

icanthrive.org

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Thrivers at the Beat the Heat summer program conquering the zipline and ropes course at Boundless Adventures in Berlin, MA.

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icanthrive.salsalabs.org/emailsignup

Stay up-to-date with what's happening. Sign up for email communication or follow us on social media—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or YouTube.

CHECK OUT

Our New Website Layout

www.icanthrive.org

Holiday Gift Drive

Thrive is sponsoring a Holiday Gift Drive for the children of our direct care staff. If you are interested in purchasing a gift please stop by the office to get a gift tag from our mitten tree or email Patty Carlson at pcarlson@icanthrive.org to get information on donating a gift.

LEARN ABOUT

Upcoming events at

www.icanthrive.org/calendar

Message From Mike

"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Recently I was asked by an interviewer to describe my leadership style. I eagerly took the opportunity to discuss one of my favorite subjects – servant leadership. While the concept of leader as servant is timeless, the term "servant leadership" was coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1970. Early in my career, I was fortunate to become exposed to, and to adopt, the tenets of servant leadership.

The most effective leaders do not see themselves atop a pyramid, issuing directions to those below. Rather, true leaders see an inverted pyramid, understanding that their role is to support, nurture and ensure the success of those above them.

Servant leadership is an essential ingredient to the success of the extended Thrive community. The principles of servant leadership are taught and reinforced at all levels within Thrive, notably including LEAD, our groundbreaking leadership development initiative for young people living with intellectual disabilities.

Here at Thrive, we are humbled by the opportunity to nurture tomorrow's leaders of all abilities. Every day presents new opportunities to lead by placing ourselves at the service of others.

What will you do today to lead and to serve?

Warm regards,

Mike

Mike Rodrigues, President & CEO

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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

Superheroes Among Us

"Being brave isn't the absence of fear. Being brave is having that fear but finding a way through it."

—Bear Grylls

We witness bravery in our participants every day. When you live life with a disability, you have two choices, to be defined by that disability or to define yourself by your ability. Victoria Szarka, a Thrive participant, has chosen the latter. This summer, she showed her amazing and inspiring self by facing her fears head-on. She demonstrated to us all what true bravery is and that by believing in yourself, anything is possible.

To know Victoria is to know that she loves superheroes. Every day she aspires to model herself after superhero traits like strength, self-confidence, and determination. One Friday afternoon this summer, at Boundless Adventures in Berlin,

she became the real superhero that she has always aspired to be. On that day, she faced her fears head-on. She climbed the ladder to the zipline and ropes course and let her body fly through the sky. At that moment, she didn't lose her fear but realized that being brave enough to face those fears will help her face other difficult times with confidence.

"I was so nervous about going to Boundless Adventures. Everyone there was so supportive of me and helped me succeed; my friends, the Thrive staff, and the workers. I now have more self-confidence to try new experiences. I know that even though it makes me nervous, I can still do it," Victoria shared. Ziplining was just the tip of the iceberg for Victoria. She's now involved with Thrive's martial arts program and is excited to face new opportunities with the bravery of a true superhero. ■



Thriver Victoria Szarka getting ready to face her fear as the superwoman she is.

FAMILIES FOCUS

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

Thrive Around Town



Thriver Cynthia Washer enjoying The Butterfly Place.

Looking to try a gym workout, stroll through indoor flower gardens, or take in the beauty of artistic masterpieces? Thanks to a new initiative through Thrive's Family Support Center, participants can take advantage of these activities. Known as Thrive Around Town, the program offers free passes to several local hot spots for Thrive's respite staff and the participants they support. "The objective of the program is to get our participants and staff out in the community and create new experiences for them," said Thrive Director of Individual Support Nanette Goldstein.

As the seasons change, finding activities to do in the winter is not always easy. Thrive Around Town offers passes to the Boroughs Family Branch YMCA in Westborough, the Tower Hill Botanical

Garden in Boylston, The Butterfly Place in Westford, and the Worcester Art Museum. "Our goal is to continue to grow the program by including venues that have outdoor experiences for the spring," added Thrive Director of Family Support Mike Diggins.

"I loved all the colors and different butterflies we saw at The Butterfly Place. There were butterflies everywhere, and they even landed on me," raved Thrive participant Cynthia Washer. When looking ahead to winter, Cynthia added, "I can't wait to check out the indoor gardens at Tower Hill Botanical Garden." Thrive Around Town is part of Thrive's drop-in Family Support Center, that offers assistance, resources, and services for families and their loved ones with intellectual/developmental disabilities. ■

COMMUNITY LIVING

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

Entrepreneurial Thrivers Helping Others

Hotdogs finished steaming, burgers stopped sizzling, and snacks are loaded in the van. It's Wednesday night, and everyone at Thrive's Pleasant Street residence is heading to Club Thrive, not just to socialize and dance, but to help others in need. Throughout October, the staff and participants from Pleasant Street worked together, preparing then selling snacks to raise money for victims of Hurricane Dorian.

"Our folks love to help others, and we thought this would be a great opportunity to get everyone involved. We talked as a group about Hurricane Dorian and how many had lost their homes. After that, everyone jumped on board, wanting to help," stated Pleasant Street

Program Director Michelle Lariviere. "Helping others makes me feel good. We knew people needed help after the hurricane, so we wanted to raise as much as we could to help them build and repair their homes," stated Thriver Amy Rieth. "We had lots of snacks for people to buy, and they loved them. We raised more than \$300 for the American Red Cross Hurricane Dorian Fund," she boasted.

This is not the first time the Thrivers at Pleasant Street stepped up for others. Just in the last year alone, they coordinated a sock drive and joined forces to collect gifts for the holidays. We know that by helping others, we help ourselves. Keeping that in mind, there is a plan to continue this spirit of giving this holiday season and beyond. ■



Self-Advocacy Group President Christine Achilles with conference presenter at the 21st Annual Self-Advocacy Conference.

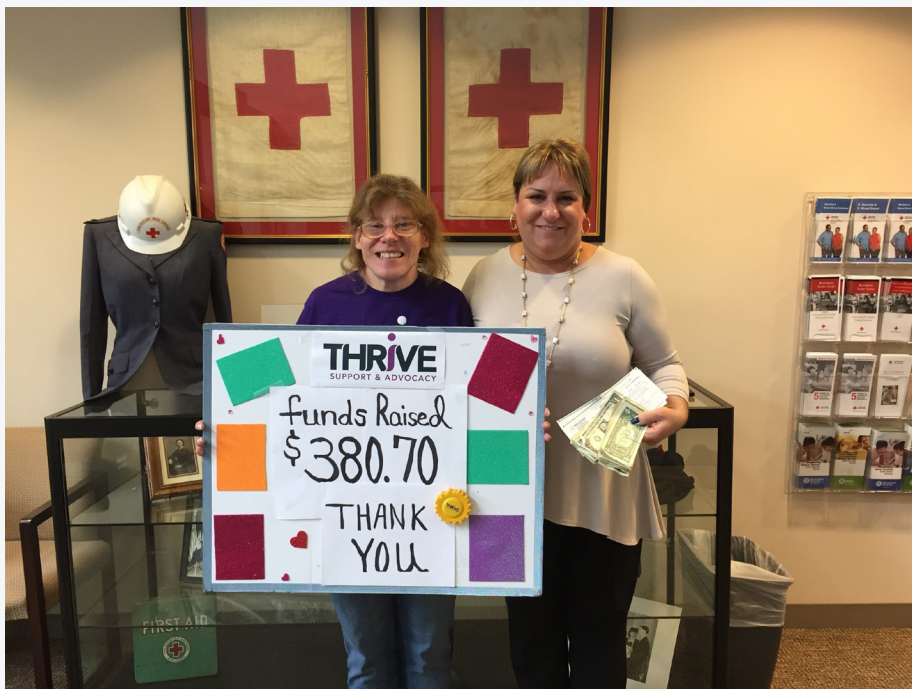
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

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

A New Vision for Thrive's Self-Advocacy Group

Self-advocacy, as defined by dictionary.com, "as the action of representing oneself or one's views or interests." Thrive's Self-Advocacy Group has been working for many years with that definition as their foundation. In recent months, the group brought in two new staff advisors, Nicole Dunlop, Direct Care Staff at Thrive's Pleasant Street Residence and George Kent, Thrive Training and Quality Coordinator. The two are eager to clarify the vision and mission of the group to

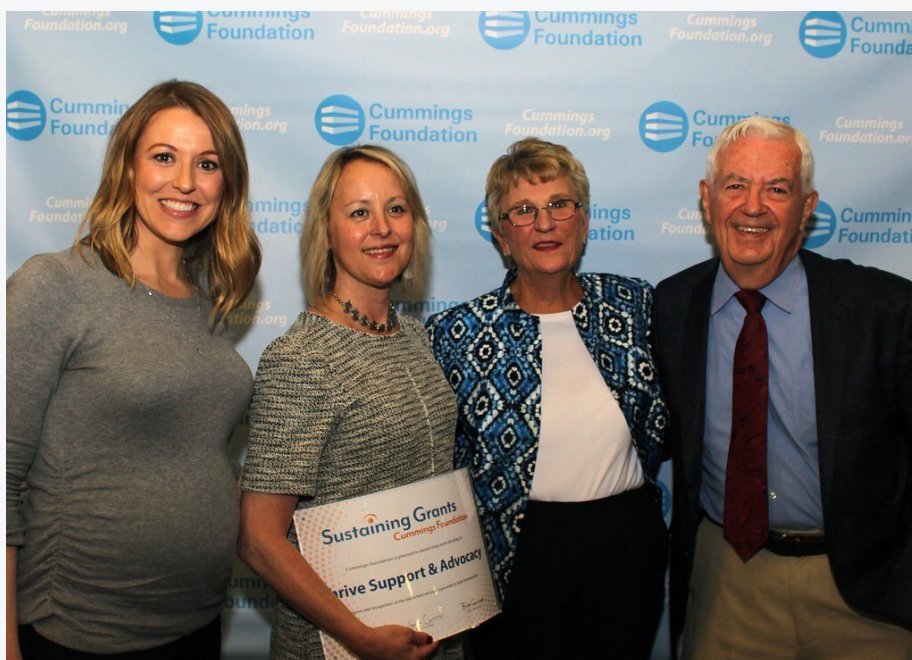
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Amy Rieth presenting fundraising check to staff member at American Red Cross in Worcester Massachusetts to aid victims of Hurricane Dorian.

OTHER NEWS

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



From Left Caitlin Devaney-Fortwengler – Thrive, Denise Vojackova-Karami – Thrive, Joyce Cummings – Cummings Foundation, Bill Cummings – Cummings Foundation

Thrive Receives \$250,000 Grant

Following a lengthy evaluation process, Thrive Support & Advocacy was one of just fifty organizations from across Massachusetts chosen to receive a \$250,000 ten-year Cummings Foundation Sustaining Grant. The grant is aimed at supporting Thrive's youth initiatives.

"The Thrive community is humbled and honored by The Cummings Foundation's generosity, and the faith and trust it has placed in Thrive. The Foundation's ten-year investment will enable Thrive to accelerate and expand our efforts to develop sustainable and scalable solutions to the unmet needs of youth with developmental disabilities and their families. We are grateful for The Cummings Foundation's continued partnership and support," said Thrive President & CEO, Michael Rodriguez.

The Cummings Foundation has awarded nearly \$250 million in grants to date in the greater Boston area. Sustaining Grant winners were selected by a 33-member volunteer

committee, which included former state legislators, CEOs of local companies, and a retired justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, among many others. Committee members met with each nonprofit twice to learn how they would use a ten-year grant to advance their mission.

Support from The Cummings Foundation grant will enable Thrive to reach more families and offer more opportunities to young people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. ■

OPPORTUNITIES

LEAD Satellite

Thrive's Leadership Experience And Development initiative is expanding to Waltham! LEAD/Waltham will meet Tuesdays starting Jan. 2020. We are looking for future LEADers and mentors to join the program. Thrive's LEAD/Marlborough is already in full swing for the 2019-2020 year. Email cdfortwengler@icanthrive.org for more information. ■

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

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Self-Advocacy

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make it a positive experience for all.

Closing out 2019, the group, led by the new advisors plus President Christine Achilles and Vice President Sandra Semenuk, will be defining goals for 2020. The group recently attended the 21st Annual Self-Advocacy Conference in Framingham, MA, where they left feeling empowered about the future. With the help of DDS Human Rights Specialist Jennifer Benoit, the members will be creating a written vision/mission and defining the roles of group members.

"I am excited to have Nicole and George helping us. They have been helpful so far asking a lot of good questions about what we do. We are currently looking for new members who will work hard to make the group a success," noted Christine. If anyone is interested in learning more about self-advocacy and being a part of the group, email Nicole Dunlop at ndunlop@icanthrive.org or George Kent at gkent@icanthrive.org. The group meets the second Tuesday of each month from 4:30-6:00 pm at Thrive Support & Advocacy, 65 Boston Post Rd. West, Suite 220, Marlborough. ■

Job Opportunities

We're hiring Adult Companions and Direct Care Staff! Visit our Open House on Thurs. Nov. 14 from 10-1 or Tues. Nov. 19 from 2-5 at 65 Boston Post Road W, Suite 220, Marlborough, MA. If you can't make the open house, email Human Resources Coordinator Walt Andrews at wandrews@icanthrive.org for more information or to receive an application. ■