The Professional Employment Initiative: Not Just Jobs, but Careers

Launched at Center Club in 2012, thanks to a generous multi-year grant from the Sidney R. Baer, Jr Foundation, Bay Cove’s innovative Professional Employment Initiative is providing clubhouse members access to a diverse array of academic classes, peer tutoring, and vocational programs—and—most importantly—the opportunity to pursue long-term careers.

A native of Puerto Rico, Ruth has been a member of Center Club since 2007, a year after she was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Since then, she’s been a fixture at the club—building friendships, helping in the club’s kitchen and enjoying being part of a supportive community. In 2011, Center Club’s Anna Hermann helped Ruth get a job at Rogerson House in Jamaica Plain, an assisted living facility for men and women suffering from dementia.

“I was a dietary aide, and I enjoyed it,” says Ruth. “But I thought I could do more.”

Ruth was among the first Club members to benefit from the Baer Foundation grant, and through the PEI, she began training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). She completed her training in 10 weeks—earning certification from the Red Cross, as well as the highest score in her class of 12 students—and now works at Rogerson as a CNA, where her duties include giving medication, bathing and dressing patients.

“I so appreciate the opportunity that I’ve gotten, and how everyone believed in me and my potential,” she says. “I love my job. It’s not easy to work with people with dementia, but I do it because of the love I feel for them. My next goal, within the next 2 or 3 years, is to become a registered nurse.”

Ruth is just one of the many helped on her professional path by the PEI. Club members have taken cosmotology classes at Empire Beauty School, floral design course at Rittner’s Floral School, and learned music production skills at local recording studios. Lennox, a member of Center Club since 2012, earned his Class A driver’s license, and has secured a position as a supply-van driver for Clover Food Labs. “It’s been very helpful. It’s put me in a better position to support myself and my family financially,” says Lennox, who, despite the challenges of depression, has professional ambitions of becoming a bus or shuttle driver.

“I think it’s a great program, and it helps people who really need it.”

Michael is a club member who’s taken advantage of English classes offered in-house at Center Club by teachers from the Boston Language Institute for the last two years, two sessions per week. “This has really helped my comprehension skills, and my pronunciation, so I feel less self-conscious when I talk to people,” he says. “If I don’t understand something, my teacher reinforces it with me and doesn’t make me feel embarrassed. It’s given me a lot of confidence.”

“We are so fortunate to have the support of the Baer Foundation, and the guidance of its trustee, George Handran, for the Professional Employment Initiative,” says David Hirschberg, Bay Cove’s Vice President of Development. “Not only does the Foundation recognize the extraordinary potential of people facing the challenges associated with mental illness, but the grant they’ve awarded us acts as a catalyst for developing innovative, effective approaches to helping people fully realize that potential and achieve their personal goals.”

“I compare it to windows going up and brick walls coming down,” says Mary Gregorio, director of Center Club, adding that she’s hopeful a renewal of the grant can be worked out once it expires this fall. “People’s self-esteem is devastated when they’re diagnosed with mental illness. Without self-confidence, it’s hard to feel you can overcome a disability. This grant allows us to offer intensive, specialized support to help people develop their educational and professional future. It’s all about creating opportunities for people, which is what Center Club is all about.”
Finally, there are hints of spring in the air! While the snow may not fully melt until well into April, roads and pathways are now primarily bare and it’s a bit safer for drivers and walkers (and runners too). What a winter this has been with our record setting snowfall! While we have all been challenged by cancellations, arduous commutes, ice dams etc., I want to share a few of the extraordinary challenges that Bay Cove and our staff overcame to fulfill our mission this winter, and ensure care and treatment for the thousands who depend on us.

During blizzards and “states of emergency,” when all are ordered to stay off the roads, 70% of Bay Cove programs continue to operate and staff must get to work (and/or staff already at work must stay) to ensure that our clients are safe. Residences are staffed night and day (for clients who can’t get out to jobs or day programs), dosing happens at our Treatment Center, and our programs for the homeless are overflowing. Despite awful driving conditions and inoperable or unreliable public transportation, the work at Bay Cove must go on. Our staff are incredibly committed to our mission and the people we serve, and the stories of their extraordinary efforts make us all proud and grateful.

At least now, as the snow melts, our Meals-on-Wheels drivers can safely pull over to deliver a meal to a homebound elder’s apartment, and our Early Intervention clinicians can find a place to park when conducting home visits. This winter, simple annoyances like no parking became constant obstacles, taken to the Nth degree, which resulted in us needing to send out two people in every delivery van, and left our EI staff resorting to Uber to get around. Clearly, both solutions were important to deliver essential services, but they added to a lengthy list of unanticipated expenses. Extraordinary additional costs such as these, combined with the need to help the people we serve overcome the difficulties created by these unparalleled storms, made this one of the most financially challenging winters we’ve experienced in a long time.

However, now we look ahead, as the days get longer and there is so much to anticipate at Bay Cove. On page 3, you will read about our upcoming assortment of special events, beginning with our CASPAR annual fundraiser in April, then the Bay Cove Changing Lives Gala and Elsie Frank 5K in May. I hope you can join us for one or more of these occasions, each of which is not only fun and inspiring, but also help make it possible for us to pursue our mission, no matter what challenges—weather, financial, or otherwise—come our way.

Spring is also the time when the Bay Cove Marathon Team is preparing for the big run from Hopkinton to Copley Square. The Boston Marathon is on April 20 and, for the 8th consecutive year, Bay Cove is the recipient of charity numbers through the John Hancock Nonprofit Program. I’m proud to have been a member of the team for each of those 8 years. Running a marathon presents a significant challenge for me (as it does for any runner!), but the opportunity to run and raise money and recognition for Bay Cove is so great that I will continue to do it, at least as long as my knees hold out. The challenge of running a marathon pales in comparison to the challenges faced each and every day by the people we serve.

The people who come to Bay Cove for treatment, training, therapy, education, a place to live, a hot meal or a place to spend the night need and deserve all the help that we can give them. I’m very fortunate in many ways, but particularly because I’ve been able to do such important work on behalf of such important people whose challenges are so much greater than any I’ve had to face. Running a marathon is a long race but, as a former colleague so eloquently put it, “for the people we serve, the race never ends.”

Bill Sprague
President & CEO
**Spring Is Here! Come Celebrate With Us!**

With only weeks to go until the 2015 Boston Marathon, Bay Cove’s team of runners continues to train hard for the big race. They did, however, slow down last month long enough to pose for official team photos. (Pictured right, from left to right, are Jake Sunderland, Bill Sprague, Lauren Easton, Dorothy Borkiewicz and Jim Laprade).

Team Bay Cove supporters will have the chance to celebrate the runners on **Friday, April 10**, at a Marathon Team Rally/Party, taking place at **Busker’s Lounge** (67 Canal St., Boston), which will feature a cash bar and hors d’ouvres with a suggested donation of $10. For more information about the event, contact Alcurtis Clark in the Development Department at 617-371-3184.

And, if you can’t make the rally, you can support our team by making a donation to at [www.baycove.org/marathon](http://www.baycove.org/marathon), or by cheering them on in person. Join Bay Cove staff and friends of the agency at the Marathon on April 20 (one popular Bay Cove gathering spot is on the inbound side of Commonwealth Ave., between Mass. Ave. and Hereford Street), and help give the runners that extra motivation for those last few miles!

Of course, the Marathon and the Changing Lives Gala are only two of the special events for Bay Cove supporters in April and May.

**“Strengthening Our Community,”** the annual fundraising event for the homelessness and addiction services programs of **CASPAR**, takes place **April 9**, from 6-8 p.m., at the Marriott Courtyard Cambridge, 777 Memorial Drive. The event will feature a delicious buffet; a live auction of unique items; inspiring stories from those who have battled homelessness and addiction; and the presentation of the Carl F. Barron Catalyst for Change Award to stalwart CASPAR supporters Stephen J. Seiner, MD, and Tiziana C. Dearing. Tickets are $150, and can be purchased at [www.baycove.org/caspar](http://www.baycove.org/caspar), or by contacting **Julia W. Londergan** at jlondergan@baycove.org or 617-619-5950.

Finally, on **May 30**, runners and walkers of all ages will gather at Pope John Paul II Park in Dorchester for **The Elsie Frank 5K for Kit Clark Senior Services**, beginning at 10 a.m. (registration at 8:30). This tribute to renowned elder advocate Elsie Frank is an annual tradition, bringing together supporters of Kit Clark and its array of senior services.

This year’s road race is open to all, including the smallest athletes among us—the event will feature a Kids’ Fun Run for children ages 10 and under, beginning at 9 a.m., with all participants earning a medal!

For more information, visit [www.baycove.org/elsiefrank](http://www.baycove.org/elsiefrank) or contact **Mary Long** at 617-533-9138 or mlong2@baycove.org.

Meanwhile, the **Changing Lives Gala on May 7** is shaping up to be a truly unforgettable evening. **Chef Andy Husbands** (above, left)—chef/owner of popular South End restaurant Tremont 647 and a former contestant on FOX TV’s “Hell’s Kitchen”—will be designing the menu for the evening, and entertainment at the event will be provided by acclaimed jazz vocalist **Rebecca Parris** (above, center). Veteran broadcaster **Susan Wornick** will lead the evening’s live auction for a second consecutive year.

Additionally, Bay Cove is thrilled to announce that new Massachusetts Attorney General **Maura Healey** (above, right) will be the recipient of this year’s Bay Cove **Changing Lives Award** at the gala. The **Changing Lives Award** is given to recognize extraordinary champions for the people we serve and for everyone in our community who faces similar challenges.

The Changing Lives Gala will take place at the Seaport Hotel Plaza Ballroom. Tickets are $250, and sponsorships are still available. To learn more, visit [www.baycove.org/gala](http://www.baycove.org/gala) or contact **David Hirschberg** at 617-371-3167.
Bay Cove Wish List

Often, one very simple item can make a real difference in someone’s life. Would you or someone you know be able to donate new (or, in some cases, gently used) items like:

- Books for our Family Support and Parent Support Resource Rooms
- An iPad for a person with developmental disabilities
- Furniture for a formerly homeless person’s apartment
- Business apparel for a job interview
- Arts and crafts supplies to be used in Occupational Therapy and Art Therapy programs

If you’re able to help, please contact Bay Cove’s Development Department at 617-619-5930, and thank you!

A Bay Cove staffer uses an iPad to help individuals at our Bradston Street Day Habilitation program enhance their job and life skills.

MISSION
Improving the quality of the lives of individuals and their families who face the challenges of developmental disabilities, aging, mental illness, and drug and alcohol addiction. We will accomplish this mission by providing effective and compassionate services and through advocacy and leadership.