

CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS CONNECTOR



All ages. All abilities. All together.

VOL. 3, NO. 2

A PUBLICATION OF CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS

SPRING 2016



Foundation for success

Montilio's Baking Company is one of a number of sites employing Cushing students ages 16-22, helping them to gain valuable work experience. From left, George Montilio and his daughter, Elissa Montilio, join Cushing student William Powers and employees Charlene and Rihanna.

Story, pages 4-5.



Peter Caron utilizes a new SMART Table.

Extreme MAKEOVER CLASSROOM EDITION

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

If learning is shaped by the environment around us, Cardinal Cushing Centers aims to ensure every environment is the very best for its students.

One of the goals of Cushing's capital campaign is to add a new state-of-the-art building to its Hanover location—complete with technologically advanced classrooms

and retail shops. In the meantime, Cushing is taking the necessary steps to modernize its existing classrooms, thanks to the generous support of local donors.

Bryce and Kathi Blair, Hingham residents, stepped up to fund the first model classroom at Cushing, which is equipped with a new laptop, SMART Board and SMART Table. Lesser known than the interactive whiteboard, the

SMART Table is a social, inclusive and captivating collaboration tool that makes it easy to get students excited about learning. The horizontal 360-degree surface makes it convenient for all students to participate, and the pedestal base is fully wheelchair-accessible. The classroom was also totally remodeled with new floors, walls, lighting and furniture.

"It was a nice fit to help to contribute towards the capital campaign in a more immediate manner," said Bryce. "This is a bite-sized transformation while they pursue the larger campaign."

The Blairs were introduced to Cushing through their neighbor, Jody Nash, who serves as chair of the steering committee for Cushing's capital campaign. One of Nash's daughters, Sophie, is enrolled at Cushing. Both Bryce and Kathi visited

See **CLASSROOM** Page 7

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

Cardinal Cushing Centers

405 Washington St.

Hanover, MA 02339

Tel. 781-826-6371

www.cushingcenters.org

Peter O'Meara

Interim President and CEO

pomeara@cushingcenters.org

Jansi Chandler

Vice President of Development

jchandler@cushingcenters.org

Michelle Markowitz

Vice President of Admissions

mmarkowitz@cushingcenters.org

Laurie Maranian

Director of Development

lmaranian@cushingcenters.org

Jenna Smith Gomes

Director of Planned Giving

jgomes@cushingcenters.org

AFFILIATED WITH THE SISTERS OF
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PKH COMMUNICATIONS

pkhcomm@gmail.com

Cushing well positioned to move forward



PETER H. O'MEARA

I am happy to provide an update on recent developments and exciting plans for everyone who lives, learns and works at Cardinal Cushing Centers.

After visiting many of our programs and homes and observing the interaction among

staff, students and residents, it is abundantly clear that our staff are committed, competent and caring. The professional manner with which they carry out their duties is commendable.

In January, Jo Ann Simons left her role as president/CEO at Cushing to become the executive director of Northeast ARC. While Jo Ann is missed, many of the planned changes are a result of her vision and

advocacy. The board of directors is committed to finding a new president/CEO who will build upon the initiatives Jo Ann started. We anticipate that candidates will be presented for recommendation and approval to the board of directors and the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in June. An appointment could be effective in July.

Another critical piece to build a neighborhood is our Capital Campaign to build a new building on Route 53. The design work has begun on the new building on Route 53 which will include new retail sites/stores as well as classrooms. It is anticipated the building will start construction over the next two years. More than \$5.4 million of the \$13 million needed has already been pledged thanks to the efforts of the development staff and our generous supporters.

The Kennedy Building hopefully will go under development in the fall. We are developing a plan to relocate the current occupants in Kennedy. The Kennedy Building will have 37 units of workforce

housing which will further enhance the vision of having typical families living in the Cushing neighborhood.

This edition of the Connector highlights some of the positive developments at Cushing, from our model classroom to this year's Boston Marathon team to our expanding employment program. You will also meet an alumna who celebrated a spiritual milestone.

As we move forward, we are aware that transitions can at times be unnerving. The inherent strength of Cardinal Cushing Centers and the excellence of our staff will guarantee the transition in leadership is smooth. The changes will result in a new level of excellence in service and commitment to the mission as well as the values of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

Peter H. O'Meara is interim president and CEO of Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Save the Date

Springtime
Thursday, June 9, 2016
Seaport Hotel, Boston

*Together, We are
Cardinal Cushing Centers*

Honorees

Richard Cardinal Cushing Award
The Sloane Family/Century Bank

Franciscan Leadership Award
John C. Boucher
Former President & CEO, South Shore Bank

*New this year, our auction has
been upgraded to mobile bidding.*

Milestones achieved

1999 Cushing graduate celebrates Bat Mitzvah

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

When Allison Cohen informed her parents that she wanted her Bat Mitzvah—and followed through on that promise when she stood up to read the Torah in front of family and friends in June—it was a moment that was years in the making.

“It was something I wanted to do for a while,” said Allison, 38, who has Down syndrome. “It’s part of my ancestry. I wanted to be a part of it.”

Preparing for the ceremony requires months of studying Hebrew and developing an understanding of the Torah. Allison spent a year and a half working with a tutor—Cantor Linda Sue Sohn, who has experience working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and who came to her house every Monday. Allison also practiced diligently each day. When she accomplished her goal, it came to little surprise to many Cardinal Cushing Centers staff members who remember Allison fondly.

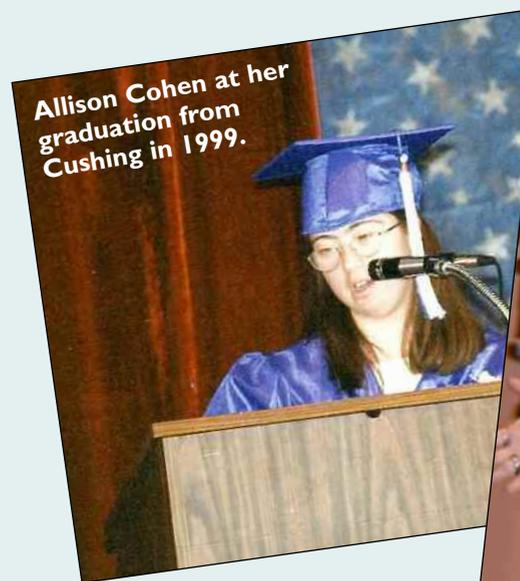
“She was a pistol,” said Cushing teacher Joyce Fanning. “She was a real advocate for herself. She was then, and she still is today.”

A 1999 graduate, Allison brought her infectious enthusiasm and unbridled school spirit to every classroom, stage and athletic arena she graced during her decade at Cushing. She began her journey as a residential student at Cushing in 1989, at age 11. She had previously been enrolled in the Framingham Public Schools, but as she advanced towards the middle- and high-school levels, her parents, Mort and Marlene, decided it was time to pursue private options.

“It was a wonderful experience for her,” said Mort. “She made friends there, had jobs, learned invaluable life skills and built lasting relationships. She still keeps in touch with the staff and has gone back for reunion parties.”

Allison was active as a cheerleader for the varsity basketball team, and even played basketball herself on an all-girls team one year. She also participated in all of the plays and musicals—from “The Sound of Music” to “Cinderella,” “The Music Man” and “Peter Pan,” to name a few.

“She personified Miss Cushing,” said Fanning. “She just loved the school and loved being part of all the activities.”



Allison Cohen at her graduation from Cushing in 1999.



Cohen at her Bat Mitzvah in 2015.

Fanning was first introduced to Allison during her time as a residential staff member.

“She was one of my first residential students,” said Fanning, who also arrived at Cushing in 1989. “She really blossomed during those years.”

When Fanning transitioned to the vocational department five years later, she again spent a good deal of time with Allison, who worked at the Iron Kettle and the staff dining room.

“She knew what jobs she wanted, and one of her strong suits was dealing with the public,” said Fanning. “She was so outgoing, it was a perfect fit.”

When Allison graduated from Cushing, she was selected to be one of the student speakers—a secret she kept from her parents.

“I didn’t even tell them,” said Allison. “I didn’t want them to worry or be nervous. They were shocked when they saw my name on the program.”

“We felt tremendously proud,” said Mort. “Cushing was very good for her.”

Since leaving Cushing, Allison has been

at the Charles River Center in Needham. She lives in a group home in West Newton, and Mort said her time at Cushing living with roommates was a good preparation for that. Allison is a volunteer greeter at the Boston Aquarium on a weekly basis and is employed three days a week at the dining hall at Mount Ida College.

“It’s similar to what I was doing before, clearing and wiping tables, being my careful self,” she said.

Allison recently attended the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress convention in Worcester, held on March 19, and a photo from her Bat Mitzvah was included in a slideshow of individual achievements. She describes her Bat Mitzvah as one of her proudest accomplishments. She completed the ceremony on June 27 at Temple Israel in Natick, followed by a reception at the Crowne Plaza.

“Last summer was the best summer ever,” she said.

Julia making successful transition to public school



Julia Moschella plays in the Swampscott High School band.

BY PAUL HALLORAN

When it comes to her educational experience, Julia Moschella has had the best of both worlds, including four extremely productive years at Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Moschella attended St. Coletta Day School in Braintree in grades 5-8 before returning to her hometown Swampscott High School as a freshman. Now a junior, Moschella is thriving, for which her mother, Kathy, gives Cushing a lot of the credit.

“She wasn’t the same little girl who left Swampscott to go to Cushing,” Kathy said. “We were really pleased. Cushing opened so many doors for her and really worked on building her independence. The staff was fabulous. There were a lot of baby steps that led to a point where she could be part of

Swampscott High School.”

Julia, who has Down syndrome, went to elementary school in Swampscott through grade 4 before transferring to Cushing. In addition to participating in Swampscott High’s Life Skills program and receiving individualized education and dedicated support from her 1:1 aide Carole Rizzo, she plays in the school band and travels with the girls lacrosse team as its biggest fan. She is active in Special Olympics and she has taken modified Spanish and Chinese classes. She will be escorted to the junior prom by Swampscott High senior Riann Flynn.

“It seemed like a leap of faith (coming back to Swampscott), but we thought we should take it,” Kathy said. “We started to think about her roots and where she felt connected. She was able to stay involved

with the YMCA and Special Olympics. A lot of the kids remembered her so it has worked out really well.”

After she graduates, Julia will likely participate in Swampscott’s Ivy program and take college courses at Salem State University. She will continue to acquire job and life skills.

Julia lives in Swampscott with her mother and her father, Tony. She has two older sisters, Cailah, a graduate student at Northeastern, and Brianna, a special education teacher in Boston, and a younger brother, Anthony, a sophomore at Swampscott High.

“When my husband takes her out he comes home and says it’s like being with the mayor,” Kathy said. “Everyone knows her.”

A JOB WELL DONE



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Planning to give

Parents see a bright future at Cushing

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

When Canton residents Sander Lederman and Debora Lynn began financially planning for the future, they knew right away they wanted to try to set aside funds for Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Their daughter, Amanda Lederman, came to Cushing as a day student and is now part of the adult services residential program. She lives with four other young women in a residence named Bella Luna—a spacious apartment in the Hanover community that was renovated in 2013.

“It’s a lovely house and such a nice group of charming, sociable young ladies,” said Sander. “As a father, you worry about your daughter, but I know she’s safe and that she loves it there. She’s very happy,

and she’d be the first to tell you.”

Sander, an attorney, and Debora, a counselor, wanted to ensure their daughter would be taken care of well into the future—along with generations of students to come.

“As people of modest means, we want to make sure there is something left to give to Cushing and we’re taking steps to make that possible,” said Sander. “In our case, Amanda is our only child and we’ve set up a trust for her, but we also want to show our gratitude to Cushing and help it to continue being the wonderful place that it’s been for our daughter.”

With the announcement of the capital campaign, Sander says he is comforted by the fact that Cushing is doing its own necessary planning for the future.

“It absolutely makes me hopeful that the school is growing and thriving,” he said. “As parents, I think we all want to support the institution and keep it healthy. They’re doing so much good work, and we want to keep it going. It’s not just good work; it’s God’s work.”

Amanda, who graduated from Cardinal Cushing School in 2010, is currently pursuing two

different vocational paths in the adult services program. She participates in South Shore Industries and Life Opportunities Unlimited and has been employed by Meals on Wheels and as part of a cleaning crew.

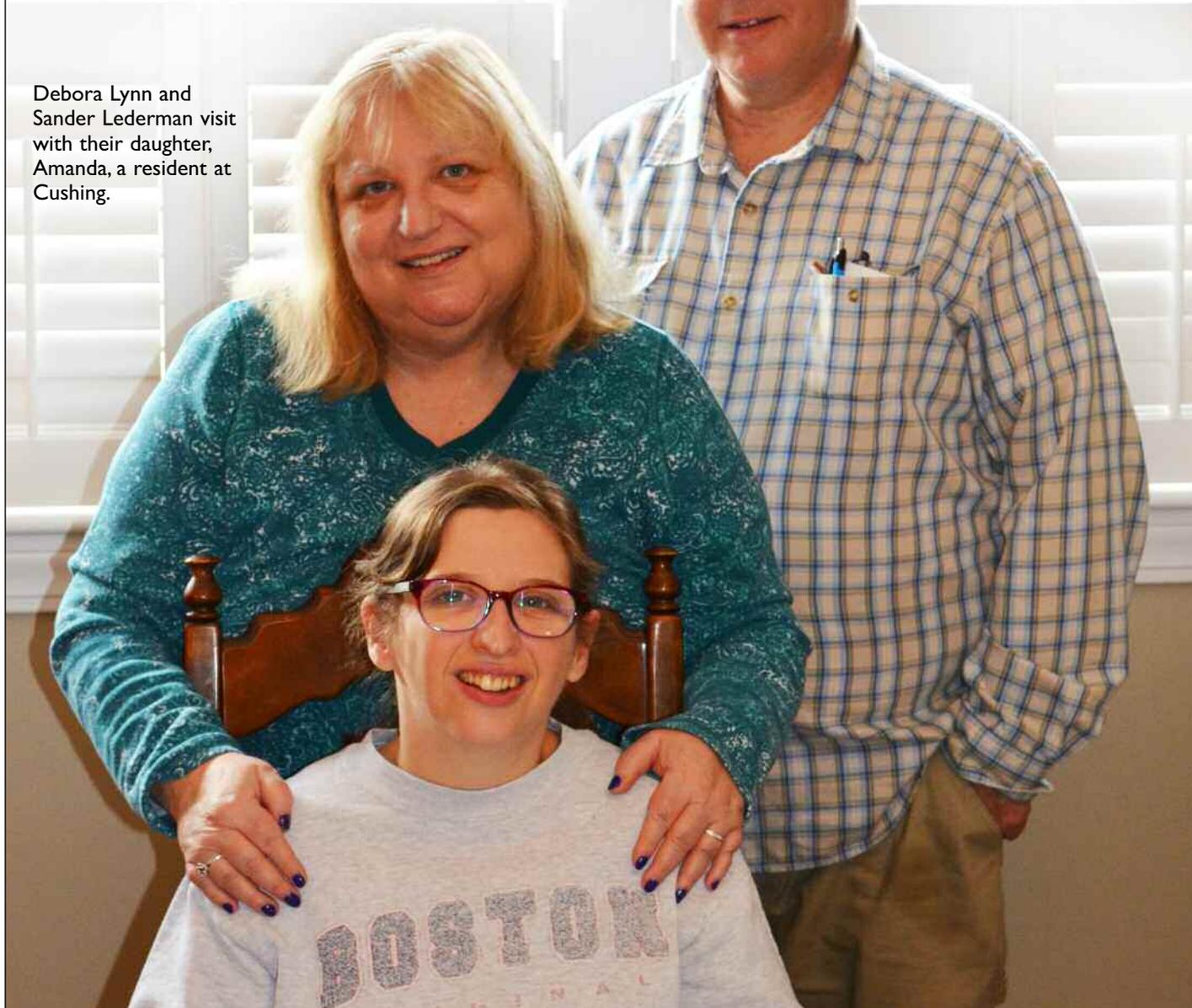
“It’s a program of constant life-skills learning,” said Sander. “Cushing does a very nice job of that. Amanda’s progressed socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually since she’s been there.”

In addition to her learning and employment, Amanda is active in Special Olympics—leaving her mark as one of the stars of the basketball team at Cushing. She also participates in track and field in the spring.

In addition to their own generosity, Sander and Debora are encouraging other family members to consider gifts to Cushing. One of Amanda’s uncles has already made provisions in his will as well.

If you are interested in learning about Planned Giving opportunities at Cardinal Cushing Centers, please contact Jenna Gomes, Director of Planned Giving, at 781-829-1223 or jgomes@cushingcenters.org.

Debora Lynn and Sander Lederman visit with their daughter, Amanda, a resident at Cushing.



How will you be remembered?

BY PATRICK KELLEHER

Sometimes in life there are things bigger than ourselves... things very meaningful, which have a greater purpose... for the people in the world that need us most.

While I was teaching my estate planning and elder law workshop at the local senior center recently, some nice folks asked me a question about the Massachusetts estate “death” tax. I explained that if they die with an estate worth greater than one million dollars in Massachusetts, then their estate will likely owe estate tax (starting with their first dollar) to the Mass. Department of Revenue.

A follow-up question arose: How can we minimize our financial obligation of paying estate tax and give more to our children, grandchildren and charity?

My answer: Do what Oseola McCarty did! She was an African American woman from Mississippi who gave her life savings from cleaning houses to the University of Southern Mississippi to start a scholarship fund for underprivileged children. An “extraordinary woman of sacrifice and frugality,” she gave to something bigger than herself and as a result, her legacy lives on.

Did you know that if you directed part of your estate to Cardinal Cushing Centers it would not only be a tax deductible charitable gift that would reduce or avoid the state “death” tax but would also add important programs and services that benefit people with special needs?

Your gift would be something far bigger than yourself, creating a lasting legacy in your community that will benefit people with intellectual disabilities long after you are gone. You will be remembered for what you did for those who needed it most.

Patrick Kelleher is an attorney in Hanover, Mass. He can be reached at 781-871-7526 or at pat@elderlawcare.com.

The information in this article is for educational and informational purposes only and should not be considered legal or tax advice on any matter. Always consult with a qualified attorney and tax professional.



Four runners, one goal

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Four first-time Boston marathoners will battle 26 miles, 385 yards on Monday, April 18 in an effort to raise critical funds for Cardinal Cushing Centers.

They make up the third—and more importantly, largest—fundraising team for Cushing in the Boston Marathon. In 2014 and 2015, Cushing was given three official numbers from event sponsor John Hancock, and this year a fourth number was added. Already, the group has raised more than \$34,000 in pledges.

One of the runners, Maura Hennessy, has worked as a music therapist at Cushing for the past four years. In that role, she also conducts the chorus and drama productions.

“The students are the most incredible people I have ever met,” said Hennessy, a Hanson resident. “They are strong, resilient, creative, courageous and kind, even when faced with many obstacles that make it challenging to complete tasks we may take for granted. They carry a unique perspective of the world and, in turn, teach me something new every day.”

Hennessy is looking forward to the spirit of the marathon, which will be the Boston Athletic Association’s 120th event.

“I love the energy of the crowd, the runners and the joy everyone shares at races,” she said. “It’s always been a dream of mine to run the Boston Marathon, and I’m beyond grateful for this opportunity to run for the Cardinal Cushing Centers.”

Jennifer Petty, a friend of Hennessy’s, will also be running for Cushing.

“I wanted a chance to give back to those in need of help, both educationally and to thrive in the real world,” said Petty, a Marshfield resident. “I feel Cushing is an amazing organization that works hard to achieve those results. I have dear friends who work there and it’s awesome to see how someone

can make such a difference in someone else’s life. Any interaction I’ve had with Cardinal Cushing Centers has been a warm and welcoming experience. It shows me the students are cared for and the teachers genuinely love the people they work with. I love a positive environment.”

Brockton resident David Farrell has been attempting to qualify for Boston since the tragic bombing of 2013. “The tragedy of the mindless violence experienced by attendees required an answer—mine is a prayer for peace,” he said.

Farrell was connected to Cardinal Cushing Centers through his friend Ted English, who serves on Cushing’s Board of Overseers and has been a long-time supporter.

“His involvement represents commitment and integrity that draw others to the mission,” Farrell said.

David Conner, a Hanover resident, is very familiar with Cushing’s mission. His wife, Nicole, has worked as an administrative assistant at Cushing for the past two years, dealing directly with student programs and services.

“I get to see first-hand all the great work they do in our community,” he said.

An avid runner, Conner has been on the fence about running a full marathon for years.

“When the opportunity presented itself this year to support a great local organization to which we have a personal connection, it seemed like the right time to commit,” said Conner. “I’m looking forward to the experience of being out on the course and taking in all the sights and sounds. I don’t think there’s another race in the world that gets the kind of spectator support that the Boston Marathon gets, so I’m really excited just to be out there on race day.”

To learn more or to support the Cushing team, visit www.crowdrise.com/cccboston2016.



Taking a pause at Heartbreak Hill during their training are Cushing runners David Conner, Jennifer Petty and David Farrell.



Maura Hennessy, a music therapist at Cushing, rounds out this year’s marathon team.

Hingham couple’s donation funds model classroom

CLASSROOM: from Page 1

Cushing for a tour last year and left with an urge to do something.

“Both of us grew up on the South Shore, so we knew of Cushing, but the endorsement from Jody really pushed us to take a closer look,” said Bryce. “It’s hard to leave without a feeling of ‘how can I help?’”

“We know how much it’s meant to the [Nash] family to have this resource so close,” said Kathi. “And education is important to us, so we were happy to

contribute.”

A retired teacher, Kathi taught for a number of years at Rosie’s Place and still volunteers as a tutor for homeless children. Speaking from experience, she recognizes how much a setting can affect both students and teachers.

“A warm, inviting, clean and bright environment is one that’s more conducive to learning,” she said. “Students and teachers feel more valued. In the case of the model classroom, the technology in the room is also a huge help. It gives students the tools to learn in new, innovative ways.”

“The physical transformation was

impressive,” added Bryce. “It exceeded our expectations in terms of what they were able to do with the space and how the students are benefiting.”

Shayna Cleary, who has worked at Cushing for nearly nine years, is thrilled with revamped room.

“The newer equipment and the atmosphere is so much better for learning and engagement,” said Cleary. “The kids are better focused and I have more advanced tools to teach. It reenergizes us all.”

Cleary teaches vocational and life skills to students ages 18-22, who will be moving on to adult services. Six out of the seven

students in her classroom are nonverbal, so the SMART Board and SMART Table are essential to helping them better communicate with each other.

“It’s pretty cool,” said Cleary. “They’re able to do activities together at the SMART Table and work on their social skills. I’m seeing a lot of progress already.”

For more information about donating to Cushing’s model classroom program, please contact Laurie Maranian, Director of Development, at 781-829-1247 or lmarianian@cushingcenters.org



The girls of Clarinda Hall have some fun in front of their photography at their opening reception at Starbucks.



From top to bottom, Jona Ghelli, Cory Milton, Sophie Savage, Sophie Nash and Sarah Martin all enjoy a Starbucks beverage at the opening of their art show.

GIRLS JUST WANT to HAVE FUN

After-school program helps Cushing students interact with community

By CYRUS MOULTON

When the school day is done, the young women in Clarinda Hall have the same goal as any girls...but with the Girls Just Want to Have Fun afterschool program, students experienced a lot more than just fun and games.

"The most rewarding thing for me has been watching their faces...when they smile, they were like, 'I can do this, yes, I got this, I'm strong,'" said Kym Doherty, physical therapist and one of the organizers of the Girls Just Want to Have Fun afterschool program.

Doherty, Speech and Language Pathologist Alexia Scalata, and Occupational Therapy Assistant Amy Segal created the group—named by the students' in reference to the 1983 Cyndi Lauper hit—to help the students in Clarinda Hall interact with and enjoy the amenities of the surrounding community last summer and fall.

The organizers explained that the girls, like many of their student peers, can rely too much on cues from staff when in unfamiliar situations. While perhaps reassuring, such reliance can ultimately hinder the students' ability to advocate for themselves as well as their sense of independence.

"Our job is to give them the support to make them as independent as possible, because they are going to need that as adults," explained Segal.

"It's like a dance," added Doherty. "You give them

support; you step back."

So the group leaders, staff and community partners collaborated to help the young women plan and participate in activities that are not only fun but also introduce them to the community and let them try out some new skills.

For instance, the young women love to read, Doherty said, so they went to the public library and signed up for a library card. A trip to a local farm culminated with the young women visiting a CVS Pharmacy to edit and develop pictures and a subsequent art show and opening reception at a local Starbucks.

"Their photography was stunning to spectacular; people wanted to purchase them" said Segal. "[The girls] are a little more into detail than the whole scene, so it made for unique photography."

The group also visited a yoga studio to try out some poses and a yarn store where they learned how to weave a beverage coaster.

The skills they learned—and the fun they had—is also continuing long after the group. The students are still using the local library, and the school store should have some original photography from the girls available soon, Doherty said.

"They still talk about the group," said Scalata. "They ask me too, when are we going to have the group again."

Ultimately, the students weren't the only girls having fun. "This is like our favorite group ever," said Doherty.

