

Corporate Champion Circle: Celebrating those who Support our Community

United Way of the Tri-Valley Area launched its Corporate Champion Circle in the summer of 2018. Circle members partner with United Way for one year, support their community, and receive unique marketing benefits. Corporate Champion Circle members contribute at one of three giving levels - Platinum (\$5,000), Gold (\$3,000), and Silver (\$1,500). To recognize Corporate Champion Circle members, and to get to know those who are passionate about United Way, we have started a series that profiles these dedicated businesses. Fourth in our series is Zachary Dulac and Lori Cushman, owners of Full Bloom Hydroponics in Farmington.

Zach Dulac and Lori Cushman own Full Bloom Hydroponics along with First Amendment Soil in Farmington and recently joined the United Way's Corporate Champion Circle. Zach grew up in Arundel, attending Biddeford High School, where he played football. Zach's parents had a camp in Northern Franklin County, where he enjoyed visiting each summer. Eventually Zach came to like the quiet and more rural area, so he decided to move. In his twenties, due to personal reasons, Zach became aware of the importance of medical marijuana, so he researched and educated himself and eventually opened Full Bloom Hydroponics. Zach has had a successful career as an educator and resource on how to grow organically and green.

Lori grew up in New Sharon and attended Mt. Blue High School. She worked for Hannaford, then entered banking and that's where she met Zach in 2016. Lori began with working part-time at Full Bloom as the financial office manager, eventually becoming co-owner of the company, which now has three full-time staff other than Zach and Lori.

Zach and Lori were approached by the former owner of First Amendment Soil in late 2017. The owner recognized that Full Bloom was the top seller for their product, in conjunction with Full Bloom items. He offered them first option to purchase the soil company from him, and they took it. Zach and Lori both said, it was a no brainer, given the top quality of the soil product.

When asked what challenges and opportunities they see as an educator in the slowly evolving marijuana field, both thought for a minute then Lori said, "It is a challenge recruiting and retaining skilled, dedicated and motivated employees, despite a friendly, flexible and incentivized work environment. "We are in a time where work ethic is suffering." Zach added that "there is an opportunity for Maine to grow in the medical and recreation marijuana field, but there hasn't been enough education for that to happen yet." Zach and Lori both talked about the great opportunities of owning a small local business, Lori speaks up "there is something about the customer service and personal touch we are able to provide to our customers." "Being able to not only answer customer questions, lots of times outside business hours, but physically demonstrate the answers is something you don't get with big box companies" Zach pointed out. "Keeping Maine green, one room at a time" is our slogan, Zach states.

When asked about becoming a CCC member, both immediately said "we love United Way, so many great things in the community are done through United Way!" "We are definitely people that want to give back and help, so what better place to partner with."

Together, Zach and Lori raise five children, ranging from 3-13 years old. The kids are active in skiing, basketball, baseball and softball. The family loves to go camping and enjoys vacationing to warm places!