

Recent Grants Provide Programs a Boost

by Maria McTernan

Thank you to the Tobin School for its grant of \$2,500 for music therapy in our children's programs. The prize money came from a \$10,000 award The Tobin School won in a national competition for the school's work in encouraging and educating young children in the value and power of volunteerism. Mary Beth Claus Tobin, a Needham resident and founder and president of The Tobin Schools, said her organization decided to use half of the funds to award two \$2,500 grants to nonprofit groups in Natick and Needham who could best "demonstrate the most creative use of the funds" to support their missions.



Left to right: Sarah Richmann, Emily Rude, Kathryn Miles, John Grugan and Mary Beth Claus Tobin

And many thanks to Dedham Temporary Home for Women and Children for its bi-annual grant of \$6,000 to support Kid's Break, our Saturday recreational program for children. Recognizing the importance of weekend social activities for children and the respite it provides families, Dedham Temporary Home has been generously supporting this program for more than 10 years!

Our appreciation is extended to all who made contributions to our end-of-year annual appeal. This financial support helps us make many capital improvements and enhance all of our programs and services.

WWW.
Please check our website often at
www.crarc.org
for upcoming events and
our future online auction!



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The Lamp

Winter 2006-2007

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

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

Aspire Program Granted State License

by Kathryn Miles

A major milestone was reached by the Family Support Division's after-school program (Aspire) this fall. We are pleased to announce that Aspire was licensed by the State of Massachusetts' Office of Early Education and Care (EEC). Aspire, originally created as an informal after-school program for children with special needs, has grown and matured through its seven-year history, becoming a more structured quality program.

The EEC enforces strong licensing standards for the health, safety and education of all children in child care. Documentation of our organization's ability to provide a well-rounded variety of age-appropriate activities

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Comedy Show and Auction to Benefit Charles River Arc!



Please support The Giving Tree Foundation and its 9th Annual Comedy Show and Auction to be held on Saturday, March 24, 2007 at MIT. Founded by a parent and wholly volunteer-staffed, the Foundation was created to raise monies for programs dedicated to helping children with brain injuries live a better life. This year, net proceeds from the event will be given to the Family Support Division to purchase a van to be used for community activities.

Tickets are \$25 each. For information, tickets, or to make a donation, contact:

Tracie Sullivan, *President and Founder*
The Giving Tree Foundation
21 Appleby Rd., Wellesley, MA 02482
781-235-1774 • sullivan.richard@comcast.net

2006 Annual Awards Dinner

by Judy Siggins



J. P. Manion
and Amanda
Armstrong



John Grugan,
Donna Gagne,
and Marcia
Stone



John Grugan presenting the
Earle Mountain Award
to Heather Conlan

With shoes shined and sporting fine evening attire, the Charles River Arc community gathered to honor recipients of the 2006 annual awards on Friday evening, October 13, 2006. The Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony, held at Moseley's on the Charles in Dedham, is a much loved tradition that provides families, Board members, and our community the opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of both staff and program participants.

Following the social hour and full-course dinner, President John Grugan kicked off the award presentations by introducing this year's Earle Mountain Award recipient, Heather Conlan, Cluster Director of our Community Living Programs. This award, named in honor of Charles River Arc's first executive director, is presented to a staff member whose colleagues recognize him or her to be an individual who

contributes outstanding service and is dedicated to the individuals and families participating in our programs.

The following staff and participants were also honored for their outstanding achievements:

- Patrick Ashe
- Elaine Caci
- Martin Cappalini
- Heather Gilbert
- Janice Lee
- J.P. Manion
- Amanda McLaughlin
- Andrea Spadoni
- Joseph Terio
- Roberta Witherow

Also recognized was Marcia Stone, President of HybriVet Systems, Inc. of Natick, who received a Special Community Award. A valued partner, HybriVet has employed many of our program participants for over 10 years.

Congratulations to all honorees and thank you to all the volunteers for making this wonderful evening possible.

Aspire Program Granted State License

(continued on page 1)

and educational experiences, qualified staff, appropriate supervision and staff-to-child ratios, health care policies, written records, and the ability to provide for the physical and emotional needs of children are all required in the licensing regulations. Building inspections are also completed to ensure that programs are safe, clean, and free from hazards. Aspire was found to comply with all licensing regulations and



received its initial license in August 2006, just in time for the start of the new school year.

Aspire serves children from several local communities including Needham, Newton, Wellesley, Walpole, Norwood and Natick. The program also provides parents with a much needed respite opportunity while their children enjoy a variety of recreational and skill building experiences. Throughout the week, program participants take part in activities including art, cooking, sports, games and music therapy. Each activity is tailored to the abilities of the individual child to ensure his or her success.

One of the unique aspects of Aspire is the opportunity for children with special needs to spend time with their typical peers. In addition to the professional program coordinators who oversee the program, high school and college-age staff are hired and trained as recreation aides to work with program participants. Program Coordinator Amanda Armstrong has designed a formal training program to introduce new staff members to the program and provide ongoing

learning opportunities to long-term staff members. Many of these young staff members find this to be an extraordinary experience and go on to pursue careers in the human services field. In addition, volunteers and interns from local middle schools, high schools and colleges bring new and exciting ideas to the program.

Prior to the start of the 2005-2006 school year, Aspire operated in two locations: the Paul Merritt Center in Needham and the Day Middle School in Newton. In order to provide families with the highest quality services possible, the decision was made to combine the two programs in one location. The program currently operates solely out of the Paul Merritt Center. Since the merging of the programs, participants take part in musical activities twice a week and have the opportunity to make use of all Merritt Center amenities, including the exercise room, kitchen and basketball court.

The Family Support Division has also placed an emphasis on staff training over the past year. Sarah Richmann, Associate Director, and Amanda Armstrong, Program Coordinator, have both completed the classes and clinical hours required for certification in Applied Behavioral Analysis. Both will sit for the certification test in the spring of 2007. The knowledge and skills they are gaining will only continue to enhance the structure and quality of the Aspire program.

The Family Support Division remains committed to providing high quality after-school programming for the families we serve. We continue to focus on education and training for all staff working in the division. As we look ahead, we have plans to reach out to new communities in areas where families may not be aware of the services we provide. For information about the Aspire program, contact Kathryn Miles at (781) 972-1032.

SAVE THE DATE!

12TH ANNUAL *Building a Dream* Benefit Gala

Wednesday, May 2, 2007
The Boston Park Plaza Hotel

Charles River Arc is proud to present the Sam Gerson Humanitarian Award to Dick and Rick Hoyt. This father-and-son team have competed in over 900 events and races, including 25 straight Boston Marathons. And – if they're not in a marathon, they are in a triathlon – that daunting, almost superhuman combination of 26.2 miles of running, 112 miles of bicycling, and 2.4 miles of swimming. Together they have climbed mountains, and once trekked 3,735 miles across America in 45 consecutive days.

It is a remarkable record of exertion — even more so when you consider that Rick can't walk or talk.

Check www.crcarc.org soon for our first "Building a Dream" online auction. To contribute to the auction or make a donation, please contact Maria McTernan at 781-972-1001 or mmcternan@crcarc.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



John Grugan, President

It seems odd to be composing a message for our Winter Lamp considering the temperature outside is in the mid-fifties. I guess we should be thankful for the warmth considering the price of heating oil and gas. Despite the fact that our weather seems to be out of sync, Happy New Year to all of you. We at Charles River Arc wish you all health, happiness and prosperity in the new year.

The staff at Charles River is preparing for another busy year. This is the final year of our three-year strategic plan and we have lots to do in order to accomplish all that we set out to achieve three years ago. We will also begin the assessment process needed to develop a new plan for the next three years. We will be contacting many families and key stakeholders to solicit advice, concerns and constructive feedback during the winter and spring months to help us shape a plan moving forward.

Our current plan focused on a variety of areas but the most complex and difficult objective was to continue to expand our residential supports. I'm pleased that we have provided housing for 17 additional individuals in less than three years.

Our goal this year is to renovate and open two new homes. One in Wellesley will serve four people and another home purchased just this week will serve five people in Millis. Once completed, we will be serving a total of 109 individuals.

We have expanded our Day Habilitation program located in the Merritt Center. The quality of our program has improved in the past few years, despite the challenges of staff recruitment and budget cuts. We are beginning to see an increase in referrals and inquiries about our services as our reputation for supporting people with complex needs with skill, compassion and dignity becomes better known. We are now serving 89 individuals in this program.

Our Family Support programs have become much more structured and organized. As evidence of this improvement, we received a license from the State Department of Early Education

and Care and have seen a slight increase in the number of children served. We have also begun a collaborative effort between the Family Support Department and our Employment Division to offer school-vacation programs for youngsters over the age of 18 in our Opportunities and Visions Program. This effort affords young individuals an opportunity to explore vocational interests and abilities in the adult services environment and has been very successful.

Charles River Employment Services have also done well in improving quality and increasing work opportunities. Over 150 individuals, either at the Dwight Vocational Center or in small companies, are successfully employed.

We set out to make many improvements in recruitment, training and retention of staff. Like most human service providers, we have met with mixed success in this area. The fact that our state contracts have remained essentially level funded for many years, coupled with the growing cost of living in our state, has eroded our ability to attract and keep staff. We traditionally count on a relatively young work force. Many young people are leaving the state and others cannot work in our industry due to economics. We have begun to increase our training efforts and, due to past success in fund raising, we are in the position to offer staff tuition assistance for coursework related to our field. This is one way that Charles River differentiates itself from other agencies. We help our staff members advance their careers in this field and consequently find ourselves with a more motivated and educated workforce. We will continue to focus on this area in our next strategic plan. Thank you to all for your ongoing support of our fund-raising efforts. Your support will help us fully achieve our goals.


John Grugan

Identifying Unmet Residential Needs

by Joan Johnson

The Arc of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council are currently conducting a survey to identify families across the state who may not be receiving sufficient services from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). Complete and accurate information regarding unmet residential needs is critical in allocating funding to meet those needs.

Many individuals with developmental disabilities live comfortably at home with parents and other family members. However, as illness or the limitations of age begin to impact the caretaker's

ability to provide care, families often find themselves looking for an alternative residential arrangement for their loved one.

To ensure that funding will be available as families realize they have residential needs, Charles River Arc is assisting in The ArcMass effort to identify those families in our service area. If you or a loved one need a residential placement now, or believe you will have this need in the foreseeable future, please contact John Grugan at 781-972-1022 or jgrugan@crcarc.org; or Kathryn Miles at 781-972-1032 or kmiles@crcarc.org.

Spotlight on...

Hilary Dietrich, Vice President, Therapeutic Day Services

By John Randall



Hilary Dietrich

Charles River Arc extends a warm welcome to Hilary Dietrich as the new Vice President of Therapeutic Day Services (TDS). Hilary moved to Massachusetts last September from the Chicago area. Prior to her relocation, Hilary worked for several years in residential, day, and clinical settings at the Misericordia Home in Chicago. She earned

her bachelor's degree in biology and kinesiology from Indiana University.

In observing Hilary in the brief time she has been at Charles River Arc, it is clear that she is the consummate professional in her desire to provide quality services and her ability to manage the multiple components of her job. A typical day for Hilary is to arrive at work a few minutes before her staff, review the prior day's issues, facilitate a morning meeting, manage daily events, and stay for a few hours after the program closes to attend to the day's issues.

When asked about how she prioritizes the many aspects of her job she stated, "It all comes down to the people we support being happy, satisfied, and well served." This ethic is evident in observing Hilary interacting with the people she supports. The program rooms come alive when she is present. TDS staff shares this observation. "We have a manager who not only cares, but is putting in the effort to make this a better place," states one direct-care professional.

Hilary has quickly developed into a leader at Charles River Arc who has garnered the respect of our primary funding source, The Department of Mental Retardation. A DMR area director noted, "Hilary has a presence and competence that are rare to see in someone so new to a position. She has comforted families with their concerns, taken steps to ensure quality programs, and kept us in the loop when issues arise. It is nice to have her as a resource."

Hilary has the heart and commitment to support the people in her programs. She has already proven to be an asset to her staff, the families, and to DMR. It is a pleasure to welcome such a strong professional to Charles River Arc at the early stages of what has the potential to be a long and meaningful career.

Athletes Shine on a Sunny September Saturday

by Amanda Armstrong



Almost 100 athletes gathered at the Needham High School football field on Saturday, September 30th to participate in Charles River Arc's annual Ellie Bloom Olympics. The sunny autumn day began with participants and volunteers receiving their highly anticipated Ellie Bloom T-shirts. The spirit-boosting T-shirts help participants identify those offering assistance during the games and contests.

Official events got under way as the Needham High School marching band lead all participants around the track to the sounds of the Olympic Anthem. After the singing of the National Anthem and greetings from President John Grugan, the games began. The athletes ran hard and fast in the individual and relay races; gave their best kicks for the soccer kick; displayed their precision skills in the ring toss and tennis ball throw; and with great caution, carried ping pong balls on spoons for the ping pong relay.

The athletes enjoyed the friendly competition as they were encouraged toward the finish line by the wild cheering and applause from the audience. Gold, silver, and bronze medals were awarded but every participant was a winner. This was a day to recognize each person's abilities, effort and spirit.

*This was a day
to recognize each
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effort and spirit.*

Following the events, Roche Brothers provided lunch for all participants and volunteers. Laughter and cheerful chatter about the spirited athletic performances filled the air as everyone ate their well deserved lunches and concluded that this had been a rewarding day for all.

The Annual Ellie Bloom Olympics was again a great success and so much fun for everyone involved. Thank you to the many volunteers and community financial supporters who made this a wonderful event:

Students from St. Joseph's Monsignor Haddad Middle School; The Needham Exchange Club; The Needham Women's Club; Needham High School Excel Club; Needham High School Marching Band; Roche Bros./Sudbury Farms; Dunkin Donuts; Charles River Arc Staff and Charles River Arc's own American Idol Choir.

The Many Talents of Roberta Witherow

by Hilary Dietrich

Charles River Arc's Therapeutic Day Services (TDS) provide opportunities for individuals to maximize level of functioning, utilize expressive and receptive communications skills, and enhance independent living and developmental skills. Among TDS' many therapeutic and habilitative offerings, the art program is by far the most popular with participants and staff members.



Roberta Witherow, Hilary Dietrich
and Mary Anne O'Brien

In addition to providing access to a wide variety of art techniques, objectives of the art program include creating an environment to increase social skills among peers and developing fine and gross motor skills. The program's popularity and success is due to talented art teacher, and recipient of the 2006 Therapeutic Day Services Staff Person of the Year award, Roberta Witherow. Program participant, Richard, fondly observes that "Roberta is a sweet lady who brings us supplies and helps us make beautiful artwork."

Roberta has been a dedicated employee of Charles River Arc for over 5 years. She works closely with all program participants in completing weekly art projects. Some of the art work is taken home to be shared within the home environment. Other pieces of artwork are displayed throughout the Paul Merritt Center. Roberta has her own special approach that encourages all program participants to take part in these creative projects. Her powers of gentle persuasion and caring support tempt everyone to get involved. Over the past few years, volunteers from the Wellesley Service League have assisted Roberta in her work. They return every year, attracted by Roberta's optimism, enthusiasm and devotion to her students.

"Roberta Witherow is a dedicated, hard working person who can create just about anything out of a Quaker Oats box," states Mary Anne O'Brien, Program Director.

On behalf of all TDS participants and staff, thank you, Roberta, for your creative energy and caring ways. You brighten our lives and our working environment.

Nicole Gowe, Charles River Arc's Newest Board Member

by Joan Johnson

This past summer, Nicole Gowe assumed her newest role at Charles River Arc as a member of its Board of Directors. Nicole, who graduated from the Massachusetts Hospital School in Canton in June 2003, joined Charles River Employment Services later that year. By March of 2004, with the supports and staff Nicole requires in place, she moved into the Avalon Bay apartment complex in Newton. Nicole loves being on the Board. "All the members are so nice," she says. She is especially interested in the work the Board does to improve community living arrangements and to acquire new residences.



Moving day into Avalon I is firmly implanted in Nicole's memory. "Living here is so much fun! There is never a dull moment," she adds. Of her roommates, Nicole has this to say, "They keep me hopping! Especially Angel. I just love it."

Nicole loves to laugh and loves to hear other people laugh. "I take after my dad," she says. "He's got a crazy sense of humor." Her sense of humor, positive attitude and absolute determination have enabled Nicole to accomplish much in her young life.

Nicole, who was born with spina bifida, was the first wheelchair-bound student to attend her elementary school. In the third grade with the help of her teacher, she produced the video, *Just Like Me*, introducing herself to the school community. The video has been widely viewed.

Entering a large amphitheatre to give a presentation to a full house of young, inquiring first and second year medical students would seem a daunting prospect to many. Nicole met this challenge as a third grader, and in what has become an annual tradition, continues to speak with Harvard Medical School students today. She derives a great sense of satisfaction in helping them to understand what it is like to live with a physical disability.

Last year, Nicole appeared before the Joint Committee on Housing at the State House. She testified about the need for continued support of Chapter 40B which

makes living accommodations like Nicole's possible. Nicole takes great pride in knowing that her testimony can make a big difference in the lives of many others.

Today, Nicole can be found working on various projects at Dwight three days a week. She also visits the Merritt Center to assist with special events. Working on gala activities is one of her favorite projects. On Mondays and Wednesdays, Nicole volunteers at the Newton-Wellesley

Hospital maternity ward, where her people skills and ready smile are great assets. She greets and directs people and performs the full range of receptionist duties. "And I get to see all the newborns as they leave for home," she beams.

Welcome to Charles River Arc's Board of Directors, Nicole. We congratulate you on your many accomplishments and are grateful for your advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

The Blue Trumpet Partners with Charles River Employment Services

by Donna Gagne

The Employment Services division of Charles River Arc has been an active place this past year. We have maintained all of our longstanding placements, and have continued to explore new employment partnerships. We are thrilled with all of the new and exciting opportunities our individuals have had. One of our newest partnerships is with a company called "The Blue Trumpet." When asked to give an employer's perspective of his relationship with Charles River, owner of The Blue Trumpet, Bill Bright, replied:

"The Blue Trumpet is a small wholesaler of Philippine and Thai gift products, located in Needham. In June 2006, the company made a commitment to repack-age its entire inventory of best-selling capiz shell tea light holders. For three months over the summer, individuals from Charles River's Employment Services Program worked on this project, which was completed much earlier than planned.

I was so pleased with the performance of Charles River's work force that we have extended our repackaging initiatives to additional products. In fact, The Blue Trumpet now considers the services that Charles River can provide to be a real strategic tool in developing our business,



Bill Bright and his staff with the Charles River team

adding terrific flexibility in developing and revamping various products. Charles River's workers have become family!"

The individuals who have had the opportunity to work at The Blue Trumpet have reported similar enthusiasm. They felt like they were a part of the "family" from their first day there. Bill and his staff members, Lori and Ceal, have worked consistently to make this a rewarding experience. Through their kindness and acceptance, they have shown Charles River participants that hard work truly pays!

For information on the products packaged by the individuals of Charles River Employment Services, please visit The Blue Trumpet's website at www.thebluetrumpet.com.

If your company is interested in hiring one or more of our clients, on a regular or temporary basis, please contact Frank Stockwell, Director of Contract Sales, at 781-972-1062 or fstockwell@crarc.org. Customized to meet your requirements, our clients are motivated, accurate, and will provide quality services in a timely manner.

Shop Your Favorite Stores

and Support Charles River Arc, too!

by Joan Johnson

Just in time for holiday shopping, Charles River Arc launched its new online marketplace last year. In an effort to capture the growing interest in internet shopping and put it to work supporting our quality programs, Charles River Arc now provides an online portal to over 1,000 fine stores. The new marketplace allows visitors to our website to have fun shopping and save money while providing much needed financial support to Charles River Arc.



Shopping at the marketplace is easy; simply visit www.crarc.org and click on the shopping bag icon. You will have access to many of your favorite stores such as Macy's, Barnes & Noble, Target, Staples, Amazon.com, Best Buy, Orbitz, Gap, Circuit City, ebay, Dick's Sporting Goods and Kohl's, to name just a few. Charles River Arc will receive a percentage of the proceeds from all purchases. An added benefit is the special savings offered by many of the stores to encourage more visitors to shop with them.

Remember...

- Ease – visit www.crarc.org and click on the shopping bag icon
- Convenience – access your favorite stores from 1 location
- Excellent Selection – over 1,000 fine stores
- Discounts – on many of your favorite products
- Satisfaction – of supporting Charles River Arc's mission

We hope you will shop with us often! And please spread the word to your relatives, friends and neighbors. This is truly a win-win opportunity for us all!

Please complete, detach, and mail this registration to Charles River Arc or join online at www.crarc.org.



MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

Yes! I want to become a new member I would like to renew my membership

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail: _____

Charge my: Visa Mastercard Discover Amex

Name as it appears on card _____

Number _____ Exp _____

I am a:

Family Supporter (Individuals with or relatives of individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability)

Community Supporter (Individuals, companies or professionals who want to support the mission and activities of Charles River Arc)

I would like to receive information on educational seminars and workshops held throughout the year

I would like to receive information on children/youth programming

If you are a parent or relative, please indicate

name of participant _____

Name of Program:

Adult Therapeutic Day Services Community Living

Supported Employment Services Family Support

Check for \$48.00 should be made payable to: Charles River Arc, 59 East Militia Heights Road, Needham, MA 02492, Attn: Danielle Castellanos, Executive Assistant to the President

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