

CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS CONNECTOR



All ages. All abilities. All together.

Vol. 6 No. 2

A PUBLICATION OF CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS

FALL 2019



LIVING COLOR

Cushing alumnus Nick Morse is an accomplished artist who exhibits throughout Greater Boston. **Page 8**

MODEL STUDENT

Cushing has brought out the best in Frost

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

All Mary Helen Walker and Michele Frost want for their daughter, Shea Frost, is to be happy and fulfilled.

"Ultimately we just want purpose and joy for Shea," said Walker. "We say that all the time."

"I think Cardinal Cushing Centers exemplifies that," she continued. "She's always happy going to school."

Frost, a 14-year-old with intellectual disabilities, entered Cushing as a sixth-grade student. Before that, she was enrolled in the Quincy Public Schools and the Learning Prep School in Newton. She still lives in Quincy and commutes to Cushing as a day student.

"Reading is hard for her, but she has high vocabulary and her comprehension is good," said

Walker. "Cushing does a really good job of thinking outside the box to educate its students. It's been so good for her. She's really blossomed in her two-and-a-half years there. Both Michele and I are comforted that she's taken care of and challenged."

Outside of the classroom, Frost plays three sports: soccer, basketball and track. She competes in the Special Olympics and earned gold medals in track last spring, competing in the mile-run. She also is a member of Cushing's traveling chorus.

This past summer, Frost secured a week-long internship at the Fashion Focus Empowerment Program in Pembroke. Founded 19 years ago, Fashion Focus is a unique program designed to help girls define their self-confidence through classes in poise, posture, skincare, manners, social etiquette, positive body image, personal

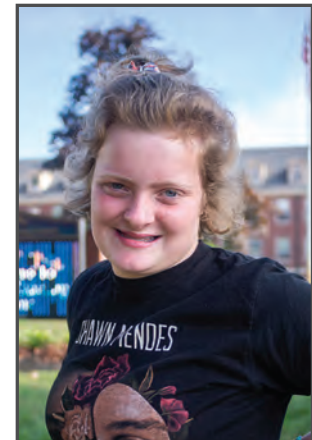


PHOTO: SEAN BROWNE

Shea Frost loves being a student at Cushing.



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GAME CHANGER: Pages 4-5

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**CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS
CONNECTOR**
A PUBLICATION OF CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS

A PUBLICATION OF:

Cardinal Cushing Centers

405 Washington St.
Hanover, MA 02339
Tel. 781-826-6371

www.cushingcenters.org

John Von Ahn

President and CEO

JVonAhn@cushingcenters.org

Jansi Chandler

Vice President of Development

jchandler@cushingcenters.org

Michelle Markowitz

Chief Operating Officer

mmarkowitz@cushingcenters.org

Laurie Maranian

Director of Development

lmarianian@cushingcenters.org

AFFILIATED WITH THE SISTERS OF
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PRODUCED BY:



PKH COMMUNICATIONS

pkhcomm@gmail.com

Looking back, moving forward



JOHN VON AHN

As I settle into the second half of my first year at Cushing, it has been a productive and rewarding experience thus far.

In my commentary in the spring edition of the *Cardinal Cushing Connector*, which was published just a few weeks after I started on March 22, I mentioned the need to stabilize our fiscal situation. I am happy to report that we have been successful in that area.

I was asked for my impressions now vs. any expectations I had, which were based

on learning as much about the organization as possible during the search and interview process. What has struck me most is the cohesiveness of our talented and dedicated staff. Regardless of any challenges they may face, they are unyielding in their commitment to our students and residents. Because of that, the care that people get at Cushing is unparalleled. We can all be very proud of that.

We have worked to coordinate the curriculum in our Braintree and Hanover programs. We are at full enrollment, with 84 day students and 62 residential, for 146 overall. We are also fully staffed, the importance of which is not to be underestimated.

We are in discussions with the South Shore Conservatory to put together a performing arts

program to complement our visual arts classes, which are producing accomplished artists such as Nick Morse (see Pages 1 and 8).

I had the opportunity to attend the Sisters of St. Francis conference in Baltimore a few weeks ago. Among the topics discussed was the fact that the Sisters – who founded Cardinal Cushing Centers in 1947 – will be transitioning the eight corporate ministries they sponsor to secular oversight. As this process moves forward, we will ensure that the Franciscan values of community and compassion remain embedded in everything we do here at Cushing.

John Von Ahn is president and CEO of Cardinal Cushing Centers.



Fore a good cause

The Cook Family Charitable Fund raised \$40,000 for Cardinal Cushing Centers during its 9th charity golf tournament, held in July at Indian Pond Country Club in Kingston. Peter Cook Sr., far left, and Peter Cook Jr., far right, presented a check to Cushing's Vice President of Development Jansi Chandler and President and CEO John Von Ahn. The money will help to equip four of Cushing's adult residential housing units with complete standby generators.

The Fund started out in 2006 as the Jordyn Cook Epilepsy Fund, named for Peter Cook Jr.'s daughter, Jordyn. It expanded its reach in 2016 to help those suffering from cancer and alcohol and addiction, as well as those affected by intellectual disabilities. Jordyn, 22, is a graduate of the Cardinal Cushing School. She now lives at Cushing and is enrolled in the organization's adult services and employed by Cape Cod Cafe Pizza in Brockton.

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

~ Harriet Tubman

Your support makes it possible for us to provide a **world of opportunities** for students and adults with intellectual disabilities.



Without you our world would be much smaller.

Donate online at
www.CushingCenters.org or
use the enclosed reply envelope



BOARD PROFILE

PUTTING FAMILY FIRST

By MEAGHAN CASEY

For Roxanne Hoke-Chandler, it was a dream to have her daughter Faith placed at Cardinal Cushing Centers. A seat on Cushing's Board of Directors has been an added bonus, ingraining her within a community that already felt like family.

Hoke-Chandler, who serves as the Statewide Family Engagement and Collaboration Coordinator at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, brings a depth of knowledge to her role on the Board. She previously served as the Director of Family Engagement at the Federation for Children with Special Needs, where she conducted workshops for families and professional development for educators on parents' rights and options, and on promoting family engagement in their children's education. Her passion — even before becoming a mother — has been serving hard-to-reach and under-served populations. After graduating from college, she worked on the Americans with Disabilities Act, which became law in 1990. In 1997, she earned her master's in management from Lesley College, and in 1998, she gave birth to Faith, who was born with Down syndrome. Faith attended Boston Public Schools before enrolling at Cushing as a day student at age 15.

"We had to fight so hard to get the private placement through the district," said Hoke-Chandler. "It was elating. I used to look at Cushing and think 'someday, my daughter will go there.'"

A Boston native, Hoke-Chandler was first introduced to Cushing through her childhood best friend's sister, who attended Cushing as a student. Decades later, as Hoke-Chandler navigated motherhood, she continued to be impressed by Cushing and the programs it offers its students and residents.

She has been thrilled by the positive transformation she has seen in Faith, in terms of poise, behavior and confidence, in the

six years since she has been at Cushing.

"I remember when we ran into her doctor at a conference, he looked at Faith, amazed, and said 'what happened?'" said Hoke-Chandler. "I told him Cardinal Cushing Centers happened."

Faith is now 21 and has been in Cushing's residential services in Hanover for the past two years, better mastering her personal hygiene, health and wellness, cooking, laundry and other household care skills. She also participates in Cushing's clubs and enrichment programs, and particularly enjoys cheerleading, track, Zumba and yoga.

"For her to learn the skills to live outside of our home is really key," said Hoke-Chandler.

As of next year, Faith has been approved for adult services by the Department of Developmental Services, but her placement is still to be determined. Hoke-Chandler is hoping she will be able to stay on at Cushing.

"I love this organization and I'm so excited for the future under the new CEO," she said.

On the Board, Hoke-Chandler is one of three Cushing parents.

"Family engagement is my passion, so I recognize how important it is to have parents — the consumers who use your services — represented," she said. "It's great to have diversity of input, life experience and skill sets at the table."



ROXANNE HOKE-CHANDLER

Roxanne Hoke-Chandler with her daughter Faith.

In addition to Faith, Hoke-Chandler has a younger daughter, Ebony, who is in her second year at Dean College. Her greatest passion is being a mother to both girls.

Outside of Cushing and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Hoke-Chandler has kept up a busy schedule speaking at forums on childcare, literacy, health care disparities and parents' rights for children with special needs.

Over the years, she has served as an educator through Families First in Cambridge, a facilitator for Parenting Journey, a board member at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and

an adjunct faculty member at Wheelock College and UMass Boston.

In 2015, Hoke-Chandler received the Allen C. Crocker Award of Excellence from the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress (MDSC), which is the highest award offered by the MDSC to the person who most advances the Down syndrome movement. Last year, she received the first-ever Dr. William Henderson Special Education and Inclusion Advocate Award, presented by the Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network.

DONOR PROFILE

CONTINUING A LEGACY OF GOOD WORK

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Decades ago, Michael J. Nichols never imagined that his high regard for Richard Cardinal Cushing would later influence his decision to leave a substantial gift to an organization the late Cardinal founded.

"I've always been an admirer of Cardinal Cushing," he said. "When I learned about Cardinal Cushing Centers, I was so impressed. It amazes me what they do and how many individuals they serve. I'm happy to foster his good work by being able to leave something to the organization."

Nichols had never even stepped foot on the grounds of Cardinal Cushing Centers when he first began making donations eight years ago. He learned of its history dating back to 1947 as a place where the children Cardinal Cushing called "exceptional" could learn, grow, thrive and achieve their individual success. Since then, Cardinal Cushing Centers has helped more than 3,500 children and adults to discover their talents, nurture their passions and lead remarkable lives in communities where all ages and all abilities can come together.

Making his first visit last year, Nichols got a tour of the Hanover residences, classrooms and facilities. He was also thrilled to see the Portiuncula Chapel, where Cardinal Cushing is buried.

"Walking around and observing the attitude of the people who work at Cardinal Cushing Centers, you can tell they're truly interested in what they do," he said. "They love the kids and their jobs."

Nichols, who lives in Pittsfield, Mass., came to observe and appreciate the Cardinal while studying at St. John's Seminary in Brighton.

"His presence was really felt in Boston — in the schools, the hospitals, the convents," said Nichols, who left the seminary before joining the priesthood.

Nichols worked in banking for 35 years, retiring five years ago, and has since named Cardinal Cushing Centers a beneficiary of his Individual Retirement Account (IRA). He looks at planned giving as an opportunity for a single person, like himself, to do some good.

"I have nieces and nephews and local charities that I'll also give to, but this was important to me," he said. "Hopefully it might inspire others."



MICHAEL J. NICHOLS

MARKET ADJUSTMENT

NEW BUILDING A ‘GAME CHANGER’ FOR CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS

By PAUL HALLORAN

If you build it, they will come. At Cardinal Cushing Centers, make that *when* you build it, they will come. “It” is the new MarketPlace Building, and “when” is now. Ground was broken on the \$10 million project in July and construction has been in full swing since. “This is a game changer for the manner in which we deliver services,” said Cushing CEO John Von Ahn. “It puts our vocational program and facilities up there with the very best.” The new MarketPlace Building, which will be visible and accessible directly from Route 53, is a 20,000-square-foot, environmentally friendly building that will house a café, thrift store and gift shop, along with six state-of-the-art classrooms. Staff that support the vocational program as well as the IT department will also be based there. The new building will provide employment training to Cushing students and job opportunities for adults with disabilities. With the retail shops more visible and accessible, Cardinal Cushing Centers hopes to increase the number of customers they serve, enhancing the job training so students are better prepared to obtain paying jobs in the community. “With better access, foot traffic will increase,” Von Ahn said. “There are a lot of seniors in town who enjoy coming to our shops. This will make it easier for them, as well as everyone else. It’s nice to have this project going on at this end of town and the mall project (transformation of the Hanover Mall into Hanover Crossing) at the other end.” Von Ahn said the MarketPlace project is “100 percent on schedule,” with an anticipated opening of June 1, 2020. Along with the addition of the Bethany Apartments, the MarketPlace Building helps Cardinal Cushing Centers realize its vision of creating an integrated neighborhood where people with and without disabilities live, work, learn, shop, and socialize together. Cushing has raised \$9.5 million and continues to fundraise to reach the original goal of \$10 million.

To support the MarketPlace Building or Cardinal Cushing Centers, please contact Jansi Chandler at jchandler@cushingcenters.org or 781-829-4611. You may also donate securely online: <https://cushingcenters.org/online-donation-form/>

PHOTOS: BILL BRETT AND SEAN BROWNE



Breaking ground on the site were Anne Fortune from the Yawkey Foundation; Cushing CEO John Von Ahn; Gerard Vitti, Board co-chair and Cushing parent; George Drummey, Building Committee; Jody Nash, Board member; Cushing parent and Capital Campaign chair; Jansi Chandler, Cushing Vice President of Development; Jake Simmons, Board member; Cushing student Nicholas Heap; and supporters Ted and Maureen English.



Above left, Jody Nash speaks about the future of the MarketPlace. Student Nicholas Heap looks on at the progress in excitement, joined by Paul Bass, Ted English and John Von Ahn.

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JOHN VON AHN, CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS CEO

”



ENGLISH LESSON: Driven to support Cushing

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Long before his daughter, Kathleen, enrolled when she was 18, Ted English was very familiar with Cardinal Cushing Centers, having first been invited to Springtime by the late, great Lenny Florence in the late 1980s.

When it came time to find a placement for Kathleen, English and his wife, Maureen, were confident that Cushing would be the right fit.

“It was great to be able to bring her to a place where we had a long-standing relationship and a great deal of confidence that she would be well taken care of,” said English, who has been a loyal and generous supporter of Cushing for more than 20 years. “The mission of that organization has always been pure. Their singular focus is to make sure that kids with challenges have the best care and attention. That always impressed me and made it easy to be a long-time supporter.”

It might be quicker to list the Cushing events and initiatives English is not involved in, but here goes:

Bob’s Discount Furniture, where English is executive chairman and was CEO from 2006-16, is the sponsor of the Cardinal Cushing Centers Golf Classic at Black Rock Country Club in Hingham. English has also supported the St. Coletta Golf



Ted English, with former student Emma Sage, is a long-time Cushing supporter.

Classic for 17 years.

English sits on the Cushing Board of Overseers and served as chair of the Capital Campaign Honorary Committee, which has helped raise almost \$10 million for the construction of the new MarketPlace building (see Pages 4-5). The Englishes also made a significant financial contribution to the campaign.

English is also a long-time supporter of the annual St. Patrick’s Day Dinner and Auction, which raises funds for the annual Trip of a Lifetime for graduating students to go to Disney World.

“We are sincerely grateful for the generous and meaningful support of Ted and Maureen English for many years,” said Cushing Centers Vice President of Development Jansi Chandler. “We could not provide the level of comprehensive, compassionate services that we do without benefactors like them.”

English said the new MarketPlace Building will enhance the integration of Cushing with the overall community.

“People will be able to interact with (Cushing) students and adults in a commercial setting,” he said. “The more visible and accessible site will enable more people to visit and gain a true appreciation and understanding of all the great things that are going on there.”

Cushing has brought out the best in Frost

FROST from Page 1

grooming, public speaking, nutrition, exercise and more.

“I met Shea two years ago as a model at Cushing’s Springtime event and she told me, ‘I’d like to work with you,’” said Fashion Focus Owner Maria Wood. “At the 2019 show, we reconnected and made it happen.”

Wood has been assisting Cushing with its annual Springtime fashion show since 2011. Her students volunteer to help with hair and makeup and Wood provides commentary as each model heads down the runway.

“My teens clamor to do it every year,” said Wood. “They just love it. It’s all about empowerment. They go and see the friendships and how wonderful and loving the Cushing students are to them, and the Cushing students are empowered by doing the show. It’s a win-win.”

In addition to helping with Springtime, Wood has also hosted her own fundraisers for Cushing — one of which enabled the organization to purchase iPads for students. Last year, she also worked with Tom McElman, Cushing’s Director of Recreation & Community Programs, to host a four-week program in Hanover.

“Maria promotes confidence and inner strength,” said Walker. “When Shea did the fashion show, she saw how kind Maria was and they really hit it off.”

Frost interned during Fashion Focus’ summer camp, held July 22-26, assisting in daily activities and helping the campers with

their vision boards, catwalk skills and more.

“An approved internship is so important for any kid,” said Walker. “An approved internship for a special needs kid can be life changing and help pave a foundation to be successful in the future.”

“She was just wonderful,” said Wood. “She advocated for herself, asked questions and was very well prepared.”

“That’s Shea,” said Walker. “She’s not afraid to ask for help, but she wants to be as independent as possible. I knew it was a good opportunity for her to work on her strengths. It’s important to set the bar high — having realistic expectations, but challenging her. It helped her gain confidence.”

Jennifer Parmenter, student program coordinator at Cushing, drove Shea to the internship each day.

“This was Shea asserting her independence,” said Parmenter. “We always want to ask ‘what does life after 22 look like?’ so we want to be setting them up to be independent and develop their strengths and interests. For Shea to have this experience now, it was so exciting. She’s growing into her maturity.”

“It shows she can hold a job,” added Walker. “She was able to get dropped off and did well on her own there. Putting her in a job or a new situation, that’s how she learns best.”

“She was loving it,” said Wood. “I know she was excited to get up in the morning and go to work. She felt a part of the staff and also had the comradery with the campers. I think she got a lot out of it.”



PHOTO: JARED CHARNEY

Cushing student Shea Frost models with guest auctioneer Jim Fagan at Springtime.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Cushing's mission hits home

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

In the five years since Jordan Berns was introduced to Cardinal Cushing

Centers, he has become increasingly involved with the organization's fundraising and development initiatives.

And he's been nothing but impressed. Berns, a partner at Jumbo Capital Management, says his first foray into fundraising for Cushing was through his company's involvement. Jumbo Capital has contributed to and been a sponsor of a number of Cushing's events, including the annual golf tournament.

But Berns also has a personal interest. His brother, Jared, who is eight years younger, has cerebral palsy and is developmentally disabled.

"I became very involved in my brother's care, and in that process of trying to figure out where he could go, Cushing stood out as the best in the South Shore," said Berns. "The organization has such a smart, dedicated team of people working there. I would be over the moon if my brother could be there."

A New York native, Berns moved to Massachusetts nearly 20 years ago after



JORDAN BERNs

Jordan Berns, right, with his brother Jared.

graduating from American University. He lives in Cohasset with his wife, Whitney, and two children, ages 10 and 12. Jared is currently living with their mother, Kathleen, in New Jersey.

"Massachusetts is exceptionally better in terms of level of care," said Berns. "My dream is to get him here, closer to me."

In the meantime, Berns has a full plate serving on three of Cushing's committees. On the Capital Campaign Committee, he has a role in planning and soliciting gifts for the \$10 million campaign to build the new MarketPlace. On the Real Property Committee, he supports the administration in the overall best uses of the organization's facilities and land. He also serves on the planning committee for Paddle for a Purpose, now in its second year. The popular event raised more than \$20,000 for Cushing in March.

"I love doing it," said Berns. "I really appreciate Cushing and what they do, and I wanted to give back to the community and individuals in need."

"The other committee members I've met are such driven, successful individuals in the community," he continued. "It's a testament to how great the organization is to attract such talent."

A dedicated network behind our SUCCESS

The success of Cardinal Cushing Centers' events depends directly on the volunteers that work tirelessly to plan and fundraise for each one.

In addition to the Paddle for a Purpose Committee — on which our volunteer spotlight Jordan Berns has served — there are numerous other committees that oversee the St. Pat's Dinner and Auction, the St. Coletta Classic, the Cardinal Cushing Classic, the Springtime gala and, new this year, the Run to Change Lives 5K. Annually, these events help to raise more than \$1 million for Cushing.

The 2019 Springtime gala drew a crowd of 450 guests and raised more than \$681,000 — making it one of the most successful events to date. One of the event's committee members was Marshfield resident Brian Cadigan, Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer at Quincy Mutual Group. He became involved after K. Douglas Briggs, Quincy Mutual Chairman & CEO, was named the recipient of the Franciscan Leadership Award, along with his wife, Claudia Sorgi. The couple was honored by Cushing for continually improving the lives of people with disabilities throughout the South Shore and across Massachusetts.

"The culture here at Quincy Mutual revolves around integrity and fairness and providing for others," said Cadigan. "Doug and Claudia do a lot of work very quietly, but they've instilled a philanthropic mission around basic needs — food, shelter and healthcare."

Along with Alex Clark, President of the Vulcan Company and a board member at Quincy Mutual, Cadigan helped to solicit donations — far surpassing their goal — from employees, vendors, independent insurance companies, friendly competitors, close friends and family members.

"It was extremely successful," said Cadigan. "We worked with Cushing's development team, and they made it so easy. It was a wonderful experience to get to the event and see all the good work they do."

Cardinal Cushing Centers

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5:30 p.m.

Seaport Hotel, Boston



Cardinal Cushing Centers

www.SpringtimeGala.com

ALUMNI PROFILE: NICK MORSE

THE ART OF SELF-DISCOVERY

CUSHING ALUMNUS MAKES A CAREER OUT OF HIS TALENTS

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Cushing alumnus Nick Morse, 31, just wrapped up an impressive art exhibit at Cambridge Open Studios on Sept. 29 — a feat that may never have come to be without the helping hand of Cushing Art Director Randy Wiskow.

Wiskow first came to discover and foster Nick's talents 15 years ago. He describes a moment in meeting with Nick and going over his goals when Nick declared he wanted to be a professional artist.

"After that, I started doing individual lessons with him," said Wiskow. "He has this knack for putting the right colors together, so that you step back and say, 'wow, I wish I could do that.' It's fascinating to watch him work."

"Randy sent me a letter saying 'I think your son has genius ability in art,'" said his father, Steve Morse. "I was so floored and happy."

Nick had enrolled at Cushing at age 12, shortly after the death of his mother, Nell. He had been having increased behavioral issues after such an upsetting life change.

"He had to overcome a lot of adversity and he had been floundering for a little while," said Steve. "I had heard of Cushing, and when we visited, you could tell immediately that it would be a good fit. The dedication of the teachers was obvious. These were people who cared."

Wiskow worked with Steve to put together a portfolio for Nick and seek out exhibit opportunities. He helped secure Nick's first exhibit at ZuZu in Cambridge when he was 21.

"It was so nice of Randy to set it up," said Steve. "It was a proud moment, and a nice launch for Nick's career. He had a packed house."

Since then, Nick has had exhibits at the Beehive in Boston, Club Passim in Cambridge, Sally O'Brien's and Precinct, both in Somerville, the Boston Public Market, Tufts Medical Center and more. He has an annual show each September at the Cambridge Open Studios. He also sells his artwork and prints to universities and

corporations. He has numerous pieces at Harvard Innovation Labs and the law firm Nixon Peabody. His career has been boosted by ArtLifting, a social enterprise that empowers artists living with homelessness or disabilities through the celebration and sale of their artwork.

"They've done a really good job promoting Nick," said Steve, adding that some of his pieces have sold for more than \$1,000. "They believe in him."

Nick is sometimes nicknamed "the color man" because of his love of bright colors, which Steve thinks may stem from his love of animated movies.

Steve, a music critic for *The Boston Globe* for 30 years, is well known in the arts community. Some of Nick's paintings have sold to musicians in his network, such as Stu Kimball, Bob Dylan's guitarist.

"I might have helped open a door or two for Nick, but his work speaks for itself," Steve said. "He really got his start at Cushing. Randy flagged his ability and turned everything around. I honestly wasn't sure what his future would hold, but with the help of Cushing, he was able to find something he's really good at. His self-esteem skyrocketed and it's really made both of our lives a lot more exciting."

"Here at the school, our goal is to instill art as a leisure-time activity, but having Nick reach a level where he's well known in the art community, it's thrilling," said Wiskow, who has remained a wonderful mentor, supporter and friend. "I get chills when I even think about it."

Nick, who is autistic and has been primarily nonverbal since his mid-20s, spent 10 years at Cushing.

"The services were terrific — his speech and occupational therapy," said Steve. "He felt comfortable instantly there. He always had quality care there. It was a shock when it came time to leave."

Since turning 22 and aging out, Nick has been living in a group home in Watertown, along with one of his friends from Cushing. He attends Outside the Lines Studio, an arts-based alternative day program in Medford, collectively run by artists, for individuals with



A proud Nick Morse stands alongside one of his three prints purchased by the Boston law firm Nixon Peabody.



Cushing Art Director Randy Wiskow attended Nick's exhibit at Cambridge Open Studios.

developmental and physical disabilities.

"He gets terrific support there and is able to do a lot of painting," said Steve, adding that Nick's art is the best way for him to communicate. "He expresses himself so beautifully through his art, even though he doesn't speak. He has a unique style with these bold, slashing strokes."