

As We Venture Forward

Continual growth for our staff, programs,
families and the people we support

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Message from the President

Another year has already arrived and brought with it the annual combination of hope and nostalgia. It is a time to look ahead at the gleaming potential of a new year while simultaneously reflecting on the joys and challenges of the previous one. At Venture, the beginning of a year gives us the opportunity to see not just how the agency has grown but also why it has grown. As always, our growth as an agency is the direct result of a committed and tireless workforce that continues to do everything imaginable in support of other people. This is what brings our mission to life every day.

The simple fact is that when the people associated with Venture grow, the agency grows with them. The accomplishments of our employees and the people they support is what drives the agency forward and allows us to tackle new initiatives and programs. In the past year, we have added two new homes to our portfolio, increased the number of people we support in Shared Living, added in-home clinical supports for individuals living with their families, and opened an Advancement Center dedicated to helping young people living with autism find employment

and educational opportunities. We also renovated the agency's first home to provide housing supports to four people working toward independence. Venture's commitment to growth is a reflection of the increasing number of people in the Commonwealth who need help and is born out of the confidence that we can help meet that need. It is how Venture and the agencies around us work to strengthen the safety net in Massachusetts.

In this year's Annual Report, you will be able to read about just some of the people who have grown with Venture in the past year. Their stories represent what is best about the human spirit; hope, courage, and achievement. They also represent what is best about working at a human services agency; the opportunity to see our colleagues and the people we support accomplish their goals. The work Venture does is still difficult, but the successes of the people here are real and worth celebrating.

We also recognize the contributions of our many supporters and donors, as well as the organizations we partner with in our continuing effort to grow and help more people. To our wholly dedicated Board of Directors and to the people who bring our fundraisers to life, Venture remains ever thankful because you are also what help us grow. Let's continue to see what we can do together.

Mike Hyland
President & CEO

Staff, Family and Individual Growth

Shared Living: Q & A with the Nartey Family

Shared Living serves adults with developmental disabilities who are in need of a welcoming home that can provide ongoing support. The person is matched by Venture with an individual or family who has been recruited and screened as a Shared Living Provider. The ultimate goal for the individual and the Shared Living Provider is to establish a mutually-supportive relationship.

My name is Charles Nartey and my family and I have welcomed Alan into our home as part of Venture's Shared Living program. Prior to becoming a Shared Living Provider, I worked as a program manager at Venture for more than 20 years.

What inspired you to become a Shared Living Provider?

While working at Venture as a program manager I learned that one of my staff members was also doing shared living for another agency. The experiences he shared about his family made me interested in becoming a provider myself.

How did your family and Alan adjust to this new living arrangement?

Initially I was concerned how to go about integrating an individual into your family when you have children and how everyone would adapt to the new living situation. Overall, the transition did end up going very smoothly with my three children. My oldest son and daughter didn't have any issues, but my youngest son couldn't fully grasp the new living situation. After noticing his uneasiness, I was able to talk with him and help him better understand our new family dynamic. My wife also has 20 plus years of experience working in human services and working with Alzheimer's patients, so she had an idea what it would



be like to have a person with a disability living in our home. It was also important to make the transition from living in a group home to a shared living setting easy for Alan and his family. Since Alan and I had known each other for years through my role as a program manager, our adjustment to the new situation was minimal. Alan's family was happy he was placed with my family, but was still concerned and wanted to make sure we knew what was involved with having Alan here full time. I assured them that I was prepared since I had worked with him on a daily basis for so long. In order to make Alan comfortable when he first moved



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in, we did a lot of things that I knew he specifically enjoyed doing. Initially he was attached to me more than the other family members since I had spent the most time with him at work. Gradually he felt more at ease with others in the family and we made it a point to show him this was his home too. It was great to see both families together during the holidays.

What do you see in the future of shared living with your family?

All of our children are done with college and have all left the home; but we are all still a family. The kids and Alan's family still come for holidays and we make a point to have dinners throughout the year with his family to stay in touch. Alan continues to travel with us to different places including Cape Cod and twice to Africa where he has made friends that he keeps in touch with by writing letters. He has started to talk about going for a third time and we are all working on saving some money to make that happen.

2022 Highlights

Advancement Center

New program to assist young adults with ASD reach their educational or employment goals

Prospect House

Transitional program for young adults with ASD that teaches skills to live independently

Baylies Road

Medical model residential home in Charlton to support five people

Dennison Drive

New residential program located in Southbridge to support four people

Golf Tournament

Hosted our 24th annual event at Blissful Meadows in Uxbridge

Wine Tasting

Brought back our popular sip, sample and support event in Sturbridge

Halloween Event

Free community event held in Uxbridge for families of children with autism

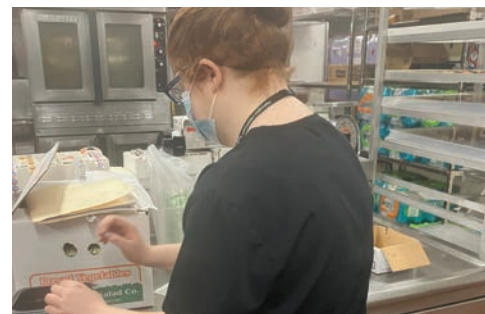
Adaptive Yoga Program

Offered in our Community day Programs and free for the community in Uxbridge for children with ASD

Music Therapy Program

Offered in our Community Day Program locations

New Program Growth: Autism Advancement Center



Russ and Rick Hoyt highlighting the display in the Advancement Center dedicated to their late father Dick Hoyt, Brandon heading to work at Walmart, Gabby volunteering at Harrington Hospital

The Venture Community Services' Advancement Center opened in January 2022 and since then we have grown to support 14 individuals with Autism and other disabilities. Our goal is to help our clients find meaningful employment and demonstrate to the community that people on the spectrum have extraordinary gifts and abilities that make them valued employees.

When a new person joins us, we typically start with assessing their skills and abilities and writing resumes. We assist clients in their desired job search and help them complete applications. Our staff can go to the interview with the individual if they request, and act as job coaches for support once employment has been found. If a person is not quite

ready for the workforce, staff can assist the clients in finding volunteer opportunities to help build their skill sets. Through a lot of hard work and patience, several clients from the program have been able to find meaningful employment.

Brandon is working at Walmart in Sturbridge and is a valued member of the front-end team. Brandon greets customers with a smile, helps put away overstock items, and acts as asset management, ensuring that no one steals from the store.

Kevin works at McDonald's in Webster where he is known to do an amazing job at the fry station. His supervisors have noticed how hard he works in cleaning booths and tables and taking out the trash.

Michael has been providing security through his weekend job at Securitas. His supervisor has praised his positive attitude and willingness to pick up extra shifts when available.

Gabby has started a long-term volunteer position at Harrington Hospital. She works in the kitchen as a dishwasher and also delivers food to patients in their rooms. The staff are all super appreciative of her help and she is enjoying the time spent there.

These are just some of the examples that highlight the growth of the individuals in the program.

The Advancement Center is off to a good start, but this is only the beginning. Many employers are currently willing "to take a chance" on hiring someone with a disability. We are working hard to change that mentality to show that this group of people aren't liabilities that employers need to shy away from, they are an untapped market who employers can benefit from hiring.

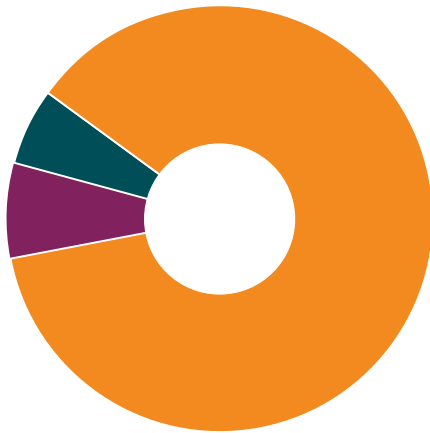
Peter Corrado, Autism Services Coordinator

"I started at Venture in May of 2022 and soon realized it was nothing like my previous programs. Venture really helped me work on figuring out what I like and want to do. We started to look for jobs and practice interview skills. A staff gave me really good advice when applying to many jobs – "focus on one person at a time." I took the advice and used it to my advantage. On day three I had three interviews. With Venture's help, I got my first job on my own without the help of my parents. It felt great! I would recommend Venture to all my friends, family and everyone else." — Brandon

Statement of Activity

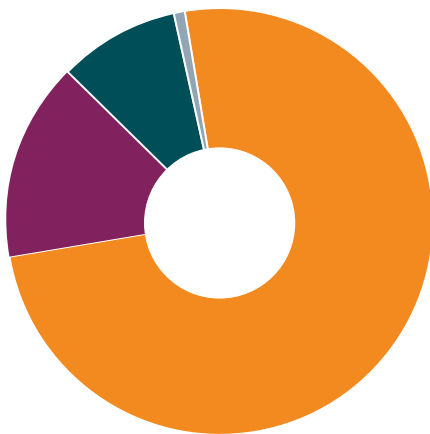
REVENUE SOURCES

- Department of Developmental Services / **87%**
- Misc. Government Contracts / **6%**
- Other / **7%**



EXPENDITURES

- Residential Services / **75%**
- Other Support Services / **15%**
- Facility & Operations / **9%**
- Other / **1%**



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

Agency Leadership

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