



Archive News – April 2013

TILL Celebrates ADDP Awards

Gina Shulimson, Recipient of the 2013 ADDP Marty Martini Manager Award



L to R: Al Condeluci, Pittsburgh UCP Executive Director, Gina Shulimson, manager of TILL's Essence of Thyme Café and Catering, Gary Blumenthal, President & CEO, ADDP.

Each year, ADDP member organizations are invited to nominate an outstanding employee to be recognized for his/her work as a Human Services Professional at the Annual ADDP Conference & Expo. TILL is pleased and proud to announce that Gina Shulimson, manager of TILL's Essence of Thyme Café and Catering business (ETC), is the recipient of the 2013 ADDP Marty Martini Manager Award, presented at the ADDP Annual Conference at the DCU Center in Worcester on 3/22/13.

As an agency, TILL prides itself on its innovative approach to answering the needs of the individuals we serve. TILL's Essence of Thyme Café and Gift Shop in Hyde Park, along with sister-sites in Chelsea and Nashua, NH, responded to that need by developing a unique entrepreneurial business model which provides culinary and retail training through our entrepreneurial food service program, neighborhood cafés and gift shops.

Behind every great and successful idea are those dedicated people who put not just sweat, but their heart and soul into their work. At TILL's Essence of Thyme Café and Gift Shop (ETC) in Hyde Park, that person is Gina Shulimson.

Gina balances TILL's mission for innovation, independence and functional purpose to teaching, with a dedication to her staff and trainees and management that is beyond compare.

Essence of Thyme and Cravings (ETC) prepares, delivers and serves over 450,000 healthy, tasty, economical meals each year to public and private schools, kindergarten through high school; day care and senior centers throughout eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Every day, over 2,000 of those meals come from ETC Hyde Park's kitchen, prepared by Gina's crew.

When TILL opened its first entrepreneurial business over 20 years ago, Gina was hired as our first-ever ETC Program Manager. Under Gina's excellent leadership, ETC has grown to supporting 30 individuals by providing a business which assesses their strengths and abilities and challenges them to reach the next level – whatever that might be based upon the individual's self-determined goals. Seven of these individuals have reached employment status because of the excellent training they received from Gina and her staff.

Gina has gone above and beyond in her commitment to provide quality training and increasing the employment opportunities for the individuals working at ETC. The training challenges their abilities allowing them to improve and succeed as employees.

ETC is a thriving, visible business, located in Hyde Park's busy center of town. Customers can come into the café to enjoy a delicious pastry and coffee or a tasty lunch. Gift items may be purchased from the gift shop which displays many of the items which are hand crafted by the individuals who participate in our art studio program. This visibility allows community members to view the individuals as capable, competent employees whose product is needed, valued and enjoyed.

Gina and her staff provide the skill development and training to the individuals who prepare over 2,000 breakfasts and lunches daily to local schools. The individuals are involved in all aspects of the business including preparing, packaging and delivering the food. Individuals also wait on customers in the café, take their orders and complete the cash/credit card transactions necessary to complete their purchase.

Gina is extremely successful in accomplishing her mission to showcase the talents of her unique workforce, increasing the community's awareness appreciation of their skills. The result of her efforts is seen as she starts at the crack of dawn each day, through the pride of the people she trains as they learn new skills, are promoted from trainee to ETC employee, or seek competitive employment elsewhere; the valued relationships that have developed within the local community; and the respect of our customers who recognize the abilities of the people we serve.

Whether in her role as teacher or chef, Gina Shulimson has been changing people's lives and changing people's perceptions, one cookie at a time, for 24 years.

Laurie Callahan, Recipient of Honorable Mention for the 2013 ADDP Self-Determination Award

ADDP member organizations are invited to nominate an outstanding individual to be recognized for his/her accomplishments. Toward Independent Living and Learning (TILL) is delighted to announce that our nominee, Laurie Callahan, has received an Honorable Mention for the 2013 ADDP Self Determination Award.

TILL is an innovative human service agency with a mission to create community based residential, vocational, and support services to help people reach their full potential and attain an optimal quality of life. Laurie is an inspiration to us all, as she refuses to let any limitations hold her back; she uses all means available to her to reach out and make the connections that we all want and need.

Laurie is a very upbeat and social woman who loves people and enjoys connecting with everyone she meets. The control that Laurie has over her life came as a direct result of her incredible determination to make her voice heard.

Through her persistence in learning how to use her adaptive communication devices, Laurie has unlocked not only her ability to make choices but her inner social butterfly. Laurie has learned to use a mouse controlled by movements of her head to identify the menus and pictures which help her communicate and give her a voice.

Through Laurie's discipline, concentration and energy, she has mastered control of the device to make more specific choices for herself. Laurie's dedication and hard work have rewarded her with the satisfaction of being able to communicate her thoughts to people who may not know her well enough to "read her mind".

Laurie's determination to live her life to the fullest is evidenced by the twinkle in her eye and her enthusiasm in all things. The joy and enthusiasm that Laurie demonstrates every day is a pleasure to watch. Paired with her determination and constant striving to learn more and participate more, she is to us, an inspiration.

TILL's International Ambassadors in Sunny Puerto Rico

TILL's International Ambassadors in Sunny Puerto Rico! In February, TILL's International Ambassadors left the snow behind as they traveled to beautiful, warm Puerto Rico, with a goal of learning about the services for adults with developmental disabilities in this US Territory and through their visits and volunteer projects at local schools and agencies, to connect with human service professionals and the individuals and families they serve. The information sharing was beneficial for both the Ambassadors and those with whom they visited.

On February 14th – Friendship Day, the Ambassadors were treated to a lively musical performance and delighted their new friends with a musical performance of their own. Ambassadors were interviewed by the parent advocates and hosts of a local radio program, Many Voices/One Vision, a program promoting the networking for disability causes. As on previous International Ambassador trips, the group returned with many photos and memories which they are looking forward to sharing with everyone at TILL and beyond.

TILL thanks the Saquish Foundation and the Blue Hills Bank Charitable Foundation for their generous contributions and support which make our innovative programs possible.



TILL's 2013 International Ambassadors to Puerto Rico are: Betsy Baumgartner, of Weymouth; Dafna Krouk-Gordon, President; Jane Pfeiffer, Coordinator of Residential Alternatives; Jennifer Ferris, Manager, Lynnfield; Jill Simard-Glidden, RSP, Lilac Court; John Stevens, Director of Special Projects; Paula Aiesi, Director of Community Connections; Ricardo Coloma Ayala, musician and friend of TILL.

TWI – TILL's Wellness Initiative "TWIngo"!

TILL's Wellness Initiative encourages everyone to focus on health and wellness in their everyday lives.

TWINGO was a month long contest sponsored by TILL's Wellness Initiative (TWI) to encourage awareness of nutrition and the necessity of physical activity in our daily lives.

Based on the game Bingo, participants filled in a square on their TWINGO board as they completed each task. When 5 squares in a row were completed, players were credited for a "TWINGO". Throughout February, gift cards to Stop & Shop and Whole Foods were awarded in weekly raffles as participants sent in their TWINGOs.



Congratulations to the grand prize winner, Jody Quinn, who received a 6-month Medley Fruit-of-the-Month Club gift from Harry & David and a Massage Envy gift card! Jody was the only participant to fill the entire TWINGO card! Prizes and gift certificates were awarded to all participants who completed one or more TWINGOs. With better health and great prizes...It pays to TWI!

TILL's Annual Holiday Parties

TILL's Holiday Party Season came to a close in January. Last was certainly not least, as each group filled the houses with holiday spirit. The New Year's parties are a great time to celebrate our recovery from the holiday frenzy with the Beatles, a bit of Elvis, lots of trivia and prizes, and lots of fun.



Once again, we would like to thank our program staff and family members whose efforts make these celebrations and the holiday season memorable. We also recognize John Stevens, Director of Special Projects, and Paula Aiesi, Director of Community Connections, who make our Holiday Parties even more fun with their talents, energy and coordination, from the first party on December 2nd through the final party on January 13th.

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