



# The Imagine Center, LLC

Work Training, Skills Building, and  
Community Engagement Center

6600 Norvell rd., Brooklyn, MI 49230

[www.theimaginectr.com](http://www.theimaginectr.com)

313-656-4052





Love



# Why the center?

- Meaningful work is one of the facets of who we are that helps us to feel good about ourselves, and our lives – meaningful work helps us to feel happier.

-Folks with developmental concerns and/or acquired functional limitations are very often unemployed or employed in settings with menial work tasks, and that involve minimal/limited engagement with others in the community - in less-than-optimal environments, and which can serve to reduce their overall life satisfaction, and worse, can engender behavioral concerns.

# Why the center?

-The farm is a natural and serene setting, and one that promotes well-being through time spent in nature (research has demonstrated links between well-being and time spent in natural settings), and physical activity (research has demonstrated links between physical activity and mood).

-Work on the farm also includes regular engagement with others and the broader community (research has well-demonstrated links between meaningful and regular engagement with others, and well-being, mood).

-The center is operated by three psychologists with extensive expertise in working with individuals with developmental and behavioral concerns, including many years of clinical work and research. Dr. Behen is also the parent of an amazing daughter (Jessica) and who happens to have some developmental concerns as well. She has been working on the farm, for a year now, and has drastically improved her physical conditioning (lost >20 pounds), demonstrated marked improvement in her communication and fine and gross motor skills, and has made very substantial gains in her overall well-being/mood, and in her behavioral functioning as well.

# Jessica's story

Having the farm available to a local community of individuals who have developmental and/or neurological concerns, has been a life long dream of Dr. Behen's – "I always knew, since the day Jessica was born, and I was already working in the field, that if I wanted her life to approximate those carved out by her more "typical" siblings – productive, proud of their work lives, pleased with their social relationships, and happy - I would need to create something that could offer her such opportunities – such settings are rare in our culture". Hence the idea of the farm was born - and offered the possibility for true community, friends, meaningful work, good physical well-being, an avenue in which to build her skills – including vocational skills, on a daily basis, and one that engendered a sense of belonging and importance. The dream was accelerated when Jessica went to work in local a "work shop", following her turning 26 years of age, and having to leave school (which had always involved wonderful programs) and embark on her life, as shed had watched her siblings also do.

Jessica then went to work each day and spent portions of her day sitting at tables with 30 or so other individuals who also had developmental concerns, and a couple of staff members., and with whom she had very limited, and often not very positive, engagements. She, when doing work, mostly (nearly exclusively) did very meaningless tasks. The setting – the only one available to her, given the level of her difficulties - rather than making her excited, happy, and instead of building her daily life, and personal, and social skills, and rather than teaching her vocational skills – rather than uplifting her – engendered anxiety, depression and associated irritability, and behavioral problems, and seemed to be associated with a decline in her communication and social skills (she spoke much less than she had when she was in school, and no longer would sing - she used to sing throughout the day), and she did not acquire any vocational skills – she did not make any friends. A change was needed - so myself, along with Dr's Gjolaj, and also Mims, began to construct the dream.

# Jessica's story

We bought the farm. We bought the animals, restored the home that is now the center. Built corrals, a greenhouse, added a casita, purchased all of the farming equipment that we could afford, and hired animal, agricultural, and construction staff, and also support staff/job trainers – a colleague completed a full evaluation with Jessica, including a comprehensive assessment of her skill levels across all of her adaptive (communication, daily living, social, and motor) behavioral functions, and also of her behavioral functioning, and also her level of work skills. We used that information to develop a plan that we could implement, on a daily basis, put together that plan, and then we started.

The process has not been easy, even with a sample of one (two for the past 6 months or so). We have learned so much in the past year (especially those things that we did not know that we did not know!), and Jessica has truly thrived in the setting. Prior to the position, she was sedentary, overweight, out of shape, depressed, nearly not speaking at all, not compliant, irritable. She now works almost 40 hours per week on the farm, fully supported. She remains overweight, but has lost 20 or so pounds. She is far more active than she has ever been, and in the best physical condition of her life. She is much more engaged with others, speaks much, much more, and is generally compliant now. All of her personal/daily living skills are markedly improved, she requests what she wants or needs more regularly, her mood is mostly upbeat, and she has friends – she smiles more and often, and she loves her work (especially the horses and donkeys who she works with daily). Prior to the farm, she hardly knew what a paint brush, or a drill were – she now uses such tools on a daily basis, and near independently (Jessica has “severe multiple disabilities”, and limited vision) – yet she is doing such tasks, and enjoys such tasks – she does them along with her friends. She is now a productive member of the community in which she resides.

So for an N of 1 we have proved – to ourselves - that we can implement the dream, and that we can have substantial and meaningful impact. Now we want to offer this opportunity to others.

## Jessica's story (continued)

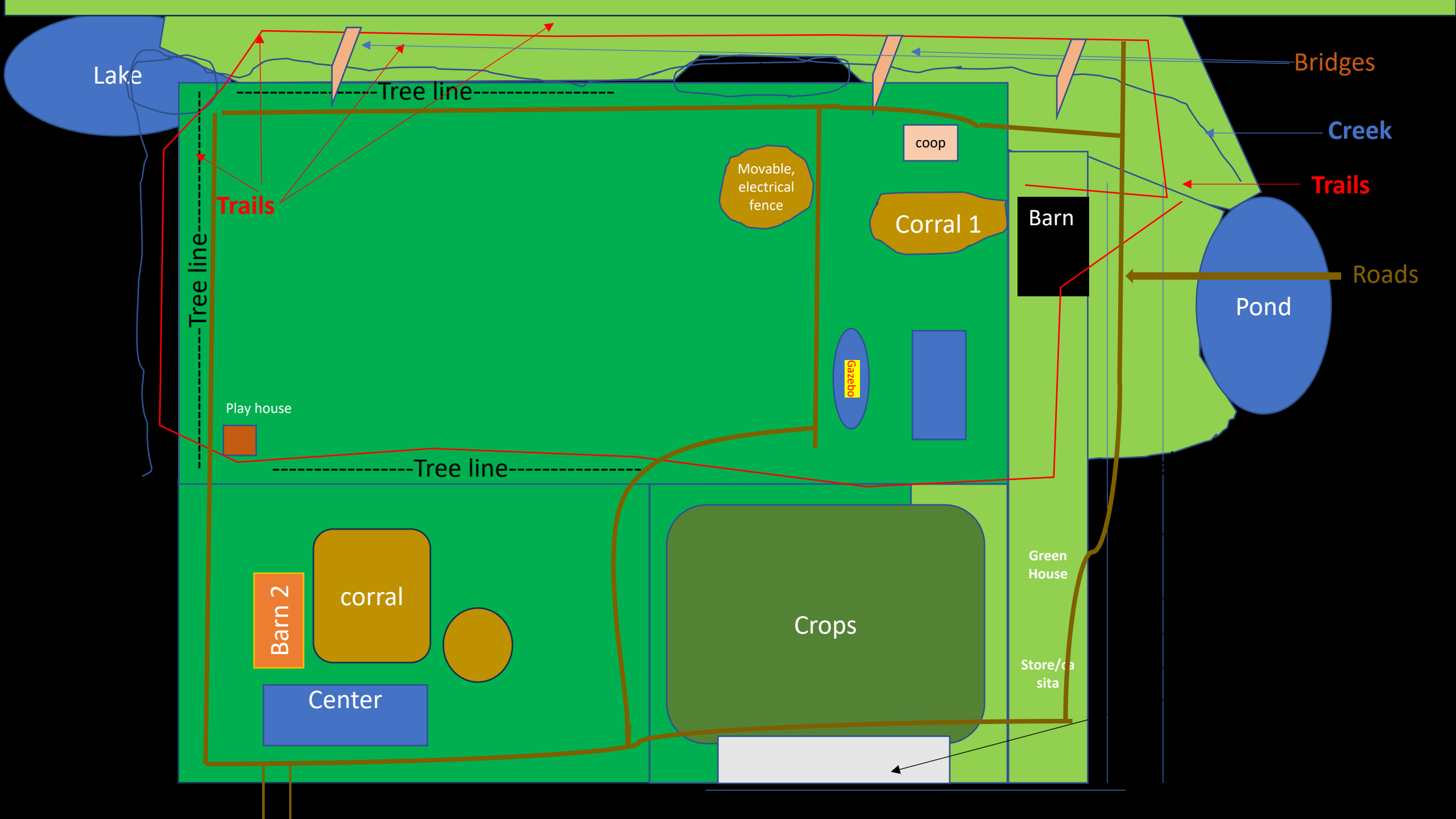
**”Knowing the situation that exists for many/most adults with such concerns – often menial tasks, limited engagement with the broader community, depressogenic settings, and again, many/most individuals are not working at all – I wanted to change this situation, and I want to offer opportunities to as many folks that I can, and I want to help them to be healthier, and maximize their level of independence in living via skills-building, and help them build skills that allow them to be/and feel more productive, and to feel good about their lives, and to make and have friends – hence the farm”. Dr. Behen.**



# The farm

- **70 acres, woods, hills, creek running through property, access to lake, trails.**
- **2 barns, corrals, work out area, casita/“store”, greenhouse, chicken coop.**
- **2 Horses, 6 goats, 8 sheep, 12 ducks, 12 chickens, 2 mini donkeys, cats, 6 peacocks**
- **Various crops.**





Lake

Tree line

Bridges

Creek

Trails

Roads

Pond

Tree line

Trails

Play house

Tree line

Movable,  
electrical  
fence

coop

Corral 1

Barn

Gazebo

Green  
House

Barn 2

corral

Crops

Store/ca  
sita

Center

# The Program

- **Employs adults with developmental challenges, and/or acquired neurological concerns.**
- **Comprehensive individualized plans of service, implemented daily, for all consumers and emphasizing:**
  - **Skills building – plans address communication, social, daily living, and motor skills, and also emotional/behavioral well-being.**
  - **Vocational training – develop vocational skills along six domains – agriculture, animal care, construction tasks/farm maintenance, and entrepreneurial skills, and also domestic skills.**
  - **Community engagement activities. Regular (daily) engagement with the many individuals, including both neurotypical and neurodivergent folks. Regularly (daily) scheduled recreational activities, and also community included activities (concerts, dances, bon-fires, holiday themed activities).**
  - **Daily recreation.**
- **Plans are highly individualized and developed/revised according to one's current skill levels, and also desires/passions. Plans are implemented on a daily basis and adjusted quarterly.**
- **Supports for farm efforts are always administered with indicated levels of support and guidance.**
- **All activities, including all work tasks, are conducted in a manner that maximizes fun and engagement with others, animals, and nature, and yet that also builds adaptive (communication, social, daily living) behavioral skills, and also vocational skills.**

# Animal Care





# Agriculture



# Construction





# Domestic



Entrepre-  
neurial  
skills



Includes a store, greenhouse cart, farmers market



Community



Our Coop

Ducks  
& Chickens



Goats,  
Sheep,  
Donkeys  
And  
peacocks





Charlie  
And Maddie











# The Imagine Center – Who we are

- Michael E. Behen, PhD

- Clinical Psychologist
- CEO, The Imagine Center for Psychological Health
- WSU Assistant Professor
- NIH Funded Researcher
- Developmental psychopathology, neuroscience (over 20 years research on development, psychopathology, neuropathology)
- Parent of adult child with developmental (Jessie) concerns
- 10+ years experience in behavioral treatment planning for adults with developmental concerns.

- Nore Gjolaj, PhD

- Clinical Psychologist
- Co-CEO, The Imagine Center for Psychological Health
- Over 10 years experience running large, successful mental health agency, with 4 locations in Michigan.
- Research on developmental and behavioral outcomes in children with histories of early adversity
- Several years experience working in adult foster care homes.

- Koyonne Mims, PhD

- Clinical psychologist
- COO, The Imagine Center for Psychological Health
- Over 10 years experience running large, successful mental health agency, with 4 locations in Michigan.



# The Center Team

Director - Michael J. Behen

Psychologist – Brooke Williams

Center Director – Kristy Davenport

Center task coordinator/quality control – Jeff Karp

Barn Manager – Katrina Juhasz

Construction Manager – Stacey Van Vleet

Maintenance coordinator – MJ Behen

Social Worker - TBD

# Teamwork and comaraderie



Friendship



The end of the day...



# The Center is now hiring.

**-We are now hiring.**

**-No qualifications necessary, except a desire to have fun days, engaging with others, and some animals, and while working, and while gaining valuable work and life skills.**

**-To enquire about a position for your son/daughter at the farm or to visit and see what's happening on the farm:**

**-Phone: (313 656-4052) or 313 354-3920 (Dr. Behen)**

**-email: [mebehenphd@gmail.com](mailto:mebehenphd@gmail.com)**

**-Fax: 313 656-4053**





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