



## The Faces of HMEA - April 2003

Worcester Area Residential Coordinator, **Mike DiPietro**, is able to weather life's obstacles and make positive changes in the lives of the people he supports, both professionally and personally. He is guided by the anonymous quote: *"Our greatest glory consists not of never falling but in rising after every time we fall."* As the custodial parent of a 5 year-old son who is very active and

demanding of his time, and a full time employee with supervisory and management responsibilities, he has learned that life is made up of both work and play and they can blend and compliment each other daily.

Mike was born in central Massachusetts to a family where the values of respect, honesty, honor, responsibility and hard work meant a great deal. Morning chores before school were a way of life on the family farm in West Boylston. During his high school years, Mike helped to support the family, and after graduation, joined the Navy. Mike realized this was not a long-term career for him; his strong family ties tugged at his heart, and he returned home in '93.

His first experience in human services was at Grafton Job Corps. There, he provided residential support to delinquent youth aged 16-24. As Mike puts it, *"These were street kids who needed help to stay on track and keep out of trouble."* Later, he worked at Burncoat Family Center in Worcester with kids 4-18 years old who were diagnosed with behavioral and emotional concerns. He was quickly promoted to Assistant Supervisor, Supervisor and Residential Coordinator. In August 2001, he decided to move to HMEA.



"I was a little nervous at first 'cause I had always worked with kids and adolescents. And now I would be working with a whole new group of people." However, Mike was immediately impressed with the training and preparation for his job that he received during orientation at HMEA. "I remember my first week at another place I worked and after I finished the mandatory paperwork, they gave me the keys and had me report to the 3rd floor to start my job without any other training! At HMEA, they took the time to prepare me and answered all my questions." He was also impressed with the fact that his supervisor was willing to support his need for flexible hours so that he could be available

for his son, Steven. In turn, he is very aware of his responsibilities and is flexible as well.

Today, as Residential Coordinator for the Worcester Area, Mike manages six homes and says he couldn't do it without the true heroes who are the managers of the homes. "They are the ones with a lot of responsibility on their shoulders and just think, they have to deal with everything that goes on in the house day in and day out." He finds the work at HMEA extremely gratifying, saying "I am very impressed that people know who you are and address you by your name and not 'hey buddy' or something like that." He recalls one instance when he was the manager of Maranook Road. The people at the house had a party and President Mike Moloney just dropped by with a gift. "That showed me a lot about this organization."

As Mike looked at the picture of his son and himself at one of the many family gatherings, he reflected "he's changed my life forever and we have a very strong bond." The staff, the people supported by HMEA, Mike's son, and his whole family are fortunate to have him in their lives.

Mike was interviewed by **Doug MacPherson**, who is a member of the Diversity Committee.