



Fellow Villagers Take on Trivia Challenge for Adults with Autism

by Johanne Kieffer



Photograph by Johanne Kieffer

It was a night of fun, facts and shopping!

Cape Cod Village, a non-profit organization for adults with autism, held its first-ever fundraising event on November 2nd at The Sea View in Dennisport, and the community response was overwhelming!

As I watched the patchwork of people flow through the door, I could feel the sense of excitement build; the community came to answer the call. A sea of faces were woven into a night of solidarity and "we believe in your cause" echoed in pieces of conversations heard throughout the night.

Teachers, doctors, therapists, parents and friends were among the many who gathered in this connective whole. All touched by autism, a brother, sister, student, son, daughter, grandchild or friend. All wanted to be part of the solution and contribute to creating a community for those who are unable to provide for themselves.

Above the crowd you could hear the laughter, reunions of old friends, and the buzz of bidding at the silent auction. The abundance of fabulous food and drink satisfied the room of over 250 attendees.

Honorary guest Congressman Keating was among the attendees and spoke about the importance of this project, as well as the need for community support.

Bob Jones, President of Cape Cod Village, had a few trivia questions specific to autism. These were not bonus point questions, they were awareness questions.

Each trivia team, seated at one of the forty tables, included many who work directly with or around people with autism. No surprise, they were spot on in their answers.

It is estimated over the next fifteen years, 500,000 students diagnosed with autism will transition out of the school systems as they reach the age of 22 and enter into adulthood. In the years to come, these numbers alone will force awareness of this population front and center.

Cape Cod Village, born of an idea of Bob and Lauren Jones, became the mission of a group of determined parents of children with autism.

The Jones' son, Alexander, has severe autism. Now 24 years old, Alex lives in a group home with other residents who have a variety of disabilities and ages. These homes are nonspecifically tailored to the needs of autism and can be isolating.

My son, Ian, is also diagnosed with severe autism. At age 19, he continues to attend a school that supports his needs. He is surrounded by peers and social activity that promotes quality of life.

He has ongoing exposure to stimulating social activities such as parties, dances, swimming, and movies that are provided in a safe and supportive environment with trained staff.

This will all come to an end when my son reaches his 22nd birthday. Like Alex, Ian will follow in his footsteps and move out of the safety of the school environment into a group home and enter the unknown adult world.

The support he received for 22 years will abruptly stop and his world will change dramatically. Minimal supports will be put in place and his quality life will be reduced.



CCV Board Members Christine Gagnon and Johanne Kieffer. parents of adult sons with autism. Photograph by Lauren Jones

Parents of adult children with autism continue to face the challenges to plan, provide and manage their children's lives. This arduous journey is too much to travel alone.

The time has come for Cape Cod Village, a community to provide the care needed for adults with autism; a place where our children can be safe, while enjoying a quality of life with dignity and a sense of belonging.



Cape Cod Village

Our mission is to meet the ongoing residential and community living needs of adults on the autism spectrum.

Our values are based on the belief that every individual is entitled to live a meaningful life.

Our vision is to create a dynamic campus-style residential community for adults with autism that emphasizes integration into the larger Cape Cod Community.

www.capecodvillage.org

The people that believe in the mission of Cape Cod Village surrounded us at this fundraiser. They are true community builders, willing to work together towards a meaningful, timely and necessary cause.

I hope this first event is one of many to follow that will raise awareness and help our vision unfold into the reality of a thriving community for adults with autism on Cape Cod.

The word tsunami, an unstoppable force of nature, is frequently used to describe the increasing numbers of autism diagnoses.

Perhaps together we can create our own tsunami, gathering as a community force to manifest the vision and mission of Cape Cod Village ~ to meet the ongoing residential and community-living needs of adults on the autism spectrum.

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