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KenCrest!

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up to...

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS EDITION



Community Champions

On Friday, March 16, KenCrest staff, supporters, and community leaders in the field of disability and social services celebrated KenCrest's Community Champions awards at the Sheraton Valley Forge. In its third year, the event recognizes and honors individuals, businesses, and organizations that have made a remarkable difference in the lives of those whom KenCrest serves.

The Community Champions awards are not based on the size or monetary value of a contribution, but on the sincerity of actions. This year we welcomed a special Master of Ceremonies, Kevin Reilly. Kevin is a former NFL player who currently is a broadcaster for the Philadelphia Eagles Network, a motivational speaker, and author.

Champion of Adventure, Ruth Abbott

Ruth, a registered nurse, met Noel, an accomplished pianist with an angelic voice and ear for the perfect pitch, while he was residing at the Royer Greaves School for the Blind. They moved in together and became a Lifesharing family in April 2016. Ruth Abbott is best described as Noel's

guardian angel; she has opened his world to a vast array of new and varied experiences. With the help of Ruth, Noel had a chance to play the organ at the Kimmel Center (which, according to Noel, was out of tune). He and Ruth took a trip to the New Jersey shore so that he could experience in person his love of the song "On the Way to Cape May." On any given weekend Noel serenades patients and visitors on the piano in the lobby at Paoli Hospital.

Noel and Ruth attend West Chester University football games and concerts. Noel has become an avid supermarket shopper, selecting his own fruits and vegetables. He is truly a member of the family! Ruth Abbott has made a difference in the life of a person we serve, and she has helped develop a sense of connection to family, friends, and community.



Champion of Leadership, Marisela Carmona

Marisela brought her daughter to KenCrest's South Philadelphia Center for services. From the moment she stepped in the door, Marisela enthusiastically and willingly volunteered to help the center.

Each year Marisela organizes the Parents' Committee for all the center's activities. With her encouragement, others participate actively. Despite the fact that her children have graduated from the center, Marisela continues to be involved. She

gives families a positive greeting, encouraging them to attend parent workshops, center meetings, and classroom activities.

For the last two years, Marisela organized all 160 families to prepare and present Teacher Appreciation Day at our center. When one of our teachers retired this year after 40 years at the center, it was Marisela who organized the retirement party. She goes above and beyond to make each party at the center special. Not only has Marisela made a difference in the lives of the people we serve, but she helped to develop a sense of connection between the families in our South Philadelphia community.



Champion of Growth, Davisville Church



Davisville Church has volunteered for KenCrest the past two years at KenCrest's community living homes in Lower and Upper Southampton. One of their volunteer experiences with us

involved yard work during a rainstorm, but they carried through with spirit and energy, eager to get the task at hand done.

Another recent example of their service was when they returned to volunteer at our homes on Giving Tuesday this past November. During this visit, the team volunteered to donate a personalized plaque and special tree in a memorial garden planted in memory of a resident they had met the previous year who passed away.

This small group sought a way to help people in their own backyard. Their small acts of kindness speak volumes about their commitment to their immediate neighbors, regardless of who they are. The members of Davisville Church have helped to develop a sense of community with their neighbors.

Champion of Engineering Opportunities, Hershey's Mill Community

The Institute on Disabilities at Temple University reached out to KenCrest to be a partner on an adaptive design initiative to help young children with developmental disabilities. The goal was to train occupational therapists and physical therapists to design and fabricate low-cost, customized adaptive equipment out of strong cardboard. This successful initiative created a quicker, customized, and more affordable option for families and their children.



Knowing that they had a remarkable wood shop, KenCrest approached the Hershey's Mill Active 55+ Community to assist in fabricating the equipment and to help meet demand.

In the first two months after introducing the adaptive design concept to Hershey's Mill, the group has constructed 30 pieces of adaptive equipment. They have created excitement and enthusiasm across their community, promoting awareness of the needs of those with disabilities or developmental delays.

Champion of Generosity, Jon Miller, Keller Williams Realty

Jon, connected to KenCrest by a friend and KenCrest staff, first visited our children's community living home in Philadelphia during the holidays.

He organized a small group to come help put up decorations in the home and spend time with the children. As a special treat, Jon also brought two local musicians to perform for them. Then, Jon helped organize multiple collections of toys and books for children in our early learning centers as a holiday initiative.

In the New Year, Jon reached out to KenCrest again. He committed to an entire year's worth of volunteering in and around his community. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, he brought several volunteers, including a professional painter, to help spruce up one of our Roxborough community homes. They brought their own supplies and spent their day serving KenCrest.

Jon Miller has made a difference in the lives of the people we serve, and he has helped to develop a sense of connection to his community.



Champion of Family, Doug Moak



In 2001, at just one year old, Tayron came to live at one of our Children's Transitional Care Homes. Due to a neuromuscular condition, he is paralyzed from the neck down, has a tracheostomy tube, and is dependent

on a ventilator. Ever since Tayron came to us, we all dreamed he would have a family and a place to call home.

At age 16, Tayron's dream became a reality. His huge personality and infectious smile stole the heart of Sara Halstead, his former summer school teacher. She, her husband Rob, and their two daughters welcomed Tayron into their family last September.

This dream would not have been possible without the help of Doug Moak, the attorney who worked on Tayron's adoption case pro bono. It was Doug who ensured that the Department of Human Services obtained a wheelchair van for the family and made extensive renovations to the family house to accommodate Tayron's complex medical equipment. His work on Tayron's case was a great sacrifice and a great success that resulted in the happiest of endings.

Champion of Independence, Modern Maturity Center

Pat Blondin lives in an apartment with two other women in our Delaware community living program. She is a friendly, social, outgoing person who likes to keep busy and explore her community.



The day program she was attending was not her speed, so her staff put her in touch with the local Kent County Meals on Wheels program run by the Modern Maturity Center, a nearby senior center. Pat went to the center to meet Trudie Clay, the woman in charge of the Meals on Wheels program. Trudie helped Pat start a part-time volunteer opportunity which quickly became full-time. In December, Pat was paired up with Mary Lynn, and a strong friendship was born. Mary Lynn takes Pat to and from the center each day, free of charge.

The volunteers, including Pat, have formed a closely knit group, enjoying lunch together at Modern Maturity Center once their delivery runs are complete. Pat now enjoys independence and confidence at work.

Champion of Partnership, Pfizer Collegeville Volunteer Team



During the holiday season of 2015, Pfizer connected with KenCrest's Supported Employment program in Pottstown to volunteer their time. Three years later, they

are still committed, bringing close to 30 volunteers each time.

Volunteer activity was only the beginning for this group. On their volunteer days, they also provide a huge potluck meal for the entire staff. This year, Pfizer's corporate foundation instituted a volunteer grants program. Our Pfizer friends' donated time earned KenCrest a \$5,000 grant.

Each year, KenCrest is invited to participate in Pfizer's Charitable Agency Fair where employees can learn more about us. Pfizer shows a continued interest in how changing legislation will affect the individuals we support. Next month, they will host a Job Shadow Day in partnership with our job training services.

Pfizer has made a difference in the Pottstown Supported Employment program, and they have helped to develop a sense of connection to community and new friendship.



Champion of Community, David Green & Terry Donahue, Primex Gardening Supplies

We met David Green, CEO of Primex Gardening Supplies, when he visited our Northeast Philadelphia Center, and expressed his interest in using gardening to teach children about the world around them. He brought several of his favorite books to read to the children.

David assisted us in planning an intergenerational project with Wesley Enhanced Living, a retirement community nearby. He works with each of our children with a warm and caring attitude, while patiently answering all of their questions. He even authorized his assistant, Terry Donahue, to gather materials and come to the center to beautify the playground area at no charge.

Thanks to David and Terry, the children have a new respect and interest for living things, and look forward to beginning their own gardening projects with the assistance of their new friends at KenCrest.

Champion of Home, Denise Supplee

Apartment hunting is always a difficult endeavor, and as KenCrest's Supported Living program grows, staff needs assistance finding a place for those we support to call home. When KenCrest began working with Deni Supplee of Long & Foster Real Estate, we knew she could help us find new apartments, but she also helped us with so much more. We gained a dedicated, professional ally who helped our Supported Living program expand rapidly in one year.



In the last year, Denise helped us find apartments for 11 individuals. Most were moving out of situations where they had round-the-clock staff, two were transitioning from challenging living situations, and one was leaving her family home for the first time in her life. All of them were excited to begin an independent life.

Deni got to know each person, finding out what was important to each as they took the big step of moving into their own apartments. Deni enjoyed getting to know the abilities and talents of those we support. She enjoys helping people have a meaningful life.

Champion of Support, Rubella and Michael Utendahl

For many years, James lived in a difficult home environment with many challenges. In spite of many hardships, James' inner spirit shined through. He continued to show up to work five days a week at his vocational training program. The friendships and caring spirit of the staff kept him going back to work. They advocated for James, brought him food, and sought assistance for him, but sadly nothing seemed to change.



Rubella worked with James, and witnessed his daily challenges and in January 2017, she and her husband Michael asked James to move in with them – a month later, James became a member of their family. Right before Christmas, James and the Utendahls became an official Lifesharing family.

Today, James has his own furnished living space. Rubella and Michael make sure that James has what he needs in order to succeed in life. They travel together on vacations, take trips to the beach, and celebrate holidays together. This past November, James had a birthday party with friends, the first party he can remember.

Champion of Inclusion, The Victory Bank

Since 2012, The Victory Bank has hosted ArtWorks! – exhibits of artwork produced by the people we serve – at no cost. They provide the space, marketing, refreshments, set up/break down support, and Olympic-style medals for our artists to celebrate their achievements.



Victory Bank's Deb Lee and Kelly Taylor take on the responsibility of setting up and procuring what is needed at each exhibit. They are always on hand to help, and they look forward to purchasing art work and meeting the artists.

Beyond the art exhibits, Deb is a long-time supporter of our work. She was one of the first members of our Business Coalition, a group of local business leaders who meet monthly with our staff and individuals to discuss KenCrest's role in the business community. More recently, Deb has been the business advisor to our Employment Goal Group, which is exploring new models of customized and supported employment.

Their work and dedication assist individuals in reaching higher and allow for full inclusion in their community.

Champion of Friendships, Wesley Enhanced Living

Our Northeast Early Learning Center needed an emergency evacuation site, so we approached our neighbor, Wesley Enhanced Living. Jennifer Anderson, the Activities Director, paved the way for Wesley and KenCrest to finalize an agreement, and then took things to another level. She encouraged us to jointly create an intergenerational program between our children and Wesley's elderly residents. This has blossomed into several



activities for our children, from Teddy Bear picnics to joint holiday events.

Next, Jennifer went to bat for us with Wesley to identify a piece of ground on their property where we could begin an intergenerational gardening program. Our generous friends at Primex Garden Center joined in and began to donate supplies and their gardening skills. When Jen moved on to another position at Wesley, her colleague Gabrielle Lonzson stepped in and continued to enhance our partnership. Gabrielle continues to help us organize the gardening project and is committed to creating new projects that will be beneficial for our children as well as the seniors she serves.

Thank You!

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