During this unprecedented health crisis, Charles River Center’s Leadership Team has responded by initiating plans for:

• Keeping our residential persons served safe in their homes
• Protecting our staff and those we interact with
• Aggressively establishing sources of medications and supplies
• Maintaining a level of service and connections to those in private homes
• Providing ongoing communications through the website, Constant Contact emails, social media, letters and phone calls

Charles River Center’s President, Anne-Marie Bajwa, has been issuing regular updates regarding what steps are being taken to ensure the safety and well-being of Charles River Center staff and persons served. For all updates, including the most recent update, and resources, please visit www.charlesrivercenter.org/news/COVID-19-updates-and-resources/

For trusted information about the COVID-19 crisis, please monitor www.mass.gov/COVID19 frequently. You can also call 211 from any cell phone or landline for information, referrals, and advice.

SUPPORTING OUR MISSION THROUGH THE COVID-19 FUND

Charles River Center has had to adopt new measures to keep residents and staff healthy and, at the same time, provide creative opportunities that keep persons served active and engaged while everyone resides at home. These actions have financial consequences that have strained the organization’s resources.

You can help. No matter the size of your gift, you will enable us to cover some of the unanticipated expenses that we have incurred as a result of this health crisis: additional cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, food and program supplies for our 28 residential programs. Your gift will also provide necessary financial assistance for persons served living on their own, as well as families who are facing unanticipated costs every day as a result of COVID-19.

To make a donation, please visit the website at www.charlesrivercenter.org/donate/ and select COVID-19 Fund from the pull-down menu. Thank you for your support, it truly makes a difference!
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we prepared this issue of *The Lamp*, we debated about the appropriateness of sending it given all that has transpired since the healthcare crisis of COVID-19 began. In the end, we decided that now more than ever it was important to publish this record of events at the Charles River Center. Our lights-on activities have been turned upside down and the most significant and challenging work we have ever faced dominates our days.

In this issue of *The Lamp* are articles about some of our activities before the State mandated closings, and some coverage about what has happened since. Our Leadership Team communicates regularly regarding the operational changes that have occurred and continue to evolve following the CDC guidance. In brief, putting in place procedures for the operations of our residential homes and family support system, emergency preparedness, personnel deployment, supplies acquisition, staffing and management, and safety protocols and health monitoring. All staff have had to adapt to new roles and responsibilities to meet the challenges inherent in these changes and I am very proud of the job they are doing.

All our divisions are as active as possible. Residential homes are busy maintaining schedules for enjoyable and interesting activities always mindful of residents’ safety. Family Support continues to communicate with all our families and provide access to resources and online workshops. Staff visit – in-person or virtually – the persons served by our Individual Support program to make sure they have everything they need. Day Habilitation is currently closed, but the space is now set up as a recovery center for our residents who have contracted the virus and need to isolate from their unaffected housemates. Employment and Day Services and Day Habilitation staff continue regular check-ins with persons served and provide engaging activities, including opportunities for persons served to connect with their peers. Our nursing and clinical teams continue to be an incredible support to families, staff, and persons served, especially during these challenging times.

For now, most of our administrative departments are working from home, keeping all systems on track. That includes Accounting and Finance, Development, Human Resources, and IT. The hard work and professionalism of these staff members is very much appreciated as well.

Another major result of the closing is the number of wonderful events that have been canceled: the Building A Dream Gala, the Exchange Club of Needham’s Golf Tournament, and our Wings for Autism at Boston’s Logan Airport and the Worcester Regional Airport.

Some of these are important fundraising events, and the social as well as the financial impact of their loss is hitting the Charles River Center community hard. However, it is the strength of our community that will see us through this crisis. We are fortunate in many ways, and have much to be thankful for – our supporters, families, staff and leadership – as we continue to work and plan for the brighter days ahead when Charles River will emerge stronger and more united than ever in our commitment to providing quality, individualized, enriching services.

Anne Marie Bajwa

---

WELCOME OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Francys Boechat, RN, has joined Charles River Center as the Director of Healthcare Services, overseeing the provision of health care in all departments. She comes to us from Nizhoni Health Systems, a Massachusetts provider of home-based health care and support, where for nine years she was a clinical nurse manager and educator to approximately 800 nurses. Prior to that, she gained clinical and supervisory experience as a Charge Nurse at Elizabeth Seton Nursing Home in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Francys Earned a Bachelor of Science in nursing from Chamberlain University and her RN from Excelsior College.

In welcoming her to Charles River Center, President and CEO Anne-Marie Bajwa commented that Francys, “has a demonstrated passion for ensuring quality care for people served in community settings. I have full confidence that her knowledge and experience will carry her through, as we work together to manage the challenges before us.”
The annual Building A Dream Gala, scheduled for Friday, May 1, 2020 at The Westin Waltham Boston, had to be canceled due to the coronavirus health crisis.

Every year, that gala is the largest single source of revenue for the Charles River Center and our inability to hold it is going to have a serious negative impact on the funding that sustains our programs and services, as well as losing our opportunity to engage with the donors, families and community supporters.

To help mitigate the financial shortfall, an online auction was held Saturday, April 25 to Saturday, May 2. It included over 50 items including artwork, jewelry, concert, theater and sports tickets, restaurant gift certificates and more. The auction was a success, raising much needed funds.

If you missed the auction and would like to help fill the gap in our funding during this extraordinary time by making a gift large or small to support the work of Charles River Center, you can, easily and securely online at www.charlesrivercenter.org/donate/

UPDATE ON THE BUILDING A DREAM GALA

**Save the Date!**
The gala has been rescheduled for Friday, April 30, 2021

A Note of Thanks
Charles River Center is fortunate to have incredible supporters – persons served, families, corporations and community partners. Thank you for your continued support of our work on behalf of people with intellectual and development disabilities and autism.

We would like to acknowledge this year’s Building A Dream Gala sponsors for their generosity and commitment.

**Platinum Sponsors** • Leiser Corporation • Louise Condon Realty • The Norfolk & Dedham Group • Gold Sponsors • Dedham Savings • Exchange Club of Needham • The Family of J.P. Manion • MacFarlane Energy • Needham Bank • Roche Bros. • USI Insurance Services and Jeffrey J. Fox, CPCU, ARM • 360 Corporate Benefit Advisors • Silver Sponsors • Anne-Marie and Zahoor Bajwa • Certa-Pro Painters of Needham and Newton • Direct Federal Credit Union • Jill and Jim Fadule • Needham Golf Club Charities • Paul Flaherty Plumbing and Heating

**Dedham Savings**
In March, Dedham Savings Community Foundation donated $6,500 to Charles River Center to be used to fund marketing collateral campaigns. Pictured from left to right are Liz Bissell, Senior Vice President, Marketing, Dedham Savings, Hillary Ryan, Vice President, Development, Anne-Marie Bajwa, President and CEO, Charles River Center and Mark Ingalls, Trustee, Dedham Savings Community Foundation.

**Flutie Foundation Grant for $5,000**
The $5,000 grant from the Flutie Foundation will support a group of persons served with autism and/or developmental disabilities in the Employment and Day Services program to complete the first career readiness track for the Charles River Center. The participating persons served will complete a five-day career readiness bootcamp composed of exercises to identify personal and professional goals, communication skills development, workplace tours, and interview preparation with business professionals.

Following the career readiness bootcamp is a six-week internship in the selected career path with regular check-ins from a veteran job coach to ensure the hands-on training is going well. Lastly, the individual meets with the job coach to discuss the experience and receive supports in securing a permanent job or recommendations, depending on the individual’s goal.

**Golf Tournament has been rescheduled!**
Save the new date of June 7, 2021 for the 33rd Annual Needham Exchange Club Charity Golf Tournament to benefit Charles River Center.

Since the 1950s, the Needham Exchange Club has been a dedicated partner with the Charles River Center. We are extremely grateful for their ongoing commitment to our mission. We are also very excited that the rescheduled tournament will take place, as originally planned, at the LeBaron Hills Country Club in Lakeville, Massachusetts. We look forward to seeing you there!

**Valentine’s Day Party**
Another wonderful annual Valentine’s Day Party was held this past February, generously put on by Louise Condon Realty.

All the persons served at Charles River Center are invited to the afternoon event at the Village Club in Needham and enjoy music, dancing and refreshments.

**St. Mary of the Hills Donation to Autism Programs**
A generous donation was presented to Charles River on behalf of St. Mary of the Hills School. The student fundraiser ran a Dress Down Day to benefit autism.

Natalia, the daughter of a Charles River Center staff member, and her friend Julianna presented the check to President and CEO, Anne-Marie Bajwa after nominating our agency.

Thank you, Natalia, Julianna, St. Mary of the Hills and all the students and faculty for selecting our agency’s autism programs as the beneficiary!
**AROUND TOWN**

**Bajwa and Ryan Attend Needham Night Dinner**

President and CEO Anne-Marie Bajwa and VP Development Hilary Ryan attended the Newton Needham Chamber of Commerce annual Needham Night Dinner on January 29 at the Sheraton Needham Hotel, Needham. Needham Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick was honored by the chamber for her 30 years of service to the town, and food entrepreneur Stacy Madison was the guest speaker.

Fitzpatrick has been a friend to the Charles River Center because of her dedication and commitment to all citizens of Needham, especially individuals with disabilities. Speaker Stacy Madison founded Stacy’s Pita Chip Company, acquired by PepsiCo, Inc. in 2006. She now operates Stacy’s Juice Bar on Highland Avenue in Needham and employs Dennis M., a Charles River Center Employment and Day participant.

Needham Night is an annual Newton Needham Chamber of Commerce event focused on the people, the nonprofits and the companies that make Needham a great community and a great place to do business.

**Charles River Center at Needham High School**

Needham High School’s One Day 2020 on February 12 was a class-free day filled with workshops, activities and seminars for students to explore – one of which was community service. Charles River Center was invited to talk to students about our internships and volunteer opportunities at the “Service Fair.” Program Director of Family Support Laura Caligiuri represented Charles River Center.

**UNITED STATES CENSUS 2020**

Every ten years, the U.S. government counts and collects information on everyone in the country, in part to help make decisions on funding programs. It is important that those with disabilities be counted correctly so there will be enough funding of programs and services that benefit those with developmental and intellectual disabilities and autism. Respond by August 14 online at my2020census.gov, by phone, 844-330-2020, or by mailing your completed questionnaire to U.S. Census Bureau National Processing Center, 1201 E 10th Street, Jeffersonville, IN 47132. For more information, visit www.census.gov or The ArcMA site at thearcofmass.org/census

**SENIOR VISITS CHARLES RIVER CENTER**

State Senator Becca Rausch toured Charles River Center at the end of December and met with Anne-Marie Bajwa, CEO, and Hilary Ryan, VP Development, to discuss upcoming state legislation that will impact the children, adults and elders in our care, as well as their family members.

Senator Rausch represents Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex counties. For more information, visit the Massachusetts Legislature website at malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/RLR0

**ANNUAL GIVING TREE**

This year’s Annual Giving Tree was a wonderful success, with every single gift tag for needed – and wished for – gifts taken and fulfilled!

Thank you to all who made a happy Christmas for a Charles River Center individual and to the following groups of people who generously took a large number of tags: John Timmerman (and friends), MacFarlane Energy, Needham Girl Scout Troop 67346 and Wellesley Service League. Thank you!

**CELEBRATING RETIREMENT**

**Carol Alden**

After almost 10 years, Carol Alden, Vice President of the Therapeutic Day Habilitation program, retired at the end of January. Carol was always focused on the needs of the persons served in her care. As a speech language pathologist, she was committed to using every possible means to enhance our persons served ability to communicate. Her knowledge of new technologies and incorporation of music, dance, art, occupational, physical and speech therapies made for a rich and varied program that greatly benefitted our persons served. Carol also had a special interest in reaching out to educational institutions to expand the intern program, customizing internships to match the interests and goals of the students. She felt that Charles River Center had as much to learn from interns as they did from us, helping us to keep up with current teachings in some of the top colleges in the area.

Day Habilitation’s goal is to meet all of the therapy needs of our persons served, and Carol succeeded in doing that. She created new programming and achieved increasingly high levels of results.

~ Anne-Marie Bajwa, president and CEO

I loved working with Carol. She is one of the smartest women I know, and I learned so much from her. She was so passionate about providing the best possible care for the individuals and inspired others to do the same.

~ Gayle Greenstein, M.Ed., CCC-SLP, speech and language pathologist

Carol was always very supportive, taking an interest in the art projects we were doing, all the art displays around the building and was involved in the annual art show.

~ Leah Foster, art instructor
A HOLIDAY COLLABORATION

Partnerships make for a wonderful Toys for Tots event

Charles River Center’s Family Support Center has participated in the Essex and Middlesex Counties Toys for Tots program for years. This past December, 30 families, which included 60 children, supported by the Department of Developmental Services, accepted the invitation to participate. Director of Family Services, Katie Mackie, teamed with Beth Farwell, Child Adolescent Services Coordinator from the DDS Middlesex West Area Office, to organize the toy request and pickup.

In line with the Family Support Center’s core value of “being responsive to family needs,” Kate and Beth decided to let people to “shop” for gifts, making for more personalized gift giving. They would arrange it so parents and caregivers could choose from a display of available toys, and paper would be supplied to wrap afterwards. They contacted Executive Co-Director Pamela McKillop at The Autism Alliance and she agreed to the use of AA’s location for toy distribution. “Pam was immediately onboard and extremely excited to participate,” Katie says.

On shopping day, December 22, everyone enjoyed being able to choose from the assortment of toys. Feedback was “overwhelmingly positive” and one grandmother was, “head over heels” to be able to select gifts for her two grandchildren. Katie says that she is confident the three agencies will collaborate again next year. “We are already planning and fine-tuning!”

COOKING CLUB

Charles River Center relies on volunteers in many areas. Before the onset of COVID-19, this club met twice a week thanks to the three wonderful Cooking Club volunteers highlighted in this article. Once the health crisis is over, the club will meet again!

It’s a Thursday evening and there are delicious smells coming from the Day Habilitation kitchen, where seven persons served from the Charles River Program are preparing dinner. These persons served are all participants in the Cooking Club, which is a skills group based around planning, preparing, and eating a meal together. The persons served are assisted by one staff member and three community volunteers.

One of these community volunteers is Christy Parizeau, a Sherborn resident. A year ago, Christy was looking for volunteer opportunities, specifically with organizations serving individuals with special needs. A Google search turned up Charles River Center. Christy signed on last spring. When asked about what she enjoys most about volunteering at Charles River, Christy noted, “I love being around this population - they are so accepting and happy.”

Erin Farrell of Needham was also looking for local volunteer opportunities. She was very involved in the local Special Olympics, where she found out that the Cooking Club was looking for more volunteers. She began attending last spring, and says she loves spending time with the persons served and loves the way they are all so engaged in the activity.

Allison Cornelisse, also a Needham resident, found out about the Charles River Center a year ago through her son, Jacob. Then a student at Catholic Memorial High School, he had volunteered at Charles River Center as part of his senior project. When Allison found out about the Cooking Club, she jumped at the opportunity, “I feel really called to cooking and sharing meals.”

On this evening, Cooking Club members made a cheeseburger casserole and French fries, followed by homemade chocolate chip cookie ice cream sandwiches. As it does every time, the meeting ends with persons served and volunteers seated around the table, enjoying their meal and each other’s company.

IN MEMORIAM

Members of the Charles River Community
Lin Damon
Craig Delugin
Marilyn Dunker
Anthony “Tony” Ferro

Tributes August 2019 to May 2020
HORTICULTURE PROGRAM UPDATE

The Flower CSA, back for its second year, has sold out for the June to October 2020–2021 season. The first plants (lettuce, onions, and flowers) were planted in the ground in mid-April, and now the greenhouse is full of vegetables and flower seedlings. The flower growing area of the farm is being expanded and improvements made to walking pathways to make the farm more accessible.

ADDPMR. JULY

Every year, the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP) publishes a legislative calendar with photographs of Massachusetts legislators, agencies and persons served highlighted on each page. This year, Charles River Center was chosen to be featured one month. We furnished the text and photo of our own Phil Hackett and ADDP placed the Charles River Center write-up and Phil on the July spread.

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

VISIT OUR WEBSITE