RSS Quarterly Newsletter

October 03, 2024

Calvin Calton, Director

This month our board chairperson, Sue Schuld, penned a powerful quarterly report. In it, she touched on my plans for stepping down as executive director, on our mission statement stressing the importance of living a life to its fullest potential, and of happiness, for ourselves, and for others. All these topics ran together for me during a recent Saturday, as I enjoyed the beautiful early fall weather while busying myself picking wild plums for jelly, syrup, and most importantly, for homemade wine.

Many of my best insights come when I’m doing something I enjoy, like the other weekend. The air was crisp. The sun blazed with an exceptional brilliance as it hung high in a cloudless blue sky. The leaves were just beginning to turn a glorious crimson and gold. As I breathed in all the beauty of the moment, I reflected on the things Sue touched on.

I thought about my future, and the fifteen months ahead that I will continue to serve as director. By now, all employees in the company are feeling the effects of the changes we are having to make. Whether it’s while I’m director, or when the new leadership takes over, I think everyone would agree that this company needs to change the way we do business to remain competitive. As I told my managers last month, I will not accept a nickel of my pay if I am not doing my best job right up until my final day. If I don’t pour my heart and soul into trying to make this place the best it can be, why bother showing up?

As a company, RSS’ fullest potential is realized when our staff work in a profession, and our residents are living a life, which is full, and rewarding, and meaningful. So how do we make RSS into the place you’d want to work, or where you’d want your most loved family member to reside? It’s going to require change.

Since I became director three and a half years ago, significant changes have taken place. The financial department, the HR department, payroll, transportation, nursing, almost nothing in our company has remained untouched. I’m not talking about the personnel, although they’ve changed, but I’m talking about our systems, our procedures, our core way of doing business. As hard as all these changes have been, and trust me, they’ve been challenging to say the least, the hardest change of all has yet to take place. I am talking about the culture of the company.

I’ve heard occasional grumblings to the effect that the administration is trying to get rid of ‘the old people’. That is not true. But we are going to rid ourselves of the old ways of doing things. Some of this comes from what Medicaid requires. We no longer lock up refrigerators and pantries. That’s called the ‘Settings Rule’. We will also no longer be controlling what grown people receiving services do with their lives. Disabled people have the right to make every significant decision, with care providers only assisting guide those decisions in the interest of health and safety. The culture of micromanaging every aspect of a resident’s life to the detriment of their free will must end.

Think about the wine-making analogy. Making a good wine isn’t easy. It takes patience. You have to crush the fruit to extract its essence. Similarly, breaking down an entrenched culture which has been allowed to permeate a company involves breaking some things. Just like making wine, the process of instituting much needed changes takes a lot of patience, and it usually involves a degree of pain.

I’ve heard it said: ‘The person who is hardest to tell the truth to is the one looking back at you in the mirror’. RSS is at a crossroads. Every employee, every family member, every board member, all of us need to ask ourselves: “With the God given talents, authority, and power that have been bestowed upon me, what can I do to, what am I obligated to do, to ensure the best quality of life for those innocent souls who did not ask to be disabled, but only want to be happy?”

The answer to that question is simple. Everything you can. In fifteen months, when I am popping the cork on a vintage 2024 Premier Blanc wild plum wine, I sincerely hope that I am toasting a successful transition of RSS into a brighter future. The plan for me is to continue to use my God given talents for the betterment of the lives of the disabled, in whatever capacity the open door in front of me at that time leads me to. The plan for RSS is live true to our mission statement of “Providing a safe environment for persons with disabilities to achieve their fullest potential in every way possible, thus building a community for all of us through participation, inclusion, and understanding.” What will your plan be when the time comes for you to do the right thing for our disabled friends and family members?

Enjoy a beautiful fall, everyone. Enjoy each moment.

Calvin Calton,

Executive Director, RSS