

Quest

Newsletter of Industrial Opportunities, Inc.

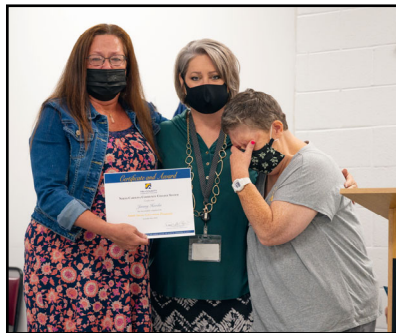
Something to Celebrate!

Tri-County Community College and IOI host Awards Ceremony for 2020 and 2021 Academic Years

After postponing the annual awards ceremony in 2020 due to safety restrictions put forth by the onset of the COVID - 19 Pandemic, Industrial Opportunities Inc. (IOI) and Tri-County Community College (TCCC) collaborated to celebrate our mutual students' successes from the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years. On Thursday, June 24, 2021, TCCC and IOI held their 20th Annual Awards Ceremony to celebrate the 47-year partnership between the two agencies. Since 1974, IOI has invited Tri-County instructors into the facility to offer learning opportunities to their employees. This partnership has remained in place to date, even through the Pandemic. Tom O'Brien, President and CEO of IOI, opened the ceremony with words of enthusiasm and encouragement as we work through how to open back up and explore this "new normal". He stated, "It is great to be able to gather for this joyful celebration and to be together again to commemorate the 20th Annual Awards Ceremony for our clients".

Lee Beal, the new Director of College and Career Readiness at

TCCC, stood in on behalf of Tri-County to assist students in receiving their individual awards. She stated, "it was a pleasure for me to be invited to participate in this long-awaited celebration"! For over 47 years, adults with disabilities at IOI have had the opportunity to take classes with TCCC instructors while working at IOI. Employees will take time out of their work day to participate in TCCC learning opportunities. Each semester, classes are based on a theme which allows students to apply academic and life skills in real world experiences. Polly Kilpatrick, TCCC instructor, shared, "This year's theme was centered around our nation's National Parks. I am extremely proud of my students' perseverance in continuing their classes during the pandemic and



working hard to prepare for today's ceremony". The ceremony was a celebration of the students and their accomplishments for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years. The awards ceremony honored 34 students who performed choreographed hand motions and sang along to the song *This Land is Your Land*, to demonstrate how much they have learned during the Summer Semester's theme of National Parks. Various other songs were performed to commemorate the challenges faced throughout 2020 such as *Lean on Me*, *Man in the Mirror* and a final song of celebration, *Party in the USA!* This year's celebration had significant meaning as we honored the life of Jimmy Hardin, a beloved member of the IOI community. Jimmy's sister Donna Ear-

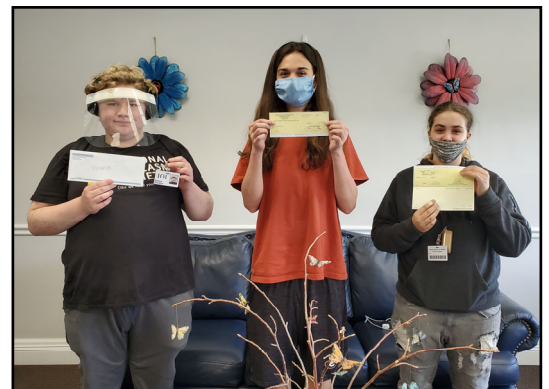
wood and Rhonda Smiley accepted Jimmy's awards on his behalf. Mrs. Smiley spoke briefly to all present after accepting her brother's award. She stated, "it is an honor to accept this award in Jimmy's memory. He always loved the cooking and gardening classes. It brought him great joy." Rhonda is a former instructor with the adults with disabilities program partnership between Tri-County and IOI and Donna Earwood also works at IOI and attends TCCC classes. This family has a long and supportive relationship with both TCCC and Industrial Opportunities, Inc. The awards ceremony was an inspiring event and a wonderful reminder that we can all work together to support one another and to remain lifelong learners.

Pre-Employment Transition Services Students Interns at IOI

In July of 2021, four Clay County students that are participating in the Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS), took part in an internship at Industrial Opportunities, Inc. This was the first internship that the PreETS program has ever done and the students had to complete at least sixty hours for the internship to be completed. It allowed the students to get real work experience but still have the support of a PreETS instructor should they need it. The internships were a huge success for both the stu-

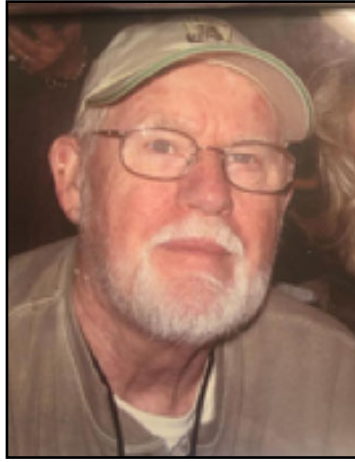
dents and Industrial Opportunities, Inc.

The PreETS program has grown and evolved considerably from its first year in 2017. The program has added schools to its service area, served more and more students every year, and even changed the instruction and curriculum to accommodate virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The PreETS program's goal is to continue to evolve and better accommodate students and their needs. The internship was a wonderful way to help achieve that goal.



James “Neb” Nesbitt Conner

James’s “Neb” Nesbitt Conner, 81, of Columbus passed away Sunday morning, April 4, 2021. Born in Walker County, GA, he was the son of the late John Walker Conner and Marjorie Bell Walker Conner. Mr. Conner was a veteran of the U.S. Army having served in the 82nd Airborne. After his service to our country, went on to graduate from Western Carolina University earning his master’s degree and Bachelor of Arts. He retired from Henderson County Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Surviving is his wife of 20 years, Anna Pack Conner; one stepson, John Gillie (Elizabeth) of Columbus; one stepdaughter, Laura Walker (Gary) of Tryon. A graveside service was held at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, April 10, 2021, in Polk Memorial Gardens, Columbus.



Military honors was conducted by the Polk County Veterans Memorial Honor Guard. Tom O’Brien of IOI commented “Neb Conner as our VR Community Rehabilitation Specialist was more impactful than any other individual I have worked with. At the onset of my career in 1974, Neb steadily provided critical input and resources that guided IOI’s development, growth and quality of vocational services. As a result of his dedication and unique influence of Community Rehabilitation Programs throughout his region of Western North Carolina, he led the state in quality of services and total successful job placement through the 1970’s & 1980’s.

Neb’s passion commitment and determination resulted in Community Rehabilitation Programs evolution from an Activity Center to Vocational Training Programs providing vocational services and employment to individuals with disabilities. Neb will always be remembered as a leading pioneer for developing today’s footprint of North Carolina’s vocational rehabilitation services.

Mission Statement

We believe that individuals have a right to economic opportunity and personal development. The Board of Directors and staff actively incorporate the concept that through meaningful, satisfying work, people are able to live more independently, successfully, and productively. We believe that every individual has the right to respect, equal opportunity and gainful employment.

Rehabilitation Programs Overview FY 2020/2021 (COVID-19 for 12 months)

Total number served

• 56

Competitive Employment

- Work Adjustment- 0 placements
- Supported Employment- 0 placements

Program Goal Achievement

- Effective in results - 124%
- Efficient in timeliness - 100%

Satisfaction with services

- Individual's - 114%
- Stakeholder's- 115%

Robert “Bob” J. Fink

Robert “Bob” J. Fink 79, of Lancaster New Hampshire, passed away peacefully Monday Morning February 15, 2021. Surviving is his wife, Gretchen.

Bob was appointed as Director of the Marble Activity Center (IOI) on July 24, 1975. In 1974, Bob initially worked at the Center organizing the vocational programs and grant writing. Bob worked tirelessly from 1974-1976 to “Get the Program Off the Ground”. Tom O’Brien, current CEO of IOI, met Bob & Gretchen in October 1974.

Tom, a 22-year-old Glenmary Home Missioners volunteer, recalls his first encounter with Bob: “I asked if he could use my assistance volunteering at the Center.”

He replied, “I hate volunteers.” “Bob’s response caught me completely off guard and after standing in shocked silence for a moment, I asked, “Why?””

Bob replied, “I’m trying to Get this Program Off the Ground and you’re only going to waste my time. I’ll have to think of things for you to do, and then you will not show up and I don’t have the time to waste”.

Tom never missed a day and 3 months later in January of 1975, Bob asked him to come work at the Center, just for a year, to help him “Get the Program Off the Ground”.

“Thinking back over the past 47 years I’m thankful for Bob and Gretchen’s love and support of me. The strong friendship we developed and his priceless mentorship. But most importantly his



Tom O’Brien & Bob Fink reminiscing about “Getting it off the Ground”

instilling in me the dignity of individuals with significant disabilities to have a meaningful day with the choice of educational opportunities, being able to take part in activities in our community, and the ability to experience the enjoyment of socialization that comes with working alongside your friends and co-workers, and the opportunity to earn a paycheck. Looking back, I can still see each individual working at the Activity Center, transform and grow before my eyes. The pride everyone took in having the opportunity to work and earn a paycheck was something extraordinary to see at such a young age. It’s something I will always be grateful of. Bob’s leadership skills and knowledgeable intuition to introduce employment opportunities into vocational programs has given countless adults purpose and hope.”

Gretchen also became an employee of IOI in 1977, working as a Program Manager of Adult Day Vocational Services.

“Bob, Gretchen and I have stayed in touch over the past 47 years. We saw each other back in December 2019, the picture of Bob & I says it all.”

IOI History

March 1974 - March 2021 Comparison

Then	Now
Workforce = 8 2 Employees, 6 Clients	Workforce = 187 148 Employees, 39 Clients
IOI rented a 1,200 square ft building	IOI owns a 108,344 square ft. building
IOI operating budget was \$27,000	IOI operating budget is \$7,718,765
IOI was 98% government supported & 2% self supported	IOI is 93% self supported & funded 7% fee for service

Richard Dean Kohler



while helping him keep his academic skills sharp with reading and math along with community outings and events. Richard Dean was very meticulous in his work, it was always correct. He took pride in his ability do jobs that required attention to detail that might be difficult for others to master. Richard Dean never met a stranger. When meeting a new person, his greeting was, "I know you!" and would connect the person with something or someone that was familiar to him even though there was no connection. Richard Dean was quick to give compliments to what a person was wearing. Richard Dean loved tracking the weather daily. He would write it down in his small note pad that he always carried with him. Also on the note pad was, every staff that he worked with on each day. He would track every vacation trip and what staff went on that trip. Definitely attention to detail! Richard Dean was a master at Arm Wrestling. He would take on anyone that had the courage to challenge him! Richard Dean was a kind, fun-loving soul that is and will be missed at IOI.

On June 16, 2021, we were saddened to learn that a former client, Richard Dean Kohler had passed away. Richard Dean had started services at IOI on May 4, 1987. He left services on May 24, 2021 due to health issues.

During his time with IOI, Richard Dean worked at a local hotel cleaning rooms for several years and then obtained a job at McDonald's cleaning the dining room for several more years. He received Supported Employment services which helped him learn the jobs and maintain his employment. When he had to leave employment at McDonald's, Richard Dean returned to various in-house services at IOI. These services helped Richard Dean maintain his skill sets to work

Kenneth "Dwight" Hollowell

We were saddened again this summer when we learned that a former client, Dwight Hollowell, passed away on August 13, 2021. Dwight joined IOI services on May 9, 2008. He had to leave services on May 18, 2021 due to health issues.

Dwight's services helped him maintain community involvement through outings and events. He also enjoyed leisure activities and

classes. Though Dwight spoke with his own language, he communicated love and affection in a very caring way. Many days Dwight would greet you with a "Hey!" numerous times throughout the day. He loved to reach out to you and you touch his hand. And if he gave you "the wink", you knew you were going to have a good day. Often he would sing to you with his words of "Ooooooh" and "Ahhhhhhhh". Though you could not hear the tune he was singing to, you could only imagine the tune was Pharrell Williams' - Happy. A song about maintaining a content and joyful approach towards life irrespective of bad days. Unknowingly we learned personal life lessons when we spent time



Supporters

- Frederick & Karen Willes
- Harriet Mulford
- Nannetta Earley
- Celia Larson
- Daniel & Patricia Braccio
- Douglas Klaucke
- Jill Kelly
- Ronald Parker
- Jack Smoot
- Mike & Robin Stevenson
- Glen & Carolyn Carson
- Anne Finn
- Carolyn Cole
- George Heilner
- Donna Del Santo
- Delmer & Deborah Chilton
- James Apple
- Kathryn Hoyt
- Hampton Dejarnette & Leslie England
- Jere & Judith Annis
- Rashid & Sabiha Khan
- Gary Kilpatrick
- Sue Baldwin
- Douglas & Catherine Odom
- Susan & Terry McNamara
- Phil & Virginia Mattox
- Brian O'Connor
- Andrew Reichman
- Joe & Beth Walton



with Dwight. He had that magic! Dwight lived in the moment, enjoyed the simple pleasures of life - a milkshake, a slice of watermelon - and accepting others exactly as they are with no judgment or fear.

Quest Fellowship

- In memory of Gary Allison by: Joseph & Janie Guffey
Loretta Barton
Robert Barton & Family and Marie Barton
Terry & Melinda Swaim
Shelia Jordan
Bruce & Mary Barton
Shirley Payne
Lynne Manning
- In memory of Susan & Chris O'Brien by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Jack Earley by Chester & Linda Jones
- In honor of Doug Earley by Chester & Linda Jones
- In memory of Cecile Mattox Campbell by Jane E. Campbell
- In honor of David Winterle by Laura Przepyszny
- In honor of Laura McKenzie Hays by W. Arthur Hays, Jr.
- In memory of Arnold Golem by John Golem
- In memory of Jack & Maxine Earley by Charles & Judy Miller
- In memory of Susan & Chris O'Brien by David & Susan Winterle
- In memory of Chris O'Brien by Noel & Susan Watts
- In honor of Tom O'Brien by Jim & Ellen O'Brien
- In memory of Bob Fink (former IOI Executive Director) by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Judy O'Brien Sheridan & Chris O'Brien by Tom Sheridan
- In memory of Cherry Garrett and Chris O'Brien by Elizabeth Walton
- In memory of Neb Conner by Harry Baughn
- In memory of Neb Conner by Tom O'Brien
- In honor of Claire Allison by Robert Barton & Family and Marie Barton
- In honor of Claire & Teresa Allison by Bruce & Mary Barton
- In memory of Kenneth "Dwight" Hollowell by:
Jack & Jolene McCann
Mark & Deborah Lincoln
Dan & Susan Halm
Kathryn Hoyt
Lynne Manning
Tom O'Brien
Beverly & Dick Hester
- In memory of Joe & Rose El-Khoury by Theresa Martin
- In memory of Richard Dean Kohler by Lynne Manning
- In memory of William & Shirley O'Brien, Kathy O'Brien Przepyszny, & Judy O'Brien Sheridan
- In memory of Richard Kohler by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Glenn Tatum III by Ellen Davis

Though he was content not being in the spotlight, Dwight will always have a bright spot in our hearts at IOI.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month



Yes, I would like to contribute to the capital needs of I.O.I.

All Gifts are Tax Deductible

Enclosed is a gift of \$ _____ toward capital improvements at I.O.I.

I make this gift:

- In memory or honor of _____
- To benefit the client activity fund.
- To benefit the IOI Endowment Fund.
- Enclosed is my Quest Fellowship donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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