

THE TILLEGRAM

Summer 2016

Toward Independent Living and Learning, Inc.

From the President



Dear Friends, Families, and Colleagues,

We are proud to bring you this edition of the TILLeGram, filled with many exciting projects. They reflect a recognition of our deep sense of responsibility to the people we support, their families and caregivers, as we travel together through life's changes, challenges and possibilities. We pride ourselves on developing services in advance of when they are needed to create exciting options rather than responses to crises. Our newest housing models in Charlestown, Chelsea and Carlisle implement the concept of integrated mixed use housing, as we proudly take our place in new communities as contributing members through the strength of our differences and diversity. We continue to work together to meet newly identified needs as individuals age and require different supports, as well as developing new services to offer new options for people who are on the autism spectrum and were not previously eligible for services. Throughout our 36 year history we have lived by the concept that "one size does not fit all" and we continue to make those words a reality through our services. We listen to you, the consumer receiving services, families and funding sources, as we develop new models of support for living, working and recreating. The revisions in our mission represent our belief in the power of language. We want to say what we mean and mean what we say.

We could not accomplish the goals of our mission were it not for the professional work and dedication of our direct care workforce, managers, clinicians and administrators. We appreciate the commitment you have made to the field and TILL will continue to advocate for making your career choice one of which you can be proud and enjoy. We take pride in our excellent retention record as we work with our employees to become the future leaders by cultivating the talent of our workforce and encouraging new graduates to enter the exciting field of human services.

Thank you for being part of our expanded TILL team and family of supports.

Sincerely,
Dafna Krouk-Gordon
Founder and President, TILL, Inc.



Recognizing Excellence

Each year TILL nominates exceptional employees for recognition at the Association of Developmental Disability Providers (ADDP) Conference held annually in March and the Providers' Council Convention & Expo held annually in October.

Reggie Etienne, Residential Support Professional was recognized by ADDP for his dedication to continuing his education while



Reggie Etienne receives the Scholarship Award from Gary Blumenthal, CEO of the Association of Developmental Disability Providers

working in the human service field with the Scholarship Award at their 2016 Conference. Also nominated were **Sandy Cummins, Assistant Director of Residential Services** for the Marty Martini Leadership Award; **Mary Cunningham, Residence Manager** for the Managers Award; and **George St. Vil, Relief** for the Direct Support Award. All received honorable mention for their outstanding work.

TILL has nominated **Heidi Torries, Residential**

Coordinator, for the Supervisor/Manager Award of Excellence, and **Keiko Ash, Senior Day Support Professional** at TILL's Hudson Day Program for the Direct Service Employee Award of Excellence. If selected, they will receive their Awards of Excellence at the **Providers' Council 41st Annual Convention and Expo** on October 24, 2016.

Join us for
TILL Games XXII
on **September 10, 2016**
at the **Reggie Lewis Athletic Center** in Roxbury to
participate or cheer
on the athletes!

TILL GAMES

TILL News Briefs

*T*ILL is expanding individualized services and residential supports through a variety of service models:

TILL's new Watertown home provides residential supports for people who benefit from minimal supports and community living, with live-in staffing to provide continuity and stability.



Prior to TILL's transformation of the Don Guanella Center to our Chelsea Respite Center, the Sisters of Providence resided on the second and third floors of this spacious building. This space is undergoing its own transformation to offer temporary life skills training for individuals with high functioning autism, Asperger's syndrome and those newly eligible through DDS omnibus waiver. Micro-apartments include shared common areas and targeted supports geared toward developing one's changing and emerging abilities through this unique model, as they prepare for the next step of independence.



Our newly built homes in Carlisle share a beautiful lot nearby to wooded walking trails and local recreational activities. The five bedroom home is designed for people on the autism spectrum or developmental disabilities who require 24 hour

staffing and support; the four bedroom home is fully accessible and designed for individuals with acquired brain injury. The two homes are connected by an accessible exterior deck.

TILL's Bridgeview Center in Charlestown is a multi-use building consisting of 61 accessible, affordable, family rental units and retail business tenants. A five bedroom group home, fully integrated into the building and community, is part of this inclusive design in a vibrant setting with access to public transportation, located near Bunker Hill Community College, retail businesses and services.



Essence of Thyme and Cravings (ETC) Food Service set records this year, preparing **621,316** nutritious school lunches during the 2015-16 academic year, and

providing employment for 17 individuals through their food service training! It comes as no surprise that ETC has outgrown its Hyde Park location and is looking for space to build a new, bigger kitchen. This highly successful entrepreneurial business, has been offering employment and culinary/retail training for people with disabilities for more than 25 years.

TILL Autism Support Center and Strattus @ TILL Mental Health Services has collaborated with Boston Public School's Bridge Transition Program at the West Roxbury Academy. Funded by a TILL Initiative Grant, TILL's ASC partnered with Bridge staff to prepare students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder for a meaningful role in the community as adults, through this innovative vocational enrichment/exploration program for students ages 14-22. In addition, Strattus clinicians lead group therapy sessions to teach appropriate worksite behavior, and student peer mentors provide role modeling and social connections.

TILL's Springboard Social Club gives members great opportunities to meet new people and try new experiences. Springboard-Plus Shared Interest Clubs include Cooking, Art, Theatre, Sports and Travel Clubs. Springboard Travel Club members visited Rome and surrounding cities in Italy as part of their Eight Steps to Independent Travel curriculum; this year's travel takes them to London, England for a week-long adventure, touring the sites and connecting with locals for a personalized tour of the city.

The success of TILL's International Ambassadors and Springboard Travel has resulted in our **NEW TILL Travel** program offering opportunities to gain interpersonal and social skills through the transformative experience of world travel. Our unique adventures are designed to enhance personal growth and connections. TILL Travel trips involve a 6-week curriculum of learning travel skills, gaining knowledge of the country and culture, establishing contacts with peers abroad and making friendships to last a lifetime.



TILL, Inc. was pleased to welcome **Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Health & Human Services**, to our Canton home, developed for people with acquired brain injury. Following a short tour of the home, Secretary Sudders joined TILL Founder and President, Dafna Krouk-Gordon, and Residential Services staff for a conversation, sharing information, successes and goals.

Left to right - Sandy Burns, LPN; Dafna Krouk-Gordon, TILL Founder and President, Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Health and Human Services; Comfort Agbortoko, Residence Manager; Pam Sheehan, Residential Coordinator; Heidi Torries, Assistant Director of Residential Services; Sandra Cummins, Director of Residential Services; and Laetisha Jean-Pierre, Residential Support Professional.



Ann Cotter-Mack, Dir. of Behavioral Services, **Alan White**, Dir. of Residential Alternatives, **Dale Belcher**, Springboard Manager, **Joshua Lyons**, Dir. of Autism Services, and **Dr. Sharon Kreder**, VP of Clinical and Support Services, presented **Innovative Programming Across the Life Span for Individuals on the Autism Spectrum** to families and colleagues at Bridgewell's *Conquering the Cliff* conference.



TILL is pleased to announce **Ed Castelli** as the new Director of Quality Assurance. Serving as Director of Residential Services since 2006, he brings extensive knowledge of TILL's systems with an incredible attention to detail to this new department, strengthening TILL's dedication to excellence.

Sandy Cummins, Assistant Director of Residential Services, has been appointed Director of Residential Services for TILL. Sandy has held numerous positions in Residential Services since coming to TILL in 1995.

Heidi Torries has been promoted from Residential Coordinator to Assistant Director of Residential Services. **We wish them all success in their new positions!**



Ed Castelli and Sandy Cummins

Marian Roessling, Provider for TILL, Inc., was awarded a **Certificate of Appreciation for Excellence in Service** at the Gateways Community Services' Award Breakfast held on June 8, 2016 at Sky Meadow in Nashua, NH.

Marian excels in her abilities as home care provider, and with the support of her husband and four children, Tammy has flourished in Marian's fun-loving home. TILL is proud to nominate Marian and her family for this recognition.



Sandy Pelletier (l), President and CEO of Gateways Community Services presents Marian Roessling, Provider for TILL, Inc. with a Certificate of Appreciation for Excellence in Service, joined by TILL's Sandy Vadenais (r).

TILL Wellness Initiative's Road to Rio

TILL's commitment to promote a healthy life style for employees and people we support is exemplified by our very successful TWI (TILL Wellness Initiative) which now boasts a growing number of participants in challenges throughout the year, resulting in an awareness of healthy eating and increased participation in an active lifestyle.

This summer's Challenge Road to Rio is a virtual race from Caracas, Venezuela to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with activity minutes converted into kilometers. To qualify for this race participants submit a summer health tip or recipe to be shared with everyone.

Ride the Wave!

TILL's Art and Music Wave began with a small swell, creating a wave train throughout the agency. Visual and expressive art and music has always been a part of TILL, but the groundswell this spring has created something truly unique. **TILL's Art Wave** took shape under the creative direction of **Paula Aiesi**, Director of Community Connection, while the Music Wave was spearheaded by **John Stevens**, Director of Special Projects and musician. Given the opportunity to transform the Watertown Program's storefront space into gallery, Paula began by nurturing the development of inclusive art which could be shared through this connection to the community. Last year, John founded the **Wave Band**, showcasing the talents of an inhouse group of musicians; and while visiting Germany with TILL International Ambassadors, he participated in some amazing music workshops which inspired our TILL Music Wave events.

To bring public attention and participation from the artist community to the new Gallery, we created several TILL Art Week events which were included in the Spring ArtWeek Boston celebration!

On April 30, 2016, the **TILL Wave Gallery** invited the public to join in painting the finishing touches on the "**World of Watertown**" mural in the first floor gallery space. This room-sized piece was brought to life in collaboration with local artist **Roscoe Lamontagne, of Roscoe Studio**, with input from a focus group comprised of people supported through our Watertown Day Program who discussed the local and historic landmarks which have meaning to them and other members of the community. Participants painted sections of the mural as well as smaller souvenir reproductions.



Watertown Mural Focus Group



Dedham Paint Party Joins the Wave



TILL Art Wave



TILL Music Wave

On the 2nd floor, TILL's Black Box Theatre created the Music Wave experience. During each one hour workshop, Wave Band musicians and participants composed, rehearsed, performed and recorded their original compositions!

TILL Wave Gallery Grand Opening Reception was held on May 5, 2016. Visitors toured the gallery space and were entertained with live music by John Stevens and Anthony Bassini. In this inclusive display were spectacular pieces by artists of all abilities as well as the completed "World of Watertown" mural.



Wave Gallery Reception



What is April Madness?

April Madness began in 1999 with a photo scavenger hunt challenging people living in TILL's residential programs to go out and "find" 10 items on a list. As the contest developed through the years, quests have become focused on creative experiences and team work, challenging further participation and connectedness, with new challenges beginning almost immediately after the year's April Madness is over.

This annual event has sparked an incredible creativity and enthusiasm which has become part of who we are all year long. This year's highlights include challenging adventures like pool-surfing and a journey by train; making art a part of our daily lives with creative studio space, exploring new media and modes of expression; continuing and expanding ongoing volunteer projects; and as always, being a part of Team TILL at Project Bread's Walk for Hunger. *Come Ride the Wave.*



Cultural Festival

TILL's Day and Residential teams were invited to "Ride the Wave", the theme of this year's April Madness competition, culminating in TILL's 16th Annual Cultural Festival for the 53 residential programs on Saturday, June 4th, and the 2016 Day Program Cultural Festival on June 24th, where TILL's Day Habilitation, TILL Central, and TILL Central Autism Initiative Programs celebrated their April Madness accomplishments. Each year we look forward to celebrating TILL's diversity together with a delightful pot-luck lunch buffet featuring a variety of internationally inspired foods. As has become a TILL Cultural Festival tradition, many people attend in traditional dress in recognition of their cultural heritage. The exciting award presentation was punctuated by displays, photos and videos from this year's contest, with a special reading of the Haiku poems written in response to one of the Quests, and the announcement of this year's winners.





Best in Show: Chelsea Respite Center!

Day Program Awards

Best in Show: Hudson Cluster 2!

- #2 - Hudson Cluster 3
- #3 - Hudson Cluster 1

Best TILL Central in Show: TILL Central TC Chelsea!

Overall Top Day Program Award: Hudson Day!

**Winners of TILL's 2016 April Madness:
Residential Awards**

Best in Show: Chelsea Respite Center!

- #2— Walnut St., Lynnfield
- #3— 250A Main St., Westboro
- #4— Beaver Brook Rd., Littleton
- #5— Boston St., Middleton
- #6— Muzzey St., Lexington
- #7— Megan's Way, Braintree
- #8— Sandy Brook B, Burlington
- #9— Fogg Rd. and Union St., Weymouth
- #10— Alden Rd., Andover



Overall Top Day Program: Hudson!

Walk for Hunger

Project Bread's Annual Walk for Hunger was held on Sunday, May 1st and once again, representatives from all of TILL's residential programs joined the 35,000 participants who came out to raise money to support local hunger-relief programs. As part of April Madness quests each year, Team TILL raises money through creative fundraising and participation in the Walk to support their neighbors throughout Massachusetts, braving the light rain to join or cheer on the walkers with signs and enthusiasm.



Riding the (Heat) Wave

The heat wave didn't hamper the spirit of TILL's Annual Team Building Day at Salisbury Beach on August 11, 2016. The Day and Residential Managers, Coordinators, Directors and our Vice President of Program Services, come together each year for a day of leadership training, discussion and games led by John Stevens, Director of Special Projects, followed by great music and delicious BBQ.

TILL's Updated Mission

TILL was founded in 1980 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. As we *grow, learn and change together*, we recognize the need to update our language to describe our commitment to *person-centered services* supporting the self-direction and personal choice of those whom we serve. We are proud to share TILL's updated mission statement with you.

TILL IS COMMITTED

to working with individuals and their families, toward creating independent, meaningful lives, connected to one's community.

WE REALIZE THIS MISSION THROUGH

individualized residential, vocational, therapeutic, and support service opportunities.

WE GROW, LEARN AND CHANGE TOGETHER

as a team with the people we support.

THROUGH PERSON-CENTERED SERVICES

we encourage personal choice and decision-making to manage one's life.

TILL's VISION is to create partnerships with people seeking services, with families and caregivers, advocacy groups, funding sources, policy makers and other service providers; to respect the creative, entrepreneurial and professional talents of our staff through teamwork; to recognize the dignity and rights of those requesting services; to acknowledge the value and expertise of the community and caregivers; and to provide leadership in the development of community services. We pride ourselves on innovation, attention to detail, and on accepting nothing less than excellence in the delivery of our services. We are committed to creating a professional environment which is exciting, dynamic and supports people through all stages of life. TILL recognizes that an invaluable resource lies in its work force and is therefore committed to creating a work environment which expands learning, offers career growth opportunities working in the field, and satisfaction in knowing that each of us can and does **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** in someone else's life.

TILL Teams Show Our Mission

With this launch, we challenged our program sites to *Show Us Your Mission*. In true TILL fashion, our teams have gone above and beyond to creatively and proudly display TILL's mission across the agency.



Remembering Friends

A life that touches others goes on forever.



Maryann Cardinale

Matthew Veits

Kevin Rogers

Joan Corbin

Ernest Penta

Dorothy Unaka

Sharon DeMorris

Jitaynia White

Vicky Evans

Alisha Anastos

Shirley McGrath