A REPORT ON THE FAMILY SURVEY RESULTS

This fall, we sent satisfaction surveys to the parents and guardians of those we support. A total of 629 surveys were mailed and 144 people (23%) responded. Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide feedback – we sincerely value your input and take your comments to heart. In order to provide the best services possible, it is important for us to have open communication with families. We want to hear what we are doing well, and what could be improved.

We were pleased to receive high marks in the following areas. The following percentages “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” with the questions posed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94%</td>
<td>“The agency and its staff provide a safe, pleasant and positive environment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>“Charles River Center staff responds in a timely and professional manner.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87%</td>
<td>“Charles River Center staff acknowledges and welcomes my suggestions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>“Staff is well prepared for planning meetings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>“Facilities are maintained appropriately and are clean.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>“Staff upholds individuals’ human rights.”</td>
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One theme that particularly stood out was the kindness of the staff. We heard:

“The staff has the patience to deal with all types of disabilities in a calm, professional manner.”

“Conversation with clients is very loving when client is upset.”

“They care about the clients. You do a great job that usually goes unrecognized!”

“I hear and witness many, many incidences of thoughtfulness and kindness by the staff.”

“I have great admiration and respect for the staff at CRC. They have been helpful and responsive to all our needs.”

While much of the survey was very positive, there were some areas that families said could be improved. Families expressed a desire for more community activities and exercise opportunities for the individuals. We also heard a need for more communication from case managers and program directors about the goings-on at the Charles River Center – in particular updates on new staff and daily activities. 71% of those surveyed said that Charles River is “good at keeping me aware of changes within the organization.”

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ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER: A NIGHT TO CELEBRATE

The Annual Dinner, held at Lombardo’s in November, was once again an inspiring evening as we learned of the great strides certain individuals have made over the year, and we recognized the staff members who have helped them on their journey to independence.

Congratulations to Jason Stockwell, winner of the Earl Mountain Award. Jason, who started with the Charles River Center as a high schooler, has held a variety of jobs in Employment and Day Services but is currently coordinating the staff and vehicle schedules for over 170 people – no easy task as it’s about 400 trips per week! He was praised for his teamwork, great disposition, and commitment to the agency.

(continued on page 3)
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Often, the start of a new year begins with a thoughtful reflection of the previous year’s achievements. In several ways, 2016 was a transition year for our organization. Last year marked our 60th anniversary, and we had many opportunities to celebrate our agency’s accomplishments and proudly look at our contribution to the advances of our industry in supporting people with disabilities in their communities. In July, we closed our sheltered work center as the state defunded this service as part of the Employment Blueprint initiative. Lastly, we transitioned the leadership position in October. The strength of our organization is evidenced by the fact that despite these significant changes, we continued to grow and implement the second years’ strategic plan goals without skipping a beat.

Our Family Support department grew in service need areas expressed by our families. We expanded the programs in our Natick location. We added Adult Extended Day, Saturday programs, information and referrals, and vacation programs at that location in addition to those in Needham. We began offering social and recreational services to those found newly eligible for state funded services-men and women with autism without intellectual disabilities. Our Adult Foster Care program is expanding and allows families to receive support for caring for their family member in their home. Additionally, we have become a Shared Living Provider for the state, which is another residential option that matches people with disabilities to community members – with the arrangement being supported by the Charles River Center.

Residentially, we opened a new community residence for five people in Sharon. We now have three homes in that town for men and women with autism. Our Newton group home relocated to a beautiful new home in Needham with its own gym! It is ideally located near the high school and within walking distance to shops, restaurants, and the library. Charles River now serves 134 people in 29 homes in the metro Boston area. The Dwight building was renamed the Grugan Center, in honor of the previous CEO, John Grugan. Ending our sheltered employment program was a huge change for our staff and participants, which necessitated the formation of new groups and curriculum development focusing on community membership, communication, social, recreational and educational opportunities, vocational skills, employment opportunities, and positive behavior supports. All aspects of the program were completely reengineered to allow for more individualized experiences based on the needs and interests of the participants. We added key staff positions to help with this transformation and to establish many more volunteer and educational opportunities in the community. We are currently managing over 400 trips a week between all of our community experiences, individual, and group employment opportunities!

Our Day Habilitation program continued to grow and focus on the therapeutic needs of the participants. Also, we expanded the Horticulture Program to include members from the Day Habilitation program, which is a big hit! With every growing organization, the infrastructure must keep pace to support the increased capacity. To this end, we had to assess our current capacity and make changes as needed. Our facility management software was upgraded to allow for better management of our facility requests, routine maintenance, inventory and vehicle management. We invited an independent IT auditor to assess our IT capability, electronic security protocols and disaster preparedness. As a result, we developed a multi-year plan to enhance our IT infrastructure in all of these areas. In the spring, we are installing a fiber optic cable to increase internet speed in all of our day programs. We also started training staff in the latest Written Information Security Protocol (WISP), which was suggested in the 2016 family satisfaction surveys. We continue to make progress in the development of integrated electronics records that will significantly improve communication between departments. It is an enormous undertaking, which necessitates methodical planning and training.

Finally, our Human Resource department has increased staff recruitment and retention efforts. The new employee orientation was revised to include training in person-centered planning, positive behavioral supports, and community inclusion to further instill our values in our employees. Our scholarship program now provides support to five employees to further their education is areas that enhance our services, such as nursing and applied behavioral analysis. In the next few months, our website will be enhanced to allow for better electronic recruitment and applicant tracking. Our staff recruitment efforts have increased with more frequent visits to college career fairs, presentations to students at community colleges, and increased internet postings. Workforce development will continue to be a major focus in the new year, as it has become more difficult to recruit staff with a low state unemployment rate and the increase in minimum wage.

It goes without saying that many of these developments couldn’t have taken place with the financial support of families and community members. Thank you to all who donated to our annual appeal and who support us throughout the year. As you can see, 2016 was extremely productive, and we expect 2017 to be just as busy as we develop our infrastructure to support our quality measures. We look forward to keeping you informed.

Anne-Marie Bajwa
INCLUSION CHINA VISIT PROMOTES CULTURAL EXCHANGE

This fall, the Charles River Center was honored to have a group of parent leaders from China visit to learn more about advocacy for those with developmental disabilities and organizational development to support them. These parent advocates, members of Inclusion China, visited in conjunction with The Harvard Law School Project on Disability.

After a tour of Employment & Day Services and Day Habilitation, the group listened to a presentation from Charles River Center senior managers focused on advocacy and person-centered planning. They discussed developing a vision for a program, establishing family supports, and making connections in the community, among many other topics.

The visitors were appreciative of their time at Charles River.

Jessica Dai, President of Inclusion China wrote, “We were deeply impressed by your organization’s professional leadership, staff’s working attitudes and the result of your good work, which is built on the vision of the individuals. In China, we still have a long journey to enable us to achieve the results you manage today, but we are very optimistic since your experience provided us a good reference and roadmap.”

All who attended were inspired by the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, with hopes that the collaboration will continue in the future.

ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER: A NIGHT TO CELEBRATE

(continued from page 1)

MacFarlane Energy of Dedham received the Special Recognition Award. Scott MacFarlane was recognized for his longstanding support of the Charles River Center, as well as his company’s readiness to go above and beyond to make sure Charles River Center participants remain comfortable, warm and safe.

Congratulations also go out to:

**Family and Individual Support**
- Youth Participant of the Year: Eric Orifice
- Individual Support Participant of the Year: James Phillips
- Staff of the Year: Olivia Bogan
- Volunteer of the Year: Nina Yi

**Day Habilitation**
- Participant of the Year: Josie Paul
- Staff of the Year: Bernadette Lynch

**Employment and Day Services**
- Participant of the Year: Karen Flibotte
- Staff of the Year: Mike Bolio

**Residential Services**
- Resident of the Year: Freia David
- Staff of the Year: Rosangela Barros, Pine Lane Program

Cathy MacFarlane, Scott MacFarlane, Anne-Marie Bajwa (President, CRC) and Phil Robey (Chairman of the Board, CRC).
ON BECOMING AN ADVOCATE: FIRST STEP, STATE BUDGET 101

by Hilary Ryan, Vice President of Development

In order to be an effective advocate, it is important to know the legislative cycle and how and when to impact the process. The budget is the most important bill to move through the Legislature each year. The Massachusetts state budget runs on a fiscal year cycle that begins on July 1 and ends on June 31.

According to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Governor must present a proposed budget for the next fiscal year to the Legislature by the third Wednesday of January. The Governor’s budget is called House 1, which can be confusing because, despite its name, the House 1 budget is not the budget produced by the House of Representatives.

The Governor’s proposed budget goes first to the House Ways and Means Committee for review and consideration. The Legislature does not have to agree with the amounts in any of the line items in House 1, and in fact, the House and Senate will likely propose their own budget proposals, often using House 1 as a baseline. The House Ways and Means Committee schedule public hearings and take testimonies from groups and individuals prior to releasing a budget document to the full House.

In spring, the House Ways and Means Committee releases its version of the proposed state budget to the full House of Representatives for deliberation and debate. During this time, the House can, and often does, amend the House budget. After the budget is passed by the House, it is sent to the Senate Ways and Means Committee. The Senate has the right to put together its own budget; it does not have to agree with either the House or the Administration versions. The Senate Ways and Means Committee will hold public hearings and take testimonies before preparing its version of the budget and releasing it to the full Senate. As in the House, the Senate amends, strikes, or adds sections prior to passing the budget.

Generally, the House and Senate pass differing versions of the budget. A six-member Conference Committee (made up of the House and Senate Ways and Means chairs and vice chairs, and a senior minority member of each chamber) convenes to resolve differences and draft a compromise budget proposal. The Committee releases the compromise budget for a full vote. The House and Senate vote; upon enactment the budget is sent to the Governor for his signature.

After the Governor receives the enacted budget, he has ten working days to sign it into law. (This period often extends into early August.) He can veto line items and/or strike language and dollar amounts. The Legislature can override the Governor’s vetoes. However, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate must agree to take up each veto for an override vote. Overrides require a two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate.

(Please note: Much of this information can be found in the Legislative Advocacy Toolkit from The Arc of Massachusetts. Please visit www.thearcofmass.org/advocacy/ for more information on becoming an advocate.)
**5K RUN AND 1-MILE WALK**

Held in late September, the 6th Annual 5K Run/1-Mile Walk was another huge success! Over 500 runners and walkers of all abilities ran, walked or rode through the streets of Needham and Wellesley on a beautiful day. Thank you to the dedicated 5K committee and the 100 volunteers who made this community-building event so successful!

**Our gratitude also goes out to our in-kind donors:**
- Heartbreak Hill
- Running Company
- Sam Adams Beer
- Stacy’s Juice Bar
- The Coca-Cola Company
- Kerivan-Lane
- Trader Joe’s
- David’s Tea
- Studio U Boston
- Rosev Dairy Foods
- Cutlip
- Volante Farms
- Nicholas’ Pizza
- Needham House of Pizza
- Town House of Pizza

**A special thanks to our generous sponsors!**

**Platinum**
- Dedham Savings
- Manion Gaynor & Manning
- Needham Bank
- California Pizza Kitchen

**Silver**
- Anna’s Taqueria
- Atent for Rent
- Wicked Local
- CAIA Association
- Coldwell Banker Cares

**Bronze**
- ARS Restoration Specialists
- Reddish Family Foundation
- Eastern Bank
- Lawrence Waste Services
- Middlesex Savings Bank
- Representative Denise Garlick, Russell, Beth and Family
- Needham Exchange Club
- Deborah Donovan
- Whole Foods
- TJMaxx
- Wegmans

**BOARD WELCOMES WALTER TOBIN**

We are pleased to welcome Walter Tobin to the Board of Directors. Walter is a “Double Eagle” graduate of Boston College with a BS in Marketing and an MBA from the BC Carroll School of Management. He is presently the CEO of the Electronics Representatives Association [ERA], a 501(c) not for profit trade association consisting of over 500 member companies. Prior to joining ERA, he was a Corporate Vice President, Executive Vice President and Senior Vice President for several global electronic components distribution companies. Walter grew up in Newton and has been a resident of Needham since 1973. He is a former US Army Captain and the father of three daughters and five grandchildren. He is an avid golfer and runner – but he says his best time spent is with his kids and grandkids.

**Thank you to our fantastic Rodman Ride team!**

On Saturday, September 24th, Shane Jones, Emily MacGregor, Kelly Atkins, Michael and Debbi Coran, Ellen Killicarslan and Jenn Fagan all rode 25 miles in the Rodman Ride for Kids, raising funds for Wings for Autism, as well as our after-school and weekend programs for children. (And thanks to Cathy Freedberg for virtually riding!)
Like any bride, on the happiest day of my life I wanted to be surrounded by my family and closest friends. As I walked down the aisle on August 23rd, 2015, I saw Stephen, Zack, Tyler, Rachael, and Shoshana beaming at me among the myriad of smiling faces. At the reception, they joined me on the dance floor, and Shoshana and Rachael even tried to catch the bouquet! Their diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorders did not set them apart from my other guests. These five wonderful people who receive services from Charles River Center are some of the most important people in my life, so of course I wanted them there to celebrate with me.

Ten years ago, I decided to follow in my mother’s footsteps and make disability services my lifelong career. I always firmly stood by my choice, but I felt like I was searching for something elusive while working for other agencies. When I moved to Massachusetts in early 2012, I discovered the Charles River Center and knew I had finally found what I was looking for. I assisted in the development of the Adult Community Experiences and Services (ACES) Program, which teaches life skills to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders through daily volunteering and community involvement. This was a life-changing experience that introduced me to some wonderful people, including the five young adults who live at the North Main Street home in Sharon. In the summer of 2014, I transferred my full-time employment to this residential program, where these delightful people became my friends, and over time became family. Because we had developed this close connection, it was an easy decision to invite them to my wedding the following year.

For many of them, it was the first wedding they had ever attended, and I imagined that it would remain a fond memory for them. What I did not expect, however, was the impact that this experience would have on their lives. My first day back after my honeymoon, I was greeted with a big hug from Rachael and a high-pitched “Sarah got married!” To this day, every time Shoshana sees a bride in a movie or hears me say my husband’s name, she shouts “Just like Sarah’s wedding!” It is a great feeling to know that this event, while to some guests may have been just another wedding, was an important occasion for these friends of mine – one that would permanently enrich their lives.

For myself and many other employees at the Charles River Center, this is more than just a job – it is a calling. We are inspired to open our hearts and create homes filled with friendship, laughter, and love. We commit years, or even our entire careers, to fostering relationships that are built on respect, support, and reciprocity. And when we celebrate monumental occasions in our lives, having our friends present can truly make it the best day ever.
How did you learn about the Charles River Center?
I first learned about the Charles River Center in 8th Grade when the Community Service Learning project was introduced. A friend and I had heard about Wings for Autism and the school vacation programs through a family member who works at the Charles River Center. That was where I started my volunteer work at CRC.

What’s it like to be a Rec Aide?
Being a Rec Aide is very rewarding. I spend my time working with kids who benefit from the time that I, as their peer, spend with them. As a Rec Aide, we play board games, do arts and craft projects, and play outside. In the job there is a lot of responsibility. There are many opportunities to change a child’s day. This can either be by being positive and kind or making a joke to make them laugh.

What is your favorite part of the job?
My favorite part of the job is that I have the chance to work with kids, around the same age as me, whose lives are different from mine. I learn what they struggle with and what they excel in. The way in which each child develops every week is just an example of how lucky I am to see them grow.

What have you learned?
Throughout this experience, I have learned how to be a leader and a role model. Working at CRC has taught me that everything I do is absorbed by the kids and they are always looking up to me.

What do you do when you aren’t working at CRC?
When I am not at CRC, I am a dancer, friend and student. I am on a competitive dance team at A Fine Dance Studio. I spend much of my time going to classes and competitions. In the summer I participate in a multi-year development curriculum working as a junior counselor at Cape Cod Sea Camps in Brewster. At camp, I interact with younger children than myself, but it is equally engaging and challenging. I also make time to hang out with my friends and family to make great memories. Lastly, I am working hard in school to be successful in my future.

What are your plans for the future?
My plans for the future are to go to college. I want to major in Human Studies and concentrate on helping people and making a positive impact in my community.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about becoming a Rec Aide?
I would tell someone who is thinking about becoming a Rec Aide that this job is rewarding. It is also challenging and fun. By being a Rec Aide you are really going to change the lives of the people who you work with and learn excellent life skills in the process.

SAVE MAY 22ND FOR THE EXCHANGE CLUB GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Needham Exchange Club will host its 30th annual Charity Golf Tournament on Monday, May 22nd at the Marlborough Country Club, with proceeds going toward Wings for Autism, as well as scholarships for vacation camps at the Charles River Center.

Registration begins at 11:30 am, followed by lunch and a shotgun start at 1:00 pm. After 18 holes of golf, there will be cocktails and dinner, as well as a raffle and silent auction. The cost per person is $195. All are welcome. Thanks to event sponsor, Salem Five.

Registration information will be coming soon. For more information, contact Hilary Ryan, Vice President of Development, at (781) 972-1030 or hryan@charlesrivercenter.org.
GRUGAN AWARDED HEERWAGEN

Middlesex Savings Bank honored recently retired Charles River Center President, John Grugan, with the first John H. Heerwagen award. The award “recognizes a strong, nonprofit leader whose work has significantly benefited the lives and wellbeing of residents within the Foundation’s community. The award provides a one-time grant of $15,000 to the recipient’s organization to be used in a manner that the recipient believes will benefit the organization.”

Our sincere thanks to Middlesex Savings for the grant and for recognizing John’s remarkable contributions to the agency and to the developmental disability community.

FAMILY SURVEY RESULTS

(continued from page 1)

Already, Day Habilitation has made plans for a quarterly, divisional update and more regular newsletters from the groups. Other divisions are developing action plans for improving communication, as well as addressing other survey results. Keep an eye out for ways we plan to act on these issues in the days to come.

Thank you again for your input and willingness to work with us. With positive communication and follow through, we will continue to strive towards our common goal – to provide the highest-quality services and programs to the people we serve. ■