The 9th annual 5K Run/1 Mile Walk on September 22 was another huge success with a record number of participants. We thank the runners, walkers, staff and volunteers, the Plugged In Youth Band Program for providing live music at the finish line, the Needham and Wellesley Police for keeping everyone safe on the course, the 5K Committee and our generous sponsors. Thank you! We couldn’t have done it without you!

Thank You Sponsors!
Charles River Center would like to thank the many generous sponsors of our 2019 5K Run/1 Mile Walk.

EVENT Reflexis Systems PLATINUM Geico • The Manion Family • Needham Bank
GOLD Apothecare • Dedham Savings Bank • G.D. McCarthy Site and Utility • Pinewood Custom Homes SILVER Bright Horizons • Percival Brewing Company
BRONZE Advantage Nursing Care • Eastern Bank • Economised Time Services •

(continued on page 4)
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is that time of year again! We all enjoy another holiday season, grateful to be with family and friends, and welcome the new year. Here at Charles River Center, we are grateful to have you as part of our Charles River family, and we, too, look forward to the coming year.

Going Beyond the Basics
As you know, our primary funding source for our programs and services comes from state contracts. We contract with various state entities to provide day habilitation, employment services, family support and residential services. Our state contracts provide for the basics: the facility, staff wages, curriculum development, vehicles and mandated staff training; all of which form the foundation upon which we work to fulfill our mission.

At Charles River Center, we like to go beyond the basics and work to truly help our individuals to lead fulfilling lives according to their personal goals and interests. Some of our most enriching events and programs were developed with this in mind, but they are not funded by our state contracts. They are funded entirely from combination of donations, grants, corporate giving, and from the generosity of time given by our business and community partners devoted to the experiences.

Those programs include the Ellie Bloom Special Olympics, Wings for Autism, the Horticultural Program’s flower CSA, which provided paid employment for the first time, and the Phil Robey Community Fund, a program created to provide financial assistance to our individuals to explore their interests and to potentially make their dreams come true.

I want to thank you all most sincerely for enabling us to provide enrichment programs that extend well beyond the fee-for-service structure of our state contracts. Together, we as a community have invested time and resources into developing the special interests and dreams of the individuals served by Charles River Center.

Support for New Initiatives
As we look to the future, I would like to ask for your support and assistance for three of our current initiatives. The first regards the employment of persons served. Currently, 81% of people with disabilities are unemployed. Also, changes in the law regulating minimum wage and other factors have reduced our ability to develop meaningful group employment opportunities. Those opportunities provide both training for those preparing for individual employment and meaningful work for individuals who may need more comprehensive job coaching.

One of our initiatives in 2020 is to work with our community and business partners on new strategies for job development. After the first of the year, please join us for a roundtable discussion about the issues, especially if you or your network can help us navigate business concerns.

The second initiative involves increasing staff recruitment and retention at Charles River Center. Recently, the Association for Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP) surveyed human service providers across Massachusetts regarding the workforce. Forty-two providers responded. They averaged a 22% vacancy rate for all positions. This is indicative of the statewide workforce crisis for this industry.

We would like to explore the development of a student loan forgiveness program to help attract and keep staff. We ask that if you or those in your personal or professional networks have experience in creating such a benefit program, please contact us.

The last initiative is in technology. Much can be gained in implementing a technology initiative and the positive impact on persons served. Human service organizations are notoriously behind in technology because state contracts do not provide for growth in this area. With your help, we would like to implement a technology initiative to explore advances that could improve the lives of our individuals. For example, we are interested in creating a smart house that allows for the residents to maneuver independently through the home without staff assistance. Staff immersion training through virtual reality is another idea we would like to explore.

With increases in health care costs, the need for better wages for our employees and the overall increase in costs of providing services, we must increasingly rely on the generosity of others. There are many ways in which our families and business and community partners help Charles River Center to reach beyond the basic provision of services. We look forward to your continued involvement.

Together, we will achieve our mission.

Anne Marie Clancy
COMMUNITY PARTNERS CELEBRATED

Community partners, donors and volunteers enjoyed a celebration of their contributions to the Charles River Center and its mission on November 12. Hosted by the CRC Board of Directors at the Needham Golf Club, the evening provided an opportunity to show appreciation for everyone’s continued involvement. Alice Taylor, Board Chair, and Anne-Marie Bajwa, President and CEO, both expressed thanks on behalf of the organization.

“Our supporters enable Charles River to create experiences for our individuals allowing them to explore their interests, engage in preferred activities and, in some cases, make dreams come true.”
Anne-Marie Bajwa

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Thank you to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center – Needham for providing $4,000 in funding for a new overhead lift system located in the Day Habilitation program. Day Habilitation serves adults with significant developmental, physical, and other disabilities who can benefit from a structured program that focuses on increasing functional skill development with therapeutic supports.

Needham Exchange Club’s Charity Golf Tournament raised $10,000 to support the Charles River Center Horticulture Program. The innovative program educates adults with developmental disabilities and autism to grow and tend organic produce and flowers, care for farm animals and interact with the natural environment.

HORTICULTURE PROGRAM UPDATE

2019 Flower CSA

The Horticulture Program’s first Flower CSA was a success. The subscriptions for weekly bouquets of flowers from June through October sold out. In a partnership with the Needham Community Farm, Charles River Center participants grew and harvested the flowers, then arranged them into bouquets that were delivered to Hearth Pizza in Needham Center for pick up. The Flower CSA provided paid employment for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Needham Channel Video

At the end of October, the Needham Channel interviewed Mike Bolio of the Horticulture Program and produced a video about the program that ran on the local cable channel. Watch the video here: youtube.com/charlesriverctr

Phil and Paul Robey of the Needham Exchange Club present a check for $10,000 to Charles River Center’s Anne-Marie Bajwa, Mike Bolio and Alice Taylor.
GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND FOR OUR INDIVIDUALS

Charles River Center’s PT and OT problem-solve equipment needs

The maintenance, updating and replacement of equipment that our Day Habilitation participants use is an important part of owning it, but sometimes very difficult for families to manage. Staff at Charles River Center have stepped in to help whenever needed, and some of their efforts have expanded to become part of our routine services.

Wheelchairs and standers often need adjustments for health and safety as well as comfort. Instead of leaving it to the families to make an appointment and take the equipment in for service, staff have made it a lot easier by arranging for representatives from National Seating & Mobility and New England Prosthetics and Orthotics to visit the Day Habilitation program regularly to check equipment. Paula McDonald, a physical therapist, and Gretchen Proulx, an occupational therapist, work with the visiting technicians to assess individuals for bracing and mobility equipment needs and to make on-site repairs when possible.

When an individual at Charles River Center has old equipment that is losing functionality, something different is needed because of changes in health, or a young person has outgrown their equipment, Paula and Gretchen have helped families with the process of acquiring replacement equipment – either new or refurbished. Because they are familiar with the needs of each of Day Habilitation’s individuals, they have been able to help families navigate the application and, if necessary, the appeals process to get an approval for new equipment from insurance companies. Since insurance only provides replacement wheelchairs every five years, that includes planning for the individual’s needs into the future. If a diagnosed condition is present that may worsen over time, for example, that may mean asking for equipment with additional capabilities, such as tilt function or re-moldable splint materials, before they are necessary.

If a family no longer needs a piece of equipment, Paula and Gretchen will always offer to facilitate a donation so that others may benefit. Wheelchairs and standers are very expensive pieces

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A RECORD-BREAKING ELLIE BLOOM

The 31st Annual Ellie Bloom Special Olympics was an amazing success this year with 155 registered athletes and over 70 volunteers — both record numbers! Held at DeFazio Park in Needham on Saturday, September 14, athletes participated in 10 adaptive sports. All participants received a t-shirt and were presented with a medal at the closing ceremonies.

Charles River was fortunate to have individual volunteers from the community as well as groups from AMP agency, Nobles and Greenough School, Austin Academy, Special Olympics of Massachusetts (SOMA) and, as always, the Needham Exchange Club and Needham Women’s Club. The Ellen Whitney family (Ellen is the daughter of Ellie Bloom) also came with a large group of volunteers. Thank you to all who participated!

Workshops to increase client health and comfort

Recently, a new resource, Permobil Academy, provided a hands-on presentation geared specifically towards PT and OT seating solutions for individuals in wheelchairs. Physical Therapist Paula McDonald says “It was fantastic! Purely educational with no sales pitch, the presentation was tailored to our concerns knowing that we deal with adults in a day habilitation program. What we learned will help us plan in advance for our client’s needs. Permobil has a list of courses and will customize one for us if they don’t already have what we are interested in. We plan to host more workshops, and they will be open to other therapists.”

of equipment costing thousands of dollars, so it makes sense that they are worth refurbishing whenever possible. “Just in the last month, we have donated two standers and a wheelchair,” Paula says. “The wheelchair was a bit wonky, but it doesn’t matter, Requipment picked it up.* They are one of a number of companies that will take a second-hand wheelchair and totally refurbish it. They sterilize it and then fix it with new hardware, fabric, cushions — whatever is needed so that it is as good as new.”

If a family does not have insurance or needs a second wheelchair or brace, which is not covered by insurance, Paula and Gretchen suggest sources like Requipment for refurbished equipment that is free of charge. Families can check current inventory on the website at DMEquipment.org. The only restrictions are that the request must come from the client and the company does have limits on certain pieces of equipment per year.

To learn more about National Seating & Mobility, visit www.nsm-seating.com; New England Prosthetics and Orthotics, visit neops.com; Permobil, visit permobilus.com.

*Reequipment is a program of MassMATCH (www.massmatch.org), the Commonwealth’s initiative to Maximize Assistive Technology in Consumer’s Hands. MassMATCH is funded by the Administration for Community Living of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and managed by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.
A NIGHT OF CELEBRATION

The 2019 Charles River Center Annual Awards Dinner was held on November 22 at Lombardo’s in Randolph. The event recognizes staff, individuals and community members who have made significant contributions to the Charles River Center community. The evening included dinner, dancing and presentation of awards. Winners this year included:

- **Community Award**
  Care Dimensions

- **Earle Mountain Award**
  John Richmond, Behaviorist

- **Special Recognition**
  Ashley Pugliares, Executive Assistant

- **Family and Individual Support**
  Adult Participant of the Year Sally Albano,
  Youth Participant of the Year Henry Newman,
  Staff of the Year Stephanie Mentor,
  Volunteer of the Year Sidonie Granadillo

- **Day Habilitation Services**
  Participant of the Year Tyler McDaniel,
  Staff of the Year Leah Foster

- **Employment and Day Services**
  Participant of the Year Jessica Margolis,
  Staff of the Year for Needham, Talesha Joseph,
  Staff of the Year for Natick, Eleanor Johnson

- **Residential Services**
  Resident of the Year Joan Irving, South Street,
  Staff Person of the Year Sabine Thevenin,
  Stott House

- **Long-Term Staff Honorees**
  25 years Adriana Bones - 20 years Marie Denise Hector, Armide Hyppolite, Garry Merone and Raju Thekaekara - 15 years Jennifer Fagan
  10 years Marina Lisovskis, Michael Maweje, John Richmond, Erion Sollomoni, Jessica Ssenfuka and Elinor Tambi

- **Stott House**
  25 years John Richmond
  15 years Hector, Armide Hyppolite
  10 years Gary Merone
  3 years Sabine Thevenin

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FLAG FOOTBALL SCORES BIG ITS FIRST SEASON

Charles River Center has added a new sport to their Special Olympics program – Flag Football. Practices began on September 9 at Dedham Country Day School, Dedham, MA. The current athletes are from our Family Support and Residential Services programs, Adam, Anthony, Dillan, Henry, Jenny, Michael and Nicholas, and they chose to name the team The Blue Man Group.

Program Coordinator and liaison to Charles River Center Family Support, Sarah Ouellette, fulfills all management duties of scheduling, organizing transportation, budgeting for expenses and fundraising. She is supported by two volunteers who enjoy football themselves, Coach Carder Sprous and Coach Casey Fox. Along with the Charles River athletes, four Unified Partners* complete the roster, Ian Connolly, Veda Donthiredy and brothers Matthew and Kyle Vieira. Five middle school students from Dedham Country Day School’s flag football and soccer teams, also generously volunteer their time to practice with the team. Those students include 7th graders Neil Burmeister, LJ Gage, Gabe Salfity, Owen Hotra, and Willy Conners.

After working hard in practices, the team qualified to play in its first Special Olympics tournament at Westfield State University in Westfield, MA on October 20, 2019. The team continued to practice and other qualifiers followed.

On November 11 the Blue Man Group had a special guest at their last practice – Obi Melifonwuk, a current NFL Patriots defensive back. He gave a pep talk before the state tournament, ran a practice with the coaches, signed autographs and took pictures with the athletes and their families. At the end of the practice, Obi gave each person a sweatshirt from the Patriots Pro Shop at Gillette Stadium. Team manager Sarah Ouellette says, “Being able to coordinate an event for the Charles River Center individuals and their families that was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and seeing everyone so happy and excited is my favorite part of being a coordinator here at Charles River Center.”

The team’s last game on November 16 at Franklin High School was a wonderful finale for the team’s first year. Mike had a touchdown, Adam had four, the team came in fourth place and each athlete proudly received a ribbon.

*Unified Partners are individuals without intellectual disabilities who volunteer to play with Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) for training and competition.
END OF SUMMER COOKOUTS

Both Employment and Day sites held their annual daylong end-of-summer cookouts in September. The Grugan Center had fun activities including games, a petting zoo, music and dancing, face painting and lunch. The party at the Natick Center had a live cover band, Frye Street Radio, dancing, arts and crafts, yard games like cornhole, Wii games and movies. The individuals shopped for, and helped prepare, the pasta salad and garden salad, and were also involved with grilling the burgers and hot dogs. As John Byrne, senior director of Employment and Day Services observed, “The level of cooperation and collaboration that was demonstrated at each of the events was nothing less than spectacular…everyone involved was smiling and having a great time throughout!”

Maria McTernan Bench

Recently, a new landscaped patio area was installed in front of the Paul Merritt Center. It features a bench given in honor of Maria McTernan by her family. Maria was the Director of Development from 1999 to 2014 and a dear friend to many. As John Grugan wrote, “From the day Maria began her work as Director of Development at Charles River Center, she brought a level of passion, commitment and determination that made Charles River a better place.” The next time you are visiting the Paul Merritt Center, we hope you will enjoy the area.

Autumn Hayride

In October, individuals from Charles River Center visited Drumlin Farm in Lincoln, MA. Here Liz enjoys a hayride on a beautiful fall day.
Fall/Winter 2019

THE LAMP

OUR 2019 ANNUAL APPEAL IS HAPPENING

It is that time of year again! Whether you are new to our community, or are friends we have known for a long, long time, we are pleased to have this year’s annual appeal as a way of reaching out to you. Your gift directly impacts the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through our programs and services. We want you to know how much your support is needed, and how very much it is appreciated! To make a donation, or for more information on the ways you can support our programs, visit www.charlesrivercenter.org/donate

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Would you, or someone you know, like to make a difference in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities? We have opportunities at our headquarters in Needham, our facility in Natick and in our 28 small group homes throughout Boston MetroWest. For a list of current openings and to apply online, please visit www.charlesrivercenter.org/careers

INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSINGS

If Charles River Center’s day programs and administration offices need to close due to inclement weather, by 6:00 a.m. on the day of closing, a message will play on the main phone number, 781-972-1000, and will also be posted on the Charles River Center website homepage at www.charlesrivercenter.org

FOLLOW US!

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:

facebook.com/TheCharlesRiverCenter
instagram.com/charlesrivercenter
twitter.com/charlesrivercen

A leader in supporting people with developmental disabilities