



From the Desk of the CEO



Greetings:

To make an understatement, let me start off by saying "what a painful year we experienced in 2020". Yet despite

everything, we worked together to weather the storm.

The repercussions of the COVID-19 virus have had a profound effect on the world. With the closing of day care facilities and schools, we had many staff who were unable to continue to work. Fortunately, the Families First Corona Virus Response Act, came into being and provided an extra support to bolster unemployment.

As the virus raged and more and more restrictions were put into place, we found ourselves entering into a totally new realm of service provision via Tele-health, Zoom and other virtual services that became second nature to all of us. Two of our Day Habilitation programs in

north and south central became isolation centers for individuals who tested positive. Stockpiles of masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves were ordered by the hundreds, only to find that the demand far exceeded the supply. However, we were able to get what we needed to ensure that everyone received these critical supplies.

We were fortunate that we had staff from our company making masks, and community companies who we reached out to donating masks, face shields, and goggles for the staff to wear. Some DDS employees were making and distributing masks in the early stages of the pandemic.

From early March through most of November, tests were showing a very low incidence of positivity in both staff and individuals. Unfortunately, after Thanksgiving the spread of the virus in our programs and other provider programs across the United States took off with renewed vigor. From

approximately November through early January, we unfortunately lost four individuals to the virus. My sincerest condolences to their families and to the staff who loved and cared for them.

I would like to thank our Human Resources, Accounting, Residential and Day Hab Management staff, our Therapists and Specialists, and our Maintenance Department who continued to work to maintain our properties and to keep as much normalcy as is/was possible.

The ability for everyone to work together as a team supporting each other and the individuals we serve continues to be excellent. I want to give a special thank you to Lisa Morgan, Compliance Director, who worked continuously to ensure our compliance and adherence to the guidelines of the State of MA, CDC, and local Health Departments. In addition, I want to thank all of our Direct Care

Inside this Issue:

From the Desk of the CEO
Employment Directions
Most Valuable Players (MVP)
Day & Residential News
DD Awareness Month

Thank You LSI Heroes
Staff Recognition
Employee Spotlight
In This Together/Thank You Supporters

Professionals, who despite the risk of being infected with COVID-19, continued to work their shifts and provided overtime and relief hours across the company to ensure that necessary services were provided.

I believe that we are slowly turning the corner on COVID-19 and will now be faced with the "new normal", whatever that turns out to be. There will be many changes that will affect our lives in the coming months. The methodologies of service delivery is very likely to change. It isn't going to happen quickly, but I do believe that it is going to happen.

On a more positive note, I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Randy Pina as our new Human Resources Director, effective March 22, 2021. Randy comes to us with an extensive background in Employment Law, Training, and Human Resources Management. As we are beginning to turn the corner on COVID, we have definitely turned the corner on having a viable Human Resources Department. Please join me in welcoming Randy to our team and wishing him every success.

In closing, I would like everyone to know that I am proud to be the CEO of Life-Skills, Inc., and to

work with what I know to be an incredibly resourceful, dedicated, and reliable, group of people.

Thank you!



Tom Amick, CEO



When it becomes available to you, you can, and should, still get the vaccine if you have had COVID-19 and have recovered.

YES! UNLESS YOU'RE CURRENTLY SICK.

Source: Mass General Brigham

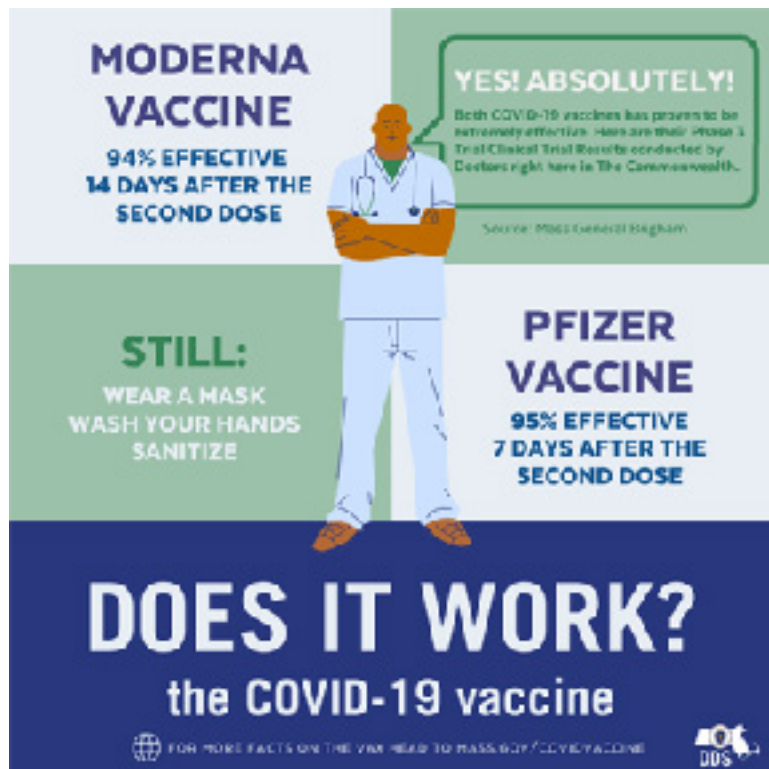
STILL:
WEAR A MASK
WASH YOUR HANDS
SANITIZE

If you are actively sick with COVID-19 or have symptoms that could be from COVID-19, you should not get the vaccine until they subside or you are instructed by your doctor.

**SHOULD I GET...
vaccinated, if I already had COVID?**

FOR MORE FACTS ON THE VAX HEAD TO [MASS.GOV/COVIDVACCINE](https://mass.gov/covidvaccine)





MODERNA VACCINE
94% EFFECTIVE
14 DAYS AFTER THE SECOND DOSE

YES! ABSOLUTELY!
Both COVID-19 vaccines has proven to be extremely effective. Here are their Phase 3 Trial Clinical Trial Results conducted by Doctors right here in The Commonwealth.


Source: Mass General Brigham

STILL:
WEAR A MASK
WASH YOUR HANDS
SANITIZE

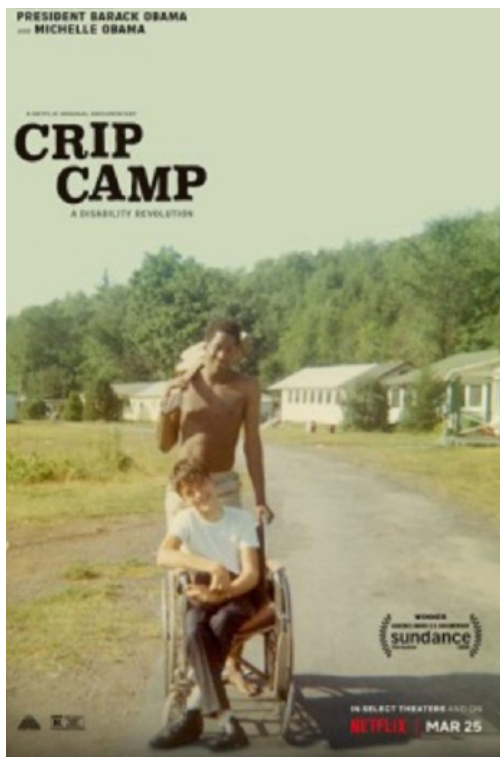
PFIZER VACCINE
95% EFFECTIVE
7 DAYS AFTER THE SECOND DOSE

**DOES IT WORK?
the COVID-19 vaccine**

FOR MORE FACTS ON THE VAX HEAD TO [MASS.GOV/COVIDVACCINE](https://mass.gov/covidvaccine)



Submit content to be featured in future newsletters!
tlewandowski@life-skillsinc.org



Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution

If you are like most of us, you filled some of the COVID quarantine time with some movie watching and maybe caught a superhero

movie or two, like Black Panther or Wonder Woman. But if you have yet to experience the 108 powerful minutes of the Netflix documentary, Crip Camp, you're not done.

The unlikely protagonists of this 2020 award nominated film tell a story that will both inspire and captivate. Crip Camp begins with a group of free spirited, disabled teenagers attending a summer camp in upstate New York and moves through their life of advocacy and the relentless fight for inclusion and accessibility. This movie has been called "a moment of truth" and will certainly affect the way you view disability and possibly call into question some preconceived prejudices.

Another byproduct of this past year, besides some extra movie watching time, has been the exposure of a plethora of inequalities and social disparities in this country that have been

pushed under the rug for far too long. This forced awareness has presented a platform for change for the disabled community and offers us all an opportunity to transform the future to include a real place at the table for all. I urge everyone to watch Crip Camp and share it with your family, friends, neighbors, employers and business community members. This movie is a universal message that can't afford to go unnoticed in this year of recovery and restoration.

Submitted by:

Kim Lapworth
Vocational Trainer
Employment Directions



MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS

July

George Leaming - Delaney Ave

August

Tabitha Hermanson - Delaney Ave
James Forbes - MCGovern Lane

September

Amber Baillargion - Delaney Ave
Cecilia Sarkodee - Mason Road
Shem Chauvin-Bartlett - Chestnut Hill
Sandro Bataille - Arland Drive

October

Carol Krasnecky - Delaney
Solomon Agyemang-Duah - Mason Road
Kristina Mundell - Chestnut Hill

November

George Leaming - Delaney Ave
Rosa Nurys - Francis Ave
Diane Ajunwa - Lancaster
Margaret Carver - Brodeur Ave
Haley Collins - 54 Boulder
Shalaina Humphrey - Mason Road
Leah McSparren - Chapel Street
Carmen Powell - Leominster

December

Ekow Acquah - Arland Drive
Victor Kudedzi - Arland Drive
Lays Napoli - Francis Ave
Amber Bailargeon - Delaney Ave
Yadira Rivera - Supervised Apts



With gratitude!

In December of 2019, we mourned the loss of our beloved Bill K. Bill's devoted sister, Barbara, provided many, many donations to the program over the years that Bill resided here – too many to list. Every donation given was always to benefit the four individuals living at our home. Barbara loves every one of them for who they are.

Barbara was an “anonymous Santa” every Christmas funding the South Central residential Christmas party. One of the last donations Barbara made was a gazebo for our back yard, which is being installed this spring/summer.

Since Bill's passing, Barbara has remained sincerely devoted to the four individuals at Brodeur Ave. She has continued her annual tradition of funding the individuals' holiday meals, and this spring/summer, Barbara is having an electric awning installed on the patio for the individuals to enjoy the beautiful weather safely and comfortably.

On behalf of Life-Skills, Inc., and the Brodeur Ave individuals and staff, we would like to sincerely thank Barbara for every donation, for her wisdom, concern, and care over the years.

Bill was a very special person and we were so fortunate to know him, and we are very fortunate to know his beautiful sister and her family.

Submitted by:

Diane Mioduszewski
Program Manager



Table Talk Pies® “America's Favorite Pie”

Thank you Table Talk Pies, Inc. and The Pie Store at Table Talk Pies for your generous donation of 8 cases of pies for our healthcare workers and individuals to enjoy!

These delicious treats were greatly appreciated!





All of us at Delaney would like to take this opportunity to thank the **George W. Wells Foundation**. We appreciate what their foundation has done for our ladies. Our previous bathroom no longer met the needs of our women, but now thanks to the foundation, this is a problem of the past. From the sink to the floor, to the safety bars and shower updates, we love them all. Our ability to help our ladies support their independence has been made easier and safer thanks to them. We are truly

grateful and appreciate all they have done to make our ladies feel special.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff here at Delaney. We have had a lot of changes this past year due to the pandemic - our ladies not having a day program to go to, not being able to go out into the community, etc. My staff did a great job keeping the ladies as happy, busy, and healthy as possible. When COVID hit our house, it hit hard. My staff showed their dedication to the

individuals and to Life-Skills, Inc. They all worked around the clock making sure the ladies had everything they needed or wanted while in quarantine.

Working 12 to 24 hours shifts without any days off, they were away from their families and were tired, but still worked with a smile on their faces and kept the ladies happy.

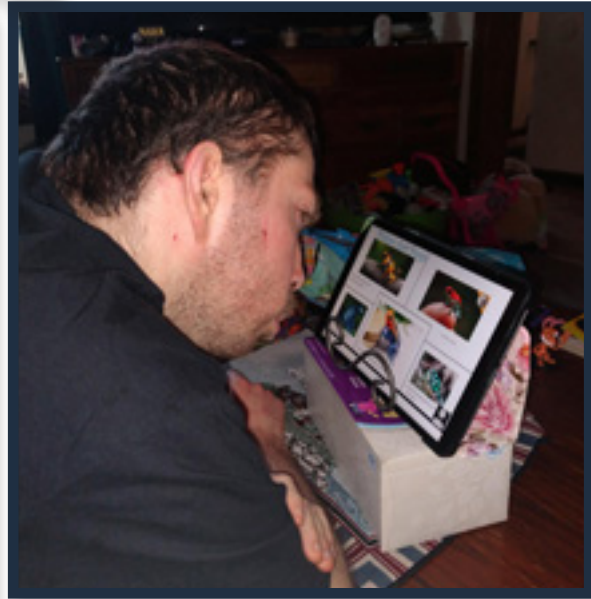
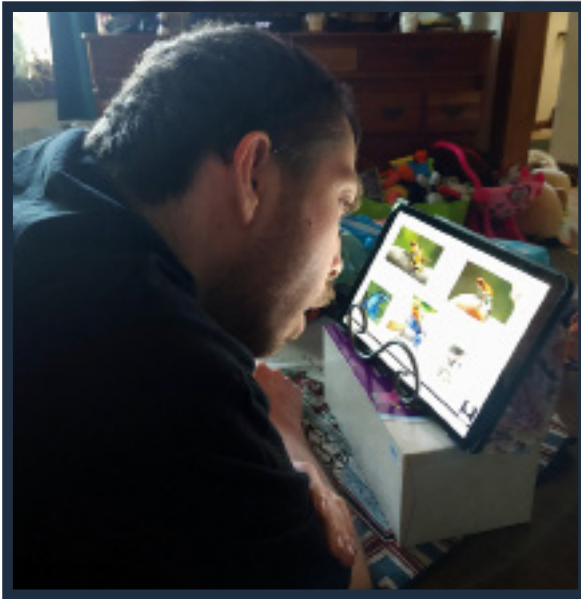
To all of my staff, I can't thank you enough!

Submitted by:
Nancy Hill, Program Manager



Photo: Staff at our Greenfield Day Hab wore pink to show their support for breast cancer awareness.

STAYING Connected



Staying connected – Chris C. (from our Greenfield Day Hab program) had a great time joining us in our daily Zoom group. Our virtual day hab sessions include a variety of groups such as music, games, crafts, gross motor (exercise), book reading, and presentations on human rights and health and safety.

Hello everyone! Although COVID has kept us apart from family and friends, which makes us sad and worried about the health of our loved ones, some good has also come from this. Our day programs have formed a unity. We share weekly Zoom visits with all of our individuals in their homes and programs, and the staff here at Centre Place Day Hab have greatly benefited in meeting all of our new friends in Webster, Greenfield, and Gardner. They have brought us much happiness in sharing their videos with us and participating in our groups.

We have a week here at the program to prepare for our groups which include Morning Meeting, Current Events, Safety, Crafts, Human Rights, and Self-Advocacy. It is our hope that we have brought you some interesting information that you can share with others.

All of you have greatly improved our lives, and we wish you all great happiness and send you a big hug and lots of love from your friends here at Centre Place Day Hab.

Submitted by: Deborah DePasquale



Here is a Valentine's Heart Wreath craft project that all of our remote individuals participated in on February 11. Everyone really enjoyed working on this project together.



Each March, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities partners with Association for University Centers on Disabilities and National Disability Rights Network to create a social media campaign that highlights the many ways in which people with and without disabilities come together to form strong, diverse communities.

The campaign seeks to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all areas of community life, as well as awareness to the barriers that people with disabilities still sometimes face in connecting to the communities in which they live.

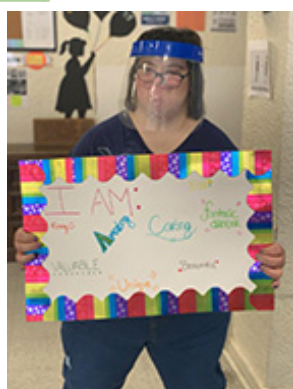
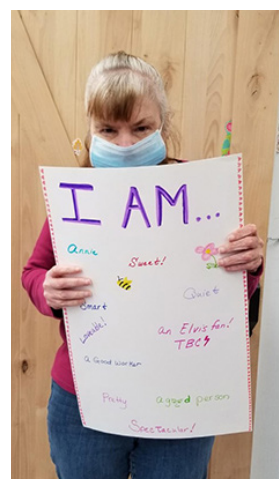
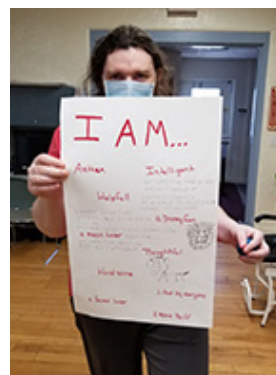
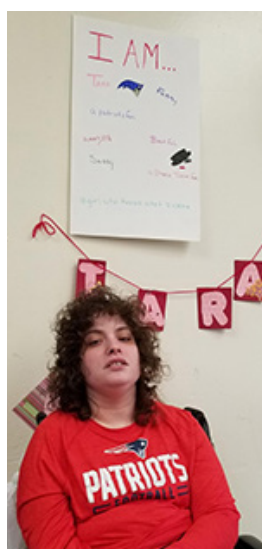
The Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month shines a spotlight on the disabled community and demonstrates how people with developmental disabilities live normal lives. In return, the public can learn how they can help people with developmental disabilities achieve their dreams.



I AM

Individuals at Day Hab 1 celebrated how amazing they are by working on an "I Am" project. Each person worked with a staff to write down all of the things they are good at and love about themselves to help eliminate the stigma around people with different abilities. They are so proud of what they came up with, and had a great time putting this project together.

Submitted by:
Rhianna Curotto, Program Manager





Pictured top left to right: Rhianna Curotto, Kendra Tortolani, Heather Frongillo, Ellen Bileau, Jessica Oliver, Bethani Colon, Cherry Bonin
Bottom left to right: Karen Milani, Heidi Bow

365 days have passed since the first day of our 4-month closure due to Covid-19 and an even longer time of so much uncertainty, unknowns, changes and adaptations, just to name a few. The day we closed, I remember saying that we will all see each other in 2 weeks when Covid is gone and under control. Boy, was I wrong. During this closure, we continued to support not only the individuals enrolled in the program, but each other. We came together and participated in drive-by parades with goodies, balloons, posters, streamers, honking horns, and

smiles for individuals. We spent time on Zoom and other streaming platforms to try and promote a sense of normalcy by practicing sign language, singing songs, reading books, range of motion exercises, or even just a quick chat. It takes a strong team to not allow a pandemic to get in the way of strength, dedication, and resilience.

We have adapted to every change thrown our way throughout this pandemic, and have come out a stronger team because of it. Supporting the members of Day Hab 1 has been, and will continue to be,

our number one priority whether individuals come back to in-person programming or join us on our daily Zoom groups.

As the Program Manager of Day Hab 1, I thank all of my staff, individuals, guardians, parents, residential group homes, shared living providers, co-workers, and community for remaining a consistent support through one of our most challenging experiences. Something that made it just a little bit easier was that we did it together.

~ Rhianna Curotto
 Program Manager, DHI



Greetings from Country Club Road

In February 2021, Life-Skills, Inc. opened a residential house in Greenfield, MA. This is our first residential home in the Franklin/Hampshire area. The house is designed to accommodate wheelchair accessibility and hospital beds.

Life-Skills, Inc. purchased this house in the middle of 2019, and then spent a year and a half remodeling the home to make it suitable and welcoming to individuals with all levels of needs. The house is established as a four-bedroom home that will have one person per bedroom. The bedrooms are spacious and adaptable to

the individual's needs. The entire house is designed with an open floor plan so that it is easily navigable for individuals in wheelchairs. The house is also equipped with an overhead Hoyer system to assist individuals who may not be able to transfer themselves.

COVID-19 didn't stop the progress that was made to get this house open to individuals, but it did slow things down and gave us a few more hurdles to overcome. But, Life-Skills, Inc. persevered, and we were able to open this home to its first resident in February 2021. The hope is to welcome all of our

residents by the middle of this year.

Life-Skills Inc. is proud to now be serving another portion of the state with this newly added residential home in Greenfield, MA, and we are prouder still of all the wonderful people that we get to meet along the way.

Thank you to everyone that has helped us to get this house open and safe for everyone, and to all of those who now get to call Country Club Road "home", we welcome you!

- Rebecca Allen
Program Manager

Thank you!

to all of our



HEROES

We appreciate you!

I personally wanted to thank all the front-line direct care employees, nurses and program managers, Coordinators and Directors that I worked with on the agency's COVID responses throughout the last year. The

COVID pandemic required a lot of time, dedication, and crisis skill management.

The day hab isolation sites, the home isolations and quarantines, closing and re-opening of day programs, testing and vaccine programs, and the urgent acquisitions of PPE were all unprecedented responses to fighting the spread of the virus for our staff and individuals.

What I experienced throughout the last year was impressive and nothing short of

miraculous. Every day we were looking at everything from split second to minute-by-minute decisions while we kept our eye on the future as COVID defined it for us.

To all the administrative staff, day employees, and individuals whose lives and jobs have been so disrupted, I greatly respect what you have gone through and often thought about all of you.

Better days are ahead,

Lisa Morgan
Director of Compliance

Are You Ready to...

- Increase your income?
- Explore your work options?
- Keep your Medicaid/Medicare while you work?
- Gain greater personal fulfillment through work?

Social Security's Ticket to Work program and Work Incentives can help you find meaningful work.

If you're age 18 through 64 and you receive Social Security disability benefits, you can take advantage of these free services.



Choose a Ticket to Work employment services provider.
Work with your provider to plan a better future.

Contact Info:

Kim Lapworth
Vocational Trainer
Life-Skills, Inc.
508-943-0700 X2171
voctrainer@life-skillsinc.org

Are You Ready to Choose Work?

Information/Resources
Call 1-866-968-7842 or
1-866-833-2967 (TTY)
Visit www.socialsecurity.gov/work
www.facebook.com/choosework



To all of our customers, friends and supporters - we are sad to inform you that due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the inability to successfully re-open Closet Classics Thrift, we had to make the unfortunate decision to permanently close our store at the end of December.

Closet Classics Thrift has been an important and unique part of our agency for many years, and we are very grateful to all of our customers, staff, and individuals who have made it such a special place for so long.

We are extremely grateful for all of your support and loyalty throughout the years!





2020

Employee Milestone Anniversaries

Congratulations to our Life-Skills, Inc. 2020 Milestone Employees! This year, we have 27 employees who are celebrating milestone anniversaries ranging from 5 to 25 years!

Thank you for your many years of service and continued commitment to Life-Skills, Inc.

See the **Employee Milestone Anniversary** Yearbook online:

<https://life-skillsinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Employee-Milestone-Yearbook-2020.pdf>

We are proud to honor the following members of our LSI team:

25 Years

Steve Iwanski
Janet Jolie
David Kline

20 Years

Colette Enno
Eileen Harris
Teresa Mejia
Philomina Toxla

15 Years

Heidi Bow
Pam Collins
Winifred Edwards
Melissa Hurstak
Mindy Haynes
Roxanne Melanson
Diane Mioduszewski
Lori Szostakowski

10 Years

Polly Burlingame
Margaret Dennis
Willard Hutton
Ivy Wetherell

5 Years

Ekow Acquah
Kristin Arce
Shaina Bradshaw
Mariah Miller
Jessica Oliver
Melissa Spinelli
Maria Tineo-Lago
Maria Watson



Current Role at LSI:

Human Resources Director

Tell us a little bit about your background/how did you get your start in HR:

I started my career by working in Accounting and Finance for over 17 years. Throughout that time, I developed an interest in Human Resources (HR) after partnering with HR team members on some employment initiatives which included recruiting and interviewing college graduates. After earning a BS in Business Administration, I continued playing a role in HR initiatives while working for Fidelity Investments. It was then that I decided to pursue graduate level education in Human Resource Management.

What aspect of your role do you enjoy the most?:

I enjoy working with employees at all levels of the company and making policies that help keep the agency legally compliant while creating a culture of collaboration and partnership.

Most challenging aspect of your role:

Staffing in this difficult, Covid-driven economy.

What are some of the goals you would like to achieve at LSI?:

To build a comprehensive Human Resources function while developing strong business partner relationships with all levels of the agency.

What would you consider the necessary ingredients to a successful work culture?:

Support from leadership combined with employee commitment to the mission of the agency.

Best career lesson you have learned so far?:

Every interaction with someone is an interview for something.

Before working at LSI, what was the most unusual or interesting job you have ever had?:

The most interesting job I had was the first position I accepted after graduate school. I was hired by an environmental and engineering firm as a Senior HR Representative. My first HR supervisor, and current mentor, promised that he

would teach me all the things I didn't learn in graduate school – real world HR and application of employment law. Over a three and a half year period, I learned a lot about the application of employment law, development of HR protocols to ensure legal compliance, mediated many complex employee relations cases that had high level implications and learned that there are three sides to every story. All of this further fueled my interest in growing my career in Human Resources.

What advice would you give to prospective candidates/ current employees?:

Work hard, be prepared, be on-time and show up (participate) in every conversation and meeting. Sounds easy, and it should be, but these are the keys to getting ahead and making a name for yourself.

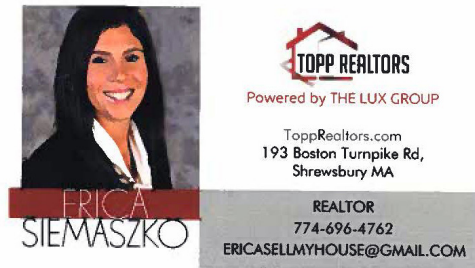
On a personal note, hobbies and interests outside of work?:

I enjoy spending time with my family, which is quite large, as well as with a close group of friends. I spend winters officiating ice hockey which has allowed me to officiate at many of the local college rinks and the TD Garden. I also enjoy playing baseball and am looking forward to opening day on May 1st. In addition to the above, I'm learning to sing, as well as play the piano, and simply enjoy pleasure reading when time allows for it.



#inthistgether

We are so grateful to the following supporters for helping us through this challenging time. We would not be able to do what we do without the generosity of our caring community.



Special Thanks

Aniko Houlihan Baglaneas Eves
Cheryl Ryan Chan
Christina Rivera
Maggie McMenemy
Marti Hobbes
Sun & Ski Sports



**Janice Smith &
Maria Pappas**
for the treadmill
donations for our
individuals



Southern Worcester County
Rehabilitation Center, Inc.



life-skills
INC.

building brighter futures
since 1970

44 Morris Street
Webster, MA 01570



Thank you for supporting our initiative to **Go Green**. Subscribe to our Portraits of Progress email newsletter and get updates on our agency delivered straight to your inbox!
<https://life-skillsinc.org/newsletters>