Hoodstock sets new record in 10th year

More than 350 people, including friends of Unified Community Connections and individuals we serve, enjoyed wonderful music, food and dancing under the Roundhouse of the B & O Railroad Museum on September 21. Event creator and musician Russ Causey reflected that 10 years ago this event started in his backyard in Otterbein with 30 people and raised $1,200. The 2013 Hoodstock raised $65,000.

Stormy weather didn’t keep people from having a good time as wheelchair dancing took over the dance floor, and Unified Community Connections presented its Samuel A. Tucker Memorial Can Do Award at Hoodstock. O. J. Brigance, a former Baltimore Raven and current senior advisor to player development for the Ravens presented the award to 16-year-old Jarred Aaron Jones. O. J. is an inspiration to all for his perseverance in fighting Lou Gehrig’s Disease for the past six years. In presenting the Can Do Award, O. J. said, “This award is being presented to a person with a disability who has shown extraordinary drive and determination to achieve their goals, regardless of what those goals may be. Jarred is the personification of strength, courage and resilience. We don’t get to pick the cards we are dealt in life, but we most certainly have a choice in how we play the hand. This young man is a living testimony to the power of the human spirit.”

Unified Community Connections’ Board Chair Ilene Salcman read a statement from Jarred that truly demonstrated how he has not let his disability define him. Please see Jarred’s story on page six.

Special thanks to event producers Russ and Jennifer Causey and Gracie and Larry Musher as well as the whole committee, including Darlene Miller, Nick Richardson, Barry Brill and Lauren Walsh for coordinating another record-breaking Hoodstock this year. Because Hoodstock is all about the music, we also must thank all the bands and wonderful musicians who participated in the event. And, just as important, the event could not have happened without the help of the many Unified Community Connections’ staff and volunteers as well as the 70 sponsors who supported the event. We thank you all.
**DEVELOPMENT NEWS**

**GRANT RECEIVED FROM OROKAWA FOUNDATION**

Unified Community Connections received $50,000 from the Orokawa Foundation to expand its transportation services by adding two new 12-passenger vans to its fleet of vehicles at its Crossroads Center in Middle River. The Crossroads Center provides a day habilitation program, including supported employment services, for adults with disabilities.

Transportation is a vital component of Unified Community Connections and may be the single most important element in allowing individuals with disabilities to fully participate in their communities. Due to a recent agency name change, Unified Community Connections has experienced an increase in its program enrollment, specifically those individuals who are ambulatory. “These new vans are needed to transport the influx of ambulatory individuals to and from supported employment opportunities,” explains Rich Ottone, director of Day Services and Transportation for Central Region. “Our supported employment program provides individuals with disabilities assistance with job selection, interviewing, and transportation to maintain both paid and volunteer positions in the community. Adding two 12-passenger vans to our fleet will provide greater flexibility to our individuals in that they can transport more people at one time. These new vans are also easier to drive and maintain and get better gas mileage.”

The Orokawa Foundation is a Baltimore-based foundation whose priorities include educational institutions, athletics, medical research and human services.

**MATCHING GRANT FOR RESIDENTIAL FUND**

Dr. George and Betty Thomas gave a $10,000 matching gift designated to Unified Community Connections’ Residential Fund for emergency and ongoing maintenance and improvements of all of our agency’s residential homes statewide. This gift was given in honor of their daughter Patricia’s 50th birthday. (See story about Patricia on page three.) With this generous contribution, the new Residential Fund now totals $20,000. If you are interested in supporting the new Residential Fund, please contact Lauren Magee at 410-484-4540, ext. 2461.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR 9TH ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC**

It’s not too early to get your foursome together and mark the date for Unified Community Connections’ 9th annual Golf Classic to be held on Friday, April 11 at the newly renovated Elkridge Club in Baltimore.

**LET YOUR WHEELS HELP TURN OUR WHEELS**

Let your wheels turn our wheels when you donate your car or vehicle to help children and adults with disabilities in Maryland. Unified Community Connections has a vehicle donation program that helps connect people with disabilities to life’s possibilities through our adult day programs, residential homes, employment opportunities and the Delrey School. Cars, vans, trucks and other vehicles are accepted, and we provide free towing. Donating your vehicle also may be tax deductible. It’s easy to donate your vehicle. Just call 1-800-4Wheels today or donate online by visiting www.UC2.org and clicking on vehicle donation.
The Thomas family has been involved with United Cerebral Palsy of Central Maryland (UCP-CM), and now Unified Community Connections, for close to 50 years, starting with their daughter’s early years at the Delrey School and including the past 30 years she has spent in our residential homes. Patricia, known as Patty, is turning 50 and was born with cerebral palsy as well as other physical and intellectual disabilities. Delrey School played an important role in those early years in helping her parents learn how to manage Patty’s behavior and teach her basic skills. “We were able to keep Patty at home for the first 18 years of her life, because for most of that time she was enrolled in Delrey,” explains her parents Dr. George and Betty Thomas. “Not only did that save our sanity and give us time for our other children, it also provided Patty with a lifestyle, friends, independence and experiences of her own. It was the first big step into the world of independence, even if in a protected and supportive environment.”

Today, not only does Patty reside at Michael’s Way, Unified Community Connection’s residential home in Howard County, but also she attends the Crossroads Adult Day Program, where she continues to thrive. She enjoys everything from watching the traffic outside to the pets and animals that come to visit. She enjoys sensory experiences and has an incredible memory for people. She also loves riding in any type of vehicle. Patty enjoys trips to the circus and outings to the mall and loves to eat. She had a wonderful time at Hoodstock in September: “Patty is very sociable. She enjoys people, being a part of a group and interacting with other individuals,” her family explains.

Patty’s sister, Karen Nattans, tells us Patty has the true temperament of the redhead she is. Karen shares with us the impact Patty and Unified Community Connections has had on the whole family. Karen knows having Patricia in her life has made her a more compassionate person, and she is pleased to have passed that along to her 12-year-old son Spencer, who goes with her to visit Patty at Crossroads. Karen encourages all siblings of individuals with disabilities to get involved. Karen can frequently be seen at Crossroads doing Patty’s nails or hair or bringing her a snack. Mom and dad visit Patty at Michael’s Way on weekends.

Patty’s first UCP-CM residential home was in Jarrettsville. It was her dad, however, who found the perfect house, for then UCP-CM, to open as a new residential home in Howard County. Her family is very grateful for Unified Community Connections and to be able to know Patty is in a good, comfortable and safe environment with socialization opportunities. Dr. Thomas reminds us that, when Patty was born, there were no small residential homes—only large institutions; he does not take these wonderful, supportive environments for granted.

George, Betty and Karen explain that life with Patty has been rewarding as well as challenging. They cannot imagine their family without her. They also stress that programs such as Unified Community Connections’ Residential Program require the support of parents and siblings of individuals with disabilities; the Thomas family encourages others to donate to Unified Community Connections’ programs and services. We are very grateful to the entire Thomas family for its support of our residential program.

**DELREY SCHOOL**

**TO COLLABORATE WITH CONNECTIONS BEYOND SIGHT AND SOUND**

Delrey School has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Connections Beyond Sight and Sound, a collaborative project between the Maryland State Department of Education and the University of Maryland. This new relationship began July 11, 2013. As part of a grant award from the Maryland State Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education/OSEP, Connections Beyond Sight and Sound will fund the implementation of this project with Delrey. This project aims to provide services for children with dual or multiple sensory impairments—mostly cortical and hearing processing disabilities. Currently, this group of children needs a comprehensive program to meet their needs, which is not readily available in the school systems.
Welcome New Board Members

Christine Bachrach is the vice president and chief compliance officer for the University of Maryland Medical System. She is responsible for oversight of compliance across the 12 hospital system, including the development and implementation of new measures to improve the effectiveness of each hospital’s regulatory compliance program. Previously, Ms. Bachrach was chief compliance officer for HealthSouth, a large provider of inpatient rehabilitation services. Prior to joining HealthSouth, she was a principal at Navigant Consulting. She has an undergraduate degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in industrial engineering and decision support and, through a graduate fellowship, a master’s degree in engineering and operations research from the University of California at Berkeley.

O.J. Brigance, a former Ravens and Baltimore Stallions player, is the Ravens’ senior advisor to player development. Brigance, who has three championship rings—two Super Bowl rings with the Ravens (2000 and 2012) and a CFL Grey Cup ring with the Baltimore Stallions (1995)—has been an inspiration to the entire Ravens’ organization for his perseverance and courage while fighting Lou Gehrig’s Disease (ALS). The NFL has honored Brigance many times; he has earned the Best Overall Player Development Program Award for two straight years (2005-06) and also received the Most Outstanding Internship Program Award in 2005. In 2008, the Ed Block Courage Award Foundation saluted O.J. with its Johnny Unitas Cops in Courage Award for his strength in his battle against ALS. Brigance played seven years for three NFL teams (Miami, Baltimore and St. Louis) before joining the Ravens’ front office in 2004.

Barry Brill is a sales representative for Chesapeake Telephone Systems. Previously, Brill worked for Toshiba and Gaylon Distributing. He attended University of Maryland Baltimore County. Brill was a key member of the Hoodstock X planning committee and currently resides in Felton, Del.

Howard K. Kurman is an employment attorney and chair of Offit Kurman’s Labor and Employment Practice Group. Kurman received his law degree at the University of Maryland School of law and Georgetown University Law Center. He was selected one of Maryland’s Super Lawyers from 2010 to 2012. A past member of UCP-CM’s board of directors from 1997 to 2006, Kurman served as vice chair and on numerous committees. He currently acts as legal counsel for Unified Community Connections.

Matt Lenihan has worked with St. John Properties since 2001 and spent three years prior to that with Whiting-Turner. He graduated from Virginia Tech with a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering and earned an MBA from the University of Maryland. Lenihan is responsible for leasing St. John Properties’ locations in Baltimore County, Baltimore City and Harford County.
For the last six years, Patrick Speaker has been a mainstay at Martin’s Food Market in Hagerstown. Through the ongoing efforts of Unified Community Connections’ supported employment program and Patrick’s job coach, Kymy Alvarez, Patrick serves as a bagger and courtesy associate three to four days a week at Martin’s.

According to Kymy, this job affords Patrick with the opportunity to engage with people, which is something he really enjoys. “He likes helping people with taking groceries to their car,” explains Kymy. “This job gives him a chance to deal with others as well as be independent and earn an income.”

To help Patrick maintain his employment, Kymy checks in with him on a weekly basis as well as Patrick’s employer on a monthly basis. “We also provide transportation for Patrick to and from his job,” says Kymy, who underscores the ways in which Unified Community Connections’ supported employment program advocates for clients like Patrick. “We listen and facilitate communication between Patrick and his employer to help ensure that everything is going well and to address concerns promptly when they arise.”

That is certainly the case for Patrick. Not only has he been able to maintain his job at Martin’s for the past six years, but also has demonstrated personal growth in the more than five months that Kymy has worked directly with him. “I have noticed Patrick’s ability to communicate better with his boss and customers at Martin’s,” comments Kymy. “He is also more trusting of others and welcomes new social relationships.”

Playing a role in helping individuals like Patrick obtain and maintain gainful employment is an important aspect of Unified Community Connections’ supported employment program, but Kymy sees the impact the program makes in an even larger context. “We help individuals go out in the community and enable them to interact with anyone and everyone,” says Kymy. “Everyone has natural talents; we simply help people discover those talents and support them in pursuing their goals and dreams.” Being productive, engaged members of society helps give individuals like Patrick a sense of purpose, self-worth and independence.

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**Staff Promotions & New Additions**

**ANNA MARIE POOLE**
Chief Operating Officer

Congratulations to Annamarie, who joined Unified Community Connections 8½ years ago as vice president of operations in Western and has recently been promoted to chief operating officer. Prior to coming to Unified Community Connections, she worked for The Arc of Washington County for 21 years.

**AMY BRECHBIEL**
Regional Operations Director, Western

Congratulations to Amy who has been promoted to regional operations director, Western Region. Amy joined Unified Community Connections in 1998 as residential director for Frederick County. She was promoted to senior residential director, Western and then to community services director, Western.

**MARCUS HANDY**
Director of Residential and Support Services

Welcome to Marcus who has been named the new director of Residential and Support Services in the central region. Marcus comes to Unified Community Connections with more than 10 years of experience directing residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Previously, Marcus worked at the National Children’s Center, ResCare of Washington and, most recently, at St. John’s Community Services.
**Workplace Giving**

Did you know that if your workplace participates in the United Way Campaign, another federated appeal or has an in-house program, you can designate your support for Unified Community Connections through payroll deduction?

**Agency numbers for Unified Community Connections are:**

- Unified Community Connections-#24
- Combined Federal Campaign (Central Maryland)-#70735
- Combined Federal Campaign (Western Maryland)-#70735
- Combined Federal Campaign (National Capital Area)-#70735
- Maryland Charities Campaign-#8024
- Combined Charities Campaign-#8024
- Frederick County/City-#0522
- Frederick Private, Cecil County, Allegheny County and other areas in Maryland-#53

*Unified Community Connections is a proud member of Community Health Charities of Maryland.*

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**Living Life to the Best of My Abilities** by Jarred Aaron Jones

My name is Jarred Jones, and I am 16 years old. I was born on April 2, 1997, in Baltimore, Md. I was born prematurely at 25 weeks and remained in the hospital for approximately four months. My parents are Vanessa and James Jones, and I have an older brother named Joshua Mason. At an early age, I was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, which is a disorder that impacts different muscular and functional abilities.

I attended the Delrey School at the age of 3. At Delrey, I learned how to interact with kids who had similar disabilities through group therapy and classroom activities. It was at this time I realized I enjoyed math and sports. Additionally, this is where I first began to use a walker and power wheelchair. The Delrey School prepared me for my transition to public school.

I began attending Edmondson Heights Elementary School in the third grade. My first experience was joining the theater group. Delrey helped me with my confidence in order to prepare me to participate and become involved in school with my peers. I next attended Southwest Academy Middle School, where I was involved in team sports as a manager. I was co-manager of the girls and boys basketball team. Currently, I attend Kenwood High School, where I am a member of the Sports Science Academy program. I actively participate as a co-manager of the boy's baseball team.

My interests and hobbies include watching and playing sports, watching the Food Network Channel and playing video games. I also enjoy talking and spending time with family and friends. Most people will describe me as outgoing, sincere, talkative, compassionate and humorous. My future goals are to complete high school and attend the Community College of Baltimore County. I want to study mass communications with a concentration in sports. My career goal is to become a sports analyst or commentator. I live my life to the best of my ability and do not allow my disabilities to define my limitations or my possibilities to achieve greatness.