

# CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS CONNECTOR



All ages. All abilities. All together.

VOL. 3, NO. 1

A PUBLICATION OF CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS

FALL 2015

## Slam dunk for Cushing



Celtics player Kelly Olynyk enjoys a game of Connect Four with Cushing student Hannah Harrington in the newly renovated recreation center.

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## Where there's a rink, there's a way

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Outside of his home in Norwell, 18-year-old Danny Ledversis finds himself most at home at two other places—Cardinal Cushing Centers and any ice rink.

Danny is in his fifth year as a day student at Cushing. At age 2, he was diagnosed with a pervasive developmental disorder, putting him on the autism spectrum. He also experiences anxiety and depression.

The town of Norwell referred the family to Cardinal Cushing Centers when Danny was in high school. His father, Jon Ledversis, admits he wishes he had looked into the option sooner.

"The school took him in and did a great job," said Jon. "More importantly, it helped rebuild him from a difficult period."

Before Cushing, Danny attended middle school in the Canton Public Schools and then went on to Scituate High School.

"He started to have a hard time at that point and had more behavioral issues," said Jon. "He would wander off by himself and he was more withdrawn. I think there were too many transitions for him back then, and that set off a chain of events."

That has changed since his arrival at Cushing.

Danny is a wonderful young man and a joy to work with," said

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Danny Ledversis enjoys an active lifestyle.



# We get by with help from our friends



**JO ANN SIMONS**

Together everyone achieves more. We are all in this together. It takes a village. Nobody benefits by standing alone.

You get the point. We can all use some assistance.

That is very much the case at Cardinal Cushing Centers where, while we are fortunate to have built a solid infrastructure that allows us to provide the best supports for the individuals we serve, we do so with the aid of many partners who appreciate

and support our mission.

You will read about some of those positive partnerships in this edition of *The Connector*. Our students were thrilled to have Boston Celtic Kelly Olynyk visit the recreation center, which was renovated with the help of the Celtics, TD Bank and Special Olympics. Kelly was especially generous with his time, engaging and making our students feel special.

Most of our residents are enjoying new furniture thanks to the generosity of Ted English and Bob's Furniture and the muscle provided by our volunteer movers from the Hanover High hockey team – another example of more than one community partner combining forces to aid Cushing.

Our recreation program at St. Coletta's in Braintree has been greatly enhanced by a grant from the Doug Flutie Jr.

Foundation for Autism. Students have had the opportunity to experience a myriad of outdoor sports and activities, on land and on the water. They even learned to surf!

Creativity and proficiency of our art were proudly on display at an open house at Jack Conway Company in Norwell, an event that also raised money and awareness for Cushing programs.

Partnerships such as these make a strong organization even stronger. Every organization needs community and we define community by our partners.

And we sincerely thank them for their support.

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

**CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS  
CONNECTOR**

A PUBLICATION OF:

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## ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

Jack Conway, Realtor hosted an open house at its newly renovated headquarters in Norwell to showcase art made by the students and adults of Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Attendees had the opportunity to mingle, enjoy the reception and purchase more than 100 paintings, craft items and handmade jewelry. The display was similar to what visitors might find at the Cushing Trader—the on-campus boutique that stocks jewelry and pottery, silk-screened clothing, framed artwork and photography, handcrafted home and garden accessories, note cards and more.

The show, which was open to Conway associates as well as business partners from the area, raised \$1,200 to support Cushing's programs and services. Many of the artists were present at the event, and the Cushing chorus provided entertainment.

"It was one of the more moving experiences I've had," said Carol Bulman, CEO and president of Jack Conway & Co. "The Cushing artists and their families were so proud and brought so much joy to the event. It was wonderful to share that experience with the community and watch so many people walk out with something beautiful for their homes or businesses."

"We are incredibly thankful for our partnership with Carol and the rest of the Jack Conway team for providing us with this unique opportunity to showcase the incredible work of our students and adults," said Cushing President and CEO Jo Ann Simons. "We are looking forward to partnering with Jack Conway in the future, and are glad they support our mission: to change the lives of the people with intellectual and developmental disabilities."

Conway has partnered with Cushing since 2012, offering cash-back bonuses to Cushing employees when they buy or sell houses through Conway, as well as matching donations to the Cushing Centers to support their programs and services.



Cushing resident Julie Ellis shares a hug with the Conway CEO Carol Bulman.



Cushing student Rebecca Haile shows off artwork.



Family members, such as the Nash family, above, enjoyed the artwork.



*We believe that all people should have the opportunity to feel good about their work.*



Cardinal Cushing Centers  
*Opportunity Fund*

**Donate Today!**

*Complete the enclosed donor envelope and return to:  
Cardinal Cushing Centers,  
405 Washington Street, Hanover, MA 02339  
If you would like a tour call  
Jansi Chandler, VP of Development at 781-829-4611*



# Helping students feel at home

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

If home is where the heart is, Cushing residents' hearts were swelling after a complete makeover thanks to Ted English and Bob's Discount Furniture and the Hanover High School hockey team.

In July, Bob's \$60,000 worth of furniture was donated to revamp the furnishings in 11 of Cushing's residential units. Couches, rugs, paintings, entertainment centers, coffee tables, end tables and dining room furniture were supplied. The Hanover High hockey team assisted with unloading to ensure all five delivery trucks would be in and out and the rooms would be transformed in one day.

"We were extremely happy to help enhance the students' living experience," said Bonnie DiCristofaro, visual-merchandise administrative supervisor at Bob's. "The residents were so excited to have a brand new, beautiful environment to come home to. I think it gives them a wonderful sense of appreciation and ownership."

The Bob's Discount Furniture Foundation, formed 26 years ago by the company's co-founders Gene Rosenberg and Bob Kaufmann, has long supported Cardinal Cushing Centers and funds from its annual golf tournament have been used to support Cushing programs. Bob's Furniture CEO Ted English has also been generous, not only with his financial support, but with his personal time—which has included a walk down the catwalk during Cushing's annual fundraising gala, Springtime.



Bob's Discount Furniture donated \$60,000 worth of furniture to Cushing.



The Hanover High School hockey team assisted with moving the furniture.



The team cleared room for the new furniture.



The delivery trucks arrived in Hanover.



The completed rooms were a big hit.



# Flutie Foundation makes waves at Cushing

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Surfing, sailing and yoga – it could be the perfect vacation agenda, or the typical activities for students at Cardinal Cushing Centers.

After receiving an Active Lifestyle Grant worth \$10,000 from the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, Cushing has used the funding for equipment and training for an adventure recreation program for its students at the St. Coletta Day School in Braintree.

The program kicked off last winter with students learning the principles of yoga from instructors at South Shore Conservatory. In the spring, they enjoyed hiking and biking with Cushing staff. This past summer, they worked with the Duxbury Bay Maritime School to learn to sail, as well as at Northeast Surfing Company in Hull for a week-long surfing camp. This fall, yoga has started back up once again. Leah Salloway, assistant director of special education at Cardinal Cushing Centers, has become certified to teach yoga and expects that portion of the program, along with hiking and biking, will continue for years to come.

“It’s been super positive,” said Salloway. “Students love yoga. You’ll see them striking poses or doing it for their own self-regulation at times, which is great. Surfing was also a big hit. They experienced fantastic sensory input with

that. It was good for them to explore different environments and practice following directions, all while having fun and socializing with their peers. We definitely saw they were more relaxed and their moods were elevated coming back from the outings.”

Salloway said the program has really worked to enhance the school’s philosophy, which centers around the importance of helping students self-determine how they want to live, work and form relationships in their community. Lisa Borges, executive director of the Flutie Foundation, said the program is achieving its goal of helping students improve their social skills, build their confidence, enjoy the outdoors and learn skills that will help them spend more quality time with their family.

“Leading an active lifestyle through recreational activities provides a multitude of

benefits not only for the individual with autism, but the entire family,” said Borges. “Families are the cornerstone of the Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation and helping them live life to their fullest is our top priority.”

Former NFL quarterback Doug Flutie and his wife, Laurie, formed the foundation in 1998 in honor of their son, Doug Jr, who is autistic. The foundation, based in Framingham, gave out more than \$400,000 in grants for 40 organizations as part of its latest grant cycle.



1. Nick Chamoun enjoyed surfing.  
2. Nick Pugsley and Chris Sanchez had a fun day sailing.  
3. and 4. Ned Davenport found his balance on a surf board, and during yoga.  
5. Molly Butler practiced yoga.  
6. Allie Crimmins loved biking.  
7. Gabe DeCoste rode a wave to shore.  
8. The group had a great time exploring a new environment.



# A gift of remembrance

## Daughter's legacy lives on at Cushing

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

When Sarah MacKinnon faced the death of her daughter Melissa at age 12, it was one of the hardest moments any mother can face.

"It's devastating when your child is gone," said MacKinnon. "All of the sudden that person you've been caring for non-stop—that blessing in your life—isn't there and there's such a void."

Melissa was one of MacKinnon's four daughters. Twelve days after she was born, she stopped breathing and suffered brain damage and numerous seizures as the years went on. She required 24-hour care and was in and out of the hospital. She ultimately died of pneumonia in 2001.

"She was like a 4- or 6-month-old her whole life," said MacKinnon. "She was always smiling and cooing, and she was so loved. She was a happy, thriving person in her little world."

Years later, when MacKinnon's youngest daughter Mary was working at Cushing while she was in college, she suggested the school might be a good employment fit for her mother. MacKinnon agreed and applied.

"I like being part of a special needs community," said MacKinnon, an Abington resident. "The kids here are so well taken care of and loved. This is their other family."

A month in, MacKinnon transitioned from working part-time as a receptionist to working in other departments that led quickly to full-time employment. She has worked at the



The MacKinnon family, pictured together in 1993 has designated a donation to Cushing in Melissa's name.

school for more than two years now.

"I find myself relating to the parents and understanding the other side of things," said MacKinnon. "I feel like it's a ministry here."

MacKinnon has been so touched by her experience working at the school that in their will, she and her husband, Robert, have designated a donation to Cushing in their daughter Melissa's name.

"I believe in what they do here and it's a blessing to be able to give a gift in memory of her," said MacKinnon.

*If you are interested in learning more about Planned Giving opportunities at Cardinal Cushing Centers, please contact Jenna Gomes, Director of Planned Giving, at 781-829-1223 or [jgomes@cushingcenters.org](mailto:jgomes@cushingcenters.org).*

## Leaving the rest to Cardinal Cushing Centers

BY JOHN REYNOLDS

We often hear from the friends and family of our students and alumni at Cardinal Cushing that they wish they could do more to support the mission of our school. However, the parents and family of children with special needs must often first focus their attention and planning on the long term financial needs of their loved one. This planning often takes the form of a "Special Needs Trust" where an inheritance or gift designated for their child is held in trust for the lifetime of the child. During the term of the trust the Trustee has discretion to distribute trust funds in the manner best suited to meet the needs of the child. The child is always designated as the "Primary Beneficiary," and the entire trust is always available to her.

But what happens to the trust after the death of the Primary Beneficiary? Generally the trust will terminate and any funds held in the trust will be paid to "Remainder Beneficiaries." Designating the Cardinal Cushing Centers as the remainder beneficiary of your trust insures that first, your loved one's needs are met and secondarily any remaining trust assets will go toward the continuing support of our mission to improve the lives of persons with special needs.

Trusts of this nature take many forms and depending on your resources, may be structured in a manner to save taxes otherwise due at your death. You should consult with your attorney when considering any changes to your estate plan. However, if you have any questions regarding this form of giving, please contact Jenna Gomes at (781) 829-1223.

*John Reynolds is a Trusts and Estates attorney at Fox & Reynolds*

# Standing O for BOMA's gift to audio system

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Performers and speakers at Cardinal Cushing Centers will be heard loud and clear from now on, thanks to a generous donation from the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) Boston.

The \$10,000 in funding, which was presented to Cushing at the annual BOMA Benefit in March, has allowed the school to install a new sound system in its auditorium, where all chorus and drama productions and other events are held. The school debuted the new equipment with a performance of the Lion King in April.

"The proposal they sent us was so specific and compelling to where the funds would be invested in, I think it made them the obvious choice," said BOMA board member Jonathan Peck, senior vice president of C&W Services. "There were over 25 proposals from various charities and the selection committee made up of 30 voted unanimously for Cushing."

The BOMA Benefit is an annual event that raises funds on behalf of charities whose missions are aligned with providing affordable housing, health and human services, housing solutions and education to those in need. Other recipients this year included Cradles to Crayons, Heading Home, and Father Bill's and MainSpring.

Peck, who grew up in Norwell and lives in Pembroke, has been a BOMA board member since 2006. He did not have a personal connection to Cardinal Cushing Centers prior to joining the Cushing Marathon team in 2014. He initially tried to get a number to run through Best Buddies and staff there alerted him to the fact that Cushing had numbers for the first time.

"The marathon was on my bucket list and as a local resident, I was thrilled to run for Cushing," said Peck. "I'm even happier that they were recognized by BOMA this year. It raised awareness for the school and it was great for them to be able to update an audio system that was in need."



Students were appreciative of the new audio system during the spring performance of the Lion King.





Cushing Recreation and Maintenance staff members Tom McElman, Tarchell Hammond, Lou Danubio, Tom Jennings, Anne Matheson and Fred Grennan celebrated the new and improved recreation center with Celtics forward Kelly Olynyk.

## Score for Cushing

**CELTICS:** from Page 8

completely refurbished.

In August, Celtics forward Kelly Olynyk joined executive director of SOMA Mary Beth McMahon, Cushing President and CEO Jo Ann Simons and Cushing student-athletes to celebrate the opening of the recreation center. Paula Warchol, vice president of field marketing at TD Bank, could not attend but was involved in spearheading the partnership.

At the unveiling, students explored the new space, challenging Olynyk, the 7-foot center, to board games and pool. Olynyk also read to them B.J. Novak's story, "The Book with No Pictures."

"I was excited to support the Special Olympics of Massachusetts at the Cardinal Cushing Centers," said Olynyk. "It was fun to interact with the athletes and learn about all the hard work they put into their sports."

At the conclusion of the event, Simons spoke about the significance of being about to provide students with a state-of-the-art facility.

"Recreation is such an important life-long skill," said Simons. "Now our students have a place to safely practice those skills that they can use the rest of their lives in the community."



Cushing student James Mulligan enjoyed a game of pool with Kelly Olynyk of the Celtics.

## For Danny, where there's a rink, there's a way

**DANNY:** from Page 1

Cushing art teacher Randy Wiskow. "One of the things I've noticed most is his social interactions with his peers, who are now his friends."

"It took time, but all of the improvements happened because he was in a good setting," said Jon. "He's doing well and our whole family's doing better."

Jon also credits the support of his wife, Caroline, and 14-year-old daughter, Taylor, in helping Danny.

"Caroline has been selfless and relentless in providing positive encouragement and emotional support, getting Danny on the bus to Cardinal Cushing, being his friend and

therapist, taking him for walks on the beach, and withstanding some very difficult behaviors but never wavering in her daily devotion," said Jon. "And Taylor has been impacted by many therapists and specialists coming into our home, but through it all, she is a wonderful and accepting young lady."

Despite it taking a little while to find the right educational fit, during all of his transitions, Danny always found comfort in speedskating.

"That was his safe place," said Jon. "He could always go to the rink and feel accepted."

Danny began speedskating when he was 8 years old, participating in Special Olympics. Jon has been a long-time supporter of Special Olympics Massachusetts and has raised more

than \$20,000 for the organization in the past four years.

Danny practices every Saturday morning starting in November and begins competing in March. At each event, he typically competes in two races – the 500 meter and the 800 meter – and consistently skates 15-second laps.

"Our whole family comes out to watch him compete," said Jon. "Taylor is right there at all the events, saying 'go, Danny, go' as he skates by the glass. He loves the support."

Danny took lessons one year at Bay State Speedskating Club in Walpole, but most of his skill has come naturally.

"He just has a knack," said his father. "When it comes time for competition, that's his time to shine."

The next goal is for Danny to compete in the Special Olympics World Games in Austria in 2017.

In addition to speedskating, Danny enjoys swimming and cycling. He swims on the Special Olympics team at Cushing.

"He enjoys other sports too, like basketball, but he does best at the individual sports," said Jon.

Jon expects Danny will continue through the educational day program at Cushing until he is 22 and will then likely enroll in Cushing's adult services.

"At the end of the day, it's the people – the patience of the staff – that make a difference," said Jon. "The fact that they know how to work through behavioral upsets or 'off days' is really important."





# Cushing scores with Celtics connection

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Thanks to a little luck of the Irish – in the form of the Boston Celtics – Cardinal Cushing Centers was excited to unveil an innovative, new recreation center to be enjoyed by students and residents.

The Celtics and TD Bank have shared a longstanding partnership with Special Olympics Massachusetts (SOMA) and this summer, the Celtics CommUNITY Crew, presented by TD Bank, selected SOMA as the beneficiary of a renovation project. SOMA then recommended Cardinal Cushing Centers as the recipient.

During phase one of the project, employees from TD Bank, SOMA and the Celtics volunteered to give the existing room a fresh coat of gray paint and designing decorative wall murals and inspirational quote boards. Professional grade wall graphics were installed during the second phase of the remodel, along with brand new flooring. The room also received brand new furniture, a 60-inch HDTV complete with an Apple TV multimedia receiver, a sensory area, state-of-the-art computer stations, new storage compartments, board games, books and a mini-basketball hoop. Prior donations of a pool table and air hockey table were



Cushing students including Shannon O'Connell, left, and Eoin Coyne enjoy the new recreation center.



See **CELTICS** Page 7