

CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS CONNECTOR



All ages. All abilities. All together.

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SPRING 2022



Above, Cushing participant Michael Russell bangs the drum while music therapist Travis Nelson of the South Shore Conservatory plays the guitar. At left, Cushing's Emilee Damon is excited to play the tambourine during music therapy.

PHOTOS BY SEAN BROWNE

Sound investment Music therapy is a big hit at Cushing

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

So often, we hear the phrase “music is good for the soul,” without even appreciating the extensive health benefits that music can offer. Yet, music therapy is becoming an increasingly popular profession, helping individuals to improve mood, wellness and self-expression.

In February, music therapist Travis Nelson started weekly sessions with participants of Cushing’s Life Opportunities Unlimited (LOU) adult day programs

in Braintree and Hanover. Nelson, who is a member of South Shore Conservatory’s Creative Arts Therapy team, is enjoying the experience.

“It’s been a lot of fun,” said Nelson, who studied music therapy at Berklee College of Music. “It’s nice to see them engaged in music. We’re trying to encourage a social/emotional connection and tap into some of that joy and happiness that music brings.”

“It’s fabulous,” said Sue Ann Hurley, site director of

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A PLAN to protect and preserve assets

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Cardinal Cushing Centers has partnered with Planned Lifetime Assistance Network of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Inc. (PLAN of MA & RI) to provide families with enhanced estate-planning options.

As a special needs trustee, PLAN of MA & RI helps people with disabilities preserve their assets, protect their benefits and live well. The organization has been named the preferred planning partner of Cushing and will be able to provide quality trustee/fiduciary services to Cushing families through trust administration and social service support. This partnership is meant to assist individuals in securing their financial freedom so they can live independent and inclusive lives, while choosing for themselves how to live, learn, work, socialize and play.

In support of the partnership, PLAN of MA & RI committed \$75,000 to support Cushing programs and services. It will also be co-presenting webinars to help educate individuals and families affiliated with Cushing on special needs trusts and the critical need for financial security.

“The partnership with PLAN has the potential to greatly assist

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PLAN of MA & RI Executive Director Joan McGrath, second from left, presents a check to Cushing CEO Michelle Markowitz and students, from left, Eddie Desiderio-Falzarano, Avery Berigan and Brady Silvia.

A PUBLICATION OF:

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Working hard to meet challenges



**MICHELLE
MARKOWITZ**

Cardinal Cushing Centers is far from alone in facing the challenges presented by a post-pandemic decreasing workforce, but there are positive developments in that area.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has shown a commitment to invest in workforce development, something from which a wide range of employers, Cushing included, can benefit. Providing the proper training and incentives for those able to enter or progress in the workforce is a big step in the right direction.

Cushing's new partnership with students in the Allied Health program at South Shore

Technical High School promises to have both short- and long-term advantages. Our adult participants are already benefitting from working with the students on life skills and healthy living. And exposing these students to the great things that happen at Cushing every day could well result in some of them deciding to follow a career path that could lead them back here.

We are always interested in opportunities for our students and adult participants to gain employment in the community, and see those opportunities increasing due to a renewed commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) among businesses. There is no better way to advance inclusion than providing a meaningful employment experience for someone with disabilities.

The workforce challenge that has been felt

everywhere the last two years is exacerbated when you are an employer that requires a high percentage of workers to possess specialized skills and proficiencies due to the students and adults we serve. I have undyingly gratitude for our staff, whose resiliency has been pushed to the limit, yet they never allowed that to be reflected in the quality of instruction and service they provide to the students, adults and families who depend on us.

That speaks to the commitment and dedication of our workforce, who have persevered under the most trying of circumstances. We are all better for their efforts.

Michelle Markowitz is president & CEO of Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Cushing students deliver for Hingham resident



Tom Coveney loves his mailbox made by Cushing students.

Hingham resident Tom Coveney had spent months looking for a carpenter to create a custom wooden mailbox. Then he saw the fall edition of The Cardinal Cushing Connector, which featured Anne Matheson's woodworking classes, and he turned to Cushing. In less than two weeks, three of Matheson's students had completed the project for him.

"The kids loved doing it," said Matheson.

"They did a fantastic job," said Coveney. "I gave them the measurements, and they gave me exactly what I was looking for, and even painted it. I've been bragging about it to all my neighbors who have been asking about it."

Coveney was looking for something to contain magazines, catalogs and small packages.

"We have a mail slot that doesn't fit much, so we were just using a little basket out there before," he said. "Our mail carrier is happier, too. It's a win-win."



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VOLUNTEER PROFILE

For Kelleher, Cushing is a special place

BY MEAGHAN CASEY



Meg Kelleher enjoys volunteering at the Cushing Cafe, working and interacting with Cushing participants including Max Travers, above, and Elizabeth Wheeler, right.

Meg Kelleher's first job out of college was special education teacher, and today — 40 years later — she finds herself circling back to her roots, volunteering at Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Kelleher, who graduated with a degree in special education from Boston College, went on to have a successful career in finance.

"I moved to New York City after that first year and by sheer Irish luck, got a job at Salomon Brothers," she said. "I started out as an assistant and eventually was running recruitment."

She relocated back to Boston and held senior roles at State Street Bank and Fidelity Investments. In 2017, she was named managing director of the Collaborative, a company dedicated to helping financial institutions and professionals meet their goals and grow business through human behavior-based training, coaching and marketing services.

Kelleher started doing volunteer work more frequently at that point, as her schedule allowed her to stay closer to her home in Marshfield. She joined the board of Alice's House in Scituate and remained active with the Boston College Alumni Association and the Council for Women of Boston College. Her friend, Mary McGoldrick, a Cushing board member, later suggested she get involved at Cushing, and Kelleher said she was drawn to Cushing for two reasons.

"It was partly because of my special ed background, and partly because the mission is so amazing," she said. "Every person deserves to be treated with respect, and Cushing delivers that, on steroids. The organization plays such a critical role in these individuals' lives, from when they are young to when they're adults. I feel honored to be part of an organization that delivers such incredible services."

Kelleher joined Cushing's Development and Springtime committees and volunteers once a week in the MarketPlace.

"I would have loved to have been in the classroom, but that wasn't possible with the pandemic," said Kelleher. "So I got connected to (Cushing board member) Jody (Nash) and started putting in hours at Take 2 and the café. I really love working with the adult interns. It's so rewarding, and there's a great energy there."



A PLAN to protect and preserve assets

PLAN from page 1

our families as they map out a lifetime of financial security and independence for their loved ones," said Cushing CEO Michelle Markowitz. "We value what PLAN brings to the table and appreciate their willingness to offer their expertise."

PLAN of MA & RI Executive Director Joan McGrath said special needs trusts are important financial vehicles for people with disabilities so they can preserve assets and protect

eligibility for public benefits.

In addition to Cushing, PLAN of MA & RI has partnered with Special Olympics Massachusetts, Best Buddies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the Carroll Center for the Blind, the Asperger/Autism Network and Northeast Arc.

"We've been wanting to expand to other partners and bring awareness to younger demographics," said McGrath, who was named executive director two years ago. She had previously served as the organization's director of finance.

"I live in Hanover and my kids volunteered at Cushing in high school, so Cushing immediately stood out as a potential partner," McGrath said. "Their mission and ours are incredibly complementary, and we're excited about the ways we'll collaborate together."

For more information on PLAN of MA & RI, visit www.planofma-ri.org/

To register:

Families of students
April 25, noon-1 p.m. on Zoom:
<https://bit.ly/3ijktb0>

Families of adults
June 22, noon-1 p.m. on Zoom:
<https://bit.ly/3DiSg4w>



Free Virtual
Presentation



Preserve Assets | Protect Benefits | Live Well



HEALTHY PARTNERSHIP

Cushing benefits from new alliance with South Shore Tech

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

When it comes to healthcare training, nothing can quite prepare someone like on-the-job experience. That's what students from South Shore Technical High School are learning, thanks to a new collaboration with Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Freshmen and seniors in the school's Allied Health department are working with participants in Cushing's Life Opportunities Unlimited (LOU) day habilitation program. Designed for adults who are 22 and older, LOU provides specialized therapeutic services to increase good health and independent living.

Kristin McAvoy, an Allied Health teacher at South Shore Technical, said she would often drive by Cushing and wondered if there could be an opportunity to collaborate. She met with Cushing's Ginger Sullivan, vice president for adult services, and Angela Gokey, director of day services, and a partnership was born.

"Traditionally, we've placed a lot of students in assisted living and nursing facilities, so we've been trying to branch out," said McAvoy. "This is really the first step in searching for new placements and exposing them to different

populations and services. I think it's the beginning of a good — and hopefully long — relationship."

"It's a win-win," said Sullivan. "They're serving our needs and it gives them real-life experience."

"Between the clients, my co-workers and the outings, I am loving my time at Cardinal Cushing," said senior Leilah Clifford, who started her paid co-op placement at Cushing in January, along with senior Grace McCarthy.

"I love the population I am surrounded by," Clifford added. "We get to bring people bowling and to a local farm, and we give back to the community by doing Meals on Wheels in Hanover. I've learned so much in my short time and I am very excited to see where this takes me."

Clifford and McCarthy are at the LOU site in Hanover every other week, returning to school for their academic classes on alternating weeks. They are learning advanced nursing assistant skills and assisting with care — even stepping in when necessary.

"They've really jumped right in and are so enthusiastic," said Sue Ann Hurley, site director of the Hanover LOU program. "We're not fully staffed right now, so they've been given more responsibility. On a day that I was down three staff members, they filled in so well."

Keith Boyle, director of vocational education at South Shore Technical, says the school relies on local businesses and organizations to support its mission of providing students with relevant, hands-on instructional experiences. In return, employers are able to recruit and hire eager workers who are well-versed in the language, procedures and technology of the industry. The school currently has 92 employee

partners and 118 co-op placements, with students working a minimum of 30 hours during their co-op weeks.

"By their senior year, we want them out in the field, utilizing the skills they've learned in the classroom," Boyle said. "And some of it is about implementing soft skills, like manners or time management. It gives them a head start in the field."

In addition to the co-op, 12 freshmen from South Shore Technical are also participating in clinical externships at Cushing. They are working with LOU participants in both Hanover and Braintree, as well as participants in the South Shore Industries (SSI) program who are exploring employment opportunities. The students started in March and visit twice a week, engaging with participants.

"Before the pandemic, our participants were going out all the time, but since that's not the case, this is an opportunity to bring people in to them, in a controlled environment," said Elise Polansky, site director of the Braintree LOU program. "That in itself is a win."

"The kids are loving it so far," said McAvoy. "We're excited to be here. They're getting exposed to different types of communication skills and working with participants one-on-one. It teaches them to build rapport with individuals just like they'll do in the healthcare field."

McAvoy is in the unique position to observe Clifford and McCarthy on the days she's at Cushing with the freshmen.

"It's great seeing them so confident and so professional," she said. "I love seeing them interact with not only the participants, but with the freshmen as well. It's exciting to see it come full circle."

South Shore Technical High School students are helping Cushing adult participants with life skills as part of a new partnership: (1) Leilah Clifford and Cushing participant Christopher Kelly; (2) Jillian Geswel and Lindsay Hadayia; (3) Ariana Clark; and (4) Maya Crawford and Amy Slater.

PHOTOS BY SEAN BROWNE

Building a bridge to accessibility

Carpentry students from South Shore Technical High School stepped up in a big way for Cushing. The students built a bridge over rocky terrain, allowing individuals of all abilities, including Karly Erickson (below), to access the nearly 200 acres of land and walking trails on the Hanover property.



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2



3



4



Runners pound the pavement for Cushing

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Running the Boston Marathon this year had special significance for sisters Samantha Taylor and Emily Cote. They were running alongside their mother, Elizabeth Taylor, for her 60th birthday, and they were running for an organization dear to their hearts — Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Growing up in Hanover, Taylor and Cote both volunteered at Cushing while in high school, and Taylor has been working at Cushing for the past eight years as a per-diem registered nurse. She is a full-time nurse at Brigham and Women's Hospital and is working toward becoming a developmental disabilities nurse.

"I love the days that I'm at Cushing, watching the kids work through their challenges and watching them make friends and high-five each other in the hallway," Taylor said. "The way they persevere is remarkable."

"Having the opportunity to run for Cardinal Cushing is very important. Given my sister is so involved, I've seen how rewarding it has been for her," said Cote, who is also a registered nurse. "I've seen the endless amount of love and support the staff give these students. Watching the students excel and defeat their everyday challenges is truly inspirational. This is a small way to show some support for them."

Though they have run other marathons and

road races in the past, this was the sisters' first Boston Marathon.

"It was our mom's idea," said Taylor. "She's run more than 20 marathons, but she was turning 60 and wanted us to run with her for her birthday."

Their mother was part of the Brigham Stepping Strong Marathon Team, benefitting the hospital's Gillian Reny Stepping Strong Center for Trauma Innovation. Taylor and Cote were two of seven runners who received bibs to raise funds for Cushing.

For more information or to donate to the Cushing team, visit: www.givengain.com/cc/cushingcenters22/.



From left, Samantha Taylor, Elizabeth Taylor and Emily Cote.

Cycling fundraiser spins into third year

Cyclists will be hitting the streets — or gym floor — this spring, as the Cushing Cycle Challenge returns for another year.

The fundraiser will kick off on May 1, and registrants have the opportunity to log their miles — a minimum of 50, indoors or outdoors — until June 30. The registration fee is \$25 and all will be entered to win a four-night stay at a Club Med resort, courtesy of the Travel Center in Hanover. Participants raising \$500 or more will qualify to compete for a bicycle valued at more than \$1,000 from South Shore BMW/South Shore Mini. All of the funds raised will go directly to Cushing.

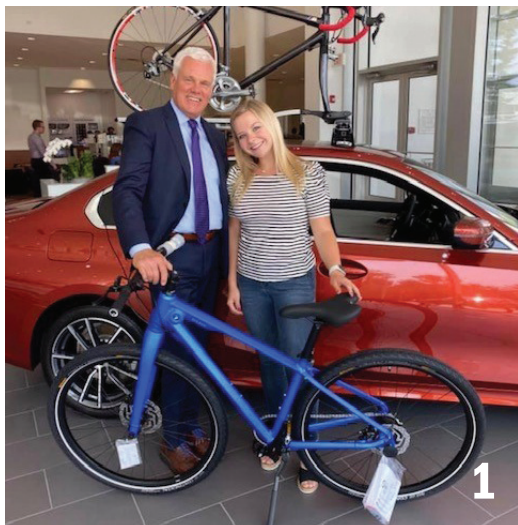
Last year, more than 100 participants — including

families, friends, staff members and even students in Cushing's bike club — raised more than \$20,000.

Ali Palasek took the top title, bringing in \$2,000 for Cushing. Many logged their miles at a Cushing spin-a-thon event at the Workout Club in Marshfield.

Pam Eddy, development coordinator at Cushing, said Cushing is thankful that National Grid and Jannell Ford are both back as sponsors of the event.

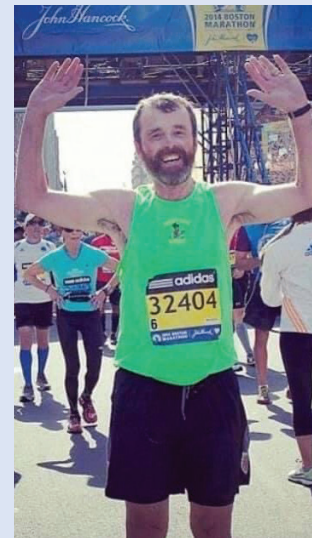
"And we were happy to welcome LuxeSmile Dentistry, Mia Regazza and the Cohasset Tennis Club as new sponsors last year," she said. "We're so grateful for all of this community support and hope to make 2022 our best Cycle Challenge yet."



SCAN ME

1. Last year's winner Ali Palasek picked up her new bike from South Shore BMW Manager Avery Trumbo. 2. Members of the Cushing Bike Club racked up miles on the track at Cushing. 3. Mother-and-daughter Jen and Katie Cedrone joined mother-and-daughter Jessie and Kenzie Mills for the spin-a-thon event.

Supporting Cushing in plain English



Jim English dedicated his 25th and final Boston Marathon to his niece, Kathleen, while raising money for Cushing in the process. Jim's brother, Ted English, is a longtime Cushing parent and supporter who sits on the board of overseers.

"Kathleen has been a member of the Cardinal Cushing community for decades and the benefit and joy she and our family have received from this relationship cannot be overstated," said Jim, whose final Boston run coincides with his 70th birthday.

Paddle for a Purpose



Gigi Meehan of Cohasset helped stage another successful Paddle for a Purpose fundraiser on April 2. Now in its fifth year, the event has raised more than \$100,000 to benefit Cushing.

Music therapy a big hit

MUSIC from page 1

the Hanover LOU program. “The groups are loving it.”

“They’ve really been looking forward to it,” said Elise Polansky, site director of the Braintree LOU program. “He’s exposing them to different genres and engaging them by doing activities like ‘follow the leader’ with the instruments. It’s promoting social skills, direction-following, communication and sensory skills. They’re getting a lot out of it.”

“The music therapy has been a good addition,” said Marissa Pitts, a participant at the Braintree site. “I love participating. Travis brings his guitar and instruments for us to play. Music therapy helps me in various ways including socialization, focusing, concentration, anxiety, stress management and my fine motor skills.”

Music therapy is part of a growing Creative Arts Therapy department at the Conservatory, led by Kristi Faby, who was appointed director of the department in May.

“I was drawn to the Conservatory’s mission of making the arts accessible to individuals of all abilities, and to the opportunity to expand to different types of therapies, like dance and accessible yoga,” she said.

Soon after coming on board, Faby met with members of the Cushing leadership team to talk about a possible collaboration.

“After having some conversations, it was clear that our values were so aligned,” said Faby.

Cushing is rolling out the program with the adult population, but may expand to students in the future.

Faby said what sets a music therapy session apart from a traditional music class is the goal. “It’s really a non-musical goal,” she said. “They’re not playing an instrument to master the music, but to work on cognition and fine motor skills. I’ve seen firsthand how creative arts therapies create a safe space for social connection, communication and self-expression. The biggest thing we hope they take from it is an overall boost to their quality of life.”



Biz Markol plays the maraca during music therapy.

PHOTOS BY SEAN BROWNE



Kelly McCowan smiles while listening to Travis Nelson perform.

Conservatory cooks up sweet sounds

The Cushing Café is alive with the sound of music each month, thanks to faculty from the South Shore Conservatory.

Laura Hay, the Conservatory’s vice president of development, said the idea was born through a conversation she had with Jody Nash, then-business manager of the MarketPlace.

“One of her goals was to get more people into the space, and it seemed like such a natural fit as we were talking,” said Hay. “Music brings so much joy and happiness to both the performers and the patrons. This has been a nice way to intertwine our organizations in such an organic way.”

The café hosted two performances in December and there was interest in it continuing on a monthly basis. Scituate resident Gary McGovern and his family stepped up to fund the performances, beginning in February. He became more familiar with Cushing after stopping into the café for an art exhibit, and his son Brendan, a drummer, spent some time at the Conservatory. A music lover, McGovern said he looks forward to supporting the program for as long as it works for both organizations.



Christine Hedden, a faculty member at South Shore Conservatory, played the Irish fiddle at the Cushing Café in March.

BOARD PROFILE



A mission to serve

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Ever since entering the convent as a teenager, Sister Helene Mertes has devoted her life to giving back — and continues to do so on the Cardinal Cushing Centers board of directors.

A Wisconsin native, Sr. Helene is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi — the Milwaukee-based congregation affiliated with Cushing. She and Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, Director of Corporate Ministries for the Sisters, help Cardinal Cushing Centers stay connected to its Franciscan roots. Sr. Joanne serves as Cushing's liaison to corporate ministries.

As a young member of the congregation, Sister Helene first served in the religious order working in food services at a seminary and college and then in an infirmary for retired sisters. She later ran a soup kitchen in Kentucky before returning to her home state to work at St. Coletta of Wisconsin, a provider of support services for adults with developmental disabilities. St. Coletta was established by the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in 1904 — 43 years before five sisters would go on to honor Cardinal Richard Cushing's request to co-found and run St. Coletta by the Sea in Hanover, Cardinal Cushing Centers' first school.

At St. Coletta of Wisconsin, Sr. Helene worked in the gardens and helped to manage the greenhouse, supervising residents who were employed there. She worked hands-on with the residents, planting, watering and harvesting. At the same time, she earned a degree in horticulture from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She also holds an associate's degree in food service management.

After 10 years at St. Coletta, Sr. Helene

went on to serve as the director of food service and vocational services at St. John's Villa in Ohio, a residential community for the developmentally disabled. She spent 16 years there, helping to facilitate adult day support and vocational services. She also ran the on-site restaurant with the residents and directed day programs in basketry and silk-screening.

"I got more from them than I could ever give back," Sr. Helene said of the residents. "Their unconditional love was so rewarding."

She sees a lot of parallels with Cushing's services, as well as the vocational opportunities that the new MarketPlace presents.

"That project was incredibly important, and it was exciting to go through the process of planning with the board," she said. "Like I experienced at St. John's, Cushing has been ahead of creating its own job sites, and I think it's been wonderful."

She is also continually impressed by the leadership and employees.

"The Cushing staff is just outstanding," she said. "They're so dedicated."

At 82, Sr. Helene is retired, but still very active. "I'm retiring from retirement," she joked.

At St. Francis Convent, she volunteers with the planting, weeding and overall management of the ground's gardens and wetlands. She is part of the Land Use Committee that is working on building a bio-diverse urban forest and larger garden areas, establishing bee colonies and restoring the 2.5 acres of wetlands. She is also the supervisor of the congregation's gift shop. In her spare time, she enjoys writing poetry and making baskets — some of which she donates to the Unique Boutique.



Sister Helene Mertes has enjoyed herself at Springtime, walking the runway with Zachary Gates and assisting auctioneer Jim Fagan.

PHOTOS BY JARED CHARNEY