

SUMMER  
2016

# CUSHING Community News



## A Message from Vice President of Development: Jansi Chandler

***"The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me."***

- Ayn Rand

If you have ever had the pleasure of attending a Cushing Centers graduation ceremony, you know that our graduates embody the spirit of determination and perseverance elicited by philosopher and novelist Ayn Rand's words. 2016 was no different.

Every commencement ceremony is certainly a cause for celebration and a time of reflection on all that the soon-to-be alumni have accomplished.

But the Cardinal Cushing Centers' commencement is something out of the ordinary, something extra special.

Too often in our society the focus is on what people with disabilities cannot do, what their limitations are. In our community, we strive to focus on all that our students and adults with disabilities can achieve. We want to know their individual hopes and dreams and how we can help them get there. Their resolve and courage to succeed, to raise their personal bar, to defy expectations and triumph over obstacles – that's the stuff inspiration is made of.

And that's exactly why our graduation ceremony is so unique.

I invite you to read the rest of the our e-newsletter stories, to celebrate the achievements of three Cushing graduates from your living room, and to be as inspired as I am when I come to work every day.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jansi".



## *Not Just “Winging” It*

Nick Hanson always dreamed of working in a restaurant. When he was a student at Cushing, he gained skills and experience in the Culinary Training program and while working in our own Bass Café. Now as a 24 year old participating in Cushing’s South Shore Industries (SSI) employment program for adults, Nick saw an opportunity he couldn’t ignore.

As construction for the new Buffalo Wild Wings location in Hanover progressed, Nick checked their website on a daily basis waiting for the page to say that they were accepting applications. He knew this was the place he was meant to work. When that day finally came, he and the staff at SSI worked together to complete the online application.



he would like to vacation at places like Universal Orlando Resort or San Francisco to see the house from the Full House television show. Acting classes, kickboxing classes and purchasing a punching bag are also on the list. With Nick's hard work and determination, there is no doubt that he will be able to achieve all of this and more.

Buffalo Wild Wings called that very same day and within a week Nick had an interview. He got the job and now works several days a week performing different maintenance functions for the restaurant. From sweeping and mopping the floors to washing the dishes, Nick is busy his entire shift and gets the job done well. Patrick Donahue, a manager at Buffalo Wild Wings, says that Nick is a valued member of the team. “He does a great job and we love having him here.”

While Nick is proud of achieving his goals so far, he is not done yet. He hopes to become a Captain at Buffalo Wild Wings so he can greet people, make them happy by controlling the channels on the many TV's and providing samples of the sauces they have to offer. With his earnings



## Braintree School Celebrates the Graduation of Joey Lavigne



Joey Lavigne has been attending the St. Coletta Day School since he was seven years old; fifteen years later, Joey has built relationships with so many staff, and his personality will certainly be missed at the school.

According to Claire Govatsos, a staff member who has worked with Joey over the past year, he always had a sparkle in his eyes and an endearing smile. He can sometimes communicate better with his facial expressions than words. Although a man of few words, he is up to date on the colorful language used by his peers. Joey is also a Disney fanatic, and will use phrases or expressions from certain characters when interacting with staff.

Joey is also known for playing jokes on his staff and teachers during class! For example, during Physical Therapy, Joey is asked to count to twenty during stretches, and he was known to skip one or two numbers to try and make them go by quicker!

To say Joey will be missed at the St. Coletta Day School is an understatement. Joey was out for an extended period of time in 2014, and upon his return the entire school lined the hallway for his grand entrance, cheering and clapping for him.. Joey has taught us all the importance of speaking your mind and shown us what being determined looks like.

Joey, thank you for the well timed jokes, tricks, and the opportunity to share this journey!



# *Living Legendary*

Gordon Benedict, also known as “the man, the myth, the legend,” is a 21 year old student who has thrived during his time at Cushing. As he prepares for the transition to adult services at age 22, he feels he is ready. At Cushing’s Graduation recently Gordon told the audience, “I have gained confidence and feel I am better prepared for the real world after graduation.”

His training in Cushing’s own Bass Café, located in the middle of the Hanover neighborhood, gave Gordon the hands on training he needed to land a paid position at Moe’s Southwestern Grill at the Hanover Mall. Customer service, food preparation and overall professionalism are all skills that students learn through Cushing’s job training program and contribute to each individual’s future success.



In his spare time, Gordon is a fierce competitor in the weight lifting events at the Special Olympics. He recently achieved his personal record for powerlifting 303 pounds!



medal and is now in an elite class at the 300-pound club. Mark tells all of Cushing’s graduates “Give it everything you have and live legendary.”

Mark Caruso, a Best Buddies employment consultant, has worked with Gordon both at his job at Moe’s and with his Special Olympics training. At a recent Special Olympics competition Mark asked Gordon how much weight he wanted for his final lift. Gordon replied “280 pounds,” but Mark knew he could do more and requested 300 pounds instead. Mark explains, “That’s what we do here to these kids. We push them to the next level because they are capable of great things.” At the competition Gordon earned the gold

