

MAY/JUNE 2015

# brightpoint BULLETIN



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# New name, same aim

To better identify its role in the community and to clarify and reiterate its mission, CANI has a new name: **Brightpoint**.

You may have read about it in the newspaper, seen it on TV, heard about it on the radio, or seen it on billboards and bus huts scattered around Fort Wayne—Community Action of Northeast Indiana (CANI) has a brand-new name.

We're now Brightpoint. We have a new tagline, too: "For a Brighter Future." And don't forget about our colorful new logo.

But why, you might ask, are we changing our name now? We've been serving the people of Northeast Indiana for 50 years, first as the Allen County Economic Opportunity Council, and then as CANI. What's in a name?

As a friend and supporter of CANI—now Brightpoint—you know what we're all about. We're a private nonprofit organization serving more than 35,000 people annually across 12 counties in northeast Indiana. We're one of the largest nonprofit agencies in the area, offering more than 20 important programs.

However, as we approached our 50<sup>th</sup>

anniversary, we found that we needed to redefine ourselves within the mind of the general public. We needed to shed any negative misperceptions about our organization and reassert ourselves as a social-service organization worthy of philanthropic support. We needed a name that matched our role and services within the community.

"After considerable research, we discovered that we lacked genuine name recognition—too many people didn't understand who we were, or what we did," says Brightpoint President/CEO Steve Hoffman.

"Some thought we were a governmental agency," Hoffman continues. "Some didn't get a sense of what we do based on the lengthy name. CANI was often mispronounced. And to some, the phrase "community action" harkened back to the programs and politics of the 60s. Another concern was that as a large, complex organization, we were often known better

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# PRESIDENT'S POINTS

What's in a name?



**Steve Hoffman**  
President/CEO

**What's in a name? It's a good question.** Call CANI, now Brightpoint, by any other name, and we'll still be doing the incredible work of helping thousands upon thousands of people in our communities each and every day. In fact, we've been doing that work tirelessly for the last 50 years now.

So why the change? First of all, it's important to note that this is not the first time we have operated under a different title. In 1965, we were called the Allen County Economic Opportunity Council. (There's a mouthful for you!) In 1981, we changed our name to Community Action of Northeast Indiana, or CANI. And, as you are well aware, on May 6, 2015, we announced a new name and identity—Brightpoint: For a Brighter Future.

While I fully support this new identity, I will be the first to tell you that I have all kinds of positive associations with our former name. In my 15 years at the agency, I've met and worked with some really wonderful people, most notably my wife, Katie! During that time, I have witnessed great resolve and dedication on the part of our staff, and I've seen countless lives change for the better. All that happened under the title "CANI."

But as our research revealed, our former name created confusion within the broader community about who we are and what we do. Ultimately, our effectiveness in communicating our mission and all that it entails is more important than any one person's personal associations with our name. In order to continue to be effective, we need to be able to tell our story in a way that communicates our purpose to the community at large. I'm happy to say that our new name does just that. I can't think of a more positive, upbeat way to describe all that we do as an organization. We really are the "bright point" in many people's lives, and we are creating a brighter future for countless people every day.

As we look to the years ahead, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported us through this process. To the board, for their tireless efforts to sort through the research and give careful consideration to our new identity; to our supporters, who have continued to give of their time, talent, and treasure to make a difference in our communities; and to our staff, without whom none of this work would even be possible. Each of you continues to make life better for the many individuals and families we serve, and for this I thank you. ▾

Steve Hoffman, President/CEO



## RECAP celebrates past, anticipates future

"50 Years...a turning point for CANI." As this year's theme suggests, our 2015 RECAP event marked a milestone in our agency's history, giving us the opportunity to celebrate 50 years of service in Northeast Indiana, as well as to introduce our new brand identity—Brightpoint: For a Brighter Future—positioning us for future outreach.

Held on Thursday, May 7, 2015, at Ceruti's Summit Park, RECAP attracted about 200 Brightpoint friends and supporters who helped us **R**eflect, **E**ngage, **C**elebrate, **A**ppreciate, and **P**lan. Those in attendance included State Senator Dennis Kruse and Jorge Ortiz, regional director for U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly, along with representatives from corporate sponsors such as Do It Best Corp., PNC, Frontier, and Barrett McNagny.

Keynote speaker Ed Gerardot, executive director of the Indiana Community Action Association, joined in celebrating the agency's impact in the area throughout the last 50 years and applauded the name change, citing its ability to unify the agency's 20-plus programs under one overall purpose—transitioning individuals and families out of poverty and into a brighter future.

In keeping with the tradition of past years' events, we were pleased to present several awards during the morning's festivities as well, honoring individuals in our community.

Overall, the morning was a huge success! We'd like to thank all the supporters, friends, and peers who helped us celebrate the last 50 years and look ahead to future opportunities. As always, we remain committed to move people in Northeast Indiana out of poverty and help them envision a brighter tomorrow. Steve Hoffman, president and CEO, puts it best when he says, "RECAP was a wonderful event bringing together our closest friends and supporters. It was tremendously moving for me to see so many there to share our history and name change, and anticipate our future." ▾

# 2015 AWARD RECIPIENTS

**HOPE BUILDER AWARD**  
recognizes individuals  
for their own efforts to  
move out of poverty

- Jesse and Lisa Babb
- John Michalski

**VOLUNTEER AWARD**  
recognizes individuals  
who have given their  
time and talent to  
Brightpoint.

- Ashley Brown
- Tammy Azar
- Elizabeth Fletcher

**OUTSTANDING  
PARTNERSHIP AWARD**  
recognizes businesses  
that have gone above  
and beyond to assist  
Brightpoint in meeting  
its mission.

- Do It Best Corp.

Congratulations to all award recipients! You are a big part in helping Brightpoint achieve its goal of helping people in the community rise above poverty and reach for a brighter future.





## Jesse and Lisa Babb discover a brighter future through SSVF

After serving for four years in the United States Marine Corps, Jesse Babb returned home, only to discover that finding and keeping a job was harder than he had anticipated. A series of circumstances—including being cut from work and losing his benefits through the GI Bill—left Jesse and his wife, Lisa, in real trouble. “When work got slow,” remembers Jesse, “I was the last one in, so I was the first one out the door.”

“We had no income, no way to pay for things,” says Lisa. “We basically lost everything—our home, our furniture....” That’s when Lisa discovered Brightpoint’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program through an internet search. Her inquiries put her in touch with Mary Nehr, family development specialist at Brightpoint. “Our veterans program is designed to help people just like Jesse and Lisa. We help them find housing and work toward becoming successful,” she says.

In Jesse and Lisa’s case, Mary discovered willing partners in their own success. “When we found the program,” says Lisa,

“everything started working for us. It felt amazing to see people go out of their way just to help us.” Jesse found full-time work and enrolled in classes at Ivy Tech in order to reach his goal of becoming a welder, and Lisa started working with AmeriCorps, where she helps people find a better means of living and greater quality of life. “It gives me a lot of pride to know that I’m helping someone who is in the same situation that I was,” she says.

Sherry Early-Aden, vice president of operations, agrees. “It takes great initiative on their part to get from where they currently are to a brighter point in their lives.” Not only have Jesse and Lisa achieved full-time employment; they also serve as role models to others. “Connecting with the veteran’s program was a real bright point for us,” says Lisa. “It gave us the resources we needed to be successful.” As Jesse says, “Brightpoint looks out for veterans and will do everything in their power to help them out.” Even better, the couple finally has a place to call home. ✓

### PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)

#### WHAT IT IS

A Brightpoint program that aids with locating and securing stable housing, providing rental assistance, obtaining VA benefits, and providing assistance and support in many of life’s difficult situations post-war.

#### WHO IT HELPS

Veterans who have been honorably discharged and are currently homeless or facing homelessness. You answered our country’s call. We’ll answer yours. **Visit [mybrightpoint.org](http://mybrightpoint.org) for more information.**

#### WHERE YOU CAN FIND HELP

Brightpoint believes all veterans deserve a stable place to call home. SSVF is available in 27 northeastern and central Indiana counties. **For more information about how SSVF can help you and your family, give us a call at (260) 423-3546.**



Children at our Hannah Creighton Head Start plant a rose bush to celebrate Head Start’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Around the country, many Head Start programs planted rose bushes at their sites to commemorate President Lyndon B. Johnson’s announcement about the program 50 years ago from the Capitol Rose Garden.

## Happy Birthday, Head Start!

Early childhood program celebrates 50 years of preparing children for success in school—and life

As you may have guessed, 2015 has been a big year for us here at Brightpoint. Not only does the agency turn 50; we’re celebrating half a century of providing our Head Start program to children ages 3 to 5 as well. We launched this comprehensive health, education, and social service program in Allen County in 1965, working with low-income families to provide a holistic approach to preparing children for school—and life.

Mary Lee Freeze, vice president of early childhood services, explains why the program is just as relevant today as it was 50 years ago. “In this day when the bar for kindergarten achievement has been raised, it is especially important to give children from low-income families the opportunity to experience a quality preschool setting in order to be ready for school. Children from low-income families have all the same capabilities as children from middle- and upper-class families. They just need equal experiences to develop the love of learning they need to be successful.”

In 2010, we expanded our opportunities to develop that love of learning in pregnant women, babies, and toddlers through our Early Head Start program, which is designed to lead children and their parents in fun, interactive learning activities based on each child’s needs. These experiences are specially created to foster mental, social, emotional, and physical growth through play and age-appropriate activities.

It’s important to note that these programs work with families in a holistic way, helping parents set goals and then assist them in working toward those goals. Examples include obtaining better housing, achieving a high school or college diploma, or working to be the best parents they can be. “Dynamics such as homelessness, parents without a job, poor living conditions,

and a variety of other family well-being factors can affect the child’s ability to concentrate and learn,” says Mary Lee. “That’s why our programs provide a broad range of social services for families. This holistic approach creates the optimum experience for parents to both be their child’s first and best teacher and provide a quality education experience.” ✓

## BY THE NUMBERS

HEAD START

3

counties served:  
Allen, Noble,  
and Whitley

776

Head Start children  
enrolled at any  
one time

800-900

Head Start families  
reached each year

110

Head Start employees, including managers, supervisors,  
coordinators, center supervisors, teachers, teacher assistants,  
family advocates, food services, custodial, and clerical staff

EARLY HEAD START

3

counties served:  
Allen, Noble, and  
Whitley

72

pregnant women,  
infants, and  
toddlers enrolled

10

Early Head Start  
employees



**EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT**  
**Steve Hoffman**  
*President/CEO*

- HOMETOWN**  
Monroeville, IN
- FAVORITE VACATION SPOT**  
Anywhere with my wife and kids
- FAVORITE COLLEGE TEAM**  
Notre Dame
- FAVORITE SUPER HERO**  
The Incredible Hulk
- FAVORITE NFL TEAM**  
Dallas Cowboys
- BEST MOVIE OF ALL TIME**  
Braveheart
- FAVORITE MLB TEAM**  
Cincinnati Reds
- FAVORITE SINGER**  
Rihanna

**WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF WORKING AT BRIGHTPOINT?**  
Getting to work with incredible coworkers on a crucial mission such as ours



6 Steve at a young age playing with cars in his childhood home.



Photo from www.JAG.org

## JAG program credited with grad, Chloe Geans, success

“JAG means everything to me,” says Chloe Geans, crediting the two years she spent in Brightpoint’s Jobs for America’s Graduates program with making her into the person she is today. And while the road hasn’t been easy, Chloe now has a vision and focus for her life—along with the training and interpersonal skills necessary to get her there.

JAG is a school-to-career program helping carefully-selected, qualified students transition from the classroom to meaningful employment or post-secondary education. The program is offered at 14 high schools located in six local counties. JAG’s mission is not to just keep young people in school through graduation; but to also provide work-based learning experiences that will lead to career advancement opportunities and a more rewarding future.

Selected for the JAG program at Wayne High School in 2009 based on her leadership abilities, outgoing personality, and coachable attitude, Chloe set to work developing those leadership skills, gaining job-searching techniques and employability training in the process. This training, coupled with an internship at Youth for Christ’s Prime Time Youth Center, along with hours of mentoring, made a huge impact in her life.

“I didn’t have a strong father figure in my life,” Chloe notes. “Those two years I spent with Mr. Robinson [JAG specialist at Wayne High School] made me into the woman I am today. Not only did he teach me proper job decorum; he taught me how to present myself to others as if I were running a multimillion-dollar company. I can walk into a room, introduce myself using my GNAP (Greeting Name Affiliation and Purpose) with confidence.”

They’re qualities her current employer notices and appreciates. “I still have my evaluations from Deb Krauhs, principal at Bunche Montessori,” says Chloe. “She has nothing but good things to say about me.” Parents and children value Chloe, too. “I can recall my first year at Bunche,” says Chloe. “The parents in my classroom made me the topic of discussion at a PTA meeting. Mrs. Krauhs told me the next day that the parents said they couldn’t wait to meet the Ms. Geans that all their kids were talking about.”

Currently employed at Bunche as a Montessori assistant teacher, Chloe hopes to finish her associate’s degree in criminal justice at Indiana Tech, then return for a degree in Early Childhood Education so she can pursue her dream of owning a Montessori-based childcare center someday. “Life after high school was actually kind of hard,” says Chloe, “but JAG let me know ahead of time that it would not be easy.”

CONTINUED FROM COVER

by our parts—our individual programs—than as a whole.”

So, with a generous grant from the Foellinger Foundation, we enlisted Nichols Company, a Fort Wayne marketing-communication agency, to conduct interviews and focus groups in the community, and return to us with a report and recommendations. The study showed that CANI had a great story to tell and was very effective in what it does. But despite all that good work, we weren’t as well known as we should be.

Subsequently, we bounced around a lot of potential new names, looking for something that described our mission and what we do in the community. We eventually arrived at Brightpoint.

“We believe that the name Brightpoint better captures the essence of our mission and conveys the ideas we promote,” Hoffman says. “The name is upbeat, focused, positive, fresh, hopeful, upward, intelligent, and smart. The name Brightpoint really does point to a brighter future for our organization—and for the individuals and families we serve. We show people there

is a bright point on their horizons, and we endeavor to help them reach that point.”

“In addition to describing the core of who we are as an agency, the name Brightpoint also unifies us as an organization, creating an all-encompassing umbrella to describe our mission, our vision, and the primary goal of each individual program or service we offer—both now and in the future,” Hoffman adds.

Regardless of the new name, however, our mission remains the same. “Only our name has changed—our purpose and vision remain constant,” Hoffman says. “All our programs are designed with one end in mind: to remove the causes and conditions of poverty. Everything we do is focused on moving individuals and families out of poverty and into self-sufficiency. We’re devoted to creating positive change, one individual at a time.”

## Brightpoint Scrapbook



1. Staff members Kristen Keuhl, Marie McFadden, and Jennie Renner take a break from the fun to pose for a photo during Head Start’s Block Party.

2. A colorful bus hut in downtown Fort Wayne showcases Brightpoint’s new look.

Want more photos? Be sure you’re in the know! Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.  
[facebook.com/mybrightpoint](https://www.facebook.com/mybrightpoint)  
[@MyBrightpoint](https://twitter.com/MyBrightpoint)



3. Brightpoint’s weatherization van gets upgrades of its own with new artwork.

4. A colorful blow-up dancer captures the fun, lively atmosphere of this year’s Head Start Block Party.



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[www.mybrightpoint.org](http://www.mybrightpoint.org)

[www.facebook.com/mybrightpoint](http://www.facebook.com/mybrightpoint)



**While our name has changed, our purpose and vision remain constant.** Brightpoint does more than treat the symptoms of poverty; instead, we seek to transition individuals and families out of poverty and into a brighter future.

### BRIGHTPOINT MISSION

Brightpoint helps communities, families, and individuals remove the causes and conditions of poverty.

For all locations call: (260) 423-3546 or (800) 589-3506

**Appointment line:**  
(800) 589-2264

**Kosciusko County:**  
1515 Provident Dr., Suite 270  
Warsaw, IN 46580-3003

**Main Office:**  
227 E. Washington Blvd.  
PO Box 10570  
Fort Wayne, IN 46853-0570

**LaGrange County:**  
109 E. Central Ave., Suite 4  
LaGrange, IN 46761-2327

**DeKalb County:**  
209 N. Jackson St.  
Auburn, IN 46706-2048

**Noble County:**  
119 W. Mitchell St.  
Kendallville, IN 46755-1775  
200 S. Cavin St.  
Ligonier, IN 46767-1496

**Elkhart County:**  
*Temporary Location (1/9/15)*  
TANF Impact Office  
1416 Cassopolis St., Suite D  
Elkhart, IN 46514-3210  
*See website for Covering Kids  
& Families location or call:*  
*(574) 524-7586*

**Steuben County:**  
1208 S. Wayne St.  
Angola, IN 46703-2343

**Whitley County:**  
885 W. Connexion Way  
Columbia City, IN 46725

[mybrightpoint.org](http://mybrightpoint.org)