SCHOOL DAYS

By Kristy Hargreaves, Director of Employment and Day Services

Friendships. Knowledge. Skills. Sense of community. Maturity. Self-confidence. These are all qualities and results that I obtained during my college experience which helped to shape me. Everyone can benefit from having an opportunity for greater education and socialization. Two community-based day programs at the Charles River Center have been sharing in unique programs at various local colleges in the pursuit of strengthening these areas.

The Futures programs in Needham and Natick are part of the agency’s Employment and Day Services division. The programs focus on skill-building and gaining independence through opportunities of volunteerism, community inclusion, and life skills groups. The Futures programs also include a college component. The vision is to give the individuals the experience of being on a college campus amongst student life and to have the opportunity to learn and grow through educational lessons and relationship-building. So far, participants in Futures have attended Bridgewater State University, Emmanuel College, Becker College, and Curry College.

A group of individuals from both the Needham and Natick programs attended an eight-week Self-Advocacy Leadership Series at Bridgewater State University during the spring and summer of 2016. This program was sponsored by the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council and Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong. Topics included learning about self, communication, feelings, values, team-building, leadership, and taking political action. Each individual presented a speech that they developed at the graduation ceremony. According to Tiffany, a participant in the Needham program, “I had a good time. The classes taught me how to stand up for myself.”

“Emmanuel College taught me responsibility. They taught us to take the future into our own hands.”

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UPDATES FROM THE HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

The cold and rainy spring did not put a damper on the Charles River Center’s Horticulture Program. (In fact, our lettuce couldn’t be happier!). Nearly 100 individuals are visiting the Needham Community Farm in small groups, five days a week, to plant, tend and harvest crops. The seeds were started in the greenhouse at the Charles River Center back in February. So far, we have harvested radishes and lettuce mixes, which were delivered to the Natick and Needham food pantries. Tomatoes, kale and broccoli are all in the ground. We are

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UPCOMING EVENTS

📅 Saturday, September 16
Ellie Bloom Special Olympics
DeFazio Park
Needham, MA

📅 Sunday, September 24
7th Annual 5K Run/1 Mile Walk
Charles River Center
Needham, MA

📅 Friday, November 10
Annual Awards Dinner
Lombardo’s
Randolph, MA
This time of year, the Charles River Center along with others in the disability community is focused on the Massachusetts state budget. Thankfully, as the budget winds through the legislative process, the Governor’s budget remains largely intact. The Governor’s budget demonstrated strong support for long term supports and services funded by the Department of Developmental Services:

- Community Residential Services increased to $46.6 million
- Day and Employment Services increased to $12.3 million
- Funding for young adults turning 22 years old is nearly fully funded at $16.7 million
- Services for the newly eligible adults with autism without intellectual disabilities increased by $1 million
- Family Support and Respite services is level funded
- Support to families through DESE/DDS grants is level funded

In May, the Senate Ways and Means Budget agreed with the House Budget and the Governor’s Budget on these important areas. We are grateful to the Senate Ways and Means Chairperson, Karen Spilka, and the committee members for recognizing and supporting the needs of families and adults with disabilities living in the community.

The budget is currently in the conference committee where differences between House and the Senate budget proposals are deliberated. One of the issues that must be reconciled is the decrease in state revenue projections. Reportedly, the tax revenue shortfall could be as much as $575 million. If this projection is correct, significant changes in the state’s FY 2018 budget will be necessary.

We are hopeful that with advocacy from the disability community, the effects would be minimal to the line items that affect our services.

Even more concerning than the state budget is what is happening in Washington with the American Health Care Act (AHCA). As you know, AHAC was developed by the current administration to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The Senate is currently reviewing the AHCA and will present its version in July. This act contains provisions that will dramatically affect the disability community. Reportedly, it includes over $800 billion in cuts to Medicaid over ten years, and a shift in costs to the states. Governor Charlie Baker has stated that Massachusetts will lose $1 billion in federal funds if this bill is passed. This would directly affect the people we serve at Charles River.

Massachusetts currently receives federal matching dollars for community-based services such as Day and Employment and Community Residential Services. Drastic reduction in Medicaid funding would be devastating to families and people with disabilities who want to work, live, volunteer, and recreate within their communities.

We are fortunate in Massachusetts to have a strong delegation that believes in our mission and is passionate about the rights of people with disabilities. I recently attended two forums held by the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers in which Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Joe Kennedy addressed this very topic. Their commitment to their constituents with disabilities was resolute. But both said that we need to advocate with great zeal to stop the AHCA from becoming law without protections for the nation’s most vulnerable and most deserving of quality, long-term supports and services.

Collectively, our voices are loud and strong. This has been proven in the past, when we stood together to fight for the rights of the disability community. We are working with The Arc of Massachusetts and 18 affiliates to advocate for the protection of Medicaid and the community service system. Please help us now and in the future by staying informed on the issues and acting when necessary. Be sure to visit The Arc of Massachusetts’ website, which explains current issues facing the developmental disability community and provides clear action steps for advocacy. Thank you for your continued support of the Charles River Center as, together, we continue to advocate for those we serve.

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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR THE 5K RUN/1 MILE WALK 9/24

We hope you can join us for this fun, family event to support CRC. The USA Track and Field-certified course begins and ends at the Charles River Center and loops through the scenic back roads of Wellesley and Needham. Enjoy food, drinks and festivities after the run. All abilities welcome with free T-shirts to the first 300 entries. To register, visit: www.CharlesRiverCenterRoadRace.com.
SCHOOL DAYS

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stated Brian, an individual from the Needham Futures program. The program has attended three semesters of educational sessions at the school. The college students designed curriculum based on the individuals’ preferences and goals. The individuals were able to meet with students regularly throughout the semesters, develop relationships, and learn about various topics.

The Natick Futures program attended Becker College during the spring of 2017 semester. According to Nancy, the Life Skills Coach who supported the group, “As a staff member, I loved this experience. The individuals were able to see many areas of the school.” Six individuals met with two students on campus weekly and explored various academic departments and recreational areas such as Health and Nutrition, Global Citizenship, Crime Lab Forensics, Gaming Design, and the athletic fields. The two Becker College students solicited feedback from the group and designed curriculum based on their interests. Peter D., a participant of the program loved the experience. He stated, “I liked Becker because I learned about the culture. We toured different areas. My favorite was the gaming department.”

Individuals in the Needham Futures program have also attended two semesters at Curry College. Students of the college along with a professor designed programming each semester based on various life skills topics. They met with individuals from Needham Futures who were paired up with a student mentor. Together, they explored subjects such as music, nutrition, social skills, money management, stress relief, and self-esteem. At the end of each semester, the students hosted a ceremony and reception for the individuals and their families. Danielle loved her time at Curry College. “I really liked the students. I learned about the school and I liked Professor Carey a lot!”

The collaborations are mutually beneficial for both the individuals in Futures and for the students and college communities. As Curry College student Gabby stated, “This has been such an incredible opportunity. As a group, we had so many laughs, smiles, and good times during the semester. We have learned from each other and it was amazing to be a part of.” For Futures, the sky is the limit. We will continue to explore higher education and find opportunities to grow and learn how to be the best versions of ourselves.

Matthew F. proudly receives his certificate from Curry College.

FAREWELL ROBERTA!

On Monday, May 15th a farewell reception was held for Roberta Witherow, who was an Art Instructor in Day Habilitation for 15 years. Roberta brought creativity and compassion to her job every day. During her time at Charles River, the Day Habilitation enrollment nearly doubled, and we instituted an internship program in Expressive Arts; meanwhile, Roberta continued to come up with new ideas and new projects week after week! We are very appreciative of her commitment and hard work and wish her all the best in retirement. If you would like to make a contribution to the Art Therapy program in her honor, please use the enclosed envelope and mention Roberta in the notes.
A terrific time was had by all at the 22nd Annual Building a Dream Gala held at the Westin in Waltham on Friday, May 5th. Over 300 people came out to celebrate the work of the honorees and agency, and the event raised over $200,000 to support the ongoing work of the Charles River Center. Tim McCoy spoke warmly of his experience hiring people with developmental disabilities in his McDonald’s franchises. (Freia David, a Charles River Center participant, retired from his Needham McDonald’s last summer.) Richard Delaney, who is a role model for his peers and a hard worker at Sudbury Farms in Needham, charmed the crowd with his acceptance speech – thanking all who have helped him along the way. We were grateful to have Emily Riemer as our charming emcee once again, and Patrick Collins was a sincere and witty auctioneer who got the audience bidding!

We were particularly touched by the outpouring of response to the fund-a-need auction for the Health and Wellness Initiative – a fund to purchase exercise equipment and a nutritionist consultant for our homes. Thanks to the generosity of the audience, we blew away our goal with a record $38,800 raised!

Thank you to all who attended, donated, and volunteered. Be sure to visit our website to see a photo gallery from the jovial and successful evening.
Thank you to all of our Building a Dream 2017 Sponsors.
Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

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and Benefits Group
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CONGRATULATIONS
TO THE BUILDING
A DREAM RAFFLE
WINNERS

Enjoy your prizes!

William Axt: $1,000
Bill Delaney: Tickets to
James Taylor & Bonnie Raitt
Henry Smallenberger:
$200 to Ruth’s Chris Steak House
The mobile farm stand is almost ready.

WINGS FOR AUTISM SOARS

Over 150 children and their families visited Logan Airport on Saturday, May 13th so that they could take a free, “test run” through the airport boarding process. This was the Charles River Center’s 13th Wings for Autism event at Logan Airport, where families were able to practice entering the airport, obtaining boarding passes, going through security and boarding a plane.

The program, which is held twice a year at Logan, was founded by the Charles River Center in 2011 and has reached national adoption in partnership with The Arc of the U.S. Volunteers from the Charles River Center, TSA, MassPort, and the airlines generously donate their time (and the airplanes) to make this impactful event happen. A special thanks to Jeri Foutter and the team at Cambridge Savings Bank, who have volunteered at the past several events!

Wings for Autism by the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Year the program was founded by the Charles River Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:</td>
<td># of events held at Logan Airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,572:</td>
<td># of families who have attended New England events run by CRC (Logan, Bradley, Manchester, Worcester &amp; Hyannis airports)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:</td>
<td># of airlines that have donated aircraft for New England events: American, Delta, jetBlue, United</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>The year the program was brought nationwide by The Arc of the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:</td>
<td># of airports that have held Wings events across America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16,001:</td>
<td># of people who have attended Wings events across America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kolongi was able to practice before his first flight.

“We will be taking my grandson, who is on the autism spectrum, on a trip to Disney World in the fall. His first taste of what it will be like to travel the airways provided all of us with a sense of excitement and great anticipation!”

“Because of my grandson’s experience with Wings for Autism, he was able to fly perfectly last month. We don’t think that would have happened without this experience!”

“Thank you for a wonderful event today! It was my son’s first time in a plane. We loved the mock run-through of going on a trip. The staff were amazing! My son even checked out the toilet... very loud flush but glad we checked it out. You guys ROCK!”

UPDATES FROM THE HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

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PLAYING FOR CHARITIES FOR 30 YEARS

The drizzle didn’t dampen the spirits of more than 100 golfers who enjoyed a day of golf to benefit the Charles River Center. The Needham Exchange Club held its 30th annual Charity Golf Tournament on Monday, May 22 at the beautiful Marlborough Country Club. It was a full day packed with lunch, dinner, golf and socializing – with some lighthearted raffles and contests along the way to keep things lively.

The tournament was founded in 1987 by Joe Gillen and Don MacIntyre, active members of the Needham Exchange Club, who had an idea to partner their love of golf with the charitable focus of the Club. They decided to start a golf tournament, with proceeds to benefit local nonprofits, and 30 years later, the tournament is still going strong.

While the format of the day hasn’t changed much over the years (why change a good thing?), the Club has visited over 15 well-respected golf clubs, including the Charles River Country Club, Blue Hills, and Waverly Oaks – allowing the players, many of whom play year after year, to experience different courses. Exchange Club volunteers spend months planning the event and staff it during the day.

The funds raised have made a significant impact on local charities. The Exchange Club has donated proceeds to the Tippett Home, the Needham Community Council, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the Charles River Center, which has been the beneficiary for many years, and is now a partner for the Tournament. This year, funds raised will support Wings for Autism and will provide scholarships for camps and weekends at the Sharon Respite home.

A special thanks to co-chairs Peter Dorsey and Ann Walsh, and to the Needham Exchange Club for your steadfast support of our mission to enhance the lives of children and adults with developmental disabilities.

A RALLY FOR THE CHARLES RIVER CENTER

Twenty-seven lucky people drove ten Ferraris and two Maseratis from Ferrari of New England in Norwood to Wellfleet on a beautiful Saturday, June 10th. After a carefree ride, drivers arrived (via police escort) at PB Boulangerie Bistro in Wellfleet for a gourmet lunch and private kitchen tour.

While participants enjoyed their meal, the cars in the parking lot drew some attention! In return for the event, drivers were asked to make a donation to a local charity, and the Charles River Center was the recipient of $1,825, thanks to Charles River Center sibling Maria Rondinelli-Lopez who works at Ferrari of New England.

This parking lot filled with Ferraris caused quite a stir in Wellfleet!
LOOKING FOR SHARED LIVING PROVIDERS...
IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW?

Shared Living is a residential model where an individual with a disability lives with a member of the community – it can be a family, couple, person living alone, or any type of family unit that is willing to share their home, time, and love. The caregiver assists the individual with any personal care needs (if necessary), medical needs, transportation, community integration, recreational activities, and day-to-day needs.

Through the natural supports of the caregiver and occurrences of day-to-day life, the individual is able to become an essential part of his or her community.

The caregiver receives:

• A monthly, tax-free stipend for his or her dedication and hard work while caring for the individual
• Respite time
• The support of a case manager from the Charles River Center for guidance and assistance
• All necessary trainings to ensure comfort with the individual’s needs
• A new and memorable life experience that will have a lasting impact!

A Shared Living arrangement can be a wonderful experience for everyone involved. Are you interested or would you like to learn more? Please contact Kayla Condon at (781) 972-1081 or KCondon@charlesrivercenter.org.