



The BWCIL Quarterly

Special points of interest:

- Community Resource Fair to be held on March 9th
- YOU Graduation has biggest class ever
- A Board Members Story
- New Program at SC4 for students with disabilities

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A Letter From the Desk of the Executive Director

Twenty-five years! It's hard to believe that a quarter of a Century has passed since the Blue Water Center for Independent Living became a bridge, a link between disability and capability.

Our mission, our goal was, is, and will be bringing independence to every individual. While every lack of asset cannot be remedied, the striving for independence, Bringing every person (no matter what his or her disability) into the main stream of society, into every facet of life, is what we're about.

During the years we have been fortunate in reaching out to the counties of Michigan's Thumb (Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Lapeer, and St. Clair) and serving you to

the best of our ability and continually striving to be better. Many changes have been made during these years but there continues to be many challenges ahead, accomplishments to be achieved and goals to reach.

Now we turn to you, whether you are a person with a disability, a family member, a friend or a community partner, the BWCIL is respectfully asking for your help. We want and we need you to tell us what you think we might do, should do, what

we're doing right, what we may be doing wrong, and what we can improve upon. Think on these things – Please!

Come April we will be conducting forums in all five counties and mailing surveys for you to fill out. Your ideas, suggestions and comments will be critical in shaping the future of the BWCIL. You will be helping the Board and staff to develop the BWCIL's plan for programs and services in the next three years.

Believe us– YOU are the only one who can help us achieve "Access for everyone, every place, and every time."

Sincerely,
Angela Hoff
Executive Director

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Community Resource Fair in March

On March 9th 2011, the 4th annual St. Clair County Community Resource Fair will be held at St. Clair County Community College in Port Huron. Taking place from 10:00am – 3:00pm, this day-long event is designed to offer a wide variety of community supports, information, and resources to individuals and families who are struggling financially, homeless or at-risk of becoming

homeless. This is not your average "fair" where participants are sent home with little more than pamphlets or business cards; our vendors will be providing actual services on-site! We will have health screenings, food, clothing, and hygiene product give-a-ways. There will be agencies there to assist participants with housing, utilities, employment, education and so much more! The Community Resource Fair is open to everyone

and is absolutely free, including lunch and childcare for children 5 and younger! For more information: (810) 966-7898 or e-mail communityresourcefair@scccmh.org

The fair is sponsored by the Housing & Support Services Workgroup of the Community Services Coordinating Body.

The BWCIL

Special points of interest:

- 3rd Annual YOU program graduation
- Speaker David Williams of MSU student athlete services
- Thursday March 24th at 6:30 pm
- Port Huron Municipal Building
- Come early to secure a seat

YOU Program Graduation

Once again the BWCIL's Youth Opportunities Unlimited program will be celebrating a successful year. Each year the YOU program hosts a very special graduation ceremony for participants that have earned their GED. The ceremony is complete with a procession and full cap and gown regalia.

In the past years speakers have included prominent community figures such as Representative John Espinoza and Professor John Berry of St. Clair County Community College. This year

we are lucky to have Mr. David Williams of Michigan State University.

Mr. Williams works in the Student Athlete Services Department and has a long and accomplished background in assisting at-risk youth. He himself earned a GED and went on to earn both a Bachelors and Master's degree from Bowling Green University. We are very excited that Mr. Williams is making the trip from East Lansing to speak to our graduates.

This year marks the 3rd cere-

mony held by the BWCIL. And this year will be the largest to date. Nearly 40 participants will be eligible to participate and to accommodate we have moved the ceremony to a larger venue.

The ceremony will take place at 6:30 p.m. March 24th at the Port Huron Municipal Office Center in the Large Conference Room. The room seats 200 and given the size of our audience in the past, it would be advised to show up early and get a seat! Congratulations to all of our graduates!

Photo Gallery from Huron County Press

Gary Wolschlager is a Board Member for the BWCIL. Read the story of how he overcame his disability on the following page.



Wolschlager gets lifted into the cab of a tractor in his sling.

Photos by DAVE FREDRICK



Gary Wolschlager rides a n elevator down to his basement *Photos by DAVE FREDRICK*



Gary Wolschlager of Harbor Beach has not let a farming accident slow him down from what he enjoys doing. Thanks to the determination of family and friends, he is still able to drive farm tractors and go hunting. Above, Wolschlager is pictured with two of the animals that he and members of his hunting party harvested while on a trip to Africa, after the accident. *Photo by DAVE FREDRICK*

Story taken from the Huron County Press (Written By: Dave Fredrick)

HARBOR BEACH - Gary Wolschlager was like many other men in Huron County, busy working the family farm and raising a family.

And like so many folks in rural settings often do, he enjoyed an opportunity to help wherever he could when a neighbor needed help.

On a cold winter morning in March of 2006, his world changed in a blink of an eye.

One minute, he was helping out a neighboring farmer in the Harbor Beach area spread fertilizer in a field, and then in a matter of seconds, he was lying in the field injured from an accident. As a result of the tragic farming accident, Wolschlager suffered serious injuries to his spinal cord and was left a quadriplegic, bound to a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

"It was such a freak thing," Wolschlager, 60 recalled. "It was a beautiful, chilly morning and things were going good. I was driving the tractor and stood up to look back and see how much fertilizer was left. Almost at the same time as I started to turn around, the tractor hit a rut or bump in the field, I lost my balance and started falling. I went to the left and put my hand out to break my fall, but instead, my hand got tied up in the tread of the tire and it pulled me off the tractor and I fell to the ground."

The Sand Beach Township resident fell face first into the dirt, his body being crushed by the 7,500 pound tractor and the nearly-empty fertilizer wagon. The tractor continued across the field, driverless, while Wolschlager struggled for life. Fortunately, a passerby saw the accident and called for help right away.

"I didn't lay there too long," said

Wolschlager. "I remember falling and feeling a crushing sensation, feeling like the wind was being sucked out of me. I knew something was happening, but didn't know what it was, or how bad it was."

He was rushed to Harbor Beach Community Hospital and later transferred to a Saginaw hospital where between treatment and therapy, he spent the next 10 weeks recovering.

It did not take long for family members, and for Wolschlager himself, to realize his life was in the midst of a major transformation.

"I remember telling my wife, you don't deserve this. I knew she was going to have to take care of me. Father TJ gave me my last rites. I did not know if I was going to make it."

He returned home to his family farm a few months later in June and quickly began to formulate a plan to continue on with an active life, despite his situation.

"I didn't know what I was going to do, but my sons - Jared (29) and Jessie (38) went right to work. They made things easier for me to keep on driving the tractors and going hunting by making special equipment. Those two, and my wife, I don't know what I would have done without what they have done."

With the special made equipment, Wolschlager was able to log over 100 hours of driving a tractor for topping sugar beets and is able to mow lawn and other farm-related jobs. The boys made a sling and use a fork lift to hoist Wolschlager into the cab of the tractors.

Prior to the accident, the Wolschlagers had planned a 14-day hunting adventure to Africa. While Gary was thinking they were not going, the rest of the family pitched in and made it happen. By the time it was time to go on the trip, there was a new motorized wheel-

chair, a special van with a lift was purchased and other details were worked out. The trip was on!

"That was a great experience," Gary said with a wide smile. "Between all of us on the trip, we harvested 28 animals and it was a trip we will never forget, for a lot of reasons."

Wolschlager said he was told he was the first person in a wheelchair to make the trip to Africa to take part in a hunting trip.

He also made sure to be part of Opening Day for deer season this year, spending the day in his blind last week. Since his accident, he has enjoyed good success locally too. Gary has bagged several deer, some using his cross-bow and also has shot a black bear while hunting up north. The Wolschlagers have several of their mounts throughout their home to remind them of their successful hunting ventures.

Through all of his trials, Wolschlager said, "I am so thankful for my family. They have been tremendous. Plus, my friends. If I didn't have all of them, and my faith in God, I don't know how this would have turned out. I am so thankful. I feel so blessed to live here. The entire community has been so wonderful to me and my family."

*Gary Wolschlager is an active board member of the BWCIL.

OUR MISSION

The Blue Water Center for Independent Living is a consumer driven organization that advocates, informs and supports all people with disabilities to live Independently.

New College Program for Students with Disabilities



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bwcil](https://www.facebook.com/bwcil)

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TRIO, Student Support Services, is a federally funded program that helps students successfully complete their coursework, graduate and, when possible, transfer to a four year university.

TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipe-

line from middle school to post baccalaureate programs.

The SC4 program focuses on student support service



in the following areas: additional support for students with disabilities, cul-

tural enrichment activities, help applying for financial aid and scholarships, help with career planning, individualized tutoring, one-on-one mentoring, personalized academic advising, priority registration for SC4 classes, specialized workshops and transfer planning. Information can be found on www.sc4.edu or by contacting the TRIO office at (810) 989-5801 or emailing trio@sc4.edu.

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