

## ***Archive News – September 2013***

### ***Moving Out: A Family Guide to Residential Planning for Adults with Disabilities***

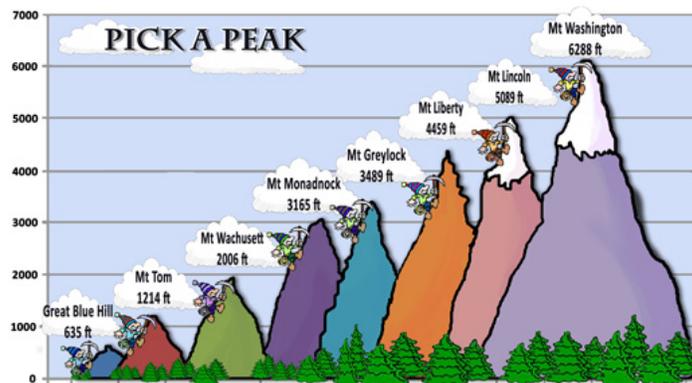


In an effort to more widely share the knowledge she has gained through her many years developing residential services and working with families, Dafna Krouk-Gordon, President and founder of TILL, Inc., recently coauthored the book, "Moving Out: A Family Guide to Residential Planning for Adults with Disabilities", with Barbara Jackins, Special Needs Attorney and parent. This comprehensive book offers information from early planning to how to plan for when the parent is no longer around. Moving Out, published by Woodbine Press, is available in your local bookstore and online.

### ***It's Easy and Fun to Live a Healthy Lifestyle if you TWI!***

TILL Wellness Initiative (TWI) encourages everyone to focus on health and wellness in their everyday lives. First over 270 individuals and staff tracked an incredible total of 328,152 activity points which translated to miles on a virtual Rt. 6 map which resulted in weekly prize drawings and a grand prize. TWIngo was a month long contest sponsored by TILL Wellness Initiative 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. Prizes and gift certificates were awarded to all participants who completed one or more TWIngos.

TWI's Pick A Peak - 8 Peaks in 8 Weeks challenged participants to scale 8 virtual, vertical peaks in 8 weeks by tracking their exercise minutes. The minutes of exercise were converted to vertical feet on the virtual mountain range.



From June 23rd to August 17th, 194 individuals and staff exercised at total of 159,302 minutes and tracked their times on their exercise logs. Many of the participants scaled two, three or more virtual mountains, but just 3 hearty trekkers climbed the entire virtual range to the summit of Mount Washington.

## **Congratulations to our TWI Winners!**

- 1st Place - Judith Benjamin (ETC in Hyde Park)
- 2nd Place -Martine Pierre (Melville Ave., Dorchester)
- 3rd Place -Laura Molla (Clinical and Support Services)

Thank you to everyone who TWI'd and those who assisted and encouraged others to TWI!

## **Highlights from the Summer 2013 TILLegram**

### ***Sage Crossing Farms at TILL - An Innovative Opportunity***

TILL has partnered with SAGE Crossing Foundation to create Sage Crossing Farms at TILL, a farm-based program where adults on the autism spectrum can pursue supported, dignified and meaningful lives in concert with each other, and with their community. SAGE has a three year history of running successful, creative farm programs, for which they received a Doug Flutie, Jr. Foundation for Autism grant. The therapeutic benefits of life and work on a farm have been long studied and documented. Sage Crossing Farms at TILL will provide individuals with meaningful, purposeful work, creating a sense of accomplishment and pride. Staff will work as partners to help them to master skills. Sage Crossing Farms at TILL is currently researching farm locations as well as seeking interested applicants for a farm program to begin Winter 2013/2014.



### ***The Story of the TILL Cultural Festivals***

TILL held its 13th Annual Cultural Festival on Sunday, June 2 at UMASS Lowell's Inn and Conference Center in Lowell for TILL's Residential Programs, followed by TILL's Day Program Cultural Festival held on June 20th at Billerica's Day Program Center. TILL's Cultural Festivals are the culmination of April Madness, the annual event which challenges the staff of TILL's residential and day programs to creatively plan and execute activities and experiences during a five week period, with particular attention to involvement in community volunteer projects. The contest asks participants to perform and document a series of Quests, related to the theme. This year's theme was "Life is a Story, What's Yours".



TILL's community residences contributed dishes representing some culture or ethnicity from within their homes for the International Buffet, and volunteer servers dished out assorted delicacies to over 360 guests. The crowd warmed up with a performance of "We Are Family" by the Union Street, Weymouth's CLO, a song they chose for the Quest "Every Song tells a Story" which exemplified the feeling that many people share with housemates and staff.



The awards program began with remarks from TILL President, Dafna Krouk-Gordon, who noted the high quality of the presentations and the continuing ability to "out-do" themselves. Several videos were shown that highlighted some spectacular April Madness moments. Most notable was Brookline residence's video which included personal statements reflecting on their ten year journey together and a video collage arranged by the Newton residence blending the song "Our House" with many photos.

Ed Castelli, Director of Residential Services, was recognized as the driving force behind the fantastic accomplishments of TILL's houses, followed by Personal Recognition Awards presented to Jen Ferris, Kingsley Brown and Tanya Amato for their exceptional contributions to April Madness.

TILL's involvement with Project Bread's Walk for Hunger has been one of the most extraordinary success stories to spring out of April Madness. Special Awards were presented to Edna Mellon (Chelmsford) and Michele Wallenstein (Newton) for their exemplary volunteer efforts at the Walk, and the mother/son walking team of Barbara Jackins and Jack Mason were recognized for, one again, having completed the entire 20 mile route.

The crowd was very excited to watch a dance performance mixing salsa music from Puerto Rico with merengue music from the Dominican Republic. Calling themselves "Los Tres Amigos", the three pairs of dancers did an excellent job bringing a Latin influence to the festivities. Thanks to Carmen Cruz (Alden Rd.), George St. Vil (Francis Wyman, Burlington & Andover St., Danvers), Yolanda Cruz (Andover St., Danvers), Chris Thuku (Andover St.), Ileana Ramos (Burley St., Danvers) and Hector Melendez (Sandy Brook A, Burlington).

The final segment of the festival was the distribution of all the Awards honoring the tremendous achievements of all the houses. Forty-eight TILL residences and one Creative Living Option (CLO) residence comprised the body of the 49 April Madness contestants. The volume and quality of the work presented by each home was remarkable and many touching life stories were seen and heard. The competition was so close that the list of the top five houses included to ties. Church Street, Newton took the prize for Best in Show; Washington St., Brookline and Walnut St., Lynnfield residences tied for 2nd place; followed by Lilac Ct., Acton in 3rd Place; Reed Rd., Peabody in 4th Place; and tied for 5th Place, Reo Rd., Maynard and Melville Ave., Dorchester.

TILL's Day Program Cultural Festival was held outdoors at Billerica's Day Program Center, under beautiful sunny skies with over 160 people in attendance. As always, the International Luncheon Buffet was incredible with dishes prepared by the staff and individuals. The award ceremony began with remarks from individuals sharing their April Madness experiences. Pat from Watertown told the crowd how much fun she and her entire cluster had surprising Stella at the Dedham office with signs from the parking lot asking for Stella's 6 Word Story. The stories were wonderful and varied, from Chelsea Day Program's trip to the Marathon Memorial, to the 6 Word Quilt designed and sewn by the participants at TILL Central Billerica.

The Day Program Cluster "Best In Show" award went to Cluster 1, Billerica. The presentation of their Quests was truly inspiring; never once allowing an obstacle to stand in their way. The TILL Central "Best In Show" award went to TILL Central Billerica, and Billerica continued their sweep with overall Best TILL Day Hab Award. The 17 contestants, 3 TILL Central Programs and 14 Day Program Clusters, did a wonderful job telling their stories through photos, music and places they visited and all took pride in their achievements.

The quality and scope of all of the April Madness presentations was incredible. The effort and creativity shown by the staff and individuals in our residential and day programs was truly inspiring. Congratulations to our very excellent top finishers as well as all who participated and made this year's April Madness once again....The Best Ever.

### ***TILL Supports Project Bread through the Annual Walk for Hunger***

Each year individuals, families and staff raise funds for Project Bread and participate in the Annual Walk for Hunger. This year's walk was attended by representatives from forty five TILL residences who joined the crowds on the walk and cheered on the participants at the finish line.

The men from TILL's Brookline house were featured in an article on the Project Bread website, highlighting their fundraising efforts through their annual Caribbean BBQ. The funds raised by TILL programs through The Walk for Hunger, help Project Bread provide our neighbors with access to nutritious food.

