

# THE EGRAM

Summer 2023

Toward Independent Living and Learning, Inc.

## Good Times With Good Friends

Memories we will never forget.



## From the President



Dear Friends, Families, and Colleagues,

“Innovation is seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody else has thought.”

- Dr. Albert Szent-Györgyi  
*Discovered Vitamin C*

We are all constantly under pressure to innovate, to come up with the next incredible electronic gadget, cure, solution for a world problem, but in reality, the possibilities to innovate exist all around us. Innovation comes in many forms. It comes from our relationships with others as we figure out ways to communicate, to excite, to encourage. It comes from the work all TILL employees engage in when they are communicating with another person, when they reach someone in a way which causes a spark and a desire to push the boundaries to the next level.

TILL has an incredible team of staff who are dedicated *not* to settle for the status quo nor to accept the “dis”-ability part of that word. Relationships, activities, sports, community engagement, fun, travel, and volunteering to better one’s community are core to TILL’s beliefs.

I look forward to a very exciting new fiscal year filled with serving an expanded group of participants and offering new academic and growth opportunities to staff.

Thank you all for continuing to innovate by doing the right thing each day because it is the right thing to do.

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



## Stay in Touch



Now, more than ever, we want to stay in touch, sharing news and updates as information becomes available.

Connecting by email saves time, trees and postage, and TILL uses Constant Contact to send and manage our email messages. We also follow up by mail with important notices to ensure that you get the information you need.

You can help us stay in touch by emailing [info@tillinc.org](mailto:info@tillinc.org) to update your mailing and email addresses, as well as contact preferences. Thank you!

## Initiative Grants

TILL is pleased to announce two new grant awards to support our programmatic growth.

TILL has been awarded a **Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Home and Community Based Services Grant** from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services to support the development of innovative workforce solutions.

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services has awarded TILL funding under the **Respite Innovations Grant Program** to develop innovative Respite models to support families and support caregivers.

We look forward to sharing the results of these two very important initiatives.

## TILL Welcomes CFO

In March, TILL was pleased to welcome Yesim Taskor as TILL’s new Chief Financial Officer. Yesim comes to us with broad experience in corporate business settings as well as in human services, including the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP), one of the leading trade and advocacy organizations in MA. Yesim holds undergraduate degrees from Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, and UMass Boston, as well as graduate degrees from Boston University.



Yesim says of her new role: “I am very proud to be part of the TILL family and look forward to working together as we continue to grow.”

## Honoring Nurses

In recognition of **National Nurses Week**, TILL celebrated our team of RNs and LPNs with Kelly Pavao, Director of Health Services, Sandy Cummins, Director of Res. Services and Dafna Krouk-Gordon, TILL President. Sharing this wonderful message from a grateful family member: “TILL’s Nurses go above and beyond to address changes in routines and medications, travel in snow and heavy rains, answer middle of the night calls, accommodate schedule changes, illnesses, and attend doctor appointments, accepting all the tasks that keeps individuals safe, and enable our son to live a happy and wonderful life.”



## Here We Grow Again

# etc

CAFÉ  
GIFTS  
FOODS



*ETC's Culinary Certificate Graduates present at TILL's Fiscal Breakfast.*

ETC Café, Gift Shop and Food Service in Hyde Park offers culinary and retail training in our entrepreneurial business, with our Artisans' creativity on display in our shop.

ETC has recently expanded our space with a Fitness Center and Healthy Kitchen for engagement and learning, as part of the ETC Curriculum and as a resource for TILL's residential homes.



## TILL Residential Homes

TILL has been tapped by DDS to create new homes serving adults turning 22 with support needs and adults moving from a hospital to a residential setting after an acquired brain injury. We will be celebrating the openings of our newest homes in Billerica, Natick and Maynard this fall with families and friends.



## Rewarding Employee Longevity

Every staff member at TILL plays a critical role in our ability to consistently provide excellence in our programs and services. Because staff retention is key to maintaining this consistency of service, TILL's Senior Management Team was thrilled to announce an employee retention bonus in June. Nearly 500 staff members with two or more years of service, who work a minimum of 15 hours per week, received a one-time bonus check to say *thank you* for your service!

## Growing Excellence



TILL's Residential Team recently reorganized to accommodate TILL's continued growth in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. These changes were necessary to support our ever-expanding services, and simultaneously bring new opportunity and advancement for team members! **Sandra Cummins**, who has been both a member and leader of Residential Services for 28 years, has been named **Vice President of Program Services**. In addition to her continued work within Residential Services, Sandy's leadership will extend to the Day Services and Health Services divisions. **Heidi Torries**, Assistant Director since 2016, has been named **Director of Residential Services**. Heidi's leadership will ensure the continued growth, advocacy and support for which TILL is known. **Emily Amezcuita** and **Mychaela Romanish**, who have been with TILL since 2009 and 2015 respectively, most recently as Residential Coordinators, have both been promoted to **Assistant Director** positions for Residential Services.

# Let the Good Times Roll

April Madness 2023 kicked off at Dave and Buster's arcade/restaurant where "everyone leaves feeling like a champion!" TILL residences came to start the good times rolling, with lunch at the arcade while picking up their quest packet of challenges, with opportunities to engage, volunteer, create, get active and have fun, all as part of this friendly competition.



## Volunteer Events

In the spirit of April Madness and volunteerism, TILL showed up at **Breakheart Reservation** in Saugus for DCR's Park Serve Day. Community Connections joined the Brighton, Brookline, Charlestown, Arlington & Lexington residences to lend a hand. Paula Aiesi, Juan Carlos, and Sheree Winters had a great conversation with **Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll**, about how TILL individuals and staff regularly use and enjoy DCR parks and programs statewide, particularly the adaptive programs.



# April Madness '23!

**On Safari:** Day Programs and Residences each enjoyed a virtual Safari Cultural Festival with Paula and Kingsley of Community Connections, and Sandy and Heidi from Residential Services and Program Services. In addition to music, food, elephants, giraffes, parrots and more, April Madness winners were announced!

## April Madness Award Winners!

Best in Show Residence: Brookline!

Best in Show TILL Central Cluster: Watertown TILL Central!

Best in Show Day Program Cluster: Billerica Day Cluster 2!

According to Dafna Krouk-Gordon, “Each year we say it can’t get better than this, but we are wrong. Creativity, inclusivity, figuring out ways to have fun and learning as well, is always impressive.”



## Walk for Hunger

April Madness encourages making a difference through volunteerism, but being a part of Team TILL's support of Project Bread's Walk for Hunger is a Quest all its own. TILL's residential programs raise funds through sponsorship as well as creative activities to support

Project Bread and this year was no exception – raising \$1,500 for this worthy cause – as representatives from 52 TILL residences rallied to walk and wheel together at this annual event.



## International Adventure

### TILL Education Through Travel

In March 2023, TILL's Education Through Travel (ETT) program provided an unforgettable geo-tourism experience for 15 students with learning differences from the Riverview School in Sandwich, MA, to the picturesque Azores – a small group of islands located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, 1,000 miles off the coast of Portugal. Their adventure included exploring the island of São Miguel's hot springs, hiking diverse landscapes, and learning about local culture. In this photo, students explore a giant ficus tree in Antonio Borges Park in Ponta Delgada, Sao Miguel, Azores Islands, Portugal.



### TILL's International Ambassadors

TILL is excited to announce the return of its International Ambassador Program. Begun in 2001, this unique program explores the best in human service practices by creating a global learning experience. In October 2023, TILL staff members will travel to

San Miguel Island in the Azores, meet with University students and professors, as well as advocacy groups, to discuss each country's approach to human services.

### TILL Springboard Riverboat Cruise

TILL's Springboard Social Club enjoyed a beautiful Black and White Sunset Cocktail Cruise on the Charles River. Members were treated to a spectacular sunset amid hidden views from the vantage of this scenic riverboat cruise. Springboard is a unique social membership club for adults with learning or social differences. For more information about Springboard, visit [tillinc.org/springboard-social-club](http://tillinc.org/springboard-social-club)



## Catch the Wave

This spring, the Wave Gallery, TILL's inclusive gallery in Watertown, hosted a pop-up photography exhibit **Through Your Lens** and a **Diversity through Art** exhibit in collaboration with the Department of Developmental Services Metro Region Cultural Diversity Committee. Currently on display through August 31st is **Reminiscence**, showcasing the artist's interpretation of an event or memory. Come in, cool off and enjoy Art for All, Art by All! Visit the TILL Wave Gallery on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/TILLWaveGallery](http://www.facebook.com/TILLWaveGallery)) for hours and details!



**TILL WAVE GALLERY**

*Reminiscence*  
Opening Reception

June 29, 2023 – 4:00-7:00 pm  
264 Arlington St. Watertown  
tillartwave@tillinc.org  
Exhibit runs through August 31



## TILL Softball, Track, Soccer, and Rowing – pick your sport!

Lace up your sneakers! TILL Games is back at the Reggie Lewis Center Track – Saturday, September 9, 2023. TILL Games is an inclusive track event featuring the 1 mile run, the team relay race and many individual races, including assisted race walks, wheelchair races and running races for children ages 1-13 years of age. Join us to participate and to cheer on our athletes. For details, email [community.connections@tillinc.org](mailto:community.connections@tillinc.org)



## TILL Rallies with the Caring Force

Team TILL made a strong showing at the **Provider's Council Caring Force Rally** at the State House in May. Twelve representatives from TILL, including individuals and staff from **Billerica and Chelsea Day Programs**, joined the sea of yellow shirts to rally in support of the Council's Pro-Workforce Legislative Agenda. The group enjoyed personal conversations with Chelsea District 5 Councilor, Judith Garcia, and Christie Young, Chief of Staff for State Senator Sal Di Domenico, who serves the residents of Cambridge, Charlestown, Chelsea, and Everett. Thank you to the Caring Force for organizing this key event!



## TILL's Newest Partnership Offers Valuable Learning Opportunities

**TILL On the Go**, a unique flexible program model, offers pre-vocational and vocational options, and new opportunities to build on interests, skills and social connections.



Through our partnership with **Maynard Fine Arts Theatre**, a 3-screen movie venue, TILL On the Go participants learn all aspects of theatre operations, including film projection, concessions, inventory, cleaning and maintenance, while developing essential social and customer service skills. The adjoining **Theatre Creamery**, a full service ice cream shop, offers training in operation, maintenance and customer service.

This spring, TILL invited individuals and staff, local special needs school programs and colleagues to the MFAT for special showings of films celebrating ability, including **Champions** and **Peanut Butter Falcon**. We look forward to combining our creative talents as we grow opportunities for learning.

## TILL's Diversity and Inclusion Film

In the spirit of fostering social connections, knowledge and interests, TILL's all-new Free Friday Lunch is a monthly "lunch and learn," open to all TILL employees. The lunch series opened with an original film, **The Immigrant Experience: Miles Away from Home**. Produced by TILL's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council and narrated by Community Connections' Kingsley Brown, the film captures the essence of the immigrant experience as shared by many of our staff. We are looking forward to sharing this film throughout TILL and beyond.

## TILL Earns Supplier Diversity Office Certification

TILL, Inc. is proud to announce our recent formal certification from the **Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Supplier Diversity Office (SDO)** as a **Woman-Led Non-Profit Organization (W/NPO)**.

This certification reflects our commitment to diversity, enhances our ability to do business and adds a competitive edge when seeking contracts with governmental agencies. To qualify, an organization must meet certain certification criteria and undergo a stringent review by the SDO team.

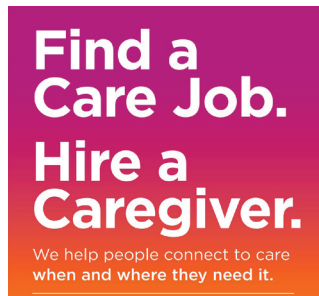


## Rewarding Work

Rewarding Work, an affiliate of TILL, is an online service, connecting people with specialized needs with support workers. RW recently enhanced its online directory and job board with several new features. A training page offers "how-to" videos, in English and Spanish, to help users successfully find and

hire support, or find a caregiving job. Advanced notifications, by text or email, alert users to new jobs or new job applicants.

RewardingWork.org is ADA compliant and website content can be viewed in dozens of languages. Rewarding Work operates in Connecticut, Kansas and Massachusetts.



## TWI Races to Disney!

**TILL's Wellness Initiative (TWI)** challenges us all to get moving to stay healthy! This spring TWI went digital using the Racery app to track a virtual 1,451.1 mile race from Boston to Disney World! Over 80 participants and teams earned miles by logging activities, from pickup basketball, walking with a gait trainer, range of motion exercise, and recumbent biking, to hiking the trails, walking to the library, dance cardio mix, gym machines and yoga for an incredible 79,245.6 miles in total! Congratulations to all who made it to Disney.



# TILL Annual Fund Donations

We sincerely appreciate the generous donations made by our families, friends and supporters over the past year. Gifts made in memory of loved ones, for specific purposes or programs and grants help to further TILL's mission and provide necessary support for our innovative programs.

## President's Club

\$10,000 and above

Susan and Peter Staecker  
James and Christine Connor  
*In Appreciation of Tahia Yiga,  
for TILL projects*  
Gustav and Vibeke Christensen  
Saqwish Foundation c/o Hunter Associates  
*For recruitment and training*  
John Campbell and Susanna Peyton

## Patron

\$5,000-\$9,999

Howard and Deborah Reef  
*For Springboard*

## Benefactor

\$1,000-\$4,999

Robert and Marian Kaplan  
Charles and Therese Giacopelli  
Alice and John Flynn  
*In Appreciation of TILL's Nurses*  
Digital Insurance, LLC  
Sharon and Mitchel Slapik  
*In Honor of Vicki Evans, for Chelsea  
Day Hab Cluster A*  
Anita Stinson  
Darren and Isabelle Nordone  
*In Honor of Hilary Brenton*  
Naoko Ikeda  
*In Memory of Tameo Take, for Billerica  
Day Hab and Mt Grove B residence*  
David and Tanya Mahoney  
Matthew Gromet and Phyllis Schultz  
John Keith  
Susan Senator  
John and Ellen Sabino  
Sally O'Malley

## Sustainer

\$500-\$999

Gladys and Scott Olson  
Kathleen and Craig Little  
*In Memory of Johna MacDonald, for  
Chelsea Day Program*  
Henry Workman  
Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation  
*Blackbaud Giving Fund*  
James and Donna Currie  
Peter and Maria Kreeft  
Michael and Tammy Ward  
Phyllis Fanger  
John Houston  
Elizabeth Viesca  
Teresa Dwyer  
Stephen Fay  
Eleanor Faye  
Thomas and Deborah Flannery

## Sponsor

\$250-\$499

Nancy and Norman MacVicar  
Dafna Krouk-Gordon and Lester Gordon  
Jean Michelson  
Geon and Jeongsun Kim  
Robert and Meryl Lindenberg  
Dahlia Mann  
*In Honor of Dafna*  
Kristina Powers  
*In Memory of Michelle Richardi*  
Bacon Flaherty, LLC

Elissa Gordet Franco  
Donna and Harry Leigh  
Marion Letvin  
Ann Yos  
David Harris

## Supporter

\$100-\$249

Ocean State Job Lot Bedford  
*Close To Our Heart Fund*  
James and Gale Habeeb  
*In Honor of Lena Magazzu and  
residents of Lyman Street*  
Georgiy Pyatnitskiy  
*In Honor of Pavel Pyatnitskiy*  
Elaine Keefe  
*In Memory of Mark Quirk*  
Marie Cushing  
*In Memory of Michael Cushing*  
Judith Beningson  
*With thanks for supporting Bill Flynn*  
Mary and Thomas Brennan  
Peter Wyatt  
Thomas and Anne Larkin  
David and Jeremy Kahan  
Guy and Ann Marchmont  
Andrea and Bradford Stokes  
*In Honor of TILL Staff at Union Street*  
Patricia Fries  
*In Honor of Chris Leichtman*  
Edward and Catherine Simisky  
*In Honor of Dale Bortolotti*  
Russell and Geraldine Vanderbaan  
*In Honor of Donald Vanderbaan*  
Sally and Sarah Milewski  
*In Honor of Kevin Milewski and  
staff at Sandy Brook Rd*  
Orazio and Frances Magazzu  
*In Honor of Lena Magazzu, for Christmas*  
Catherine and Sean Kennelly  
*In Honor of Susan and Peter Staecker's  
50th Wedding Anniversary*  
Gail and Stephen Trask  
*In Memory of Brian Staniewicz*  
Ruby and James Harrison  
*In Memory of Charles Harrison*  
Donna Eidson  
*In Memory of Francis Vaughan*  
Brian and Tricia London  
*In Memory of Joan Mahoney*  
Thomas Mullen  
*In Memory of Joan Mahoney*  
Shirley Brooks  
*In Memory of Lance Brooks*  
Joan Smith  
*In Memory of Marilyn Casanave*  
Bernard and Mary McCourt  
*In Memory of Michael Reardon*  
Catherine and Phil Reardon  
*In Memory of Michael Reardon*  
Mary Reardon  
*In Memory of Michael Reardon*  
Jeanne Robison  
*In Honor of Rory Dockett*  
Suzanne Wilkins  
*In Memory of Rory Dockett*  
Carolyn Halunen  
*In Memory of Rory Dockett*  
Deborah Winnick  
*In Memory of Sumner Fanger,  
for Springboard*  
Donahue Architects, Inc.  
Deborah and Mark Christopher  
Diane McCormack and Thomas Taranto  
Elan and Rinat Noy

David and Christine Hayes  
Michael Brooks  
Michael Gallahue  
David Kaplan  
Alison Stockdale  
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Bernadette O'Halloran  
Paul and Sandra Palefski  
Joseph and Shirley Quirk  
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Patricia Soriano-Lapon and Milton Lapon  
Linda and Ramon Spognardi  
Robert and Phyllis Tobin  
Yuan-Shion and Shu-Lin Tung  
Robert and Kathryn Vanderbaan  
Super Flash T-Shirts  
Timothy Proia  
Give Lively Foundation Inc.

## Friend

Under \$100

Malcolm and Mona Roberts  
*In Honor of Tabia Roberts' birthday*  
Grace Geilich  
*In Honor of Alan Chefitz*  
Charlie McKinnies  
*In Honor of Auntie Barbara*  
Enrico and Julia DiChiappari  
*In Memory of Bernadette Gillis*  
Donna Voltolini  
*In Memory of Joan Mahoney*  
Cynthia Strong  
*In Memory of Michael Cushing*  
David and Patricia Steen  
*In Memory of Michael Reardon*  
Rosalind Reese  
*In Memory of Rory Dockett*  
Elizabeth and Thomas Glick  
Julian Wierzbicki  
Robert and Jean Lincoln  
Deirdra Murphy and Stephen Moriarty  
Kenley Bransme  
Janet Clancy-Cadogan  
Altina Moura and Maria Bairos  
June Bowman  
Kathleen and William Hamilton  
Jill O'Reilly  
Andre and Linda Paquette  
Ken and Nancy Pondelli  
Gordon and Claire Reid  
Rochelle Senator  
Donald and Marilyn Garand  
Anita and Joseph Milano  
Stephen Dagata  
Barbara and Michael Mancini  
Paul and Kim Ridikas  
Linda Sullivan  
*In Honor of Rita Hassett*  
Nina Thomas  
*In Memory of Michael Cushing*  
Cynthia Tolley  
*In Memory of Michael Reardon*  
Lee Fatalo  
*In Memory of Rory Dockett*  
Joseph and Anne Benenati  
Mennel Phillips  
Evelyn and Cletus Thomas  
Erika Bianchi  
Evelyn and Robert Cushing

Ann Griffin  
Michael and Regina La Rose  
Thomas Pilleri  
Raymond and Jenny Shih  
Elizabeth and Vicki Haley  
William Larkin  
Rita and Susan Scribner  
*In Honor of Jeffrey Nicoloso*  
Frederick Mark  
*In Memory of Pauline and Larry Wexler*  
Joshua Delung  
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and  
Merrimack Valley  
Anne Halidy  
Nora Bogot  
Yesim Taskor

## Special Donations

### In Memory of Miriam Harris

Michaelyn and Michael Wickersham  
Auburndale Community Library  
Linda and Alisa Kelly  
Scott Acito  
Jacqueline Cathcart  
Alissa Destasher  
Anne Hall  
Angela Harris  
Angela Mirinis  
Gena Osborn  
Rochelle Sokoll  
Bridgette Perrier  
Sue Jagodzinski  
Terri Scheumann  
Kerri Sullivan-Kreiss  
Nergg, Inc.  
Scott Birnbaum and Lynn Baden  
Judith Sokoll  
Ilene Horvitz  
James Kuroda  
Jessica Baird  
Keren Goodblatt  
Allison Sokoll

### In Memory of Kenneth Ordway

Susan and Ronald McCarthy  
Richard and Nancy Lohnes  
Kevin and Nancy Barrett  
Ruth and William Donovan  
Carol Canova  
Joan Maider  
Margaret Otto

### In Memory of Cameron Archibald

Leatherneck Honors Society  
Marcia Fox  
Mary Meany  
Paul and Cynthia Spinozala  
Anne-Marie Fuchs  
Charles Lancaster  
Nancy Martin  
Paul Nugent Sr  
Barry O'Neil  
Keith and Mary Russell  
Danielle Pintone and Bill Cannon  
Barbara Gillespie  
Shelagh Maiorana  
Ann Marie Meany  
Morning Glory Lane Association  
Judy Lore  
Kenneth Surabian  
Michelle Grossman



Each month, TILL's Professional Development Committee awards a Certificate of Appreciation to employees who have gone that extra step in the performance of their duties.

### Employees Honored during TILL's FY2023

- ☆ **Laura Molla**, *Senior Revenue Manager*
- ☆ **Shlomo Teken**, *Hospice Support*
- ☆ **Shaheera Pace**, *Residential Coordinator*
- ☆ **Mychaela Romanish**, *Residential Coordinator*
- ☆ **Ngozi Carol Ejindu**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Tahia Yiiga**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Chef Rowdy Bessey**, *Cravings Café*
- ☆ **Bridgewater Residential Team**
- ☆ **Ayla Daley**, *Senior Day Support Professional*
- ☆ **Reanna Lombardozi**, *Day Support Professional*
- ☆ **Middleton Residential Team**
- ☆ **Evans Diya**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Forest Street Residential Team**
- ☆ **Sheila Barbosa**, *Program Manager*
- ☆ **Glide Street Residential Team**
- ☆ **Mount Grove Street Residential Team**
- ☆ **East Main Street Residential Team**
- ☆ **Carla Cerasuolo**, *Job Developer*
- ☆ **Hilary Hctor**, *IHBS Therapist*
- ☆ **Razaki Ogounsola**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Evan Rockefeller**, *Occupational Therapist*
- ☆ **Bashirat Shittu**, *Residential Support Professional*
- ☆ **Caleb Garner**, *IT Specialist*
- ☆ **Alex Tisme**, *Help Desk Technician*
- ☆ **Christine Granata**, *Program Nurse*
- ☆ **Ekamma Aiworo**, *Residential Support Professional*
- ☆ **John Baptiste Ssepuyya**, *Residence Manager*

## Volunteer Events

TILL's commitment to community shows up in many ways! Recently TILL volunteers served dinner at **My Brother's Table**, the largest soup kitchen on the North Shore.



## Remembering Friends

*A life that touches others goes on forever.*

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Patricia Craven</b>  | <b>Miriam Harris</b>  |
| <b>Kenneth Ordway</b>   | <b>John Gray</b>      |
| <b>Ida Hubbard</b>      | <b>Jason Frost</b>    |
| <b>Joy Johnson</b>      | <b>Robert Edwards</b> |
| <b>Charlotte Wright</b> | <b>Robert Mahoney</b> |
| <b>Michael Cushing</b>  | <b>Rory Dockett</b>   |