

VOICE

News and information for friends and supporters of Vinfen



Sandy Wardlaw stays fit at the Community Support Services Day Habilitation.

You Helped Sandy Become Fitter and Healthier

When Sandy Wardlaw was informed by her doctor that she was prediabetic, the staff at Vinfen's Community Support Services Day Habilitation (CSSDH) helped her get in shape. This began an incredible journey of healthy choices, lifestyle changes, and weight loss. In less than a year after her diagnosis, Sandy is now over sixty pounds lighter and her health risks are much lower.

Vinfen Program Nurse Dawn Halloran, Physical Therapist Amy Fallon, and an occupational therapist met with Sandy to create healthier goals and develop a diet. "Providing more healthy choices allowed Sandy to take the reins of her weight loss," Dawn said.

To stay fit, Sandy walks on the treadmills at CSSDH every day, which were funded by a generous grant from the Rae and Aaron Alberts Fund at the Boston Foundation. Physical activity can be a challenge for Sandy who is blind so she also does stretching exercises to improve her balance. She also prepares and brings in her own meals to the program. And partnering with her brother to change their lifestyle habits, whom she lives with on weekends, has strengthened their relationship.

Now, Sandy no longer suffers from hip pain or shortness of breath. She is able to use her cane and navigate more easily. "I feel better," Sandy said, "I feel good."

"Sandy's involvement in her weight loss journey has positively impacted her behavior," said CSSDH Program Director Catherine Burke. "She's no longer on a plan, and she has hit her goal weight."

When asked if she would maintain her healthy lifestyle, Sandy replied with a resounding "Yes!"



President's Message

Bruce L. Bird, President & Chief Executive Officer

Each Spring, Vinfen joins fellow advocacy, professional, and provider organizations to promote mental health awareness.

We attend events such as the Massachusetts Association of Mental Health's Annual Friend & Leader Award Dinner on May 3. This year, Vinfen's Lisa Halpern and Janel Tan received awards as leaders in the peer recovery movement, in which they have served as role models. On May 14, about 250 Vinfen staff, people served, and supporters joined thousands in the National Alliance for Mental Illness' annual NAMIWalks Massachusetts.

Vinfen also hosts our own events, such as the Point After Club celebration on May 6. During these events, people tell inspiring personal stories about how with the help of their families, peers, and programs, they are able to manage their psychiatric conditions to live happy, productive, and valued lives in the community. At this year's event, I had the privilege of hearing a young woman tell us about her journey to overcome the challenges of living with schizophrenia.

All of these activities are designed to continue decades-long efforts to fight the views that are still widely held by the general public, which translate to discrimination and a reluctance of people to disclose their psychiatric conditions and seek help. The month of May has been designated Mental Health Awareness Month to support these efforts. But despite the fact that more celebrities and public officials have disclosed their psychiatric conditions recently, and we now know more about how these conditions are disorders of the brain, we have much to do to change these outdated beliefs.

We invite you to join us in this important effort, so people have access to the resources they need to recover and manage their mental health with the support of the community they deserve.

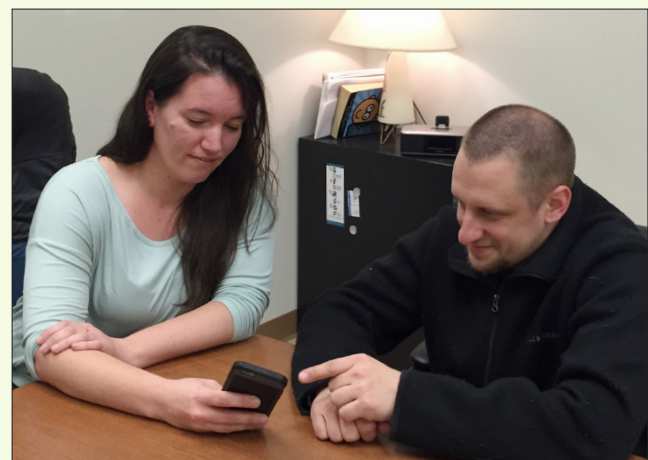
spotlight on wellness

Broadening Innovation at Vinfen

In 2013, with your generous support and a grant from the Cummings Foundation, Vinfen worked with Wellframe to develop a Smartphone app designed to enhance services to young adults with emotional and behavioral health challenges. After completing a successful pilot and receiving an award from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, Vinfen is now expanding this program to 160 adults with serious mental illness in Plymouth County, Massachusetts.

App content is currently being updated and tailored for the adult population with 200 new articles and related videos informed by emerging evidence-based practices including those from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Rollout of the app begins next month and the program will be fully operational this summer. In addition to the app, Vinfen will embed extra Health Outreach Workers into the community based care team to address gaps in the healthcare system by collaborating with providers and by coaching the people we serve to engage with, navigate, and make effective use of the healthcare system.

Vinfen Director of Strategic Initiatives Sophie Jones said, "We are very appreciative that Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation has chosen to support our efforts to use innovative technology to integrate behavioral health and primary care and to improve access for the people we serve."



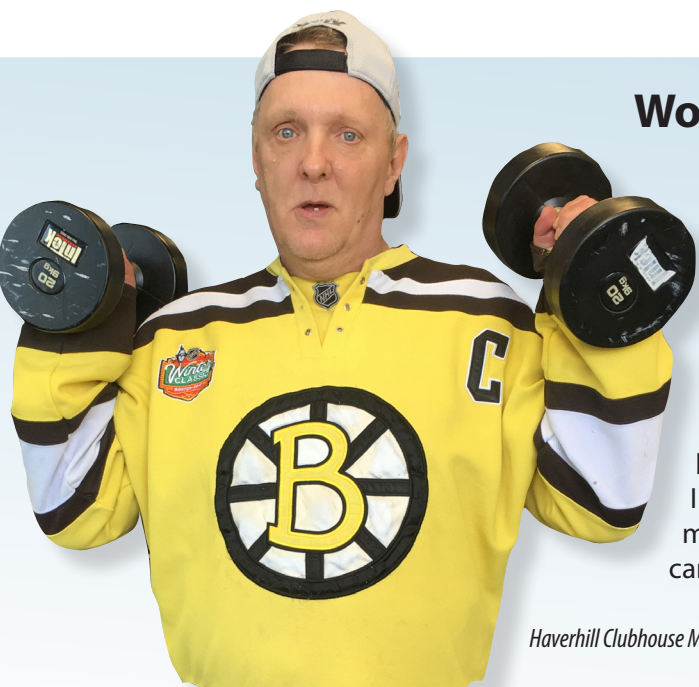
Vinfen staff test and examine the app.

Racing for the Health of Others

Four Vinfen teams ran 190 miles from Hull to Provincetown, MA to raise awareness and funds for people with psychiatric conditions in the 30-hour Run-4-Life relay on May 13 to 14. Thanks to your support, the teams raised over \$25,000, which will help fund Vinfen's innovative health and wellness programs. A special thanks to our sponsors: Merchants Automotive Group, Pelham Pharmacy, Afia, Alexandria Real Estate, and Atwood's Tavern.



Run-4-Life Team 1 take a group photo before the race.



Working Out as a Team

Three times a week, Haverhill Clubhouse members hit the gym together to reach their fitness goals. The Clubhouse provides YMCA passes so members can exercise in groups or by themselves. Clubhouse Counselor Christian Way, who was inspired by his training in the U.S. Army Reserve took the lead in promoting the group. Christian provides guidance on weight-lifting techniques and proper form.

Member Mark B. has been going for over a year and said, "It is so much better than staying home. Christian always encourages me, even when I don't feel like going. It is a lot of fun going with Christian and the other members. I started out lifting 160 pounds on the bench press, and now I can lift 200."

Haverhill Clubhouse Member Mark B.



Lisa Halpern
Director of Recovery Services

Working Together to Grow

Our society views the phenomenon of psychosis as an illness so strongly, that we do not stop and consider the possibilities of seeing this phenomena in a new light. Google defines psychosis as “a serious mental disorder in which thought and emotions are so impaired that contact is lost with external reality.” However, a 2014 British Psychological Society Report, *Understanding Psychosis*, seeks to demystify the phenomenon of psychosis by noting that it is a more common experience than people sometimes think. The authors note that psychosis should not be

treated with prejudice and discrimination but rather, with understanding and compassion.

For example, hearing voices is a relatively common human experience. Have you ever thought you heard your phone ring or someone call your name in a crowd only to find out it hadn't really happened? As with other psychological problems, it makes sense to think of psychosis on a continuum from normal thoughts to psychotic ones. Many people hear voices or see visions occasionally or to a degree, especially at times of stress. Each person's experience of psychosis is unique and each person's way of coping is different. My own experience has included hearing voices, seeing flashes of light, hearing screeching sounds, and thinking that people were trying to hurt me.

One result of our society's dominant paradigm about psychosis is the assumption that it is a very serious condition, and that people must seek help from the professional mental health system. Actually, most people who experience psychosis do not seek help from professionals. Two out of three people who hear voices or see visions are not troubled by them and do not seek help from mental health services. Perhaps the most important message of this report is that “every service user needs a worker who enables them to talk and think about their experiences in a calm, supportive, and non-judgmental atmosphere, and who is willing to accept their own beliefs about the nature of their experiences.” Given this fact, it may be more prudent to simply find ways to support people in whatever way they personally find the most helpful, rather than hospitalizing them in many or all circumstances. Further, we should avoid promoting any one view or suggest that any one form of help such as medication or therapy is the answer for everyone. Relationships matter. People who have supportive relationships tend to do better than those who have less support, or more stressful, or implicitly judgmental relationships.

Knowing that psychosis is a normal occurrence, we don't need to treat people differently who have strange thoughts or fixed beliefs. Instead, we can seek to understand their beliefs and experiences, with the understanding that their ideas exist on a spectrum that are part of the human condition, and work toward agreement with them on how we can help them accomplish their goals.

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Mission Statement

Vinfen transforms lives by building the capacity of individuals, families, organizations, and communities to learn, thrive and achieve their goals. Our services promote the recovery, resiliency, habilitation, and self-determination of the people we serve. As a human services leader, we strive to be the provider, employer, and partner of choice.

vinfen leading the way

Quitting Smoking Together

Vinfen will help lead a study to support people with serious mental illness to quit smoking and improve their overall health. Research shows that people with serious mental illness have life spans 25 years shorter compared to the general population, and smoking is a contributing factor. Smoking rates are higher among people with serious mental illness and they often do not receive treatment to help them quit. The study will examine if tailored education to providers and community health workers will address this lower rate of treatment received by people with serious mental illness.

Dr. A. Eden Evins, Director of the Center for Addiction Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, who recently received \$10 million from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, will oversee the study. Vinfen and Bay Cove Human Services will be leading the study's clinical component, which will include more than 1,100 people who receive care at 50 Boston-area community health clinics. If successful, the study's methods could be expanded to Medicaid programs and mental health departments nationwide.

"We are excited to be working with Dr. Evins and Bay Cove Human Services on such a large-scale study that could have a lasting positive impact on the people we serve," states Vinfen President and CEO Bruce Bird.



Vinfen will help take an active role in a study to support people with serious mental illness to quit smoking and improve their overall health.

Recognizing Excellent Leadership



Sydney Rives and Phoebe Goodman.

Vinfen Senior Program Director Sydney Rives and Supported Employment Director Phoebe Goodman have embarked on a journey of learning and leadership called Creating Our Common Wealth. The initiative was developed as part of Department of Developmental Services Commissioner Elin Howe's plan to create more comprehensive social inclusion policies. Both Sydney and Phoebe joined the three-year program last April. Since then, they have attended formal quarterly trainings with 150 fellow participants. They have also visited agencies successful in overcoming the barriers encountered by direct care professionals when connecting the people they serve with their community and forming supportive relationships.

"I find the groups and learning opportunities invigorating!" Sydney said, "I am thankful to be given the opportunity to learn from others to increase my awareness and abilities as a supervisor, an advocate, and an avenue of change in today's society."



Vinfen staff and supporters take a group photo while at dinner.

Vinfen Director of Recovery Services Lisa Halpern and Program Director Janel Tan were honored with Massachusetts Association of Mental Health (MAMH) Special Recognition Awards at MAMH's annual Friend & Leader Event on May 3. The awards recognized Lisa and Janel's accomplishments and leadership in the recovery field as well as their efforts to inspire hope and provide support for people with psychiatric conditions.

making a difference

Your Help Hits all the Right Notes

Vinfen thanks the Longwood Symphony Orchestra (LSO), our Event Committee, Sponsors, Benefactors, and you for helping us raise over \$75,000 at this year's Healing Art of Music concert. Your generous donations will support our innovative health and wellness programs.



Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) of Massachusetts Executive VP Patrick Gilligan, his son Patrick, his wife Lee Ann, and HUB International Senior VP Kent Campbell.



Citizens Commercial Banking Sr. VP Anne Thruelsen, Casner & Edwards Partner Anita Lichtblau and her husband, and Citizens VP Jennifer Shine-Hayward.



BCBS of Massachusetts Lauren Erlingheuser and guest John Heaster.



Attendees from RSM, Inc.



Philip Mason, Event Committee member and LSO bassoonist Stephen Wright, MD, Annie Wright, and Toddy Mason.



Vinfen CFO Richard Sullivan and his wife Mary Leigh, Rebecca Bird, and RSM National Leader Bill Kracunas and his wife Suzanne.



Vinfen Board Chairman Philip Mason (center) with Governor Michael Dukakis and First Lady Kitty Dukakis.

Thanks to our Event Committee

Committee:

Bruce L. Bird, PhD
Richard Caturano, CPA
Geri Denterlein

Kitty and Michael Dukakis
Philip A. Mason
Stephen C. Wright, MD

Thanks to our Sponsors and Benefactors

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You Can Contribute to Vinfen in Many Ways

- Direct, unrestricted donations
- Matching gifts
- Gifts in memory, in honor, or in celebration
- Gifts of bequests or planned giving
- Donate online: Visit www.vinfen.org and click "donate now" to make a secure and convenient online donation to Vinfen.
- A donation envelope is also enclosed for your convenience.

For more information, please contact the Vinfen Director of Communications and Development Erin Tighe at 617-441-1736 or tighee@vinfen.org.



vinfen happenings

Advocating for the Community



ADDP President & CEO Gary Blumenthal, Vinfen President and CEO Bruce Bird, Speaker Robert DeLeo, and ADDP Chairwoman of the Board Directors Jean Phelps.

Vinfen attended the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers' (ADDP) Annual Legislative Luncheon on January 26 at the Massachusetts State House. Vinfen President and CEO Bruce Bird introduced MA House of Representatives Speaker Robert DeLeo. Governor Charlie Baker was presented the ADDP's 2016 Elected Official of the Year award for his support of the community.

Rallying with the Caring Force



Vinfen staff, persons served, and supporters showed their support for The Caring Force by wearing their gold t-shirts.

Vinfen was over sixty strong at The Caring Force's Fifth Annual Rally, which took place on April 12 at the MA State House. The rally brought attention to the obstacles faced by human service workers and providers. The Caring Force members testified to the importance of loan repayment, affordable health insurance, and increased access to graduate-level courses for human services workers.

Showing Support for Recovery



Vinfen Psychologist Amy Paris, Joletta Singleton, and Clinical Coordinator Rebecca Cline.

Joletta Singleton inspired attendees at the Department of Mental Health's Metro Boston Legislative Breakfast by sharing her recovery story of how she partnered with Vinfen and attained independent housing and overcame her struggles with incarceration, self-injury, and anger. The breakfast was on February 11 at the MA State House and was a chance for people in the mental health community to meet and network with their legislators.

Walking for Mental Health



Team Vinfen got together for a group photo at the NAMIWalks Massachusetts.

Over 250 persons served, staff, family, friends, and supporters from Vinfen gathered on May 14 with thousands of other walkers at Artesani Park for the 2016 NAMIWalks Massachusetts. Each year, the walk raises funds to help promote mental health awareness, fight prejudice, and support NAMI Mass programs and grassroots advocacy.

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Working Successfully in the Community

Through Vinfen CT's support, Jamelle Lewis lives and works independently within his community. He has moved from 24-Hour Residential Support Services and to his own apartment with 12 to 15 hours a week of individual support. Jamelle has also secured competitive employment with the help of the Vocational Training Center. His employer recently raised his weekly hours from 20 to 40, because Jamelle is such a talented, dedicated employee. Jamelle is happy and proud about his success. "I want to tell people like myself that if I can do it, they can do it too," he said.



Jamelle Lewis with Vinfen CT Job Developer Bill Hensley.

vinfen arts

Celebrating Talented Work

Vinfen's Gateway Arts raised over \$80,000 at its annual fundraiser, A Taste of Gateway, on April 2. Guests were treated to live and silent auctions, live music, a buffet, and a beer and wine tasting. Donations will go toward supporting unfunded artists, upgrading the studio's technology, and hiring more facilitators. The 2016 Beverly Benson Award was presented to Beth Kantrowitz, who has worked tirelessly to support Gateway Arts' mission and to integrate the artists into the art community through outreach and networking. For more information about Gateway Arts, visit www.gatewayarts.org.



Beth Kantrowitz (right) received the 2016 Beverly Benson Award. She attended A Taste of Gateway with her family (left).

Branching Out into New Themes

Vinfen's Art Connection Studio held the opening reception for their spring exhibition, *Los Arboles*, on April 22. Over 250 artists and their friends and family, staff, and community members were in attendance, including Connecticut First Lady and Greater Hartford Arts Council Chair Cathy Malloy. For more information about Art Connection Studio, visit www.artconnectionstudio.org.

Opening Minds to Art

Webster House Gallery opened its doors to the community on April 30 for the 30th annual Brookline Open Studios. Each year, art studios across the city invite the public to view original artworks within the artists' creative space. Webster House Gallery premiered their newest exhibition *Shades of Spring* and featured paintings, drawings, and mixed media works celebrating the vibrant colors of the new season. The exhibit will remain open through June 30. For more information on Webster House, visit www.websterclubhouse.org.



Webster House Artist Robert Cayne with his work, Green Coral, which was the featured piece in Shades of Spring.

Recovering and Now Supporting Others

Floyd Bouchard recently became a Peer Specialist at Plymouth Bay Clubhouse where he is member. As a Peer Specialist, he provides guidance to others with psychiatric conditions. Seven years ago, Floyd joined Vinfen as a person served at a residential program. He then joined the Clubhouse and continued his path to recovery.



"I was in a really bad space when I got into Vinfen. And I thought that people were going to give up on me. As much as I said 'no,' Vinfen was still there. By not giving up on me, I had more confidence. When I got this job as a Peer Specialist, it made me very proud of myself. Because I am here, and I am not where I was five years ago."

—Floyd Bouchard , Vinfen Peer Specialist

Today, he has his own apartment and supports other members. He also shared his story for the Vinfen Smartphone app that will support adults with serious mental illness. (See page 2 to learn about the app.) Clubhouse Counselor Cindy Collins has worked with Floyd and says, "He wouldn't have grown if he didn't want it. Our support works both ways. We put it out there and he's taken off with it."

vinfen
transforming lives together

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