

Cardinal Cushing Centers CONNECTOR



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Spring 2024



Michael's his Guy

Michael Jaxtimer-Barry, who works in Cushing's food service department, appeared on Food Network's "Guy's Grocery Games," hosted by celebrity chef Guy Fieri. Story, Page 8.

PHOTO BY BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL

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Technical assistance



Owen Dillon, a senior at South Shore Technical High School, plates a quesadilla at the Cushing Café during his shift.

PHOTO BY SEAN BROWNE



BY MEAGHAN CASEY

For three seniors at South Shore Technical High School, the experience-based learning opportunities at Cardinal Cushing Centers have been transformative.

The students, Luke Coughlin, Owen Dillon and Nick Locke, alternate between academic weeks and shop weeks, spending their co-op days at Cushing.

Coughlin and Dillon have been working at the Cushing Café since November, under the supervision of

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**CARDINAL CUSHING CENTERS
CONNECTOR**

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Cushing and collaboration go together



**MICHELLE
MARKOWITZ**

We at Cushing are always proud of the phenomenal accomplishments of our students, adult participants, staff and volunteers, yet humble enough to realize it only happens due to a spirit of collaboration that permeates everything we do.

This edition of the Connector highlights the well-used but always applicable acronym TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More.

You will read about our students putting into practice their vocational and entrepreneurial

skills in the form of a mobile coffee cart, delivering coffee and goodies from the Cushing Café directly to staff offices. Tough to find a better win-win than that!

We continue to benefit from our partnership with South Shore Tech, which at this time has students spending their vocational weeks working at Cushing, two in the Café and one using his graphic design skills to support the MarketPlace. We also have South Shore students working in our day habilitation program as part of their allied health studies. It is gratifying to read about how much South Shore Tech also values the collaboration.

And how about our resident chef Michael Jaxtimer-Barry rubbing elbows with the famous Guy Fieri and other culinary celebrities. Keep those good vibes and tastes coming, Michael.

I hope you will join us at Springtime, our annual gala that not only raises critical funds for Cushing, but also gives us the chance to honor our most committed partners – this year, Jim Dunphy and Meg Kelleher.

Thank you for your interest in Cardinal Cushing Centers and best wishes for a warm and fulfilling spring.

Michelle Markowitz is president & CEO of Cardinal Cushing Centers.

A season to honor valued volunteers

Cushing’s Springtime Gala will be held on Thursday, May 23 at the Boston Seaport Hotel. With a theme of Models of Volunteerism, this year’s honorees could not be more fitting recipients.

South Shore Bank President and CEO Jim Dunphy will be honored with the Richard Cardinal Cushing Award, which is given annually to someone who provides consistent support for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. Dunphy displays a relentless commitment to helping others and building community, especially when it comes to providing education and career opportunities for underserved youth.

“Receiving the Richard Cardinal Cushing Award is an honor, and I am grateful that the funds raised at the spring gala benefit Cardinal Cushing Centers in their mission to empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, providing pathways for growth and endless possibilities,” said Dunphy.

Dunphy arrived at South Shore Bank in 2014 as executive vice president and was named president and CEO in 2015. He also serves as president of the South Shore Bank Charitable Foundation. Under his leadership, the bank has grown to become the region’s leading full-service mutual bank, with approximately \$2 billion in assets. It has 11 branches in Weymouth, Quincy, Braintree, Hingham, Norwell, Stoughton and East Bridgewater. The bank donates more than 10 percent of its profits to local organizations. The South Shore Bank Community Fund has distributed more than \$500,000 to assist those struggling to pay rent and mortgages during the pandemic.

Born in Quincy and raised in Abington, Dunphy has a strong commitment to improving communities on the South Shore. He serves on the boards of various nonprofit and business organizations, including Special Olympics, and has been deeply involved with Cardinal Cushing Centers from the moment he stepped into the role of CEO. He and his team at South Shore Bank host Cushing’s annual St. Patrick’s Day Dinner and Auction, raising funds to send the graduating class on a Trip of a Lifetime to Disney World each year.

Marshfield native Meg Kelleher will be honored at Springtime with the Franciscan

Leadership Award, which is given to someone who actively builds a stronger community by providing opportunities for those who are less fortunate and demonstrating generosity, leadership by positive example and mutuality toward others.

“Being a part of Cardinal Cushing is very additive to my life,” said Kelleher. “To play a small part in making a difference in the lives of the students and adults we serve is a privilege, so when I found out I was being recognized for something I love to do, I could not have been more surprised.”

Kelleher has more than 40 years’ experience in financial services, including profit and loss management, setting strategic direction, and leading national and international teams of professionals. She recently retired from The Collaborative in Boston, where she consulted for investment advisors, banks, asset managers, broker dealers, wirehouses, and insurance companies. Her previous experience includes tenures at Fidelity Investments and State Street Bank.

Kelleher’s community involvement includes serving on the board of Alice’s House and in many capacities at Cardinal Cushing Centers, from being a member of the board of directors and the finance and development committees, to serving as a trusted volunteer in the Cushing Café at the MarketPlace.

“The more time I spend at Cardinal Cushing, the more passionate I become about both the mission and the community,” Kelleher said. “It’s one of those places that the mission—a place where people of all ages and abilities find possibility, opportunity and hope—plays itself out daily in the community. As I attend events like staff appreciation night, fundraising events, the Fun Run and Harvest Festival, and just spending time at the café as a patron, you can feel the commitment and love in every aspect of this community. As a board member, I can now see the inner workings of this amazing organization and it has deepened my understanding of what it takes to run an organization that is making such a difference in the lives of students, adults and families.”

Kelleher has also been very involved with her alma mater, Boston College, serving on the Alumni Board, chairing her reunion

committees, and being an active member of the Council for Women of Boston College. The university recognized her with the John J. Griffin Award for Distinguished Volunteerism. She and her husband, Pat, raised their children, Patrick, Chris, and Haleigh in Marshfield.

For more information or to purchase tickets for Springtime, visit SpringtimeGala.org.



Jim Dunphy



Meg Kelleher

Coffee cart offers perks for student, staff

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Cardinal Cushing Centers students are making it easier than ever for staff to get fueled up with caffeine.

Thanks to a new mobile coffee cart, vocational students are able to bring coffee, iced tea and baked goods from the Cushing Café directly to offices.

“It’s another opportunity for employment training in a safe, controlled, on-site environment, and it’s a perk for staff,” said Eleanor Arpino, Cushing’s sustainability coordinator.

A pilot program started in October, before the cart was purchased. Vocational students would head to the finance department once a week, deliver menus, take orders, prepare the orders at the café and deliver them.

“I believe the coffee cart pilot program has been a wonderful

learning experience for all those involved,” said Marian Macuch, Cushing’s accounts payable coordinator. “During the six or so weeks our department was the testing ground, I found myself both proud and humbled by how well it was working. I watched as the service and procedures were refined and improved each week — along with figuring out the tech. It was a nice break on Thursday afternoons.”

In January and February, students traveled with the cart, taking payments and filling orders on the spot. The cart was fully funded by a grant from the Quincy-based Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association, which provides charitable support for Massachusetts organizations that either teach mechanical arts, provide employment opportunities for the disabled, or use vocational training and workshops as a key part of their programs.

“I’m so impressed by the commitment of the students, and how quickly they learned the tasks,” said Arpino. “There’s a huge sense of pride in doing the work of fulfilling orders and being rewarded with tips. It’s really been wonderful. A few students even became ‘the teachers’ to their other classmates.”

Arpino said the café and vocational education teams are working together on a plan to roll out the coffee cart program on a more permanent basis, which will require the collaboration of many. The plan is to also explore the potential of developing a training curriculum and job opportunity for Cushing’s adult population. Arpino hopes that they will even be able to take the coffee cart to local events and festivals in the community.



1. Eleanor Arpino, student Bella Testa, Sue Svelnis and Samantha Babineau roll out the new coffee cart.

2. Student Abby Nix is ready to take orders.

3. Teacher Allison Miller, student Jonathan Perrault and teaching assistant Julia Douglas take out the cart.

4. Student DJ Russ delivers orders from the café as part of the pilot program.



Donations help build a better Cushing

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Tom Jennings has worked at Cardinal Cushing Centers for nearly three decades, but he's never been busier than he is now.

"It's been more exciting to work here in the last two years than in the last 20," said Jennings, who serves as Cushing's director of facilities. "In the old days, we were doing regular repairs, but because of the fundraising and generous donors, we've really been able to make an impact recently. This year alone, we had \$3 million in capital improvements."

Jennings and his crew oversee 22 buildings and 11 residential units within seven houses, in addition to the grounds. Thanks to major gifts, they have been able to perform upgrades to the track, pool, basketball courts and recreation area and are in the middle of an extensive classroom remodeling project. They have already replaced 160 windows in the school and have gutted and renovated six classrooms. A \$1 million investment to install a new heating system, complete with new piping, has also been a big project. Up next, they'll be repainting exterior spaces and replacing doors.

"Some of these spaces date back to the '50s, so it was overdue to turn them into modern classrooms," said Jennings. "It will be a great space for staff and students. When we can do these improvements that directly affect the kids, that's what makes this job special."

The team is also installing a new heating and cooling system in every residential home, and remodeling some of the kitchens. One house is closed for complete renovation with new flooring, new bathrooms and electrical upgrades.

"When we finish that one, we'll move on to the next, and in three to four years, we'll have done all the units," said Jennings.

"Doing the houses over is pretty nice," said Fred Grennan, who has served as assistant director of facilities for the last five years. A professional painter by trade, he found out about a job opening from his wife, Annette, who works in Cushing's Life Opportunities Unlimited (LOU) day habilitation program in Braintree. He has worked at Cushing for 12 years.

"The people really make it enjoyable to work here," said Grennan. "It's not like going to work."

Working with contracted projects managers and architects, the facilities team has also been involved in the rollout of some of the major building projects at Cushing, such as the new MarketPlace, the renovated auditorium and the new Washington Street residence.

"It takes a lot of planning to get it all done, but it's been exciting to see," Jennings said.

A licensed plumber and gas fitter, Jennings was originally hired as a plumber at Cushing and has served as director of facilities for more than 20 years.

"For me, personally, it was always about the kids," said Jennings. "I come from a long line of school teachers, so to be in this setting, working to improve the kids' lives, that's what keeps me here. Things have changed a lot over the years, but the mission has never changed. And that's to do the best we can for those living and learning here."

Jennings was hired at the same time as carpenter Harry Hunt, who later went out on his own, but Jennings recruited him back about five years ago.

"We were originally brought in when they wanted skilled labor — a carpenter, plumber and electrician," said Hunt. "I left after three or four years and did some subcontracting here for a while, but the timing seemed right to come back."

Hunt hasn't had a slow day since he returned.

"I'll never run out of work here," he said. "I can do quite a bit without Tom having to hire someone else out. My favorite jobs are the remodeling ones, and a lot more of those projects are getting done."



1. Cushing's facilities team members, from left, Michael Collins, Harry Hunt, Fred Grennan, Tom Jennings, Bernie Egan-Mullen and Chris Mercurio show off one of the recently renovated classrooms. 2. Bernie Egan-Mullen assembles a cabinet. 3. Harry Hunt, Chris Mercurio and Michael Collins do demo work. 4. Tom Jennings speaks with his team. 5. Michael Murphy begins painting the walls of a classroom.

PHOTOS BY SEAN BROWNE

South Shore students provide technical assistance

SOUTH SHORE from page 1

manager Maren Geloran. Coughlin has been posted at the front of the café, greeting customers, taking orders, making coffee and more.

“He’s in the machine shop at South Shore, but he was looking for social skills training,” said Geloran. “His self-confidence has really grown.”

Dillon, who is in the culinary arts program, is working the grill, prepping food and making sandwiches.

“I was so impressed when he came in for his interview and he took a menu home right away to prepare,” said Geloran. “He’s really been able to grow his work skills in the kitchen, and get a feel of the day-to-day in the restaurant industry. And they’re both learning time management skills that are preparing them for the next level.”

The South Shore Tech students have been working hand-in-hand with Cushing students and adults in the café. There are currently five Cushing adult participants, as well as two classrooms of vocational students that are training in the café.

“They all enjoy the interaction with each other,” said Geloran. “It’s always fun to work with new people, and it fits the mission of changing lives, by partnering with another school or organization. It’s part of what we’re meant to be doing.”

“We appreciate the opportunities Cardinal Cushing Centers has offered our interns and cooperative education students,” said Bob Mello, director of off-campus education and

special projects at South Shore Technical High School. “As a vocational school, we rely on local businesses to help give our students real-world work experience. Not only are they getting hands-on experience in their trade at Cushing, they are able to get that experience within an organization whose work is meaningful and impactful.”

Locke, who is in the design and visual communications program, is skilled in graphic design software, as well as print shop production equipment. Since February, he has been putting his skills to work with Randy Wiskow, Cushing’s manager of art enrichment and community engagement.

“Knowing the great work the interns were doing in the café, we knew we needed some help in graphics to support the MarketPlace,” said Wiskow. “South Shore Tech has such a wonderful program. They got us in touch with Nick.”

“The school did a mass mailing postcard for us when the café started opening at 7 a.m., and the quality of the work was absolutely spot-on,” said Cushing’s sustainability coordinator Eleanor Arpino. “It was top quality, professional work. We were thrilled to get someone from that shop in.”

Thus far, Locke has created flyers for art shows in the community and is in the process of creating tags for more than 100 pieces of art for a show in July. He will also be working on creating tags for items and displays in the MarketPlace shops, and will be assisting Arpino with some design work in the Greenhouse.

An Eagle Scout, Locke’s interest in design began when

he earned his graphic arts merit badge. He has continued to succeed in the shop, and participated in SkillsUSA Massachusetts local competitions.

In addition to Coughlin, Dillon and Locke, Cushing also hosts two students from South Shore Tech’s allied health programs. That partnership began two years ago with co-op students working with participants in Cushing’s Life Opportunities Unlimited day habilitation program.

“Cardinal Cushing offers opportunities across many of the programs we offer, so we’ve been able to establish a true partnership which we hope will be mutually beneficial for years to come,” said Mello. “As employers, they understand the mission of our program and make their workplace an extension of our classroom. They invest in the success of our students.”

In turn, South Shore Tech has been able to offer the skills of some of its programs as well. Its culinary arts department had the opportunity to hold a cooking class at Cushing and the school hosted a shadow day in its automotive technology department. Students in the carpentry program built a footbridge to assist Cushing students in accessing a ropes course.

“We will continue to look for ways to assist Cardinal Cushing in the important work they do for their students and residents,” said Mello. “We’re excited to explore the many possibilities of this partnership.”



Owen Dillon, a student at South Shore Technical High School, prepares lunch at the Cushing Café.

PHOTOS BY SEAN BROWNE



South Shore Technical High School student Nick Locke works on a graphic design project at Cushing.

BOARD PROFILE: SAKINA EVANS

A valuable resource for Cushing



BY MEAGHAN CASEY

With nearly 30 years' experience in human resources and talent management, Sakina E. G. Evans knows how to spot talent. And she found it at Cardinal Cushing Centers.

Evans joined Cushing's board of directors in 2021, after being introduced to the organization by her neighbor, Jerry Vitti, who also sits on the board.

"I was fully aware of the mission of the organization, but it's been incredible to see the work in action and meet so many of the people who make it all happen," she said.

Evans understands that an effective business strategy starts and ends with leadership and a well-engaged team, and she was particularly impressed by the leadership of Cushing's president and CEO, Michelle Markowitz.

"Michelle is one of the best CEOs I've ever seen," Evans said. "She handles everything with a business mindset and emotional intelligence. She knows how to work with people and build incredible teams. Michelle is attuned to the organization at all levels and knows what makes it thrive."

Evans has enjoyed serving during a time of continued growth for Cushing.

"It's a pleasure to serve on a board that is focused on outcomes and is committed to ensuring that our annual strategic planning is not just a document—we bring it to life," she said. "Cardinal Cushing is about community and our work is necessary and impactful."

Evans is the founder and CEO of EvansOne, a Boston-

based executive consulting firm focused on helping technology companies recruit talent, build high-performing teams and integrate common-sense programs across their organization. She also serves as vice president of people for Nth Cycle, a metals processing and recycling technology company. She has expertise in both the nonprofit and corporate space, leading organizations such as Bose Corporation, Idiom Technologies, and Partners Healthcare, to build teams by identifying, hiring, developing and mentoring some of the best talent available. At Bose, where she spent 21 years, she was responsible for 9,000 employees and seven divisions serving 27 multinational markets.

Evans is a graduate of the University of Toronto with a bachelor's in psychology and sociology. She lives in Milton with her husband, Seth, and teenage son, Miles. She also serves as a member of the advisory board for the Women's Foundation of Boston.

Students bank on annual Disney World trip

Every year, Cushing graduates have the opportunity to create lasting memories at one of the most magical places on earth, thanks to the hard work of those organizing the annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner and Auction, sponsored by South Shore Bank.

This year's event, which featured food, entertainment and auctions, raised more than \$157,000. The funding allows for graduating seniors to go on a fully-paid vacation to Walt Disney World. This trip has become a milestone event that Cushing students look forward to for years, and for many it is their first vacation.

South Shore Bank has been the premier sponsor of this event since 2007, and a group of employees, led by President and CEO Jim Dunphy, serve on a planning committee to run the event. The bank's philosophy is "your community is our community," so employees feel a personal responsibility to help the businesses and people of South Shore thrive by giving

their time, talents and service.

"I take immense pride in leading an exceptional organization and team at South Shore Bank, dedicated to giving back to our community," said Dunphy. "By building strong relationships with our clients and the South Shore community, we can create a real and positive impact of shared success. Our longtime support for Cardinal Cushing Centers and the Trip of a Lifetime program truly demonstrates our dedication to their vital work, and highlights the important role our bank plays in our region."

The planning committee this year included Dunphy; Jane Barry, banking center officer; Cindy Bovaird, consumer loan officer; Jane Bowman, chief marketing officer; Nikki Corbo, marketing specialist; Joe Dahlstrom, facilities manager and banking officer; Scott Ewing, director of project and process management; Joanne Tully, community relations officer. Travel consultant and certified autism travel professional Holly

Roberts, whose daughter attended Cushing and who has been involved in the trip since 1997, also served on the committee, along with John Troupe of Troupe Waste Services.

The 10 committee members worked for months to ensure the event was a success, and 13 other volunteers assisted during the event.

Corbo, who was hired by the bank last May, took a lead role in organizing many of the details.

"The most rewarding part of the event was seeing the kids there and witnessing their joy and infectious energy," said Corbo. "Their excitement emulated from the inside out and set the tone for the entire event. The students who performed in the chorus were so excited, and it was amazing getting to speak with them before their performance and hearing how proud they were of their song. The genuine happiness of the students, and their excitement about the event and the trip is a testament of how great the programs at Cardinal Cushing are."



1. Cushing President and CEO Michelle Markowitz and Tammie Frye of Gibbs Software Solutions donned green for the event.
2. Cushing's chorus students performed at the event.
3. Planning committee members included, from left, Cindy Bovaird, Jane Barry, Jim Dunphy, Holly Roberts, John Troupe, Jane Bowman, Joanne Tully, Nikki Corbo, Joe Dahlstrom and Scott Ewing.

Cooking up celebrity connections

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Michael Jaxtimer-Barry's culinary expertise reached new heights this winter, as he competed alongside peers and celebrity chefs on Food Network's "Guy's Grocery Games."

Jaxtimer-Barry, a Milton resident, works in Cushing's food service department. He and two other Best Buddies participants, Cassidy Bauer and Chris Harrington, were featured in a special holiday episode of "Guy's Grocery Games," which is hosted by culinary star Guy Fieri.

"It gives me goosebumps," said Fieri, during the episode. "I've known these kids for going on 12, 13 years now. To have them here is pretty amazing."

Jaxtimer-Barry first met Fieri 13 years ago when he was invited to cook alongside him during a celebrity chef tailgate at Harvard University, which kicked off the Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port event, an annual walk/ride fundraiser for the nonprofit. Fieri, a longtime Best Buddies global ambassador, mentioned on the show that Michael was the first person who came and cooked with him at a Best Buddies event.

"It's been a lot of fun, meeting him," said Jaxtimer-Barry. "He's a nice guy."

"He's every bit as genuine and authentic as he appears

to be," said Michael's mother, Joanne Jaxtimer, who serves on Cushing's board of directors. "Guy tells the story all the time that Michael was one of the first people he met with intellectual disabilities. He saw Michael working as his sous chef at that Harvard event and thought 'this guy really knows what he's doing.'"

In addition to being a Best Buddies participant, Jaxtimer-Barry is a Special Olympics medalist in skiing. A graduate of Milton Public Schools, he trained in the food service program at Cushing while he was in high school, and he also took a 12-week evening course in cooking at Cushing. He later went on to work in the kitchen at Davio's, but returned to Cushing, where he has worked for nearly eight years on the culinary team under Gerry Fanning, Cushing's director of food service.

"Michael's experience at Cushing has truly been transformative," said Jaxtimer. "It set him on a path toward meaningful employment. It's awesome."

As the contestants walked onto the set of the show, which was filmed in Santa Rosa, Calif., they were paired with their celebrity chefs for the first time. Jaxtimer-Barry worked with Maneet Chauhan, a Food Network regular who has established herself as a go-to figure when it comes to Indian cuisine and spices. Jaxtimer-Barry, who loves to cook classic

comfort food, also loves adding spice, so they were a perfect match.

"We had a lot of fun cooking together," he said.

They had 60 minutes to make a holiday entrée and dessert featuring two special ingredients chosen from Fieri's holiday sample tables, plus whatever other ingredient they could fit into two holiday stockings.

For their entrée, Jaxtimer-Barry and Chauhan prepared fried turkey roulade, mac n' cheese with gingerbread cookie panko topping and eggnog mashed potatoes. For dessert, they prepared a pumpkin pie ice cream. The judges were all impressed by the original twists on the traditional holiday offerings.

"I think, Michael, we need to get your name on a box of eggnog mashed potatoes going," said Fieri. "That's well done, my friend."

Though Bauer earned the winning prize of \$15,000, Jaxtimer-Barry was recognized with a \$5,000 donation in his name to Best Buddies.

"It was pretty cool," Jaxtimer-Barry said of his first television appearance. "People will see me now and say 'I saw you on TV.'"

The show can still be viewed on Food Network, Amazon, Apple TV and other streaming services.



1. Michael Jaxtimer-Barry competed alongside Cassidy Bauer and Chris Harrington on "Guy's Grocery Games." 2. Guy Fieri welcomed contestants, families, judges and crew to the set. 3. Michael Jaxtimer-Barry was paired with celebrity chef Maneet Chauhan.

