

Please like us on Facebook!

Eagles Community RedZone

Gary. “As a PHLY partner we were honored to be awarded the Community RedZone opportunity to publicly showcase our mission.” For the game, CI was awarded two tickets, two parking passes and two vendor credentials which allowed CI to staff a booth provided by The Eagles, and which was located on the Main Concourse of Lincoln Financial Field.

In preparation for the event, Meg assembled CI promotional materials, and ordered a large number of giveaways, which quickly got snatched up by the Eagles fans. As a Community RedZone partner, CI received live, in-arena recognition, a commemorative trophy that was presented to CI Managing Director Carrie Carter (who stood in for CEO Christopher Saulino who was on vacation at the time), and broadcasted from the field, along with social media, print and internet exposure.

“It was a very exciting and fun evening for us all,” said Meg, who was accompanied by Carrie, Sam Kiiru, Senior Program Specialist for Residential Services, and Dominique Young, Associate Director for Residential Services. “We are so grateful to have been selected for this honor. Go Eagles!”



In the Philadelphia Eagles Community RedZone, sponsored by Philadelphia Insurance Companies (PHLY) on August 8th, (from left) Jeff Evans, former PHL Marketing Representative; Meg Nielson, CI Director of Communication and Outreach; Carrie Carter, CI Managing Director; and Dominique Young, CI Associate Director for Residential Services. Not pictured is Sam Kiiru, CI Senior Program Specialist for Residential Services, who took the photo.

Communication and Outreach, to organize the agency's presence at the August game. “PHLY is one of the leading insurers of nonprofit organizations in the Greater Philadelphia area, with a philosophy and longstanding tradition of giving back,” said

con't on back page

Our Mission:

Community Interactions, Inc. (CI) provides quality services for people with intellectual, physical and behavioral health challenges to help them create lifestyles consistent with their communities while respecting individual choice, self determination and culture.



Message from the CEO

Christopher Saulino, Ph.D.
President/CEO

As another year comes to a close, I would like to share some exciting new initiatives that are happening. However, first I would like to address our CI family.

Over the years, I have had various roles and responsibilities within our organization, but I have never had the opportunity to see the entire picture. After taking the helm as CEO a year ago, I can firmly say how impressed I am with the hard work of our dedicated staff, families, individuals and stakeholders. This incredible group of people make up our CI family and we couldn't do it without them.

As I touched on in the last newsletter, our focus in 2020 will be on quality. We have begun instituting a balanced score card which measures our quality goals. This includes measuring how well we are doing in all aspects of our agency. This will help us gain data on how to continue to improve the quality of our services.

We have also made, for the fourth year in a row, the commitment to increase staff wages. We will work hard to make this happen on a continued basis, as we are committed to help solve our DSP crisis. Pushing wages up, and retaining our employees is critical to a stable quality workforce. We also have a new recruitment team who will target and market our services to meet the growing need for staff.

This year training will focus on certifying our workforce. This will include a DSP training sponsored by the NADD (National Association for the Dually Diagnosed), certified management course for our frontline managers, and a new autism training program. These certified trainings will focus on best practices and quality standards, to ensure that we continue to provide the best services as possible.

As I reflect upon what I personally need to be thankful for, I have been blessed and honored to oversee the direction of Community Interactions. I have received tremendous support from the board of directors, individuals, staff, and families.

I wish everyone in the CI Family Happy Holidays, and I look forward to a wonderful start to the New Year.

PEOPLE

Renée Sutton



Renée Sutton, CI's new HR and Fiscal Administrative Assistant, has stayed true to the goal she set for herself when she joined the agency 15 years ago, which was to learn and grow within the organization.

Over the years that Renée, a Philadelphia native, has been with CI, she has indeed grown. None of her prior professional experience in HR and accounting administration was in human services, except for an internship at Jefferson Hospital that she took while she was

pursuing her degree in Secretarial Science at the American Business Institute. That experience planted a seed that ultimately grew into her first position at CI as a Direct Support Professional.

Within a year of working as a CI DSP, Renée was promoted to Team Leader, a position she held for seven years until becoming a Team Facilitator, and finally a Senior Team Facilitator before moving into her new role in HR.

Renée, the mother of two grown sons TJ and Pastor D.E. Sutton, whose wife Melica Renée is proud to call her daughter, and the grandmother to nine grandchildren, is just getting used to her new job. She said it's going very well as she becomes accustomed to now being in the main office every day.

"I've always enjoyed working with people, and the opportunity to learn different things," she said. "When I came to CI I wanted to learn everything I could about supporting people with intellectual disabilities, and to be part of a growing agency. Over the years, the insights I've gained have enabled me to understand why we do what we do."

Samantha Swain



Samantha Swain is CI's Director of Human Resources, a position she's held since spring, when she was promoted from HR Generalist. She began her career at CI as a DSP working in the Day Program eight years ago, during the height of the Great Recession, and within a year transitioned into a temporary position in HR. "And I never left," she said.

She first learned of the agency through Diane Hannah Wilson, who joined CI as VP of Human Resources in 2009, and whom Sam had met previously while vol-

unteering in HR at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital. At that time she was completing her Bachelor of Arts in English, Political Science, and History. Following her graduation in 2008, she moved to South Florida to complete her Juris Doctor at the University of Miami, graduating in 2010, and passing the PA Bar in 2011.

After graduating with her law degree she worked part-time practicing trust and estate law, as well as administrative benefits on behalf of veterans. She enjoyed it, she said, but discovered she loved human resources, its policies, meeting with employees, and creating opportunities that really benefit them. "It's very fulfilling. We all need meaning and purpose in our lives and I think that if you can find that in your job then you're blessed."

"I feel very fortunate," said Sam. "Graduating from college in 2008 wasn't a good time to be entering the workforce. 2010 wasn't significantly better either. A lot of my friends were working temp jobs, and I needed to start paying down my student loans. CI was a great chance to get my footing."

Sam lives in Ridley Park with her fiancé Michael Boyle, and their dog Parker, in a home they purchased this summer. The pair will be tying the knot on New Year's Eve, and Sam said planning for the wedding is in major full swing.

FOCUS ON

CI Technology Project Receives Funding Boost



(From left) Melanie Yoho, President of CI Self-Advocates; Christopher Lynn, Operations Director; Christopher Saulino, CEO; Henry Njenga, Residential Director; and Anthony Tori Jr., Enterprise Fleet Management Senior Account Manager.

This past June, Enterprise Holdings Foundation donated \$1000 to CI for its Independence Through Technology Project. The foundation is the philanthropic arm of Enterprise Holdings, which, through its regional subsidiaries, operates the Enterprise Rent-A-Car, National Car Rental and Alamo Rent A Car brands.

"We are honored to have received this generous donation from Enterprise Holdings Foundation," said Christopher Lynn, CI's Operations Director. "The grant will be applied to integrating smart home technologies in one of our CI homes, as part of an initial pilot program. Technology supports will help ensure our residents' safety and enrich their lives through greater independence."

At the check presentation on June 25, Anthony Tori Jr., Enterprise Fleet Management Senior Account Manager said, "As a fleet management partner, I am pleased to present CI with this grant. We believe in strengthening our communities one neighborhood at a time."

SPOTLIGHT ON

Dreaming of Germany

Like everyone we profile in the CI newsletter, it is impossible to encapsulate their lives in less than 400 words. John McGrath, 31, is no exception.

The Delaware County native has had his full share of trials and tribulations, yet despite the hardships he has endured – losing his mother when he was 10 and ties to a sibling and father, being shuttled from foster home to foster home, and most devastatingly losing his beloved grandfather Timothy John McGrath – John, as his high school German teacher, Eva Kaufmann said, has maintained a positive outlook on life throughout it all.

Prior to coming to CI in 2009, after graduating from Marple Newtown High School at 21, where he was called the "Mayor of Broomall," and a wrestling champion, John received residential services from The Communities of Don Guanella and Divine Providence. At CI, he has lived in a variety of residential settings, but has always preferred living with and being part of a family. Today he is in lifesharing with CI Health & Wellness Administrator Sharon Williams-Gibbs, who he's happy to call his mom.

Growing up in Lansdowne, John was closest to his grandfather, a decorated WWII veteran who served in both the Pacific theater, as a Flying Tiger in the U.S. Army Air Corps, and in Europe, where he was captured by the Germans when his plane

South Korean Film Crew Focuses Lens on CI



CI folks pose with the South Korean documentary film crew who conducted interviews and toured CI's Delaware County facilities in October.

In early October, CI CEO Christopher Saulino was approached by Dr. James Conroy, CEO of the Center for Outcome Analysis, who recommended Community Interactions be included in a documentary that was being produced by a South Korean public television station. The film centers around helping individuals with I/DD move out of institutions and into the community.

Using an interpreter, the producer and camera man spent the entire day of October 16th and a large part of the 17th filming throughout the Swarthmore Office, the PA Day Program at Reed Road, and at the home of CI Lifesharing Provider, Miss Peggy Salley. CI's Director of Communication and Outreach, Meg Nielson, organized the two-day schedule and assisted the film crew with their many requests. CI Founder, Gerald Saulino, stopped in for an interview to tell CI's story that began in 1971 to fulfill his dream of getting people out of institutions.

Most of the filming focused on Mary Alice Singleton, who had been in Pennhurst for many years before coming to CI where she initially lived in a community home until moving into lifesharing with Miss Peggy Salley, where she still happily resides.

"I'm excited that other countries are shining a light on this dire issue and that we can teach them something that CI has been doing for many decades—to get equal rights for individuals with disabilities," said Christopher Saulino.

HAPPENINGS



CI CEO, Christopher Saulino, and Managing Director, Carrie Carter, spent a sunny Saturday at the Elmwood Park Zoo for their Autism Awareness Event, Exceptional Families of Exceptional Children.



CI Central PA resident Miranda Dunbar recently gathered with friends and family, her brother Ian pictured here, to celebrate her 42nd birthday at the CI office in Hershey.



John McGrath on a Meals on Wheels delivery.

particular cars, sports and military aviation. "He is absolutely brilliant...with a sharp memory for facts." When he's not working at CI, or delivering Meals on Wheels, John's greeting everyone with a smile and news and sports updates. He regularly enjoys spending time with friends, and girlfriend Hillary, whose family have invited him up to their retreat in Maine on several occasions. His big dream is to visit Germany one day.

"One should not make assumptions about John's abilities," said Eva. "He is sociable, loyal and generous to his friends. Johann is a great guy!"