

(Accompanying video [Video 1] plays to begin Keynote segment.)

Introduction:

It's really exciting to be able to introduce Vito to the entirety of BAYADA. He's been our client since (year); he was our first 24/7 case/workers' comp case; and he and his care team have gone beyond the clinical to establish themselves firmly in friend and family territory. For those in service offices, you can imagine it this way: he's the call you look forward to getting.

Vito's case is a positive outcome thanks to the work you all do every day. We understand what goes into it—how every piece has to come together in just the right way for it all to work, how you make the behind-the-scenes orchestrations look easy to clients, families, and referral sources. Tenured clients like Vito rack up years of those behind-the-scenes efforts. Before he was a client at the well-oiled machine of an office, Garden City Skilled, he was under my purview at the Mineola Office. Mineola—derived from the Algonquin word meaning “pleasant village,” though I'm not sure that's the first word I'd use to describe it.

I got there in 200(x), a floppy-haired CSM [show photo], who barely looked half of his 26 years. But I loved the CSM work, and I was good at it. Soon after, I moved into the Director role. I grew the office to 80K and later left, confident the “house” I had built was strong.

You may be wondering why I'm wading into the past when this Awards Weekend theme is all about growth—*Bloom with BAYADA*. Well, sometimes it's good to reexamine your roots. I've learned a lot of hard lessons during my BAYADA journey, but they were all important.

Some of you have heard this story before, though probably not in this much detail. For the rest, I'll say that it's a humbling experience to talk about mistakes you've made in front of an audience that you're terrified of disappointing. Luckily, I had some help from the very same people who helped me back then. As always, they're very All Hands on Deck.

I found out later that once I left Mineola, the office struggled. I didn't realize it initially, but I hadn't set them up for success: there was turnover, so shifts went unfilled; clients were frustrated with sub-par service; and there wasn't a culture to keep people motivated. The office needed the right people in the right seats, and it had to be rebuilt from the ground-up. Eventually, with the leadership of Linda Seissel, Cris Toscano, and eventually Iris Cognevich, Mineola came back to life as Garden City—an appropriate name, taking into account this year's theme. It wasn't quick or easy; it was an endeavor. But, along the way, a lot of talent filtered through and nourished the office, as it stabilized and grew and split off.

Cris put it best: working in Garden City was a “rite of passage” for many BAYADA employees—truly, trial by fire. Those who stuck it out, learned and grew—not only those in the office, but clients and field employees, too. Vito and his nursing team were one of the stalwarts that remained with the office throughout all the chaos. His continued presence seemed to act as a beacon of hope for the office employees when they needed a reason to keep trudging on. I've always wanted to know—why'd they stay? When everything goes wrong, what makes a person stay?

However complicated the Mineola Office's journey, one thing's for sure—that office, and those relationships between Vito and his care team, they set off a chain reaction of growth: personal, professional, and performance. BAYADA's resulting success throughout Long Island seemed as natural as germination—just another dandelion bending in the breeze, its bristles traveling wherever the wind takes them. And these days, we're the largest home health care provider in the area.

Which is thanks to Vito and his care team, but he's grown, too. He doesn't define himself by his diagnosis, and he doesn't want his caregivers to, either. He's optimistic; there aren't any limits to what he can achieve. And what a powerful message that is—no matter who you are, where you are, or what's going on in your life: you can't live limiting yourself.

When it comes to *The BAYADA Way*, our vision is to make it possible for millions of people worldwide to experience a better quality of life in the comfort of their own homes, and Vito's one of those people. It's a very lofty goal, but we've always approached it with a balance that doesn't sacrifice the personalization. We'll treat millions of people like they're the only one.

All of these reasons are why I went back to Mineola Boulevard, and that's why we're diving into the roots of it all—to trace the many ways BAYADA helps people bloom. And through the experience, I had an epiphany. But, we'll get to that later. First—Vito.

(Lights dim. Video 2 plays.)

Part 2:

I think it was kind of surreal for me to see Denise, who I hadn't seen in 18 years, at Vito's, where she's spent the majority of her hours for nearly a quarter century. It's this almost mythic relationship, and it's powerful to see in person. Time sort of stood still as I watched them. We all have relationships; we all have people we spend time with. But the sheer amount of time they're spending one-on-one is probably more than most of us spend with anybody in our life. If that doesn't outline the importance of making the right match, I don't know what does.

Because you don't stay stagnant as a person during this time. You're constantly evolving, learning, growing. That growth looks different for everyone. For Neil and Denise and the rest of the team that supports them in supporting Vito, they all have their own journey, which weaves in and out of their personal and professional lives. Life sometimes throws challenges our way that live in one realm or the other but require support from both—Denise will talk about an experience she had in the next segment—and when all these different people's roundabout routes of growth intertwine and interact with each other, everyone becomes stronger. The entire team benefits.

Thinking back to Garden City, then Mineola, and how it became the office it is today—I don't know if it would've happened without Vito and Denise. I really don't. They're the match that made an empire. And there are a ton of other factors, of course—we're about to hear from Cris and Iris about the turn-around of this office. Garden City needed the right people coming in and being invested. There were a lot of processes that needed to be put in place. Most of the relationships needed to be rebuilt. Would it be the same if Cris never volunteered? If Iris hadn't left Louisiana? It's hard to say. What I do know is Garden City's clean-up crew cite Vito as their rock. Through every difficult call, seemingly-impossible-to-cover shift, and quarter in the red, there was that match and that incentive to do right by him.

Seriously—Cris, Iris, and the team they cultivated worked for a year at Garden City before seeing a profit. That could've been disheartening, if not for Vito. He was such a positive presence in their days, a constant reminder of the purpose. We promised high quality care in his home with dignity—that's a given—but he's got *quality of life*, because he and Denise are thriving together. That's the kicker.

It's this symbiotic relationship. Vito needs care and wants Denise to be the one who gives it; Denise needs the work and wants to be fulfilled—if we do our job right, they grow to need each other. *But we need them, too.* We've got to know how good it can be. Without that match, we're scheduling appointments and giving clinical oversight. With that match, we're changing lives.

All this has made me look at *The BAYADA Way* with fresh eyes. Yes, we want to build the world's most trusted team of healthcare professionals; we want the world to trust us and see us as that. But you can interpret it differently. What if we focus on building a team that trusts each other more than any other team on the planet? What if we have a group of people who are so invested in each other and everyone's growth that the rest just comes almost naturally?

Let's see what a team like that looks like.

(Lights dim. Video 3 plays.)

Part 3:

Some people think about how offices grow and mature over time—which, in turn, creates organizational growth—they think of it in terms of a family tree. I don't know that I've ever appreciated that until I visited Vito. He mentioned the director before me in conversation; her name's Carm. And I never really had any sense of connection to Carm other than working with her briefly. But then I realized that, as Director, I had inherited Carm's legacy, the responsibility of care for Vito and all the other clients. And so I'm under her in the family tree. And then there's this line of directors after me who grabbed the baton and took on the responsibility to continue to, through their own personal growth, build and grow the office. I'm not sure how Cris fits in exactly—she's like the wacky, wise cousin, once removed. But so, you take on this seed, you improve on it—put it in fresh soil—you take responsibility for its nurturing and care—water it, trim its leaves, whatever—and then you pass it onto the next person. You teach that person how you took care of it, but you're kind of excited to check back every once in a while and see how they bring their own personality into it.

So that family tree, this ongoing legacy dynamic of how an office evolves over time—that's how the organization evolves over time, too. Garden City and all the offices it spawned is like a microcosm of the whole BAYADA experience. That Mineola office was like a sapling, and now there's a forest up there. We've got this whole network of National Parks across BAYADA, because of this responsibility that each steward has taken from the person before them.

But back to Garden City. The core group has continued to bloom from seeds that are being planted from within the group that continues to exist. Caseloads are built. Enough caseloads become new offices, and people grow into the opportunities.

In this next segment, I want to show this whole idea of a Lasting Legacy in action.

(Lights dim. Video 4 plays.)

Conclusion:

The first thing I noticed walking into Garden City Skilled—and I notice this a lot when I go into offices, which is great—was that Justin and Iris were in the pit talking about the open board, brainstorming about what's going on with this particular case, looking at the prospect list, checking in with their team—they're engaged. Justin's a Director—Iris is a Division Director—but you'd never know it. They're on a team. No one's too important to help out with anyone else's job. It's my favorite thing to see.

And sitting down with Justin in his office, it hit me: I miss it. I miss that job, that environment. I miss the rush, the energy of helping clients, solving problems, finding new ways to recruit, trying to make a better match with a client and a nurse looking for meaningful work. I didn't realize I was going to look around and feel like, "Wow, I kind of wish I was in this office." The emotion of it surprised me a bit.

And then I remembered the harder times, because it's easy to initially look at things through this haze of nostalgia. But it's not all smooth sailing, right? And this sense of admiration just settled in as I was talking to Justin. It's a hard job—not just Director, but every single seat in that office. Walking around, you have to admire and respect this juggling act that goes on at each desk in every office. This is not easy work. That's not why we do it. We do it, because it's important and complicated and rewarding. There's a lot to get out of it when we do it the right way; that's why you have to put a lot in. And not just anyone can do this. You all are *exceptional*.

Which is why I just want to take this moment to say, "Thank you." Thank you for the long nights, the holidays, for living further away from your family than you might like, for the time away from your family and friends. Thank you for your passion and expertise—for getting on this bus instead of any other one.

Thank you for understanding that we're a team at the end of the day and for treating that team with respect. Thank you for investing in BAYADA's Lasting Legacy.

My dad started this journey and set us on this path to leave a lasting legacy. Can you believe that within the next month or so, we'll have served our millionth client? And I've no doubt that we'll go on to serve a million more.

It's not lost on me that part of my legacy is the fact that I failed 18 years ago. But I learned. I shared this story at the All Hands meetings in November, and for Justin to be able to tell me that he connected with it; that he learned and changed the way he did things; that he maybe avoided repeating history? I've never been more proud to say that failure's a part of my legacy, because that means growth is, too.

Going nonprofit, we pledged ourselves to supporting our employees, to giving the highest-quality care, to expanding this company with a conscience. BAYADA has been growing ever since Mark started the company in 1975. But, on December 31st, when we went nonprofit, we *bloomed*.

I don't want December 31st to go down as another moment in BAYADA's history. It's not a moment. It's a movement.