



RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMMING A WALK DOWN ACTIVITY LANE!

BHMA residential staff pulled together some amazing offsite programming throughout Massachusetts this summer and fall. Join us on a walk down residential “activity lane” as we share what we’ve been up to and what we’ve learned in the last few months!

Did you know that there are over 400 waterfalls in Massachusetts? Several of the falls are in Franklin and Berkshire Counties, making it easy to see them. Over the last few months BHMA residents have been able to venture out to many of these nearby breathtaking sites. One of our favorite ventures was Bash Bish on the border of Massachusetts and New York. Another popular trip this semester was Doane’s Falls in Doane’s Falls Reservation near Royalston, MA in Worcester County. Doane’s Falls plunge, cascade, and even have a “block style” look as the water falls from Lawrence Brook into the river below.

Our annual trips to the Bridge of Flowers and the Trolley Museum went off without a hitch. We learned that the bridge was constructed in 1908 for trolleys to convey raw materials from the railroad yard in Buckland across the Deerfield River to the factories in nearby hill towns. As a concrete structure, it could bear heavy loads better than the iron bridge that it parallels. With the arrival of motorized vehicles, the trolley bridge became obsolete, and the trolley company went out of business. Tearing down the bridge would have been expensive, so the town (now home to many local artists) decided to adorn the bridge with perennials plants, indirectly becoming a tourist attraction.

Other popular trips included summer concerts at the South Hadley Commons and Forest Park in Springfield. New England Sea Aquarium, the EcoTarium, Good Harbor Beach, and the Southwick Zoo.

Our gala trip was a success! Residents who did not attend the 80’s gala voted on visiting Water Park of New England in Danvers, MA for a day filled with swimming, water slides and a floating river for relaxation. After a day of water activities, we enjoyed a hibachi dinner at the nearby Tokyo Japanese Steakhouse in Peabody, MA. It “maki” our special day!

Apple picking and the Big E in New England are synonymous with classic fall fun! They are without a doubt a couple of our favorite autumn activities here at BHMA. We were also able to visit Salem before Halloween- it was a Spooktacular day!!

As the year progresses, we look forward to attending the YMCA weekly to swim, use the basketball court and fitness center. The year will also be filled with Boltwood and Best Buddies adventures, Special Olympic sporting events, the UMass Body Shop to help focus on our physical health, outdoor hikes and trails, bowling, dinner outings, movie nights, Jericho dances, sledding and our famed karaoke nights.

Check out our BHMA social media pages to see what we are up to each week!

 **Facebook:** Berkshire Hills Music Academy

 **Instagram:** @brkshirehills



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BHMA HIGHLIGHTS

Travel Training with Rosa

An Independence Building Adventure

Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, members of our new Travel Training class can be seen leaving the building, walking to the nearest bus stop, and boarding a public PVTa bus. Prior to leaving, the group decides which route they would like to explore. Building confidence and practical skills with each ride, the groups have traveled to UMASS where they enjoyed lunch on the campus, made trips to Atkins Farm, The Holyoke Mall, and Northampton, among other locations. Some members of the class are more comfortable traveling in the group with their instructor, while others are making trips with peers as they work towards being able to travel independently.

Life Skills Instructor Rosa Price shares her appreciation for public transportation with the individuals in her classes and guides the groups to build more independence with each trip. "Access to public transportation opens possibilities. Some of the individuals in my classes are planning to use the skills they have built to travel to their job, travel to UMASS to attend Best Buddies events or to travel to neighboring towns to visit friends or visit favorite shops. In moments where they would previously have had to rely on family or staff, they will now have the option to travel with independence."



BHMA Gigging is Back!

The BHMA bands are back making music in the community! Whether it's the NeurodiversiTones at Keystone Commons, the Capabilities and our soloists at the Belchertown Fair, the Jazz Quintet providing entertainment for the Children's Advocacy Center of Hampshire County, John Libera performing at the Stanford Neurodiversity Summit, SHINE Dance troupe at Rockridge Retirement, or the Sound Squad rocking in Chicopee, our bands have been spreading their music all around the Valley! Our second-year Music and Human Services groups have also been busy, volunteering their time by bringing music to the older adults at Holyoke Health Care and Arbors of Amherst.

Our bands had the opportunity to spread patriotic cheer at Six Flags for Veteran's Day as well as fall and winter spirit at various nursing and assisted living facilities, and the Holiday Stroll in South Hadley. Check out our website for information about our holiday concert and upcoming community performances.

Don't forget, Variety Hour on Fridays at 2:00pm are open to friends, family, and the community. We would love to see you!

VOCATIONAL EXPLORATION ...

... FOR THE LIVE PROGRAM

As doors continue to open, the vocation department is ready to walk through them with members of our LIVE program. We are currently volunteering at three new sites; Dave's Natural Garden of Granby, Share Coffee Roasters in Hadley, and South Hadley's Community Television Station TV 15. Everyone is learning a great deal at these three unique and distinct businesses.

With our volunteering at Share, we decided that it would be fun to learn how to roast coffee! Our participants researched and created a process to get from the green bean (sourced fair-trade from Ethiopia) to that delicious cup of Joe in the morning. We sold our product at the last art show and will continue to roast and sell this delicious treat!

BHMA continues to have a presence at several community locations that have been partnering with us over the years. We have participants working at Chapdelaine's in South Hadley, Granby Grain in Granby, a variety of daycares for book-reading, Rock Valley Tool in Easthampton, and Trader Joe's in Hadley. We are excited to share that we will soon have individuals working at The Paper Kitchen, a cookbook store opened to support the growth of our community members in an independent retail setting. All the general tasks of running a retail store will be there including point of sale register work, direct customer service, inventory management, and developing product knowledge. Stop by to say hello and browse this interesting store in South Hadley!



Vocational Prep at Share Coffee Roasters



Vocational Prep at Dave's Garden Farm

... FOR THE TRANSITION PROGRAM

Each Wednesday morning, individuals in our first-year Vocational Exploration class leave campus to work in the community in a volunteer capacity. Teams work together to explore vocational interests, build work skills and practice social skills in a work environment. Through a rotation of three different vocational sites, and some class work, individuals are given opportunities to explore several types of work environments and tasks.

Working alongside other community member volunteers, individuals working at Neighbors Helping Neighbors sort, weigh, and shelf donated grocery items. BHMA has partnered with this local South Hadley food pantry since 2016 – here individuals build community connections and develop team building skills, while supporting an important service for our community.

Another volunteer site is the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Hatfield. At the Food Bank participants work to sort, bag, and weigh donated food items in a larger capacity in a warehouse environment. Our third volunteer partnership is with the South Hadley Council on Aging, where participants support the organizations cleaning and sanitizing practices and learn to follow task lists.

Each weekly outing provides the opportunity to practice skills learned throughout all other aspects of the first-year program: Individuals apply appropriate social skills with their peers, instructors, and other leaders at their worksites. They also work on community safety skills such as pedestrian safety while in parking lots. Once per month, each group chooses a local restaurant and enjoys a lunch outing in the community, where they work on their money management skills to stay within a budget and order meals with their highest level of independence. We're so proud of all the gains our first-year group has made so far this year!



South Hadley Senior Center



Neighbors Helping Neighbors



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80'S NIGHT GALA A TOTALLY AWESOME TIME

On September 17th, we held our much anticipated, fully in-person 80's Night Gala! The evening was a flashback hit with special appearances by Brett Michaels, George Michael, the Ghostbusters, Where's Waldo, Jareth from 'Labyrinth', MC Hammer and a variety of prom queens.

Hairspray and bright colors were in full effect as 230 attendees danced the night away to the Capabilities song list including... *Thriller*, *Billie Jean*, *I'm Still Standing*, *Footloose*, *Walking on Sunshine* and *Love Shack* by the B52s. The band also threw in the classic *Can't Fight This Feeling* and channeled their inner REO Speedwagon for a memorable slow dance.

While the theme of the evening was 80's, the hallmark of the event was coming together to celebrate community. Guests were treated to a video from BHMA participants highlighting what being a part of the BHMA community means to them. Alex Mody's thoughts were echoed throughout the video when he said "I feel accepted at BHMA and I feel happy to be a part of this community."

The continued success of BHMA would not be possible without the generosity of our volunteers and donors. A special thank you to returning gala co-chairs, Kay Bernon and Karen Phillips, and our planning committee members

Patti Connor, Veronica Heath, Mona Jomaa, Sharon Libera, Susanna Peyton, Mary Richardson, Lori Swartz and Laura Wernick. Thank you!

To our community partners we send a huge thank you for continuing to share in our mission of providing skill building opportunities in a music filled environment to our participants. Your generosity and support will continue to allow BHMA to stay true to our mission and ensure that we are around for future participants. A special shout out to our top sponsors this year: Kay & Peter Bernon, Frank and Patti Connor, Mona Jomaa, Bill O'Neill & Mary Richardson, Susanna Peyton, Ann & Steven Davis, Phillips Insurance Agency Inc. and PeoplesBank. As Matt Banister, Senior VP of Marketing and Corporate Responsibility, at PeoplesBank commented "it's great when the community comes together to support good causes and BHMA is nothing short of a good cause." We thank all our friends, families, and community members for their ongoing support!

We are excited to share that our 2023 gala will take place on Saturday, September 23rd! Save the date for another evening of celebration, music and dancing.



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