



Cardinal Cushing Centers
All ages. All abilities. All together.

Class of 2026 Commencement Ceremony

June 13, 2026



Welcome

Brent Garcia

Pledge of Allegiance

Dylan Singer

Singing the National Anthem

Former Cushing Teacher Maggie Hall

Commencement Address

Michelle Markowitz

Presentation of Certificates

Kathryna Patukonis

From the President and CEO



Dear Class of 2026,

Today is a celebration of what happens when you refuse to give up.

Every Cardinal Cushing graduate sitting before us has a different story about how they got to this moment, but the one thing they share is that they did not let the hard days stop them or define them.

- They tried again and again when success didn't come easy.
- They showed up when things were confusing and hard.
- They proved that the pace of completion does not define your potential.

Collectively, their journey to this moment has given them the incredible gift of grit. That ability to move forward will be their biggest strength and will serve them for the rest of their lives.

In the education space, we talk about standardized metrics, the importance of grades and timelines. At Cardinal Cushing Centers, we measure success by the courage and resilience it takes to keep trying.

- We measure success in the moments our students mastered tasks that once seemed impossible.
- We measure success in the confidence gained to speak up, to share an opinion or to advocate for yourself. Whether you speak with words, signs or a communication device – your voice matters.
- We measure success in the kindness, empathy and resilience our graduates display every day.

You didn't just complete a curriculum or reach honor roll, you grew into independent, capable young adults who embody the spirit of service and kindness.

To the parents, guardians and families here today — thank you.

Thank you for trusting us with your children and for partnering with us through every milestone and breakthrough. Your fierce advocacy, unconditional love and support are the foundations of everything achieved on this stage.

To our incredible staff, you do not just teach, you transform lives. Thank you for your endless patience, your creativity and for seeing the unique brilliance in every single student.

And, to our graduates, as you leave us to enter new programs, new jobs, new homes and new experiences, do not let anyone else define your limits. The world needs your exact perspective — your kindness, your determination and your voice.

I want you to know you all leave Cardinal Cushing Centers a better place, and all of us who work here, better people. While it was our task to teach and guide you, it is also our job to learn from you.

Your Cushing Family wishes you the very best as you move forward in this next chapter of life. The world outside this room needs more light. Do not ever hide who you are or what you can do. You have so much power to make the world a better, kinder and more inclusive place.

Dream big and keep shining!

SENIOR

SENIOR

2

SENIOR

0

class of

SENIOR

2

SENIOR

6

SENIOR

R



Dayshawn Anderson

Over his nine years at Cushing, Dayshawn has shown tremendous growth in many areas of his life and those he's worked with could not be prouder of all that he has accomplished. He has learned to express himself more effectively, advocate for his needs, and work through difficult situations with greater independence and confidence.

Even during challenging moments, he pushes himself, learns new strategies, and shows resilience.

Dayshawn has overcome obstacles, celebrated achievements, and continues to make progress in ways that once may have seemed impossible. It has been truly rewarding to watch him participate in so many experiences - from school activities and vocational opportunities to community outings and field trips – and each accomplishment reflects the hard work he has put in.

As Dayshawn graduates and begins this next chapter of adulthood, we want him to know how proud we are of everything he has achieved. While he will be missed by staff and peers, we know he will continue to grow and succeed, and we are so excited to see what the future holds for him. His journey is a reminder that growth takes time, patience, courage, and support.

Congratulations, Dayshawn! Never forget how far you have come and how many people are cheering you on every step of the way.

Class of 2026!

So proud of you,

Nichole Schofield



Joseph “Joey” Bettencourt

As Joey prepares to graduate, this is undeniably one of those moments when I’m reminded of why I do what I do. From the very first day he walked through the doors it was clear that he was someone special, with his warm smile and radiant spirit that lights up any room. He approaches each day with a contagious enthusiasm, and watching

his resilience, determination and ability to navigate in the classroom, residential, and vocational has been nothing short of remarkable!

Some of Joey’s most admirable qualities are his unwavering and disciplined commitment to structure and routines, his incredible attention to details, and an intentionality that most people spend a lifetime trying to develop. His schedule is sacred, and if you ever misplace something in Joseph’s workspace he will likely find it, fix it, and reorganize the entire room.

Milestone after milestone, Joseph has risen to every challenge and all of that hard work, dedication, and growth built toward his Trip of a Lifetime to Walt Disney World! Watching him experience true joy, wide-eyed and fully present in every moment, was a beautiful reminder of all the progress he has made over the years.

Joey, as you move forward from this chapter, carry with you the knowledge that you are capable of extraordinary things and the spirit you bring to everything you do are a foundation for the amazing journey ahead. The world is wide open for you, and there is no limit to all the things you can and will accomplish! We are endlessly proud of you, and we are cheering for you every step of the way.

Congratulations, Joey!

Matt Miranda



Elijah Bey

I first met Eli when he was four years old at my previous job. Even from a young age, he stood out as a spirited little boy full of energy and personality, who could also sit patiently while working on a 300-piece puzzle. Over time, we formed a special bond, and he even gave me the nickname “LouLou.”

Whether putting together a puzzle or dancing with a big smile on his face, Eli brings so much joy to those around him and is always lighting up the room. I’ve had the joy of watching him grow into a compassionate, resilient, and thoughtful young man whom we celebrate not just for graduating – but also for the determination, hard work, and strength Eli has shown throughout his journey. Every step forward and every accomplishment along the way are a testament to his perseverance and the effort he has put into becoming who he is today.

Eli, there has always been something very special about you and I am incredibly proud of everything you have achieved; it has been an honor to watch you grow. I have no doubt that you will continue to accomplish amazing things in your new placement. Congratulations on this well-earned triumph.

Best,

Louise Thompson



Griffin Browne

Griffin Browne has been a proud member of the Cardinal Cushing Centers community since starting his journey with us in September 2019. Known for his strong will and attention to detail, Griffin is always advocating for himself and his independence and determination have been inspiring to those around him. He has made so many strong friendships and connections with peers and staff - but especially loved spending time outdoors (especially swinging) with his classmates.

Throughout his time at Cushing, Griffin participated in a wide range of vocational programs, gaining valuable skills in areas such as Central Supply, Unique Boutique, recycling, and the Greenhouse. He was adamant about always finishing his work, which demonstrated reliability and responsibility in every task he took on.

Griffin has left a lasting impact on the Cardinal Cushing community through his love of Beatles albums, scripting his favorite daily thoughts, and his warm-hearted spirit. He will be truly missed by everyone who had the pleasure of working with him.

Griffin, we're all cheering you on as you move forward into your next chapter. Wherever life takes you, we hope you continue being your authentic self. We're so proud of you and will miss you so much!

Elizabeth Abbott and Emma Duffy



Zachary Evans

I started working at Cushing in 2023 and from the first “Belly!” I knew I had a best friend. Zeddy has flourished through copying, communicating through scripting, and learned language. Once you learn to understand him - you are in for a treat.

Zeddy has made enormous progress both vocationally and socially in the short time I’ve known him, and through copying he has really flourished. He’s gone from refusing to go to

work sites to being the first out the door, to do work such as Central Supply, laundry, and the Greenhouse where he repots plants, digs and rakes. He has also worked very hard to learn to order his own food – something he struggled with – but now he can use a full sentence to order his favorite from the Cushing Café – a chocolate chip cookie!

Zeddy also loves to watch YouTube videos of Disney movies and many of his scripts are Disney movies and quotes – which is amazing because when I first met him, he wouldn’t allow anyone to even mention the word Disney. Now, he watches the movie *Cars* for fun, and even went to the movies to watch *Moana 2* with his friends.

Zeddy is moving on to a new home in Rutland, and will make as many beautiful friendships there as he has at Cushing. I can’t wait to see the progress you make at your new home ZeddyBear! Remember it isn’t goodbye – it’s SEE YOU LATER!

Amy Tranter



Anaya Figueroa

Anaya joined Cardinal Cushing in April 2025. Since then, she has grown into an enthusiastic, determined, and intelligent young woman who has built meaningful friendships and strong connections with both staff and peers alike. She loves spending time with and helping her friends, creating art and crafts, singing her favorite songs, running, and swimming.

Anaya thrives when she is active and engaged. She dedicates her full attention and effort to challenging tasks, such as assisting staff when presenting lessons on the Smartboard, using the printer and making copies, sanding wood to create trinkets, and painting items to sell at Unique Boutique.

Anaya has a bright smile and a contagious laugh that brings joy to those around her, and has limitless potential that will allow her to exceed every expectation placed before her. It has been an absolute honor to be her teacher and witness her growth throughout her time at Cushing, and I know she will go on to do amazing, inspiring, and beautiful things.

Anaya, we are all so proud of you and will truly miss you. Keep shining and believing in yourself—you are capable of incredible things!

Elizabeth Abbott



Ian “Yis” Gibson

Ian, better known as Yis or Yisak, joined Cardinal Cushing in October 2022, and I have had the pleasure of knowing him for his entire time here. No one will deny that he had some struggles when he first arrived, and had a hard time settling into his new routine, but through time and patience from all of his staff, Yisak began to flourish.

Yisak is currently in a post-high school setting and enjoys the relaxed pace of his classroom and the various vocational opportunities offered to him – especially Industrial Arts and the Greenhouse where he can work in the garden. In his free time, he is often at the swings, in the pool with his friends, or on community trips to places including the zoo, shows, and the summer ice cream cruise.

Yisak is a very social young man and there was a time when he would look for younger students and persevere on them, but over time and with hard work he can now say hi to them and continue on with his day. He's also working on being obsessive with his favorite staff members, and we are so incredibly proud of how hard he's worked to manage this!

In his time at Cardinal Cushing he has become a large part of the community and his presence will surely be missed. I have no doubt that with a little time he will settle into his new adult placement and do as well there as he has done with us.

All of us at Cushing wish Yisak the best of luck in all of his future endeavors.

Melissa Young



Shawn Kelly

Shawn Kelly is perhaps the nicest student I've ever met here at Cardinal Cushing Centers! He's polite, kind, caring, considerate, and compassionate – and he dedicates his time to making people feel special and appreciated. Without expecting anything in return, he's always offering to help clean the Rec Hall, wash dishes, set up and break down events, volunteer at the Greenhouse, and skim the pool – and he makes others feel good by

holding the door, praising his peers, and saying things like “the best staff ever” and “best coach ever.” His overwhelming positivity is contagious, and his kind deeds often earn him a sweet treat.

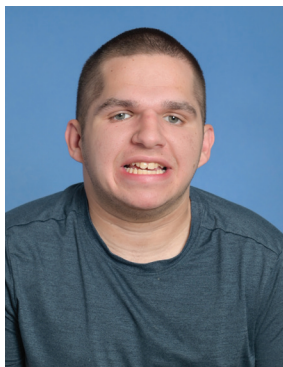
Shawn is also an exceptionally well-rounded athlete! I've coached Shawn on the softball, football, soccer, basketball, and powerlifting teams here at Cushing and he's an incredible team player, works hard, doesn't complain, and listens to his coaches – making him a great role model for the other students. His best sport is powerlifting, and he's one of the strongest athletes I've ever coached with his 150-pound bench press, 255-pound squat, and 325-pound deadlift! He pushes himself to his limits in the gym, and it is truly inspiring to watch him improve each week.

I recently had the privilege of spending a week at Disney with Shawn for our graduates' Trip of a Lifetime and he was easygoing, but also able to stay at the parks all day and maximize what each park had to offer. He's a photogenic individual, so he loved all of the photo-ops as well as our special trip to the WWE Performance Center, where he experienced NXT Live.

Shawn Kelly is a fun and amazing person to spend time with, and we will miss him here at Cardinal Cushing.

Shawn, congrats on your graduation!

Brent Garcia



Aiden King

When Aiden joined Cardinal Cushing Centers in July of 2022, I would not have anticipated just how much growth, joy, laughter, and singing he would bring into our lives. In addition, he gave me my official title of, “Lyndsay from Occupational Therapy.” In July 2023, Aiden transitioned from a day student to a residential student, an impactful step toward his future.

Through every transition and challenge, he became more active, more consistent, more independent, and his kindness and appreciation for others constantly shined through in the little things he said: “You’re such a nice woman,” “I appreciate you,” and everyone’s favorite, “You make my heart happy.”

Aiden quickly became known as one of the school’s most enthusiastic learners and has worked hard at improving daily chores, basic house-keeping, academics, vocational skills, community skills, and demonstrating boundaries and safe interactions. Aiden has participated in school-wide events / talent shows (“All About That Bass” by Meghan Trainor is a favorite) and recreational activities such as karaoke, swimming, and Special Olympics basketball and track & field. He also loves renovation projects on campus – showing admiration for the hard-working crews and equipment.

Aiden’s excitement, humor, and the unique way he adds intonation to his words and people’s names, make it nearly impossible to have a bad day when he is around. His kind-hearted, social, upbeat, and endearing personality make any person lucky to work with him. Just in being himself, Aiden has unintentionally taught me the importance of joy, inclusion, perseverance, and of course, telling “your people” how happy they make you and that you appreciate them.

Congratulations, Aiden — we are so proud of you!

All my best,

Lyndsay Stearns

•

•



Annelise Mauro

Today we celebrate Annelise whose journey has been filled with determination and joy. Through many challenges, Annelise has continued to shine with her positive spirit and kind heart, and her love of word searches shows her tremendous level of patience, focus and problem-solving skills.

Graduation is a milestone that celebrates not only the finishing of school, but also celebrates your hard work and growth. Annelise has accomplished so much, which has made everyone around her proud and believe that her future is bright and filled with endless possibilities. Congratulations on this amazing achievement. Keep shining, creating and believing in yourself.

Annelise, you have so many more successes yet to come!

Lori Grimes





Owen Putlack

Owen has had many triumphs since joining us at Cushing, and has been involved in many things – including earning campus independence and his own access badge. He's also worked many jobs both on and off campus, and played several sports.

On campus, you may have seen Owen working at the Cushing Café - washing and folding laundry, working the cash register, checking

the temperature of the refrigerators, and even baking a few cakes! He's also worked at Central Supply, where he filled orders and made deliveries on his own, and worked at food services cutting vegetables and preparing hamburgers.

Off campus, he's worked at many jobs including making pizza boxes at Blue Moon Pizzeria in Norwell and pulling weeds at Black Rock in Hingham.

Owen has played softball, basketball, volleyball, and soccer, and even played for two basketball teams this year! He has earned many medals at the Special Olympics, and does a great job of representing Cushing!

Owen, we wish you the best of luck on your next adventures and we are so glad we get to call you a friend. You will be missed!

Scott Jones



Dustin Rose

Dustin and I have been working together for about three years, and it has been such an awesome experience. He is creative, funny, smart, a wonderful friend ... the list goes on and on! I have truly enjoyed watching Dustin grow over the years, and I can hardly believe it's time for graduation. He has grown so much, and I am incredibly proud of the young man he has become.

Dustin loves watching videos and playing games, whether it's on the computer, iPad, or phone. Some of his favorites include Thomas & Friends, Curious George, LEGO Star Wars, and Paw Patrol Academy. His excitement and enthusiasm for the things he enjoys always brings a smile to people around him. Dustin has a very fun personality and a great sense of humor that makes him a joy to be around.

This year, Dustin started at the Industrial Arts vocational site, and he absolutely loves it. He has helped create so many projects and always takes great pride in his work and accomplishments. It has been amazing watching his confidence and independence grow as he learns new skills and experiences new opportunities. Dustin is deaf and uses ASL to communicate, and it has been incredible seeing his communication skills continue to grow over the years. Watching him learn new signs and successfully using both ASL and his AAC device has been truly inspiring. He is a rock star!!

Dustin has developed into a wonderful young man, and I will miss him dearly. While I am sad to see him leave Cushing, I am so excited to see where his future takes him. I know he has so many great things ahead of him, and I wish him nothing but happiness, success, and the very best in life.

Olivia Medeiros



Dylan Singer

When I first met Dylan in February of 2019 he was a young boy, so watching him grow into the mature young man he is today has been a blessing — not only in my career, but also in my life. He has consistently worked very hard in school and takes great pride in a variety of vocational programs including Greenhouse, Culinary, and Industrial Arts, where he continues to build valuable skills, gain hands-on experience, and demonstrate a strong work ethic and positive attitude.

Dylan is a funny, smart, and incredibly caring young man with many interests. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his friends and family, listening to music, and singing along to his favorite songs. He loves musicals and enjoys off-campus outings, including Target, bowling, hiking, and trips to Dunkin' for his special drink. He has also proudly participated in Special Olympics, competing in track and field, soccer, and his favorite sport, basketball.

I have had the privilege of being Dylan's 1:1 staff member and someone who will always consider him a forever friend. We've shared countless memories together — like Disney on Ice, the zoo, the Codzilla boat ride and many van rides and ice-cream trips. But Disney is the top memory - watching Dylan navigate each park was so special to watch and he worked incredibly hard to make his trip a success.

I am so excited that you are moving back to New York to be closer to your large and loving family (his mom, dad, two older brothers (Max and Ben), his twin brother Jonah, and his dog Milo), but I will miss you so much and no words will ever fully express how proud I am of you. Have fun on your new journey, and keep being the amazing person you are. Double thumbs up, Dyl!

PEACE OUT CAPTAIN DYLAN!

Your forever friend,

Amanda Cleary



Ryan Snow

Ryan started at St. Coletta Day School more than 10 years ago and has grown so much. While he started middle school on the small St. Coletta campus, he eventually transitioned to the much larger Hanover campus where he took different classes with new peers, faced new challenges and tried new things – including working at the New England Wildlife Center and Starland.

This increased willingness to transition to new situations and go to new places has expanded his independence, including swimming in the pool over the summer and working at Central Supply during the school year. He has even helped collect recycling and get involved at Take 2.

He has also shown a huge increase in his verbal communication this year which has increased his ability to self-advocate for his needs, and has enjoyed sharing all of his interests with staff. His sense of humor and contagious laugh never fail to cheer up the classroom.

Ryan has grown from a boy to a young man during his time here and I know he will bring joy to those around him wherever goes. I wish him the best of luck in his next chapter in life.

Sara Puccia, M.Ed



**Congratulations
Graduates!**



Cardinal Cushing Centers

All ages. All abilities. All together.

Special Thanks

Brent Garcia | Amanda Lunn | Laurie Maranian

Thomas McElman | Amanda Cease | Randy Wiskow