

QUARTERLY IN VIABILITY

CONGRATULATIONS! THREE-YEAR CARF ACCREDITATION



Top: **VIABILITY** staff in February enjoy a celebratory meal at The Hotel Northampton in Northampton, Massachusetts, to celebrate the Three-Year Accreditation achievement. Right: **VIABILITY** President and CEO Dick Venne speaks at the event.

VIABILITY has been issued a Three-Year Accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

CARF is an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services, enhancing the lives of people served worldwide. Accreditation consists of ongoing consultation and in-depth onsite reviews to help

organizations achieve the highest quality of care for their members. A Three-Year Accreditation is an achievement that indicates **VIABILITY's** dedication and commitment to improving the quality of life for each of its members.

Among the areas of strength, **VIABILITY** was commended for: a dynamic and dedicated board of directors

and leadership team; its cultural competency and commitment to diversity and inclusion; its strong relationships with both national and local businesses, funding sources, and community partners; its well-trained and skilled staff that take a mission driven, person-centered approach to their work; a positive corporate culture that provides staff with opportunities



for personal and professional growth; and testimonials from its members that their lives would truly not be the same without **VIABILITY's** staff and services.

IN MEMORY OF KATHY MOYLAN

Kathy Moylan, **VIABILITY's** executive assistant to the president, passed away on Sunday, Feb. 24, in Northampton, Massachusetts, with her family by her side.

Kathy worked for the organization as a devoted advocate for people with disabilities for more than 35 years. Her journey began in the employment and training program in Holyoke, Massachusetts. She also served as Human Rights coordinator and chair of the Human Rights Committee, in addition to her position as executive assistant; or as she and Dick referred to her role as Dick's "job coach."

Kathy was known by her peers as a loyal and caring friend, and colleague.

She had a kind nature and sense of humor, plus an absolute dedication to the members we serve. Kathy was a welcomed



Kathy Moylan

and familiar face of the organization, often taking on the responsibility of organizing celebrations, and fundraising events. She was genuinely skilled at bringing people throughout the community together to share in **VIABILITY's** mission, and did so without expectation of praise or recognition. Kathy was a central part of the **VIABILITY** (formerly Community Enterprises) team. She will be affectionately remembered by its staff, board, and members.



A message from

Dick Venne

VIABILITY President and CEO

Hello from **VIABILITY!** In celebration of **VIABILITY's** second anniversary, we are launching a quarterly newsletter.

Our first issue offers a variety of stories and events that have taken place during the past few months. **VIABILITY** is rapidly becoming the company we dreamed it could be and I am thrilled to say this is directly attributed to our tremendous employees.

We are starting our new Florida branch and hired the director on July 1. Programs are growing and referrals are expanding in all areas. I am looking forward to a great third year of **VIABILITY**. More news to come ...

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FORUM HOUSE ACCEPTS GENEROUS DONATION

Forum House representatives accepted a generous annual donation from the Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival committee on Thursday, June 13, at the Holyoke Council on Aging in Holyoke, Massachusetts. The committee presented clubhouse personnel with an oversized check for \$15,000, proceeds earned from last year's event. Approximately 25 people, including **VIABILITY** President and CEO Dick Venne, other **VIABILITY** staff, Forum House members, and 22News attended the event in the upstairs recreation room at 291 Pine St.

"On behalf of **VIABILITY** and Forum House, I can't thank you enough for your generosity and support," said Dick. "We're happy to be a beneficiary, and we're happy to participate and help out at the festival."

Sally English, regional clubhouse director for Forum House in Westfield, Massachusetts; Odyssey House in Holyoke; and Lighthouse in Springfield, Massachusetts; agreed and spoke of the tremendous relationship between the festival committee and Forum House members, who regularly volunteer at the annual event manning the pub and helping assemble tents. She said it's no small feat and takes approximately 35 Forum House



From left to right: Regional Clubhouse Director for Forum House, Odyssey House, and Lighthouse Sally English; Forum House member John, and Peter Langmore, of the Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival Committee, stand with an oversized check made out to the clubhouse for \$15,000 on June 13 at the Holyoke Council on Aging at 291 Pine St. in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

members to adequately do the task they perform each year.

To see 22News coverage of the event, go to www.wvlp.com/news/glasgow-lands-scottish-festival-committee-presents-local-non-profits-with-checks/

"Every year, we talk about how incredible it is, this partnership we have with the Glasgow Lands Scottish Festival to be able to work together to do this," Sally said. "One of the cool things about Forum House is we are a clubhouse model and we actually decide how we spend the money every year ... it's really a way for us to do a lot of extra stuff that we may not otherwise."

Forum House is one of **VIABILITY's** six clubhouses located throughout the state.

Clubhouses are accredited by Clubhouse International and CARF International. Formerly known as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, CARF provides recognition and recommendations for best practices in the health and human service industry.

John, a member of Forum House since 1994, regularly volunteers at the Scottish festival and said he enjoys interacting with the community, listening to the music, and watching people enjoy themselves.

"The festival enables us to receive money, which helps us 'get it done,'" John said referring to the festival volunteer crew motto of "Have fun, but get it done."

VIABILITY GIVES BACK



From left to right: Associate Director Lisa Kenney and Director Victoria Fisher sit in front of the food collected at the Community Living Program in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The food was later donated to the Berkshire Dream Center, also in Pittsfield. Following the longest federal government shutdown in history, **VIABILITY** staff and clubhouse members participated in a food drive, raising more than 35 pounds in nonperishable foods and hygiene products for pantries in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2019

BETTER TOGETHER: **VIABILITY** TEAM GRADUATES FROM INNOVATION ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

VIABILITY staff, Cody Andrews, Julie Lococo, James O'Neill, and Monique Whiting recently graduated from the Innovation Accelerator program, a Western Massachusetts-based initiative aimed at helping nonprofits build a culture of innovation and maintain financial sustainability through diverse funding opportunities. Our four **VIABILITY** teammates are 2019 graduates of the program, which challenges nonprofits to formulate an idea that meets an identified customer need and then develop their concept into a service or product. Our team chose to create a web-based training on disability inclusion for the customers of **VIABILITY**'s Corporate Inclusion Solutions team.

The Innovation Accelerator program is derived from an idea to market a technique that originated in the Silicon Valley, California. The purpose of Innovation Accelerator is to challenge nonprofits to think outside of the proverbial box and work toward securing unrestricted revenue streams. This is directly in line with **VIABILITY**'s strategic goal of regularly intro-



From left: Cody Andrews, Julie Lococo, Monique Whiting, and James O'Neill on May 6 present their product in a pitch to a panel of funders and members of the business community, similar to what is done on ABC's "Shark Tank" TV show.

ducing innovative and emerging services that diversify our portfolio. The program allows our staff to tap into their ingenuity and leadership skills while representing our organization in a well-developed pitch to funding sources that are an alternative to state monies; this serves the dual purpose of providing professional development opportunities for our staff while creating strategic ways to reach our revenue goals.

"It was a lot of work, took a lot of time, and we did a lot of interviews and presentations," said Cody, Pre-ETS program supervisor. "This program pushes you out of your comfort zone,

but it's rewarding, and I gained so many skills in a short amount of time."

The group first came together in October 2018 and met every other week. They attended classes and lectures by guest speakers, conducted research, and collaborated with the other participating organizations and group facilitators on ideas and strategies. Our **VIABILITY** team participated in the course with Community Education Project, a nonprofit based in Holyoke, Massachusetts, looking to provide English to Spanish document translations; and Xernai, a for-profit start-up business based in Florence, Massachu-

setts, that focuses on mindfulness, meditations, and motivations. The groups, on several occasions, presented their product in a pitch to a panel of funders and members of the business community, similar to what is done on ABC's "Shark Tank" TV show. To illustrate their pitch, the **VIABILITY** team told the story of Tom Gustafson, Sephora Human Resources Logistics vice president. Their distribution center in Mississippi had seen high turnover and low productivity. As a result, the bottom line had been negatively affected. Tom heard about our disability inclusion training pro-

gram at the Walgreens Distribution Center in Connecticut. After an initial tour of the Walgreens center and seeing the program in action, Sephora partnered with us to implement the training program at their Mississippi center.

More than a dozen companies nationwide are impressed with our disability inclusion training program and have contacted us to begin implementing our specific training model. To meet this growing demand, our Corporate Inclusion Solutions staff flies across the United States regularly for onsite trainings. While it's working for now, the team noted in-person trainings are not a permanent solution. In fact, our processes could be streamlined, and our most up-to-date trainings could be experienced by more people if they were available online.

Through Innovation Accelerator, Cody, Julie, James, and Monique conducted research and interviewed more than 80 people to find a way to scale our disability inclusion training. The team identified their competitors and had a dozen of their hypotheses disproven. They then reworked their plan several times before finalizing their strategy, which includes various levels of web-based training and customer support

that allows us to scale our business appropriately while maintaining successful outcomes. One of the panelists our team presented to was impressed by the outcomes data we shared and commented on the transformative cultural shift that corporate partners were experiencing through our inclusion training; they're not just seeing better outcomes from people with disabilities that we are placing there, employees without disabilities are performing better as well. Overall, the team had a strong final presentation and readily answered questions posed to them from the panelists.

Following the team's final presentation with the "sharks" on May 6, which was also the graduation from the course, there was an open forum for comments and feedback. During that time one of the panelists commended **VIABILITY** President and CEO Dick Venne for encouraging his staff to participate in the Innovation Accelerator and said, "all nonprofits should be doing what you are."

Since graduation, Cody said **VIABILITY** leadership is in contact with funders about backing the project and next steps include recruiting a consultant to create and test a pilot version of the web-based training.

BETTER TOGETHER: **PYRAMID** MEMBER ENJOYS INTERACTING WITH COMMUNITY, VOLUNTEERING

Since Eli began attending Pyramid's day habilitation program in Springfield, Massachusetts, roughly a year ago, he's discovered new interests and has proven he can contribute to society; that is in large part to the staff and enhanced staff who regularly interact with him. So far, Eli, a 43-year-old nonverbal member, has found he enjoys gardening and packing boxes at The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Hatfield.



Eli adds filling material to a box at The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Hatfield.

"He likes to go out. He likes to ride in the van. He likes to be engaged. He likes to do tactile things," said Brad Pellissier, Pyramid project director. "So, we thought it would be worth a try to see how he did going out and doing various activities.

"One of the challenges we face in working with people who have very limited communication ability is frequently we'll introduce them to new experiences and it's almost like a trial and error system," Brad said.

Through trial and error, his team found the Holyoke, Massachusetts, native likes to carry things out to the assorted gardens around the building at 60 Brookdale Drive. He'll help move stuff around as he likes to feel textures. Eli will also observe as others work on the gardens.

The staff then decided to introduce him to volunteer work. Since there is already a program in place to allow Pyramid members to help out at the food bank, personnel thought it might be a good fit. They were right and he visits the organization with three to four other members a couple of times a month for a few hours. He's been going for approximately six months.

"Eli is always excited to go and is fond of adding filler material to make sure food is safely packed," said Raquel Rivera, a life skills support professional.

Brad said these experiences not only benefit Eli, but the community around him.

"When you see someone, you see the differences. When you meet someone, you see the similarities," Brad said. "These are opportunities for our members to meet the world in a natural environment. We're building a community that's accepting."

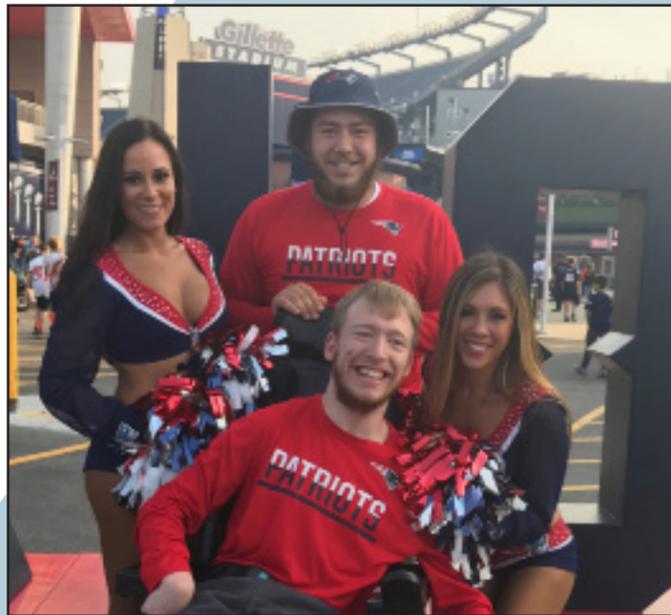
BETTER TOGETHER: MEMBER WITH CEREBRAL PALSY SAYS HE'S A NORMAL GUY

Spend an hour with Joe and it's easy to see why his family, personal care attendants, and **VIABILITY** Case Manager Leonor "Lee" Maagero adore the 24-year-old college senior from Wilbraham, Massachusetts, who insists he's just a normal guy. Yet, his charming personality and witty sense of humor are only part of the story.

Born Joseph Steven, he is the oldest of three children and the only one in his family with a physical disability. At childbirth, Joe was deprived of oxygen for too long, which caused damage to the part of his brain that controls movement, muscle tone, balance, and posture. As a result, he has cerebral palsy – a disability that affects a person's ability to move. Joe uses a powered wheelchair and benefits from support with self-care activities. But when it comes to wit



Joe recently at his home in Wilbraham, Massachusetts.



Joe (front row) and his brother John pose with New England Patriots cheerleaders at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, in August 2018.

and humor, Joe is on his game.

Lee, a senior living coordinator with our Community Living team at 979 Dickinson St. in Springfield, Massachusetts, met Joe five years ago and has since become an important part of his support team. Joe has been an important part of Lee's work as well; Lee's first vocational rehabilitation assessment on the job was with Joe. **VIABILITY** staff work collaboratively with members during the intake process to determine their skills and capabilities, and to help members set personal goals for employment and/or higher education. During the initial conversation, Lee said she remembers asking Joseph,

as she calls him, what he wanted other people to know about him. He answered, "that I'm normal and I'm smart."

"That just stayed with me because it's so profound," Lee said. "He's so smart and funny. He's an old soul in a young body."

After working together to establish Joe's goals for higher education during the assessment, Lee continued to be an advocate for Joe and his family. Joe soon began his college education at Westfield State University in Westfield, Massachusetts, and Lee often discussed matters with university officials that affected the freshman's experience, particularly when it came to living on campus.

In order to experience college fully, Joe chose to live in the dorms, which meant working with university officials to ensure Joe had appropriate housing accommodations and several personal care attendants, or PCAs, who assist him with daily self-care activities and homework assignments. He also receives support from Lee to help resolve issues when his mom, Nancy, can't be there due to other obligations or when university officials insist Nancy not be present because Joe is legally an adult.

"That was Joseph's first time away from home and he was new to being out on his own. He was very quiet and very soft-spoken, and didn't ask for anything," Lee said.

Lee has since encouraged Joe to speak up for himself when he feels he is treated unfairly and Joe has become more assertive in advocating for himself and communicating his needs with others.

"I have been in meetings with this guy where he takes over the room and I'm like, amazed," Lee said. "I go back to that meeting where he had an advisor who wasn't helpful at all. We had to have a meeting with the Dean of Faculty, and I thought I was going to have to do a lot of the talking. Joseph

took over clearly expressed how he felt and what he needed from the university. He was confident and funny. I was just blown out of the water."

Carlos Feliciano, one of Joe's PCAs who's been working with the family for the past five months, agreed and spoke of the adversity Joey, as he calls him, faces.

"There is a stigma, and that's what he has to go up against," Carlos said. "Just because he may move or speak differently because of his muscle range and function, does not mean he's not a normal 24-year-old man. This dude is hilarious."

After two years in the dorm, Joe decided to move back home. He realized, although it had its favorable moments, the lifestyle of staying up all night and still making it to early morning classes, wasn't for him.

The Wilbraham house is outfitted to best support Joe, with a ramp from the living room to the lower-level garage and a button that automatically opens the door leading to the garage from the house – a suggestion from Lee.

As Joe prepares for his senior year studying global studies with a concentration in social work, he said he has several activities planned for the summer, including a retreat and several day trips planned that he is looking forward to, just like any other normal 24-year-old guy.

"BETTER TOGETHER" MORE THAN A MOTTO SIBLING MEMBERS FIND A FAMILY WITH NEW CAREGIVER



Top: from left: Clarence, Fay, and Alees pose around the kitchen table in Fay's Springfield, Massachusetts, house. Bottom: Clarence cooking in Fay's house.



We are "BETTER TOGETHER." Just ask Clarence, Alees, Fay, Lisha, and the Community Living team at 979 Dickinson St., Springfield, Massachusetts. For the past two-and-a-half years, Clarence and Alees (pronounced Uh-lees) have been matched with Fay, their primary caregiver, Lisha, an alternate caregiver, and John, a direct care worker who takes Clarence on weekly outings to the movies, retail stores, and on walks.

"It's a really good match for them. Better than what we could have expected," said Eileen McKeever, program manager of **VIABILITY**'s Community Living program.

Several years ago, Clarence and Alees found themselves in quite the predicament. Their beloved caretaker, Rudy, had passed away and none of the new guardians assigned to the sibling pair were working out. There was a fear the duo would be separated or forced to move out of their family home on College Street in Springfield, which their late mother had left to them.

Clarence, a man in his 60s, battled high blood pressure, struggled with his weight, and was a borderline diabetic. He has intellectual disabilities, a speech impediment, and a limited vocabulary. Due to his building frustration with his living situation and not having a caregiver who understood his support needs, Clarence became combative. Alees, also in her 60s, is unsuspecting, im-

pressionable, and overly trusting, which often proved detrimental in instances of neglect or boundary issues. The Community Living team had found several caretakers, but none were the right fit. Furthermore, other prospective caregivers had changed their minds midway through the application process. The search continued for well over a year.

One day, a caretaker came into the building looking for work. With her, she brought her friend Fay. Fay wasn't looking for a job, but opportunity found Fay.

After passing a background check, a home visit, and filling out the necessary paperwork, Fay met Clarence and Alees. Soon, their visits became more frequent until one day, the siblings moved in to Fay's Springfield home.

Now, they're a family. "With Fay, it's home. She's made Clarence and Alees part of her family. She includes them in family functions, as do Fay's grown-up daughters who live down the street," Eileen said. "They get a lot of attention. We were really fortunate to find Fay. There's an excellent collaboration between Fay, Fay's alternate Lisha, and John, Clarence's part-time direct care worker. None of this works without the other piece," Eileen said.

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STATE VIP VISITS FORUM HOUSE

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES MEETS WITH MEMBERS, STAFF

Forum House in Westfield, Massachusetts, recently hosted Marylou Sudders, Massachusetts secretary of Health and Human Services. Secretary Sudders sat with members and staff Feb. 22 to hear their personal experiences with the clubhouse and mental health services.

"It is excellent to have her as a supporter of clubhouses," said John L., a member. "She was very professional, sincere, and caring."

Members shared their experiences about returning to work while trying to maintain essential health care benefits provided by programs such as MassHealth and OneCare. Through these stories, Secretary Sudders heard about the essential



From left to right: Massachusetts Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, left, stands with member John, Forum House Director Sally English, and VIABILITY President and CEO Dick Venne Feb. 22 at Forum House in Westfield, Massachusetts.

aspects of recovery that Forum House provides, including skills development, job placements, benefits counseling, and relationship building.

John M., a member who shared his journey through the mental health system of MassHealth, Medicare, and

OneCare said he was glad to share his story and that the secretary was understanding.

"She said she has a direct connection to OneCare and vowed to assist me with OneCare should I need it," John said. "She was happy that the services offered to those with mental health issues and homelessness were able to get me housing."

Secretary Sudders, who served as commissioner of Massachusetts Department of Mental Health from 1996-2003, is a fierce advocate for those with mental health conditions. While at Forum House, she shared her personal experiences supporting family members with mental health conditions and maintaining their employment. As secretary, she has been a supporter of health care initiatives aimed at providing increased services to those with disabilities, as well as efforts to address the opioid epidemic.

Members also shared the unique opportunities they have had with Forum House, such as working as a Salvation Army bell ringer dressed as Santa Claus and contributing to Forum House's renovations by ripping up carpet and painting.

Phebe, a member, shared how her brother researched Forum House before she became a member and how her family has

said Forum House has changed her. "Membership took me out of that 'dark hole' I was in," Phebe said. Phebe works at Stop and Shop and has learned computer skills and filing.

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CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES



From left: VIABILITY Senior Vice President Sue Cauley, Lighthouse Program Director Toni Bator, Patrick Carnevale, regional director for the Massachusetts governor's office, and Mike, a Lighthouse member, gather at the Springfield, Massachusetts, clubhouse in January. Patrick visited Lighthouse after receiving Mike's letter praising the clubhouse model and the difference it has made in his life.

ODYSSEY HOUSE HOSTS LEGISLATIVE LUNCH

MEMBERS CHAMPION POLITICIANS FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Roughly 45 people attended a legislative luncheon at Odyssey House, a VIABILITY clubhouse, in Holyoke, Massachusetts, on March 25. Sponsored and hosted by State Representative Aaron Vega, D-5th Hampden District, the event gave clubhouse members an opportunity to bend politicians' ears about the need and importance of funding for their program, and an opportunity to share their personal stories.

Odyssey House, is one of VIABILITY's six clubhouses located throughout the state. The mission of the program is to support individuals living with the effects of mental illness. Clubhouse staff and peers aid each other in pursuits to find and attain work, education, and feel comfortable in social situations.

"It's important to recognize that everything we're trying to do through the clubhouses, through (Massachusetts Department of Mental Health), (Department of Developmental Services), and the support services we put out there, is to give people that opportunity to have equal opportunity and have a 'normal life' as whatever that means," Vega said in his opening remarks.

Christina "Cici," an Odyssey House member for the past two-and-



From left to right: Sebastian Villanueva, district aide for State Sen. Jim Welch, D-Hampden District; VIABILITY President and CEO Dick Venne; State Rep. Lindsay Sadosa, D-1st Hampshire District; State Rep. Daniel Carey, D-2nd Hampshire District; Odyssey House Director Jillian Cunningham; State Rep. Aaron Vega, D-5th Hampden District; Senator Welch; and State Rep. John Velis, D-4th Hampden District. The group came together March 25 at the legislative luncheon held at VIABILITY's Odyssey House clubhouse in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

a-half years, was the first of many clubhouse speakers. She discussed her personal history with mental illness dating back to her teenage years and the various programs that have helped her on her journey. She specifically cited the costs to fund these endeavors and her worry about the possibility of programs being cut.

"Inpatient hospitalization for psychiatric treatment costs \$4,356 for five point five days for Bipolar disorder. Depression, \$3,616 for four-point-four days; Schizophrenia treatment, \$5,707 for seven-point-four days," Cici said. "And to attend Odyssey House, it only costs \$60 a day."

"I believe the decrease in services out there had a huge impact on people with mental health challenges. I know for me, if I go into crisis, if I have too much time on my hands, I need to



Left: Odyssey House member Christina "Cici" speaks at the Legislative Lunch March 25 in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Right: John, an Odyssey House member, also talks during the event.



keep busy and active," Cici said. "Ever since the cutbacks and changes in the mental health field, I worry I will lose my services."

Member Claire, who claims she babysat Representative Vega when he was a child, kept her speech short and to the point.

"This year I'll be celebrating my fifth year here. Every day it gets better and stronger, but the one thing we need are handicapped members like me and a handicapped van," Claire said. "So VIABILITY,

get busy." The audience laughed and cheered.

VIABILITY President and CEO Dick Venne reminded attendees of the nonprofit organization's overarching mission and goal.

"Today, I heard the word 'hope,'" Venne said, as he shared the history, accomplishments, and overall reach of VIABILITY. "I've always viewed the work we do here at VIABILITY as giving people hope and hopefully continue that as we go forward."

SUCCESSFUL MEET AND GREET

NEW MCDHH COMMISSIONER INTERACTS WITH HOLYOKE DHILS COMMUNITY

They wait for the presentation to begin. The room is relatively quiet, but conversations are plentiful. Hand gestures are boisterous and facial expressions are animated. Nearly 20 members from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services community – ranging in age from young adults to seniors – came to 302 High St. in Holyoke, Massachusetts, on May 30 to meet the new Massachusetts Commission of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commissioner Stephen A. Florio. He took the post in February.

During the two-hour ice cream social, the born-deaf commissioner presented a half-hour PowerPoint presentation about his background and role within MCDHH. The commission, he said through an American Sign Language, or ASL, interpreter, falls under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services managed by Secretary Marylou Sudders. MCDHH is one of 13 agencies in this grouping. Others include the Department of Developmental Services, Department of Children and Families, and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

“There are millions and

millions of dollars that go into these different agencies and we work together to help serve the people within Massachusetts,” Commissioner Florio said. “Some of these other organizations don’t know about deaf people and they rely on me to educate them.

“It’s not always perfect – some is good, some takes some work – and hopefully it’s continuing to improve. That’s why I’m here, to help be a liaison and be a connection between these different state agencies and the deaf community.”

Commissioner Florio concluded his presentation by asking the audience if they had any questions. They did. Soon, discussions began with multiple people signing so everyone could see what was being said and an interpreter voicing the comments.

The audience relayed disappointment in police officers who disregard deaf people not understanding what is being vocalized and a concern for a lack of Spanish-speaking interpreters. Another point made was time limits on interpreters’ commitments. The commission provides interpreters specially for funerals and weddings, but it’s limited



Top: Massachusetts Commission of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commissioner Stephen A. Florio presents a PowerPoint presentation to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services community May 30 in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Bottom: Members from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Services community watch the commissioner’s presentation.



to a two-hour allotment, which may not be enough time for a wedding that is typically followed by a reception.

The commissioner said these points are all worth further exploration and would be mentioned to his staff to improve the system. He then thanked everyone for their thoughts and their attendance.

“The event went well,” said Nicole Nelson, program director for the Holyoke Services for Hearing Individuals; and Holyoke and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Services for Deaf Individuals. “We really appreciate the commissioner coming out to show support and speak with the deaf community. We’re excited to work with him in the future.”

WELL DONE, LIGHTHOUSE

CLUBHOUSE CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL OPEN HOUSE

Lighthouse, one of our clubhouses, honored and celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month on May 22 with an open house. Roughly 100 people attended the event, which offered tours of the facility at 1401 State St. in Springfield, Massachusetts, and presentations by several speakers.

Lighthouse is one of **VI-ABILITY**’s six clubhouses located throughout the state. The mission of the program is to support individuals living with the effects of mental illness. Clubhouse staff and peers aid each other in pursuits to find and attain work, permanent housing, education, and feel comfortable in social situations. Clubhouses are officially recognized by Clubhouse International Accreditation and CARF International. Formerly known as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, CARF provides recognition to health and human services.

“The reason they do the accreditation is to make sure we’re doing the best and most current support for people who need our services, and we’re providing great programs and services to help in their recovery,” said **VI-ABILITY** President and CEO Dick Venne.

Several members



Members mingle with each other at Lighthouse’s open house May 22 at 1401 State St. in Springfield, Massachusetts.

shared their experiences with Lighthouse and the benefits they have gained from participating in the clubhouse culture. Santa spoke about the ongoing support she has received while attending American International College and the 3.67 grade point average she currently holds.

Darlene read from a speech she wrote about her illiteracy before coming to Lighthouse.

“I’m honored to be part of Lighthouse. I want to thank staff and members for all your support,” Darlene said. “I may have stumbled over some words [in this speech], but a year ago, I could not read them at all.”

Longtime member Robert expressed how Lighthouse allowed him to open up and break out of his proverbial shell. He felt empowered

to try new things and look for work despite having a physical disability that required dialysis and a double transplant.

Mike, the event’s photographer and a member, said Lighthouse gave him the support to start his own business, and mentioned he is reportedly the first one to do so. Despite challenges and tough days, he doesn’t give up and continually strives to do his best.

ONLINE COVERAGE OF LIGHTHOUSE EVENT

To see 22News coverage of the event, go to wwlp.com/news/local-news/hampden-county/springfield-organization-providing-support-for-those-dealing-with-mental-illness/2019356703

Leading up to the event, Toni and Robert were featured on the May 20 episode of Mass Appeal. To see their segment, go to wwlp.com/mass-appeal/learn-about-lighthouse-clubhouse-at-the-spring-open-house/2014422426

CONGRATULATIONS, SALLY!

DIRECTOR EARNS 40 UNDER FORTY AWARD

Our very own Sally English is one of BusinessWest's "40 Under Forty" award recipients. Each year, the Western Massachusetts's business news publication recognizes 40 distinguished business and civic leaders younger than 40 years old. Our 36-year-old Sally is no exception.

The regional clubhouse director for Forum House in Westfield, Massachusetts; Odyssey House in Holyoke, Massachusetts; and Lighthouse in Springfield, Massachusetts; has been wowing staff and members since she began her tenure in 2017. Hired as Forum House's program manager, she immediately took a hands-on approach to familiarizing and learning clubhouse operations and getting to know members and staff.

"She has developed a strong member-driven culture at Forum House that promotes a welcoming and productive vibe that can clearly be



Sally English

seen, heard, and felt by members, staff, and community partners," wrote Sue Cauley, **VIA-BILITY** senior vice president in her nomination packet suggesting Sally for the 2019 honor.

Our clubhouses offer a community for individuals living with the effects of

mental illness to feel supported as they are given opportunities to better their vocational, educational, and social skills.

Less than a year later, Sally earned a promotion to her current position where she continues to amaze her peers.

"As one of the first accomplishments in her new role, Sally was able to recruit, hire, and train new directors for Odyssey House and Lighthouse," Sue wrote. "Under Sally's leadership, both clubs are poised to be strengthened and follow the successful path of Forum House."

Toni Bator, Lighthouse program director, agreed.

"If Sally's leadership skills are representative of the next generation of leaders, I have renewed hope for the future of transformational leadership," Toni said.

In addition to her responsibilities at **VIA-BILITY**, Sally who holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Social Work degrees, also has leadership roles in several civic organizations and is active in several roller derby associations. Sally and her "40 Under Forty" recipient peers received their accolades June 20 at the Log Cabin in Holyoke.

OUR MISSION

We believe individuals with disabilities and other societal disadvantages are an essential resource for our country's future. Our mission is to help build a world in which individuals with disabilities and other disadvantages realize their full potential.

OUR VISION

VIABILITY will be a positive disruptive force in the marketplace leading the innovative designs of future service delivery for individuals with disabilities and other disadvantages to realize their full potential within their communities of choice.