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WORCESTER, MA



**ANNUAL REPORT | 2016**

*Pathways to  
empowerment.*

# 2016

# \$32.7M

*annual revenue*

# 775

*employees*

# 44

*community residences*

# 189

*people receiving residential services*

# 132

*people attending day habilitation programs*

# 275

*people receiving transportation services*

## **Venture Community Services**

*provides support to individuals facing diverse challenges through a compassionate and dedicated workforce using innovative practices that encourage independence, empowerment, and opportunity.*



## Message from the President



As we get ready to head into 2017 it's only appropriate that we look back on what has been a very busy year at Venture Community Services – busy, but successful. Programming expanded as the agency finished building its newest home in Rutland and welcomed four young men into their beautiful

new house. Venture is also in the process of opening another home in Franklin through a partnership with the Franklin Housing Authority and the Department of Developmental Services. We also continue to see growth of our Shared Living program, and our community day programs received a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). We expect to continue our development in the coming year with new programs and expanded services, particularly with regard to autism and day programs.

In early November, Venture was the recipient of a distinguished award when the company was named an Employer of Choice by the Employers Association of the Northeast. This award is given to companies that demonstrate a commitment to empowering and valuing employees through a compassionate and supportive workplace. The award, coupled with another award bestowed by the Worcester Business Journal last year, is validation of Venture's ongoing dedication to the many professionals who provide vital supports to the people in Venture programs. We are truly fortunate to have such a talented group of professionals who make a positive difference every day in the lives of the individuals we support. These awards reaffirm our responsibility to recognize the important work being done by so many people.

Although one more year is nearing an end, the agency must be ever mindful of the future. There is a growing need for vital programming and we have an obligation to meet this challenge. Working with various funding sources, we will continue to explore different ways to assist people of all ages living with autism. We are committed to developing innovative and creative support services that will help the Commonwealth to efficiently assist a growing population of people in need. In early 2017, the agency will be amending its strategic plan to reflect the development of programs that utilize enhanced therapeutic techniques and maximize the use of assistive technology. In addition, Venture will continue working with trade associations to constantly advocate on behalf of the men and women who work incredibly hard every day to provide the people we support with opportunities and dignity.

We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season!

*Mike*

Mike Hyland  
President & CEO





# Programs and Initiatives

*We are setting the standard in individualized care by understanding the unique needs of each individual we support. We respect their goals and continually develop creative strategies to assist people in reaching their highest potential and greatest level of independence.*

## Expanding Day Services

In February, we announced the expansion of our services into the Blackstone Valley region with the purchase of an 11,000 square foot building on Douglas Street in Uxbridge. We are eager for the opportunity to introduce our programming to a new part of the state and address the need for creative treatment options for a population in need of vital services – people with autism of all ages. We intend to offer support services to families and individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities through our day habilitation program, Applied Behavior Analysis treatment, center-based social skills programs, family outreach, and pre-vocational training. When open, the center will be a resource for children, families and adults with a wide range of clinical needs.

## Exploring Assistive Technology

With the increasing specialized needs of the individuals we support, Venture has developed an Assistive Technology Committee to help effectively meet these needs. Key staff members have been attending conferences and trainings to learn how to develop a program that will help assist individuals in our programs to access the resources available. Adaptive equipment and assistive technology are essential to improving the quality of life and increasing the level of independence for people with disabilities. Examples of such equipment might be tablets, communication devices, lifts, swings, exercise equipment, computer software, specialty eating or writing utensils and much more. These items can help individuals with mobility, communication, sensory, recreational, or social needs. Too often, cost or availability can be a major barrier to someone in need of such equipment. The committee plans to offer assessments to review the needs of the

individual, determine what type of equipment would be most useful, and explore funding options to fill that need. The committee also hopes to partner with local colleges and vocational schools for assistance in developing new and creative tools or equipment.

## Offering Adaptive Yoga

Yoga has been shown to offer tremendous benefits to those who practice it, including stress management, alleviation of pain, improved physical fitness, increased flexibility and balance, enhanced mood, blood pressure regulation, and more. Recently, yoga has become popular for its accessibility – with a few modifications, the benefits of yoga are available to almost everyone, regardless of age or ability level. Adaptive yoga practice has recently earned recognition as a complementary therapy for individuals with developmental disabilities and autism. We have created an exciting new partnership with an incredible service-oriented yoga studio that is helping us to train yoga teachers in their specialized adaptive yoga curriculum, bringing a new opportunity to the people we support in our day service and residential programs. We hope to add more teachers and sessions in the upcoming year, and even open the classes to others with disabilities in our community.

## Encouraging Community Living

Venture's Shared Living Program has experienced tremendous growth in the past year. We have been working to identify individuals who wish to live more independently than the group home setting and match them with a provider that will support them in their goals in a compatible home environment that will enrich their lives.



Providers welcome adults with developmental disabilities into their homes, lives, and families, establishing a mutually supportive relationship. We are continually working to cultivate compassionate, caring providers who believe in our mission as well as offering training and support.

### Investing in Our Staff

Our employees are what make it possible to fulfill our mission every day. As an agency, we are committed to providing opportunities for staff members as well as the individuals supported by our programs. In the past year, our Employee Recognition Committee and Wellness Works program have both grown significantly. We believe employees need to be valued and rewarded, and employee recognition is an important step. Our thank you card program, employee awards, special recognitions for longevity, and employee appreciation days all contribute to a positive work environment. The Wellness Works program is a benefit to all employees to help them achieve their health goals, create a sense of community, and provide resources for wellness. The program offers monthly awards, workshops, healthy snacks provided weekly at our offices, contests with prizes, our annual wellness fair, and reimbursement for participating in walks or road races. We

were also honored with the Worcester Business Journal's 2015 Employer of Choice Award in the large employer category for Employee Health & Wellbeing. Just this November, we were also selected as an Employer of Choice by the Employers Association of the Northeast based on our commitment to wellness, educational resources, tuition remission program, and unique benefits.

### Leading the Industry

As leaders in our industry, we are working with our trade associations to provide opportunities and advocate for the needs of the individuals we support and the employees who make the work we do possible. We are working to represent the interests of direct care staff members when it comes to livable wages, affordable health insurance, and work life balance. As part of our commitment to enhancing the industry as a whole, we recently developed a highly successful mentoring program that will afford people the opportunity to grow either with Venture or elsewhere in the industry. In addition, we will continue to not only advocate on Beacon Hill, but also in our nation's capital to ensure that the importance and professionalism of our workforce is properly recognized.



# Venture Celebrates Success

*We strive to empower individuals by providing the resources and support they need to reach their goals. We encourage individuality and celebrate accomplishment.*



*Mercy with Tiffany and her husband Shawn*

## **Mercy and Tiffany**

Mercy has been sharing a home with her shared living provider, Tiffany, for the past five years. Recently, Mercy approached the Shared Living Department to ask if she could do something special to recognize everything that Tiffany has done for her over the years. Together with Venture staff members, Mercy decided to surprise Tiffany with an award presentation at Venture's main office to recognize her for Outstanding Dedication as a Shared Living Provider. Mercy presented her with flowers, an award, and shared a speech she had written. "Tiffany is an outstanding provider because she always helps me get everything I need," said Mercy. She went on to share that Tiffany had been instrumental in helping her to reconnect with her father and facilitating visits with her sister. Mercy shared that she was grateful to Tiffany for bringing her to get her ears pierced and always doing something special to celebrate her birthday, like going out to dinner or to concerts. She has also inspired Mercy to go on vacations, provides support to enhance her social life, and encourages her at her job. Both ladies admitted that at times it's not always easy, but together they make a great team and look forward to many more great years working together.



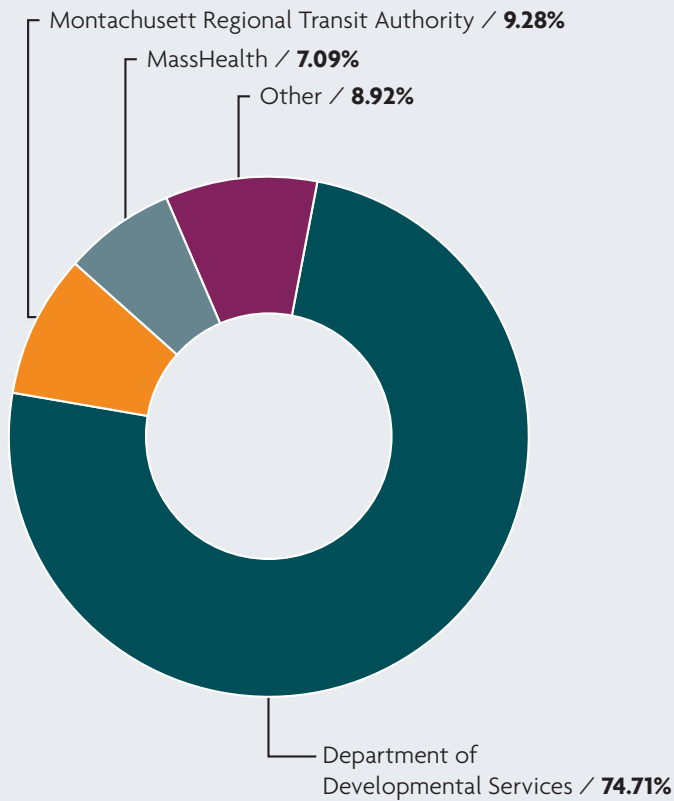
*Unveiling ceremony – September, 2016*

## **Exploring the Arts**

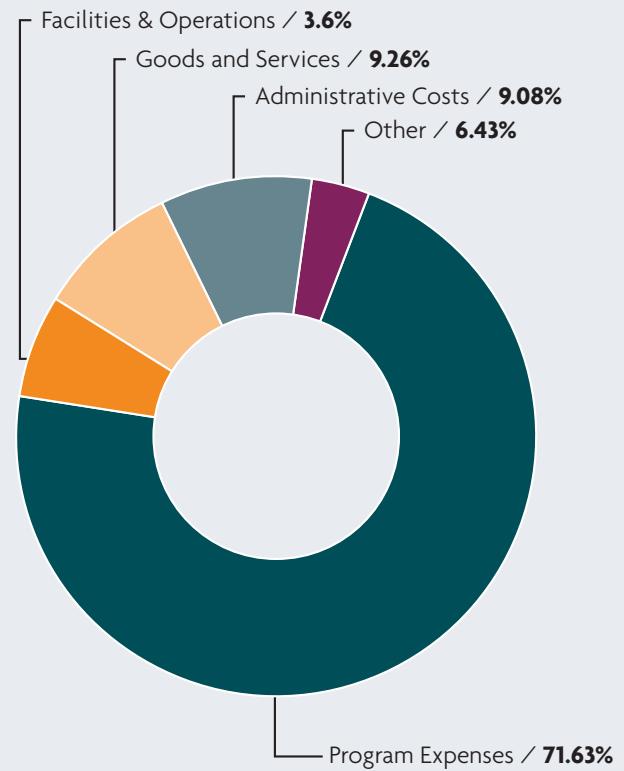
Over the summer, one of our residential programs in Foxboro hosted an art class in conjunction with the Attleboro Art Museum. Angela, one of the women who live at this program, began taking art classes at the art museum last year. Together with her staff, they thought it would be a great idea to bring art into their home! Three other residential programs from the surrounding area joined Angela and her housemates for an afternoon of splatter painting facilitated by an art instructor right in their own backyard. Happy with their finished project, the group generously offered the piece to Venture's main office in Sturbridge, where it is now displayed. The residents invited their families to join us for an unveiling ceremony and reception in September, which was also attended by many employees and friends. Special thanks are also in order for the exceptional staff at the Foxboro program for encouraging and facilitating such a great experience!

## Statement of Activity

### Revenue Sources



### Expenditures



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Venture Community Services is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides support to individuals facing diverse challenges through a compassionate and dedicated workforce using innovative practices that encourage independence, empowerment, and opportunity.  
 Federal Tax Identification 04-2593315

## Thank you for your support

*The support you provide allows us to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and other challenges in our community.*

### Platinum Donors

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## How You Can Help

*Donations, volunteering, advocacy, event participation, or legislative actions—community support makes the difference. Visit [venturescs.org](http://venturescs.org) for more information.*