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## ECONOMY

# Apple Patch becomes Pillar, opens new high-tech center

By [LISA HORNUNG](#) | December 18, 2018 5:45 am



The high-tech room designed by Snoezelin offers many sensory experiences for clients and can be customized to each person's needs. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

Apple Patch, a nonprofit organization that provides support for adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities, has had a busy year — it celebrated 30 years in business, changed its name to [Pillar](#) and opened its new community engagement center in Crestwood Station.

The 8,000-square-foot center has more than enough room to expand its Adult Day Training program, which has a waiting list, from its current 78 participants to more than 100.

The program was leasing a farmhouse at Foxhollow Farm. While they liked it, there was a lot of maintenance, and it wasn't as accessible to those with mobility issues, said Zac LaFollette, director of community programs for Pillar. When Foxhollow said it was going to use that building for something else, Pillar took the opportunity to create a more fitting space for its needs that will allow the nonprofit to customize services.

"Our primary goal at Pillar is to advocate for and improve the lives of the individuals we serve," LaFollette said. "To really develop and enhance independence skills in the participants to the best of our ability, and that's going to be different for each individual we serve. Every individual has a different set of needs and a different set of ideas behind what their hopes and dreams are."

The



Pillar, formerly Apple Patch, just opened its new community engagement center to house its Adult Day Training program for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

center has two wings, the overall day facility and another area called E3. E3 stands for Equip, Empower and Engage. It also refers to the 3-to-1 ratio of participants to staff.

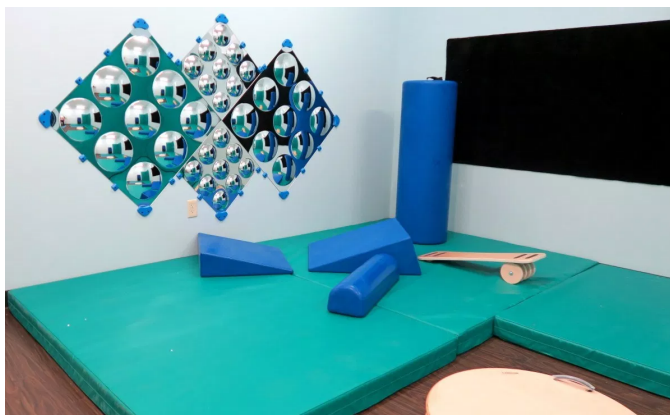
"The men and women on this side demand a lot more support from the staff," said Andrew Martin, a community engagement center manager. "Smaller class size allows us to get a little more involved."

Many of the participants who are involved with E3 are adults with autism or have some sort of sensory issues, so the area

has a state-of-the-art sensory room built by [Snoezelin](#), a company that specializes in multi-sensory experiences.

The area has bubble machines, infinity mirrors, projectors, padded areas and a large bean-bag-type chair with a subwoofer inside. The area can be programmed specifically for a client's needs and can even be set up to operate certain features at certain times of day, so that clients can get consistency of schedule, Martin said.

"A lot of programs that work with men and women and children who are on the autism spectrum, they benefit from this environment," Martin said. "It soothes; it has a very strong calming effect; it has a leveling effect."



A second sensory room offers more tactile experiences for clients. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

All the lights and effects can sync with music and clients can interact with different aspects of the room, depending on their needs.

"Not everybody that we serve does well with continued engagement all day long," LaFollette said. "Some folks need smaller ratios; some folks need a place to decompress, to de-escalate. The purpose of that room is to provide a space for folks to decompress to work on communicative skills in an appropriate way."

Next door is another tactile room that is more physically engaging.

"A lot of folks like to get down on the floor and move around, that's what this is for," Martin said.

There are different textures and tactile pieces designed to help soothe those who need it.

“I’ve been in the field for a long time, and it’s rare to see a space with this many resources and this much space,” Martin said. “Both of these rooms together are a really huge benefit. We’re really excited about it.”

The area also has a room that will eventually be a training apartment, with bedroom furniture, so that

participants can learn daily living skills such as making a bed, cleaning the floor, dusting and more.

On the other side of the building, there is a washer and dryer, where participants can learn to do their own laundry, when it’s time to do laundry, how to fold clothes and more, with the goal of becoming more independent.

The space comes with a gym, which has several treadmills, dumbbells and weighted balls so that participants can get exercise.

Martin said people with developmental and intellectual disabilities often don’t get enough exercise, and this will help them keep their bodies moving. Fitness has a strong effect on mental health and relieving anxiety, which are all benefits that the clients can use.



Andrew Martin, a center manager for Pillar, demonstrates the fiber-optic tubes that clients can use to soothe themselves. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

Participants will move back and forth between the wings so that they can get the benefit of both sides, though some will likely spend more time in the E3 program, Martin said.

There is a large kitchen with two double-convection ovens and movable prep tables for participants to learn kitchen skills. Some participants receive training for jobs in the restaurant industry, so they might learn how to bus tables, set place settings and more.



Pillar's new kitchen area is large and versatile enough to have cooking demonstrations and training. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

There are art rooms, a performing arts room, computer labs and classrooms all over the building, so that all needs and interests can be accommodated.

"The whole point of the year and a half spent designing this space is that it's built around the individual," Martin said. "When a person comes in the door, how can we assess them? What do they need by working with their support team? Then completely customize that experience for them."

Martin said benefit of the center is that it's right in the middle of Crestwood Station, a large shopping center with churches and other businesses nearby so that the participants are a part of the larger community, not hidden or out of the way. It adds to the inclusiveness of the program.

"Really what we're trying to do is develop skills so that they can live independently, they can operate in the community just like you or I would, to achieve whatever they want or whatever they're capable of," LaFollette said.

The Pillar Community Engagement Center, 7408 Highway 329 in Crestwood, is open to some clients now and will be fully open next week. The organization hopes to open the center to new clients starting in mid-January.

## LISA HORNUNG

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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