A CELEBRATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT!

The 2018 Annual Awards Dinner was held on Friday, November 2 at Lombardo’s in Randolph, Massachusetts. The event featured dinner and dancing, and honored Charles River Center program participants as well as outstanding staff and volunteers for their contributions and service to the Charles River Center. We thank all of our community partners for a wonderful evening enjoyed by all.

Two highlights of the evening were the presentation of the Earle Mountain Award and the Community Award. The Earle Mountain Award went to Ernie Carter of Salamone House. Anne-Marie Bajwa, in announcing the recipient said, “Ernie has been steadfastly loyal to Charles River and resolute in ensuring the residents have the highest level of care and happiness… Ernie has earned the respect and trust from all the family members at Salamone.

Congratulations and thank you for 17 years of providing excellent care and support.”

The Community Award went to Tim Dunn, parent of a North Main Street resident. In presenting the award, Anne-Marie praised Tim saying, “Tim is one of those people who offers to help and always follows through. He consistently demonstrates how much he cares not only for his own daughter, but also for her housemates and other individuals at Charles River. He has touched every part of the organization with his generosity of time, professional contacts and donations. How you and your family have contributed to the Charles River Center is truly exceptional!”

Visit the News and Events Gallery on our website to see more photos.

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PHIL ROBELY COMMUNITY FUND AWARDS INAUGURAL GRANTS

Since the establishment of the Phil Robey Community Fund, the committee has been working hard to develop the mission, guidelines and application process. Representing all program divisions, each member has brought a unique perspective to the committee, which has helped to define the mission of the fund.

We are now thrilled to announce the first grants awarded to allow individuals from the Charles River Center to participate in enriching community experiences.

- Marianne, who is visually impaired, will be able to participate in an adaptive aquatics program. She loves being in the water and is able to move without the need for physical assistance. This opportunity will provide Marianne with an enjoyable and fulfilling activity that she loves.

- Billy has always wanted to try rock climbing. Because of the fund, he will be joining a rock climbing gym for a trial period to determine if he enjoys it.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- April 2019
  Wings for Autism
  Logan Airport
  Boston, MA

- Friday, April 26
  Building a Dream Gala
  Boston Marriott, Newton
  Newton, MA

- Tuesday, June 4
  Exchange Club Golf Tournament
  Marlborough Country Club
  Marlborough, MA
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In New England, fall is the season in which we survey our landscape, plant seeds for future growth, and lay down the foundation for a bountiful garden in the year to come. In many ways, we have been doing the same within the Charles River Center.

To tend to our external “landscape” following the mid-term elections, we reached out to congratulate incumbent legislators on their re-election and introduce ourselves to new legislators. Legislative advocacy is extremely important to protect and build upon existing services for those in need, so we will begin to meet with legislators to discuss the fiscal year 2020 budget priorities for the disability community. Those priorities include: the protection of transition services funding for children in their last few years of school (Turning 22 line item), an increase in the employment line item allowing more people to experience paid work and support for workforce initiatives that address wages, the lack of clinical staff due to low reimbursement rates and the need to establish a more stable workforce through credentialing efforts.

A group of self-advocates from the Grugan Center and a board member participated in the State House vigil for adoption of Nicky’s Law. Passage of the bill will create a registry of individuals against whom there is a substantiated finding of abuse or neglect of a person with I/DD by the Massachusetts Disabled Persons Protection Commission, and requires provider agencies to check the registry before hiring a new employee. Our group met with Speaker Robert DeLeo’s aide and expressed why the passage of the bill is important to them. Since the vigil, support for the bill has grown.

Tending to our internal “landscape” this year, we laid the foundation for future growth by expanding our organizational capacity in Human Resources, Quality Assurance, IT and Development. We continued evaluating the progress of the current strategic plan and began developing a new plan to begin in July 2019.

This fall we surveyed our families, guardians, and the individuals we serve to determine the level of satisfaction with our programs and services. Overall, the results were very positive. Departments are using the survey results to add to their 2019 program outcomes.

Much effort has gone into addressing the vacancy and turnover rates of our workforce. For example, we negotiated no cost increase in our employee health insurance plan, we increased our staff appreciation efforts including a week-long celebration during Direct Support Professional week, we launched an e-learning platform for education and training, we increased credentialing of our staff through grants and expedited the hiring process through an online system of recruitment. All of these efforts have resulted in a decrease in our turnover rate by 2% and our vacancy rate almost 6%. We are well below industry standards at this time.

In the new strategic plan, we expect to focus efforts on positioning Charles River Center for the future in the new managed care landscape. It is a time of seismic change that could potentially reshape our industry. Innovation, creativity and diversity in funding along with our values and commitment to quality of services will lead us to a position of strength. Continued support from our community and stakeholders is needed to make the Charles River Center bloom brighter than ever before!

LONG-TIME COMMITTEE MEMBER RECEIVES SERVICE AWARD

After serving on the Charles River Center’s Human Rights Committee for seven years, Priscilla Morrison has decided to retire. In appreciation of her dedication, hard work and commitment to the committee, a Service Award was presented to her during the November 8 committee meeting.

The committee of about 15 people, currently coordinated by Jennifer Fuglestad, Director of Quality Assurance, assists Charles River to affirm, promote, and protect the human and civil rights of individuals served, and to monitor and review the activities of Charles River Center with regard to the human and civil rights of those individuals. Priscilla was on the committee as an “individual served” member. She attended monthly meetings and, as necessary, participated in site visits. Jennifer Fuglestad says, “Priscilla has been an invaluable resource on the committee and we will miss her insightful comments.”
A TRIO OF MEMORABLE FALL EVENTS

5K Run/1 Mile Walk
Over 600 runners, walkers and volunteers from communities throughout Eastern Massachusetts participated in the Charles River Center’s 8th annual 5K Run/1 Mile Walk fundraiser on September 23, a picture-perfect fall day!

Ellie Bloom Special Olympics
On September 29, over 200 athletes along with family members, athlete buddies, contest leaders, team leaders and many volunteers participated in the Ellie Bloom Special Olympics at Needham’s DeFazio Park. Our thanks to everyone, including our donors and supporters, Needham Exchange Club, Needham Women’s Club, Needham Golf Club Charities and Roche Bros. for making this a truly inspiring event!

Wings for Autism
The Charles River Center held its 16th Wings for Autism at Boston’s Logan Airport on Saturday, November 3. More than 475 children with autism and their family members made the “test run” through the airport boarding process during the fun half-day event designed specifically for families with children with autism to help ease the stress of flying.

COMMUNITY TURNS OUT TO SUPPORT THE CHARLES RIVER CENTER
The Charles River Center wishes to thank all of the individuals and organizations that made this year’s 5K Run/1 Mile Walk such a success. We could not have done this without your tremendous support!

Thank you to all the runners, walkers and volunteers, Plugged In for providing entertainment at the finish line, the Needham and Wellesley Police for keeping everyone safe on the course and to the following generous sponsors!

Event Reflexis Systems, Inc. ■ Platinum Needham Bank, Stretch What Matters
Gold Dedham Savings Bank, State Representative Denise Garlick
Silver Highland Car Care, G.D. McCarthy Site and Utility, Needham Collision
Water Station Deborah Donovan, State Representative Denise Garlick, Irene and Gary Gladstone, Pabian Law, LLC, Summit Financial Corporation ■ Mile Marker Century 21 Commonwealth, Kathleen Kane-Leach, Raymond and Janet Murphy & Family, Ujwala Panse ■ Beer Dunn-Gaherin’s Food & Spirits, Harpoon Brewery

In-Kind Donors Anna’s Taqueria, Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Northern New England, Crescent Ridge, Kettle Cuisines, Mia Nina, Needham Exchange Club, Needham House of Pizza, Nicholas’ Pizzeria, Town House of Pizza, Wegmans

Planning for the September 2019 event will be underway soon. If you are interested in being a part of a great committee of community members, please contact Hilary Ryan at hryan@charlesrivercenter.org

5K Run/1 Mile Walk photos by Alison Borrelli
COHEN RECEIVES HONORARY DEGREE

Congratulations to Allison Cohen who received an honorary degree from Mount Ida College where she was an employee for almost five years as a part of the Employment and Day Program at the Charles River Center.

The 119th Mount Ida Commencement Ceremony program listed Allison under Honorary Degrees as “Allison Cohen, Aramark Dining Service & Special Friend to the Mount Ida College Community,” and the description read, “Allison joined Mount Ida in the fall of 2013 and attained celebrity status almost immediately. Allison's school spirit and love for the students was infectious and always on display, often leading the dining team in a Mount Ida cheer at the beginning of the year…Allison has left a piece of herself with every person she has met. The students from the class of 2018 want to congratulate Allison…they feel so lucky to have had her in their lives every day.”

Since the close of Mount Ida College, Allison is working at Regis College and has celebrated her 5-year service anniversary with Aramark.

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

EASTERN BANK AWARDS $10,000 GRANT

Eastern Bank has awarded Charles River Center a $10,000 grant to provide self-defense training and prevention education to 47 women in our Employment and Day Services program.

Charles River supports these women who have autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy or other developmental disability weekdays during which time they are working at a variety of local companies, volunteering at local charities and otherwise active in their neighborhoods. Unfortunately, those with disabilities are seven times more likely to be sexually assaulted as people without them, and they are more likely than others to be assaulted by someone they know.

With this grant funding, Impact:Ability (Impactboston.com) will conduct classes teaching women how to assert and protect themselves in unsafe and uncomfortable situations. All self-defense concepts and skills are taught using hands-on, concrete scenarios. The instructors can teach physical self-protection skills to students with a wide range of mobility and communication styles.

Also, the purchase of Circles Curriculum: Part 2 will enable CRC Coaches to teach our clients about proper relationships. We have been successfully teaching Circles Curriculum Part 1 to all 142 clients (both male and female) in Employment and Day Services. Part 2 helps with concepts of intimacy and relationships.

With this curriculum and these classes, we hope to empower the women we support with knowledge that will help to avoid and prevent sexual assaults.

AIR AWARDS $5,000 COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANT

AIR Worldwide, a risk modeling and data analytics company headquartered in Boston, recently awarded the Charles River Center’s Horticulture Program a $5,000 Community Support Grant. The grant is one of AIR’s community initiatives to award financial and volunteer support to an organization or program that serves their local community. An employee of AIR, Lucy Phillips-Kassanis, was a weekly volunteer at the Horticulture Program this past year, and helped Charles River Center’s Mike Bolio successfully navigate the application process. The funds will help increase ease of access to planting areas around the Grugan Center greenhouse and create a new accessible garden behind the Merritt Center for each of the twelve Therapeutic Day Habilitation rooms.

Allison Cohen was given a standing ovation from the students as she received her honorary degree from Mt. Ida College.
Community partners, donors and volunteers enjoyed a celebration of their contributions to the Charles River Center and its mission. Hosted by the Board of Directors at the Sheraton Needham Hotel on November 13, the evening provided the opportunity for the Charles River Center’s leadership to show its appreciation for everyone’s continued involvement and support. Alice Taylor, Board Chair, and Anne-Marie Bajwa, President and CEO, spoke about the success of Charles River Center resulting from the efforts of so many. As Anne-Marie told the gathering, “The very nature of our mission necessitates the help of others. Our organization is strengthened by our teammates, which is all of you—our donors, board members, staff, families, volunteers and community partners.”

PHIL ROBEY COMMUNITY FUND

(continued from page 1)

- Stephen will begin attending the YMCA on a weekly basis and meet regularly with a personal trainer to carry out his fitness goals.

The mission of the Phil Robey Community Fund is to provide financial support to adult participants served by the Charles River Center. The priority is to enable participants to access the community to learn new skills, stay active, enjoy new experiences and broaden their horizons.

If you are interested in learning more about the fund, please visit our website. www.charlesrivercenter.org/4678/news/announcing-the-phil-robey-community-fund
Charles River supports United way Thanksgiving Project

Once again this year, the Charles River Center community joined in United Way’s Thanksgiving Project to collect a variety of Thanksgiving dinner ‘fixings’ to feed over 6,500 low-income families in our region. Staff volunteers then delivered all of the collected groceries to United Way.

Parent Presentation

Irene Gladstone and Linda Goldman, parents of long-term Therapeutic Day Habilitation participants, presented “From a Parent’s Perspective” to the TDS Case Manager Group in early November. They discussed with candor what a family goes through when their child has disabilities—from the initial diagnosis, to working with school and then adult support systems.

The well-received talk, a modified version of the one regularly presented to students studying to be genetic counselors at Brandeis University, succeeded in deepening and broadening understanding among staff for some of the complex issues faced by families of the disabled.

DSP Recognition Week

During Direct Support Professional Recognition Week, September 9-15, the Charles River Center celebrated the hard work and dedication of its staff with a complimentary breakfast, raffles for prizes, Panera gift cards for residence staff lunches and treats hand delivered to each residence.

B/Spoke and CRC Volunteer at Community Farm

Charles River participants along with B/Spoke Studios staff took part in a Needham Community Farm volunteer day. They prepped the farm for winter, turning over beds, composting and harvesting herbs for drying. Well done, volunteers, for giving back to the community!

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AUTHOR WRITES A GUIDE TO VOTING FOR SON WITH AUTISM

According to her website Susan Senator is, “an author, blogger, journalist and public speaker living in Brookline, Massachusetts. I have three sons, the oldest of whom is in his twenties and has severe autism.” She is the author of Making Peace with Autism: One Family’s Story of Struggle, Discovery and Unexpected Gifts; The Autism Mom’s Survival Guide; and Autism Adulthood: Strategies and Insights for a Fulfilling Life. In order for her son Nat, now a relatively independent young man of 28 who attends Charles River Center’s Employment and Day Services program, to exercise his right to vote in the recent mid-term elections, Senator wrote a 9-page booklet, “Voting is really important. Here’s how to do it.” Happily, the step-by-step instructions and practice ahead of time resulted in a successful voting experience for Nat.
HOW YOU CAN HELP ENABLE, EMPOWER AND ENRICH LIVES

Our 2019 Annual Appeal is in full swing! We have been sharing some of the success stories of individuals supported by the Charles River Center in ways that only your donations make possible.

Their stories highlight their opportunities to participate in not only all that their communities have to offer, but also to give back at many area organizations. Each individual has a unique combination of needs, but with specialized care and planning, Tyler can help with chores at the Sharon Fire Department, Jason delivers Meals on Wheels, Phil volunteers at Needham Community Farm, Shannon plays on a Park and Rec soccer team and Richard works at Sudbury Farms.

If you have donated, thank you! If you haven’t yet, please consider donating securely online at www.charlesrivercenter.org/donate. Large or small, each gift makes a huge difference. Every gift helps enable, empower and enrich lives.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Charles River Center is active on social media, posting photos, current events, information of interest and special updates. Be in the know! Check us out on:

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