

## EMPLOYMENT REORGANIZES TO BETTER FIT NEEDS

Big changes have been going on in the Employment and Day Services division – mostly located in the Dwight building in Needham but also in our office on Strathmore Road in Natick. As part of the state’s



Tiffany volunteers at Buddy Dogs



Richard works at Sudbury Farms

Employment First policy – an initiative that encourages integrated, individual employment for those supported by the Department of Developmental Services – we have now reorganized the division to better align the 152 individuals in this program with their skill sets and interests.

Groups were chosen by the individuals, their families and case managers based upon skills, desires and preferences.

All programs are community-based day services and have the following components:

- Life/social skills development
- Educational groups
- Health and wellness education
- Individualized goal development
- Community volunteerism and recreation
- Positive behavior supports
- Individual and group employment opportunities
- Horticulture

**Opportunities to Work:** The goal for people in this program is to find and maintain individual paid community jobs. Trainings and groups are focused on the development of work ability, resume building, and professionalism.

**Futures:** A group for those who want to improve life skills, continue education, and be active members of their community. The goal is to provide a wide variety of curriculum and community volunteer activities which will encourage new and improved experiences for individuals.

**Foundations:**

For individuals who work best in a structured and consistent environment, the goal is to teach individuals appropriate behaviors so that they may become independent and active members of their communities.



Chris works on his computer skills

**Opportunities & Visions:** Individuals will be active members of the community and will continue to learn through education and life skills building groups, but a main focus will be improving communication skills through enhancing speech and language development.

**Community Choices:** For individuals who want to find employment in adaptive settings, the goal is to explore community and job opportunities. For the next few months, individuals in this program will have brief

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## FOCUS ON PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME

At the Charles River Center, we provide services and programs for over 900 children and adults with a large variety of developmental disabilities. One of these is a little-known genetic syndrome called Prader-Willi syndrome, affecting approximately 1 in 15,000 people. Currently, Charles River supports fifteen men and women with this syndrome, and we receive many calls from families due to our success with treatment and support.

Usually diagnosed in early childhood, Prader-Willi syndrome is typically characterized by low muscle tone, short stature (when not treated with growth hormone), behavioral problems and cognitive disabilities – according to the Prader-Willi Syndrome Association. Perhaps the largest challenge is the chronic feeling of insatiable hunger and a slowed metabolism that can lead to excessive eating and life-threatening obesity.

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### SAVE THE DATE

**Friday, April 29th**  
**Building a Dream Gala**  
The Westin  
Waltham, MA

**Monday, May 23rd**  
**Needham Exchange Club Golf Tournament**  
Marlborough Country Club  
Marlborough, MA

**Thursday, June 23rd**  
**Wings for Autism Travels to Disney**  
Logan Airport  
Boston, MA

## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBER GERALD McTernan



We are very pleased that **Gerry McTernan** recently joined the Board of Directors at the Charles River Center. Gerry is a partner with the law firm of Russell, McTernan, McTernan & Fruci, LLP, specializing in elder law and estate planning. Gerry, who is an active member of the Massachusetts chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, is a graduate of Ohio University and received his Juris Doctor degree from Suffolk University Law School. A resident of Needham, Gerry is the father of Lori, who participates in Day Hab and lives in a Charles River residence. In his spare time, Gerry enjoys golfing and spending time with his three adult children.

## EMPLOYMENT

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opportunities to engage in subcontract work as they continue to explore community activities.

The new programs began in late November, and individuals have adjusted well, made new friends, and are greatly improving their skill sets. “In addition to implementing these programmatic changes, we have also renovated the building and built an accessible greenhouse for our exciting horticultural program,” said Heather Lomartire, VP of Employment and Day Services. “There are many more choices for people to engage in meaningful and enjoyable activities that further their involvement in the community based on personal preferences.”

## LET THE 60TH CELEBRATION BEGIN!

It is remarkable to think that 60 years ago, in April of 1956, parents of 15 children with developmental disabilities met and decided to start a preschool. The preschool was held three days a week at Carter Memorial Methodist Church and the cost to parents was \$1 a month. Sixty years later, Charles River now serves over 900 people, staffs 24 homes, helps more than 70 individuals a year find employment in the community, offers a vibrant array of family support services, and much more.

It is a good time to reflect upon the remarkable progress we have made in the I/DD world – focusing much more on inclusion – as well as the accomplishments of individuals supported by the agency. To celebrate our successes and the significant progress that has been made in the developmental disability world, look for many fun events in the coming year... a celebratory Gala, surprises at our special events, and much more.

## THE BENEFITS OF A MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHARLES RIVER CENTER

### Have You Renewed Your Membership?

The Charles River Center is an affiliated chapter of The Arc of the United States and The Arc of Massachusetts. Together, we shape public policy and educate the public, but most importantly, we work hard to preserve and improve the current programs and services needed by those with developmental disabilities.

For \$50.00 you will become a member of the Charles River Center, The Arc of Massachusetts, and The Arc, and join a grassroots network that promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

### Benefits from the Charles River Center:

- Receive our newsletter, *The Lamp*, in the mail
- Automatic membership to The Arc of Massachusetts and The Arc of the United States

### Benefits from The Arc of Massachusetts:

- Receive their quarterly *Advocate* newsletter in the mail
- Receive up-to-date news on local, state and national events via their ListServ

### Benefits from The Arc:

- Receive a quarterly newsletter, bi-monthly e-newsletter, a weekly roundup of major events on Capitol Hill and up-to-the minute information about The Arc’s advocacy activities, programs and events
- Services and Programs
  - ~ Mercer Consumer, offering quality protection plans from health coverage to affordable life and accidental death and dismemberment insurance
  - ~ Liberty Mutual, providing a group insurance program that comes with special savings and benefits on auto, home and renters insurance
- Join an active online community and social media channels and attend events hosted by The Arc
- Receive discounted registration to annual national events such as the Disability Policy Seminar and the National Convention
- Get free subscriptions to *Apostrophe Magazine* and *ABILITY Magazine*

To renew your membership, visit our website [www.charlesrivercenter.org](http://www.charlesrivercenter.org) or you may mail a check for \$50.00 made out to The Charles River Center in the enclosed envelope. Please note “Membership” on your check. **Thank you.**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



John Grugan, President

### Ensuring Quality at the Charles River Center

We at the Charles River Center recognize our responsibility to the people and families who utilize our services to provide the best possible programs and supports that we possibly can. We must provide effective and safe services, in quality environments, that focus on the individual needs of each and every person who relies on us. This can be a daunting task in an industry that experiences high turnover and low pay.

One of the reasons Charles River is an excellent agency is that the culture of our company puts the individual first. I take pride in the fact that our staff are committed to the people they support and that they recognize this is a priority. **We try to instill in each and every staff person that those who participate in our programs deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, and that they must be the center of everything we do here at Charles River.**

In order to ensure that we maintain high standards, we have created a task force of Senior Staff, headed by Anne-Marie Bajwa, our Chief Operating Officer, to examine our organizational culture with a goal of identifying those things that make us a highly respected organization and build on them. In this process, we must also identify and articulate aspects of our culture that can be improved. Once these items are identified and acknowledged, we will be better prepared to work hard to further shape our culture.

In addition to the work our Senior Managers are doing to shape a strong quality culture, we have begun to implement a formal Quality Assurance Department charged with the responsibility of carrying out the following tasks:

- Ensure full implementation of agency-wide evaluations and analysis of data focused on outcomes for those served
- Conduct satisfaction surveys among individuals and their families, as well as funding sources
- Staff our Human Rights Committee and train Human Rights Officers for each program
- Train managers in state and federal regulatory compliance and Charles River Center operating policies and procedures
- Train staff in our Human Rights practices and policies

- Conduct annual comprehensive program audits and consult with management to help improve services identified as needing enhancement
- Staff our Health and Safety Committee and ensure health and safety inspections are conducted for all of our facilities and vehicles
- Monitor and report on all incidents and analyze trends

I am pleased to announce that Julie Hamilton, a Charles River Center employee for over ten years, has assumed full time responsibility as our new Coordinator of Quality Assurance.

We know we provide high-quality services and are proud that we have a fine reputation among our peers. But those we serve need and deserve excellence 24/7, so we must constantly evaluate our processes and procedures to ensure that our reputation for being a leader in serving people with developmental disabilities remains strong.

## PRADER-WILLI SYNDROME

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In order to control obesity, people with Prader-Willi syndrome have a strict, set number of calories they can consume each day, but they are constantly desiring to eat. In order to prevent binge eating, there may be locks on refrigerators and cabinets to limit access to food.

Albert D., an individual with Prader-Willi Syndrome at the Charles River Center, says that going out to restaurants is his biggest challenge. He enjoys the sociability, but he must get the menu in advance and discuss meal options with a nutritionist beforehand.

Regina Williams, a Case Manager at Charles River who has been to many national conference and trainings on the syndrome, wanted to learn more about Prader-Willi syndrome because she found the individuals intelligent, expressive and loving. Several staff members have been specifically trained in the needs of this population.

Because those with Prader-Willi Syndrome can be precise and committed workers, many individuals supported by Charles River are working in the community. Andy, our front desk attendant at the Merritt Center, said, "Living with Prader-Willi can be difficult because others may have trouble with their diet and don't want to exercise. So it's hard for people like me – who want to maintain their weight and exercise. But living with Prader-Willi gets better as the years go by, and as I see the progress of the people who live with the same disorder as me." With the help of the Charles River Center and good friends, Andy has dropped his weight from over 300 to 125 pounds, is healthy, and has made great accomplishments.

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# THE LAMP

## THANKS TO RODMAN RIDERS!



Seven valiant riders and three virtual riders participated in the Rodman Ride for Kids this fall. The Rodman Ride, held in Foxboro, is the nation's #1 largest one-day fundraiser supporting at-risk kids, and riders can choose to ride 25, 50 or even 100 miles over a beautiful course. Together, the group raised \$45,000, which is matched at 6% by the Ride and will be used to support Charles River children's social and recreational programs. **Thank you, riders, for your efforts, and thanks to everyone who donated to show their support.** We are already looking forward to next year's event. Let us know if you would like to join the team, and stay tuned for additional information on how you can support their efforts.



Mark Cacciolfi braved the 50-mile



The Charles River Riders

## 20<sup>TH</sup> WINGS EVENT AT LOGAN



On their way to Wings

On November 7th, the Charles River Center in collaboration with American, Delta, JetBlue and United, held the 20th Wings for Autism event at Logan airport, with over 150 families participating in this free event.

The program, created by staff from the Charles River Center in 2011, allows families to familiarize themselves with the airport and travel procedures. Children practice: entering the airport, getting a boarding pass, checking bags, going through security, and boarding the aircraft. Practicing these steps helps establish a travel routine – so important for many children with autism who rely on repetition and structure.

The rapid growth of the program is a testament to its worth. While the Charles River Center coordinates Wings events in New England, The Arc of the United States coordinates events nationally, and programs are now held in 22 cities across the nation with thousands of families participating. These Wings for Autism events have shown families that air travel is indeed possible. Safe travels!