

Summer
2024

Cushing Community News

A message from President & CEO Michelle Markowitz



Hello and Happy Summer!

As the days get warmer and our trees and flowers bloom, I wanted to check in with everyone and reflect on what a fantastic year we've had so far. I'd especially like to congratulate the 11 wonderful, hard-working people who graduated from Cushing this year. Your Disney "Trip of a Lifetime," prom red carpet and graduation events will stay with you for the rest of your lives, and we couldn't be prouder of your accomplishments!

There have been many other exciting things happening across all program sites – from volunteer groups coming and beautifying the Braintree and Hanover campuses, to baby chicks being raised at our

LOU South location, many improvements to our residences thanks to generous donors and business partnerships, a very successful Springtime Gala event, and a new, more accessible website (if you haven't already, check it out at www.cushingcenters.org).

There are many activities and events to look forward to this Fall – including Cushing's Fun Run and Harvest Festival, and two golf tournaments – one in Marshfield and one in Hingham. Please consider supporting these events, and follow us on Instagram and Facebook to be kept in the loop on all things Cushing.

With much gratitude, sunny beach days and cool dips in the pool,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Markowitz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Markowitz
President & CEO

Cushing Builds Cookie Cart for World Bike Relief

When Cushing Industrial Arts teacher Anne Matheson was approached to build a wooden cart that would help raise money for World Bicycle Relief, she was all in. But first, she wanted to learn more.

World Bicycle Relief notes that nearly one billion people in rural regions of the world live in communities far from the nearest paved road, and have to walk miles each day just to survive. “Distance is a barrier to attending school, receiving healthcare, delivering goods to market and other critical services needed to thrive,” says the organization. In response, WBR raises money to work with poverty-stricken communities to deliver Buffalo Bikes - specially designed, locally assembled, rugged bikes.

Buffalo Bicycles aren't your typical bikes –they are strong, simple, sustainable bikes that can withstand harsh rural conditions. Puncture resistant tires, the ability to carry heavy loads and travel long distances over rugged terrain, and high-quality parts and materials are just some of Buffalo Bike's highlights. What's more – WBR also trains residents to build, fix and maintain these bikes to keep them going. More than 3000 local women and men have been trained and given the tools and spare parts to be

mechanics, in order to keep the buffalo Bikes on the road - offering “life-changing mobility.” This is critical in places like Uganda, where nearly half of the population lives in poverty, and only 25% of children attend secondary school.

After learning about World Bike Relief's mission, Matheson was excited to help and partnered with Steve Devaney – a local philanthropist who had the idea of raising awareness and funds for World Bike Relief. He came to Anne with an idea – if her woodshop team could build a large, mobile cookie cart, he could place it in busy locations, stock it with cookies for sale, and raise money for World Bike Relief.

Anne wasted no time – working with her Industrial Arts students at Cushing School to develop the cookie cart. “It was such a fun project,” stated Matheson. “My students rose to the task, as they always do – even on the tricky wheels of the cart.” The cart took about 5 weeks to build, and Devaney was very happy with the final product. Many cookie carts will be made by different organizations, and Cushing's will be placed at various parishes and senior centers around the South Shore!



Cushing Wins Award at DECA Event

When the Cushing vocational department attended a recent DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) Life Skills event at Scituate High School, the students showcased the vocation and employability skills that they had been working on. The event was attended by several other Special Education school programs, including Scituate, Hingham, Marshfield, and Weymouth; Cushing School was the only private school to attend.

Each attending organization was asked to perform a skit, and Cushing chose to perform a mock customer interaction at the Cushing Café. Students performing included Abby Nix, Bella Testa, Ainsley DiTomaso, Will Egan, Shawn Kelly, and Shea Frost. DECA awarded them the prize for most unique presentation!



Baby Chicks Cared For

Life Opportunities Unlimited (LOU) South adult participants started visiting Stewart Farm in Duxbury over 10 years ago, as part of a collaborative effort with the Stewart Family Foundation of Duxbury and its overseer John McCluskey. The Farm, which has been in operation since 1763, was not only a beautiful place to visit, but the Foundation was also very grateful for the help provided by Cushing adult participants – including harvesting blueberries, and growing produce on the farm. The partnership also included managing the chicken coop - watering, feeding and cleaning the coop nearly 5 days a week. Cushing even used the eggs during cooking preparations within their own nutritional program.

After a hiatus due to Covid, the LOU participants began resuming activities at Stewart Farm in 2023 – aligning with Cushing’s mission for participants to be active members of the community. Eventually the resident chickens at the farm aged, and when discussions began about getting a batch of baby chicks –a new collaboration between Cushing and Stewart Farms was hatched. Cushing would take 5 of the baby chicks and raise them until they were “feathered,” a term that means they’ve become teenagers and can move back to the Farm, and a Farm volunteer offered to take the remaining 4 chicks. The plan was to have them for 5 to 6 weeks.

Leading up to the arrival of the indoor chicken pen, also called a “brooder,” and heat lamps to help raise the chicks, some of the classroom curriculum began to focus on the care and needs of baby chicks. They would need a clean area, fresh water, heat, and – hopefully – some love! The participants were eager to meet the “real thing” and all of the adults were very excited when the chicks arrived.

Once the chicks were settled at LOU, a few were reluctant but many helped clean the pen, hold the chicks and feed them. As the chicks began to grow, however, they got louder, larger, and more lively



– even after just a few weeks. When they started practically jumping out of their brooder, it became clear that they wanted a larger area to roam, preferably outside. They were collected by a friend of Stewart Farm to roam on her property until they were ready to go back to Stewart, to be egg-laying chickens.

Now that the chicks are living back at Stewart Farm, the LOU participants have once again begun caring for them – now feeding them adult food and fruit and produce. They also plan to help expand the roaming area of the chicken coop there, as part of the care for their beloved friends. It is fun to think of the chicks growing into chickens, and living a wonderful life at Stewart Farm – in part, thanks to our Cushing day habilitation adults!