

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Moving Forward.

Continuing access to compassionate
and innovative programs and improving
the lives of those we support.

6,656

hours spent on **staff training**

841

dedicated
employees

24

Percent of employees
who have been

promoted

within the past two years

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

120

free adaptive
yoga classes taught

4.5

Average years of
employee tenure

177 individuals living in **44** community residences =

806,546

hours of **direct care provided**

136,868

gallons of gas for

110

vehicles in fleet

\$7,611

spent on adaptive
equipment and
assistive **technology**

137 day habilitation
participants providing

520

hours of community
volunteer work



Message from the President



It continues to be a busy time at Venture as we go about the daily business of providing supports and opportunities for the hundreds of people in the agency's programs and in the local communities where we operate. As always, it is such a genuine pleasure to see the remarkable skill and compassion

that our employees demonstrate every day to improve the lives of others. Although this can be difficult work, the commitment of our many professionals ensures that people who need help can find it here at Venture.

While we are faced with many challenges in this industry, there is one that looms larger than all the others; the growing workforce crisis. Hiring people to do this incredibly important work has never been harder than it is now and this crisis extends throughout the country. In every state, human services provider agencies are confronting high vacancy and turnover rates in jobs that are crucial to providing community-based supports for people with disabilities and other unique needs. Low pay combined with increasingly challenging work has created a dynamic that threatens every agency's ability to continue to meet growing needs in the immediate future. Venture is working closely with other agencies and our trade associations to find ways to overcome this issue, and that includes working with the state to raise rates for services so that employee salaries can increase in a meaningful way. This type of advocacy is Venture's top priority now, as is raising awareness of just how important direct care jobs are in this country. The professionals who do this vital work, and do it so well, are more than just nice

people helping those in need. They are a highly skilled and dedicated workforce that is also a key economic driver in Massachusetts and across the United States. Venture will strive non-stop to make everyone outside of the human services industry aware of just how talented and critical our workforce is, as well as how long overdue appropriate compensation truly is for them. It is high time that our society recognizes direct care employees for the accomplished and dedicated professionals that they are and always have been.

In addition to our advocacy, Venture heads into the third decade of this century fully committed to making a difference in the lives of others. Our programs continue to evolve, as does our work in the community. Venture offers more free events to people living with autism and disabilities than ever before and we continue to create opportunities for the individuals in our programs to be vibrant members of the community where they live. It is through this commitment that Venture fulfills its mission on a daily basis while always challenging ourselves to do more. Of course, this work would not be possible without the constant support of our donors and many friends. Venture is proud to note that every dollar donated to this agency is dedicated directly to programming and to enhancing the lives of the individuals we help every day of the year. That is of course why we have been doing this for 45 years now.

Mike Hyland
President & CEO



Programs and Initiatives



Our main goal is to invest in our employees, which will ultimately lead to the improvement of services for the individuals we support.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Venture takes great pride in the exceptional efforts of its direct support workforce. Our employees are what make it possible to fulfill our mission and we are committed to providing support and recognition to staff members of all levels. Our main goal is to invest in our employees, which will ultimately lead to the improvement of services for the individuals we support and contribute to the professionalization of the human services industry. This year, the agency has been working to enhance the Employee Recognition Program which includes department-specific appreciation days, contests with prizes, anniversary gifts, an Excellence in Direct Support Award that is presented at our annual Wine & Beer Festival, the employee thank-you card program, which allows colleagues to show appreciation for each other and be recognized among their peers, and more. The dedicated staff newsletter highlights all the great work being done in our individual programs, and offers yet another opportunity for staff members to be recognized for their incredible work. Venture is dedicated to fostering staff growth and development as demonstrated in this year's Staff Spotlight. We are pleased to recognize the accomplishments of five dedicated house managers who began their careers together as direct support professionals at our Highland Street residence. Today, five years later, each of these dedicated employees has been promoted and is now in charge of leading their own programs and teams. "I am so very proud of these four professionals that have built great teams in their own right," says Greg Golden, a Residential House Manager at our Holden program. "Their work has helped multiple individuals with challenges to remain safe in the community, promote independence, offer choices and live meaningful lives while encouraging them to maintain valuable relationships."



Left: Congratulations to Scott Bagley (right), the winner of this year's Direct Support Professional Award, pictured with Robert from the Uxbridge Day Program. / Right: Greg Golden, Samuel Conduah, Marie Wells, James Konie and Dan Goddu.



LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Venture is deeply invested in strengthening the human services workforce. Our agency employs nearly 600 direct support professionals who provide emotional, recreational, medical, behavioral, and physical support to hundreds of individuals. This number only represents a sliver of the people working in similar positions in other agencies across the Commonwealth. Nationally, the human services workforce is experiencing a 45% turnover rate, which threatens the stability of services. We are committed to helping manage the human services workforce crisis on a national stage, which means working with members of Congress and advocacy organizations to represent our employees. Direct support professionals are what make it possible to provide quality services 365 days a year – these employees are skilled, trained professionals and we are working diligently to promote the human services workforce and in turn secure the highest quality services. Venture works closely with the Association of Developmental Disability Providers, The Providers' Council and the national advocacy organization ANCOR (American Network of Community Options and Resources) to promote the best possible services for the individuals we support and the professionalization of the human services industry. We represent the unique interests of our workforce by advocating for better wages, access to healthcare, student loan reimbursement and more.

CONTRIBUTING in the COMMUNITY

Both our day programs and our residences are committed to providing services through unique programming, activities and community involvement. We recognize that every person we support is an individual with their own set of needs, interests, preferences and health concerns. Venture works with each individual on a case-by-case basis to help determine their unique abilities. Between the Sturbridge and Uxbridge day programs, Venture's participants provide 8 hours of volunteer meal delivery for local seniors weekly. The Uxbridge day program provides support at a local cat shelter, helping to clean, organize, feed the animals and offer much-needed attention to the cats waiting for their "forever homes". Several residential programs in Dudley teamed up to fill some back-to-school backpacks for local children in need and our Paxton residents help out every weekend at a free medical clinic. Some of our programs have visited nursing homes to provide companionship to seniors in our community. Many residents are members of churches, health clubs and social clubs. Individuals also have the opportunity to participate as rider athletes with the world-renowned Team Hoyt in road races across Massachusetts. At Venture, we recognize that true community involvement can be achieved through giving back and helping our neighbors.

Above, left to right: Dot Cote (Chief Financial Officer), Pam Sampson (Chief Program Officer), Jonathan Hinkle (Residential House Manager), Senator Ryan Fattman (Republican – Worcester & Norfolk) and Paige Mador (Director of Community Engagement) share a visit at a residential program in Webster. / The Uxbridge Day Program participants and staff volunteering at a local animal rescue. / Enjoying a visit to a local apple orchard.



Community Outreach Program



Venture is proud to report that the Community Outreach Program has grown tremendously within the past year. The goal of this unique program is to provide free social and recreational opportunities to both adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism.

This initiative began three years ago with free adaptive yoga classes, which quickly grew in popularity. Today, Venture provides two free yoga classes per month to children in the Blackstone Valley community. The children's portion of the program also offers monthly therapeutic drum circles and live music, family fun events, cooking classes and craft programs. The free family fun events are sensory-friendly and geared toward kids with autism and their families. Our Halloween event offers practice trick-or-treating, crafts and sensory activities. The annual spring event gives kids the opportunity to experiment with different types of exercise, music and yoga as well as meeting animals. Not only do these events give kids access to fun activities in a safe and supportive environment, it also provides opportunities for them to meet friends and for their parents to connect with one another.

During the past year, Venture has begun offering events for adults with disabilities in the community, too. More than 50 participants enjoyed both our spring and fall paint nights hosted by Brush It Off Paint & Sip in Sturbridge, as well as a summertime herb garden project and Thanksgiving centerpiece creation, both hosted by Bemis Farms Nursery of Spencer. We also welcomed more than 130 individuals to our first annual Luau this past July and we are eagerly awaiting the Winter Wonderland dance in December. While attending their day programs, individuals supported by Venture also have access to projects with local artists, yoga classes, tai chi classes and therapeutic drum circles.



Above, left to right: Jodie helping out at the spring gardening workshop. / Venture staff getting ready for the first annual Summer Luau. / Elaina hard at work at our autumn paint night. / Enjoying drum circle. Right: Sensory bin fun at the Spring Fling.

Statement of Activity

REVENUE SOURCES

- Department of Developmental Services / **75%**
- Misc. Government Contracts / **17%**
- Other / **8%**



EXPENDITURES

- Residential Services / **68%**
- Other Support Services / **13%**
- Administrative Costs / **10%**
- Transportation / **7%**



Venture Community Services is a 501©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

AGENCY LEADERSHIP

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- Dorothy Cote
Executive Vice President & Chief Financial Officer
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Chief Program Officer
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Thank you for your support

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

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Michael and Deanna Murdza
Patricia Kasturi
Patricia Nylin
Rapsallion Brewery
Table 3 Restaurant Group
Pamela and Jose Costa

How You Can Help

Donations, volunteering, advocacy, event participation, or legislative actions – community support makes the difference. Visit venturecs.org for more information about how you can join in our mission.