Service learning is an integral part of Stone Belt’s community engagement efforts. A partnership between a nonprofit, university faculty and university students, service learning is an important tool for increasing awareness of students and adding value to the client experience. Service learning is a method of teaching, learning and reflecting that combines academic classroom curriculum with meaningful service, throughout the community. Service learning teaches social responsibility, encourages lifelong civic engagement, and strengthens communities for the common good.

Stone Belt is honored to be considered a premiere non-profit location for service learning activities for the Bloomington campus of Indiana University. Our goal is to strengthen the relationship between Stone Belt and the Indiana University community through the formalizing of a structure and implementation of service learning within our agency.

There are two types of service learning activities that take place at Stone Belt: direct service-based activity and project-based activity. A current example of direct service-based activity is the design and implementation of an adaptive physical education curriculum that is being undertaken by two Therapeutic Recreation classes from the IU School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. Throughout this fall semester, twenty undergraduate students, along with their two graduate level instructors, are developing experiential learning for our clients. They are then modeling for our staff how to put the learning into practice, so that the experience can continue for our clients into the future.

A current example of a project-based service learning activity can be seen in the work of a select group of MBA students from the prestigious Kelley School of Business. As Stone Belt makes strategic decisions about how to transition to electronic medical records and billing, these students are providing analysis and the development of a business model to enable the agency to most effectively serve our clients.

Stone Belt is fortunate to participate in the ACE (Advocate for Community Engagement) program through Indiana University. The ACE – whose salary is supplied by the university through the Office of Service Learning – is responsible for overseeing service learning within the agency, with supervision and direction given by the Community Engagement Director. Stone Belt has an ACE on staff during the fall and spring academic semesters of each year.

We’d like to introduce you to Stone Belt’s current ACE, Gwyn Vicars (pictured above with client Brandon Williams). A junior in the IU nursing program, Gwyn comes to our agency with a
wonderful background in working with individuals with disabilities. She joined the Stone Belt community in January of this year, and spent the first six months of the position developing a new Service Learning model for the agency. Gwyn not only coordinates current service learning groups and projects, she is also responsible for establishing relationships with departments and faculty on campus who will collaborate with Stone Belt in the future.

We look forward to continuing to share stories of successful service learning in the future.