

## From The Director's Desk

It's hard to believe an entire year has passed since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We all remember the days following the Governor's "Stay at Home Order", when we had to quickly pivot from an organization that focused on getting clients out into the community to one that focused on keeping clients busy and safe at home. The speed at which our staff was able to create online classes, in-home programming, and safety protocols that ensured our clients were not only cared for and in contact with us and each other, but also able to continue working on their skills and goals is simply amazing. In some ways, the pandemic allowed us to really find and focus on our strengths, while also shining a light on the things that our clients truly love – like cooking classes. Clients have had the opportunity to interact in zoom classes, with some of them even taking the opportunity to teach their peers. Residential clients have received much of their programming from their homes, allowing them to focus on their gardens, their artwork, or take up new hobbies. It has truly been inspirational

to watch our staff remain steadfast in their dedication, their flexibility, and their creativity. We owe them a great debt.

The PLUS Company is happy to announce that more than 200 of our staff and clients have received their COVID-19 vaccinations. We are very hopeful that this means we have a path forward to resuming some additional in-person services. Due to lack of staff, this will be a very slow process. If you know of anyone who is looking for a rewarding career that makes a real difference in the lives of others, please send them our way. Please visit our website for more information:

[www.pluscompany.org](http://www.pluscompany.org)

Finally, I would like to send out a huge thank you to the sponsors of this year's Wild Irish Breakfast. Our first virtual event was a huge success, and we could not have done it without you.

Happy Spring!

*-Kim Shottes*

## Thank you to the sponsors of the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Wild Irish Breakfast!

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# PLUS Spring 2021 Perspectives

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## Student Teachers and Interns Find Inspiration

The PLUS Company has a strong partnership with Rivier University, which allows our clients to learn and experience life on a college campus. The Campus-Based Enrichment Program (CBEP) began 8 years ago. Rivier students completing service-learning projects are given the opportunity to teach classes to PLUS Company clients on a wide-variety of topics. This semester, classes have included: Virtual Vacations, Animal Work, Infamous Murderers, Sports Rules and Regulations, and Health and Wellness.

PLUS was also fortunate to have two interns, Matt, from UMass Lowell, who taught a very popular astronomy class, and Angela from Rivier, who taught and observed classes for 20 hours a week.

As the semester wraps up, the student teachers and interns were given the opportunity to reflect on their work with PLUS, and how this experience has impacted their lives and future plans.

**Lydia Pray:** "My volunteer experience with The PLUS Company has been a wonderful way for me to connect with the community. As an Education major, this experience has also prepared me for my future in teaching."

**Taylor Lacasse:** "I am so honored I got the chance to work with The PLUS Company. The staff and students were amazing and made me feel so welcome."

**Sydney Racevicius:** "I really enjoyed working for The PLUS Company and engaging with so many enthusiastic students, who loved to learn, and taught me so much!! I enjoyed every Zoom meeting I had, and my students had such a big impact on me, and never stopped making me smile!"

(cont.)



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**Angela Tafone:** “My experience working with The PLUS Company was simply one of the best experiences in my life. I absolutely loved teaching classes to the clients a few times a week and loved observing the other ones as an intern. They were always so engaged which made me feel very accomplished. Also, Leni was a fantastic mentor where she was so supportive.”

**Emily Feinstein:** “This experience was intimidating at first. I am not an education major; I am in nursing so it was a challenge to navigate. After learning week-by-week I became more comfortable and now I will miss teaching every week at The PLUS Company.”

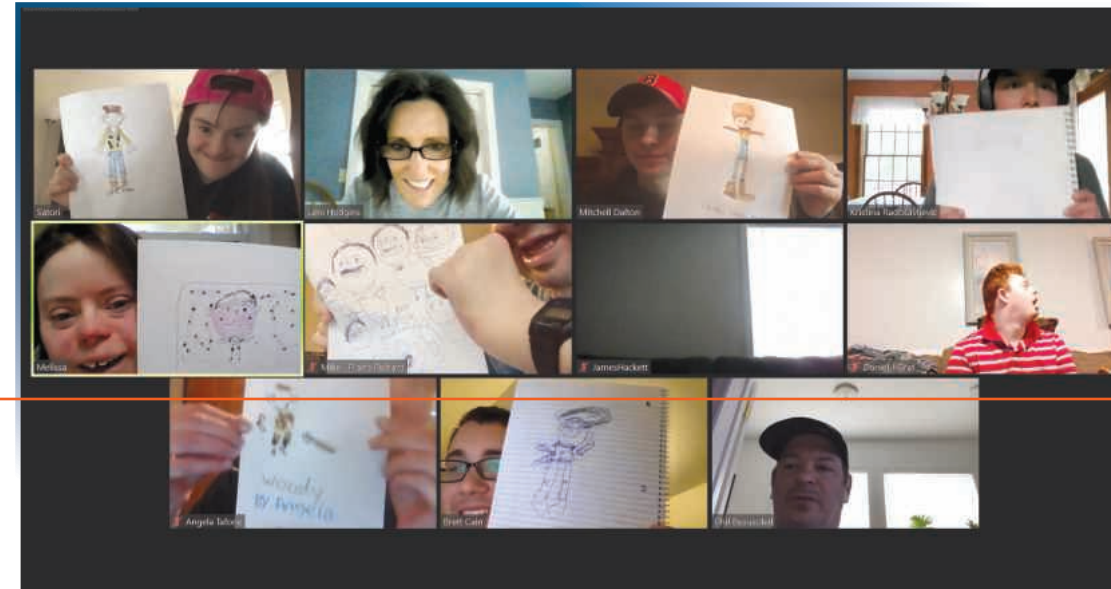
**Phung Bui:** “This experience at The PLUS Company has taught me so much, I got to know everyone that was in the class and it made me realize that I want to teach and help others in the future for whatever career I choose. This was an amazing experience and one I will never forget.”

**Matt Dulac:** “I enjoyed my time here at The PLUS company. Teaching classes and participating in discussions over Zoom posed it’s challenges, but overall I’m glad to have had this experience. It has taught me a lot about peoples’ needs and the variety of care and availability of options for people who need the assistance.”

On behalf of PLUS and all the clients participating in our Adult Education classes we would like to thank all of these student teachers and interns for their hard work and inspiration.

## The Student Becomes the Teacher

**THE ADULT EDUCATION AND ENRICHMENT CLASSES** offered by The PLUS Company give our clients the opportunity to learn everything from reading and writing to healthy living to public speaking and leadership skills. They are also a great opportunity for clients with special interests to become the teacher and use the skills they have learned to lead a class. Kristina recently held an art class where she showcased her drawing ability. The class learned step-by-step how to draw Woody from Toy Story. Kristina says, “I really like the Zoom art classes and I like to teach other clients how to draw. We drew Woody from Toy Story using different techniques. People drew Woody’s body in different ways. I have been drawing for 22 years. I like to teach and it was fun and I would love to do again. Art helps me and others deal with stress. I wanted to help make other people feel good and feel less stress too.” We look forward to more student-led classes and cannot wait to see our clients showcase their talents.



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## DSP Spotlight: Melinda Philbrook



**MELINDA PHILBROOK** will be celebrating her 10-year anniversary with The PLUS Company this year. During the past decade, she has proven herself to be reliable, flexible, and a very hard worker. Currently, Mel has been spending her time assisting clients at the Hudson Community Thrift Shop. The shop, a partnership between PLUS and the Hudson Community Church, gives clients the opportunity to learn how to sort donations, create displays and tag items, and interact with customers. Mel has been one of the driving forces behind the success of the shop, and clients are thrilled to work with her each day. “I love the Thrift Shop,” says Mel. “It gives us exposure and opportunity for the clients to be a part of their community. All the people that shop here love the mission behind it.” One of Mel’s strengths has been assisting the clients to display items in the most appealing manner possible. She has also developed a nice relationship with the “regulars” who visit the store each week.

The Hudson Community Thrift Shop is located at 19 Central Street in Hudson. The shop is open Monday – Friday from 9am to 3pm. Masks are required. Donations are accepted during these hours. 100% of the proceeds are split between The PLUS Company and the Hudson Community Church.

## Clients Celebrate Employment Recognition

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Deb Harrington and Mike Brunco! Both are celebrating some amazing employment accomplishments. Deb received a plaque celebrating 20 years of employment with Walmart! She was incredibly proud and could not wait to share the news with everyone. Mike received the Associate of the Quarter award for his TJ Maxx store. This award was voted on by his fellow employees, and Mike is so pleased that they chose him. Way to go Deb and Mike!

