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Message From Mike

Recently, a visitor to Thrive's headquarters remarked, "This place doesn't feel like a nonprofit. It's more of a tech startup environment." I had to agree. There are many ways in which Thrive differs from most other human service providers. Here are just a few:



Over and above is in our DNA. We follow the lead of the individuals and families we serve, who break through barriers and surpass expectations every day. "Above and beyond" and "whatever it takes" are the rule, not the exception when it comes to our commitment to service quality.

We support the whole family. Thrive staff takes the time to get to know family members, caregivers, and anyone else who is central to the lives of the individuals we serve. We have learned that working together we can help loved ones attain heights that were previously perceived as unreachable.

We hire the best and the brightest in our field. Our trusted staff members are second to none in their positive and proactive commitment to providing the absolute highest quality services possible.

We innovate to address unmet needs. Thrive does not simply duplicate what other organizations offer. We strive to understand families' needs that are not being met by anyone else. We then apply our collective experience, creativity, and passion to develop long-term sustainable solutions to those unmet needs. Our services have received national recognition for innovation and positive outcomes.

Thrive's fast-paced, leading-edge approach is similar to those of successful tech startups. Perhaps that is why, in less than three years, we've grown from serving eleven communities to serving 45 today. Thank you for investing in the future of Thrive participants. With that investment, you own a share in their future successes.

Mike

Michael A. Rodrigues, President & CEO



Youth Empowerment

We choose to see gifts before challenges and empower everyone to realize their own greatness.

Life is Better with True Friends

People say that there is nothing on this earth more prized than a true friendship. For many parents of youth with disabilities that is the missing link. Although their children find success in the classroom or at a job, what they are missing is the friend group to meet up with after school or on the weekends. That is where Thrive steps in.

"We saw a need and we are offering programs to meet that need," shared Director of Youth Services Caitlyn Devaney-Fortwengler. "In the past two months alone we have started two new social groups on the weekends, a time when young people socialize with their friends. These groups not only offer a social outlet for kids, but they also offer respite for families who are juggling the daily challenges of life," she added.

Thrive's 18+ ASD Men's group meets every other Friday evening. The group plays video games, watches movies, and talks about their lives. The goal is to create a safe and caring community where true friendships develop. "My favorite part of Men's Group is all the different activities," shared participant Maxwell Palmer. Another new addition occurring on alternating Saturdays is Thrive's Community Cooking. Based on the same premise of forming friendships, the group works together to create and cook a snack or meal. While the food is cooking, they play games, talk, or hang out.

These social groups are not Thrive's only social outlets for children and young adults. The Thrive After School Community (TASC), now in its third year, continues to grow. This year Thrive has a record number of participants, with plans to offer more spaces next year. TASC offers activities such as art, athletic programs, and cooking in an after-school environment that is caring and flexible to participants' needs. "I know it sounds cliché, but

my daughter has thrived at TASC. She has learned new skills and made true friends for the first time," raved Christine Johnson, mother of a TASC participant.

Keep an eye out for additional activities and experiences for these young people. We know that the sooner we

reach a young person, the more positive impact we can have on their lives. By focusing on connecting with others and forming lasting friendships, we not only help families but also create bright moments for our participants, which is our goal here at Thrive. ■



Friends at the Thrive After School Community playing a game of Monopoly.

COMMUNITY LIVING

A home is where we find the space, comfort, and safety to be ourselves and nurture our personal needs.

Leadership in Action

Growing up, Kristen Camacho always wanted to earn her own money. Almost five years ago she moved from her parent's house into one of Thrive's community residences. Kristen shares a carriage house with another participant where she does her laundry, cleans her home, is learning to cook and has recently fulfilled her dream of getting a paying job. Kristen is a proud employee of The Local, a restaurant in Wayland, MA.

Flashback to 2017, Kristen was a future LEADER in Thrive's LEAD (Leadership Experience And Development) initiative. "I learned a lot of things in LEAD, especially how to speak up for myself and to

set goals," Kristen shared. "So, I began setting goals after graduation. My first goal was to get a job and start earning my own money," she added. With the help of a job coach and utilizing her ability to advocate for herself, Kristen soon found a position at The Local.

Working every Saturday night, Kristen assists the servers by assembling the silverware. "Since Saturdays are busy at the restaurant they really need my help," she explained. "My favorite thing about working there is the people. They are so nice to me, and I have made a lot of friends," she added. She *continued on pg. 3 bottom*

Family Focus

We find answers, advocate for change, offer respite, reframe challenges, and celebrate accomplishments.

Sharing Experiences Brings Families Together

Feeling supported by your community is paramount to making it through challenging times. Sharing your knowledge with others creates a community. These concepts are the starting point for the two new Thrive workshop opportunities Coffee & Conversation and Thriving for Knowledge. Both groups offer information and ideas for parents and caregivers of loved ones with developmental or intellectual disabilities, in a relaxed supportive environment.

"We noticed that many of our families were feeling isolated in what they were experiencing with their family member with developmental challenges," said Mike Diggins, Thrive's Family Support Coordinator. "The thought was if we could unite families, they could talk about their experiences and create a community of sharing, helping them feel connected rather than alone," he added. That was the seed for the Coffee & Conversation group. Meeting the second Wednesday of every month at Thrive headquarters, the group is open to all and no registration is required. "We really want families to connect with one another and learn from each other's experiences. No matter how seasoned you are, there is always something new to learn and others can certainly benefit from your knowledge," stated Diggins.

If information on specific services and supports is what you are looking for, check out the Thriving for Knowledge workshop. This workshop meets the third Wednesday of every month and covers topics such as Social Security, MassHealth, housing, domestic benefits, transportation, medical and educational coordination, DDS applications, PCA services and ABA resources. Laurel Hill, attendee and parent raved, "This is the most informative workshop I have ever attended. There are so many resources I did not know about and can't wait to start accessing them

for my son." Presented by a Thrive family support staff member, topics are driven by attendee suggestions and pre-registration is recommended.

Parenting and caregiving isn't easy, but having a support system of people with similar experiences helps.

These workshops reinforce Thrive's goal of bringing families together into a community where they share common ground and create a supportive nurturing environment. If you have ideas or suggestions for topics for other workshops, please email familysupport@icanthrive.org. ■



COMMUNITY LIVING CONTINUED

LEADership in

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credits her success to her participation in the LEAD program and the support she has from the staff at her residence. "The LEAD program is fantastic. Caitlin (Director of LEAD) and the staff at my house are the best because they helped me so much."

Since reaching her goals Kristen has a new aspiration, to give-back. "I want to come back and be a mentor for LEAD. I look forward to sharing what I have learned with the new LEADers," she added. Let's give a standing ovation to Kristen, who LEADs by example and shows us all that when you work hard and set goals, dreams do come true.

SIDE NOTE: Kristen recently represented The Local, at the 2019 MetroWest Work Opportunities Coalition Annual Employer Luncheon. The Local received an "Accommodation Award" which recognized MetroWest employers' efforts and commitment to employing and



Kristen Camacho ready for work.

retaining people with disabilities. It's so exciting that Kristen to receive this award with her co-workers. ■

Social Connections

Providing real opportunities for our participants to become a part of the community around them.

Good Food means Good Mood

It is said that food is the way to a person's heart. On the third Tuesday of every month, almost one-hundred Thrive participants have full hearts thanks to the generosity of Marlboro's Fraternal Order of Eagles #3565. Once a month for the past twenty-five years the group, along with the Boy Scouts and other volunteers, sponsor a pasta dinner for Thrive participants.

The dinner is a highlight of the month for Thrivers. They not only get a tasty pasta dinner with all the works including dessert, they are also treated to an evening of music and dancing. It's a savory evening for both the stomach and the spirit. "The Eagles dinner is delicious. The volunteers work so

hard every month and make it such a special night for us," exclaimed participant Camille Vigeant.

"It's amazing how much these folks have done for us over the past twenty-five years," stated Jim Karami, Thrive's Director of Social and Recreation.

"Their generosity to this community is unmatched. I am sure they can see the joy on our participant's faces each month," he added. Thanks to the Marlboro Eagles and all the volunteers. Because of their generosity over 100 Thrive participants have a special night out every month that they will not soon forget. If you're interested in checking out the Marlboro Eagles dinner, email Jim at jkarami@icanthrive.org. ■



Thrivers socializing at the Eagles Dinner.

OTHER NEWS

Additional ways that Thrive participants and friends go above and beyond every day.

Exciting New Partnership with Triton Financial

For Robert Gustafson, Triton founder, his connection to Thrive stems from an appreciation for how the organization supports their community, just as Triton supports their clients. "I admire Thrive for the help they provide. I also think it's important for businesses to support impactful organizations like Thrive whenever possible," shared Gustafson.

As a passionate and generous supporter, Triton has pledged to donate a significant portion of the annual revenue they receive from clients who come to Triton through Thrive. If you're interested in Triton's services contact them at 508-480-8383 or www.tritonfinancialgroup.com and be sure mention that you're a member of the Thrive community. ■



LEADers Serve the Community

Thrive's LEAD (Leadership Experience And Development) initiative is wrapping up their year long program with a number of community service projects and a graduation celebration. The group recently volunteered at Marlborough Heroes Cup hockey tournament which brings firefighters, police officers, EMS, and military members together to raise money for multiple charities. All are welcome at the 2019 LEAD graduation/celebration planned for June 6, 6:30-8:00 pm at the Marlborough Senior Center. If you are interested in attending email youth@icanthrive.org. ■



Robert Gustafson, President/CEO Triton Financial (left) and Michael Rodrigues, President & CEO Thrive Support & Advocacy.