

New BIAAZ Resource Facilitation Specialist Will Grove Finds his Groove



Brain Injury Alliance
ARIZONA

**“Come on, Will!” “Will, come dance!”
“Get up, Will! Everyone else is dancing!”**

My resolve to move not one inch closer to the dance floor was steadfast. Two decades of frequent concert-going, along with a life-long and unwavering aversion to anything that even resembled dancing, had prepared me for this. First cast in the dimly-lit, streamer-adorned gyms and auditoriums of my youth and sculpted to refinement in the various concert halls of Phoenix, my skills of polite refusal on this matter were stuff of legend. This was no challenge. I would, as ever, be an amiable rock of inertia.



Or so I thought.

Ten minutes later, there I was, on the dance floor with a group of campers and volunteers who, up until 48 hours prior, had been complete strangers. We moved back and forth in an earnest, but ultimately hopeless, attempt at approximating the rhythm of the music. This “rock of inertia” now looked more like one of those inflatable dancing tube puppets at car dealerships, operating at a sputtering 50% power. My principled refusal had been overcome by a campaign of benevolent, concentrated peer pressure the world had never before seen and may never again. I confess, I have the utmost admiration for all who participated in this effort. For years, many have come before you and have failed. By the end of the night though, much like those flailing inflatable tube puppets (technically called “Sky Dancers,” according to Google), I was smiling.

That was on day number six of my new job as a BIAAZ resource facilitation specialist, so you could say my first week was a bit of a whirlwind. I had started the week by being introduced to Jeanne Anderson, the resource facilitation manager, who so graciously delayed her indefinite sabbatical, (she doesn’t like to use the word “retirement”), in order to begin my training and instill in me the knowledge she’d gained during her sixteen years of invaluable service to the brain injury community. Of all the things I learned from Jeanne, (and there were many), what stuck out most was the humbling realization of the

gargantuan shoes I’d been tasked to fill.

By day four, I was off to the lovely Whispering Hope Ranch in Payson for Camp Can Do 2018. I spent the next four days in the Arizona “wilderness” getting to know a whole new community of co-workers, fellow professionals, and most importantly, survivors, which, yes, included reluctantly participating in...*shudder*...dancing. I had the pleasure of making dozens of new friends and not only hearing their survival stories, but their dreams for the future as well. As camp drew to a close, my still nascent comprehension of my new position and community did not mitigate my hope to understand the purpose, the “why” of BIAAZ’s mission; rather, it fueled my desire to learn how my new role would contribute to fulfilling it.

I showed up for the start of week two at the office even more excited than I had been on the first day. For five years prior to joining the BIAAZ, I had worked in the world of children’s behavioral health, and I bring from that time many lessons and experiences I value. Most treasured of these is understanding the importance of always learning more than I am teaching. At Camp Can Do, my primary task was to support the campers, but I can say without hesitation that I gained more from them than I gave. My first week at BIAAZ demonstrated to me that I will have frequent opportunities like the one at camp to step out of my comfort zone and go to places, both physical and figurative, I may otherwise not dare go. Whether I am supporting a professional in their mission to help others, or briefly taking a trip with a survivor on their journey to recovery, or simply making a timid foray onto a makeshift dance floor under a ramada in Payson, I look forward with excitement to my role with the BIAAZ and all that it will entail. Already in my first few months here, I have had the honor of being welcomed by so many members of this community. I hope to meet many more of you in the future!

Will Grove is a native of Erie, PA, and a graduate of Syracuse University. He is an avid fan of indie films and music, and in his spare time, he enjoys playing soccer, running, and hiking. Prior to joining the BIAAZ staff, Will worked as a coordinator for kids and adolescents struggling with behavioral health needs at Child and Family Support Services. If you have questions regarding BIAAZ resources and programs, you can contact Will via his email, outreach@biaaz.org.