



SAVE THE DATE!!!

There is still time to purchase tickets to the Annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner & Auction to benefit Cardinal Cushing Centers that

will be held at Indian Pond Country Club on **Sat., March 13th, beginning at 6:30 p.m.** Sponsored by South Shore Savings Bank, the event will raise funds to send the 2010 graduating class on a *Trip of a Lifetime* to Disney World. Please contact Sheila Smolak at Cardinal Cushing Centers, (781) 829-1201 or e-mail her at ssmolak@coletta.org by March 6th.

Director's Letter

Larry Sauer

Everyone here in Hanover is anxiously awaiting the end of winter and the arrival of spring! The Red Sox spring training reports let us know it won't be long before everyone can go spend some time outside, shooting baskets, playing soft ball and soccer, or just enjoying the fresh air. We are all anticipating the opening of our newly refurbished baseball field and track thanks to a donation from the former Abington Savings Bank!

February was a busy and very important month for our school. Every six years the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE, formerly DOE) does a very thorough review of our programs. They review our policies and procedures, they review student and personnel records, they interview staff and parents, and they toured the programs and observe in classrooms. While the final report has not yet been completed, they did end their four day visit with a meeting with me and the program directors. Their overall report was very positive. In their time here, they saw happy students, being well educated, in clean, safe, environments. While we are not perfect and they did find areas for improvement, they also found areas that were commendable (DESE's highest rating) including our Vocational Services, our collaboration with public school districts, and our PAC and other opportunities for parent involvement (including this newsletter)! When the report is completed, it will be available online at the DESE website. I owe a great deal of thanks to the many staff members throughout the organization who helped to make this review a success!

Now that DESE has returned to Malden and we won't have their report to respond to for a month or more,

our focus has shifted back to moving the programs forward. Just prior to the February break, a big move was implemented in the residential department. Although this caused some disruption for our students in the short term, we do believe these moves will result in better long term outcomes for our students. Our objective was to better align our residential programs and allow us to provide specialized training for staff and specialized programming for students based on their individual needs.

I am hoping for warmer weather, an entertaining Red Sox season, and I hope to see many of you at the St. Patrick's Day event that supports our graduating student's trip to Disney World! ♥



CARDINAL CUSHING IN THE COMMUNITY

Cardinal Cushing Centers student artwork will be for sale at the 23rd Annual Hingham Antique Show, Sun., March 21st, from 11 a.m. till 4 p.m., at the Hingham Middle School. Students and staff will man a table displaying note cards, dried flower arrangements, wreaths, wooden bird and bat houses, painted tile trivets, whimsical refrigerator magnets, and screen printed T-shirts and sweatshirts. This is a wonderful opportunity for the community to get a glimpse of our art and vocational programs while giving students a chance to interact with people as spokespersons for the school as well as putting their retail skills to work. ♥

SAVE THE DATE REMINDERS!!!

Sat March 13th—St Patrick's Dinner and Auction

Sun March 21st—Hingham Antique Show

Wed March 24th—Estate Planning Presentation at St. Coletta's—(see invitation on last page)

Sat., March 27th - Mass. Down Syndrome Conf. Jo Ann Simons presenting

Tues Apr. 6 7pm- PAC Meeting-staff dining room Dr. Joseph on "Medications"



Cardinal Cushing Centers President & CEO Jo Ann Simons will present “The Ultimate Transition to Adulthood” Workshop at the Annual Mass. Down Syndrome Conference on Sat., March 27th, at the DCU Center in Worcester. This provocative and entertaining

workshop will answer many of the questions about the transitions that occur when a student leaves the safety and security of a “free and appropriate public education” and ventures forth toward the rest of his or her life.

Everything will change—nothing will be the same. It includes an overview about housing alternatives, employment and volunteer possibilities, relationship building, post-secondary educational options, funding resources and self-determination projects which are reinventing the way individuals receive life-long and innovative supports.

Advanced copies of Jo Ann’s new book, The Down Syndrome Transition Handbook: Charting Your Child’s Course to Adulthood, scheduled for publication by Woodbine House in April, will be available. The conference registration deadline is March 15th and can be completed online at www.mdsc.org.

Jo Ann will also be speaking at the Arkansas Down Syndrome Association in April and the National Down Syndrome Congress Annual Convention in Orlando in July. ♥

Education Department Updates

Roberta Pulaski and Staff



Hi Everyone,

We’ve had a very busy new year, with classrooms being painted, having rugs removed with our wonderful old tiles exposed again, and just some plain old cleaning and disposing of accumulated “stuff”. The chorus is busy practicing for our upcoming social events. Students and staff are working very hard on their studies and putting their MCAS Portfolios together. We are also planning a special Dr. Seuss “Read Across America” day in March, with some surprise guests for the students.

We are entering the last of our books, videos, and DVDs into our new Library system. Everyone now has a library card and both staff and students are checking out materials. Pam Shea, from the vocational department, has trained Jessie, a vocational student, to be our official Librarian. He is doing a great job and has inspired other students to apply for other helper jobs.

We have some of our Cushing Trader items in REACH, an art gallery in Plymouth supporting adults and their artistic endeavors. The adult artists at REACH loved our students’ work and everyone enjoyed our visit with each other. ♥



Vocational Education Department News

Doug Frazier

The Greenhouse has started to order plants, seedlings and other supplies in the anticipation of spring. I am still working on plans that the Greenhouse program will be a separate program from the Cushing Trader, giving our students even greater choices in their vocational education. Cushing Trader has been busy with numerous projects such as making 300 St. Patrick’s pins for the March 13th Disney trip fundraiser. The Trader recently had a wonderful and very successful travelling show and selling of their products at ING company.

DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of MA) completed their review/audit and the Voc Ed Dept was noted for commendable (above and beyond) action in the following areas:

- The great variety of vocational programs offered to students.
- The newly established program between Cushing Voc Ed Dept and four local public schools – offering these students/schools vocational experiences that are not available at their public school.
- The Iron Kettle restaurant program for seniors in local communities – providing our students with vocational training.
- Work opportunities for students – having our businesses open extended day and weekend hours to supplement work opportunities through our Job Bank Program.

The department continues to send students to Project Forward at Cape Cod Community College. Some of the students were disappointed that they had to attend college during our on-campus February break!

Boston University will be presenting weekly classes on health and nutrition to the Bottle Redemption site on Fridays through the spring.

Of course all the seniors are excited about two upcoming events, one being the class trip to Disney World on May 2nd through May 7th. South Shore Saving Bank has been sponsoring the trip for numerous years and will be holding a St. Patrick’s Day fundraiser on Saturday, March 13th at the Indian Pond Country Club in Kingston, MA. On behalf of the students that have attended this “Trip of a Lifetime” over the years, I would personally like to give a big THANK YOU to South Shore Savings Bank for their generosity.

The other big upcoming event for seniors is Graduation 2010! Fourteen students will be graduating on Sunday, June 13, 2010.

I encourage anyone to come and visit our vocational sites on campus and see what great opportunities are available for our students. ♥

Please see the Education and Recreational Calendars for March on our website as well as resources on Transitions and new programs!



CLINICAL/STUDENT SERVICES **DEPARTMENT NEWS**

Mary Bettley

Everyone in our department has spent the last month both preparing for and catching up from the site visit from the Department of Early and Secondary Education that happened in February. We were very pleased with the outcomes and findings (including a commendation for our parent newsletter and PAC group!!) and have some new ideas to improve some of our services.

The PAC meeting speaker in April is Dr. Anthony Joseph MD, our consulting psychiatrist here at Cushing. For those of you who do not know Dr. Joseph, he is a highly regarded psychiatrist who has spent his extensive career working with youth and adults in inpatient and residential settings. His special expertise is in working with clients with cognitive impairments with the focus of the impact of brain injuries on mental health issues. He will be speaking on the role of medication in dually diagnosed youth (cognitive impairments/mental health issues). Please come! We meet on Tues. April 6th at 7pm in the staff dining room.

Staff members in our department have spoken with providers in community-based programs about their sibling support/fun groups and are considering if this is a service that we should offer here at Cushing. If you are interested in a support/fun group for siblings of students enrolled at Cushing, would you please email Mary Bettley so that we can have an initial idea of parent interest? We would plan to start this in the spring if there is interest.

Our OT team is hosting the OT team from the League School this month to discuss best practices and options for improving our services. The League School is very interested in our vision services and Brain Gym group and several students will be demonstrating for them.

It is with regret that we announce some goodbyes in the department. Satu Donahue, our Physical therapy assistant, is leaving us this week. She has worked at Braintree and the Hanover campuses on a part time basis, providing direct treatment to many of the students. Her recent move has brought her a job closer to her new home. We wish Satu well after her many years of dedicated service to Cardinal Cushing/St. Coletta's!

We also wish Holly Tree Dental staff well as they will no longer be providing educational support to the staff and students at the Hanover campus. Although they remain involved in our organization in other areas, their reallocation of resources will not continue to afford their time here. We thank Dr. Andrea Bricker-Sullivan and Sue Felins, hygienist, for their over 5 years of service to our staff and students. To keep providing services to our

students, Tufts Dental staff continue to periodically provide instructions to identified students on how to improve their dental hygiene. ♥

PAC News

Mary Bettley (coordinator)

The dates/topics for the rest of the year are:

April 6th --Medications (Dr. Joseph)

June 1st --Parents Experiences of Services/Transition
—PLUS election of PAC officers



Health Center Happenings

By Joanne Leahy

The past few months have been a time for change in the Health Center. We have said goodbye to several nurses as they move on to a new job, spending time with their family, or doing some traveling. We want to thank Claire Lehan, Nancy Hanson and Carolyn Clarke for all their years of caring for the Cardinal Cushing students. The many years of hard work has not gone unnoticed by staff, students, or families. These wonderful nurses will be missed!!

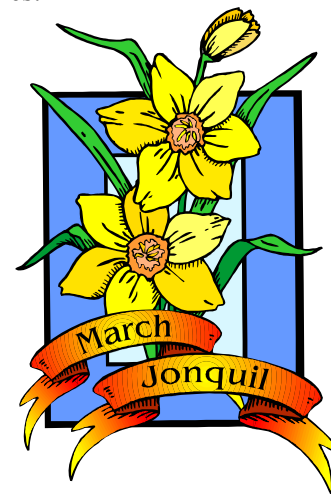
There are several new faces around the Health Center. Jacqueline Tavares and Judy Lynch have many years of nursing experience and are a welcome addition. Emmanuel Manigat is also new to the Health Center, but has a number of years of experience working at CCC in the Residential Department. We are excited about our new nurses and look forward to working with each of them. ♥



Recreation Update

Tom McElman, Anne Matheson, Terri Keenan

We would like to thank all of our families and friends for supporting our basketball teams and cheerleaders throughout our exciting season! All teams have done a great job at practice and games.



Augmentative Communication: How to navigate through the sea of information

Patti Nelson, M.S. CCC-SLP
Coordinator of Specialist Services

While one article can't address everything about augmentative communication, perhaps I can offer some important information that you need to be aware of when exploring the world of augmentative communication devices. Wikipedia defines augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) as "communication for those with impairments or restrictions on the production or comprehension of spoken or written language". Is it for everyone? Probably not. Is a dynamic/high tech device more effective than a low tech system? Not necessarily! All the bells and whistles of a \$7000 device may not meet the communication needs/challenges for a particular individual.

The speech-language team at Cardinal Cushing School-Hanover has made a concerted effort to increase our understanding and knowledge of augmentative devices and their potential use with our students. We have found ways to stay current with the field and to facilitate our students' success by attending local and web seminars/conferences and company demonstrations to learn about what systems are available as well as how to use and program the systems that our students have.

Two resources to help sort out the decision making:

I. Election criteria for the adoption of an augmentative communication system: preliminary considerations **(Shane HC, Bashir AS)**

"Criteria for determining candidacy for an augmentative communication system are reviewed. Included is a consideration of cognitive, oral reflex, language, motor, intelligibility, emotional, chronological age, previous therapy, imitative, and environmental factors. The multiple factors are arranged on a branching type decision matrix, which yields a decision to either elect, reject, or delay implementation of an augmentative communication system. Additional factors important to consider are: visual skills, need to communicate, ability to initiate, audience (who does the person communicate with or need to communicate with)?" (In other words, this article provides a framework for the questions involved in deciding if an augmentative communication system will be helpful for a particular individual.)

II. From the Dynavox Technologies website: **Is a communication device appropriate?**

Does the individual have difficulty expressing their wants, needs or thoughts in one or more environments?

Do you or others need to have background knowledge or ask multiple questions to understand what that person is saying?

Does the individual become frustrated or give up when attempting to communicate?

Is the individual able to understand more than he/she can express?

What options do I have for equipment?



Low-tech communication aids are defined as those that do not need batteries, electricity or electronics to meet the user's communication needs. These are often very simple aids created by placing letters, words, phrases, pictures and/or symbols on a board or in a

book, which may be accessed with a body part, a head/mouth stick or light pointer. Alternatively, the student might use such a device to indicate yes or no as a listener scans through the possible options. (Wikipedia)



High-tech AAC aids are electronic devices that permit the storage and retrieval of messages, with most allowing the user to communicate with others using speech output. Such devices can also be referred to as Speech Generating Devices (SGDs) or

[Voice Output Communication Aids](#) (VOCAs). High-tech systems can be divided into dedicated devices developed solely for the purpose of communication and AAC, and non-dedicated devices, such as computers, which have been adapted for use as communication tool, but which can also be used for other functions. (Wikipedia)

What happens at Cushing?

The speech language specialists here at Cushing continue to adhere to a Total Communication approach and philosophy which supports the notion of many different modes of communication being taught at once. While an augmentative communication device may be beneficial for a particular student, many methods of communication are encouraged, supported, and/or trained, from natural gestures, some ASL (American Sign Language) as appropriate, use of pictures, head nods, vocalizations, and/or verbal language. While exploring systems with our students, one means of communication is never used alone. While we continue to encourage verbal language and find it is often the optimal way to communicate for most students, we will try any combination of systems that may be helpful.

Since our library of augmentative communication trial devices is limited, we often seek outside assistance for additional evaluation and/or recommendations. The good news is that medical insurers are more apt to cover the cost of these devices as they relate to the ability to communicate basic medical and safety needs to others. In addition, the speech language specialists here at Cushing continue to learn how to program and use the devices as they are obtained by families for their youth.

Should you have any questions for our staff about the appropriateness of these devices for your youth, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the speech language department. For the most part, our annual updates and/or evaluations should cover whether augmentative communication is appropriate to explore for your child and/or what progress to date has been made. Please call on us if we can help you as you sort through the sea of information and/or devices that may be most suitable for your youth! ♥

**Cardinal Cushing Center and
St. Coletta Day School**



**Both the Cardinal Cushing Center and St.
Coletta Day School *in conjunction with*
New York Life Insurance Company and
Attorney Matthew Marcus invites you to
attend**

**MAKING PLANS... DEFINING
YOUR FAMILY'S FUTURE**

**Wednesday, March 24th at 6:30 PM
85 Washington St, Braintree, Ma**

This sixty minute presentation is intended to be a primer on some of the critical financial and estate planning issues that face families of children with special needs. The information is presented by Kristyn Mac Fawn and Leo Rotman, Agents of New York Life's Boston General Office in Waltham along with Attorney Matthew Marcus.

**To call ahead and reserve your seat please contact
Ron Shepherd @ 781-848-6250**

The Cardinal Cushing Center or St Coletta Day School is not affiliated with New York Life Insurance Company or its subsidiaries.