

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE: ONE SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES MARKS 35TH ANNIVERSARY WITH BENEFIT NOV. 8

By Jeffrey Symes
One Sky

For more than 35 years, One Sky Community Services has been dedicated to the notion that every individual has the potential - and the right - to live a rich and fulfilling life and make an important contribution to the community in which they live.

When it opened its doors in 1983, the Portsmouth-based agency was assisting inmates from Laconia State School in the transition from life in an institution to life in the communities where they were born. Though its mission has changed since Laconia closed its doors decades ago, the focus for One Sky has remained the same: assist individuals with developmental disabilities and acquired brain disorders in fulfilling their potential and contributing to their communities.

“The individuals we serve are no different than anyone else,” says Chris Muns, One Sky’s executive director. “They want the same things out of life that the rest of us do. Because of something they were born with or received through an accident, they just need a little extra help in fulfilling their life goals. They want to be independent, hold a meaningful and satisfying job that allows them to be on their own, they want to be a valuable part of their community and make a contribution to that community, and they want to have friendships and good relationships, just like the rest of us. All of us at One Sky are working hard to make sure that happens.”

Ranging from autism spectrum disorders and cerebral palsy to Down syndrome and visual impairment, in legal language a developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability that manifests before the age of 22 and is likely to continue indefinitely. According to the U.S. “Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000,” a developmental disability “results in substantial functional limitations in 3 or



SAMANTHA COUSINS, ONE SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHRIS MUNS, MORGAN JOHNSON AND ROBIN ZELINKA GATHER AT ONE SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICES. THE ORGANIZATION WILL CELEBRATE ITS 35TH ANNIVERSARY ON THURSDAY, NOV. 8 WITH A FUNDRAISING CELEBRATION AT THE ABENAKI COUNTRY CLUB IN RYE. FOR INFORMATION AND TICKETS, CONTACT BILLIE TOOLEY AT 603-436-6111.

more of the following areas of major life activity: Self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.”

One Sky also works to support people with an acquired brain disorder (ABD) eligible for services under the N.H. Bureau of Developmental Services definition of an ABD as a “disruption in brain functioning that is not congenital or caused by birth trauma” and that occurred before the age of 60. With causes ranging from strokes and brain tumors to neurological disorders and car accidents, an ABD “presents a severe and life-long disabling condition which significantly impairs a person’s ability to function in society.”

As a private, non-profit, One Sky operates under state-mandated rules and regulations and is the designated agency and initial point of contact in the Seacoast area for any individual with a developmental disability or an acquired brain disorder requiring support and assistance.

For One Sky, the effort to support individuals with disabilities extends to the larger community as it seeks partnerships in the business and civic arenas to raise awareness and promote inclusion for all citizens.

“By establishing better ongoing relationships and partnerships within the communities we serve,” says Muns, “it provides more opportunities for us to dispel the misconceptions about developmental disabilities and acquired brain disorders and showcase how this unique segment of our population offers so much to our community.”

As it celebrates 35 years of honoring the inherent value of every human being, One Sky is committed to helping people make choices about where they want to live, work, and spend time, using all existing resources possible to create and maintain support services that are flexible and responsive to the needs of each individual. By fostering the inclusion of those it serves in community relationships and activities, One Sky hopes to promote community understanding, acceptance, and support for individuals with disabilities.

One Sky serves nearly 1,200 individuals and families in 24 towns and cities in Rockingham County, including Seabrook, Hampton Falls, Hampton, North Hampton, Exeter, Kensington, Kingston, East Kingston, Portsmouth, Newington, New Castle, Rye, Fremont, South Hampton, Raymond, Epping,

Northwood, Deerfield, Newfields, Newmarket, Greenland, Stratham, Brentwood, and Nottingham.

One Sky’s 35th Anniversary Celebration will take place as part of its annual “Move to Include” benefit on Thursday, Nov. 8 at the Abenaki Country Club, a key sponsor of the event.

The keynote speaker will be Collette DeVitto, of Colletty’s Cookies in Boston. Collette is an individual with a developmental disability who opened her own bakery in Boston and she will discuss its evolution. She now sends her cookies nationally. There will also be a photographic exhibition on One Sky clients in their workplace, sponsored by Clark Insurance of Maine; a short video will be shown on how the photographic exhibition was put together; a silent auction; an award presentation in three categories; three individuals with developmental disabilities who have achieved a special goal or overcome a special challenge this past year; One Sky employees who have attained a milestone in the number of years they have committed to serving those with developmental disabilities through One Sky Community Services.

Each year One Sky inducts individuals, companies and civic organizations who have been unwavering and generous in their support of One Sky, into the One Sky Circle of Caring. This year’s recipient will be Seacoast Media Group. Call Billie Tooley at One Sky Community Services at 603-436-6111 for information and tickets.



Incorporated in 1983, One Sky Community Services has been dedicated to providing a comprehensive array of services, supports and programs to individuals and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as acquired brain disorders. A private 5013C nonprofit organization, it is the designated area agency serving the following communities: Brentwood, Deerfield, East Kingston, Epping, Exeter, Fremont, Greenland, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Kensington, Kingston, New Castle, Newfields, Newington, Newmarket, North Hampton, Northwood, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Raymond, Rye, Seabrook, South Hampton and Stratham. One Sky works with nearly 1,200 individuals and families on a yearly basis.