

Intrinsic Integrity: Unveiling Our Core Values

Josh Drake, Executive Director

In my interview process to become the Executive Director here at Morgan Autism Center, one of the most exceptional attributes was the unique culture of the organization and its importance to our success. While everyone was using different words to describe our culture, it was apparent that how we work with each other is also how we engage with those we serve—students, clients, and their families. As a result, a top priority for me as the new Executive Director was to clearly define our culture and core values in order to be able to successfully manage and sustain our culture on a go-forward basis. Our culture's core values are the guiding principles that ground the organization in everything that is done, everything that is communicated, and in all efforts to measure effectiveness.



CORE VALUE-LOVE: Program Director, Mark, and student Daija sharing a hug at All School Music.

Over the course of three Thursdays during our summer session, all staff came together to collectively identify and define our core values. We began with each classroom and program selecting their top values from a list of over 100 potential core values that represent who we are at our best and what sets us apart. Next, we had the

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Farm to Table Program

-Haley Sepulveda, Development and Communications Manager



FARM TO TABLE: Room 7 student, Maria, enjoys her weekly gardening sessions.

At Morgan Autism Center, our goal is to teach our students and clients skills that will increase independence and help them lead happy, productive, and healthy lives. Empowering them with these skills builds confidence and creates a sense of pride and accomplishment as well as connects them with their greater community. Based on a tailored curriculum, our Farm-to-Table Program serves these goals perfectly by providing numerous opportunities for practical, physical, and mental enrichment, including: An outlet for important sensory regulation and relaxation, hands-on learning of important responsibility-based skills, outdoor exercise, exposure to new foods, healthier diet options, collaboration with peers and the community, experience planning and executing a multi-part project, functional skills training including supervised food prep and cooking, conceptual demonstration of plant life cycles and how seasons play a role, an understanding of the importance of nutritious foods and how they impact our bodies and an overall healthy lifestyle.

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Student and Adult Client Spotlight

Adult Program: Bryan H.

-Gus Gayton- Adult Program Skills Trainer

Bryan, more famously known as BH, has been at MAC for 37 years. I first met BH in 2015 when I started working in the Adult Program. He was a mysterious and intriguing person to me. He would smile and laugh when things amused him, but would sometimes distance himself from others during group activities. He would have his headphones on, occasionally spin, pitch an imaginary baseball, and barely said an audible word when spoken to – except for his “shmee, shmee” catchphrase. BH loves music, and having his headphones on is a good way for him to drown out the sound of his most disliked noises – sneezing, and coughing.

Initially, in order to communicate with BH, I would have to use sign-language or have to pull off one of his headphones to get his attention. Eventually he relied on his headphones less and less, and now in 2023, he removes his headphones once he enters the Adult Program. Over time I would try to get him to speak in a louder voice, and eventually he became more vocal to the point that you hear what words he was saying (still a whisper, but you can make out what he says).

Within a few months of working in the Adult Program, I saw a colleague, Joahn, play a game with BH, and that inspired me to play games with him, too. I would soon get BH to join my morning group where he participated in various group games, and eventually got him to play with other groups throughout the day. BH has now become one of the most popular clients in the Adult Program. All of the staff want to work with him, and all clients want to hang out with him. Now BH helps prepare snacks for his peers, preps lunches for the school program, helps with community clean up, and joins various PE activities with Tyler, our PE Coordinator. Every day you see BH in the Adult Program he is beaming with a smile, always happily jumping to help staff or his friends, and even verbally communicates what he finds interesting, or funny to them.



SMILE: Bryan "BH" is excited for picture day and it shows!

Student Feature: Carson K.

-Heather McClimans - Room 5 Special Education Teacher and Lesley Kennedy - Room 6 Instructional Aide

Carson is a loving, attentive, energetic young man. He is one of the newest students in Room 5 and is fitting right in! He loves Toy Story, looking at books, listening to music, playing Candy Land, and being in a group of friends. He has a bright, engaging smile and a whole-hearted laugh. Carson likes doing sensory activities such as swimming, running, doing heavy work, gardening, and water play. He also enjoys going out into the community and trying all different kinds of foods! Both staff and students alike enjoy spending time with Carson.

While Carson was in Rm 6 - some things we remember fondly of him. He loved following his schedule at school, and liked doing vocational tasks and participating in our group activities - cooking, art and science. He also had a great command of his AAC and let everyone know if he needed space. He also enjoyed hugging his teachers and melted our hearts with his coy smile.

The highlight for Carson every week was our outings into the community, the various parks we visit in the area throughout the year, the light rail, Christmas in the Park, Children's Discovery Museum and trips to the bowling alley. He also loved going on our annual outing to the beach in Santa Cruz.



Golf Outing: Room 5 student, Carson, plays mini golf with his classmates at Golfland.

Remembering Student, Selah Bleu Gonzales

-Kristin Schaefer-Room 8 Special Education Teacher

Selah Bleu Gonzales was born under a full moon with her name sign being "Moon". A "name sign" in Deaf culture is a personal way to identify someone and they often reflect the person's character. She was our blue moon, our rarity in education and friendship. Selah was so full of life, magic, and fire. She had a contagious laugh and hugs that would melt your heart. Her smile was warm, and her excitement was powerful. Everyone had a truly unique and rare bond with her. Whether she was asking questions like, "Where do the bubbles go? Do they come home?" or just laughing on the floor with her friends, you could tell there was great depth to her as a person. A personality with a spark of life and light that few people know or get to experience.

Selah was defined by her love for her family and friends, her passion for fashion and boots, and her love for roller skating and all things mermaid. Although her name sign was the moon, she clearly worshiped the sun, too, as you could always find her stuck outside on a bright day. She was strong, she could be fiery, but she was always easy to love.

Selah was such a gift to those around her and we should feel so blessed to have had so much time with her. We all love and miss our dear friend, Selah. At least at the end of every day, we all have our own personal blue moon in our hearts, lighting our way.



SPARKLING FASHIONISTA: Selah and her teacher, Kristin, enjoying field day. We love you and miss you, Selah Moon.

"MAC-N-CHEESE"



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.

1. Room 8 student, Blake, received a special visit from a San Jose Police Officer and his cop car for his birthday!

2. School Program student Justin practices ordering and paying for his favorite boba drink.

3. The Little Grass Foundation toured and donated \$10,000 to MAC this summer!

4. AP client Julian working hard in the garden.

5. Adult Program clients Angel and Phillip enjoying their lunch at Habit Burger during their Community Integration Program outings.

6. Instructional Aide, Jeanine, and her student AJ participating in Science Day.

"Unveiling Core Values" (Continued from page 1.)

staff vote until we narrowed it down to our top three core values of Teamwork, Love, and Respect. We then shared stories of when we had lived those values at our best to help define what each of these three core values means at the Morgan Autism Center. As a result, together as a full staff we developed the following three core values which define our current culture at the Morgan Center.

We believe that our core values are a guide for not just us as individuals and as an organization but also for others in how to best serve those with autism and other developmental disabilities. **The QR code link** below takes you to a deeper description of what it looks like to live our core values with each other and our community. Because of the importance of our deep ties to our community, we want your feedback on these core values and how we live them here at the Morgan Center every day.

Your feedback will help us best define our current core values and how we live them out in our hiring decisions, our training, our promotions, and how we work with each other and those we serve every day. On a go forward basis, we will continue to ask our staff and community for feedback on how well we are living up to our core values as well as how well our core values help us meet the needs of our community. -J.D.



COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE: Staff collectively created their top 10 core values eventually choosing Morgan Autism Center's 3 core values of Teamwork, Love, and Respect.



Core Value of Teamwork

LIVING OUT OUR CORE VALUES:

Each day, staff have opportunities to live out our core values with students and adult clients. Our recent Science Camp is a great example of staff supporting students during activities, hanging out together and having fun, and being encouraging while learning a new skill.



Core Value of Respect



Core Value of Love

SCAN FOR CORE VALUE FEEDBACK SURVEY



CORE VALUE FEEDBACK QR CODE:

Scan the QR code to learn more details regarding Morgan Autism Center's Core Values and provide valuable community feedback.

Core Value of Teamwork



DEFINITION: Teamwork is being on equal ground and always with each other, being proactive over reactive, and sharing our success. For us, effective communication and authentic empowerment are critical to successful collaboration.

What this looks like with...

OUR TEAM: We are one team. Each of us is willing to take the initiative to step in to help whenever needed. We have open and frequent communication so that we can help each other.

Each of our teammates is empowered to do the right thing.

OUR STUDENTS & CLIENTS: We work with our students and clients by first building relationships and then utilizing their authentic interests to help set a positive direction. By helping our students and clients to effectively communicate, we are able to empower them to make choices and have agency in their lives.

OUR FAMILIES: We work in close, collaborative partnership with our families supported by frequent and open communication with all team members to best serve their children. We empower our families through sharing our best practices, access to key resources, and providing regular training.

Core Value of Love



DEFINITION: Love is consistently showing up as well as anticipating and understanding the needs of others with compassion. Our love enables us to demonstrate the empathy, joy, patience and positivity needed to support each other.

What this looks like with...

OUR TEAM: Our love for each other is deeply knowing and caring for each other. We jointly create a fun and joyful environment which allows each of us to continue to do this demanding and rewarding work.

OUR STUDENTS & CLIENTS: Our love for our students and clients is demonstrated by returning every day to consistently provide the deep empathy, enduring patience and positivity they need to be their best selves.

OUR FAMILIES: Our love for our families is demonstrated through our commitment to their children as well as our empathy and positivity in our ongoing collaboration to support their children and their family.

Core Value of Respect



DEFINITION: Respect is meeting all individuals where they are. This respect includes creating an environment that honors the diversity of each individual which creates belonging and enables them to reach their full potential.

What this looks like with...

OUR TEAM: We welcome staff with diverse backgrounds and experiences by creating a inviting environment. We seek to help each of our team members reach their full potential through learning best practices and clear career pathways.

OUR STUDENTS & CLIENTS: We begin by always listening to the voice of those we serve. We create highly differentiated programming and supports for every student and client which recognizes their individuality and helps them to grow to reach their full potential.

OUR FAMILIES: Our families reflect the full diversity of our community and its various races, ethnicities, and cultures. We welcome all families to our community and do our best to support them to be successful.

Fundraising Progress Report: *Making An Impact Together*

In support of our Farm-to-Table program we have been making a series of significant upgrades to our campus.



Before

School Kitchen and Adjacent spaces

Our goal with our school kitchen was to convert it from a non-functioning commercial kitchen setup to a fully functional residential kitchen design that would enable our students and clients to more easily learn and transfer the daily living skills they need in a residential kitchen.



After

Sport Court

Thank you to those of you who helped us raise **\$50,000** for our sport court during last year's Move-For-MAC fundraiser. We are excited that the sport court will provide a safe, flexible play space for our students and clients. While we have completed the design work for the future sport court, we are waiting to complete our long-term strategic planning effort this year in order to determine its final location on our property.



Garden Classroom

In order to provide a fully functioning outdoor garden classroom, we replaced our old pergola with a larger, covered pergola which has electricity and water. It is also located next to our new garden area as well.



Before



After

Adult Kitchen

Our goal with the adult kitchen was to provide a more fully functioning kitchen as well as increased flexibility to effectively complete the variety of other activities the space is used for.



Before



After

Doubling the Results: Move-for-MAC Fundraiser

-Haley Sepulveda, Development and Communications Manager

Our annual Move-for-MAC fundraiser was a huge success this year, raising more than **\$106,000** to complete our Farm-to-Table Program. This year the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office and Little Grass Foundation joined the Morgan Autism Center community by creating their own pages, spreading the word within their networks and committing to move in whatever form they chose to help raise funds. On top of that, we had a generous donor whose contribution allowed us to match every dollar we raised above last year's \$50,000.



On September 30th, we held our first ever Move-for-MAC Festival at Morgan Autism Center with 120 attendees! MAC family, friends, and community supporters enjoyed pizza from Pizza my Heart and delicious shaved ice from the famous Kona Shaved Ice Truck. Activities included racing in the obstacle course, a jump house, and face painting by an amazing MAC staff volunteer. And a special thank you to the 20 event volunteers from Little Grass Foundation.

On behalf of the entire MAC staff, Board of Directors, and the families we serve, we thank those who contributed to make this year's Move-for-MAC a victory!

Move-for-MAC Sponsors

Thank you to our generous Move-for-MAC Sponsors for helping make this happen: *Star One Credit Union, Roger Meade, The Wheat Family, Laughing Giraffe, Something to Say, the Tuchman Family, The Berrocal Family, the Freckmann Family, the Ching Family, the Awan Family, the Cuellar Family, the Milani Family, the Wilder Family, the O'Day Family, Eric Stark Interiors, the Franza Family, the Drake Family, the Eggebraaten Family, the Price Family, the Lewis Family, the Escher Family, the Pfister Family, the Hofstetter Family, and the Moriarty Family.*



MAC Online Store

Morgan Autism Center apparel is now available for purchase! Grab a t-shirt, tank top, sweatshirt or more on Bonfire. Visit <https://www.bonfire.com/morgan-autism-center-apparel/> to purchase your favorite item!



Ways To Give

Annual Giving

Morgan Autism Center graciously accepts monetary and in-kind donations. You can donate online at www.morgancenter.org/donate-bay-area-morgan-autism-center/ or send a check to 950 St. Elizabeth Drive, San Jose, CA 95126

Employee Gifts

Many companies participate in matching gift programs. Ask your employer today to join you in supporting Morgan Autism Center.



950 St. Elizabeth Drive
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Autumn Creations

-Nicole Ferguson, Administrative Specialist



FALL FUN: Art is just one of Sophie's many artistic passions. Their class recently created whimsical tree sculptures in honor of the first day of Fall.

Sophie Escher is a true art enthusiast. Her passion for dance, ice skating, music, and art knows no bounds. In her classroom, Sophie's fall-themed creations come to life with brightly colored leaves, big pumpkins, and autumn trees. Whether she's sculpting fall paper trees or happily painting watercolor leaves, Sophie's



personal touch shines through. Sophie's art is a testament to her beautiful spirit and a love of the arts.

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and Kristin Schaefer.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to help children and adults with autism or other developmental disabilities maximize their potential in a dignified, positive and loving environment.

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