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THE LAMP

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HORTICULTURE PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW

By Mike Bolio, Case Manager, Employment and Day Services

After what seemed like a never-ending cycle of snow storms and bitter cold, the warmer temperatures are here to stay. Over the winter and spring, we were busy preparing for the first season of the Horticulture Program, and today we are growing a variety of food and flowers in three different locations. More than 60 Charles River Center individuals are participating in this exciting new venture.



Mike Bolio, Farmer and Case Manager, plants with Shoshana

In January, the Dedham and Wellesley stores of Whole Foods hosted 5% Community Days, raising over \$12,000 for the Horticulture Program, and the Needham Women's Club generously donated \$2,000 in support of this new initiative. The funds were used to purchase a greenhouse as well as seeds, soil, and equipment.

We are currently growing at the Needham Community Farm, the Community Gardens at Nahanton Park (through Newton Parks and Recreation) and in donated crates and buckets at the Dwight building. Once the greenhouse is up, individuals will start seeds in the greenhouse, as well as directly sow into the ground. All of the practices are organic, and the food grown this year will be donated to the Needham Food Pantry and Charles River homes. So far we have planted a variety of beets, radishes, kale, lettuce, herbs, chard, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, sunflowers, zinnias, and strawflowers.

Not only do the individuals enjoy being outdoors and the gardening tasks, they are learning new skills and improving upon others. While gardening, they work on communication, teambuilding, scheduling, and attention to detail, while increasing their endurance and improving their fine and gross motor skills. These skills are necessary for everyday living and may help with employment opportunities in the future.

We look forward to a productive growing season ahead.

To prepare for this new program, Mike Bolio, Case Manager in Employment and Day Services, worked at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at the University of Santa Cruz, California, where he received his certificate in Ecological Horticulture.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS: A NEW SOCIAL GROUP FOR TEENS

Making and keeping friends is difficult for anybody – but can be particularly difficult for teens with developmental disabilities. Not only are they going through the typical changes and social anxieties that come with being a teen, they may also need additional help with the skills necessary for making and keeping friends, such as communication, self-respect, self-esteem, and boundary-setting. That's why we developed the Building

Friendships program – a venue for teens with disabilities to meet teens without disabilities – with the goal of developing ongoing friendships.

The program begins with a 6-week session for teens with developmental disabilities. At these sessions, they discuss the basics of being a friend: self-esteem, personal space, shared experiences, different types of relationships, and conversation skills, as well as red flags in forming

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JOIN THE TEAM!



Join the Charles River Riders at this year's Rodman Ride for Kids on Saturday, September 26th! Ride 25, 50 or even 100 miles over a beautiful course through Foxboro and surrounding towns. Don't want to get on a bike? Consider becoming a virtual rider. The Rodman Ride is the #1 single-day athletic fundraiser in the nation supporting at-risk kids.

Reasons to Participate:

- Help us reach our fundraising goal of \$45,000 for camps, after-school and recreational programs for children at Charles River.
- Festive atmosphere and fun after-party
- An opportunity to explain to others what the Charles River Center means to you!

Are you interested or would like to learn more? Contact Hilary Ryan, VP of Development, at (781) 972-1030 or hryan@charlesrivercenter.org.

ROWING TO GOOD HEALTH

Health and wellness are top priorities at the Charles River Center, with numerous individuals enjoying local hikes, our physical therapy room in Day Habilitation, Zumba, yoga classes, and memberships at local health clubs.

Last fall, 12 individuals from Opportunities & Visions started working out twice a week at the beautiful boathouse of Community Rowing in Brighton. With a mission of "rowing for all," Community Rowing is the world's largest public access rowing organization and has served the Greater Boston community for almost 30 years.

While at the boathouse, individuals have use of the facilities and more than 50 rowing machines – all located in a beautiful, light-filled room with stunning views of the Charles. "We have worked closely with the trainers at Community Rowing to develop goals for the individuals, and everyone enjoys the machines and atmosphere. We love visiting Community Rowing," said Pat Palmaccio, Director of Opportunities & Visions.

While the individuals haven't made it out onto the water, yet, that is certainly a goal for the future. Row on!

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AT THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

The 20th Anniversary Building a Dream Gala was a night to remember as nearly 400 attendees celebrated Charles River's successes while helping to raise funds for its continued growth and program enhancements. Partygoers appreciated the move to the suburbs (especially on a game night) and enjoyed delicious hors d'oeuvres, dinner, auctions and a program filled with a few tears and much joy.

It was an emotional evening as we presented the first *Maria McTernan Civic Leadership Award* to the Needham Exchange Club. John Grugan gave a moving speech about Maria and how much she is missed, and nearly 40 members of Maria's family were there in her honor. The Exchange Club also came out in full force to honor Maria and to celebrate their long partnership with Charles River.



Helen and Gilbert Cox



The residents of N. Main Street in Sharon receive the Community Achievement Award



Lucky winner Stephen Meyler

During this special evening, we were also pleased to honor the Residence of North Main Street. We learned how five young adults have beautifully adjusted to their new home in Sharon with the strong support of staff, families and the Sharon community.

Bob Lobel, legendary sports director, added much humor throughout the evening as he rekindled the tie-exchange with Sevrin Nelson, an individual who lives in a Charles River home, and kept us informed of the Red Sox score. John Terrio joined us again, helping to encourage bidding on some terrific live auction items. Winning bidders went home with a variety of goodies, including golf packages, a cruise to Bermuda, electronics, and a trip to anywhere!



Members of the Needham Exchange Club

We would like to thank our Sponsors and Friends who helped underwrite the cost of the event, all who donated items to our auctions, individuals who purchased tickets, and to the many volunteers and committee members whose hard work and enthusiasm helped make this a successful and truly memorable evening.

A special thanks to our Sponsors!

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



John Grugan, President

A little for a lot or a lot for a little?

The Charles River Center aims to support individuals with intellectual and other disabilities, and we like to think we do a pretty good job of it.* But there never seems to be enough revenue to meet everyone's needs. The Commonwealth deals with this dilemma by assigning a Priority for services; very few of those turning twenty-two are eligible for housing, however, and the percentage is getting smaller. **It is becoming clear that the cost of 24-hour care for those who would like it is becoming unsustainable with our current tax structure and will continue to be strictly rationed.**

This dilemma is getting more of our attention as the cost of residential services goes up and state resources either shrink or, at best, stay the same. The answer seems pretty clear – that we should pursue a strategy where a lot get a little; that is why we have grown our Family Support program significantly.

While the Family Support program is strong and dynamic, **we plan to create an even broader array of innovative, cost-effective services that will help families cope with the demands of keeping their loved ones at home for longer periods of time.** Over 500 families take advantage of our many offerings: after-school care, vacation camps, numerous social and recreational programs, in-home care and respite, our new Respite Home in Sharon, advocacy and counseling. We have already accomplished much but feel that we must work even harder to offer a sufficient variety and scope of affordable services.

Our current Strategic Plan calls for us to examine how we deliver these services and how we create revenues to help support families who can't afford to carry the entire burden. **Going forward, we will begin to focus more of our fundraising revenues to help shore up these important services. We believe that the number of people who need our Family Support services exceeds the participation level and that cost inhibits many in need from using them.**

Many families receive some government family support subsidies but, despite our advocacy on Beacon Hill, many run out of funds early in each fiscal year. Our hope is to generate enough charitable funds to help support a growing number of people who are faced with the burden of not only supporting their loved ones as young children, but who now must face the reality that they will be required to continue this well into their children's transition into adulthood and beyond.

We feel this issue is a community problem that should be shared by all those who have the means to make a difference and share our passion for helping those in need. **These families carry a tremendous burden and we need to lighten their load. Please help support us as we continue to expand our Family Support services.** You can make a difference at our 5K Run on September 27th and by supporting our Rodman Ride for Kids on September 26th. Please check our website for details.

**In fact, the Department of Developmental Services agrees and just gave our Residential and Employment and Day Programs a 2-year recertification – the highest level possible.*

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS

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relationships: bullying and cyber-safety, among others.

At the end of the six weeks, there is a 3-hour volunteer training for the typical teens. At this session, the teens learn about developmental disabilities, what to expect, communication, and how to support positive behaviors. Charles River recruits these typical teens from ten area high schools.

The following weekend, we hold a "Meet and Greet" with all of the teens gathering together. On this day, the group plays games, participates in guided conversations, and shares lunch. At the end of the day, a "yearbook" with contact information is exchanged so that teens may get in touch with one another.

The program launched in the summer of 2014, and so far over 35 teens have



Teens play bingo as an icebreaker

participated. Thanks to the Wellesley Hills Junior Women's Club for their financial support this year.

One parent commented, "I've already noticed an increased maturity in my daughter's interactions as she tries out some of her new skills." And a typical teen said, "After I completed the session, it felt really powerful and awesome to have contributed to these teenagers' lives."