

CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS CONNECTOR



All ages. All abilities. All together.

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SPRING 2014

Hi, neighbor



Students from the Meeting House Montessori School visited St. Coletta Day School to meet some of the Cushing students they will be sharing a building with. Seated are Cushing students Jessica Fiorentini and Nick Pugsley; Montessori students included, from left, Cecilia Simonetta, Molly McGillivray, Leila Spires, Colton McCain and Anna Sheehan, with Educational Director Stephen Putnam. **Story, Pages 4-5.**

Work in progress

BNY Mellon Grant supports workforce training at Cushing

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Cardinal Cushing Centers prides itself on preparing young adults for meaningful employment opportunities, primarily through its South Shore Industries (SSI) program. Those efforts have been enhanced thanks to a grant from BNY Mellon.

Cushing Centers received a \$20,000 grant from the BNY Mellon Charitable Giving Program to create an intensive employment training program for young adults with intellectual disabilities, ages 22-30, who attend SSI. The grant was made possible through the generosity of the Arthur F. Blanchard Trust.

The funding is being used to support a minimum of four individuals with the goal of finding integrated, community-based jobs that match their skills, interests and abilities. Cushing staff has worked with them to develop

See **BNY Page 6**



Runner Tessa Casey with her son, Matt.

Making strides for Cushing

Marathoners raising funds

BY PAUL HALLORAN

This year's Boston Marathon will take on special significance, as it marks another step in the healing process after last year's terrorist bombings claimed the lives of three spectators and sent more than 260 people to the hospital with injuries ranging from minor to loss of limbs.

For the first time, Cardinal Cushing Centers received three official numbers from race sponsor John Hancock, which requires those running for charity to raise at least \$5,000. Tessa Casey, Gabe Dutra and Jonathan Peck will

See **MARATHON Page 7**

Creating meaningful bonds



JO ANN SIMONS

The prospect of our students interacting, learning and playing with their counterparts from Meeting House Montessori School is exciting for everyone associated with both schools. The respective staffs will determine how we can make this relationship work best for both groups. I know the result will be a meaningful partnership that benefits students at both schools.

Ironically, this relationship would likely never have materialized if not for an instance of discrimination the likes of which I have not seen in many years. We had a signed agreement to rent space elsewhere in Braintree for our LOU program, only to have the landlord back out. He said other tenants in the building would be “uncomfortable” with a special-needs program in the building.

I have to admit, that was a jolt. I thought that in 2014 that type of discrimination was a thing of the past, mainly because of all the positive experiences I have had at Cushing and as the mother of a 35-year-old son with Down syndrome who owns a home, holds multiple jobs and does volunteer work. Sadly, I was wrong.

Elsewhere in this edition of the Cardinal Cushing Connector, you will read about an exciting new partnership between Cushing and Meeting House Montessori School. As detailed in that story, I think this is one of our most important initiatives.

The prospect of our students interacting, learning and

There is a happy ending to the story, though. We reconsidered our decision to move the LOU program and decided to move SSI as well, opening up space at St. Coletta that will be filled by Meeting House Montessori. We found out, somewhat by accident, that they were looking for space, and at that point we had space to offer.

The Sisters of St. Francis, who founded our wonderful school 67 years ago, would maintain that it was not by accident at all. They would point to the fact that Montessori education started in a poor section of Rome, and St. Francis, their patron, preached in the slums of Assisi. They would attribute it to divine intervention, and who are we to question them? I can point to other instances to further make their case.

When we were applying for our SEVIS certification — Student and Exchange Visitor Program — that allows us to accept foreign students, we were caught up in a pile of governmental red tape. We had a student from Mexico that wanted to come, but we could not admit her without being SEVIS-certified. I had a meeting with Cardinal Seán O’Malley and, two days later, we received the certification. Coincidence?

Then there was the day we lost all power as a blizzard raged. I remember standing outside the chapel and talking with the facilities director about the possibility of evacuating the school, which is obviously a major undertaking. As we were trying to decide, the lights went back on.

I think the good Sisters have a point.

Jo Ann Simons is president & CEO of Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Save the Date



 Cardinal Cushing Centers
Springtime

Wednesday, May 28th, 2014
The Westin Copley Plaza



Honorees

Franciscan Leadership Award
 Bill Brett

Richard Cardinal Cushing Award
 Jim Fagan

To learn more about Cardinal Cushing Centers:
www.CushingCenters.org

CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS CONNECTOR

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Cushing: A perfect fit for our son

BY LAURA TREPPEL

When it comes to our son, David, we can point to two distinct periods in his life: BC and AC — before Cushing and at Cushing. We like AC much better.

When David’s school in Pennsylvania closed its residential program — two weeks after we completed his annual IEP — we were scrambling for an appropriate replacement. Sadly, there were no schools in New Jersey, where we live, suitable for David.

Our educational consultant, who had helped us find the Pathway School in Pennsylvania, told us Cushing was accepting out-of-state students. I drove up to take a look.

Almost immediately, I knew Cushing would be a great fit for David. I was struck by the fact that Cushing looks like a beautiful college campus. People go to school, live and work there. People from the community go there to dine, shop and stay. The kids get to deal with the public in a controlled, friendly place.

When David was 15, we realized he needed to be in a program that could address his needs and help him meet his challenges. He is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and is bi-polar. David is relatively high functioning, but is hampered by mood swings triggered by the unpredictability of daily life. He’s a very smart kid, but when he gets anxious everything falls apart.

It was hard to find the right place for him. He needed a place that understood him. We looked all over the country before we found Cushing. We are so grateful that we did.

David lives in a home with seven other students. It is a highly structured environment with 24/7 supervision. He has his own room, which is very

important to him. It is a very comfortable place.

David has been exposed to the various vocational opportunities at Cushing and he has gravitated toward cooking. We found that interesting, especially since he had such a limited diet. Dry cheerios were a staple for him. He was anxious about transitioning to the vocational school, but from the first day he loved it. You can imagine our surprise when we heard this come



David Treppel cooks for his family.

from David’s mouth: “I love to plate salads.”

When David was home for the February break, he showed off his cooking skills. Besides helping me make salads and going food shopping, he downloaded a recipe for chicken and spinach Alfredo lasagna. We made it from scratch and it was delicious. After he turns 21 in May, David will participate in the LOU program as well as culinary

training.

We have noticed significant improvement in David’s behavior, specifically in regard to his flexibility — or lack thereof. One time when we were at the movies seeing “Transformers,” a smoke detector went off, the theatre had to be evacuated and they ended up canceling the movie. We went home and ate dinner and went back to the theatre, but David insisted we go into the movie at exactly the point at which we had left. My husband, Jerry, went in and called us when that scene was coming up.

One of David’s quirks was that he had to take a shower at 5 p.m. every day. That put a damper — figuratively and literally — on everything we would do. When he started at Cushing, I told the staff if they could break him of that habit, everything else is gravy. It took awhile, but the first time he was home and we wanted to do something in the afternoon that would mean we wouldn’t be home at 5 p.m., he shrugged and said, “I guess I’ll have to take it later.”

That was our life before Cardinal Cushing Centers. Cushing has taught David to express himself. Now he tells us what he is worrying about and we can reassure him. One day when he was home he Googled OCD and anxiety. He asked me, “Do I have autism?” When I told him yes, he said, “Wait until my friends and staff at school hear about this!”

David was excited. And we were excited to see him becoming self-aware. Cushing has played a large role in that, and we are thankful for that.

Laura Treppel is a pediatrician from Edison, N.J. In addition to David, she and her husband, Jerry, have two older sons, Josh and Danny.



Cushing student Brittany Geoghegan enjoys her classes at Cape Cod Community College.

PATHWAY TO COLLEGE

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS AND CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE OPENS DOORS

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

The road to college is becoming a little more well-traveled, thanks to a partnership between Cardinal Cushing Centers and Cape Cod Community College.

Brittany Geoghegan is one of four Cushing students participating this semester in Project Forward, a program at Cape Cod Community College that gives students with disabilities the opportunity to take college courses, while also building vocational and social skills. It is operated and administered by the college with Cardinal Cushing Centers coordinating student schedules, transportation and support.

"I love my classes," said Geoghegan, who attends every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Geoghegan has taken classes in retail and landscaping and has one in office technology coming up. Each participant also takes work/life-skills courses. Geoghegan hopes to continue her education and have a career in child care or pet care, or perhaps retail. She has also expressed interest in becoming a certified nursing assistant.

"She's very caring, so I think any of those fields would suit her," said Doug Frazier, senior director of vocational education at Cushing.

Geoghegan graduates from Cushing in June, but does not turn 22 until February, so she will still be eligible to

participate in Project Forward in the fall. From there, she will either transition to adult services or enroll in college full-time.

"Hopefully I can go on to a school like UMass or Rutgers," she said.

Originally from Sharon, Geoghegan enrolled at Cushing as a day student in 2006 and transitioned to residential life the next year. She lives on the Hanover campus with one roommate and goes home most weekends to see her family.

"I like it because I get to see my friends here," Geoghegan said.

She is very involved in campus life, participating in swimming, basketball, cheerleading, track, volleyball, rock climbing, chorus, Girl Scouts and a number of other activities. She is volunteering at this year's Boston Marathon, handing out water and cheering on the runners, especially those who are running to raise money for Cushing.

As part of Cushing's vocational program, Geoghegan has had the opportunity to work in most of the career sites on campus, and especially enjoyed her time at the greenhouse, bakery and recycling center. She still works one day a week at the campus restaurant, the Iron Kettle.

Welcome aboard

Meet Cushing's newest board members

Cardinal Cushing Centers Board of Directors bring a wealth of experience and a variety of skills to the board.

John Cochrane

Having recently retired as executive vice president at National Grid, John Cochrane had some free time and was looking to stay active in the local community. A chance meeting with Cushing Centers President and CEO Jo Ann Simons led to a conversation about his joining the board, which he did in January.



Cochrane was already familiar with Cushing as his son, Michael, has participated in the South Shore Industries program for four years. Michael works at a variety of jobs, including Meals on

Wheels and at local nursing homes, and "he loves it," according to Cochrane.

"There is a dedicated staff and you can tell they really care about the kids," he said. "Jo Ann and her team do a great job. I'm happy to help out in any way I can."

Cochrane said he has been impressed with his fellow board members. "It's a good board with capable people. Financially, they've done a really good job."

A Harvard graduate who earned an MBA from Northeastern, Cochrane lives in Hingham with his wife and four children.

Kevin Kiley

As Director of Strategy and Financial Planning for the Archdiocese of Boston, Kevin Kiley has extensive financial-management and strategic-planning experience. He joined the finance committee at Cushing early last year and moved up to the board of directors in January.



"It's been interesting for me because it's the first time I've been on a board," he said. "There's a lot of responsibility. I've met some great people."

A Marshfield resident, Kiley and his wife, Sue, have brought their four children to the Nativity scene at Cushing for many years. "I never realized what a vast enterprise it is," he said. "It really is impressive."

Kiley's godson and nephew, Ryan Murphy, participated in Cushing's LOU program. He died last year while undergoing treatment for leukemia.

Jeanine Mount

After spending almost 30 years as a professor and associate dean at the University of Wisconsin, Jeanine Mount came to Northeastern University last fall as Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education in the Bouve College of Health Sciences. She joined the Cushing board



of directors shortly thereafter.

Mount served on the board of directors for Canticle Court and Juniper Court, an elderly housing development in Wisconsin sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis, the order that founded and sponsors Cardinal Cushing Centers. She said she admires the work of the Sisters

and is pleased to have the opportunity to support Cushing in carrying out its mission.

Mount earned her bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. from Purdue University.

Ralph J. Rivkind

Ralph Rivkind attended Cushing's annual Springtime gala and said he "ran into 20 people I know." At a South Shore Chamber of Commerce event, he met a client whose daughter is a graduate of the school. Rivkind mentioned that he would be happy to do anything he can to help Cushing, and it did not take long for that message to get to Cushing President and CEO Jo Ann Simons.



"Five hours later, I had an e-mail from Jo Ann asking if I could be at the school tomorrow," said Rivkind, an attorney with Rubin and Rudman in Boston.

His impression after a short period on the board? "I love doing this," said Rivkind, who has been involved with the South Shore Chamber for 40 years. "These are competent, dedicated people who ask the right questions and, when they get the facts, they make decisions."

"Cushing assists people with disabilities and their families from the time they are in kindergarten for the rest of their lives," he said.

A CUSHING CONNECTION



Meeting House Montessori students Leila Spires and Giovanni Marinilli and Cushing student Molly Butler ride bikes.



Meeting House Montessori students Cecilia Simonetta, Molly McGillivray and Leila Spires meet Cushing student Jessica Fiorentini, second from left.



Cushing student Allie Grimmins completes a transaction at the school store with Meeting House Montessori School student Anna Sheehan.



Both schools will benefit from Cushing-Meeting House Montessori partnership

By PAUL HALLORAN

When one door closes, another opens — and sometimes even wider than you had anticipated.

That sums up the union of Cardinal Cushing Centers and Meeting House Montessori School of Braintree, two respected institutions that are about to become roommates.

Meeting House Montessori will be renting space from Cushing and moving into its Braintree facility that currently houses St. Coletta Day School and two adult programs: Life Opportunities Unlimited (LOU) and South Shore Industries (SSI). LOU and SSI will be moving to another site in Braintree.

The circumstances behind the new arrangement can be attributed to divine intervention. Cushing was looking to move the LOU program in order to free up some space at St. Coletta, and had signed an agreement to rent space in another building in Braintree. The landlord backed out of the deal, citing other tenants' concerns of having a special-needs program in the building, much to the chagrin of Cushing Centers President and CEO Jo Ann Simons.

"I was really disappointed and angry to see that kind of

discrimination in 2014," Simons said.

With that door closed, Cushing re-evaluated its situation and decided to move both the LOU and SSI programs, thus opening up a good amount of space at St. Coletta. At the same time, Meeting House Montessori Educational Director Stephen Putnam was searching for space for his school, having been notified by the town of Braintree that it needed to take back the elementary school space Meeting House had been renting for the last 12 years.

As part of Cushing's search for space, Vice President of Development Jansi Chandler was speaking to someone in the Braintree planning department and learned about Meeting House Montessori's situation. That led to a conversation, which ultimately led to the new arrangement.

"This is one of the most exciting initiatives I have been involved in," Simons said. "Both organizations are in the business of educating students and helping them be as independent as possible. From the first time I met Steve, there was a trust and a feeling that a handshake was all that was needed to seal the deal."

Putnam was already very familiar with Cushing Centers, especially St. Coletta. He went to high school at Archbishop Williams next door

and, along with his seven siblings, volunteered at St. Coletta in the summer, calling it a "very rewarding" experience.

"I really like the idea of the connection between our school and St. Coletta," said Putnam, who founded Meeting House Montessori 21 years ago and, along with his wife, Caren, has overseen its growth from 12 pre-school students to 144 students pre-K through grade 5.

"Part of our mission is to prepare students for life and the social and community relationships they should be building with the people around them. This is another piece of the puzzle as we help students round out their development," he added.

The staffs of the two schools are discussing how to maximize the sharing of space, resources and, perhaps most importantly, the interaction between students. It is reasonable to expect that the older Montessori students may be able to help their Cushing counterparts with academics and social activities.

"Montessori promotes a hands-on approach that fosters independence," Simons said. "That is so consistent with what we are trying to teach our students. All kids come to school to learn and they should care for each other. That's a universal thing. Why do we have to do it in separate spaces?"

From left, Meeting House Montessori student Colton McCain, Cushing students Kerri O'Neill and Nick Pugsley, Montessori student Anna Sheehan and Educational Director Stephen Putnam, back, get to know each other.

'I wanted to give back to the school that raised me'

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

In 1962, at the age of seven, Gregory Wood arrived at Cardinal Cushing School (then named St. Coletta by the Sea)—which would become his home for the next nine years and hold a special place in his heart forever.

"For me, St. Coletta was my home," said Wood. "And today I feel the same way."

So much so, Wood has named Cardinal Cushing Centers as a beneficiary in his will.

"I never had any children and got married for the first time last year," said Wood. "I wanted to give back to the school that raised me."

Wood came to Cushing's Hanover campus from Westfield, N.J., on the recommendation of both his doctor and the family's church.

"My parents were concerned about my learning disability and behavior problems," said Wood. "My brain processed things at a slower rate and my body moved at a slower speed. The medical community felt I was either autistic or had pervasive developmental disorders. There was confusion and not as much knowledge of



the brain as there is today."

Wood was not diagnosed with Asperger syndrome until later on in life, at the age of 49.

He has fond memories from his time at Cushing, where he was able to live and learn in a structured setting and had the opportunity to join the choir and band, serve as an altar boy and join the school's newly formed Special Olympics teams. He loved playing baseball and was able to make a number of school trips to Fenway Park. His class also took a trip to Washington, D.C. in 1971, meeting the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Mostly, however, he credits the school for instilling in him the values he still operates with today.

"Cardinal Cushing's message was that despite our limitations, we were all special in his heart," said Wood. "Hearing that made me feel special."

It is a message he never forgot, and one that has encouraged him to live his life with compassion.

"I have been told over the years by many people that I have a very kind heart and gentle spirit," said Wood. "My father told me that several years before he died last year. He hoped that I would never lose that. I feel it was the school that helped me develop that, as well as a certain level of integrity."

After Cushing, Wood went on to a private school in Miami for one year. When his

father relocated to Houston, he followed and graduated from a public high school. He later earned his associate's degree from Mitchell College in New London, Conn. and his bachelor's in business from Texas Christian University (TCU).

"When I was growing up, I wasn't sure if I would graduate from high school or even college," said Wood. "So much more is known today. As I read what Cushing has been doing in recent years, I see a vast improvement in equipping students for a place in the world. I see now the school preparing students in a variety of ways, from job training, residential living options, social skills and involvement in the community. I am glad to see a college option as well."

Wood began making donations to Cushing nearly 30 years ago. His father was a financial supporter of the school for many years, and made a large donation in 1998 in memory of his wife, who passed away that year. In addition to making a will bequest, Wood donated benches to the school last year in memory of his parents.

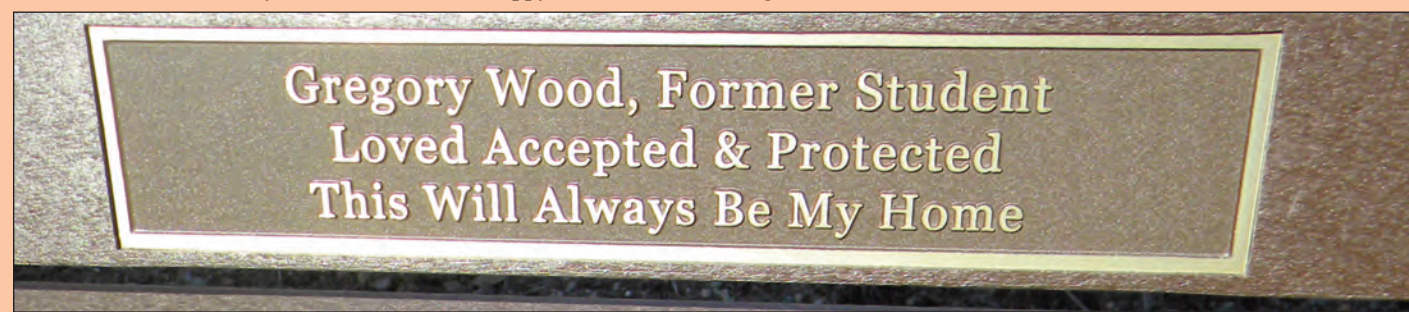
"I feel it is important to give back to the school because my parents were always supportive of education and always said you need to give back to your schools," said Wood, who also donates to Mitchell College and TCU. "What makes me happiest is being able to give back to others. I am happy for the understanding I now have of



DONOR PROFILE
Gregory Wood

the struggles I had as a child and adult. I hope I can be a mentor and inspiration to others."

Today, Wood is married and still living in Texas, and volunteers for the Red Cross, handling data entry on disaster operations. He also volunteers with Rainbow Days, an organization in the Dallas area that works with young children in homeless shelters and schools, providing them with the skills and support they need to make healthy choices, stay drug-free and believe they have a purpose. Additionally, he volunteers at the nonPareil Institute, which provides technical training to young adults on the autism spectrum.



At left, Gregory Wood as a student, with June Hendrix; above, a bench on campus is dedicated to Wood.

BNY Mellon grant supports workforce training programs

BNY: from Page 1

individualized employment plans, prepare resumes and identify a suitable job placement.

"This grant is allowing us to provide an increased amount of individualized job training and coaching," said Cushing Centers President & CEO Jo Ann Simons. "It provides us with the flexibility to try something new. We want to make sure people are not waiting for a turn to get a job. We want to push them to the front of the line. We expect people to be getting jobs, and we are

going to hold ourselves accountable for this."

BNY Mellon Regional Executive Joannie Jaxtiner said job training is part of the company's global philanthropic focus, so supporting Cushing's work in that area is a natural fit.

"We want people to have the opportunity to transition into the workplace in a supportive way," Jaxtiner said. "It has to be a really good fit. We learned of the great work going on at Cushing and took a closer look. They are fabulous partners."

As the parent of a son with intellectual impairment, Jaxtiner can relate to the

importance of job coaching. Her son, Michael, a graduate of Milton High, works at the Lodge restaurant in Randolph.

BNY Mellon Vice President of Charitable Giving Brianna Curran spent some time at Cushing's Hanover campus as part of the grant application process, and she was impressed with what she saw and experienced.

"I was taken with how supportive the environment is," said Curran, who visited the Cushing Trader gift shop, Bass Village Cafe and Iron Kettle restaurant. "I felt like I was in any other store. I was struck with the support

the school clearly provides. I saw firsthand the benefit of a workforce-development training program."

Jaxtiner said BNY Mellon, an investment management company that awards \$2.3 million annually in Greater Boston through its charitable giving program, does more than simply provide funding to organizations such as Cushing.

"We engage our partners," she said. "We are involved with the governance of organizations and our volunteers participate in fundraising activities. We are a hands-on funder."

Safe at home

Adult Family Care program supports caregivers



Steven DeWitt participates in Cushing's South Shore Industries (SSI) employment program, working two days a week at Rite Aid.

BY PAUL HALLORAN

There are many benefits to keeping a loved one at home as opposed to another setting, and the Adult Family Care (AFC) program makes that easier to accomplish.

AFC is geared to individuals age 16-100 who have MassHealth insurance and need help with personal care – including dressing, bathing and mobility – but want to live in a family setting rather than a nursing home or other long-term care facility. Any person with a long-term physical or intellectual disability may qualify for this program. AFC members live with trained caregivers (usually a parent or family member), who receive a stipend of up to \$18,000 a year to provide for their daily care.

Cardinal Cushing Centers was approved as an AFC provider in 2013 and currently has 25 members in the program, according to Pat Conley, Director of Adult Family Care, who said individuals do not have to be a current or former Cushing student in order to apply for the program through Cushing. The program is open to anyone that meets AFC qualifications.

There are two levels of compensation for caregivers, depending on the needs and limitations of the person being taken care of. Each person is assigned a case manager/social worker and a registered nurse. AFC staff meet with the individual and their caregiver once a month and review the individual's home, medical, work and social history for the month and provide a variety of trainings.

"This program encourages families to keep a loved one at home, in a safe and familiar

environment, by providing a little extra financial support to help defray the costs for transportation, medications and food," Conley said.

Cushing currently has participants ranging from 16-83 years old. Caregivers are children, parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, and AFC-trained caregivers for those that do not have a family member available. "We are trying to get the word out to children who are taking care of a parent, and make them aware of AFC," Conley said.

AFC is making a difference for Steven DeWitt and his family. DeWitt attends Cushing's South Shore Industries (SSI), an employment program, working two days a week at Rite Aid in his native Braintree, where many affectionately refer to him as the "mayor."

DeWitt, 38, lives with his parents, Robert and Kathleen, and his sister, Lynne, who is his caregiver. His sister said the monthly stipend provided by the AFC program is very useful. "It's a tremendous help with his everyday living expenses -- transportation, activities, clothing," she said.

Steven, who has autism, graduated from the May Institute in 1997 and, after working there for a few years, joined the SSI program at Cushing. "There are a lot more opportunities for Steven now," Lynne DeWitt said.

Steven takes great pride in his job at Rite Aid, performing a variety of maintenance duties. "I like it," he said. "I work hard."

When he is not working, Steven enjoys watching sports on TV, doing yoga and Zumba and playing basketball, golf and billiards. He also participates in Cushing's sports programs.

For more information the AFC program, contact Pat Conley at 781-829-4608.

Making strides

MARATHON: from Page 1

be running – and raising money – for Cushing.

Casey's son, Matt, is an adult resident, having come to Cushing as a day student in 2012 after attending the Pilgrim Area Collaborative in Duxbury. Matt, 23, participates in the Life Opportunities Unlimited (LOU) program.

Casey has run the Boston Marathon six times and, if not for a hamstring injury that sidelined her last year, may very well have been on Boylston Street when the two bombs were detonated. She has run for the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Children's Hospital, and is looking forward to dedicating her efforts to Cushing.

"It's very personal with Matt here and part of the Cushing community," said Casey, who lives in Duxbury. "We feel blessed that Matt is able to participate in so many wonderful programs. The staff is phenomenal."

Casey, who ran cross country and track in high school and college, is anticipating an emotional day on April 21.

"It will be a day to celebrate the Boston Strong attitude, a day of healing and moving forward," she said.

Casey and her husband, Jeff, have two sons in college, Kevin at Northwestern and Sean at Clemson.

Gabe Dutra was introduced to Cushing through Rockland Trust, one of the school's major benefactors. His company, Ridgeworth Investments, has sponsored the St. Coletta Golf Classic and other events the last several years.

"I've gotten to see first-hand what Cushing is all about," said Dutra, whose wife, Joanna, and two-year-old daughter Annabelle were at the Marathon last year when chaos struck.

"They were walking back from a restaurant," he said. "It took 30 minutes for me to reach her by phone."

Dutra ran the Buffalo Marathon a few years ago, but this will be his first Boston. He is pleased to be running for Cushing, knowing the money he raises will be put to good use.

"I'm impressed with the program at Cushing," said Dutra, a Hingham resident. "They provide support for people who want



From left student Shawn Halajko, runner Jonathan Peck, student Cory Milton, runner Tessa Casey, student Kaitlin Ryan, runner Gabe Dutra and student Coles Pierrette.

to live independently. Witnessing what the staff does with the kids is amazing. They foster independence and an environment that people thrive in."

Jonathan Peck grew up in Norwell and lives in Pembroke, yet he did not have any personal connection to Cushing prior to joining the Marathon team. His company, DTZ, Inc., has a relationship with Best Buddies and he initially tried to get a number through that organization.

In his application, he wrote about attending a fundraising gala and buying a centerpiece that had been made by Cushing

students. The Best Buddies staff alerted Peck to the fact that Cushing had Marathon numbers this year, he applied and got one of the three.

"Even though I did not have a connection to the school, I knew of the great work they do for intellectually challenged children and adults," said Peck, who will be attempting his first marathon. "I'm glad to be running to raise money and awareness for Cushing."

To donate to the runners, visit www.crowdrise.com/CardinalCC2014BostonMarathon.

Shannon shines

SSI participant rises above her challenges to meet success

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Having risen above nearly all of the challenges handed to her, Braintree resident Shannon Driscoll believes nothing can hold her back.

“I know that any individual with special needs can get a job, be who they are and live a long and happy life,” said Driscoll, 34, who has Down syndrome.

For the past 12 years, she has attended Cardinal Cushing Centers and she participates in its adult services — South Shore Industries (SSI), in particular. Located on the Braintree campus, SSI helps individuals such as Driscoll gain the training, skills and opportunities to find meaningful jobs in the community.

“I would recommend Cardinal Cushing Centers to any adult with disabilities,” Driscoll said. “The staff treats me with respect and dignity. They listen to me when I have a problem and they help me solve it.”

Driscoll has been working at Stop & Shop in Braintree for nine years, typically logging 15-20 hours per week. She started out bagging groceries and is now a cashier.

“I really enjoy meeting people all day long,” she said. “And I love seeing all my friends when I get back to campus.”

Down the road, Driscoll plans to earn in a degree in child care. She has already been taking classes in child health and behavioral management at Massasoit Community College.

“I never get tired of learning,” she said.

Growing up, Driscoll attended Cushing’s St. Coletta Day School in Braintree and then Braintree High School. In addition to taking mainstream classes, she was part of Braintree High’s Project PROVE program, which provided students with special needs work-simulated experiences through specially designed training stations.

“I loved getting homework from Project PROVE,” said Driscoll. “And I loved drama, Spanish and Italian. Those were some of my favorite years.”

She looks back on her high school graduation fondly.

“It’s a day I’ll never forget,” she said. “I was able to get my diploma and go on and get a job.

In life, it’s not about being different; it’s about being yourself. If you want to do something with your life, do it. Be special. Be you.”

In her spare time, and sometimes with a group from Cushing, Driscoll volunteers at Alliance Healthcare Center, Meals on Wheels and Father Bill’s Place, a nearby shelter. She is also involved with the Friendship Home in Norwell, participating in social outings and events. In March, she traveled to Florida where she visited a dude ranch, attended a rodeo and took part in some zip lining and country line dancing.

“I like being active and independent,” she said.

Driscoll met her fiancé, Michael Goodhue, when she was in junior high. The couple has been engaged since 2005. She is currently living with her parents in Braintree.

“I’m lucky I have parents who support me and drive me places,” Driscoll said.

She also has two sisters and three nephews, whom she sees often. “I just love them to pieces,” she said.



Shannon Driscoll has worked at Stop & Shop for nine years.
PHOTO: MEAGHAN CASEY