



The Faces of HMEA - February 2006

Mike Rush, Children's Services DMR/DOE Coordinator, has been with HMEA for more than 15 years. He was first hired to work at an employment site (then known as Grand Industries) as a Unit Supervisor. Mike applied to work at HMEA because he was interested in supporting people with disabilities to work in the community.

Over time, he secured work sites for the people he supported (many of those sites are still staffed by workers from HMEA). When the Sterling employment site opened, Mike moved his group there, and became the supervisor of the program.

A family crisis resulted in Mike's need to resign and spend more time at home. To his surprise, he received a phone call from Mike Moloney, encouraging him to stay, even in a part-time capacity. And Mike became one of the agency's "Community Connectors", whose job it was to help people who didn't work to get out in their communities. He was thrilled because this was something he had seen a need for while he was in Sterling, and now he could focus all his efforts on just that.

A few years ago, Mike decided to move to Children's Services. He was interested in the Simmons program and liked the flexibility the new position would allow him. He finds it interesting to work with younger people who may be a little more flexible, and who have not had the many years of learning challenging behaviors. His initial caseload required that he work with many families who had extensive needs, and he quickly became recognized for his ability to work with all kinds of people.



Mike is a man with a "can do" attitude. Several years ago, Mike was the recipient of the HMEA Award. One of the reasons for the award was specifically for his type of attitude. Mike had been told by staff that one of the men who was being served couldn't go out in the community because he was too loud. He didn't know how to behave in public. Mike took the man out for coffee, and when he became exceptionally loud, Mike raised his voice to match the man's volume. Pretty soon, everybody in the shop was speaking quite loudly, and the man's behavior wasn't noticeable at all! There is no "can't" in Mike's vocabulary.

He's a man of musical talent as well. A member of The Boston Horns for years, now Mike finds time when he's not working, going to school, or studying, to play his bass guitar.

When asked why he enjoys working at HMEA, Mike stated that the fact that the agency would accommodate his needs at a time when he really needed it is one, but there are two other reasons as well. One is that Mike sees a lot of integrity at HMEA, and people are committed to the work they do. Another is that he feels we've done a lot of good for people through the years. He mentioned a man who is on the crew that cleans the Hudson office. Mike knew the man at Grand Industries; his behavior frequently used to prevent him from being in the community. Now that man goes to Hudson a couple of times a week, greets people, and gets busy with his work. Mike says that's a great thing to see, and reminds him of why he started doing this work in the first place.

Thanks to Jan Bolton, Diversity Committee member, who interviewed Mike. ◀