A Diversity Celebration

Written by Noelle Lalazarian
Job Coach of South Shore Industries- Hanover

The month of February invites us to honor the many influential people, events, and achievements throughout African-American History. During this time we recognize years of progress and change by illustrating the powerful impact a culture can make on history. Black History Month is a celebration for all man-kind; therefore, in what ways can society celebrate diversity as a whole?

Over half a century ago, Civil Rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. took a stand for freedom and equality during a time of adversity in America. Today, we remember MLK for instilling hope into the eyes of millions of people with his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. Not only is this speech a catalyst for change in African-American history, but an inspiration to diverse populations all over the world.

On February 28th several Cardinal Cushing alumni amongst other local agencies celebrated diversity through the presentation of MLK’s historical speech. For the second year in a row The Central Congregational Church of Middleboro hosted the event in light of Black History Month.

The celebration began with an opening address given by the event's forerunner, Dianne Rodrigues. Dianne is currently the standing Director of Learning and Staff Development with the Department of Developmental Services. Regarding the origin of the event, Rodrigues attributes the idea to
a message she says to have received from God; “Why don't we encourage the people we support to recite the “I Had a Dream Speech”? The idea posed the question of whether a presentation of this nature existed, and in response became a great opportunity for the population at hand.

The Central Congregational Church served as an ideal location to honor Martin Luther King, for he too was a Pastor. When planning the event Rodrigues envisioned the venue to be held in a church with access to a piano for full effect. Reverend Steven Rodrigues, Master of Ceremony, provided the introductions to the presentation, along with an array of musical selections featuring Reverend Lunsford, Nicole Rodrigues, and members of Southeastern Residential Services.

In preparation for the ceremony, participants including Cardinal Cushing’s Lee Raisel and Ian Fedderson selected pieces of the “I had a Dream” speech to later recite as a group. The 48 individuals attended two formal rehearsals and set aside personal time to master their speaking roles. “We tried to have every disability participate in the presentation to fill valued roles as presenters for their families and community to see,” said Dianne Rodrigues. On that day people were inspired to celebrate diversity, and according to the coordinator, the participants are eager to know when they can present again.

The most rewarding part of the celebration for Ian Fedderson was to speak in front of an audience and see the faces of his peers in the crowd, he explained. Lee Raisel commented on how he enjoyed talking to others about a dream. He also appreciated the support he received from companion, Charlie Kelliher, along the way. Both Rodrigues and Kelliher agree that the most compelling part of the presentation was listening to the individuals read their parts; “The centerpiece is always the people we support; hearing their delivery of MLK's speech with such passion and conviction is my highlight,” said Rodrigues.

Prior to the event Rodrigues raised a question to the participants; “If Martin Luther King lived to see today would he think his dream had been fulfilled?” In response the group replied with a “No.” Many expressed that society has made notable progress, but that MLK's work is not finished yet.

“I think that the dream for a better future is a human and universal dream, regardless of who you are. Just like there used to be a stigma around being an African-American in this country decades ago, I feel one still exists surrounding those with developmental disabilities,” stated Kelliher. Martin Luther King fought for equality for everyone and of these battles included gaining equal employment opportunities. Kelliher observes that obtaining employment can still be challenge for many, and he hopes that all people try to gain more patience and understanding towards individuals with disabilities.
This year’s celebration of diversity served to be a tremendous milestone for self-advocacy. Participants shared a teachable moment with others by demonstrating a model of how everyone should be treated. Diane believes this day will become an annual event as the turnout grows each year. The invitation will be open to the public for anyone interested in embracing the beauty of being different.

Photo featuring South Shore Industry’s Lee Raisel, Cory Milton, Amy Slater, Ian Fedderson, and Henry Buxton uniting with peers after the presentation

Thank you to Noelle and Brendan McGuirk, from SSI Hanover, for sharing this with us!!
Thank you for those who participated in the 2016 Family and Guardian Satisfaction Survey. From the survey results we have found that those who participated were satisfied overall with the supports we provide. In particular, the strongest ranking that was consistent across the programs was that staff are friendly, professional and respectful. We are very proud of this feedback.

The Adult Services Leadership team knows we can improve our communication with families and guardians. We recognize that we need to be better at letting families know changes to the programs as well as staff changes. We will be developing a strategy to inform you in a timely manner, but realize families may not want to be overwhelmed with emails.

Another area of concern was employment. Families/ Guardian do not feel that their loved ones are working enough or have been unsuccessful in gaining employment. We are hopeful that our partnership with Employment First will provide innovative ways to have people who are committed to getting a job; actually secure one. Our employment teams have made a commitment to be more data driven in regards to assessing strengths, areas of improvement and working with individuals who truly are motivated to work, when the employer needs them. We are committed to have individual’s secure competitive employment in the community.

Lastly, we have found that many families/ guardians did not receive information regarding our annual “Family/ Guardian Night” that was held in October and November. Please make sure that we have the correct email address for you, so you do not miss news or important information. New emails/ addresses/ phone numbers can be sent to Christine Wood at cwood@cushingcenters.org Thank you again, for those who participated in the survey. Always feel free to send in your comments or suggestions.

Tara Jordan
Cardinal Cushing Centers
Associate VP of Adult Services &
Human Rights Coordinator
Prior to becoming a member of the AFC program, Bobby Palazzolo’s family was in a quandary on how to juggle their full time jobs and support the increasing needs of Bobby. It was becoming clear that Bobby could no longer safely be left home alone. It was then that his brother contacted Pat Conley, Adult Family Care (AFC) Director, hoping to receive some guidance and direction as to what CCC Adult Services were available for Bobby. Pat worked with Angela Gokey, Director Life Opportunities Unlimited South (LOU) Program, to secure an optimal day program for Bobby.

Bobby’s family is now relieved and pleased to know that Bobby is safe, happy and thriving within his day program. In fact, Bobby’s family reports, Bobby happily anticipates his transportation to take him to his program each morning. When asked, Bobby’s face brightened and he stated, “I enjoy my day at LOU very much”.

AFC was ALSO able to find a quality alternative caregiver for Bobby, which has allowed his brother and sister-in-law to go on a much needed vacation. Bobby and his family appreciate the supports and efforts the AFC program provides and looks forward to their monthly visits with Linda Davis RN, and Megan Gajewski, Case Manager.
SSI Braintree has been very busy since we have moved into our beautiful new space! Everyone adjusted so nicely. Below are some updates to what has been happening at SSI!

On May 26th, we will have a dance and luncheon to celebrate Spring! Jackie Sera will be our DJ and we will party together in our beautiful, green room!

Our folks will have the opportunity to work out on a rotating basis with Julia Douglas, our Zumba Instructor and Job Coach, at Planet Fitness in Braintree.

Our Marina Bay volunteers will be attending a brunch for all volunteers on May 26th! We are so happy to be helping our elderly friends at Marina Bay Nursing Home.

We will begin volunteering at South Shore hospital two days a week. They will be working in the dining room, restocking condiments, cleaning tables and keeping the dining room neat and clean.

We had a great time at our drum circle event on April 5th! Ed Sorrentino will return for another drum circle on May 8th! Everyone enjoyed making music together. Great team effort!!!

We had the pleasure of having Alex Cooney back with us for the past 4 weeks doing sign language classes. Alex is of to Guam where she will be preforming for nine months, singing and dancing. She has spent the past several months entertaining on a cruise ship! We will keep in touch with her by email.

We have had several tours with families and new people will be joining our program in the coming months!

LOU North

By Marissa Pitts

LOU North is a really well-structured program in Braintree! The program is covered by Mass Health. Transportation is also funded through Mass Health. The program is very structured
and is for high-functioning individuals with various disabilities including developmental delays and autism. Once a month, we have a musician come by and his name is Julian Rollins. Also, we have a structured fitness class with Leila. She provides the exercises for us in the great room every Thursday.

We work on independent living skills. In the kitchen, we learn nutrition, perform sweeping, set the table, work on culinary skills, learn about foods, discuss healthy foods, plan menus, get lunch supplies out, cleaning appliances, and doing the dishes. The independent living skills we learn in the computer room are educational research skills and typing skills. In the Global exploration room, we work on writing and money skills. We also learn environmental safety signs in the Global Exploration room.

Also, we work on social development skills. We learn how to identify staff members by name, choose appropriate topics of conversation, interacting with other peers and participating in a group. Affective development is also a development area. We help others and we have to be positive when we help others. Also, we learn community skills. Our community outings are volunteering at Meals on Wheels, bowling, volunteering at the chicken farm, basketball at Archie’s, swimming in the outdoor pool at Cardinal Cushing in Hanover, reading adult-level library books at the Braintree Public Library, going on random outings, going to Stop& Shop to buy groceries for Friday lunch and reading books at Thayer Academy for Book Club.

Leila is the site coordinator. Annette is the case manager. Claudette is our Developmental Specialist. Kerry is our nurse. Catherine is the art instructor. Katie is the Creative Expression instructor. Marissa B is the fitness instructor. Amber is the computer instructor. Sherly is the Global Explorations instructor. Jodi is the float staff. Liz is our relief nurse Christine is our Occupational therapist. Kris is our speech therapist. Donna is our behavior therapist. Laura is the physical therapist. Angela is the Day Services Director of Cushing Adult Services.

Each Friday, we have a homemade healthy cooked lunch with a main meal, a side or two, soda or Crystal Light and a dessert. Annette and Claudette help us with the cooking on Fridays. The names of the rooms are the Common Ground Café, Global Explorations, Open Canvas Gallery (Art), Inspirations (Fitness), Computer Resource Connections, Creative Expression (Beads), and Mind & Body (Wii). We also have a conference room for meetings and relaxation.

Our day begins at 8:30 AM when transportation companies arrive with the clients. We have free-time for 30 minutes before our first rotation. We have two lunches and five groups. Our
groups are labeled L, O1, O2, U1 and U2. The first lunch is usually the people in the building or the groups that end with a 1. Our sessions in the room are 45 minutes.

We work on our goals for 30 minutes and we have 15 minutes of free-time. Also, we do chores before we have juice at 2:15 PM. Socials are varied by week and we have healthy snacks and juice. At the end of every month, we celebrate staff and clients’ birthdays by singing to them, having birthday cake, having take-out pizza for lunch, eating Caesar salad that we make and we have diet soda. We leave the program at 2:30 PM when the vans are called.

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**Honoring those who Promote Inclusive Communities through Community Partnerships and Social inclusions**

*Sheila Marchand received an award on Inclusion through the Plymouth Planning Committee on April 14, 2017*

Sheila has always been a champion of inclusion for the folks she supports, not only in the community, but in their social lives. Sheila is always looking for fun activities for her residents—outside of the agency events or events geared towards the population we support. For example, she introduced the gentlemen she supports to square dancing at a local bar, which also has great priced appetizers and dinners. They go out, square dance and have dinners and appetizers at the bar, for a reasonable price. She also encourages the gentlemen to attend local live bands because they love music so much, and helps them look for reasonably priced places so they can enjoy music and dinner, while also staying within their budget!

She shows a real passion for supporting the gentlemen outside of their comfort zone, she’s always pushing them to learn more and DO more in the community outside of the regular activities...
they've always participated in. Sheila has always taken pride in helping the gentlemen she supports foster new relationships—both friendships and romantic relationships. Sheila goes out of her way to take them on dates with new ladies that they meet at their various recreational activities while also helping them learn the dynamics of new friendships and relationships. She sets up parties/BBQs at the gentlemen’s home for family and friends to come over and encourages the gentlemen to invite their significant others and their families. Sheila works outside of her schedule to take the gentlemen on dates, and pick them up their jobs in the community. When the day program had asked Sheila about the transportation feasibility of one of the gentlemen working outside of day program hours, Sheila’s response was “You help him get the job, and I will make sure he gets there and gets home.” This particular gentleman is gainfully employed in the community at a local restaurant and works weekend and late weekday hours. Regardless of his schedule, Sheila and her staff arrange to pick him up—even at times when it means Sheila leaves her personal home to go get him and drop him back off at his home. She’s always there to support “my guys” as she affectionately calls them, through their community employment, new activities and helping them learn how to be social and friendly in their new friendships and relationships. She’s an advocate for inclusion and really supporting them to be the best version of themselves while helping them find out just what that means!
Here at LOU South in Hanover, we are so excited for so many reasons!

The arrival of Spring has brought a renewed energy and enthusiasm. Community outings are enticing and trips to the track are such enjoyable events in the warm weather!
Some of our individuals attended the Senior Center Brunch in April and all who help out delivering Meals On Wheels to residents of Hanover received a certificate of participation.

Also, we are very happy to welcome our new staff. Carla Sousa and Jessica Perrault have joined us as group instructors and Laurie Mathews is our new Art Instructor. The groups are alive with new activities, current events being discussed, and all our Boston sports teams being followed closely. The Art Room and hallways are adorned with beautiful artwork and themed decorations.

We are so proud that our Developmental Specialist, Teresa Nichols, was nominated and selected as a “You’ve Been Spotted” winner. Congratulations Terri we are lucky to have you!

This is a new page intended for the Individuals we serve to share opinions or news that is important to them. I hope this page will grow in popularity once
the word is out that it is here and that people enjoy reading this. I hope you will join me in encouraging hearing what our individuals want to say.

I’m an Aunt again!!!
My sister Tracy had a baby boy. She named him Tim. He has 5 sisters. He doesn’t even cry much!

Sarah Egan

Culinary In Hanover
By Shannon Driscoll

I have been doing Culinary in Hanover at Cardinal Cushing since last summer in 2016 and I really enjoy it a lot! I do Culinary every other Tuesdays! I serve lunch to the students and teachers! After we serve lunch then we have a free lunch between 11:45 and 12:00PM.

I will be moving up to be doing Culinary every Tuesday! I really enjoy being a part of the culinary team at Cardinal Cushing! I enjoy doing food prep and serving lunch to students and teachers!

PBS Bright Lights Staff Recognition

We are very lucky to have such dedicated, caring staff working in our programs!!! Staff & clients are recognized for exemplifying the standards of PBS- Respect for self, other & the environment. The winners are chosen at random via a drawing. Keep those nominations coming in!!
FEBRUARY 2017 WINNERS:

Residential: Heather Raji
Day Services: Terri Nichols
Client: Dona Varrasso

MARCH 2017 WINNERS:

Residential: Pam Sargent
Day Services: Diane Dumont
Client: Marie Poulin

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL

PBS Notable Quote: Everyday may not be good, but there is something good in everyday 😊