

THE TILL EGRAM

Summer 2018

Toward Independent Living and Learning, Inc.



The Visionaries Premiere

TILL celebrated the premiere of our Visionaries documentary “Journey to Independence” on May 15th, with a special screening and breakfast reception at the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum and Library in Lexington. Many of the people involved in bringing our story to the screen joined us to share this unique experience.

TILL wishes to thank everyone who made this film possible: the individuals and families who shared their stories, the generous underwriters who supported this project, and the dedicated Visionaries team who worked with us to give voice to these stories. The Visionaries 22nd Season is currently airing on public television stations throughout the country, but you don't have to wait to watch. The full episode is online at: www.visionaries.org/till.html



From the President



Dear Friends, Families, and Colleagues,

TILL's workforce and service users are comprised of a diverse mix of abilities, races, religions, ethnicities, and gender preferences. As an agency, we represent a broad spectrum of people from all walks of life. The combination of our

parts makes us a greater whole.

We learn from one another and gather strength from our differences rather than only from our similarities. Our relationships with countries around the globe that are involved in similar work as TILL's has helped us to further understand one another and to develop new, interesting, and person centered services. In this issue of the TILLgram we highlight some of our international connections and the excitement which ensues as staff and service users alike develop long-term relationships with people around the world.

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



New Home – New Opportunities



We are pleased to announce the opening of our newest home, specially designed to provide supports for adults with acquired brain injury. This newly built home in Dedham replaced an unsightly, long-shuttered business with a state-of-the-art, fully-accessible home, restoring the property to residential use and enhancing the neighborhood.

Rewarding Work Resources Joins TILL

Rewarding Work Resources, the web-based job board connecting families with in-home caregivers since 2004, has officially joined the TILL family of services!

Rewarding Work's online directory and job board enables individuals and families to find and hire caregivers to provide respite, community and in-home support.

Use of the website and job board is free to individuals and families receiving DDS supports or involved in self-directed programs like Agency with Choice and Participant Directed Services. Low-cost private-pay subscriptions are also available to help you connect to care. www.rewardingwork.org

Rewarding Work
CONNECTING TO CARE

Help Us Stay In Touch with You!

To update your mailing and email addresses, please email:
info@tillinc.org

TILL GAMES!

TILL Games XXIV
will be held on **Saturday, September 8, 2018** at the **Reggie Lewis Athletic Center**. This annual, inclusive track event is celebrating its 24th year and you do not want to miss this exciting event!

*New this year is
Dafna's Corn Hole Challenge!*

Teams compete to qualify for a spot to challenge Dafna's team in a Corn Hole Playoff at TILL Games.

Massachusetts Housing Partnership

Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP), a statewide, public non-profit affordable housing organization, recently highlighted our Charlestown group residence in its annual report. TILL's Bridgeview Center is a multi-use building with 61 accessible and affordable family units, a fully integrated group residence and retail space in Charlestown, near the Bunker Hill Community College campus. MHP's thoughtful article provides a peek inside this beautiful, inclusive home within the Bridgeview "neighborhood" and this vibrant Charlestown community. We are proud to partner with MHP to provide inclusive and affordable housing in our community.

The report can be found online at: https://issuu.com/massachusettshousingpartnership/docs/mhp_2017_ar_final/8



1st Responders Safety Awareness Day

TILL's Autism Support Center and the Boston Police Department hosted a fun-filled day, welcoming families, children and adults with autism, learning differences and other specialized needs to meet local first responders and learn about special programs. The heat didn't stop families from checking out the trucks and equipment, joining in the games and activities, and cooling off with Richie's Slush and treats from the BPD Ice Cream Truck!



Photo courtesy of the Boston Police Department.



Embracing Diversity – Celebrating Inclusion

One of the first sites welcoming new TILL employees is the display of flags from each country represented by our employees, proudly displayed in TILL's training room. Dominic Tembo added the flag of Malawi at a recent New Employee Orientation.

International Exchange SYMPOSIUM

On March 19, 2018, TILL hosted an International Exchange Symposium: Sharing Innovative Ideas to Empower People with Autism Spectrum Disorder, bringing together local professionals, educators and service-users with our counterparts in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to share ideas, research and experiences. Presenters representing the Middletown Centre for Autism, Ireland; University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Curry College; Department of Developmental Services (DDS); Massachusetts

Rehabilitation Commission (MRC); and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) filled the morning session, followed by luncheon discussion and networking. The afternoon session continued with a presentation from Autism Initiatives of Northern Ireland and concluded with very moving and personal stories from people who receive supports; service-users from TILL Springboard and Autism Initiative of Northern Ireland. In closing, Sara Jane Reynolds from AINI presented a plaque to Dafna with the Irish word *cairdeas*, which translates as *friendship*.



Going Global

March 8-10: Downside Up, Moscow, Russia

Members of the Russian organization, Downside Up, dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with Down syndrome, made a number of connections during their whirlwind visit. The group toured ETC's entrepreneurial food service program and gift shop, enjoyed an evening with residents, staff and families from our Muzzey St. and Waltham St. homes, visited leaders at the ARC of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress AND managed to squeeze in some sightseeing with TILL family members and Payroll Manager, Emiliya Ryaboy.



Left to right: Dafna Krouk-Gordon with visitors Irina Menshenina, Natalia Usoltzeva, Tatiana Nechaeva, and Joshua Komyerov of the Mass Down Syndrome Congress.

March 15-21: Autism Initiatives, Northern Ireland

In 2017, Autism Initiatives staff and service-users welcomed TILL travelers for a week of learning, touring and sharing ideas, so we were thrilled to re-connect with members of their group on this side of the pond.

In March, travelers from Autism Initiative of Northern Ireland joined us for a very full week; presenting at our International Exchange Symposium; connecting with friends, old and new; visiting our homes and programs, touring local sites, and celebrating St Patrick's Day, American style, at Springboard's Annual Gala!

This valuable connection will continue with Springboard Travel Club's fall trip to Ireland and more!



March 17-24: TILL's Education Through Travel (ETT) program creates adventure for Riverview School students.

Thirteen students and three staff from the Riverview School, in Sandwich, experienced an unforgettable journey in Costa Rica, led by Dale Belcher, TILL's Community Services Coordinator. During their week-long adventure, the group connected with local students, learned some new dance moves, travelled to the cloud forest on horseback and ziplined through the trees.

ETT offers exciting, supportive world exploration for travelers with learning differences: preparing for new experiences with a pre-travel curriculum, learning essential skills needed for a successful and memorable trip. ETT takes travelers beyond the typical tourist attractions by connecting with locals, and learning about their culture and their daily lives.

April 27-May 6: Neuerkerode Community, Germany

In 2014, a chance meeting with Neuerkerode's inclusive band, The Mix, while in Boston on their North American Tour, resulted in this ongoing connection. In 2015, seven travelers from TILL toured Germany and this integrated community.

TILL was pleased to host administrators from the Neuerkerode Community in Germany as they toured many of our programs and local attractions. They joined Cluster 2 for a wheelchair roller painting demonstration and attended the famous "Meet John and Paula Day" with the Day programs, held this year at the JFK Museum and Library. The group was very interested to learn about TILL and our innovative programs.

The TILL Wave Band, musicians, service-users and staff are returning to Germany this August to join the festivities celebrating the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Neuerkerode Foundation.



(L-R) Peter Savic, Founder and Musical Director of the Mix; Marcus Eckhoff, Head of Living and Care Neuerkerode; Rudiger Becker, CEO Neuerkerode; Dafna Krouk-Gordon, TILL Founder and President; Ingo Beese, Head of Administration Neuerkerode, Hans Henning Muller, Head of Mehrwerk; John Stevens, TILL Director of Special Projects.

News from TILL's Wave Gallery

The annual **TILL Wave Art and Music Festival**, in collaboration with Boston Art Week, was held on Saturday, April 28th. Visitors were invited to join artist Roscoe Lamontagne in a collaborative collage project in addition to creating their own art pieces. Multiple interactive music sessions throughout the day featured music from this year's April Madness theme: "Across the Universe!"



The Wave Gallery's Fall 2018 exhibit *The Waves of Time* will open on October 11, 2018 and run through November 30th. The Call for Art, all mediums, is open until September 21st. Please visit www.tillinc.org/TILLWAVE.html for details.

Walk for Hunger

TILL, once again, turned out in full force at the annual Walk for Hunger on Sunday, May 6th.

Individuals, staff and families representing more than 50 TILL residential homes participated by joining, sponsoring, or cheering on a team of walkers. This year Team TILL raised over \$20,000 to help make hunger history. GO TEAM TILL!



Essence of Thyme and Cravings (ETC) Food Service

TILL's entrepreneurial food service training program had its most successful year to date in terms of number of meals served, and number of trainees who transitioned to employee status. During the 2017-18 school year, ETC prepared and delivered 783,278 meals (breakfasts, lunches, and snacks) to 20 sites!

April Madness 2018 – Across the Universe

TILL's April Madness is an annual contest that challenges our day and residential program teams to creatively complete a series of quests focused on interactive experiences and team work, fostering participation and connections. This year's theme, Across the Universe, inspired many to go where no team had gone before, with creative activities and adventures.

April Madness accomplishments are recognized at our annual Cultural Festivals.

The Residential Cultural Festival, held June 10th at the Burlington Marriott, showcased an African dance, group drumming, and videos that highlighted just some of the amazing accomplishments. Vice President of Program Services, Linda Naclerio, brought the house down when she entered in full astronaut regalia.



The Day Program Cultural Festival, held June 15th at the Tewksbury/Willington Elks Lodge, featured an amazing live performance of Don McLean's Vincent (Starry, Starry Night) by TILL Central Billerica, followed by videos, art, and music.



Congratulations to all who travelled Across the Universe with us!



Best in Show: Fogg Road

2nd Place Tie: Chelsea Respite Center/Walnut Street

3rd Place: Brookline

Most Wowable Wow Award: Littleton's hike up Mount Monadnock



Best in Show: Hudson Cluster 3

2nd Place Tie: Hudson Cluster 1, Hudson Cluster 2 and Chelsea Cluster C

3rd Place: Chelsea Cluster B



Top Day Program: Hudson

Top TILL Central: Chelsea

John Stevens Retiring

John Stevens, Director of Special Projects and creative genius, is retiring after 32 years with TILL. It is hard to describe all that John has meant to TILL over the years. Professionally trained as a musician at the Berkeley School of Music, he “fell into” his role with TILL when he applied to run a weekly after-school music group. It quickly became evident that John and TILL were meant for each other.



John’s musical talent and sense of humor is legendary. He has the unique ability to entertain while teaching through the power of his humor, personality, passion and talents. He is an invaluable trainer and cheerleader in every sense of the word. As TILL’s CPR and First Aid instructor, John teaches all new staff CPR and First Aid in addition to ongoing recertification classes, with humor and an enthusiasm which brings the most mundane material to life.



John has worked on the development of numerous “special projects” as his current title implies including but not limited to being a short order cook at our initial culinary ventures; rising at the crack of dawn to head up Mowtown, TILL’s landscaping business; becoming an expert farmer and learning things about compost and mulch which a “boy from Brooklyn” has no business knowing about for our TILL

Farms program; as well as his enthusiastic involvement with all of TILL’s sports. John has initiated basketball, softball and bowling leagues as well as weekly track practice in preparation for the annual track and field event. John is well known for TILL Games,

April Madness, TWI and maintaining an unbelievable schedule during every holiday season to play and sing at every one of TILL’s 30+ holiday parties.



But throughout it all, most significant has been John’s consistent belief in the power of passion and in the power of connections and relationships, forged through his energy and musical talent.

A very heartfelt thank you for a wonderful 32 years. We all wish you the best in the next phase of your life.



Remembering Friends

A life that touches others goes on forever.



Faina Balder

Larry Heckstall

Mary Heaney

Peter Sallen

Brian Staniewicz

