

Transformation Grant

“RI WINS (Workforce Investment & New Solutions)” is the name utilized by the RI Cross Disability Coalition for our DD Transformation Grant in collaboration with the RI Developmental Disabilities Council (RIDDC) and Skills for RI’s Future. This newsletter provides information on the status of implementation of the goal areas within the project and efforts to educate and provide support to people with disabilities, staff from community agencies, and RI employers on creating sustainable change for meaningful and inclusive lives for individuals with disabilities.

This is the first time the training has included participants beyond DD community agencies such as staff from State Behavioral Health, The Providence Center, Gateway Healthcare, Office of Rehabilitation Services and Department of Labor and Training.



Doug Crandell and Sue Babin

Doug Crandell recently conducted the fourth round of the Transformation Grant’s 3-day Employer Engagement Training for support agencies. During these trainings, participants learned how the process of knowledge transfer, group work and developing effective employer connections in Rhode Island can help facilitate the critical relationships between businesses and agencies that can lead to customized employment opportunities for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD). The trainings are funded by a grant from the Division of Disabilities.

Following the previous two days of sessions to learn the model’s best practices, day three culminated in presentations by each group with a friendly competition and a prize for the one voted best by all the participants. Each presentation contained details from their tour, interviews, market

research, Q&A to uncover the company’s “pain points,” with their combined insights gleaned about the company culture informing their final document.



Amy Weinstein, Claire Haines

Colleagues at specific agencies were assigned to work with members of other participating agencies with the goal of establishing and nurturing new relationships between organizations. Through this collaboration new and lasting relationships will be created between businesses willing to participate in the program. For businesses, the project aims to schedule informational interviews with various employers to determine their workforce needs, and to identify strategies or solutions to meet those needs through potential job opportunities for people with disabilities, a business-within-a-business for individuals involved with self-employment, or a continued relationship with the employer over time. For people with disabilities, it opens the door to work opportunities.

The recent training cohort of 23 individuals across six teams from RASOI (Indian Restaurant), Cup of Joe Kitchen and Café, Tucker Lucas and Associates (CPA), Thundermist (Community health center), Luigi’s (Italian restaurant) and Landmark (community hospital) is representative of



Danna Spencer, Paul Ouellette, Brian LaFauci

agencies providing resources and assistance in the fields of I/DD, behavioral health, substance abuse, and transition/adult. For five team members, this was their first time working on an initiative that directly related to assisting individuals with I/DD.



Project leader Sue Babin opened the three-hour long session by saying that the project “was really powerful this time around.” She also announced that there are plans to launch another training, which will exceed the requirements of the initial project scope.

Building a community of practice for the teams is a key focus led by Skills for RI’s Future. Going forward, it allows participants to recognize that there is access to a platform where they can share opportunities and collaborate on materials in real-time. This “hub” for business engagement – in addition to monthly coaching calls - also works in tandem with the transformation grant’s goal of connecting people, allowing participants to share employer job offers with others when the interviewing organization doesn’t have a matching candidate - or when things “just don’t come together” within an individual organization.



Emilee O'Connor, Andrea Saqib, Josette Sobers



Christopher Tanguay, Pholla Hang-Casale, Rachel Pavao, Seth Piccolo



Lori Ann Ethier, Michele Dellamorte, Alan Atwood, Jennifer Mencarini, Natalie LaRoche

Exploring Culinary Excellence at Rasoi



Josette Sobers, Mirasia Cassese, Elvys Ruis, Emilee O'Connor

Exploring Culinary Excellence at Rasoi

When it comes to experiencing the vibrant tapestry of flavors that Indian cuisine has to offer, few places can rival the authenticity and charm of Rasoi, an Indian restaurant nestled in the heart of Pawtucket. A recent meeting with the owner, Sanjeev, shed light on the restaurant's rich history, its commitment to quality, and the guiding philosophy that shapes its success.

Born in India, Sanjeev's passion for hospitality ignited during his time in Austria, where he pursued a degree in culinary arts. He then embarked on a stint with a luxury hotel chain before crossing borders to the United States and enrolling at Johnson and Wales for his graduate degree.

Through anecdotes and personal insights, Sanjeev revealed the transformative power of learning from one's own mistakes. His words resonated with the inherent challenges of running a business, where every twist and turn becomes a valuable lesson. "You learn from your mistakes," he emphasized, underscoring the significance of self-improvement and resilience.

A central theme emerged during the conversation was the importance of fostering a supportive and approachable environment. Sanjeev's leadership style is grounded in the belief that true leaders are those who encourage dialogue and ensure that employees feel comfortable voicing their concerns. This approach, he pointed out, builds an environment where communication flows freely, fostering a sense of belonging and trust within the team.

Rasoi physical space reflects its commitment to excellence, with a pristine space showcasing a dedication to sanitation and customer satisfaction. Sanjeev's keen eye for detail was evident as he walked us through the neat and organized kitchen – a testament to the emphasis on providing fresh and high-quality ingredients.

The restaurant's impact extends beyond the culinary experience. Sanjeev's compassionate approach to management became evident through the tale of overseas employees navigating cultural nuances. He recognized their challenges and responded generously, supplementing their tips from his pocket. This gesture highlighted his commitment to creating a positive work environment that nurtures both the team and the business.

In other instances, he has gone above and beyond to ensure that the restaurant is accommodating to a diverse clientele - including making modifications to ensure that guests requiring wheelchair access were easily able to access the building and - in one case, working with his staff to personally help lift a wheelchair into the building. He is a firm believer in "Atithi Devo Bhava" - an Indian phrase that translates to "Guest Is God," and the idea that providing your guests - whether in your home or your business - with the most impeccable, welcoming, and nurturing experience is the absolute first priority.

Sanjeev's forward-thinking mindset also extends to business sustainability. Recognizing the potential of collaboration, he expressed interest in working with employees within the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) community. This approach aligns with his broader vision of creating a harmonious and growth-focused environment for everyone involved.

Rasoi's longevity and success stand as a testament to Sanjeev's philosophy that each customer's visit is an opportunity to provide nourishment through cuisine and meaningful interactions. The commitment to nurturing the team and a willingness to evolve with changing times has solidified Rasoi as a cornerstone of culinary excellence in Pawtucket.



Empowering the Community: Cup of Joe's Commitment to Inclusivity and Impact



Team Members; Lorraine Lesniak, Alyssa Buco, Sue Pollard, Scott DeAscentis

Cup of Joe's Commitment to Inclusivity and Impact

In a world often focused on profits and bottom lines, there are shining examples of businesses that prioritize people over numbers, community over transactions. At a recent meeting, a conversation unfolded that revealed the remarkable story of Cup of Joe's, a local establishment that isn't just about serving coffee and treats; it's about fostering an inclusive haven for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

As the dialogue unfolded, it became evident that Cup of Joe's isn't your typical coffee shop. Mike and Kenny, have created an environment that doesn't just serve the community – it embraces it. What sets them apart is their unwavering commitment to inclusivity and, specifically their mission to include people with I/DD on their team.

Turning Compassion into Action

Mike's vision extends far beyond brewing coffee and baking treats. He's committed to empowering those with I/DD by providing meaningful opportunities for them within his business. From offering training and certification programs to holding baking classes tailored to individuals with differing abilities, Mike is proving that businesses can play an instrumental role in supporting the professional development of those often marginalized by society.

A Multifaceted Approach to Inclusion

Cup of Joe's isn't just creating a space for those with I/DD to thrive professionally; it's creating a culture of acceptance and understanding. By designing a menu that accommodates food allergies and ensuring a safe and inclusive environment, Mike and Kenny are dismantling barriers and fostering a sense of belonging. Their commitment to employing people with I/DD resonates not only with their team but with every customer who walks through their doors.

A Beacon of Change in the Community

Beyond the walls of the coffee shop, Mike and Kenny are deeply involved in supporting and uplifting the community. Their philanthropic efforts, ranging from fundraising for accident victims to actively contributing to local charities, demonstrate their dedication to being a force for good. These actions reflect their belief that businesses, especially those deeply connected to their communities, can be powerful instruments of positive change.

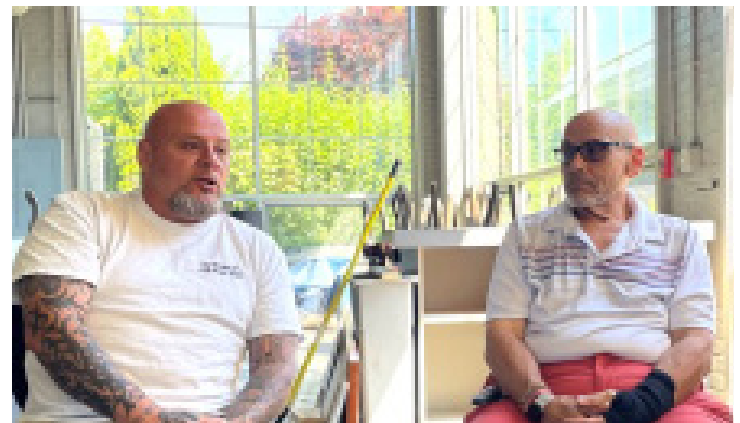
A Call to Collaborate

While Cup of Joe's has already made substantial strides, there's more to be done. Challenges such as equipment shortages and staffing gaps are real obstacles, but the beauty of their approach lies in collaboration. Mike and Kenny understand that through unity and partnerships with other local businesses, they can overcome these challenges and continue making a lasting impact.

An Inclusive Legacy in the Making

Cup of Joe's isn't merely a coffee shop; it's a living testament to the profound impact that businesses can have on individuals and communities. Mike has woven inclusivity, empowerment, and compassion into the very fabric of their establishment. Their journey serves as a reminder that businesses, regardless of their size, can become catalysts for change, uplifting those who often stand on the fringes of society.

In a world where divisions persist, Cup of Joe's is a shining example of the transformative power of unity, empathy, and unwavering dedication to making a difference. As their doors open to a diverse clientele, they also open the door to a future where every cup of coffee comes with a side of compassion and a whole lot of heart.



Mike and Kenny from Cup of Joe



Building Community through Commitment and Values



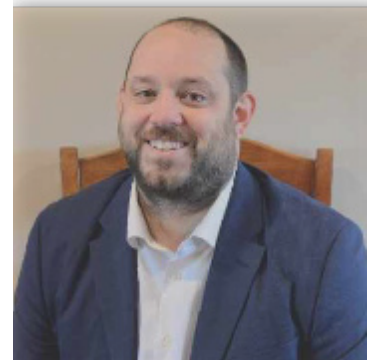
**Tucker Lucas
& Associates**
YOUR TAX PROFESSIONALS

The Story of Tucker Lucas and Associates

In a world where business often takes center stage, there are individuals who stand out by embodying their values and using their platforms to make a positive impact. One such individual is Dan Tucker, the sole owner of Tucker Lucas and Associates, an accounting firm with a unique approach to business that revolves around community, trust, and dedication. Here's what the team found...

A Man of Many Roles

Trust, honesty, integrity, credibility, communication, caring, kindness, and flexibility are some of the core values that guide Dan's approach to business. These values have led to his unique vision: a business that not only serves its clients but also actively contributes to the well-being of the community it operates in. Dan's commitment to his family shines through in his aspirations. He expressed that he doesn't want to miss out on moments with his family, such as picking up his kids from school and going on vacations. This emphasis on work-life balance goes beyond mere lip service; it's a testament to his dedication to his family and his understanding of what truly matters in life.



Dan Tucker

Serving the Community

One remarkable aspect of Dan's business philosophy is his desire to serve the community while keeping his business goals in sight. He doesn't let financial gains dictate his every move; instead, he places his values and the needs of the community at the forefront. This approach not only reflects his authenticity but also underscores his commitment to making a positive impact.

While the conversation highlighted Dan's strengths and values, it also revealed certain unmet needs within his business. Observations were made about areas such as organization, hospitality, office decor, and marketing strategy. These insights were shared with Dan to provide potential solutions that could further enhance his business's success, including working with individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD) to fill his unmet needs while also providing opportunities for the community.



Fernanda Furtado, Dena Brown, Cythia Woodruff, Christiana Otele

Building Relationships, One Conversation at a Time

Dan Tucker's story is a reminder that business is more than transactions; it's about building relationships, fostering trust, and serving the community. Through his dedication to his core values and his unwavering commitment to his family and clients, he's setting an example for business owners everywhere. His approach reminds us that success is not just measured by profits but by the positive impact we leave on those around us. As we navigate the complexities of the business world, let's remember Dan's words: "Be kind, build good relationships, and everything else will come through."

