

THE EGRAM

Winter 2017

Toward Independent Living and Learning, Inc.



From the President



TILL had a busy year in 2016, developing new residential options and creating new services in our day/ vacational, and clinical and support services to meet the changing needs of individuals and their families.

Our continued expansion providing Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) services and our dedication to providing new opportunities for growth resulted in two new contemporary design homes in Carlisle which have been noted as

worthy of submission in an international competition for "Friendly and Inclusive" design.

We continue to listen to individuals we support and their families in developing individualized residential options ranging from our Creative Living Options model to community supports in one's existing home setting. Our culinary model has expanded, offering more vocational training and employment options. The new TILL Farms in Westborough promises to offer fresh produce for many of our homes this summer as well as additional vocational training opportunities for those who benefit from the concrete work and satisfaction seeing the end product of their efforts.

In response to the increasing demand for home based and clinical services, we began our Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) services to families in their homes and schools. Therapists and specialists have been added to the In Home Behavioral Services for children as well as Strattus clinic's expanded services.

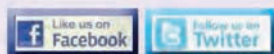
TILL is known for its innovation in creating new services as we identify future needs so that services are planned rather than reactive to crises. An example of this is the Springboard Social Club which has not only expanded its membership, but extended the same concept to high school students as well. We also launched TILL Travel with a trip to England with fourteen travelers and two travel guides, and an upcoming trip to Ireland.

These services would not be possible were it not for the infrastructure of TILL which makes it possible for all of the services to operate efficiently; comprised of our IT, Administrative Support, Finance, Property Management, Marketing and Communication, Transportation and Human Resources.

The biggest challenge the human services profession faces is the recruitment and retention of committed employees who view their work as a career path. TILL's workforce make the growth of the agency possible. We are fortunate to experience a long retention rate within all levels of the organization. We appreciate the humanity each employee brings to their job each and every day as they make a difference in each person's life through their relationships and very being.

Thank you to the hundreds of dedicated employees who have chosen TILL as the place to share their talents, skills and energy.

Sincerely,
Dafna Krouk-Gordon
President and Founder



TILL Games, an annual track event, is open to athletes of all ages and all abilities.

Each year over 200 participants come together to challenge themselves and their peers in many events including: running, walking, power and manual wheelchair race events.

Who can participate? Everyone! TILL Games is truly a TILL Family Event. Our athletes are people supported by TILL, family members, friends and staff. Many of our youth participants are the relatives of our individuals as well as the children and grandchildren of our employees. Many of the kids have been running at TILL games their whole life.

On September 10, 2016, TILL Games celebrated its 22nd year at the Reggie Lewis Athletic Center in Roxbury, with over 200 participants.



TILL thanks the Friends of TILL Games for their ongoing support; Whole Foods for their healthy snacks to keep our energy high; our Team Members and Fans who make the day a true success, and the Athletes who inspire us all with their determination!

Heidi Torries receives:

Providers Council Award of Excellence



Heidi Torries, Assistant Director of Residential Services, received the Providers' Council Award of Excellence in recognition of her hard work, dedication, and growth in the field at their 41st Annual Convention on October 24, 2016 at the Marriott Copley Place in Boston.

TILL proudly nominated Heidi for the Supervisor/Manager Award of Excellence for her role as Residential Coordinator, from 2014-2016, recognizing her for her drive, dedication and her ability to lead by example.

Congratulations Heidi.

TILL Travel

A Passage to Independence

The Anticipation, the Preparation, the Journey

In September, TILL Travelers journeyed to London for a unique travel adventure, “England: Castles and Countrysides” but the trip itself is just part of the adventure.

TILL’s “Eight Steps to Independent Travel”, our preparatory curriculum, was designed to teach travelers the art of independent travel. We believe that supported, educational travel should not be about being handed a ticket and collecting souvenirs, but rather about experiencing different cultures and seeing what we learn about ourselves along the way. Anticipation and preparation, when tangled together, are as much a part of the passage as the journey itself.

Meeting as a group, travelers prepared for all aspects of the journey: obtaining a passport, handling currency, learning what and what not to pack, along with developing awareness of cultural differences, learning about local customs and language differences. With this shared goal, group bonds and friendships grew. Travelers volunteered to research highlights from the itinerary and shared their discoveries with the group, building self-confidence and adding excitement for the journey ahead. TILL Travelers connected with members of Langdon Community, TILL’s sister agency in London, introducing themselves as “e-pals” prior to the trip and meeting face to face across the pond. When in England, travelers took turns posting their daily experiences and photos for friends and families on our travel blog, each giving voice to their personal account.

Tours of England’s iconic sites along with exploring the neighborhoods and life as a Londoner made for an unforgettable experience. Members of the Langdon Community graciously hosted the group for dinner and spent some time showing us “their” London. Day trips to the English countryside, exploring Stonehenge, Oxford and Bath rounded out our experience. It was magic!

TILL Travelers returned with a sense of independence, self-confidence, a lifetime of memories, new friends and the knowledge that in life’s journeys all things are possible when you push yourself beyond your comfort zone. Look for details of our next trip to Ireland.



For more information about TILL Travel, please contact Dale Belcher at 781-302-4619, or dale.belcher@tillinc.org.

TILL Farms

TILL Farms is an innovative training opportunity for adults with developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, which provides meaningful, purposeful work, while creating a sense of accomplishment and pride.



TILL’s Farms has put down roots in a new location!

Following a year of growth, getting our feet wet (and muddy) at Three Boys Farm, TILL Farms has moved to a new location in Westboro, utilizing the acreage adjacent to our East Main Street homes.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters at Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation, Insight Performance, Inc., and Belmont Savings Bank Foundation, we recently installed an educational greenhouse for year round learning and farming.

A greenhouse essentially doubles growing time and allows our farmers-in-training to continue to develop the skills learned in outdoor farming; growing winter crops of herbs and seasonal specialties; starting seedlings in the early spring, or extending the fall growing season past the first frosts. And as anyone who has ever had the opportunity to spend time within a greenhouse would agree, being among growing plants feels and smells wonderful!



Top 100 Women-Led Businesses

TILL, Inc. has been named as one of the Top 100 Women-Led Businesses in Massachusetts by the Commonwealth Institute for the second year in a row! The Top 100 Women-Led Businesses were celebrated at the Seaport Boston Hotel on October 28, 2016.

The Commonwealth Institute annually ranks both for-profit and nonprofit women-led businesses in Massachusetts based on a formula of revenue or operating budget, number of full-time employees, workplace and management diversity and innovative projects.

The Top 100 ranked list appeared in the October 31st Women and Power edition of the Boston Globe magazine.



Proudly representing TILL and the field of human services at this inspiring leadership event, are (standing L-R) Tafadzwa Chikakayi, Relief Staff; Michelle Lannan, Residence Manager; Comfort Agbortoko, Residential Manager; Heidi Torries, Assistant Director of Residential Services; Tammy Scott, Central Accounts Manager; Christine Gravina, Residential Coordinator; (seated L-R) Michelle Torres, Day Support Professional; Dafna Krouk-Gordon, TILL Founder and President; and Mary Cunningham, Residential Coordinator.

New Opportunities for Growth

Charlestown, MA: TILL proudly welcomed friends, supporters, and funding sources for a ribbon-cutting celebration on October 27, 2016. TILL's Bridgeview Center in Charlestown is a multi-use building with 61 fully accessible and affordable, family rental units; a five bedroom group home, fully integrated into the building and community; and retail space. Guests were welcomed into the very spacious five-bedroom group home for the celebration and had the opportunity to tour the two- and three-bedroom family rental units, and accessible courtyard. The Bridgeview Center is easily accessible to Interstate 93, Bunker Hill Community College and Bunker Hill Mall Shopping Center.



Carlisle, MA: On November 3, 2016 TILL hosted an Open House Celebration at our two newly built homes in Carlisle. The two homes, consisting of a four bedroom home for people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and a five bedroom home for people with developmental disabilities, are connected by a beautiful shared patio, and the state of the art universal design ensures that all areas are accessible for residents and visitors alike. The new Carlisle residents welcomed family, friends and neighbors, including state and local officials for a toast to this joint effort, creating expanded opportunities in their new homes within this welcoming community.

Lexington, MA: Gustav and Vibeke Christensen have made an extremely generous gift to TILL, of a beautiful new home for their son Daniel and his three current housemates, in historic Lexington center. The four have lived together since 2002, and Daniel's family wanted to ensure the long term stability of the home and the group who have bonded over the years. The home, custom built by Finnegan Development, LLC, incorporates universal design to accommodate future needs for friends and family with full access to the entire house. The Christensen's act of generosity benefits TILL and the four men and women of the house and their families. We are very appreciative of this donation and hope it serves as an excellent model for future donors. Stay tuned for the full article and photos in our next newsletter. If you are interested in discussing donor arrangements that can benefit your family member, please contact **Dafna Krouk-Gordon at dafna@tillinc.org**



Shared Living

Shared living is exactly that, sharing your life with a person with different abilities. You provide accommodations, support, and positive life experiences as part of a family; you receive financial benefits and professional training, and the joy of making a world of difference in someone's life.

For more information, visit tillinc.org: Residential Alternatives.