



FAVARH - THE ARC OF THE FARMINGTON VALLEY

Spotlight on Staff

JONATHAN CRIOLLO

FAVARH RESIDENTIAL DSP

Jonathan Criollo joined Favarh in November of 2018. He works the second shift as a Residential DSP at Two Mile group home. Jonathan is a one-on-one with James, a younger Favarh resident. His work involves keeping James active and safe by engaging with him, listening to music, and being out in the community. James likes being active, running, riding horses, and new activities like learning how to ski.

Jonathan finds his work as a DSP fulfilling. "I enjoy working with other DSPs who have been doing this work for decades. They've been with our participants and have seen the progress. What I like is contributing to someone's life. I'm actually touching people's lives and seeing the progress." Jonathan also finds interacting with James's family fulfilling, as they are always grateful. "They want the best for him and they're very nice people." Jonathan helps James call his parents every night since the Covid-19 Pandemic began, and James knows it's part of his bedtime routine.

Thinking back on his accomplishments, Jonathan talks about how he found something meaningful to do in life. "At school, I was always switching majors, going through jobs." He majored first in business, then in computer tech, then finally settled on obtaining a medical assistant degree. After college he took EMT courses and became certified. "That definitely opened my eyes to doing work with meaning." He recalls the time he performed CPR on someone having a cardiac episode, and being thanked by the family. It was

around this time he focused on finding a place in society that was meaningful for himself and others. That's what Jonathan found in Favarh – meaningful work helping people.

When Jonathan was 25 years old, he was diagnosed with colon cancer. "A lot of people said, 'stay strong!' But hey, I didn't do anything – I just held on." Jonathan talks very humbly about his time in treatment. Compared to other stories, he calls his cancer experience a cakewalk. "I didn't have any symptoms" because the cancer was found early on. Although he had to make changes since being treated for cancer, Jonathan says the changes are "a small price to pay" for being cancer free.

Asked if he had any thoughts for his colleagues or people considering working at Favarh, Jonathan says, "With any job, you need patience, and especially this job. It's important to put yourself in their shoes." He says that there's definitely no point in doing it "if you don't have your heart in this work." Being a DSP is for people who have empathy and patience. And for those that do, the work can be especially rewarding.

Jonathan is single. His extended family lives in and around New York City where his parents immigrated from Ecuador in 1970's. Jonathan was born in the Bronx, then moved to Queens, and finally to Connecticut along with his sister. He and his sister both live in New Britain where he enjoys spending time with her two daughters.