



The Lamp

SUMMER 2008

T H E C H A R L E S R I V E R C E N T E R

The mission of The Charles River Center is to enhance the quality of life for individuals challenged by developmental disabilities.

A Touch of Hollywood Comes to Building a Dream 2008

by Maria McTernan



The month of April drew to a close in grand fashion as The Charles River Center community gathered at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel for its 13th annual *Building a Dream* benefit gala. This much anticipated evening provided families, board members, community supporters and friends the opportunity to celebrate Charles River's successes while helping to raise funds for its continued growth and program enhancements.

This year, *Building a Dream* was touched with a bit of Hollywood allure as *The Sam Gerson Humanitarian Award*, named in memory of former Chairman of the Board of Filene's Basement and longtime friend of Charles River, was presented to the moviemaking brothers, Peter and Bobby Farrelly.

Screenwriters and directors of many successful comedies, the Farrelly brothers include many people with disabilities in their movies. These characters are portrayed without pity or condescension and never defined by their disabilities. "Every time you

see a movie about people with intellectual disabilities...it's a tear-jerker," said Peter Farrelly. "It's sad. It's depressing. We wanted to throw something out there that was uplifting."

In their films, *There's Something About Mary*, *Kingpin*, *The Ringer* and many others, Peter and Bobby invite their audiences to rise above political correctness, embrace people as they are, and take joy in the funny situations that anyone may encounter, regardless of disability or ability.

Accepting *The Sam Gerson Humanitarian Award* on behalf of himself and his brother Peter who was unable to fly in from the west coast, Bobby Farrelly described the initial resistance they met from their early movies' investors. "They wanted us to eliminate the character with an intellectual disability because they felt it was too risky and the public wasn't ready for it." But Peter and Bobby refused to capitulate, the movie was a success, and including people with disabilities in their future filmmaking endeavors became customary procedure.

Without any accompaniment, Ray "Rocket" Valliere, a good friend of the Farrellys and a waiter in their movie, *Stuck on You*, held the audience captive with his rendition of "Ol' Man River."

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Charles River Employment Services Teams Up with the American Red Cross

by Charles Doherty

While waiting in line to donate blood last summer, I wondered who assembled all the supplies and equipment needed to run a successful blood drive. A phone call to the American Red Cross regional center in Dedham provided a few answers. The regional center had a full time staff which kitted all the needed supplies on site. Although they did not need additional help at the time, they promised to keep us in mind for future needs.

In mid-January, Red Cross Manager

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Greg Sweatt noticed that his kitting operation had a regular bottle neck in the counting, folding and banding of all the trash and bio-hazard bags needed to run a safe and successful blood drive. He called Charles River Employment Services (CRES) to see if we would be interested in performing the task. A quick check with Frank Stockwell, Charles River's longtime Director of Contract Sales, confirmed that CRES workers would do the job.

Like many of our most successful projects, this partnership is a blending of a community need with the steady and accurate performance of our workers. This particular venture has the added advantage of being long lasting. In fact, due to the diligence and accuracy of the Charles River workforce, the Red Cross has added three additional tasks to the list of items in the agreement.

This opportunity has been ideal for CRES workers Andrea Kelley and Carol Huffman, who are delighted with their new responsibilities for the Red Cross.

As for how the new arrangement is working out for the Red Cross, Greg Sweatt says, "the quality of the work is excellent and they are always on time with my production needs. They never miss a deadline." It provides peace of mind for Sweatt to know that whenever he is called on to provide products to any of the five New England states he supports, he can call on Charles River Employment Services to fill his needs quickly and accurately.

Family Support Programs Receive \$4000 Grant

by Joan Johnson

Thanks to a \$4000 grant from the Crossroads Community Foundation, the dream of a playground installation for the children who participate in Charles River's Family Support programs is one step closer to reality.



(continued on back page)

Spotlight on...

Anne-Marie Bajwa, Chief Operating Officer

by John Grugan



I am pleased to announce the appointment of Anne-Marie Bajwa to the position of Chief Operating Officer. Anne-Marie has assumed responsibility for all of our programs and services divisions including Residential, Therapeutic Day Services (Day Habilitation), Vocational Services and Family Support programs. Within a short period of time, many of our staff have developed

admiration and respect for her supportive leadership style, skill and knowledge. She is quickly becoming a strong mentor and experienced teacher of our management workforce.

Anne-Marie comes to us from an agency in the southeast section of Massachusetts called "Road to Responsibility" where she provided leadership for their five day habilitation programs and also had experience in running employment programs and residential services.

Anne-Marie has become known among her peers as "the expert" in providing the intense therapeutic day services common to day habilitation programs. When Charles River first started its program, she was the person we consulted for advice regarding the important clinical and regulatory issues of operating this type of program. Others have recognized her expertise by electing her to chair the statewide Day Habilitation Coalition, a trade association for many human service agencies in the Commonwealth. In addition, she has served for the last three years on ADDP's Day Services Committee, another trade organization and forum for state-funded programs. Anne-Marie has had a positive impact on the many challenges that face the industry both in terms of burdensome regulatory issues and complex financial issues.

Beginning as a teacher at the Saint Colletta School in Braintree, Anne-Marie has had a long and successful career in human services. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from Boston College. After moving into the administrative level of the profession, she pursued and received a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Bridgewater State College.

Anne-Marie brings a strong commitment and passion for the work that we perform. As evidence of her commitment, Anne-Marie volunteered to become a specialized foster family provider for Lorna, a woman with a cognitive disability who moved into her home on an emergency basis. Fifteen years later, Lorna remains part of the Bajwa family. This experience has given Anne-Marie a unique perspective on the issues families face when a member of the household has special needs, and it will help her serve our families well.

Anne-Marie, her husband, three children and Lorna live in Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Please welcome Anne-Marie into the Charles River family.

A M E S S A G E F R O M T H E P R E S I D E N T



John Grugan,
President

In 2001, we moved into our brand new Paul Merritt Center, a 27,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art building to accommodate our adult Therapeutic Day Services, our Family Support children's programs and all of our administrative departments. Staff and participants alike enjoy the spacious classrooms, beautiful cafeteria and terraces, and all of our wide open corridors. In these seven years, our new Center has enabled us to expand our services and accommodate many more families seeking quality programs for their children transitioning to adult programs at age twenty-two.

At this time, 100 program participants in TDS engage in physical, occupational and communication therapies. Individuals work hard to improve daily living skills but are also involved in fun activities such as music and dancing, arts and crafts, cooking, and gardening. Many participants can also be seen delivering meals to elders with Meals on Wheels or volunteering at local libraries and recycling centers.

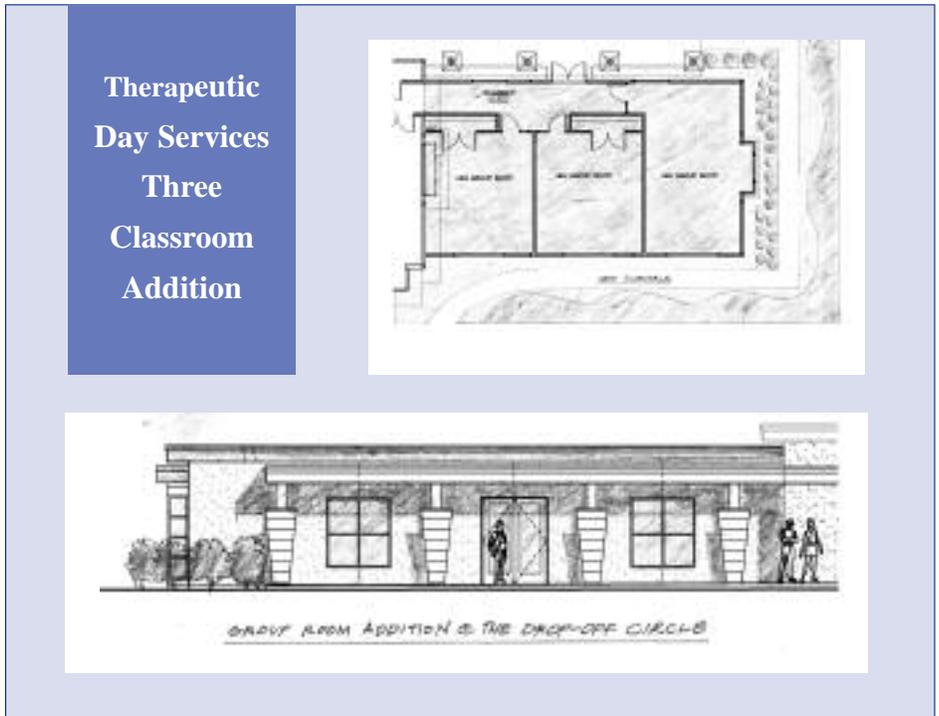
It is hard to believe, but we are bursting at the seams! I am pleased to announce that we are planning a 1700 square-foot addition to the Therapeutic Day Services wing, with construction to begin this summer. These three new classrooms will enable us to accommodate more families in need but also provide extra space for participants in wheelchairs and for those needing greater assistance.

Below is a sample drawing of the new TDS wing area. Andrew Weaver, architect for the Merritt Center, has also designed this new wing.

The cost of the new addition will be approximately \$500,000. We will be busy in the coming months asking families and friends to financially support this capital expansion. Please remember that we receive no funds from the state or federal government for renovations or capital purchases so we need your help! It is the generosity of individual donors who

believe in our mission and see the impact that we make on the quality of life that has helped The Charles River Center attain its level of excellence. Please consider a gift today. For more information, please call our Development office at 781-972-1001 or visit www.crarc.org.

John Grugan



Therapeutic
Day Services
Three
Classroom
Addition



A big thank you to Barbara McLaughlin whose Boston Marathon run raised \$10,000 for the Bob Moore Scholarship Fund.

A Touch of Hollywood *(continued from page 1)*

During this special evening, we were also pleased to honor program participants, Leslie Cusack and James Levine. Supported by Charles River Employment Services, Leslie and Jimmy have been employed by the Babson Executive Conference Center in Wellesley for 20 years. Leslie and Jimmy were presented with the *Lifetime Achievement Award* in honor of their proven work ethic and long term on-the-job reliability. Friends from Babson were in attendance to celebrate Jim and Leslie's accomplishments. (See accompanying article on Leslie and Jimmy.)

As emcee and auctioneer, John Feeley, a director on Charles River's Board, did a wonderful job conducting the live auction, as our longtime emcee and friend, Bob Lobel, legendary Sports Director of WBZ-TV, faced back surgery the next day. We are happy to report that Bob is doing well

and look forward to having him join us next year.

We are also pleased to report that both our silent and live auctions were very successful. Winning bidders went home with a variety of goodies, including golf packages, a cruise to Bermuda aboard the Norwegian Dream, and autographed sports memorabilia. The highlight of the live auction, however, was when three bidders got the opportunity to be part of a Farrelly Brothers' movie!

We would like to thank our Sponsors who helped underwrite the costs of the event, all who donated items for our auctions, advertisers in our program booklet, individuals who purchased tickets and raffles, those who participated in our online auction, and to the many volunteers and committee members whose hard work and enthusiasm helped make this a successful and truly memorable evening.



Leslie Cusack and James Levine Receive *Lifetime Achievement Awards*

by Joan Johnson

Supported by Charles River Employment Services, Leslie Cusack and James Levine have accomplished something that is growing increasingly rare today. This year marks their 20th year of continuous employment at the Babson Executive Conference Center in Wellesley.

In August of 1988, Leslie and Jimmy began their service in the laundry facilities at Babson Executive Conference Center which boasts 211 well-appointed guest rooms and award-winning dining facilities. Leslie and Jimmy quickly became a fully engaged, hard-working duo whose efforts were and are integral to the Center's smooth operation.

Human Resources Manager Heather Bunzel notes that the Center has seen many changes over the course of 20 years, but "we've always been able to rely on Leslie and Jimmy to be here every day."

Leslie's independent spirit and sense of humor keep everyone on their toes, while easygoing and friendly Jimmy works diligently by her side. "They are very hard workers and they're wonderful people to work with," states their longtime Case Manager, Angela Edgeston. "They're a great team and always support each other," she adds.



"They are very hard workers and they're wonderful people to work with... they're a great team and always support each other."

Among Leslie's many loves and interests are her large family, her friends, hip hop dances, Harry Potter and, of course, her computer where she amazes her family with her skills. Politically active, Leslie would never miss a vote. In fact, one year she was elected mayor for a day in her hometown of Dedham.

Jimmy has lived in a group residence with 9 other people in Brookline for 23 years where he loves to take part in the large weekly grocery shopping excursion. He enjoys his many friends, bowling with his mom, his regular exercise program and participating in many local road races. His mother reports he must have a "zillion t-shirts from all these races."

When not physically active, Jimmy, a true game show aficionado, can be found watching *Jeopardy*, *The Price is Right* or old shows on the Game Show Network.

Congratulations to Leslie and Jimmy. We are proud to honor them with this year's *Lifetime Achievement Award*. Through their devotion to hard work, admirable spirit and extraordinary accomplishments, they have become role models for us all.

*Thank you to all of our Building a Dream 2008 Sponsors.
Your generosity is greatly appreciated!*

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Annual Legislative Breakfast Focuses on Funding Challenges

by Sarah Richmann

On March 31, 2008, the The Charles River Center joined the Greater Waltham Arc, Greater Boston Arc and the South Norfolk Country Arc on the Grand staircase of the State House for the 3rd annual Legislative Breakfast. Each spring, as the state budgeting process gets underway, the breakfast is held to help draw attention to the needs of the individuals we serve and the inadequate funding provided by the state.

This year, turnout for this event was exceptional, as families, staff, and self advocates met with their state representatives and senators to discuss funding issues concerning individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The room was full of people ready to advocate for themselves and the people they care for.

Individuals with developmental disabilities may receive state funding from the Department of Developmental Services, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission or Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. It is through this critical funding that individuals are placed in programs such as Charles River's Opportunities and Visions and Community Living Programs.

Charles River focused particular concern on the tremendous need for Family Support flexible funding. This program provides families with small stipends to offset the cost of having a child with a disability living at home. Families can use this money for things such as respite, camps, adapted clothing and equipment. The program has been level funded for the last eight years and state officials estimate over 3,000 families across Massachusetts are still waiting for this service.



State Representatives Paul McMurtry and Lida Harkins with Arc Mass Executive Director Leo Sarkissian

Chris Queen, a Charles River Center member, shared his family's story and stressed the importance of the funds and case management services his family has received. Chris explained all of the costs associated with having a child with developmental disabilities. Although helpful, this funding allocation only covers a small percentage of the overall costs the family incurs. State Representative Lida Harkins also addressed the audience on this important issue and urged families to ask their legislators to join them in their advocacy efforts for increased funding.

Please contact your legislators to tell them how vital our programs are to the children and families we serve. Although The Charles River Center remains committed to providing high quality care, we must work within the parameters set by the Department of Developmental Services budget. Budget increases are critical to the quality and sustainability of our programs and services.

My Experience with the NCDS Fashion Show

by Kiki Dolan



Newton Country Day School has a "Senior Project Requirement" that each student must participate in and complete before they graduate. Most students choose to work in an office, a retail store, or even as a personal assistant. However, none of the aforementioned projects appealed to me. I wanted a project that would give me the opportunity to create my own sort of business with a result that benefitted others. I chose to call The Charles River Center in hopes of offering to help with any fundraising events in May. After speaking with Maria McTernan at Charles River, we both decided that creating our own fundraising event together would be the best idea. We then began to plan for the fundraising fashion show, "Spring onto the Runway" at Newton Country Day School on May 30th.

We began this project by planning the completion of each task throughout the entire month. From invitations, to tickets, to wrapping countless raffle items, we had plenty of projects to finish by May 30th. We printed over 300 invitations to send out to students at Newton Country Day, families at Charles River, and family friends. Once we gained public interest, we had to plan each detail that went into the actual night. I went to over twenty stores, supermarkets, and boutiques in search of generous donations for the raffle. Each store was more than willing to donate to such a great cause. After I collected each donation, I wrapped and labeled a total of twelve raffle baskets. In addition to the admission ticket fees, the money raised from this raffle was all donated to the children's programs at The Charles River Center.

Luckily, I had a generous group of seventeen boys and girls who were willing to model clothing from LF Stores and E. A. Davis in Wellesley Center. Their enthusiasm and fun attitudes really helped to get more public interest from students, faculty, family, and friends. When the show was just around the corner, I worked on the music mix for the show, several informational signs, buying food for refreshments, and creating over 200 tickets. These details

(continued on next page)

Newton's PAC chairman steps down

reprinted from the Newton TAB, 6/18/08

by Chrissie Long/Staff Writer



Newton – For Leslie Lockhart, leading, advising and lobbying for the parents of special education students was never a task. Throughout the 13 years she carried the Parents Advisory Committee on her shoulders — at times, the sole volunteer to coordinate events and line up speakers — she never felt it was a job.

As the mother of a severely disabled 23-year-old, her time with the group was one she looked forward to because it was a place she could fit in.

At the meetings of the special education Parents Advisory Committee, she was among other parents whose child would never compete in a Little League baseball game, never star in a musical and never receive an acceptance letter to a prestigious college.

“As a parent of a special education student, you do sometimes feel left out,” she said. Among parents of children in mainstream classes, she typically felt on the outside of conversations.

Whether setting up chairs for a speaker or meeting over coffee, the Parents Advisory Committee was a group she felt comfortable with.

But, now that her daughter is out of the school system and new leaders for the group have emerged, Lockhart is stepping down as chairman. It will take three people to fill the role she had for so many years.

“Chairing the PAC is an enormous time commitment that a number of us are just becoming aware of now,” said current Co-Chairman Jessie Solodar, who is serving along with Jo-Louise Allen and Sandy Baird. “Leslie has done a beautiful job and remained level-headed through all the kinds of things the role involves.”

“She practically ran the whole thing independently, often using her own money to pay for speakers,” said Lucie Chansky, former chairman. “She was a one-man band and did whatever was necessary to meet the needs of parents in the community.”

The Parents Advisory Committee was a group formed in the 1980s under Massachusetts law to act as a liaison between school districts and parents of special education students and advise those parents about their legal rights.

“My most essential role has been to support parents in what can be a difficult struggle,” Lockhart said. Piled on top of the responsibilities most parents have in caring for children, juggling work obligations and driving from one activity to the next, parents of special education students must navigate a system that may not always be conducive to their child’s needs.

It’s often a constant struggle to keep a special needs child afloat in an educational environment where one poor decision or one back turned could mean drowned progress.

Along with supporting the parents of kids in special education, the Parents Advisory Committee also educates community members and the school district about children with special needs.

Lockhart, who received an anonymous phone call one night asking her to remove her child from the school system, said, “People often look at you as a drain. When money is tight, there is a trend to blame the weakest person. We try to help people see children with a disability as an asset.”

Teachers benefit from having special education students in their classroom because it challenges them to have the creativity and flexibility to adapt to a wide range of learning needs, Lockhart said. Students benefit from the added support an aide can bring into a classroom and from the opportunity to interact with disabled students, which creates awareness and tolerance.

Her own daughter has been an inspiration to her peers and others. Unable to speak or walk and far removed from living a normal life, Julia doesn’t let her physical condition handicap her cheerful emotions, Lockhart said. No matter the situation, Julia is always smiling and happy.

Lockhart is hoping that her new-found time will give her the opportunity to devote more effort to her roles in special needs beyond Newton, such as serving on the Board of Directors at Charles River ARC in Needham and on the DMR Citizen Advisory Board for the area.

Chrissie Long can be reached at clong@cnc.com

NCDS Fashion Show *(continued from previous page)*

for planning an event are often overlooked, but take a lot of time to prepare. They really completed the look of the entire show and helped to inform the guests about The Charles River Center.

I chose to donate all of the money raised at the fashion show to Charles River because of my previous experience volunteering in the children’s programs. I worked there two summers ago and helped engage the children through arts and crafts, singing, and other fun activities. I had such a great experience that summer and could not stop talking about how wonderful the organization really was. Both the volunteers and the staff create such a warm and comforting atmosphere where these children can work to reach their highest level of independence. I was amazed at how much these children have to go through every day. Yet, they continue to smile and stay so positive in any situation. I felt that this non-profit organization was the best place to send the \$2,400 raised at “Spring onto the Runway” because their staff’s selfless efforts truly make a difference.

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2008-2009

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Joan Johnson, *The Lamp Editor*
Howe Associates, *Graphic Design*

Family Support Programs Receive Grant

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Through their innovative Youth In Philanthropy (YIP) program, Crossroads partnered with students from Needham High School, guiding them through the grantmaking process and enabling the teens to evaluate proposals, make site visits and make recommendations for awards.

Crossroads has found YIP to be a powerful program with winners on all sides. Their grantmaking to children's organizations is strengthened by the youth perspective and youth participants develop an understanding of philanthropy, grantmaking and community needs.

Sarah Richmann, Charles River's Director of Family Support, was very impressed by the Needham High School students during their site visit. "It was obvious that these kids had done their research. They asked important questions and were determined to gather as much information as possible to enable them to make the best decisions."



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