

Thank You



Thanks to Hill, Holliday, Connors and Cosmopolos, long-time supporters of Cardinal Cushing Centers, the Challenger Classroom was transformed over

the holiday break. The 15 volunteers, employees of the Boston-based advertising agency, worked diligently for some 35 hours and introduced innovative Rust-Oleum products. Traditional chalk boards are now clean new white boards, cork boards have become handy magnetic boards, cabinets and shelves, table tops and computer stations look like new with their durable new surfaces. The classroom was truly transformed to the delight of students and teachers alike. (Please see more about this story in education news!)

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Larry Sauer

As I mentioned in January's newsletter, 2010 will be a year of new beginnings and new possibilities here at Cardinal Cushing School in Hanover. As you will see in this newsletter, we already have a redesigned classroom, a new library setting, and new learning activities in our classrooms. PBIS and our new school store continue to grow as more of our students get excited about the positive praise and attention generated by this program. More news for this month is that we are beginning a new parent(s)/guardian communication liaison program to improve our communication with parents and guardians and enrich our relationships with all of you.

As you may have read in my recent letter, we will begin our program in February to improve communication by assigning a staff person to each student as the communication liaison. In most cases, this will be a staff person you already know and whose role it is to relay positive information about your student's activities, accomplishments, and successes. When the assignments

are finalized in early February, your liaison will contact you to introduce him/herself, explain the program, and find out about your preferred method of communication. In general, our preferred communication is the telephone, because it gives parents/guardians the opportunity to immediately ask questions and/or provide immediate feedback. If this is not the best method of communication, please inform your communication liaison, so we can accommodate your needs. If the phone is your best method of contact, it is important to inform your liaison as to the best time to call you.

In addition to discussing the good news for the month, if you let the liaison know about any issues, concerns, or problems that need to be addressed, the communication liaison can pass this information on to the appropriate staff person (e.g., the Student Services Coordinator, etc.) or can refer you to the appropriate person to resolve the issue. Since the focus of these telephone contacts will be to inform you of "positive" information about your child, it will not be the communication liaison's responsibility to resolve those issues that you may identify. As with any new program, there may be some bumps in the road as we begin to utilize this new parent(s)/guardian contact plan. If you experience any difficulty with its implementation, please contact your child's Student Services Coordinator, Mary Bettley, the Director of Clinical and Student Services, or me.

Thank you for helping us to build a stronger Cardinal Cushing community. We look forward to seeing you at the PAC meeting on February 2nd or at many of our other activities coming up in the next few months that you will find listed in this newsletter or in the monthly calendars. ♥

CARDINAL CUSHING IN THE COMMUNITY

- **Technology updates**--Jo Ann Simons, our President/CEO blogs regularly on our website about what is happening at Cushing. While you are there, you can also sign up for Twitter updates from the campus!
- Please see our website for more information about our classroom makeover and for a link to a Boston Globe story on Nick Morse's art show! ♥

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



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. It is an exciting season so far and all teams have done a great job at practice and games.

- The Southeast Special Olympic Basketball Assessment round is being held on Saturday February 6th at Stonehill College in Easton, Ma. We hope that many of you can come and support our teams. The Massachusetts Special Olympic Winter Games will be held over the weekend of March 13th and 14th in Worcester.
- On Sunday February 7th, Cardinal Cushing will be hosting our annual Southeast Section Special Olympics Basketball skills day. This will be our fourth year hosting this fun event. Most members of our basketball skills group participate since everyone gets to meet other local basketball players and to receive an award.
- Thanks to our Volunteer Coordinator, we will be welcoming several volunteers to our program. One volunteer will be coming each month to help make jewelry with our students on Saturday mornings, and another will be coming each month to work on special project with our Jr. Girl Scouts.
- Starting this month, the Recreation Department will be offering an on campus dining opportunity at the Bass Cafe. The Bass Cafe Restaurant will give our students an on campus dining experience where they may go with a friend for dinner. Students will call and make reservations, order from a menu, and be responsible for paying for their meal and leaving the appropriate gratuity. The Recreation Department in conjunction with the Vocational and the Food Service Departments will run the cafe just like a real restaurant, with our students working as wait staff, host/hostess and kitchen prep. Please contact the Recreation Department if you have any questions. ♥

Health Center Happenings

By Joanne Leahy

We know how difficult it is to keep track of things, but sometimes, we all need a little reminder. It is extremely

important for all students to be up to date on their physicals, immunizations, and dental exams. Actually, it is a requirement of the state for all children enrolled in school to have a current physical on file. If your child has recently visited his/her doctor and/or dentist, please be sure to send a copy of their report to the Health Center for inclusion in the medical chart. For those of you whose student will be going to Disney World in May, current physical and immunizations records are mandatory for them to take this wonderful trip.

Also, if there has been a change in your student's medical/dental coverage (e.g., new providers, new ID

numbers, new cards, etc.), please be sure that this information is also received in the Health Center. We need to have all students' charts current in order to provide them with the best care we can give. Thank you all for your help in this endeavor. ♥



CLINICAL/STUDENT SERVICES

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Mary Bettley

- Positive Behavior Intervention Support is up and running. Many students have enjoyed their trips to the school store for "goodies" earned by their points for caring for self, others and the environment. Amy Bezanson, coordinator of the Support Team (and the school store) is teaching students about banking and saving as many are "saving up" for larger incentives. Amy Bulger, behavior specialist, continues to develop new ways to coordinate data collection within the program.
- Catherine Martin, our Human Development Coordinator, is creating some new social skills groups for many of our students. Catherine is using both established curricula and her own expertise to put together groups of housemates in the residential program to learn about hygiene, getting along, and dating skills. Lots of others in our department are enjoying their work co-leading the various groups.
- Our Student Service Coordinators continue their work of developing measurable IEP goals that meet the standards of the federal laws and the styles of various school systems. In addition, we are busy learning new ways to develop transitional plans that must now be in students' IEPs starting at age 14!
- Our ongoing work on reducing restraint/seclusion continues this month with the start to our monthly meetings to review the data that will lead to our getting better at how we help students when they are having a difficult time. We are busy developing models for individualized "crisis de-escalation" plans for each of our students which include sensory interventions, DBT skill sheets, and processing plans.
- Coming next month in this newsletter, we will start a series from our specialists team (PT, OT, Speech and Language) on topics related to our students.

If you have ideas or topics you would like to see covered in more in-depth articles in upcoming newsletters, please be in touch with Mary (MBettley@coletta.org). ♥

PAC News

Mary Bettley (coordinator)

The tentative dates/topics are:

Feb 2nd "Adult Services and Transitions"

Cushing's adult services, guardianship

April 6th Medications (Dr. Joseph)

June 1st Parents Experiences of Services

—PLUS elections



Education Department Updates

The Challenger class has some exciting news since the Hill Holliday company donated their time during

the holiday break and did an "Extreme Makeover!" They painted, washed windows, stained the woodwork, and even donated a new rug. Our class wrote an 'acrostic' poem to describe our thoughts about our new room.

- C**hallenger class has had a "makeover"!
- H**appy are we with our new room.
- A**wesome colors on the walls.
- L**ight green and dark
- L**ovely frosted hearts painted on doors and mirrors.
- E**ven a glow-in-the-dark solar system on a border.
- N**ice shiny clean windows.
- G**orgeous, bright and beautiful
- E**xcellent new stain on woodwork.
- R**ug and new jukebox radio donated, too! ♥



Atlantis Classroom

Greetings from the Atlantis classroom! From Greek Mythology to serving at the Iron Kettle Inn, the students have been busy at work. Academically, the students have started reading *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan, a fantasy-adventure novel based on Greek Mythology. In science, they are exploring and learning about the nervous system. What better way to learn about the brain than to practice using it? Atlantis has also been playing with words to create poetry, while learning about alliteration, similes, and rhyming. In history, the students are learning about the structure of local, state, and federal government. Filling out applications, practicing interviews, and important job skills are being focused on in functional academic classes.

The students are also working at various job sites on campus including: bottle redemption, serving at the Hill, central supply, culinary arts, and serving at the Iron Kettle Inn. The class also created a CD over a period of many music classes. The CD is a compilation of full class songs, as well as some solo pieces. Healthy eating is the

current topic in Health classes and they have been practicing their volleyball skills in gym.

The Atlantis classroom also has some athletes that have been performing wonderfully on the basketball teams. Michael T., Kyle M., Ashley C., and Jaime L. are working up a sweat at basketball practices and working hard at games. After discussing the earthquake in Haiti, the students decided they wanted to host a bake sale to raise money for relief efforts. The students are in the process of planning this event. The hard work continues, and the students in the Atlantis classroom continue to do their best! ♥

Our New Library!!!



Thanks to many, the school library has been modernized and relocated from a corner of the balcony to its own room on the 4th floor of the school building. Floor to ceiling shelves were hand built, stained and sealed by John Barkhouse and other members of the Maintenance department. We also extend a huge thank you to Jude Morgan for leading the planning as well as to staff and students for all of the hard physical work that they did to make this a reality.

Since this will be a new student worksite, students and staff can now borrow books just like in every other library. The books, videos and DVDs were entered into a library computer program using individual barcodes which allows for a searchable database as well as the creation of a circulation list for late returns.

We are very excited and grateful to have this wonderful new space! The library is now a place where students can be found browsing the shelves for a good read, listening to a story, learning to use the library program, and organizing books on the shelves. When you are here, stop and see the schedule of all the education and vocational classrooms using the space! As always, donations of books, videos and DVDs are gratefully accepted.

The next time you come to visit the campus, be sure to stop at the school building, take the south stairway up to the fourth floor and turn left, or take the elevator and turn left, to visit our wonderful new space. ♥

Guiding the Transition to Adulthood:
A three part series on Guardianship, Chapter 688
referrals, and Adult Services

(Mary Bettley with the Student Services Team)

Just as you and your son/daughter/student have gotten settled at Cardinal Cushing and you've become familiar with what you can expect from us, your son/daughter nears 18 on the way to 22, and you find yourself faced with a whole new realm of unknowns. By this point, you have probably heard all kinds of stories about what lies ahead of you and your young person during his/her upcoming transition to adulthood and adult services, but it is often hard to decipher what is/is not true.

This third and final entry in the series of three articles in our parent newsletters will help explain what you can expect in the upcoming years between your youth's 18 birthday and turning 22. If you have any questions regarding any of this information, please contact the Student Services Coordinator assigned to you and your son/daughter. Of course, please know that none of us are lawyers, and for the most accurate advice on legal processes, you should use an attorney.

Additionally, if you have questions about transitions and adult services that you feel other parents may also have, please contact me at mbettley@coletta.org and I will incorporate the answers to your questions in future parent newsletters.



Part III: What are the options for Adult Services?



How do we know what services will be provided through DDS or another agency?

If your student has been found eligible for services from the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDS), you will have participated in a procedure and assessment process titled the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Process (MASSCAP). (See last month's article for more information on this.) This assessment tool generates a numerical score which determines a student's level of eligibility for supervised residential care.

Students who receive a score below 39 are eligible, funding permitting, for 24 hour a day, 7 day a week residential care, such as placement in a group home. Students who receive scores between 40 and 69 are eligible for up to 30 hours per week of supervised care. This may include an assisted living facility in which staff is not present at night, independent housing with staff support, and adult foster care. Students who receive scores between 70 and 89 are eligible for no more than 14 hours per week of care. This may include independent living

with occasional staff support or respite support in their family's house.



What is an ITP?

Once your child is determined eligible for services with DDS, he/she will be assigned a 688 Transition Coordinator who will be your primary contact for information and assistance from DDS. The Coordinator should be invited to attend all meetings on your child to help in planning as now is the time to think about what services you will be requesting from DDS. It is important to consider all your student's needs in thinking about providing services for them in the adult system. What do they like to do? What kinds of supports do they need? What can they do independently? What will contribute to their best quality of life?

Roughly one year before graduation, there will be a meeting held by your Transition Coordinator to develop an ITP (Individualized Transition Plan) that reflects the unique interests, skills and needs of your child. This document will function ultimately as a "blueprint" of your child's requested support needs so it is important not to underestimate what your child may need or hesitate to make it as personal as possible. However, it is important to remember that even though these supports may have been identified, there is no guarantee that you will receive them all. Your requests are still subject to prioritization, appropriation and availability. As with all services, it is important for you to balance your youth's strengths with his/her need for services.

Once the ITP is written, DMR will review it and prioritize each of the requested services separately. There are three levels of Prioritization: Priority 1, Priority 2, and No Priority. Priority 1 allows for immediate services which are needed to protect the health and safety of your child. Priority 2 refers to a service request that is still in the "active planning stage" and requires further discussion, and No Priority refers to a service for which your child is not eligible, or one in which you are no longer interested. Even after these priorities have been set, and DMR has made you an offer of services, it is important to know that you have not yet reached the end of the line, and you can still write a letter appealing DDS' priority determination if you are not in agreement with the plan.



Where can I get help?

Undoubtedly, these various processes and your child's transition to adult services can be quite overwhelming. As such, Cardinal Cushing staff are prepared to help guide you through this process as much as possible. We can complete assessment forms, answer questions, and provide you with any information or referrals that you may need. Please feel free to contact your child's Student Services Coordinator with any questions or concerns as they arise. ♥