

VOICE

News and information for friends and supporters of Vinfen

Exploring The Dignity of Risk at our Film Festival

Vinfen invites you to attend our 11th annual Moving Images Film Festival. Each year, we host a film festival to increase awareness, educate our community, and fight prejudice and discrimination faced by people who have psychiatric conditions, intellectual and developmental disabilities, brain injuries, and behavioral health challenges. This year's festival, *The Dignity of Risk*, will feature six films and two panels that explore how the right to take risks, both big and small, is an essential element to self-advocacy, services, recovery, relationships, and the pursuit of one's dreams.

The festival will be on **Saturday, March 24** from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Joseph B. Martin Conference Center at Harvard Medical School in Boston, MA. The event is free and open to the public, but a \$10 donation is suggested and appreciated.

For more information and to register, visit www.vinfen.org/moving-images.

A Light Beneath Their Feet

A mother wrestles with bipolar disorder and an imminent empty nest. Meanwhile, her daughter must decide if she will stay near home to care for her mother or follow her own path.

Carly's Café

A café trip is viewed through the eyes of Carly Fleischmann, a young woman with non-verbal autism.

Crazy

This documentary follows Eric, a young man with schizophrenia, as he advocates for the right to make his own treatment decisions.

I Had a Black Dog

Writer and illustrator Matthew Johnstone discusses overcoming the "black dog of depression" in this animated short.

OCD by Neil Hilborn

In his spoken-word poem, *OCD*, Neil Hilborn explores the intersection of love, relationships, and mental health.

Wizard Mode

This documentary follows Robert, a young adult with autism, as he seeks to balance his quest to become the World Pinball Champion and his growing responsibilities and independence.

A special thanks to our sponsors: Ozzy Properties Inc., Shaevel, Krems, O'Connor & Jackowitz, Parker, Brown, Macaulay & Sheerin, and MSG Staffing.



President's Message

Bruce L. Bird, President & Chief Executive Officer



Starting in June, thousands of people across the state will be impacted by changes to the Massachusetts public behavioral health and disability system.

A new MassHealth system of integrated care services will become responsible for the total health and healthcare costs of individuals with significant behavioral health conditions and other disabilities. These services will be delivered by Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), which are formed by hospitals and managed care organizations. They will be supported by community organizations like Vinfen that have formed Certified Partnerships that will contract with ACOs to provide care coordination for over 30,000 individuals eligible for these services. The goals will be to advance health outcomes, improve coordinated care, and rely less on more expensive, ineffective emergency and acute care. Vinfen has formed partnerships with six community organizations and is planning to begin providing services in June with ACOs in Eastern Massachusetts.

Another change involves the Department of Mental Health's adult community service system, currently served by Community Based Flexible Supports. A new model, Adult Community Clinical Services, will offer increased clinical capacities and serve about 9,000 eligible people. These services will be linked to the Certified Partnerships described above, and are expected to improve coordinated care. Vinfen, which operates services in eight areas of Eastern Massachusetts, has bid to continue providing services under the new model.

These exciting changes will shape the future of the service system. Vinfen and our partners are focused on recruiting and training a capable workforce and energizing them to meet the important goals of these innovative systems. Stay tuned for future updates as we continue to transform lives together.

vinfen leading the way

Advocating Together

Vinfen attended the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers' (ADDP) Annual Legislative Luncheon on January 23, the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts' Advocacy Day on February 8, and the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health's (DMH) Citizen Legislative Breakfasts in February and March. Each event was at the MA State House and gave the people we serve, their families, advocates, self-advocates, and service providers a chance to meet with legislators, network, and be politically active.

"Thank you legislators and DMH for providing me access to services. You have made my recovery possible," said Vinfen's Recovery Coordinator Sherry Hammel, who shared her story at DMH's Southeast Area Citizens Legislative Breakfast on February 8. "At Vinfen, I was welcomed. I was treated with respect and kindness, no shame or guilt. I learned coping skills to deal with my life. I began to believe that yes, I do matter."



Vinfen President and CEO Bruce Bird, MA Department of Developmental Services Commissioner Jane Ryder, and Bay Cove Human Services President and CEO Bill Sprague at ADDP's event.

Spreading Cheer and Healthy Habits



A group of people we serve celebrated the holidays by entering the 6th Annual Winter Lights 5K in Plymouth, MA on December 1. They were brought together by Vinfen's Plymouth Integration Project. With carolers' songs to guide them, the group donned headlamps, flashlights, and race bibs supplied by Vinfen and funded by a grant from the Mass Charitable Foundation. The grant was recently awarded to Vinfen to support the health and wellness of the people we serve.

The group ran, jogged, and walked their way through downtown and next to the waterfront, supporting one another and forging new friendships along the way. Though this was the first race for many participants, two individuals ran the whole race and everyone enjoyed making holiday memories together.

Participants celebrate at the end of the race.

Improving Health through Employment

Vinfen is proud to announce its participation in *The Supported Employment Demonstration*, a national study funded by the US Social Security Administration and managed by Westat. The study will look at how employment services, provided with integrated behavioral health and social services, can help people with mental illness get a good job. The study will include over 3,000 individuals at 30 study sites across the country.

"The hope is that by providing insurance, care management, and supported employment, we can help individuals avoid going on disability [benefits]," said Vinfen Director of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services Steve LaMaster who is serving as the study's Site Director. "We want to keep people out of the poverty trap," said Steve, since many individuals find it difficult to transition back to full-time work and pay after receiving disability benefits.





Lisa Berger
Director of Recovery Services

It's the Little Things

Not knowing the right words to say or things to do when a loved one is struggling prevents many of us from even trying at all. And by right, I mean what we view as the magical words or actions that will enable those we care about to make progress, improve, feel better, or at the very least, not feel worse. If you get caught in this bind, recognize it for what it is: the very human fear of not getting it right. But ignore this fear. I can tell you from long experience that there's no right or wrong when reaching out to a loved one to communicate your care and concern.

Remember, it's the little things that matter. Recently when I was on leave from Vinfen, my dad sent me a greeting card. This action was a statement in itself. So few people nowadays send snail mail and my dad, a scientist who is rather fond of email, does not usually make a trip to the Hallmark store, let alone purchase a stamp. The front of the card had a black and white photograph of a bulldog with Winston Churchill's famous quotation below it, "Never, never, never give up." Sometimes when we don't know quite what to say, it's helpful to mention a title of a book, song, or movie that is particularly meaningful and has bolstered us in times of trouble.

Not only is there a fear about saying or doing the wrong thing, there's also the conundrum of why should I act if I don't have the ability or power to make it better? While I was gone from Vinfen, I had many phone conversations with my mom where she said, "You sound awful."

"Yep, I'm miserable," I replied.

"Since there's nothing I can say to help you feel better," she said. "Why don't we get off the phone?"

And, inevitably, I would respond, amid awkward and uncomfortable long pauses and silence, "No, let's stay on the phone."

I wasn't able to express this at the time, but in retrospect, I'm extremely grateful for those who reached out and tried to connect with me—and kept trying despite obstacles. When I didn't answer the phone, accept visits, or talk to people with enthusiasm, it was almost never because I didn't value the people who care about me or understand that they wanted to help me. It was just that I didn't have the emotional or physical bandwidth to connect with them at that moment. Looking back, I can honestly say that few things other than people simply trying to support and connect to me were more powerful and influential to my recovery.

So try. Try again. A card, some flowers in a plastic vase, and regular phone calls and/or emails are all ways you can show your support and care for someone who is struggling.

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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 and advocacy 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 making a difference

Giving Back and Paying it Forward

At Vinfen, the people we serve inspire us daily not only by achieving extraordinary goals, but by exemplifying what it means to give back to the community. This holiday season was no exception.

Vinfen's Self-Advocacy group volunteered at the Little Sisters of the Poor's Christmas Celebration, serving meals to the less fortunate and helping with event logistics. The group also baked pies before Thanksgiving for fellow individuals in Vinfen services.

People served at Vinfen's Day Development and Transition Center spread holiday cheer with the Weymouth Food Pantry. "The individuals worked really hard delivering flyers and donation boxes, picking up donations, and delivering them," said Vinfen Developmental Specialist Elizabeth Violanto.

Meanwhile on the Cape, Vinfen's Baybridge Clubhouse held a yard sale to benefit Serenity Farms, a local nonprofit dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and re-homing of farm animals. They raised over \$700 to support the organization, and four members completed a 12-week, labor-intensive, and volunteer program at the farm. The participants helped care for animals while enjoying the therapeutic benefits to interacting with horses and other farm animals. One Clubhouse member said of the experience, "in riding a horse, we borrow freedom."

To show your support for the people we serve who continually contribute to their local communities, you can visit www.vinfen.org/donate.



Baybridge Clubhouse Program Director Scott Conroy with an affectionate chicken named Bluebeard at Serenity Farms.

You Made the Holidays Hopeful

Since 1993, Vinfen has raised funds for our Holiday Giving Program. We once again surpassed previous totals, raising more than \$18,000 this year! Over a 25-year period, nearly 50,000 people have benefited from the program, which ensures that each person we serve has a gift to open and enjoy. For many of those whom we serve, the holiday season can be stressful and lonely as they lack the family or personal means to make the season special.

We want to thank the enormous generosity of family members, friends, staff, and businesses whose support helped Vinfen purchase nearly 2,000 gifts for people we serve. Our corporate sponsor, Wegmans of Medford, was particularly generous in their support. Vinfen staff also contributed, raising over \$3,000 to ensure the holidays were special for those that we serve.

Thank you to everyone who helped us make the holiday season a time of cheer!

Wegmans



Recognizing Leadership

Below: Joe Spinale with Senior Vice President of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Susan Abbott.

Vinfen Community Based Flexible Supports Rehabilitation Specialist Joe Spinale was the recipient of the 2017 Peer Leadership Award in recognition of the outstanding support he provides to the people he serves and his significant contributions to the peer movement. Joe worked in the field for years before joining Vinfen a decade ago, but chose not to disclose his lived experience due to fear of discrimination.

"I cannot begin to describe how meaningful of a decision disclosing turned out to be. I am grateful to work at an agency that believes in recovery and works to incorporate empowering practices into services," Joe said.

He added that while he was honored to receive the award, he does not consider himself to be a peer leader. "I just care about treating people with dignity and respect, and giving them control over how they use services," Joe said. "This is what motivates me to come to work. It is less about being a leader, and more about doing my part to contribute to the change I believe in."



Vinfen staff members get ready to raise some dough for Plymouth Bay Clubhouse.

Dining for a Good Cause

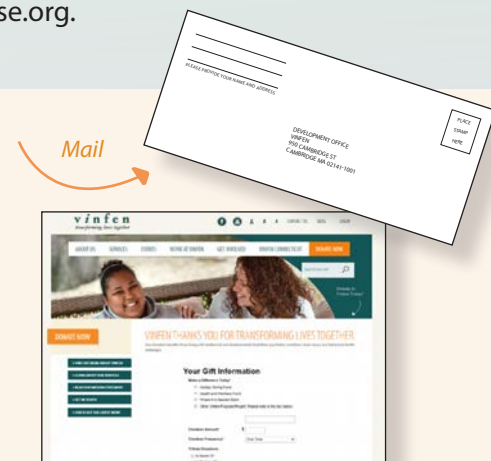
Vinfen's Plymouth Bay Clubhouse recently participated in a Dining for Dollars fundraiser at Bertucci's in Plymouth, MA. Clubhouse members, who were interested in raising money for special activities, were involved with distributing flyers about the fundraiser in the local community. In addition, staff set out a table with materials about the Clubhouse to raise awareness of their services.

Nearly \$600 was raised, and members are looking forward to using the funds to enjoy local events. Many thanks to Bertucci's for their support of the Plymouth Bay Clubhouse.

For more about Plymouth Bay Clubhouse, visit www.plymouthbayhouse.org.

You Can Contribute to Vinfen in Many Ways

- Direct, unrestricted donations
- Matching gifts from your employer
- 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 donation to Vinfen. Consider recurring gifts.
- Donate your used vehicle. Visit www.v-dac.com or call 877-999-8322 and select Vinfen as the nonprofit you wish to support.



A donation envelope is also enclosed for your convenience. For more information, please contact Development and Special Events Manager Ann Bausman at 617-441-1896 or bausmana@vinfen.org.

vinfen happenings

Giving to Those in Need



Volunteers show off their chef hats and some art at the Thanksgiving Dinner.

The Friends of Metro Boston Annual Thanksgiving Dinner was held on November 22 at Florian Hall in Dorchester, MA. Over 475 guests attended and about 200 volunteers helped serve the delicious meal. Secretary of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, Department of Mental Health (DMH) Commissioner Joan Mikula, State Senator Linda Dorcea Forry, and Boston Police Commissioner William Evans headlined the event.

Coming Together



Gateway Arts Artistic Director Stephen De Fronzo with Webster House artist Pat Peter.

Webster House hosted a Grand Opening and Gallery Reception on October 18 at their new location in Roslindale, MA. Dozens of members, staff, friends, and supporters came together for the event, which also celebrated the opening of their newest exhibit, *Unity*. The event culminated with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Honoring Rose T. Coppinger



Massachusetts State Representative Juana Matias, former State Senator Susan Tucker, and former NAMI Massachusetts President Jean Derosa attended the dedication.

Point After Club held a dedication of the Rose T. Coppinger Member Resource Room on October 19 to honor Rose, the founding director of the Club and a visionary leader in the greater Lawrence community. Dozens of members, friends, family, staff, community supporters, and legislators were in attendance for the event, including former State Senator Susan Tucker and State Representative Juana Matias. Those in attendance shared stories of how deeply Rose affected their lives, the Club, and the surrounding community.

Celebrating Community



Viesia Novesielki recited one of her poems at the celebration.

Vinfen's Cambridge/Somerville program hosted their 8th Annual Community Celebration on November 16 with a carnival-themed party at Arts at the Armory in Somerville, MA. Dozens of friends, family, staff, and persons served spent the evening celebrating with dinner, dancing, games, live music and entertainment performed by people served.

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Finding Enchantment Under the Sea

Vinfen Connecticut held its 18th annual Winter Wonderland at Our Lady of Sorrows in Hartford, CT on January 18. More than 100 persons served, their family members, and staff attended the undersea-themed event. Guests were encouraged to wear blue and green. A DJ provided music for dancing and dinner was catered by one of Vinfen CT's Day Programs. The lovely, nautical night would not have been possible without donations from local vendors and the support of volunteers.



Angel Valdez and Jamelle Lewis take a photo together at this year's Winter Wonderland.

vinfen arts



Vinfen's Service Specialist Marjorie Schechner and Max Schechner. Marjorie was honored at last year's Taste of Gateway for her long-standing contributions and support to Gateway Arts.

Welcoming Winter

Over 100 people attended Art Connection Studio's exhibition opening, *Glisten*, on December 15. Among the guests was longstanding supporter First Lady of Connecticut and CEO of the Greater Hartford Arts Council Cathy Malloy. The opening showcased holiday cards, seasonal gifts such as embroidered pillows, bangles, jewelry trays, and paintings with a winter color palette of gray, blue, and silver. Guests could even enter an auction to win the original pieces featured on the holiday cards.

For more information about Art Connection Studio, please visit www.artconnectionstudio.org.

Piece by Gateway Arts artist Amy Caliri

Relishing Great Works of Art

Join Vinfen for A Taste of Gateway on Saturday, April 28 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Gateway Arts Studio. Guests will enjoy an art swap, a live and silent auction, live music, delectable food, and beer and wine. Tickets at \$175 include an original work of art created by a Gateway Artist. Attendees will be asked to choose an envelope that contains an image of art valued up to \$400. Guests are encouraged to swap their images with other art ticket holders to ultimately receive a piece of art that reflects their own style. Event-only tickets are \$75.

For more information or to buy tickets, visit www.gatewayarts.org.



Artist Elizabeth Barnett with First Lady of Connecticut and CEO of the Greater Hartford Arts Council Cathy Malloy.

Advocating to Become Informed Voters

Vinfen recently launched an initiative to help individuals make their voices heard on Election Day. Development and Special Events Coordinator Alex Yellin partnered with members of the Executive Team to develop a Voter Advocacy Guide and a training aimed at supporting the people we serve to register, vote, and address the issues that matter to them.

"It feels good to advocate for myself. You know what you want to do and what you don't want."

—Self-Advocacy group member Deb Thompson

The first training was rolled out with Vinfen's Self-Advocacy group led by Director of Service Asela Jayasinghe. Several individuals registered to vote during the session, just in time for the upcoming election. The group discussed the importance of voting, their rights as voters, and what to expect at the polls.

vinfen
transforming lives together

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voice
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