



community interactions inc.

connections

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Chairman of the Board



Next year, CI will be celebrating its 50th anniversary since Gerald “Jerry” Saulino founded the nonprofit in 1971. It took a few years to get the organization up and running, and was officially incorporated in 1973, when CI opened its first home for eight children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The process to establish CI from concept to incorporation was not without a few obstacles. However, Jerry was determined that no one should live a life like his older brother Albert had at the infamous Pennhurst State School and Hospital that was shuttered in 1987, after years of controversy.

Jerry was born in 1934 and grew up in South Philadelphia. At the age of seven, his widowed mother enrolled him at Girard College, the private boarding school that at the time accepted “poor, white, male orphans” on scholarship. He stayed there for 10 years, and one year went home to find his brother Albert was gone. His mother had placed him in Pennhurst.

“It devastated me,” said Jerry. “I didn’t get a chance to visit him there until about a year later. When I did see him, he just wasn’t like how I knew him. They had turned him into a walking hulk; he wasn’t himself. He could hardly talk and the conditions were horrible.” He continued to visit his brother over the years at Pennhurst with the drive to one day get him out and into the community.

At 18, Jerry joined the army and served from 1952 to 1955. Immediately after the army he enrolled at Temple University and graduated in 1958 with a bachelor’s of science in accounting. He later went on to get his MBA from Temple, but in the meantime went to work for Exxon, where he met his wife of nearly 48 years, Patricia Busard. Sadly, Patricia passed away in 2007, and in her memory, Jerry established the Patricia B. Saulino Memorial Fund, a vacation fund for CI individuals.

While raising their family of four boys, John, Paul, Jerry and Christopher, CI President and CEO, Jerry continued to work at Exxon until 1979. When he left the company, he began working with First Pennsylvania Bank, a wonderful place to work, he said, that offered him flex time, allowing him to oversee and evolve programs and services at CI.

Beginning in the 1960s, advocacy efforts to expose the inhumane conditions in institutions that Jerry witnessed firsthand paralleled families’ desire for their children with disabilities to live at home, access appropriate education, and achieve meaningful adult lives. The Pennsylvania Mental Health and Mental Retardation Act of 1966 that allocated



Jerry (right) with his brother Albert in 1942.

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Message from the CEO

Christopher Saulino, Ph.D.
President/CEO

I hope that everyone is well and has been staying safe through this incredibly difficult time. Though it has been quite challenging, it is amazing to see the remarkable things that the human spirit can do. The sacrifice and dedication that our staff, families, individuals and extended CI family has shown during this crisis has impressed me beyond belief.

It has also made me reflect on comments I have said in the past about CI truly being a family, and that, in times of trouble, family members stick together. I am especially appreciative of our DSPs for their hard, tireless work; some working in conditions that have been arduous and sacrificing themselves by being away from their families and loved ones. I cannot thank them enough for their love and devotion to the individuals that they support. They have been true heroes and for that, we express our deepest gratitude.

CI is doing everything we possibly can to make sure that we stay healthy and strong through this ordeal. I would like to say, on a personal note, that I am also grateful for the support that we have received from the community at large, from volunteers sewing more than 600 masks for all our staff and consumers, to CI employees purchasing supplies for our homes, and coming up with creative ways for individuals to stay healthy and engaged during quarantine.

Communication and transparency have been key to getting us through this crisis, and we will continue to do whatever we can to ensure that everyone stays informed, and that we address any questions and concerns people may have. Fortunately, technology has enabled us to do this by keeping the communication lines open through videoconferencing, e-mail, and phone messaging. Through these means we have been successfully maintaining operations and staying in constant contact with everyone.

We optimistically look to the future and our strategic plan as we continue to provide services in new areas, especially with the new family living waiver. This waiver will allow us to assist families in various ways to support individuals who live at home. By the end of the summer we anticipate our new office in Central PA will open its doors, as we look to expand our programs in that area. Providing services to those with dual diagnosis, mental health challenges and ID are foremost, and we will continue our mission to support those in need.

While these may be uncertain times, I am certain that, when they are behind us, we will emerge as a stronger organization, ready to meet any challenges in the future. Please stay safe and best wishes for a healthy summer.

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.

PEOPLE

Jane Bostwick



One thing Jane Bostwick learned rather early on in her nearly 11-year career with CI, is that most people like their independence; they thrive on it. As a self-professed people person, she naturally wants to do for others, and that includes the women she supports as a DSP. In order to encourage their independence and ability to do for themselves, she said she had to back up and give them the space and opportunity to discover and grow on their own, but with her guidance and support.

Jane, who holds a bachelor's in physical education and health from Cedarville University in Ohio, never imagined she would one day find herself working with people with intellectual disabilities. After graduating from college, she taught school for three years, got married and began a family. While raising her two children, Adam and Katie, she took on a job working for a market research firm in Philadelphia, a position she held for 19 years prior to coming to CI.

"I'm the kind of person who gets a job and keeps it," she said. "Though sometimes it takes a good kick to figure out what you really want to do."

That kick came in the form of losing her job at the market research firm. "It was a desk job and wasn't me. I'm a sociable person and really needed a people job," she said.

Through her work at CI, Jane has found the fulfillment she long knew she wanted in her career. "I want to make a difference when I'm working. I always ask myself, what can I do to make someone's life a little better today? Maybe today, it's just holding somebody's hand because that makes a difference for them."

Marcia Scott



Marcia Scott has never seen her career at CI as a job. It's been a labor of love, one she has enjoyed for almost 22 years. She remembers the exact day she started – October 29th, 1998. "It doesn't feel like work to me," she said. "I love working in this field, especially when it comes to the individuals we support."

Although she said she came to CI with no prior experience working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, she was willing to learn and felt that her caring nature would serve her well. "I care about people and CI saw that and took a chance on me."

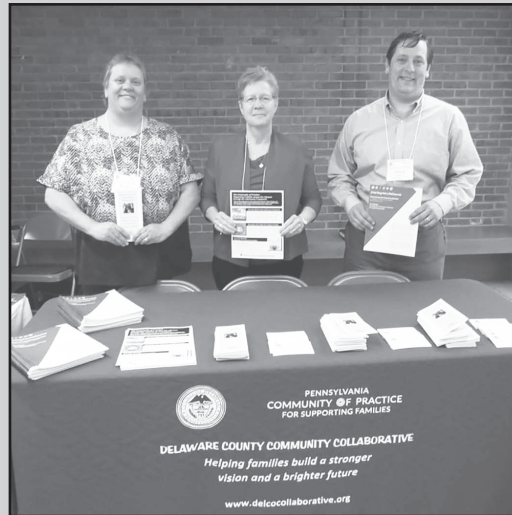
Until 2004, Marcia, a mother of two girls and three boys, ranging in age from 21 to 33 (her oldest, Marquicia, works in CI Programs and Services), worked in residential services as a DSP, when she took on the position of Residential Supervisor initially overseeing two homes. She and other supervisors worked under Service Coordinator Antoinette Trusty at the time and dubbed themselves the A-Team. It was Antoinette who had originally encouraged her to apply for the position.

In 2010, Marcia made the transition over to the Day Program where she has remained to this day. For a time, she worked in Home and Community Services and while she continues to provide some support for the program, her responsibilities largely involve helping to facilitate Day Program operations - scheduling transportation, handling medication and personal finances for all the individuals at the program.

During this lockdown, Marcia Scott has been thinking a lot about the men and women CI supports who can't come to the Day Program. She understands how hard it must be for them. She also applauds all the DSPs for their incredible dedication during this crisis. "The role of the DSP is more important than ever," she said.

FOCUS ON

Helping People Live the Best Lives Possible



(From left) Eileen McDonald, Dr. Susan Proulx, and Christopher Lynn present at an event on the campus of Delaware County Community College.

All people and their families should be able to live, love, work, play, and pursue their dreams and aspirations in their communities.

That is the core tenet of the Delaware County Community Collaborative (DCCC), established a little more than three years ago as a pilot program under the main auspices of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), who joined the national umbrella initiative "Community of Practice: Supporting Families throughout the Lifespan" in 2016. This initiative was established in 2012, in Missouri and involves "working to transform state policies, practices and systems to better assist and support families that include a member with intellectual disabilities and/or autism."

"Our effort is to reach out to families and community stakeholders to help people live the best lives possible through the use of the initiative's Charting the LifeCourse framework and integrated tools," said Dr. Susan Proulx, Deputy Administrator of the Delaware County Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, who was approached by ODP to launch the pilot in Delaware County as part of a broader state initiative in partnership with the PA Family Network. The Network was created under the leadership of Vision for Equality to support families and the major elements of the Community of Practice goals.

SPOTLIGHT ON

Parent Advocate: Patricia Spratley

CI Board member Patricia Spratley was only two weeks into her new position with the Brandywine School District in Delaware when the state's coronavirus stay-at-home order came in. That was about two months ago, and since then her life has been turned upside down. Her beloved niece, Marquita Spratley, who was only 42, passed away, and she lost several friends to COVID-19. Her best friend, Michelle Smoak, whom she's known since the age of 3 and is like a sister to her, also contracted the virus, but is amazingly making a recovery.

"It broke my heart that I was unable to attend services or say that final good-bye to them because of the virus."

Compounding this loss, is the fact that Patricia can't see her oldest child Janelle, who has been receiving CI Residential and Day Program services since the programs opened in Delaware more than a decade ago.

"With all that's going on, it's a lot for me not to be able to see Janelle, and for her not to see me," said Patricia. She continues to drop off dinner with staff at Janelle's home. "It's a blessing to know that the DSPs and CI staff are going above and beyond to keep Janelle and the other individuals as safe as possible."

In her new role with the Brandywine School District, Patricia provides administrative support for home-bound, and in-state and out-of-state placements through the district's special

HAPPENINGS

When the fledgling pilot program was launched in Delaware County, Dr. Proulx and Eileen McDonald, Executive Director of the Delaware County Advocacy & Resource Organization, and DCCC's co-organizer, tapped Christopher Lynn, Community Interactions' Operations Director for Programs & Services, to join DCCC as a founding member.

"As I was helping move this initiative along, I was always thinking of how the LifeCourse framework and tools could fit within CI as a provider agency," said Lynn. "What we've come up with in the last few months is using these resources as an assessment tool that would put us ahead of the curve perhaps before it's mandated."

As Dr. Proulx describes it, "the LifeCourse framework was created by families to help individuals and families of all abilities and all ages develop a vision for a good life, think about what they need to know and do, identify how to find or develop supports, and discover what it takes to live the lives they want to live."

Even though it was originally created for people with disabilities, this universally-designed framework may be used by any person or family making a life plan, regardless of life circumstances.

Although the pilot program has been put on hold due to the coronavirus, CI has begun using the LifeCourse tools during the intake process for residential services. "Individuals and families are first connected with the PA Family Network," said Lynn. "They work through the tools with them to 'chart their life course', and then we use those tools to familiarize ourselves with the individual, understand what his or her goals are, and then help create a support plan around that in order to help them achieve their aims of independence, or community integration, or whatever it is that they want."

"What's attractive about the LifeCourse tools is that our goal in this field is to always put the individual at the center of everything," added Lynn. "They're to be in the driver's seat. You look at an agency's assessment and ISP process, and those are well-focused and intentioned, but with these tools the individual takes a more active role. At the end of the process you get a visual product that the individuals we support are better able to navigate and have more control over. It keeps in front of people what the individual wants and what we need to do to get there."

For more information about the Delaware County Community Collaborative and Charting the LifeCourse, visit www.delcocollaborative.org.



Aisha Rice, CI Senior Program Specialist, hands out a Boredom Bag to Sunshine who resides at CI's home in Lansdowne. CI Behavior Specialist Bill Merryfield purchased the many items to fill the bags for each resident, who were thrilled to receive them.



Intern, Natalie Weaver, doing a Zoom yoga class with CI Day Program participants. Program Coordinator, Barbara Vecchioli, and Program Specialist Brooke Zanetich, coordinated the online class and reached out to all the families.



Patricia (center) with her daughter Janelle and granddaughter Brielle.

education and support services. Her background, however, is not in education. For 18 years she worked for various Delaware state departments, which included the DE Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families for many years, and prior to that for the state of Pennsylvania, where she is from originally.

Patricia graduated from Chester High in 1985, and holds a bachelor's in behavioral science and a double master's in public administration and human resource management from Wilmington University, where she served on the board, and proudly helped spearhead an annual Polar Bear Plunge fundraiser through the school's chapter of the Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society.

For the past two years, Patricia has served on CI's Board of Directors. With her wealth of professional experience in human services and as a staunch advocate for her daughter Janelle, who was diagnosed with autism at the age of four and is nonverbal, she sees herself as the "voice of the parent."

She has always thrived on sharing resources and information and advocating for people with disabilities. Helping and educating people is something she does regardless of whether it's in her workplace or on the board.

"Because I am able to approach my position on the board from an operational standpoint and from the perspective of a parent, I feel like I have a well-rounded view and can bring a lot to the table," she said.

Her participation on the board was sidelined last year when she woke up one morning unable to walk. She was diagnosed with osteoarthritis that resulted in her having both her hips replaced.

"It came out of nowhere," said Patricia. "I was not physically able to do what I normally do, and the pain was constant." Her daughter Brittini, 27, and son Stan, 35, along with family and friends helped her get through the ordeal, from which she has only recently recovered.

Needless to say, Patricia is looking forward to better days ahead and the time when she can visit Janelle with her granddaughter Brielle, her frequent companion at CI events. The recent loss of her niece and friends has taken a toll on her, but she said "I pull on my faith in God to get me through, and I realize we are all in this together."



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Jerry Saulino

funds for community living and services, and set the stage for the end of institutionalization, brought Jerry closer to his goal of creating CI.

On a visit to see Albert at Pennhurst he met with several of the cottage managers who helped him put together a business proposal to establish community homes. He presented his plan to local counties with disability programs, until Delaware County offered him the chance to open a home for children. He also worked to get Albert out of Pennhurst and did so in 1969. Through the early years, Jerry led CI's expansion, and program development, hiring several executive directors over time.

Today, the grandfather of 10, and great-grandfather of two is staying healthy, and managing well during the coronavirus stay-at-home order, but said he mostly misses the social scene. "There's been nothing like this in my lifetime, and it's taken some adjusting for all of us. But we'll get through it."



Jerry and Patricia with their son, the future CI CEO Christopher Saulino, in the 1980s.

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