



SKILLS

of Central Pennsylvania, Inc.

ANNUAL REPORT 06-07



Skills Enriches Lives by Choice

Life is Change. Growth is Optional. Choose Wisely.

Every day, you make choices: some small and simple — some large and complex. Like most people, you many even take the many choices you have for granted. At Skills, however, we take choice seriously; it is a cornerstone of our philosophy of service provision.

You start making choices the very second you wake up each day. Maybe you pop out of bed when the alarm sounds, or maybe you hit the snooze button. You might choose coffee over tea or whole milk over

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

skim. Perhaps you shower first. Or do you have to exercise to start your day off right? The point being, you tailor your morning routine to your own wants and needs. How you start your day can often make it or break it. And the power to make these and other choices over your life is paramount to your well being.

Reflect for a moment on your own morning routine. Now imagine how you would feel if you had to suddenly adopt a friends' routine — detail by detail, even just for one morning. For many individuals with disabilities, this has long been a reality. They have had little choice but to adhere to daily routines established for staff convenience.

Today, however, the importance of providing opportunities for choice in all aspects of daily life is widely recognized. Human service providers like Skills are embracing essential lifestyle planning and other approaches of care to incorporate an

individual's needs and wants — and choices. At Skills, we strive to provide opportunities which enrich the lives of the people we serve. Providing choices — even if they sometimes lead to hard-to-learn life lessons — is a critical shift in our service provision. Choices empower us, nurture our ability to dream, and help us grow.

Please take a moment to read about the many successes we have had in the past year. I'm confident these stories will give you a new appreciation of the choices which present themselves to you each and every day.



Ron Bailey
Chairman of the Board of Directors

FROM THE PRESIDENT

For too long, people with disabilities have had few choices over their lives. They were told where to live and with whom. They had little decision making power over how they spent their day or their free time. And while the human services system for people with disabilities was developed with the best of intentions, over time we recognized the need for a shift in philosophy — a need to center services on the people we serve: a need to provide and support individual choices.

This shift in philosophy underscores our mission to create opportunities and provide supports which help people acquire skills and experiences to lead richer lives. In the past decade a great deal of research has been conducted in the area of choice among people with severe to profound developmental disabilities. The results have given us tools to help us identify, with the individuals, the choices that

are most important to each of them and ways in which to make their choices available to them.

Research indicates people with disabilities want more control over the following aspects of their lives: work, housing, money, transportation, relationships, personal care and personal freedom. At Skills, we strive to address these issues and more. For example, each consumer we support has the opportunity to gather a support team which may include family members, friends, staff and significant others. Together, the individual and members of their team identify, discuss and resolve issues they feel are important. They then develop a blue print of supports from among many options. The team meets regularly to support the individual in making choices to help him or her pursue interests, needs and wants. And the results have been monumental.

Every day, we redefine the word "impossible". Many of the people we support were told they could never live outside an institution, could never hold down a job, could never regain custody of their children — but they did. Given support, and the opportunity to make choices, they did.



Larry visits Mike at the office.

As someone once said, "It is our choices that show that we truly are far more than our abilities."



David M. (Mike) Rice
President and Chief Executive Officer

Support Skills at Special Events in 2008



Golfers head for the green following the shotgun start at Skills' 2006 golf tournament.



Jennifer enjoys hamming it up for the camera.

Golf Tournament Brings Art, Music and Drama to Skills

Skills hosted its first Annual E. F. "Pat" Houser Memorial Golf Tournament on July 10, 2006. With the proceeds generated by more than 20 participating teams of four, Skills introduced an exciting arts program to individuals receiving adult training services in Centre County.

The program began in November when Michele Rivera, founder of Artistic Horizons, agreed to share her gift of teaching art, music and drama classes to the individuals Skills serves. Since then, each week, the classes provide individuals who have significant physical and or developmental disabilities with an opportunity for artistic expression and fun. The program incorporates creative approaches using music, drama, and art to help the participants use their imaginations and to pursue their creative talents. Michele believes every person, regardless of their abilities, deserves to have access to learning experiences through the arts.

"Having instructors come to Skills from Artistic Horizons gives the individuals a desire to learn," says Melissa Slaby, program specialist for Skills' adult training service, "Their approach to learning is fantastic and the participation is incredible – greater than I have ever seen."

To keep up to date on all special events, please check out our web site at www.skillscentralpa.org

Candlelight Vigils for Mental Health Awareness Month:

On a Wednesday in May, Skills will hold two separate candlelight vigils, one in Cambria County at the Ebensburg Court House and one in Centre County outside the Bellefonte Court House. Dates for the vigils will be announced at a later date.

Discovery Garden Plant Sale:

On a Saturday in May, Discovery Garden will hold a plant sale to benefit Skills' horticultural therapy program and Discovery Garden. You will find great deals here! Date to be announced.

Skills 3rd Annual E.F. "Pat" Houser Memorial Golf Tournament:

On Monday, July 14, Skills will hold its 3rd annual golf tournament at the Elks County Club in Boalsburg, PA. More information to come.

Skills 6th Annual Penn State Tailgate Party:

On Saturday, October 25, Skills will hold its Tailgate Party with a silent auction for the Penn State vs. Ohio State game – location TBA. More information to come.

Jim Cain Has Spent 40 Years Working His Way Into All Of Our Hearts!



Jim gets a hug from Sunshine.

On August 12, 2006, Jim celebrated his 40th anniversary of working at Skills' vocational training facility (WOSKOB) in State College. When he started at Skills, people with disabilities did not have many choices in where they wanted to work or what kind of work they wanted to do. However, for Jim it was a great choice. He loved attending WOSKOB. His favorite jobs were mailers, and he chose to attend the adult basic education classes twice a week. He worked his way into the heart of everyone he encountered. Each morning he would make sure to greet all the staff, and if they looked like they were having a bad day, he would cheer them up with a hug.

Jim enjoyed the social aspect of work much better than the work itself. Every time George Basalla, senior sales representative for Skills, came into the workshop to visit, he and Jim would sing their rendition of "Happy Trails to You." They were in demand. They even sang for Steve Zook, former CEO, at his retirement party, and at Sunshine Kustaborder's wedding. Sunshine is Jim's program specialist at Skills.

"Jim has a great sense of humor," says Sunshine "He would always play and joke around with staff and his peers." He is as loyal to his friends as he is to his brands. Jim had a Pepsi during break time everyday – don't even try to give him a Coke.

Due to Jim's current circumstances, he is unable to attend his favorite work program, although he does come by for a visit now and then. We all miss him and are honored he chose to spend 40 years at Skills working with people he loves and who love him.

Skills Thanks Sponsors of its 2006 Golf Tournament

Special thanks to:

- Tim Houser who lends his talents and his father's name (the late E.F. "Pat" Houser) to the tournament.

Special thanks to our major sponsors:

- Reliance Bank
- McQuaide Blasko Attorneys at Law
- Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott
- Precise Polstar (Rexam)
- Leonard Truck & Trailer
- PennTerra Engineering Inc.
- Newborn Enterprises
- Stephen L. Foust, CFP
- Brown & Brown Insurance
- Marcon
- Supelco
- Andrews & Beard Law Offices

Friends Help Discovery Garden Grow

Thank you to all friends of Discovery Garden. Your support keeps Courtney Claton's memory alive, allows us to make new additions to the garden each year, and helps expand our horticultural therapy program. Special thanks to Tom Ford, PSU Extension Agent, who once again offered his annual series of free gardening classes to the public. We are also grateful to Home Depot in Altoona for sponsoring Skills' annual Discovery Garden plant sale at Legion Park, Hollidaysburg. This event raised funds for Skills' Horticultural Therapy Program and needed supplies for the garden. The garden's success is due to the many volunteers who plant and weed and tend the garden throughout the growing season.

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We Remember...

Individuals Skills has served:

Danny Bird – Thanks to the Bird family for their memorial gift to Skills.

Jason Quate – Thanks to all of the loved ones who gave in Jason's memory.

Staff who have served Skills:

Debra Shuma – Thanks to Debra for her 17 years of service, and thanks to all who made a donation to Skills in Debra's memory.

Joe Paden – Thanks for 10 years of service.

They all will be missed tremendously.

Is Freedom Anything Else Than the Power of Living as We Choose? – Epictetus

In 2005, Skills began closing its Conewago Residential Services – a 48-bed intermediate care facility which was home to many individuals with severe disabilities and complex medical needs. Each individual has now moved into one of 10 new homes which Skills purchased or built in residential neighborhoods. Once thought impossible, the residents have made a smooth transition to community life – and it has transformed their lives.

For instance, the residents of the new community home in Mt. Misery are discovering the joy of living in a real home. For the first time, they live in a home they can call their own. They each have their own bedroom. They eat home-cooked meals in a cozy kitchen and get out into the community more easily than before. Living outside an institution presents a world of opportunity and choices – choices about everyday aspects of their lives.

Virginia gets to see more of her family on a more frequent basis. Her overall health and well being have greatly improved. Last winter, after the first snowfall, she was thrilled to be able to go outside with staff to play in the snow.

Jeffery chose the paint for his room – a beautiful silvery blue. He also is the proud owner of a goldfish which he won at a carnival. To indulge his slapstick sense of humor, staff accompanied Jeffrey to a local comedy show, which left him laughing for hours.

David now enjoys getting his own drink from the refrigerator and watching staff prepare his food. He also gets a kick out of the food processor and watching staff clean up after him. And when David wants some fresh air, he simply goes outside, and swings on the porch.

Linda has had tremendous success in getting off her psychotropic medication. She is more verbal and her vocabulary is growing. She loves music and sings at any given opportunity.

Where institutional settings require efficient schedules and routines, a home provides warmth and opportunities for growth. We see the fruits of this every day and will continue to nurture opportunities for individual choice.



Skills' "foremen" regularly checked progress on the construction of their new home.



Everyone enjoyed picking their pumpkins for Halloween.

Sheetz, Inc. Donation Provides Training Opportunities



Greg eagerly awaits to take your order.

*(LEFT)
David serves Laura her "hotdog with k".*



Cathy cooks up some mighty fine hotdogs.

When Sheetz, Inc. closed its Mifflintown store early in 2007, Jeff Benson, Skills' sales & production supervisor, and Chris Fasick, manager of recruitment & employee relations for Sheetz Inc., came to a mutually beneficial arrangement. In keeping with its philosophy of giving back to the communities in which it operates, Sheetz Inc. generously donated to Skills a full compliment of industrial food services equipment. Today, the equipment is set up for the adults Skills serves through its vocational training service in Altoona.

"When Skills was first opening its new workshop on Cortland Ave, we could not think of a better home for the equipment," said Fasick. The staff and consumers at Skills couldn't be more grateful. Justin Beigle, director of Skills' vocational services in Blair County said, "They gave us anything we thought we could use. This donation has opened up a world of opportunity and provides wider choices in training activities for our consumers." The equipment donated includes microwaves, a hot dog cooker, a bun steamer,

several coffee stations, an industrial sink, cabinets, counter space, and large industrial coolers.

The individuals receiving vocational training services have enjoyed operating their own convenience "store". "It gives our individuals a safe and real world learning environment under direct supervision from Skills staff," says Beigle. "They work on many skills that are required for jobs at convenience stores like Sheetz. They do all of the prep work, serving, and the clean-up after they are done. Best of all they have fun doing it." The following was overheard when a Skills' trainee confirmed a "customer" order: "That will be a dog with 'K!'" ("K" for ketchup.)

"Sheetz and Skills have always enjoyed a nice business relationship, which is mutually beneficial, and has grown over the past few years," said Fasick. "Sheetz is very proud to be a local employer for Skills' employment services program. Maybe one day, Sheetz will be able to employ an individual who trained on the donated equipment at the vocational training center."

Memorial, Honorary Giving

The Skills Foundation memorial and honorary giving programs offers you a meaningful way to extend condolences or congratulations to friends and family members and also help the individuals that Skills serves. For more information, please contact the public relations department at (814) 238-3245 ext. 321.

A Home Away from Home for Children and Adolescents in Blair County

Between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007, Skills' Child and Adolescent Program reunified nearly 50% of the children in its care with their families. Program Director Robin Weirich attributes the program's success, in large part, to its emphasis on serving children and adolescents in their home community.

Skills' Child and Adolescent Program provides safety, protection, and support services for children and adolescents aged six to 18 who require protective custody. The program includes three community homes in Blair County, and its goal is to reunify the child with his or her family when appropriate.

Each home provides a supportive environment, security and permanency all of which contribute to promoting child and family well-being. Working toward family reunification where possible, the program's staff provides support services to both the children and their family members. The program ensures the children, adolescents, and their families obtain needed support services such as individual and group therapy. Some of the services provided are outsourced to experienced professionals in

counseling, community engagement and family reunification.

The reunification process includes such program supports as family education, counseling, and structured daily living activities for the children. Whenever possible, Skills provides maximum opportunity for family engagements and home visits for the children/adolescents. This approach enriches relationships and creates better chances of reunification.

Since the inception of program in 2002, Skills has demonstrated the ability to meet the needs of the children and adolescents it serves in their home community. This is significant because, often, children placed in protective custody have to be relocated to neighboring counties, leaving behind everything that is familiar to them: their neighborhood, their extended family and their friends. Research indicates that successful reunions are associated with continuity of the child's relationships and regular activities while in protective custody.

All of the individuals receiving services through Skills' Child and Adolescent Program have had the choice of staying in the school they attended prior to placement so they could maintain friendships with peers and participate in school activities.

The program's philosophy of service provision supports the child welfare system's goal of "permanency" (a permanent living situation either with or without the individual's family). The program's staff works to identify and address the critical issues pertaining to the child and his/her school/family/health. By supporting the child and his or her family in addressing these issues, Skills aims to ensure that family relationships and connections are preserved for the children in its care.

Also unique to Skills' program is that the staff also frequently provide one-on-one supervision for children so that they may reap the benefits of participating on sports teams, pursuing various lessons, attending school functions, and more. This arrangement requires proper supervision for their safety.

A Choice Location

In June 2007, Skills bought two new community homes in the Huntingdon-Mifflin-Juniata region, bringing Skills one step closer to providing one-storey, accessible homes for all residents who need them.

The new three-bedroom home on Fairmen Road in Port Royal was purchased for Christine K., Christine W. and a third resident who has since moved to a nursing home.

"In general, the greatest benefit of the new home is that the location allows the individuals more opportunities to get out into the community," said Residential Manager Dianne Carter. Although their new home is only nine miles away from the previous one, it is closer to Mifflintown, Lewistown, and Skills' Juniata County office where the ladies attend the day program. "It's easier to get to the library or to go out to lunch or to go shopping, especially during the winter months," said Carter. "Having these options helps enrich their lives in so many ways."

Newer with more natural light flooding the rooms than their previous home, the house sits on a beautiful lot. At the back of the house, large sliding glass doors reveal a great view and open onto an expansive, covered porch. A mother bird and her babies have taken up

residence in a tree outside the kitchen window. "The ladies spend a lot of time out there enjoying a cup of coffee and relaxing," said Carter. The neighborhood has also proven to be welcoming and supportive. Shortly after they moved in, the ladies invited their neighbors for coffee and cookies. Many came and were pleased to have been invited and to have the chance to get to know their new neighbors.

"Both women are just so much happier living here," said Carter. "Christine K. laughs and smiles so much more in this new home. And when we ask Christine W. if she likes her new home she is very enthusiastic."

The second new house is on Blue Juniata Drive in Lewistown. Completely accessible, the new home better meets the needs of Skills' older consumers. For example, one of the residents recently fractured her hip and is now receiving physical rehabilitation. Returning to the previous house would have posed numerous challenges – including a second-floor bedroom. The new, one-story house allows



Christine shows off the fish tank in her new home.

her to return home from rehab ahead of schedule.

Even the consumers' dogs Sadie and Elvis have adjusted well to their new home – and to each other. More importantly, while walking their dogs, the residents have met many neighbors (and their dogs), helping to develop a sense of community in their new neighborhood.

In the next fiscal year Skills aims to sell its two-storey home on Fleming Avenue in Lewistown and to move the residents into a more comfortable, single-storey home.

New Johnstown ATF Offers Another Opportunity for Choice

Making fall crafts, L to R: Courtney, Emily, Christy, Staci, Michael, and Howard. Great Job!



In December 2006, Skills opened a new adult training facility (ATF) in the University Park Plaza in Johnstown. The new location better serves the 12 individuals who had been commuting to the Cresson ATF from the Johnstown area, and now provides services to nine new consumers, including two individuals from Somerset County.

The 12 who made the transition from the Cresson ATF have long been a close-knit group. Breaking in could have been a challenge for newcomers. However, in happy coincidence, most of the new consumers had already met one or more of the original 12 through summer camp and were welcomed as old friends. Four Skills staff members (Anita Kania, Jody Murvine, Carol Piechnik, and Debbie Wissinger) also made the transition to the new facility. The dedicated staff have a combined total of 49 years of service at Skills.

What makes this ATF unique is its central location. "Everything is at our doorstep here," said Wissinger. "We go out every day and already have many friends at the bowling alley, the library, the humane society, the senior activities center, and the St. Vincent de Paul store. They all know us now."

Also unique to the Johnstown ATF is that most of the individuals are young (in their 20s) and live at home with their families. "We have a great deal of parental involvement which enhances our program in many ways," said Wissinger. "We also try hard to accommodate their needs. For example many of the individuals' parents work, so we agreed to open earlier and change our hours to help the families."

In addition, the staff works closely with the school districts to make the transition from school to the ATF as smooth as possible, continuing similar programming. Everyone is encouraged to choose activities according to their needs and preferences. "For example," says Wissinger, "one of our participants loves to shop at Giant Eagle so we take her shopping for groceries almost every day. Several of the individuals had never ridden on public transportation before. We have fun taking the bus on excursions to the Galleria Mall every other week or so, not to mention that several of the women love having their hair done at the cosmetology department of the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center." The staff and consumers have also made special trips to the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, the Pittsburgh Zoo, and PPZ Aquarium.



Sporting fall shirts they made are (back row, L to R): Denene, Carol, Eric, and Amy. Front row, L to R: Christy and Crystal. Love those shirts!

Wissinger and her staff extend a warm welcome to all who are interested in touring the new site. "Come and visit us – we'd love to show you around."



Mission Statement

Skills of Central Pennsylvania, Inc., a private, non-profit organization, is committed to creating opportunities and providing support for people who need specialized services to enhance all aspects of their lives.

Meeting Community Needs Since 1960

	Unaudited 2007	Audited 2006
Income		
The percentages demonstrate Skills conservative management of resources to best serve people today and in the years to come.		
County Funding	72%	73%
Medical Assistance	18%	17%
Client Fees	3%	4%
Other	4%	3%
Expenses		
Wages & Salaries	59%	59%
Supplies & Purchased Services	12%	12%
Property, Utilities & Insurance	10%	9%
Employee Benefits	18%	17%
Other	2%	2%

Donate Your Obsolete Computer to Support Job Training for People with Developmental Disabilities

Skills collects and recycles obsolete computer electronics as part of its vocational training and industrial services programs. Donating these items to Skills provides individuals with developmental disabilities with an opportunity to learn valuable employment (and pre-employment) skills in a supportive environment – while earning a paycheck.

Keeping computers out of landfills is a primary goal of the program. When a computer is buried in a landfill, there is a high risk that toxic chemicals in the computer will eventually leach into the groundwater. After the dismantling process is complete, components are separated and shipped to various recyclers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Florida. From there, they are either refurbished and reused, or broken down further for scrap metals and plastics.

Items Accepted with No Drop-Off Fee:

Computer towers – all makes and models
IBM-compatible monitors
Keyboards – all makes and models

Mice – all makes and models
Laptops – all makes and models
Any old wires or parts once belonging to a computer

Drop-Off / Collection Hours:

Monday through Friday (excluding holidays)
from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Drop-Off Locations:

Mifflin County
31 Industrial Park Road, Lewistown.
Tel: 717 242-0313

One Stop Communications:
126 Electric Avenue, Lewistown.
Tel: 717 248-4996

Juniata County
On the corner of Old Rt 22 and Rt 75,
outside Mifflintown.
Tel: 717 436-2101

Huntingdon County
40 Pennsylvania Ave, Huntingdon.
Tel: 814 643-2310

Centre County
341 Science Park Road, Suite #6,
State College.
Tel: 814 238-3245

Blair County
4601 A Cortland Avenue, Altoona.
Tel: 814 944-4519

Magazines and Shredded Paper

Skills also recycles old magazines and shredded paper. Please remove name labels and place the magazines in a clear plastic bag. Shredded paper, too, must be placed in clear trash bags. You may drop off magazines and shredded paper at any Skills facility.

For More Information:

Tel: (717) 436-2101

Website: www.skillsofcentralpa.org

Click on the computer recycling icon on the right hand side of the homepage screen.

Michael's Choice Dispels Stereotypes, Demonstrates Desire to Participate in Community Life

Michael lives in a licensed home in Clearfield. He has lived there for more than a year with one housemate. Prior to that, the two men shared a small apartment near downtown Clearfield. Before coming to Skills, Michael lived in a more restrictive setting in Butler, PA.

As part of his individualized service plan, Michael enjoys a period of independent time each day. Initially, he spent his time taking walks in his neighborhood, but some of the neighbors felt he should be supervised. To quell neighbors concerns, staff agreed to drop Michael off in downtown Clearfield for his unsupervised time where his routine typically involves visiting shops and restaurants, and talking with his many friends.

One day this summer during his walk downtown, Michael decided to enter the offices of the local newspaper "The Progress" to inquire if there were any available paper routes. As luck would have it, no one had been delivering the paper in his neighborhood for a few years. A few days later, Michael received a list of potential customers. With the help of Patti Hunter, the team leader for his home, he went door to door, asking neighbors if they wanted to order "The Progress". Twenty-six people said yes. After a week or two, word got out and Michael signed up 10 more customers.

Michael's choice to pursue this opportunity has been a success. He has received many compliments from his customers – as well as a



Michael distributes newspapers on a cold, windy day.

\$10 tip. Perhaps the most significant outcome, however, is that where Michael's neighbors once saw a person with a disability whom they feared, they now see a dependable and courteous young man, and a contributing member of their community.

by Joe Portugal,
Manager, Residential Service

“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being.”

Goethe, a famous German philosopher.



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of Central Pennsylvania, Inc.

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Mail Call...

If you receive duplicate copies of this newsletter, have a correction, would like someone added to our mailing list, or would like your name removed from our mailing list, please call Skills public relations/development department at (814) 238-3245.

MORE WAYS TO DONATE

Your gift to the United Way or the State Employee Combined Appeal (SECA) can be directed to Skills by simply locating the section on the pledge form that allows you to name a specific agency to receive your contribution, and write in Skills of Central PA, Inc. Your contribution will help to cover important expenditures for the needs of the individuals we serve.

- Skills' memberships include:
- The United Way of Blair County
 - United Way of Mifflin-Juniata
 - United Way of Laurel Highlands
 - Centre County United Way
 - Huntingdon County United Way

MAKE SKILLS YOUR FAVORITE CHARITY

By remembering Skills in your will you can help assure our continued financial strength and our ability to provide superior care for individuals with mental and multiple physical disabilities. To ensure proper application of your planned gift, please designate your gift for The Skills Foundation. For more information on how to designate The Skills Foundation in your will, please speak with your attorney, financial planner, or call David M. (Mike) Rice, president and CEO, at (814) 238-3245 ext. 304. Also, please let us know that you've named Skills in your will so that we can thank you.

100% of your donation benefits our individuals directly.

Skills' Offices

- Corporate: (814) 238-3245
Blair: (814) 949-4800
VT: (814) 944-4519
AT: (814) 944-9522
Cambria: (814) 472-1031
Cresson: (814) 886-2423
Johnstown: (814) 262-0440
Huntington/Mifflin/Juniata:
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Huntington: (814) 643-2310
Mifflintown: (717) 436-2101
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(717) 630-2455
AT: (717) 259-7120
Centre: (814) 272-0341
AT: (814) 237-2774
VT: (814) 234-2330

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