

Labor of Love

U-Haul Dealer realizes dream by opening world-class brain injury rehabilitation facility

MEDFORD, N.Y.—Traumatic brain injury (TBI) patients in New York and throughout the northeastern U.S. have renewed hope and a new beginning, thanks to the tireless efforts of U-Haul Dealer Allyson Scerri and many others. Scerri is the founder and president of the New Beginnings Community Center, a world-class care, treatment and rehabilitation facility for people with TBI and other physical and cognitive disabilities that recently held its grand opening.

“We didn’t know what to expect as far as turnout, and we had more than 400 people there,” Scerri cheered. “Inside, the room was filled up, and I looked around and took a deep breath and said, ‘We did it!’ It’s a very good feeling.”

A better option

Scerri got the idea for the facility after her father, Al Barone, suffered a TBI in a motorcycle accident in February 2007. Scerri kept hearing the word “plateau” in reference to her father’s recovery, and it made her realize there had to be a better option.

“I didn’t want to accept what the doctors were telling me,” explained Scerri, who co-owns A Space Place and U-Haul Dealership (047180) with her husband, Steve.

The Scerris, along with their friends and family, decided to create a place that would cater to TBI patients and their families, and the New Beginnings dream was born. The facility caters to military veterans and others who suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well.

For the past few years, the Scerris, their friend Kate DiMeglio, A Space Place employees Maxine Adams and Derek Ortiz, and many others have been fundraising tirelessly to help New Beginnings become a reality.

“We still have a lot of fundraisers planned,” Allyson Scerri emphasized. “Our goal is to make sure that everybody is accepted to our center, regardless of their ability to pay. We’ve paid out about \$40,000 over the last couple years to families who didn’t have the money to pay for care or treatment.”

“Very rewarding”

In addition to continuous fundraising, Scerri is involved in the day-to-day operations of New Beginnings, while Steve Scerri handles the business aspects of A Space Place. Allyson said New Beginnings wouldn’t be open without her husband’s 16-hour days. Also, Allyson thanked Fundraising Director Carol Dunn and her husband Jimmy, a TBI patient who led the Pledge of Allegiance at the grand opening.

“That was very inspiring,” Scerri declared. “And Carol kept everyone motivated throughout the construction process, even bringing food for the construction workers.”

Despite the long hours everyone has put in and continues to put in, it’s a labor of love for all of them.

“It’s very rewarding,” Scerri stressed. “I don’t want to leave at night because I’m so excited about what I’m doing. Seeing what these patients are doing is very powerful.”



After years of planning and fundraising, the New Beginnings Community Center opened its doors recently.



Allyson Scerri (right) came up with the idea for New Beginnings after her father, Al Barone (left), suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in 2007.



New Beginnings President Allyson Scerri (left) and Vice President Kate DiMeglio (second from left) watch the ribbon cutting at the facility’s grand opening.



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Scerri said it was a very good feeling to see hundreds of people at the grand opening.