

# THE EGRAM

Winter 2023

Toward Independent Living and Learning, Inc.

## Making the Most of the Season

With every new season, a perfect opportunity to do something bold, something kind, something new!



## From the President



Dear Friends, Families, and Colleagues,

I am in awe as I read the articles in our seasonal TILLgram. It gives me a chance to reflect on all of the activities and wonderful opportunities for new experiences afforded to the individuals we support as well as to our staff members.

At a recent networking event that we held, we asked employees “what do you like most about your job?” More than two-thirds of the participants said “the people I work with at TILL.”

There are special people who work here. The kindness, compassion and irreplaceable feeling one gets when they make a connection and a difference in one other person’s life is what makes TILL, TILL. I am so fortunate to be surrounded by caring professionals who use their talents in making this world a better place for others.

Two phrases I recently heard ring so true to TILL’s culture and mission. “Nobody cares what you know until they know that you care.” There is no doubt that TILL’s staff members care about each individual they work with as well as on making a positive impact on society as a whole.

Author Jodi Picoult, in her newest novel, writes: “Sometimes, making the world a better place just involves creating space for the people who are already in it.” Let’s do our part to make sure there is “room” for everyone equally.

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

## Stay In Touch

Email [info@tillinc.org](mailto:info@tillinc.org) to receive important news via email, update your mailing address or find out more about TILL’s services. Keep up with the news, events and more: like tillinc on Facebook, follow @tillinc on Twitter, and @till.inc on Instagram.



## TILL Announces New Wages and Benefits

Every staff member at TILL uniquely contributes to our agency goals: helping people be as independent as possible – enjoying life in the community, having fun and constantly learning – being the best they can be. To recognize current staff and to recruit new staff, TILL announced increases in pay and benefits.

- Base pay for Day and Residential Support Professionals increased to \$20 per hour.
- Recruitment bonuses for referring qualified job applicants increased.
- Retention bonuses totaled over \$480,000 in one year.
- TILL increased its 403B retirement plan contribution, and continues to pay 75% of health plan costs.
- Tuition reimbursement, remission and student debt-relief programs continue to support employee education.

In 2023, we look forward to introducing new scholarships, training and certification programs to encourage employees to obtain valuable credentials and to climb the career ladder.

## Review from DDS’s Office of Quality Enhancement

TILL received excellent reviews from DDS’s Office of Quality Enhancement during their 2022 License and Certification Survey, resulting in a two-year license for the residential service grouping and a two-year license for the employment/day service grouping. DDS surveyors noted TILL’s commitment to ensuring a stable and enhanced quality of life for the people it supports. “It is apparent that everything we saw at TILL was not done just for show for the surveyors -but is genuinely how it is done throughout TILL.” - DDS Surveyor

## Tops Again

TILL was included in the Top 100 Women Led Businesses in MA - a project of The Women’s Edge and the Boston Globe - for the eighth consecutive year. Thank you to TILL staff and friends who celebrated this achievement. From left is Alice Flynn, longtime supporter and parent; Cissy Birungi, RSP, Arlington; Sandra St. Hubert, Residence Manager, Westboro; Dafna Krouk-Gordon, TILL President & Founder; Deb Goodman of Goodman Advisory Group LLC; and Aviva Saper of Saper’s & Wallack.





TILL On the Go is an individualized and flexible experience for adults with specialized needs, offering engaging, individualized choices to promote engagement, new opportunities to build on interests, and social connections with peers within our community. Experience a variety of unique locations, including TILL Farms, ETC and Cravings Cafés and Gifts, TILL's Wave Gallery, and our exciting new partnership with Maynard Fine Arts Theatre and Theatre Creamery.

For more information about TILL On the Go, please contact us at [Day.Services@tillinc.org](mailto:Day.Services@tillinc.org)

## Behind the Camera

TILL loves sharing great photos and we'd like to recognize one of our contributing photographers. Alan is a talented photographer who specializes in taking candid snapshots of people. "I like to be the photographer at special events and parties. I like taking pictures for fun," Alan says. In addition to photography and videography, Alan stays busy with volunteer projects, and is especially committed to supporting Dig Deep, bringing running water to the Navajo Nation.



## Join the Wave

The TILL Wave Gallery and the Watertown Art Association's exhibit "Show Us Your Art!" highlighted the original work of nearly 60 artists. The lively opening reception on December 8th, featuring the music of John Stevens, was well attended by artists and guests alike. "Show Us Your Art!" closes February 10 to make way for the Spring Exhibit – "Through Your Lens". Follow @tillwavegallery on Facebook and @tillartwave on Instagram.



*L-R: The Gallery Team of John Stevens, Paula Aiesi, Dale Belcher, and Kylie Weinzierl, with Dawn Scaltrero of the Watertown Art Association.*

## Annual Employee Anniversary Celebration

5 Years  
36 Employees

10 Years  
18 Employees

15 Years  
7 Employees

20 Years  
2 Employees

25 Years  
1 Employee

35 Years  
1 Employee



TILL celebrated employees' special work anniversaries at our annual luncheon, held at the beautiful Kernwood Country Club in Salem. Our staff's dedication and longevity of service is truly impressive!

## On the Upside

Jordan Rich, longtime WBZ Radio host, recently featured TILL on “The Upside with Jordan.” “TILLinc.org believes in seizing the day, not just getting through it,” begins Jordan in his “quick dose of good news” podcast. Listen here - <https://tinyurl.com/2s3pdt6b>



## Experiences in Travel

TILL's Education Through Travel (ETT), which offers people with learning differences the transformative experience of world travel, was recently featured in an article on accessible travel on WickedLocal.com. Melissa Bradley, frequent ETT traveler, said her trips to Ireland, Northern Ireland,



England and Spain opened her eyes to the amazing world of travel. TILL's Community Services Coordinator, Dale Belcher, shared expert tips on travel preparation. In March, ETT travels to the Azores with students from the Riverview School in Sandwich, MA. Read the article here: [tinyurl.com/487e5c48](https://tinyurl.com/487e5c48)



## TILL ETC Food Service on CBS News

TILL's Essence of Thyme Cafe at 1300 Hyde Park Ave. in Hyde Park and Cravings Cafe at 64 East Pearl Street in Nashua comprise ETC Food Service – providing unique employment training opportunities through food service and retail training. ETC was featured on CBS WBZ-TV News Boston in August. Enjoy this highlight at [tinyurl.com/2xhtzdx6](https://tinyurl.com/2xhtzdx6), then stop by and treat yourself at our Cafes and Gift Shops.



## Proper Bostonian Quilters Donation

TILL was thrilled to receive a beautiful variety of handcrafted quilts and crocheted afghans from the talented members of the Proper Bostonian Quilters. These stunning works of art will be treasured and enjoyed by men and women who receive supports in our residential homes.



## Volunteer of the Year

Carol Ngozi Ejindu, Residence Manager of TILL's Peabody home, received the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Provider's Council at their 47th annual conference. Carol was honored for her exemplary volunteerism for her work with My Brother's Table in Lynn, the largest soup kitchen on the North Shore. Carol's enthusiasm leads TILL's volunteers in supporting MBT's important mission. Congratulations, Carol!



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