On July 14, I had one of the most incredible experiences of my life. The National Guard has a program called “Boss Lift,” which gives members of the Guard the opportunity to share a real-life military adventure with their civilian employer.

That civilian employer was me—and it could not have been a more amazing day. Together, Crotched Mountain staff member and National Guardsman Anna Annelli and I took to the skies from the Pease International Tradeport in a massive tanker plane and, after flying to parts unknown, hooked up with some fighter jets for a mid-air refueling mission.

There, many, many thousands of feet in the air, we watched the miraculous unfold, a stunning achievement in human engineering. And knowing the sacrifices Anna has made on behalf of our country (she received the Purple Heart during a tour in Iraq), made that day one of my most memorable ever. What an honor to share it with her!

I’m just as honored to see Anna and Justin, one of our beloved clients from our community-based services, every day on the Crotched Mountain campus. Anna is Justin’s staff and the two have been together for 10 years. Justin is a man of many skills, and he and Anna are fixtures in and around the offices, as he picks up and drops off mail and works in shipping and receiving at our skills center.

After 27 years of duty, Anna will be retiring this year from the National Guard, driving up to Concord to turn in her equipment and uniform. She is planning to bring Justin along as well to be with her as she ends one chapter of life. It makes sense; when she returned from her deployment in Kuwait on 2011, Justin was waiting for her at the Manchester bus station, jumping up and down and smiling, elated she was back.

These are the stories I treasure, stories that only Crotched Mountain can spin. Whether it’s in the belly of a monstrous tanker plane or in the Crotched Mountain cafe, where Anna and Justin break from lunch to say hi, inspiration and exhilaration is always at the ready.

The stories that follow in this issue of Horizons all share a common theme, one of change and growth and transition. It is apropos for Crotched Mountain, considering our season of transformation. As our Specialty Hospital completes its wind-down and Crotched Mountain embarks on the next phase of our journey, I find Anna’s story particularly resonant. She will soon bid a fond farewell to a part of her story that was important and made a difference—as our Hospital did for many years—but looks forward to what the future holds, as we do. I’m right there with you Anna. As donors and stakeholders in the Crotched Mountain story, you’re right there too. We can’t do any of this without you and I am honored that you are with us, shoulder-to-shoulder, to accompany us on this journey.

Sincerely,

Michael Coughlin
President

PS: To learn more about Crotched Mountain’s strategic plan, please visit our new website at cmf.org.
We’ve all been there. One season of life ends, another begins. For Sam Arnold, a Crotched Mountain School student, change was upon him. And with all hands on deck—family, teachers, staff, and stakeholders like you—the new season was primed to be his best one yet.

Above: Sam and Dave take a walk down Pierce Lane

Right: Christian perfects his guitar technique
His stuff was there. That's what Sam realized with each visit. Every time he went to the house, walked down the stairs, and entered the bedroom he saw his stuff. And that gave him comfort, familiarity. It began to click: this is going to be my new home.

**JULY 6: PIERCE LANE**

Christian is strumming on his guitar. He loves music. He especially loves playing music, twanging the strings or tapping the keys or pounding the drums. The tactile feedback is soothing and gives him a way to let off some steam if the occasion calls for it.

Today, however, he's just showing off, plucking away, while reclining on the back porch of the house on Pierce Lane in Hollis, NH. It's a lazy summer day, the sun pours down, and the sounds of lunch coming together are audible in the nearby kitchen.

The concert is broken up by the sound of a door opening. Christopher is home. He walks in with his support staff behind him, fresh off a morning's work of document shredding. Before settling in, he makes a beeline for a small container hanging off the side of the back door. He takes the container to the backyard and feeds the day's food scraps to the composter, closes the door, and lets nature take its course.

With another part of his daily routine done, he walks back inside, grabs a seat at the lunch table with Christian and starts in on his sandwich.

There's still lots to do for both guys before the day's out—a run to the town dump for Christopher, an afternoon at the YMCA for Christian—and then, as is the custom for the Pierce Boys, a laid-back evening watching *Wheel of Fortune*.

Both Christopher and Christian have an autism diagnosis and are former Crotched Mountain School students, who found their way to Hollis as part of their transition to adult, community-based services. The Pierce Lane home or, as Samantha the house manager likes to call it, "the bachelor pad," gives these guys a very similar experience to what other young men in their early-20s have: graduating from school, moving out of their parents’ house, and kicking it with a couple of roommates.

*continued on page 5*
“I love it when I visit here and nobody’s home,” says Sarah Menard, Associate Director of Community Living for Crotched Mountain. “That means they’re out in the community, doing their own grocery shopping, volunteering, going for a swim. They’re learning to live like independent, adult men.”

JUNE 15: CARTER HALL

There’s a buzz in the air on the mountain. Twenty-one excited students are lined up and about to graduate from Crotched Mountain School. One of the figures clad in a dark blue cap and gown is Sam Arnold.

Sam also has autism, which, over the years, has severely limited his communication and led to challenging behaviors—behaviors that would sometimes turn into intense, physical aggression. For Sam’s parents, Carol and Enos, this meant he could not remain at home, or continue in his day school programming. Sam needed something more. And that’s how he arrived at Crotched Mountain School, and how he now finds himself sitting alongside 20 of his fellow graduates, listening to the keynote speaker—his mom.

She says: “From the time Sam arrived on campus he grew academically, socially, and emotionally. He was among peers and staff that accepted him, respected him, and made him feel less like a person with special needs and more like a person that is special and unique. We had never seen Sam more comfortable with himself and more at ease with the people around him.”

When the ceremony wraps and the certificates have been handed out, the newly-minted CMS alumni spill out into the sun-splashed campus. Sam’s family gathers and ushers him toward the flagpole for photos. Standing next to Sam is his younger brother, Zack, recently graduated from the University of Rochester with a degree in neuroscience. They stand shoulder-to-shoulder—two young men whose school experiences couldn’t be more different.

But pride is bursting in equal measure for the Arnold parents. Their boys are ready for the next adventure. And for Sam, it’s life at the Pierce Lane Bachelor Pad, where his new room awaits.

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In the run-up to The Big Move, Sam’s parents outfitted his new place with his personal items and, over the course of several weeks, Sam would visit. He got to know the staff, the location, and, most importantly, Christopher and Christian. A strong relationship with his direct support staff, Dave, was an essential key to success. Dave got to know Sam in both the school and residential setting while he was a student and then moved with him to Pierce Lane following graduation. It was a textbook transition, built to ease Sam into the next chapter as neatly as possible.
staff, home providers, friends, and family members are all together, playing field games, eating pasta salad and watermelon, enjoying the day.

Sam and his parents are here, too. Today, at the playground, the family exchanges words and hugs. They take a moment to pose for a photo, and continue to chat until Sam’s staff pulls up in the car.

“Come on Sam. Time to go.”

Sam nods and peels away. There are no tears, no screams, no behaviors. There is just a young man saying goodbye to his parents. Carol smiles and waves, the faintest quiver in her lips. Sam climbs into the car and heads home.
This is the tale of how four men from the other side of the world ended up together on the top of a mountain in rural New Hampshire—and made an incredible difference in the life of a boy with autism. You are part of their story.

It was January 2015 when Yusuf approached his friend, Mohamed, in New York City. A fellow immigrant from Liberia, Yusuf knew Mohamed was casting about for a new employment opportunity with meaning and a future.

Yusuf knew the feeling. After arriving in America in 2006, he too had looked for the right job. He had found it at Crotched Mountain School and he wanted to share it with his friend. And that’s how Mohamed found himself standing in the kitchen of a small apartment in Greenfield, NH one morning, getting doused with a cup of water.

JD

The launcher of that cup of water was JD, a student at Crotched Mountain School who has carved out a reputation as being one of the more challenging young men to ever call the school home. When he first arrived, he was in full restraints, his arms covered in thick padding to prevent him from hurting himself.

JD was assigned multiple direct staff—as many as five at a time. He was given his own living space and, essentially, monitored around the clock to keep himself and others around him free from harm.
Diagnosed with autism and largely non-verbal, JD’s challenges and outbursts arose from a pervasive sense of non-safety and a paralyzing inability to communicate this to the people around him. If he didn’t know you, didn’t trust you, and sensed you were uncomfortable around him, he didn’t feel secure—and if JD didn’t feel secure, he would lash out physically in defense.

Due to his sensory issues and difficulty with crowds, JD’s classroom schedules were staggered so as not to coincide with the movement of groups of students. And, always flanked by his staff, students and others knew to keep a respectful distance.

Very few people could work with him.

Yusuf was one of those few, however. When he started as a Residential Counselor, JD was his guy. But for the first two months there was non-stop fighting. Every morning, from 7 to 11 a.m., Yusuf—no small man—would grip a body-length pad and absorb blows like he was a speed-bag at a boxing ring. JD didn’t know this man. He was new and in his space and he didn’t feel safe. So he fought. And fought. And fought.

But Yusuf never relented. He showed up every morning. He took the poundings. Until they stopped. Because something clicked with JD, within the unknowable complexity of his unique mind: This man is safe.

TEAM LIBERIA

It’s a spring morning at Crotched Mountain, and we’re all sitting in JD’s apartment. There are four staff: Mohamed, Yusuf, Ahamed, and Amadou. Their sagas are wildly different, but they have two things in common: they have emigrated from Liberia and they all work with JD.

Ahamed arrived as a refugee with nothing. He stayed with his brother, couch-surfed for a stretch, slept in his car for a week, worked as a dishwasher, realized he couldn’t make enough money to live working as a dishwasher, went to school, got his LNA license, and found himself at Crotched Mountain School as JD’s weekend staff.

Amadou came to the US six years ago on a Diversity Visa. He started in Pennsylvania, worked at a factory and

*continued on page 9*
That’s when a new world opens. When JD knows he can be in a position where he doesn’t feel stable, where circumstances might become unpredictable, when the world seems to shift under his feet...he can turn to you and know. Know that Yusuf, Ahamed, Amadou, or Mohamed, his trusted friends will be there to reassure and protect him. That’s when they interlock their fingers and JD sees and understands. The situation is under control and he can defuse the terror that grips him and suppress the instinct to lash out.

Because there’s a simple message in that gesture, more powerful than any verbal communication, which has been learned over the course of many years: “You’re safe.”

SAFE

When Mohamed took that first splash of water in the kitchen, JD was telling him something. “He’s letting you know, ‘this is my area,’” Mohamed says. “I would follow him in the kitchen every day for a week and he would splash me, but I would keep going with him and he eventually understood the routine. That I would go with him in to the kitchen, he would take a glass of water, drink it, put the cup down, and sit.”

Routine builds trust and trust yields security. Yusuf, Mohamed, Ahamed, and Amadou wouldn’t give up, wouldn’t be afraid. “You can’t show fear to JD,” Yusuf says, “because he can see it in your eyes and then he doesn’t feel safe.”

JD made progress. Eventually, he was able to sit in comfort close to his mother, his staffing dropped to one-on-one and, because of the rich Vocational Living opportunities through Crotched Mountain School, he got a job on campus, collecting recycling.

“He’s an amazing kid,” says Yusuf. “We don’t know what’s happening in his brain, but he can communicate, he can show you love.”

Like everything else he does, JD shows love in his own way. For him, it’s “The JD Head-butt.” when he invites you to lower your chin along with him, and place your forehead against his. You can’t be nervous. You can’t be fearful. But when you do it, when you have willfully entered into this mutually vulnerable posture, you’re in the circle of trust.

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“You’re safe.”
Bob never met an obstacle he couldn’t overcome, never hit a barrier he couldn’t smash down to live the life he wanted. Then one day that all changed—and the Crotched Mountain family joined his cause.

Bob Bergman was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1954. He had arthrogryposis, a birth defect that affected the musculature of his legs. At the age of four he went to Shriners Hospital, where he would be, on and off, for the next 14 years, sometimes for as long as nine months at a time. He had 14 surgeries on his legs, feet, and hips. His bones would be broken and straightened out and he would rehabilitate and the process would continue on and on.

He would go to school after these operations, and the pain was intense—both physical and emotional. When he wasn’t managing the excruciating recovery process, he was dealing with incessant taunts from classmates over his mangled legs and the thick, metal braces he was forced to wear.

But if there’s anything you can say about Bob Bergman it’s that he is a scrapper. He may have been lonely and hurting and ostracized, but he was never weak and he never, ever backed down—a trait he got from his mom, a woman who was ferocious about getting her son the schooling and support he needed.

“My mother had to fight for everything,” Bob says. “Back then you didn’t have the rights you have today.”

That fighting prowess was hardwired into Bob’s DNA. Even when the doctors said he would never live life outside of a wheelchair and would likely die before 25, he was determined to show them how wrong they were. He worked harder, he put up with the braces, he did what he had to do to move forward.

No one was going to tell him what he couldn’t do.

**ALL-TERRAIN CRUTCHES**

“You’ll never be able to walk.”

A refrain from the early days of the diagnosis, a hard dose of truth used to temper the hope of a small boy. All those years, Bob held on to the simple dream of going to the beach.

His surgeries and hospital visits prevented him from achieving that until he got the chance to go to Camp Sea Haven on Plum Island. Crossing the sand, however, proved to be a challenge.

continued on page 11
It’s not easy to walk a beach—or any uneven topography—with standard crutches. But thanks to the ingenuity of his uncle, Bob scored himself a pair of custom all-terrain crutches. His uncle affixed bicycle tires to the bottom of the crutches, giving Bob the traction he needed to stroll the coast and even hike mountains. After you’ve had 14 surgeries on your lower body over the course of 14 years, a little bit of sand and some rocky footpaths wither in comparison.

He refused to consider anything off-limits. He rode snowmobiles and ATVs, bought two campers and owned a series of specially modified trucks, including a super-duty F-250 that pretty much encapsulated the demeanor of its owner.

“I want to go water-skiing,” he mentioned to some co-workers one day. They promptly laughed at him.

A few days later he pulled up with a brand new motorboat hitched to the back of his truck and shot them a rub-it-in-with-vigor look and said: “You guys want to go for a ride in my boat?!!”

THE STROKE

Four years ago, at the age of 59, Bob had a stroke that essentially wiped out his entire left side. He nearly died and spent a month in the ICU. He rehabbed for four months, reset to the point where he had to relearn how to talk, how to eat, how to swallow.

At first he resisted a wheelchair, unwilling to cede victory to what he had worked so hard as a child to evade. But there was no other option. So he made peace with his situation, returned home with his wife, Lynette, and began a new chapter.

Lynette and Bob have been married for 12 years, but together for almost 20. They have lived in their Salem, NH house for 19 of those years. But with Bob’s injury and Lynette’s physical limitations from chronic pain, remaining in their home became a question mark.

That’s when Crotched Mountain Community Care stepped in. CMCC’s case managers worked with Bob and Lynette to identify the supports they required to give Lynette respite and provide for Bob’s needs—laundry, house-cleaning, and personal care services.

“The admiration I have for them as a couple, I can’t even put into words,” says Deb Burke, CMCC case manager. “When you work with folks like Bob and Lynette, your heart gets filled.”

“If I didn’t have Crotched Mountain, I don’t what I would do,” Lynette says. “We needed someone to advocate for us, someone who has pull.”

Speaking of pull—every so often you will find Bob and Lynette going for a trip to the Mall at Rockingham Park, Bob towing a wagon behind him to carry the day’s shopping spoils. It’s a far cry from the days of speedboats and off-roading, but for him, it’s enough.

“I have to look forward, one day at a time,” Bob says. “That’s all I’ve got. I just have today.”

Forward he goes, with help at his side, and the words of his mother echoing in his mind to this day:

“Go out and do it. Never let anything hold you back.”

Above: Lynette displays one of Bob’s custom off-road crutches
June 10. Glen, NH. The sun was out, pushing back the gray clouds, bathing Story Land in early summer warmth. Six year-old Derek was waiting in line for the Polar Coaster. He had never ridden a roller-coaster before. In fact, this was his first time at any kind of amusement park. At the exit, after his ride, he bounded out, a gigantic smile lighting up his face. “That was AWESOME,” he shouted. He and his staff quickly moved on to the next adventure.

In 1954, one of New Hampshire’s most iconic family attractions kicked off a partnership with one of New Hampshire’s most iconic nonprofits. The one and only Story Land, nestled in the heart of the Mount Washington Valley, debuted its Wishing Well—which has stood for over half a century since.

Donations to the Wishing Well have come to Crotched Mountain since then, a steady current of significant funds averaging nearly $5,000 a year.

The connection to Story Land goes even further beyond this generosity. The park has always welcomed students from Crotched Mountain School, with annual days designated for visits and admissions donated. This year, two groups of students and staff were able to enjoy Story Land, swinging by for a day’s worth of good times in June and August.

“What an amazing experience to give to our students,” said Kevin Harte, Vice President of Advancement at Crotched Mountain Foundation. “Story Land’s commitment to our mission has been a treasure for us since the beginning of our history.”

“Bob Morrell, Story Land’s founder, always had compassion for those ‘not as fortunate as you or I,’ as he would say,” said Jack Mahany, Assistant General Manager of Story Land. “Hopefully our relationship with Crotched Mountain will continue for countless years to come!”
Crotched Mountain School recently launched an exciting, full-featured after-school program, which offers a variety of activities for residential students, including basketball, floor hockey, photography, board games, and more.

To celebrate the good times, students and staff gathered together on the ball field on a gorgeous mid-July day to hang out, play games, and enjoy a surprise visit from the ice cream truck! Here, Liam and Mikala place their order for their frozen treats.
CAM’S NEW RIDE

It was a picturesque, early summer Friday afternoon at the ballfield. Crotched Mountain students and staff gathered together for a game of softball, practicing their hitting, fielding, and, yes, playful taunting, directed mainly at Jake Sweatt, the pitcher and campus support staffer.

Then, off in the distance, a solitary man in a tie-dyed Crotched Mountain School t-shirt bounded over the hill. It was Ray Benoit, Crotched Mountain Foundation Trustee, completing the final lap of his “Epic in All of Us” marathon. Applause broke out as he circled the bases, exchanging high-fives with anyone and everyone. With that last run, he wrapped up his personal challenge of running 55 miles in 24 hours, raising over $5,000 for the school in the process.

THE FINAL LAP

Over at ATECH Services in Concord, six-year-old Cam is all smiles as he takes his brand new motorized wheelchair for a spin for the first time. Cam, who has cerebral palsy, now has the freedom to maneuver, thanks to support from his therapists, technicians, school, and family.

“It’s been a long road of a lot of therapies,” said Tracy, Cam’s mom. “It teaches you a lot about life, about what’s really important.”

See the moment Cam first gets moving at cmf.org/cam!
Come celebrate autumn’s gifts at Crotched Mountain’s Harvest Bounty, featuring inspired regional fare paired with fine wines in support of Crotched Mountain.

For more information
Jeannette Nieder - 603.547.1486 or jeannette.nieder@crotchedmountain.org
Sponsorship opportunities are available - cmf.org/harvest