

B A R B E R

SPRING 2023

SPIRIT

**NEW
THIS
YEAR!**

**THE JAY & MONA KANG
ART SHOW & SALE**
a hybrid experience: in-person + online



Barber National Institute
Making dreams come true.

**DONOR REPORT
EDITION**

Jonathan Lange, left, and James DeWolf, attend the Adult Christmas Party.

ALBUM GIVES VOICE TO FRIENDSHIP

James DeWolf has a special talent for music, and a special relationship with a young man with autism. He used both of those gifts to create an album that he hopes will convey the message of friendship and inclusion that he has put to music.

James, known by his nickname Tito, has been working with Jonathan Lange for five years through the Agency with Choice program at the Barber National Institute. Agency with Choice is part of the self-directed service model offered in Pennsylvania that provides individuals with greater choice and control over where, when and how their services are delivered. In addition, Agency with Choice permits individuals and families to choose and refer the staff they want to work with.

Right from the start, Jon's mother thought Tito would be a good fit for her son. "At our first meeting, Tito asked 'what is the one thing' we want most for Jon. I knew immediately. We wanted him to have a friend. That is what he found in Tito," said Kathy Lange.

Tito works with Jon five days a week doing their favorite things, such as walking at Presque Isle, visiting the library and the mall, and shooting hoops at the local YMCA.

Then, the pandemic brought it all to a sudden halt. "Jon likes being very active and always being on the

go," said Tito. "And then suddenly, there weren't many places to go."

Tito turned to their shared love of music for a new activity. They went to Tito's house and started singing about what they liked to do and talk about to the accompaniment of a guitar.

That's why the first song on the album is about, well, olives. "When Jonathan wants a snack, he will often say the word repeatedly. He was asking for olives, which I didn't have, and we put that to music," said Tito.

Tito said that all 13 songs on the album directly relate to his relationship with Jonathan. For instance, there's a tune about their favorite food, cheesy pizza, and another about two geese that seemed to be turning up wherever they went to walk.

As the songs developed, Tito saw a "concept album" forming, and he began working on it in earnest. He ordered sound and mixing equipment for his home studio, and began laying down tracks on his guitar, keyboards, bass, harmonica and ukelele. He then enlisted the help of a friend to add in the drums. "Honestly, if it hadn't been for the pandemic, I never would have had the time to do this," said Tito.

Tito had been keeping the album a secret, and when it was completed, he invited Jon's parents to his home to



BARBER NATIONAL INSTITUTE MISSION

We are "making dreams come true." We provide children and adults with autism, intellectual disabilities, and behavioral health challenges and their families the education, support, and resources needed to be self-reliant, independent, and valued members of their community. In addition, we provide the professionals who serve them with world-class education and training.

hear it. "We were completely overwhelmed," said Kathy.

While most of the tunes are lighthearted, Tito wanted to write something special about his relationship with Jonathan, whom he calls his best friend. That led to the title song, "Different Isn't Bad, Everyone Needs a Friend."

Tito sees the song as a tribute to inclusion, and hopes it encourages others, especially children, to be more open to people who may be different from them. "I want to try to give persons with special needs the acceptance they deserve," said Tito. "Often times, kids are hardwired to avoid people who are different from them. They will be missing out on some of the best relationships they could ever have."

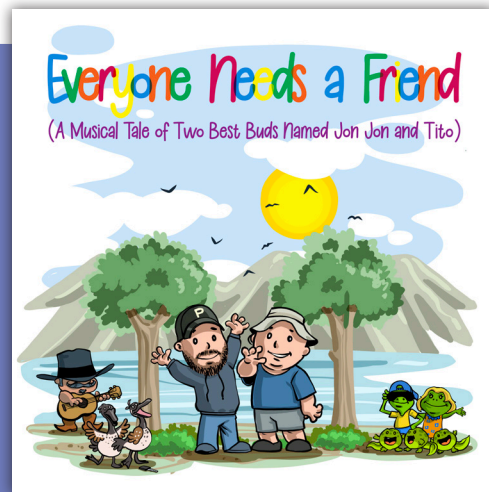
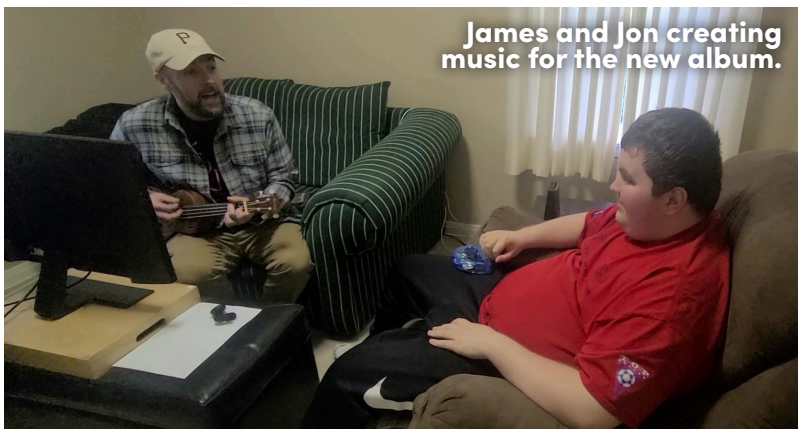
Kathy echoes that hope. "We hope that hearing about this relationship will open other people's minds and hearts," she said.

The album can be heard on Tito's website, everyoneneedsafriendalbum.com, and downloaded free of charge on Spotify, Apple Music and Pandora.

Tito often performs the songs when he is singing with a friend as part of their duo, TVM, and he also plays in a '90s tribute band, The I-90s.

While he loves being a musician, Tito is also happy to have his work with Jonathan in his life. "I always knew that I wanted to work with persons with special needs, and it has been so fulfilling for me," said Tito. "I see how Jon has grown, and how I have grown. Every day, you really feel like you are making a difference."

That's a friendship that hits all the right notes.



"Different isn't bad. Sometimes the best friends you ever have, well they call them different, they call them special, but they're just your friends.

Everyone needs a friend. Yeah, you know it's true. And if you reach out a helpin' hand, You just may find the one you've been helping's been helping you."

"Everyone Needs a Friend"
by James DeWolf

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AGENCY WITH CHOICE, CALL 814-878-4088.



MEET JONATHAN

Jonathan Lange moved to Erie from Washington, DC shortly after he was diagnosed with autism at age three-and-a-half. He attended school in his home district, but participated in many Barber National Institute programs, including summer camps and the Time for Me recreation activity.

His mother, Kathy Lange, said the services played a big role in his life. "If it wasn't for the Barber National Institute, I don't know where we would be."

Kathy wanted to express her gratitude in a tangible way, so six years ago she left her job in a local school district to join the staff in the Elizabeth Lee Black School. "I wanted to help other children because of all of the help that was given to my son," said Kathy.



COMING HOME TO THE BEAST

Although 2022 marked the first time Megan DeMarco competed in Barber Beast on the Bay, the event was more like a homecoming. Her ties go back to 2013 when she was the event coordinator who helped create, plan for and carry out the first ever Beast.

She remembers the daunting task that she was involved in more than nine years ago: building the Beast from the ground up.

“[Our team and I] had to come up with everything from the start,” she said. “We looked to other obstacle course races as inspiration, but none of us had planned anything on such a large scale.”

The first-ever Barber Beast on the Bay capped out at 12 miles with 20 obstacles.

Since then, the event has undergone many changes based upon feedback from participants. It has transformed into a 10-mile, 30 obstacle course that integrates more of the peninsula’s natural terrain.

Megan said she loves the changes made to the Beast over the years, and is pleasantly surprised by its growth.

“I’m so impressed by how far and how big this event has gotten just by number of participants, the caliber of the obstacles and how it’s become a big part of the community,” she said.

After helping the event find its footing, Megan finally beat the Beast with a group from her gym and friends she made while training for the event, competing in the elite wave.

While she had intended to sign up every year, something always got in the way – including two pregnancies and the birth of her son and daughter. “I’m really thrilled to finally compete in the Beast after nine years.” she said.

Like many participants, Megan was most looking forward to actually finishing the race. She finished with a time of two hours and 44 minutes and has already signed up for the elite wave in 2023. It seems that after a few years away, this Beast alumna has finally come home.

10 BARBER BEAST ON THE BAY
Barber National Institute

SEPTEMBER 9, 2023

BE PART OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY BARBER BEAST ON THE BAY

10-MILE OBSTACLE COURSE CHALLENGE AT PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK
ONE-MILE ADAPTED COURSE AT WALDAMEER PARK

PARTICIPATE • VOLUNTEER • SPONSOR
LEARN MORE AT BARBERBEAST.ORG

INDEPENDENCE RINGS



Thad Jackman, right, director of southeastern programs at the Barber National Institute, presents the award to Jerome Owens, center. Jerome's brother James, left, a Philadelphia police officer, was on hand to share in the celebration.

Jerome Owens would not let a worldwide pandemic get in the way of his employment dreams. It took months of trying, but he made that dream a reality.

For his determination, Jerome was recognized with an award at a luncheon sponsored by the Supported Employment Program in Philadelphia to celebrate Disabilities Employment Awareness Month.

Jerome had been working in a job he loved at a Philadelphia shopping mall when Covid layoffs hit, and

he joined the ranks of thousands of workers who lost their jobs.

It didn't take him long, though, to start a new job search.

Jerome began with an employment assessment with Supported Employment to evaluate his skills. Job coaches easily concluded that he would be a wonderful employee for any willing business.

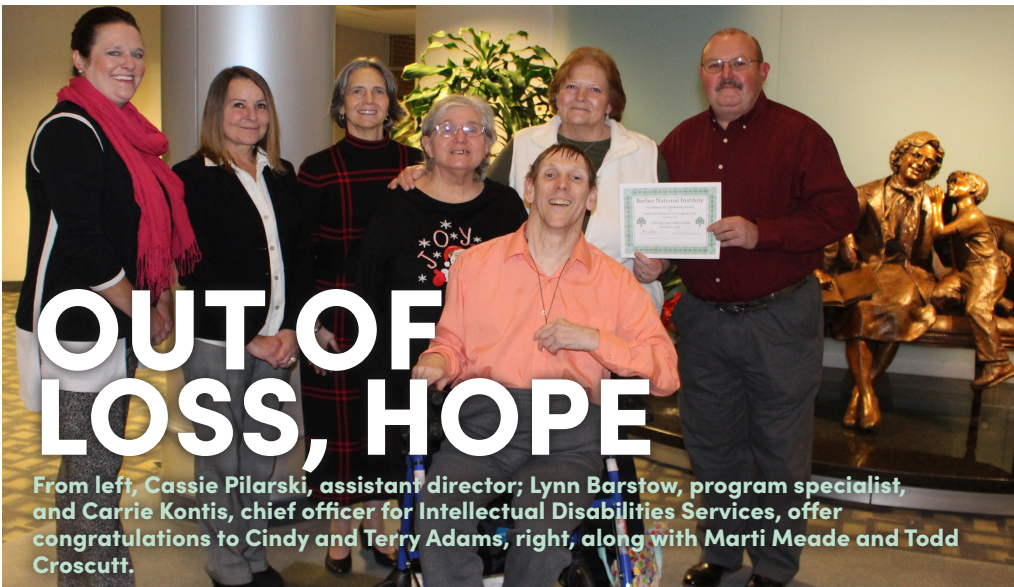
With each new application he made, Jerome became even more determined. After the Supported Employment team arranged for an interview with the United States Custom Office, everyone agreed that Jerome was a perfect fit. Jerome thought so too, and on June 27, he became the first adult from the Barber National Institute program to get hired at the federal agency.

Jerome was recognized as the Barber National Institute's nominee for the PAR Award for Self-Advocate of the Year, and was honored with nine other adults for their commitment to employment. All awardees received a replica of the Liberty Bell, a symbol of America's independence. The award was especially meaningful for the adults who are celebrating the independence they have achieved with employment in their community.



CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS IN THE CITY

More than 1,200 revelers gathered to kick off the holiday season with the 2022 Barber Christmas Ball, Christmas in the City. John and Bridget Barber, left, joined Ball chair couple Lisa and Tim NeCastro in welcoming guests to the event. Proceeds benefited services to enhance the lives of children adults with disabilities and behavioral health challenges, most notably the project to renovate the Barber National Institute multi-use pool.



OUT OF LOSS, HOPE

From left, Cassie Pilarski, assistant director; Lynn Barstow, program specialist, and Carrie Kontis, chief officer for Intellectual Disabilities Services, offer congratulations to Cindy and Terry Adams, right, along with Marti Meade and Todd Croscutt.

Even before meeting Todd Croscutt, Cindy and Terry Adams knew that they would welcome him into their family.

For several years, Todd had been happy in Lifesharing, a program that enables adults with disabilities to live with a provider family as a member of their home.

Then, in February 2022, a tragic fire brought sudden devastation for Todd and his family, claiming the life of one of his beloved providers, and destroying Todd's home and all of his belongings. Cindy and Terry had already been Lifesharing providers to Marti Meade since 2015. But as soon as the couple heard about Todd's loss, they opened their home and their hearts to help.

For their generous spirit that provides a nurturing home and supportive relationships to two adults with intellectual disabilities, the Adams were awarded the 2022 Lifesharing Excellence Award by the Pennsylvania Lifesharing State Coalition.

"Terry and Cindy really embody what Lifesharing is all about," said Carrie Kontis, chief officer for Intellectual Disabilities Services at Barber National Institute. "The adults truly become an integral part of their families, and they support the adults to live their best possible lives."

After Marti began living with Cindy and Terry, the couple enjoyed the Lifesharing experience so much that they began providing substitute care for adults who temporarily needed a place to live. Cindy said that the program was just what they needed to fill their "empty nest" after their children had grown. "If you have room in your heart, they will fill it," said Cindy.

"Sometimes they will need guidance and support, and sometimes they will need independence. But you will get back even more."

When the couple heard that Todd was without a home

after the fire, they contacted their program specialist to see if he might need help and want to stay with them. "Everyone was concerned about Todd's emotional state after such a devastating loss," said program specialist Lynn Barstow. "But as soon as Todd entered their house, he immediately felt at home."

Todd already knew Marti and was happy to see her there. After touring the house, he went into what would be his new bedroom, took off his shoes and rested on the bed. For Todd, he was home.

Todd officially moved in the next week, and the four quickly forged a strong bond among themselves, and Cindy and Terry's extended family. Cindy and Terry paid close attention to Todd's interests and assisted him in rebuilding his life and replacing items that were very important to him.

Cindy and Terry were honored to receive the award, but said they already have so many rewards. "What is important for us is knowing that we're there for them, and really, they are there for us," said Cindy. "Just like a family should be."



COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERISM

Adults took many opportunities to "give back" during the holiday season, including groups from the Community Participation Supports program who rang the bell at several businesses in Somerset, PA to collect for the Salvation Army. Other acts of volunteerism were performed by adults in the Club Erie CPS program who packed boxes for youngsters around the world for Operation Christmas Child, as well as adults who prepared meals for St. Martin's Center in Erie.



STAFF PURSUE NATIONAL CERTIFICATION

Julie Tregaskis plays a hand of Uno with adults at the Community Participation Supports Program in Girard. She is one of more than 90 direct care staff who are working toward national certification.

“This certification recognizes the dedication and expertise of our direct care staff who are committed to serving our adults and their families,” said Carrie Kontis, chief officer of Intellectual Disabilities Services.

“Through the extensive menu of well-developed trainings, staff even further develop their skills and grow in their careers.”

Direct care staff in residential and day programs across all Barber National Institute locations were invited to apply for the voluntary program,

which is conducted through on-line trainings covering a wide range of topics, such as crisis management, health and wellness, and person-centered strategies.

The Barber National Institute Training Department is coordinating the implementation of all aspects of the program.

Staff can attain up to three levels of certification, and are eligible to receive a \$500 bonus for each level they complete.

Julie and the other participants finished online orientation sessions in late January, and are now completing the training sessions. For Julie, it is an exciting endeavor. “I really believe that you should always keep learning,” she said.

Julie Tregaskis is a dedicated staff who has been providing the highest quality direct care to children and adults with intellectual disabilities for more than 30 years. When she learned about a new opportunity for national certification for direct support professionals, she jumped at the chance to apply. “I don’t think you can ever be done learning,” said Julie, who now works with older adults in the day program at the Barber National Institute Girard Campus.

Julie is one of more than 90 direct care staff accepted into a certification program offered by the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). The Barber National Institute recently became a member of the NADSP and applied for a time-limited funding opportunity through ODP to offer the voluntary certification at no cost to employees.



YOU'RE HIRED!

Karen Zorn and Patrick Forman recently became the first adults hired at Berkebile Oil Company in Somerset, PA through the Barber National Institute Supported Employment program. The new employees are assisting in assembly work at the company, particularly with the packaging and labeling of windshield washer fluid that will be shipped across the country. Congratulations to Karen and Patrick for making their dream of community employment come true!



THE SOMERSET SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM CAN BE REACHED AT 814-445-6908.

BARBER SPIRIT

Barber Spirit is a quarterly publication for friends of the
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ONLINE AND IN-PERSON ART SHOW HAS IT ALL!

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, the Jay & Mona Kang Art Show & Sale offers the best of both worlds - a new, **hybrid event**. One of the region's largest exhibits will be back in-person at the Barber National Institute for those wishing to see and experience the art, and online for those who want to browse from the comfort of home.

The creative works of adult and youth artists include paintings, sculptures, ceramics, works in fiber and other media. All artwork is available for sale with a minimum of 25% commission benefitting the Barber National Institute. Each purchase supports the artist, as well as services for children and adults with disabilities and behavioral health challenges and their families.

WHEN & WHERE:

IN-PERSON

The live show will be held in the north complex
of the Barber National Institute on:

FRIDAY, APRIL 14

10:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, SUNDAY AND MONDAY,
APRIL 15 - 17**

noon - 3:00 p.m.

Visitors can vote for the People's Choice Award for their
favorite adult and youth artwork during the in-person
exhibit.

ONLINE

The show will be available online for viewing
and making purchases from:

APRIL 14 - APRIL 27

SUPPORT THE ARTS!

Donate to support the art show and the mission of the
Barber National Institute - and get your invitation to
the **Highmark Donor Debut on April 13!** Make a gift
at BarberInstitute.org/artshow

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2023 SPONSORS!

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MONA
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