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MVES Teams with Diversity North to Build Inclusivity, Equity

Mystic Valley Elder Services (MVES), a Malden-based nonprofit aging services agency, recently partnered with Massachusetts-based Diversity North Group consultants to launch an organization-wide diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) collaboration.

The year-long MVES DEIA Project will work to lead a cultural shift throughout the organization by offering team-based learning, coaching, and skills development. The goal of this initiative is to enhance current efforts to provide equitable access to resources, support, and opportunities for professional advancement for all team members.

MVES CEO Lisa Gurgone shares, “Our goal is to understand: What can we do better as an organization to support our staff? How can we best honor the cultural differences among our staff and the communities we serve? What are the best practices for ensuring MVES systems and structures are equitable? I hope that continuing to build DEIA into our operating DNA will become business as usual at Mystic Valley. We are committed to learning how to do better as an organization because that’s the way we continue to enhance services to older adults and people with disabilities to live independently with dignity in a setting of their choice.”

MVES, which serves 11 communities north of Boston, is committed to driving change in the community, and views its partnership with Diversity North Group as an opportunity to engage its network in making tangible progress.

“We will use this initiative as a platform for enhancing the dialogue with the individuals we serve, our Board members, and our partners about the importance of inclusivity and cultural competence as we work to meet the needs of the community,” Gurgone explains.

Jasmine Montanez, the Diversity North Group manager of the project, says: “We are excited to be launching this DEIA effort at MVES because of the wonderful work the organization provides to Massachusetts elders and those with disabilities. MVES is extraordinary in its diversity now, with over 300 staff speaking more than 5 languages, as well as embracing female leadership and older workers.”

Diversity North will build on the agency’s nearly 50-year legacy of fostering equity and accessibility. “Our goal is to help MVES internalize their values as a sustainable system that enables the agency to continue making diversity, equity and inclusion part of the fabric of everything they do,” says Montanez.

Research shows that, in general, social service agencies that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion do better work. When employees believe they are heard, and when work is fair and well managed, organizations benefit



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through higher employee retention rates, a friendly and productive work environment, and better interaction with consumers.

“At Diversity North, we believe that to make true change, DEI must be embedded into the rhythm of the business. The goal is for organizations to develop and strengthen their reflective practices for inclusion and equity,” Montanez notes.

MVES is proud to launch this critical initiative with funding awarded through the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Development Grant program issued by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) with resources from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). This initiative will run through late spring 2024.

About Mystic Valley Elder Services (MVES): Since 1975, MVES has worked to ensure that older adults and people with disabilities have the support they need to live independently and with dignity. Located in Malden, Mass., the non-profit agency provides information, care and resources to residents of Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winthrop. Services include information and referral, management, home care, elder protective services, health insurance counseling, caregiver supports, transportation, Meals on Wheels, and more. For more information, call 781-324-7705 or visit www.mves.org.