

BECKWITH *News*

A Newsletter of Beckwith Residential Support Services | Fall 2018

LEAVE THE WORLD A LITTLE BETTER THAN YOU **FOUND IT...**



Kathleen Downes...

Developed programs as a Social Justice & Leadership Education (SJLE) intern. Created a women with disabilities panel in honor of Women's History Month. The panelists participated in a discussion of how disability intersected with their experience of womanhood and other social identities. Created disability training modules for all University Housing Multicultural Advocates (MAs).

Elijah Walker...

Volunteers as a tutor/teacher's assistant at Franklin Middle School, is a part of Illini Medical Services, a research assistant for a gastroenterological study, and participates in the cross country and track & field clubs.



Kelly Hussey...

Continued paving the way for other students with disabilities to study abroad by completing a five-week study abroad course in Bilbao, Spain. Communicating with several different people in two countries to assure that she had a successful experience.

The Power of Opportunity

by Susann Sears, Beckwith Director



As you read through this year's annual newsletter, the common theme conveyed in each article is a message of personal growth, achievement, and connection made possible through opportunity; one of the greatest gifts that can be either received or extended to others. Opportunities where people are valued, respected, and listened to are needed now more than ever before. When asked about the type of legacy that I hope to leave behind, it comes back to simply being remembered as connecting others to opportunities that allow them to realize a greater level of potential within themselves. Supporting students in achieving a sense of meaning and purpose is central and drives dedication in our work. Nothing is more gratifying than hearing how a Beckwith supported student/PA/alum has successfully accomplished this.

Author Emily Esfahani Smith has spoken about how there is more to life than just happiness. Although life is getting objectively easier, people are feeling more hopeless and alone. She stated that it is not a lack of happiness that predicts this emptiness, but a lack of meaning felt in one's life. Therefore, having meaning in one's life is found to be more fulfilling than happiness alone. "Leaving it better than you found it" is about the actions needed to create opportunity for others. The hope is that these very opportunities help to cultivate the meaning that drives us to live our fullest lives.

It is commonly stated that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Establishing new relationships and fostering existing ones to work collaboratively in new and creative ways can offer and extend more opportunities. When differing minds come together for the same purpose, and subsequently experience success – this is where the true beauty also lies. Working together is not always a linear or harmonious experience, so when all the pieces come together, the reward can be powerful. Impactful opportunities also incorporate the development of personal responsibility, as well as "teachable moments" that attempt to inform and develop individuals in a positive direction.

Our collective goal is to utilize each opportunity to create an imprint in the students we support that will drive them to continue to positively impact others beyond the university and into our greater communities, even internationally. One can only imagine the privilege it is to witness students achieving success based on an opportunity during their tenure with Beckwith Residential Support Services (BRSS) and the University of Illinois. In fact, a BRSS and U of I alum, Katy Hoyer ('11 Psychology, '13 Master's in Social Work), recently shared an opportunity in her role as an independent living advocate at the Disability Resource Center. She had successfully connected a young girl named Shay with an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device through their Assistive Technology for Young Children program. Because of Katy's support, Shay was able to verbally express herself independently and in a self-directed manner. For the first time, she has an independent voice. THIS exemplifies the power of seizing and living with meaning and purpose. I hope you enjoy learning about how our contributors have exemplified this as members of the BRSS community this past year.



Katy and Shay enjoying their conversation.



The Next Right Thing ***by Dr. Patricia Malik, DRES Director***

As I read the articles written by Beckwith Residential Support Services (BRSS) residents and staff, I was brought back to a moment I shared with Dr. Tim Nugent. He was sitting in my office waiting for his college roommate to arrive so we could do a tour of Nugent Hall. I asked him if he ever thought a building would be named after him. I mean really – can you imagine having your name on a building on our Illinois campus? He looked at me, as only Tim could, and said that he never approached increasing access on the Illinois campus for accolades. He stated that he would see a problem, or something that needed to be done, and simply try to address it, one at a time. His focus on one problem at a time was the only way he could tackle the many issues that he faced in the 1940s through the 1980s. Tim merely found the next right thing to do for students – leaving the campus better than he had found it upon his arrival.

The spirit of Tim Nugent is alive and well in the

students and staff of the Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES), and within the articles in this newsletter. There are BRSS residents and staff who recognize when a first-year resident needs someone to listen or offer support. Others use their own gifts and skills to offer engaging and challenging programs that build community. Still others make their corner of the world better by being actively involved outside of BRSS through internships, blogging, and involvement in advocacy work.

It is helpful for each of us to reflect on how we are “righting” our corner of the world and making it a better place for our family, friends, and fellow citizens. There is much to learn in the pages of this year’s Beckwith Newsletter, from first year residents who found their own voice to those graduating who are ready to make a difference in their new worlds. After reading this year’s newsletter – what is the next right thing you can do to make the world better than it was yesterday?



First-year residents with TAs, DAs, and BRSS and Nugent Hall staff.

Seek And You Will Find It

by Jason Murphy



My first year as the coordinator of staffing and education has come to a close. I am very appreciative of and humbled by being selected to be part of this amazing program. I quickly concluded this is where I need to be for myself and as a wonderful experience for my family. In short, I have been provided with a renewed sense of purpose, and my family has had joy, healing, and a sense of peace that had been needed for a very long time.

This year, the Beckwith community aspired to “Leave It Better than You Found It.” When asked what legacy I wanted to leave, I admit I was unsure. Heck, I had just started – I was not considering the future. However, as the year progressed it became clear. I realized very few students knew Beckwith Residential Support Services existed or understood our mission. I feel my legacy entails informing students and other campus entities about Beckwith Residential Support Services, our students, and our mission.

As I interviewed students as potential personal assistants, many expressed that they had only heard of

Beckwith by word of mouth. UIC nursing students studying on campus complete a brief rotation where many expressed wishing they knew about us sooner. I admit, as a student, I did not know the program was here. Many recipients of this newsletter are well informed about our program and generously support us in countless ways. For others, this may be your introduction.

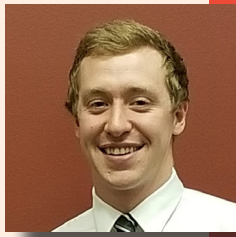
I feel strongly that increasing our exposure will not only benefit others, but also Beckwith. The Beckwith community would benefit from the vast unknown resources on campus. This would be a win-win opportunity. Logistics regarding the where and when still need some work. However, I believe our College (Applied Health Sciences), the College of Medicine, and the Schools of Nursing and Social Work would be a great start. I look forward to beginning this conversation with leaders of these units. It’s been said throughout our existence that Beckwith is one of the best-kept secrets of the University, and I want to change that. Until then, I am happy with one PA at a time.



Jason and Paige at the 2017 Muscular Dystrophy Association’s Muscle Summit to spread the word about Beckwith to potential residents.



Jason presenting the Matthew Allen Odellius Award to Amelia at the 2018 DRES Awards & Recognition Reception.



Leaving a Blueprint

by Matt Burns

A wise Lord Robert Baden-Powell once delivered a great message informing us to “Leave this world a little better than you found it.” Interpretation of this request is subjective, but I truly believe it means that for every venture which we assume throughout our lives, it should be our moral imperative to put our very best forward. Our very best should be not only for ourselves, but also for the betterment of the community and all individuals participating in that given endeavor. Rather than having our efforts being predicated on what’s best for us individually, it is vital that we consider what is in the best interest of all. In doing so, you will have optimized your odds of fulfilling Lord Baden-Powell’s request.

In my time spent in the Beckwith community, I hope that my attitude, practices, and beliefs left a good blueprint that resonates positively for future employees and residents. Whether in the world at large, a job, or any specific circumstance we encounter in life, it must always be our goal to leave it better than we found it. At Beckwith, that meant that my co-workers and I needed to go the extra mile, stay the extra ten minutes, help

somebody out in the hall even if you aren’t on the clock, and do more than what has simply been laid out in front of you!

Human beings are naturally compliant and obedient. This means that when directives are given, we naturally comply and most likely stop at that. However, this alone is not enough. If we do not go above and beyond how are we to expect change, improvement, or leaving this world better than we found it? The only true way to leave the world a little better is to strive for overachievement. Do the extra task, even when nobody is looking. Do the leftover work others passed on, even if it may be hard. I challenge all of you reading this to go the extra mile today! Leave this world a little better than you found it.



Competing during the 2018 Men's Track Illini Classic.



Jason congratulating Matt for being nominated as a Student Employee of the Year.

Finding One's Confidence

by Dan Escalona



I remember vividly a morning during my freshman year when for the third week in a row, my PA was more than 30 minutes late to get me out of bed. I missed class again and the floater had to get me up. It was the first time I seriously doubted if I really could make it living independently away from my parents in the Beckwith program at the U of I. I resolved to discuss the issue with the PA, despite my crippling fear of confrontation. Having to confront my PA about this constant extreme lateness was awkward but eventually we figured things out and the problem did not arise again. It was here where I found a confidence to resolve issues with the very people I needed to rely upon to live independently and to better manage my PA staff.

But, more importantly, by getting through this stressful situation my freshman year, I knew that, yes, I belong here and I could make my mark.

Now, looking back at the last six years, I am impressed by how far the confidence I found to take on and push through difficulties has left the Beckwith community better than how I found it, especially as I prepare to take on the next difficulty life has for me.

This confidence pushed me to join the *Daily Illini* as a freshman, only to find myself working there for four years as a reporter and columnist. It pushed me to report on issues I never thought I could, especially local government and investigative journalism. It pushed me to make lifelong friendships and other memories I will fondly remember. It pushed me to succeed in my major and get accepted into the journalism master's program. It pushed me to find solutions to issues related to PAs or classes or my disability. It pushed me to get out of my comfort zone in a way I could never imagine the summer before my freshman year, and again as a TA/mentor helping first-year students with their transition. It pushed me to become a positive role model for all the members of the Beckwith community since I arrived, some of whom have since graduated, some who will be graduating, and some who still have a couple more years at this place. Most importantly, it pushed me to cultivate my identity at a time when I was still looking for one.



I've got a deadline to make!



A Year to Remember

By Barrett Patton

“You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have.”

This Bob Marley quote is painted in a picture sitting on the desk in my dorm room. The sentiment is meaningful not just for its powerful, poetic tone, but also for the incredible amount of relevancy it holds for me as I reflect upon my first year as a college student and Beckwith resident.

On February 6, 2017, I received the email confirming my acceptance into the Beckwith program. I remember feeling overjoyed, but more specifically a sense of resolution. “Yay, I get to go to college and not have to worry about who’s going to take me to the bathroom!” I rejoiced. Thoughts like this were prevalent because I initially viewed Beckwith as one-dimensional...PAs, floaters, and nothing more. The best part is I could not have been more wrong! My journey toward discovering the whole truth behind what the Beckwith program has to offer me (still in progress, by the way) is at the core of what made this a year to remember!

Over the last nine months, there have been many tears shed, homesickness, and moments of uncertainty. Even so, as I experienced this incredible sort of metamorphosis by going through these hardships, I also had the opportunity to begin leaving an imprint on many aspects of the university community. As far as Beckwith is concerned, I was given the monumental honor of emceeding the 7th Annual Disability Awareness

Program. This so-called gig was not only a lesson in confidence, but proof that I had already begun making imprints within Beckwith. I have also been able to join a choir and forge many other lasting friendships, all in the course of one year.

Recently I had the opportunity to meet an incoming resident with whom I shared advice and reflections as a resident finishing my first year. For me, the ability to impart such wisdom with the hope of making something a little bit easier for someone else was highly rewarding. Knowing all of this, I think it’s safe to say that this year has been a year to remember!

“Discovering the Beckwith program is at the core of what made this a year to remember!”



Barrett and his parents on Move-in Day.

A Year at Beckwith...



Engaging conversations during the post disability awareness program social.



Born to cook! And eat!



Kathleen and Bria enjoy the evening.



The annual ice skating party bringing the BRSS community together.



Avery and others checking out sled hockey!



Our first bonfire! A beautiful night to chat under the stars!



A community enjoying hanging out with each other.



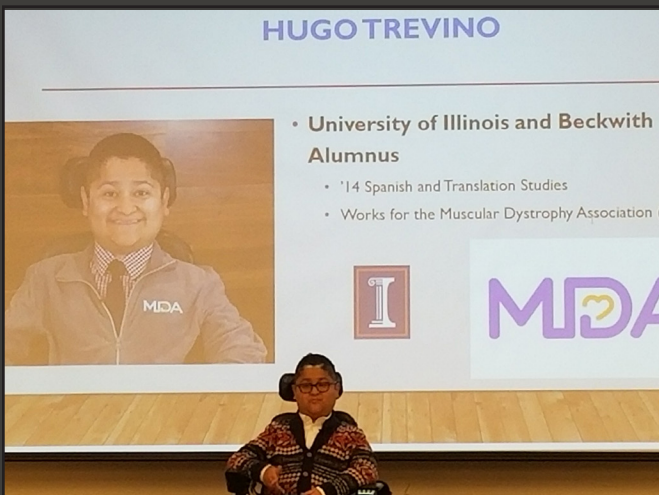
Kelly, Cole and Kathleen taking a study break to join the BRSS Community at "friendsgiving."



Alexis, resident advisor; Sarah & Jake, multicultural advocate enjoy the photo booth as they prepare to support the new residents.



This year's panel was represented by freshman through graduate students.



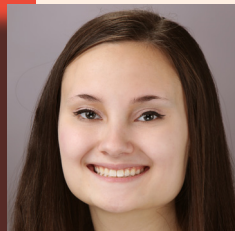
Hugo Trevino, the Seventh Annual Disability Awareness Program keynote speaker.



Hannah hanging out in Beckwith.

An Ideal Internship

by Allie Berg



It was strange to consider what type of legacy I've left at Beckwith. I don't have a street named after me, a scholarship in my name, or a statue to reflect my successes like Dr. Nugent. Frankly, I thought I was not old enough to have this kind of lasting impact on anything. After some thought, I realized that you can leave a legacy, no matter what age or life stage you are in.

During my internship at Beckwith, I was fortunate enough to implement an art program and work one-to-one with residents. My goal was to teach residents a new way to de-stress, prioritize themselves, and have fun with their peers. I also hoped to foster an appreciation of art as a creative way to express yourself and be mindful, and as a tool for self-care. It was rewarding when students expressed how much they looked forward to this program and thanked me for enabling them to do art. This is when I knew I had made an imprint during my internship.

On a broader scope, I co-presented with Susann on disability culture to a social work class, DRES, and

Beckwith. Being able to take what I've learned and inform others about disability culture was an amazing professional achievement. Whether it is doing a formal presentation or a more casual conversation, advocating for people with disabilities is my passion. I want to continue this legacy of advocacy on a much larger scale. As a social worker, I aspire to work in policy/legislation to advance equal rights for people with disabilities. Who knows, maybe I'll be a future senator or congresswoman!

I want to thank everyone at Beckwith for the incredible impact you've had on me, and for being such an empowering, inclusive community. Words cannot express my love and admiration not only for reaffirming my love of my major, but also providing invaluable lessons such as going with whatever life throws at you. I experienced my ideal internship! I hope I was able to have a similar impact on you.

Beckwith is like a second family to me. I will truly miss all of you. Now go out and start creating your legacy.



Lauren proudly showing her watercolor painting.



Avery & Allie enjoying the semi-formal dance.



Expanding One's Voice

By Shannon Rose

My experience at Beckwith began after being accepted to complete my community health internship with the program. It expanded exponentially after completing PA training and being given the option from Susann and Jason to also work as a PA. I quickly realized it was the right place for me to spend a majority of my senior year.

From the beginning, the administrative staff immediately motivated me to work hard. Becoming a PA was one of the best decisions I could have made as an intern. It allowed me to have a broader connection with the residents, which is the reason why Beckwith exists in the first place. Having these daily interactions with residents allowed me to gain insight into the everyday happenings on the floor, as well as learn what we could improve on programmatically.

I was really excited by the opportunity to follow through with updating/improving the PA training program since this was my primary responsibility as

an intern, in addition to completing a case study with a resident. I was able to apply the knowledge gained from working as a PA to these projects, for which I am grateful. To improve upon PA training, I worked with six residents to videotape personal messages that they felt were critical for the PAs to embrace. In this way, I was able to broaden the impact of the residents' voices.

It is easy to get caught up in the daily grind of college but with these positions, I found the importance in remembering the meaning behind the work. I hope that by incorporating my perspective along with the opinions of those who use personal assistants, we were able to make changes that will have an impact in the future. My experiences with Beckwith left me with knowledge and understanding that made me a better person. Just as Beckwith has left me a better person, I hope to have had a positive impact on Beckwith, leaving it a little bit better than when I found it.



Shannon enjoying game night with a lot of the past and present Beckwith Community.

Finding My Niche

by Amelia O'Hare



During my time at Illinois I have had the opportunity to be involved in and take the lead on many movements and projects, which is why I'm honored to receive the Matthew Allan Odelius Award for leadership and academic success. As I have had time to determine my concentration in my major, I have come to the realization that community engagement and development is where I belong. Through my urban planning community development workshops, I worked closely with members of various communities. I listened to their stories and heard about improvements needing to be made in their neighborhoods. Last fall I had the opportunity to travel to the far south side of Chicago to work with the community members on making sure their voices and concerns about the new Red Line extension were being heard. During this time, I was able to meet one of the leaders of the Environmental Justice Movement and many other people who shared their stories.

This type of fieldwork is very meaningful to me, as it provides an opportunity for me to make a real

difference on a more personal level. During the spring semester I was able to work with a neighborhood in Champaign that was undergoing a school expansion. The neighborhood, considered to be the first organized neighborhood in Champaign County, contains many beautiful, historic homes. One of the concerns the neighbors expressed was that the city would be tearing down some of the homes that have been around since the early 1920s. My team and I took this to the city hall and school board after consulting with various community members in the neighborhood. Finally, I generated a historic preservation memo to propose to the developers on this issue.

I hope that I am still able to do such meaningful work after graduation and "leave it better than I found it." It was truly a wonderful experience living in a space that allowed me to be so involved and seek out my own passions. Without having my wonderful PAs and support system, I would never have been able to travel to Chicago and be an advocate for others.



Amelia was pleased at the great turnout for the bowling/pizza party that she coordinated.



The Purpose Behind My Experiences

by Sarah McCabe

I am thrilled to have received a renewal of the David S. Mundy Scholarship, which recognizes the pursuit of personal independence and responsibility for transitional disability management. I graduated in May, so it's a bit strange to think about how many exciting, yet challenging things occurred throughout my time at U of I, and how my independence and skills have become so much more diverse with time.

I believe that it is my job as a human being to leave the parts of the world that have somehow wound up in my life better than I found them, and I've tried to do so at the U of I. I strive to do the very best that I can in whatever position I'm in, and I feel that this is often done by being authentic.

For the past two years, I've been striving to help first-year residents have a smooth transition into Beckwith and college serving as a TA/mentor, with the hope of leaving the process a bit easier than I found it. I've tried to do the same thing the past four years as an admission's blogger. As an ATLAS intern, I approached every project with the goal of making web content more organized

and accessible, and at least one person's life simpler. As a DSAC member and volunteer at Krannert Art Museum, my mission has been to make sure that a variety of people can learn something while having the maximum amount of fun at events.

There is no doubt that the opportunities I've had have made my days more lively and sparkly. However, these same activities have allowed me to grow as an individual and experience so much that I never before considered. Because of these experiences, my tapestry of life is way more colorful than it was prior to my time at the University.

As I prepare for new adventures at the School of Labor and Employment Relations this year and reflect on my rewarding experiences as an undergrad, I cannot help but be incredibly grateful for those who have shared their wisdom, love, and sunshine with me. These interactions have always inspired me to work extra hard and leave my corners of the universe a little brighter and more joyful than I found them.



Sarah and her PA, Lexy, finishing their tasty meal at the annual semi-formal.



Sarah and Kailey (iHealth intern) enjoying Allie's Art program.

The Power of Conversation

by Zakk Forsyth



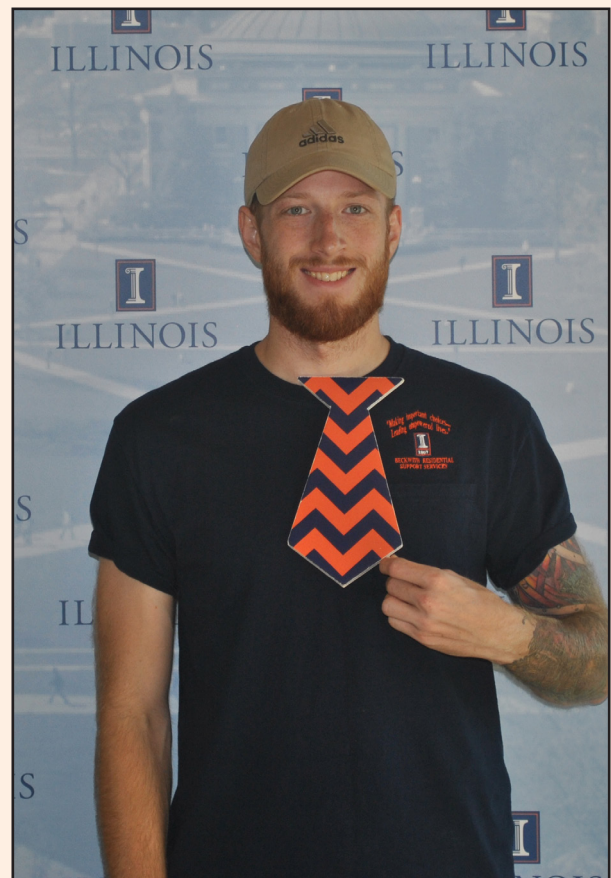
This year's *Beckwith News* theme is all about “leaving it better than you found it,” and originally, I was expecting to come in and make these great big changes. However, due to some unforeseen health issues that happened in the middle of first semester and early second semester I was thrown off track. I was struggling to get healthy and get back on track with my position as a disability advocate and with school. I was feeling overwhelmed at times and not really sure if I would be able to continue with school for the spring semester. I was considering if I needed to take a medical leave and just finish my degree this year.

Then I remembered that phrase, “leave it better than you found it.” I knew that I couldn't just give up so easily. I had seen many people in Beckwith struggle with so many issues of their own and they did not quit when it got tough. Honestly, the support from everyone at Beckwith was amazing and really helped me to keep going. I was reminded about all the connections with people I had made on the floor and some personal stories that were shared about different struggles we all had faced.

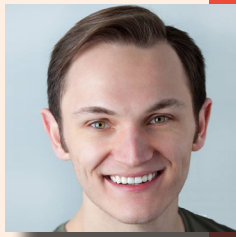


Zakk & his girlfriend Alayia at the semi-formal.

I know that some people may see that phrase and take it as a literal reference. However, I think that the way I left Beckwith better than I found it was through the relationships I built and the connections I made with people. Whether that was just conversations in the hallways on rounds with people, saying hello when passing by, or having serious conversations about things someone or I was struggling with, they were all important and they all had some sort of positive impact on the floor that helped create a positive change for someone. That is how I feel I left the Beckwith community better than I found it.



All work and no play, would make Zakk a boring DA.



A Simple Idea

by Berlin Schlegel

Imagine the positive change that could occur if everyone committed to leaving things better than they found them. This simple idea can have a much more profound impact than many may realize. Something as easy as smiling at a stranger, consistently saying “please” and “thank you,” or doing a random act of kindness can bring happiness to those around you and to yourself.

Having the opportunity to serve as a disability advocate has certainly left me better off than when I started here two years ago. This position is something I will forever be grateful for, and I can’t thank each and every part of the community enough for such a rewarding experience. It’s truly incredible to work alongside people who are so passionate about what they do. Seeing the devotion that Susann, Paige, and Jason have for this program is truly inspiring. The support of Zakk is something I couldn’t possibly have done without. And getting to know the residents has been one of my greatest joys.

The past two years have been filled with such wonderful memories and now that it’s time to go, I can walk away knowing that my contribution meant something to this place. Whether through programming events, spending

time with others on the floor, supporting students in need, or working with the administrative team, I’d like to think that I have left my mark. I can honestly say that my role here has changed me for the better.

I am going to miss everyone here so much. I hope we can all look back on this year and recognize the growth that each of us has made and remember the experiences we’ve shared. In closing, I wanted to share part of a beautiful song that I think goes with this theme very well. It’s entitled “Make Someone Happy” from the musical *Do Re Mi*, with music by Jule Styne. I think the lyricists, Betty Comden and Adolph Green, put it best in saying,

*“Make someone happy,
Make just one someone happy,
And you will be happy, too.”*



No, you can't have it, it's mine!



A beautiful day to go to Curtis Orchard.

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