

# THE COMPASSION CHRONICKLES

THE TURN-A-FROWN AROUND (TAF) FOUNDATION, INC.

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## *Sweet Support from the Community*



By Afshan Ladha  
Director of Operations

**Stewartsville, NJ** –TAF) by definition was founded with the support of community members and works to end loneliness for those in the community who need friends. In the past 15 years, TAF) has had unwavering support from a number of people, organizations, businesses, and groups. Our organization would not stand without support from the community.

Stellar examples of these do-gooders are the amazing friends at Buttercups Bake Shoppe in Stewartsville, NJ. They donate their baked goods every Sunday to TAF) and Angel Ed distributes them at the nursing homes he visits.

It's clear that besides Angel Ed's visit and warmth, these baked goods make nursing home residents happy and puts a smile on their faces. Nursing homes in Phillipsburg, NJ are lucky enough to enjoy these baked goods!

"Everyone that works there is so nice and such big hearts," says Angel Ed.

Buttercups Bake Shoppe is a wholesome traditional bake shop founded by Cara Anastasio. Her goal is for each baked good to taste as though customers are eating a *slice of heaven*.

How fitting! Angel Ed handing out slices of heaven to his Forever Friends is a match made above. Of course, with a wholesome business and big hearts, these baked goods naturally will bring a smile to anyone's face. And Ed's angelic nature and love and passion for what he does make them even sweeter!

With an organization like TAF), there are so many opportunities to volunteer and we understand that not everyone can commit to the weekly visits to Forever Friends in nursing homes, mental health facilities, and other places of loneliness. Buttercups Bake Shoppe exemplifies exactly what volunteers can do: their best at what they love doing! •

**If your organization or group of friends would like to get involved and support TAF) in a similar way, please email us at [tafafoundation@gmail.com](mailto:tafafoundation@gmail.com)!**



**BUTTERCUPS**  
BAKE SHOPPE

## Volunteer Spotlight

### Andrew Dudas, Smile Station Coordinator

By Jackie Dorey  
Staff Writer

Andrew was inspired to end loneliness through his visits to a good friend at a nursing home. This one friend grew into several, and eventually led to the founding of two Smile Stations in Central New Jersey. He assisted with forming a group of other volunteers through the Moving Forward Wellness Center, where they meet and travel to their Forever Friends on a weekly basis. Andrew talked about some of the most meaningful moments he has shared with his Smile Station and Forever Friend.

#### **How did you get involved with TAFE and starting a Smile Station?**

The first TAFE event I went to was a Christmas party at Summer Hill Nursing Home in Old Bridge, NJ in 2014. After that, two other volunteers and I started going there every other week, and it became a regular thing. We named the Summer Hill Smile Station "Margaritaville" after a person who used to come to the Moving Forward Wellness Center. We also have another Smile Station at JFK Hospital in Edison.

#### **Is there anyone you visit that has made an especially big impact on you?**

Yes, my Forever Friend. When she moved to Summer Hill Nursing Home, we decided to start visiting her. This is what we do: if you can't come to us, we go to you. The other volunteers have Forever Friends as well, and we have a new volunteer starting next week that will find one. And we also visit other people. It's really about spreading the friendship around. "Ending loneliness one person at a time" is the TAFE motto, and it's the truth. Nursing homes are not extremely happy places. We go there to make them happier, even if it's just a little bit.

#### **What part of volunteering do you look forward to the most?**

Seeing my Forever Friend's face. It lights up when she sees me. We've been friends for over five years, and we've continued our friendship through the Smile Station at Summer Hill.

#### **What are your future plans for your Smile Station and TAFE?**

To continue what I'm doing for the simple reason that I

like doing it, and hopefully expand the program to other places too. We have the TAFE Café here at the Wellness Center every Wednesday to get more people interested in becoming volunteers.

#### **Can you tell me more about the TAFE Café?**

It's a social event we have here at the center. We make coffee, have cookies, and look for volunteers. We spread the good word about TAFE and encourage people to volunteer, making loneliness disappear one person at a time.

#### ***Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?***

TAFE opened my eyes and heart and I really believe in what we do here. Like with anything in life, you have to believe in what you want to do, and I want to do this. I believe in ending loneliness one person at a time. •

**If you know a volunteer that you'd like to see spotlighted, nominate them by sending an email to [tafafoundation@gmail.com](mailto:tafafoundation@gmail.com)!**

## Smile Station Express

The Smile Station Express travels from town to town, setting up Smile Stations to turn your frown around.

Who will love the loveless? Who will be a friend? Who will seek and find the lost? Who will bring loneliness to an end?

Will it be the worship house? Love is what they teach. Or the local bar and grill? With beers within your reach.

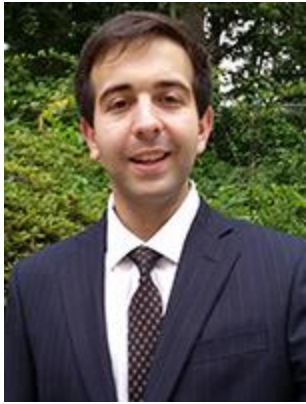
Elk clubs, moose, and lions, any animal will do. Kids from grammar school to college, it could even be your friends and you.

So climb on the Smile Station Express as we gather each Forever Friend. Start a Smile Station right now, is the message that we send.

Just think about the lonely and how they will come alive. Just think about the forgotten whose soul you will revive.

So will you become a Forever Friend? Don't make us wait or guess. Please bring your unconditional love and join

### Allen Teplitsky, Director of People Operations



#### What interested you in TAFE?

I was interested when Drew Horn told me that this was going to change the world. I always wanted to make a positive difference.

#### What are you hoping to accomplish, short-term and long-term in your position at TAFE?

I want to get data and reward others to motivate them to do more! My short-term goals are assisting others learning about TAFE and getting them started with our team. I also push our team to do their best! My longer-term goals include collecting data through the <http://www.rewardvolunteers.coop/> app. Please try it out! When you volunteer you can be thrown into a raffle. All you do is put the hours you volunteer! Super simple.

#### How does your personality align with TAFE's mission and culture?

I am vivaciously passionate about doing good, joking around, and working with others. TAFE has a great team and I enjoy working with them all the time.

#### If you could be any animal, what would it be and why?

I would be an Orca Whale. Apex predator for the win!

#### Anything else?

Sign up for <http://www.rewardvolunteers.coop/> and reward yourself for helping to end loneliness! •

### Alexandra Solares, Director of Organizational Management



#### What interested you in TAFE?

I joined TAFE during the summer of last year. I had been searching for a place to have some exposure to HR and Organizational Development, but I did not want to join just any organization. I really felt it in my heart that I needed to seek this experience in a nonprofit since that's what my

background experience is in. One night as I was searching online, I saw the job post and as I read into the organization description I was intrigued and then went to the website. As soon as I understood the mission and the existent initiatives I knew this was right up my alley. It was the perfect combination of the work that I already do as a psychology major and the work I'm pursuing as a Masters student in organizational behavior.

#### What are you hoping to accomplish, short-term and long-term in the organizational department?

Short term goals: Efficiency, efficiency, and more efficiency. With both teams, the Recruiting Team and the Program Specialist Team (formerly known as Smile Station facilitation team), there is a heavy emphasis in looking analytically into our current forms and work flow in order to improve our business processes and reengineer them in a way that works best with TAFE's mission and culture.

Long Term goals: Succession Planning. Most of our teams are made up of students. Students graduate and move on. It's a natural cycle. However, ideally we want to have the OD department at a place where if internal volunteers need to leave, work doesn't stop nor does it become impossible for anyone to take that position. The goal is for everyone to have tasks that are clear, manageable with lots of space for creativity and uniqueness, but also transferrable.

#### How does your personality align with TAFE's mission and culture?

TAFE's mission is to end loneliness. The fact that I get to be part of this by directing some of the backstage action is such a privilege. I have always believed in working for a cause that impacts society in a valuable and unique way. I like to smile and I love to laugh. These two are definitely part of the organizational culture at TAFE.

#### If you could be any animal, what would it be and why?

Oh dear, I always dread questions like these, makes me want to develop a list of animal candidates, and their pros and cons. I just came back from South Africa, so maybe that's why the first animal that comes to mind is the Lioness. She works hard, harder than a lion because she's lighter so she moves faster. She's very caring towards her cubs, but also is super respected by her partner.

#### Anything else?

Sometime before I became director and was a Smile Station Facilitator, there was a senior who was seeking a



forever friend. It took the team and I some time to find this person a forever friend mainly because it would have to be a pen pal. However, the senior changed his mind and then decided he didn't want a pen pal so we decided to go for a phone pal. He accepted the idea and given that most volunteer candidates were not in his area, it was hard to pair him up with someone. I reached out to a friend of mine, and over coffee I told him about TAFE and asked if he would be willing to be a phone pal. He thought about it, he accepted it. Not too long ago, I met up with him again and he tells me this friendship has changed his perspective on life so much. Ironic, huh?

We usually think the person in need of a forever friend is the one who benefits the most when being paired up, not always true. The volunteer sometimes has double the positive impact in their life. This was a direct confirmation for me that it was at the right place and the right time to be part of TAFE. •



### *Campaign to End Loneliness*

By Mehnaz Ladha,  
Staff Writer

The threat of loneliness is typically assessed on a national level, yet this epidemic reaches all corners of the world. The Campaign to End Loneliness is a non-profit organization similar to TAFE and based in London, where it works with its neighboring communities to find solutions to the global epidemic.

Launched in 2011, the Campaign is a coalition of five organizations that work toward a common goal: to ensure that no one who wants company lives without it. A core team of four individuals, which include a director, research and learning manager, and campaign and communications managers, manages these individual organizations. The Campaign receives funding from several foundations, which believe in its goal of ending loneliness on both a local and national level.

The Campaign devotes its resources not only to providing support to people most at risk for loneliness, but also to

developing services and activities that are directed toward educating the public about the epidemic. A network of almost 2,500 supporters supports this small infrastructure and works with the administrative members to achieve the mission.

The non-profit organization focuses on campaigning, informing, and researching. Most supporters spend their time communicating with public officials that make choices about healthcare policies, with a goal of influencing their decisions. While the Campaign has a large number of followers already, it's important to continue spreading awareness through education workshops that explain the problem and its greater effects.

Research, gathered from academic partners throughout the world, is essential to the organization, as campaigning and educating would be impossible without it. The latest research is meant to be relevant and practical so that both public officials and public persons can be persuaded to take action.

Forming links between similar organizations as well as like-minded individuals is also an important step for the Campaign. By providing other groups access to research, opportunities to meet and learn from each other, and other information, helps to promote the common mission and the bigger picture.

The organization creates a welcoming atmosphere for interested volunteers on its interactive website, which outlines what people can do to spark change in their own communities. The website is the hub of information for people interested in supporting the cause, providing them with a comprehensive overview of the epidemic. Statistics, such as the fact that two fifths of elderly say that television is their main company, convey the severity of the situation that is typically left ignored.

Structured similarly to TAFE, the Campaign to End Loneliness is an organization to be aware of. While it might seem appropriate to focus on improving the state of our own community, it's necessary for us to recognize how pandemic this problem is. With organizations like TAFE and the Campaign to End Loneliness existing around the world, we should work together to establish a global program and act as partners striving to achieve the same goal. TAFE might have its list of short-term goals at the moment, but should consider adding this type of objective to its long-term list. This type of partnership would have the ability to draw more attention to the issue of loneliness, attracting a new network of supporters and financial donors. ■