals.

### Upcoming Fundraising Events

PTI – Kirkwood Theatre Guild Fundraiser  
November 2-4, 2012

Trivia Night 2013  
February 2013

Awareness Walk  
April/May 2013

Pathways to Independence  
25th Year Celebration  
September 2013

“Even for people without disabilities it is difficult to find a true friend. To find someone accepting of your idiosyncrasies and to celebrate them with you is very difficult indeed. When she joined the group Pathways to independence, that all changed. Very slowly, but it did. From her inverted self to reaching out, not being fearful of judgment, she faced those fears...”

- Carole Haddonbarry in her blog, “Focus on Independence”

# -PathNotes-

## Clint's Gains Confidence and is Honored as Employee of the Year Runner-Up



In a building that houses over 100 employees, Clint Whitaker has found what he has a passion for...helping others learn to do their job better. He has blossomed in the past year, showing leadership qualities, gaining confidence in many areas of his work and using his communication skills to share his talents with others.

When talking about this article, the term “confidence” came up over and over. He attributed the boost in his self-esteem to the environment he is a part of with PTI. In social situations, he explains how he would often have been the quiet one who may have understood what needed done, but didn't offer the extra hand or advice to get it done. He would have been too reserved. He says PTI helped him to become his own person. PTI taught him how to interact with people who are different than he is. He learned to ask more questions, bring up new topics and find things that they have in common. What he learned is he can relate to most people about something. He also learned to let frustrating situations roll off his back and seek new solutions to dealing with difficult people. In doing so, he has made a lot of friends.

Translating this, he has learned to open up at work and help others. The confidence he gained from these successful relationships improved his ability to relate at work, and this improved his performance; and that caught the attention of his supervisors. He finds that he is able to explain processes easier using the communications skills he picked up while on events in the community with PTI. Clint states that coming to Bunco helped him realize he enjoyed showing others how to do things, like adding up their points. Now, his supervisor can count on him to take that leadership role when they have to step away for a few minutes to tend to other tasks or help another employee. He sees another PTI member who is a Line Leader and he aspires to join her ranks. He's found that spark that can take him to the next level.

He and the other PTI member recently shared in a small group skill building opportunity. He says he would like to get together outside of PTI events with friends he shares common interests. He recognizes that the new four-person groups are the next step to making that happen. He says he will use the information he has gained from asking questions to key into people that he knows have certain interests. He knows if it's a sporting event, he'll invite a certain group he enjoys talking stats with, but if it's a night at the movies, those he shares common themes with are different than the sports crowd.

Clint wants to continue to build his planning and time management skills. He wants to build his relationships to doing things together outside of PTI events. He wants to continue to sharpen his problem solving skills. He has found success through building relationships, and through building relationships, he has found more independence. Let's give a hand to a guy who keeps learning, achieving and being recognized for his good work!

## Social Etiquette Corner—Tips to make your next encounter **SUCCESSFUL!**

- Judgments of individuals are a personal matter and it is not incorrect to hold certain learned beliefs about people. However, personal opinions should remain private in polite company.
  - Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough.
  - Do not discuss one's personal wealth, possessions or finances socially.
- An arm's length of personal space is the normal comfort zone between unrelated individuals.
  - When with a group of friends, please turn cell phones off.

Prepared and submitted by: Shannon Morris, PTI participant

# -PathNotes-



## Kristen Cox, Program Specialist

PTI enjoys a terrific staff who give beyond the day to day duties of their position. One of our key team members is Kristen Cox. She joined us in the fall of 2010 after completing her B.S. degree in Therapeutic Recreation. She was inspired to work for PTI initially by our mission and vision. "I loved the idea of helping others in a community setting and helping them to be as independent as possible. I knew that this population lacked organizations such as PTI and wanted to help out where it was most needed."

Kristen's passion flows in her work and her attention to the participants. "I love being able to help them and then hear their stories and see the strides they make whether in the community, at work or in their personal lives." She has said there are many moments that come out of this that remind her why she does this job after working full-time for a complimentary agency. It makes her happy to know she is helping someone else.

Along the way, she has learned from the participants. She has learned how to support a variety of different participants, different approaches and how to work in variety of settings. As she is currently working on her Master's Degree in Applied Psychology with an Applied Behavior Analysis concentration, she plans to continue to work in the field for years to come and have an even deeper impact. Moving to St. Louis, now engaged and recently purchased their first home, PTI and the PTI family has been influential to her wanting to stay in St. Louis. "I was welcomed by everyone and felt comfortable in a new situation. I've learned just how friendly and genuine the participants and staff are. I feel as if I learn more from the participants than what I can ever teach them. They remind me to let my guard down and to enjoy the little things in life. I'm so grateful to have always had PTI in my life here in St. Louis."

## Lauren and Sam Relate to Each Other

Lauren Montgomery and Sam Wiltsch have known each other for years. They met before becoming active in PTI and quickly found that special connection. What they lacked in their relationship was the know-how to make it last. Sure, they both come from strong families with great support, but they have always had to find that inner strength to learn how to communicate effectively. Sam is the typical, easy-going guy that you meet out and he welcomes you with a smile and an open hand. Lauren is more reserved and hides her cards. She has the genuine innocence and subtle smirk that attracts others to want to get to know her.



Once involved with PTI, Lauren and Sam found a natural environment to work on their communication. They found a supportive team to bounce ideas and follow paths that they have never traveled. They have met new people and strengthened relationships with those they can turn to when the going gets tough. Lauren turns to the wife of another couple in the organization because she knows being married, she understands what it takes to get through the daily trials of being so close to another person. Sam has found a male friend who gives him a different perspective while offering support and encouragement. Together, they benefit from a very close friend with relationship experience who wants the very best for both of them.

Involvement in PTI has introduced them not only to peers to turn to, but to a staff that helps them problem-solve. They have learned how to communicate through differences. They will tell you that when faced with a difference of opinion, they talk it out, think, listen to one another and come to an agreement. They learned some of these skills by watching other couples, but also by experiencing a few bumps in the road and having staff teach skills in empathy, to recognize the other's point of view and to take the steps to find common ground. They have learned to share their feelings through a gift on special occasions or simply a phone call during their lunch hour to see how the other's day is going and just say, "Hi." Like many couples, they spend a great deal of time on the phone learning to understand each other even more. What they have gained is their strength: knowing they can get along and knowing they have each other to enjoy time together.

Involvement in PTI has added more variety to their dates. They reserve a night each weekend to be together. They have friends outside of PTI that they often double-date with and enjoy new places that they were not aware of in the past. In addition, they have continued to have healthy social outlets when they are apart. This too, has increased their desire to share new experiences with each other and with their friends, both within and outside of PTI. Lauren and Sam are four years into a relationship that will lead them down many roads, we are glad they have chosen to share their success and their zest for life and be the shining example to any other couple who finds themselves tiptoeing along this beautiful path.



# Pathways to Independence

Specializing in social, recreational, and leisure education for adults with learning disabilities since 1987.

200 S. Hanley, Suite 103, Clayton, MO 63105

Partially funded by the



**DDRB**



## -PathNotes-

### **PTI to Initiate Services to St. Charles County Residents – Asperger Support Group to Expand with Additional Service Options**



As many of you know, St. Charles County has experienced rapid population growth over the past 15-20 years. Along with rapid population growth comes significantly larger needs and gaps in services as people move in faster than services are prepared to start. For several years, Pathways to Independence (PTI) has been aware of the gap for the individuals living in St. Charles County that would benefit from the social interaction, community involvement and pre-employment skill training provided through our services. In 2011, The St. Charles Developmental Disability Resource Board (DDRB) completed a Strategic Plan and Needs Assessment that validated that gap and began to search for providers who could meet the need. Due to funding, they were unable to initiate services until this fall, but on August 19, the DDRB Board of Directors approved a pilot project for PTI to begin to meet the need in their county.

Serving three of the major counties in the St. Louis area is a major step forward for our organization, but more importantly, a major win for individuals who are often overlooked or do not feel comfortable in other programs in the area. Because PTI supports such a niche group within our population, it is often difficult for them to find programs where they “fit in”. PTI is excited to be part of the solution for residents of St. Charles County beginning this fall.

The awareness of the need began as an Asperger’s Syndrome support group coordinated as a special project by a former DDRB employee who was finishing her social work degree. When she finished her formal training and moved on, others tried to keep it going, but it faded due to the lack of a formal service provider. With social skill training being a major emphasis of PTI since our inception 25 years ago and supporting those who are more independent within the developmental disability diagnostic criteria, it seemed an obvious fit that PTI would seek to formalize this service and carry on a much needed program. As a result, PTI plans to expand our capacity and be serving 30 individuals in St. Charles County by June 30, 2013. We are grateful for the confidence placed in us by the Board and staff of the DDRB and look forward to bridging the gap for those individuals looking to be socially engaged in their community.