

THE TILLEGRAM

Summer 2021

Toward Independent Living and Learning, Inc.

Celebrating TILL's Annual Cultural Festivals - Zoom Style

Every year, TILL celebrates the culmination of April Madness with a cultural festival. This year, the Zoom-style festivals – “broadcast” live from TILL's Dedham Office in June– looked a little different but were equally amazing!

TILL's Residential Services and Community Connections hosted the Cultural Festival and it was quite the party! Individuals and staff decorated their homes, dressed up in style and enjoyed delicious dinners and sparkling beverages. Emma Riffelmacher started off the Gala with a beautiful performance of “Ain't No Mountain High Enough.” Paula Aiesi, Community Connections Director; Residential Services Director, Sandy Cummins; and Assistant Director, Heidi Torries, presented April Madness awards, while DJ Kingsley Brown (Assistant Director, Community Connections) spun everyone's favorite tunes. Additional awards were presented by TILL President Dafna Krouk-Gordon, Vice President Chris Sweeney, and Jen Polischuk, TILL Training Coordinator. Special guest, John Stevens, entertained with musical selections.



TILL's Day Programs and Community Connections hosted the Day Cultural Festival Luau, and it was equally impressive! Day Program participants enjoyed the colorful Luau decor and tropical drinks, abundant at all program sites. Peter Van Voorhis, Senior Director of Resource Development, with Paula Aiesi and John Stevens, hosted the awards ceremony, while DJ Kingsley kept the tunes flowing. After the zoom gala, the Luau fun continued with an ice cream sundae extravaganza for TILL's Dedham office staff.

And Now the Awards!

The Residential Best-in-Show top honors went to the tied Lynnfield and Marrett Road, Lexington homes. The Wowable Wow Award went to Cresthaven Drive, Burlington, for their fabulous Spring Gala at home with guests from the F. Wyman Rd. residence.



The Day Program Best-in-Show top honors went to the Chelsea Day Program and Hudson@Billerica Program in a tie, and Best TILL Central Award went to Billerica's TILL Central Autism Initiative. The coveted Wowable Wow Award went to TILL Central Billerica for their educational film about COVID.

From the President



Dear Friends, Families, and Colleagues,

Four decades and one year ago TILL was founded. That is both a very long time as well as a mere blip in the course of history. We were established as a result of the outcry which was fueled by families, self-advocates and

pioneering professionals, many of whom work at TILL, who envisioned a different world in which community based services offering equality and opportunities for all could be a reality. The pandemic we all experienced highlighted more than ever that small, community based settings are best.

During the pandemic, our human services sector was often included with the category of “congregate care settings” in the state. However, we are vastly different. People live in small home settings, work in their own communities, and learn and socialize in their neighborhoods. Key to the success of living and thriving in these small, personal and individualized settings, whether in a time of crisis as we just experienced or in normal times, are essential human service professionals. Day in and day out, our essential work force and management staff supported the people they have grown to know, love, become attached to, and feel responsible for assisting in their growth and well-being.

This TILLgram is filled with exciting projects and initiatives we have engaged in over the past six months. The pandemic did not stop us, but instead encouraged us to do more, do better, and create new ways of engagement.

TILL shines a light, applauds, salutes and thanks each and every member of TILL’s workforce for choosing this profession and for choosing TILL to share their talents.

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



TILL at 41

TILL celebrated its 41st anniversary on May 1. As we recognize this milestone, we thank all of our supporters - our dedicated staff, the individuals and families who put their trust in us every day, and our community partners, as we continue to grow, learn and thrive together in support of our important mission.

Growing Excellence

TILL is committed to recruiting, hiring, training and retaining qualified staff to provide important supports and programs for the people we serve. We are proud to share some of our unique incentives and efforts during FY2021.



79 TILL staff members (almost 10 percent of our employees) were promoted! The promotions are great for staff and a win for TILL, as we benefit from valuable experience and training.



TILL employees received more than \$10,000 in tuition reimbursements and student debt relief, in addition to the state tuition remission program. These programs are an exciting way for TILL to support staff as they pursue educational and career goals.

ADDP recently partnered with UMass Lowell to offer discounted tuition to employees of its member agencies. All TILL employees will have access to this benefit.



This summer, job candidates were eligible for a special sign-on bonus in addition to our competitive salary and outstanding benefits!

Many employees continue to participate in our employee referral program, and receive bonuses for referring qualified candidates successfully hired for a minimum of six months.



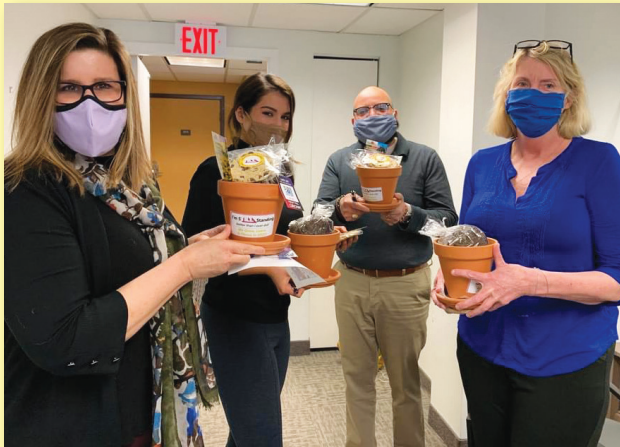
Stay in Touch

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 to update your mailing and email addresses, as well as contact preferences. Thank you!

We're Still Standing

March 16 marked the one year anniversary of the COVID-19 emergency declaration, which upended daily life in ways no one could have imagined. In a TILL-wide Zoom call, Dafna Krouk-Gordon reminded us of “our journey through COVID-19” to where we are today—one year later, still strong, still standing, and still moving forward. Video interviews highlighted how TILL staff withstood the challenges and at all times provided essential care, and closed with a TikTok style dance routine to Elton John’s “I’m Still Standing”, an appropriate theme song for the day.



TILL Employee Receives Flutie Foundation Award

Nadege Poirier-Nye, BCBA Supervisor, was honored with a Doug Award by the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism. Nadege received a \$250 donation for an autism-serving organization of her choice, and has gifted this donation to TILL’s in-home ABA program. The family who nominated Nadege said: “Nadege Poirier-Nye has been so truly invested and genuinely caring in supporting our son with so many behavioral challenges and obstacles he struggles with every day. We have never seen our son make so many gains.” Congratulations and thank you, Nadege!



Moving Respite Forward

Rewarding Work was featured in the 2021 International Short Break Conference – *Moving Respite Forward*, with TILL president Dafna Krouk-Gordon and RW co-founder Jeff Keilson sharing our unique approach to helping families find respite care. Thank you to co-hosts, ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center, Respite Care Association of Wisconsin and University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing for making this event possible.



Rewarding Work, a nonprofit established in 2004, is an affiliate of TILL, Inc. Rewarding Work connects people with disabilities, elders, and their families with caregivers who meet their unique needs through our online directory and job board.



Partnering to Keep Our Community Safe

In May, TILL partnered with Brewster Ambulance Service and OneDigital Health and Benefits to offer a mobile COVID-19 vaccine clinic at our Dedham office.

Open to the general public, TILL reached out to staff, friends, and families, and through social media to spread the word, and the response was gratifying. Thank you to everyone for doing their part to keep our community safe.

Workforce Hero!

The Caring Force named Sandy Cummins, TILL’s Director of Residential Services, as its March 2021 Workforce Hero! The Caring Force noted Sandy’s crucial leadership while navigating the challenges of providing services a year into the COVID-19 pandemic. “Sandy’s colleagues described her as ‘a center of calm and clarity’ and ‘committed to the quality of life and growth of each person’ in her care,” the Caring Force said. We couldn’t agree more. Congratulations, Sandy!



Read the full interview here:
<https://providers.org/tcf-blog/march-workforce-hero-sandy-cummins/>



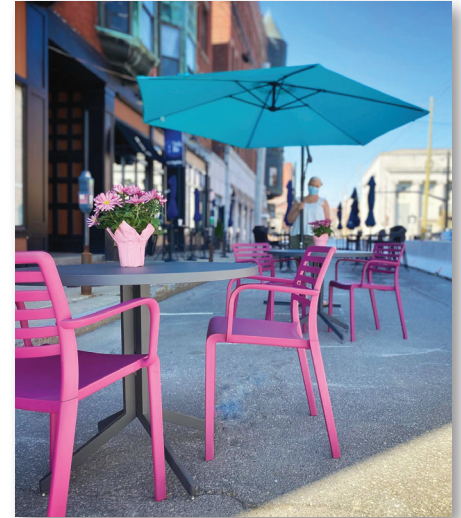
etc  cravings  farms

Showcasing Talent

TILL offers unique training opportunities in our three entrepreneurial businesses, and **Our NEW TILL Shops Catalog** features many of the beautiful items for sale in our shops, created by the combined talent of artisans and trainees at Cravings, ETC and TILL Farms. Each location encourages the creativity and unique talents of each participant, with proceeds reinvested in each program. Items include home décor, one of a kind art pieces, planters, gourmet treats, and so much more. Shop online or stop by our shops! Email tillshops@tilliinc.org for a current catalog.

Cravings' Outdoor Café is Back!

Cravings Café and Gifts, located at 64 East Pearl St. in Nashua, has reopened their popular sidewalk café, offering delicious sandwiches and salads, in addition to their famous cookies. The shop, known for unique handmade items, seasonal gifts, jewelry, and décor, provides vocational opportunities for people of all abilities through their art-studio, kitchen, café and gift shop.



ETC Awarded Business of the Year

ETC Café and Gift Shop was awarded Hyde Park Main Streets' Business of the Year at their June Board Meeting. This recognition celebration included a citation from the Boston City Council for ETC's contributions to the Hyde Park community and congratulations from the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Hyde Park Main Streets is a local non-profit organization composed of residents and business owners promoting this thriving business district. TILL has been a part of the Hyde Park community for over 25 years, offering unique work training opportunities in our entrepreneurial café/catering business, ETC Food Service, Café and Gift Shop on Hyde Park Ave.



How TILL Farms Rolls

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters whose donations make our innovative programs possible, TILL Farms continues to GROW! The addition of this *Kubota* tractor, an essential piece of equipment, allows us to expand our farming capacity, thereby serving more individuals and broadening the types of training available.



Did You Know? The name TILL Farms was coined to describe our active engagement in this valuable work opportunity. Who farms? *TILL Farms.*





Westwood Home Under Construction

TILL's sixth home specifically designed for people served by the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) waiver is under construction in Westwood, on land generously donated by Fox Hill Village, an active and growing retirement community. ABI waivers support residents living in nursing facilities who wish to move back into the community and live more independently, with supports. The residence will be home to five individuals.



TILL Expands Residential Services in New Hampshire

Last November, TILL was selected to operate a residence serving three young men in Hollis, NH, formerly run by Crooked Mountain. Alan White, Director of Individualized Support Options at TILL, and Theresia Robinson, TILL's Support Services Coordinator, led the team in this transition process.

This newest addition to TILL's services "north of the border" offers combined day and residential supports, drawing on TILL's expertise in creating connections in the community. In addition to weekly projects at TILL Farms and at Cravings in Nashua, the group participates in many of Community Connections' virtual activities, and this spring, dove into their first-ever April Madness!




TILL will continue to provide support and expertise as New Hampshire begins to develop comprehensive programs for individuals with a diagnosis of ASD.




Culinary Training at ETC

TILL's 12-week hands-on Culinary Training program prepares participants for entry into a variety of food service environments with instruction from trained chefs, food service professionals, and experienced job coaches. This comprehensive hands-on course is designed for adults (ages 18 and up) with learning differences, and teaches essential skills in the basics of culinary arts at our ETC Food Service kitchen at 1300 Hyde Park, Ave., in Hyde Park, MA. For more information, contact vocational.services@tillinc.org



TILL offers a wide variety of individualized options to promote active engagement, meeting the needs of people of all abilities. Services include therapeutic day habilitation programs, community based day supports and flexible models like our new TILL On the Go, an individualized, non-site based day experience, as well as unique work experiences at our cafés, gift shops, farm, art gallery, and more.

TILL recently revised and reinvigorated our day habilitation model, which we are pleased to introduce by its new name – TILL NOW! Using the principles of engagement, involvement and doing “with, not for,” individuals, TILL NOW offers a 6 week cycle curricula in skill-based arts, personal care, fitness, music, culture, and community skills for each of our day habilitation programs. TILL NOW provides the framework for individualized interests and learning experiences through on-site and remote classes. TILL NOW is a first line participatory experience in which all Direct Support professionals are truly instructors/teachers and staff and individuals alike are delighted with the consistency, structure and full activities offered each day. For more information visit: tillinc.org



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

Jim and Carol Herscot
James and Christine Connor
Saqish Foundation
For Recruitment and Training staff
Gustav and Vibeke Christensen
John Campbell and Susanna Peyton

Patron

\$5,000-\$9,999

The George Mavridis Foundation
In Memory of Brian Staniewicz
Blue Cross Blue Shield
One Digital Dash Sponsorship

Benefactor

\$1,000-\$4,999

Jillian and Dwight Zuck
In Honor of Evan Rockefeller
Jack and Alice Flynn
Matthew Gromet and Phyllis Schultz
In Honor of Danny Gromet
Anita Stinson and Thomas Stinson, III
Darren and Isabelle Nordone
Jeffrey and Debra Lieberman
Neil and Maria MacDonald
For Forest Street, Danvers
Sally O'Malley
Lisa Birkdale
In Appreciation of Alan White
Diane Wright
In memory of Craig Wright
Peter Staecker
Thomas Flannery, Jr

Sustainer

\$500-\$999

Mark and Kathryn Lagunowich
For the Carlisle House, with thanks to staff
Scott and Gladys Olson
Dafna Krouk-Gordon
In Memory of Tom Nordberg
Raymond, Elizabeth and Christopher Geraneco
Andrea and Bradford Stokes
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Bob Rivers, Quincy Miller, and friends at Eastern Bank
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Gayle and Mark Lewin
In Honor of Douglas Williams
Goodman Advisory Group, LLC
One Digital Dash Sponsorship
John Houston and Katherine Read
LPL Financial
Matching contribution, One Digital Dash
Mark and Claire McCarthy
Stephen Dillon and Victoria Leblanc-Dillon
Thomas and Joan Feeley
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Zelia Chaves
For Luis M. Cabral and Hudson Day Program
Judy Bernier
Thank you from R. LaFleur's Farm
Stephen Fay
Eleanor Fay
Sue Fuller
John Sabino
Christopher Webster

Sponsor

\$250-\$499

John A. Scileppi Foundation
Loomis, Sayles & Company, LP
Matching gift - Molly's Marathon
Network for Good (Anonymous)
Thomas Mullen
In Memory of our old friend and neighbor, Billy Mahoney
Amazon Smile
Albert and Barbara Fullerton
For Springboard
Bacon Flaherty, LLC
The Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism, Inc.
In Honor of Nadege Poirier-Nye
Elizabeth Viesca
In Honor of Norma Holmes
Elissa Franco
Dahlia Mann
In Honor of Dafna Krouk-Gordon
Ned Batchelder
Patricia Quill
Ronald Shorr

Supporter

\$100-\$249

David and Marianne James
Diane McCormack and Tom Taranto
Geon and Jeongsun Kim
James and Gale Habeeb
For Lena Magazzu and Lyman St.
John and Cynthia Brown
Norman and Nancy MacVicar
In Memory of Michael Rzeppa
Ann Yos
For Kensington Park and Billerica Day Program
Bradford Powers
In celebration of the life of Michelle Marie Richardi
Esta Levine
In Memory of Bruce Levine and brother, Dr. Bernard Slosberg
Frederick Foppiano
In Memory of Eileen Foppiano
Judith Checkowski
Peter Wyatt
Robert and Meryl Lindenberg
Christopher and Mary O'Connell
David and Jeremy Kahan
David, Christine and Elizabeth Hayes
In Honor of Barbara Jackins
Gail and Steve Trask
In Memory of our brother, Brian Staniewicz
Thomas and Anne Larkin
Ann Abbott
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
John White
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
David Harris
Nancy Bacon
Judith Beningson
Janice Gazza
Guy Marchmont
Carmela Bumbaca
In Memory of Joe and Joey Bumbaca
Felix Balder
Andrew and Janice Krim
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Carol Meaney and Mark Gaudette
Coastal Heritage Bank
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi

Dave and Sue Batson

In Honor of Scott Batson
David and Sherry Ahearn
Dawn Eldridge and Richard Eldridge, Jr.
In Honor of Douglas Williams
Deborah and Mark Morine
In Memory of John Morine
Edward and Catherine Simisky
In Honor of Dale Bortolotti
James Kolt and Sharon Hucul
Jeff and Linda Beck
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Juergen and Susan G. Nordhausen
Kathleen and John Sullivan
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Linda and Ramon Spognardi
Mark and Pam Fernberg
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Orazio and Frances Magazzu
In Honor of Lena Magazzu
Robert and Brenda Borr
In Honor of Marilyn and staff at Hudson Day Program
Robert and Jean Lincoln
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Robert and Judith Moodie
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Robert and Kathryn Vanderbaan
Russell and Geraldine Vanderbaan
Thomas and Elizabeth Glick
William and Beverly Matarese
Yuan-Shion and Shu-Lin Tung
Patricia Soriano-Lapon
Sally Milewski
In honor of Kevin, and Sandy Brook Road staff
Elaine Keefe
In Memory of Mark Quirk
Rebecca Duggan
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Teresa Kearns
Fran Kehoe
Daniel Halbert
Teresa Dwyer
Margaret Callahan
Peter Cutler
Lynore Desimone
Greta Flaherty
Ruby Harrison
Robert Lee
Alison Stockdale
Thomas Vancor
Julian Wierzbicki

Friend

Under \$100

Malcolm and Mona Roberts
In Honor of Tabia Roberts
Rich and Dorothy Robison
Patricia Gonda
In Memory of John Morine
Diane Saleski
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Anne and Scott Marino
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Bernard and Patricia Barrows
In Honor of Stephen Barrows
Collins Strategies, LLC
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Deborah and Mark Christopher
Donald and Marilyn Garand
Gordon and Claire Reid
John and Judith Froio
Joseph and Diane Richardi
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi

Joseph and Shirley Quirk
Kathleen and William Hamilton
Ken and Nancy Pondelli
Marcia and Robert Crawford
Randall and Diane Bird
Rene and Mary Desimone
Russell and Kyra Dipietro
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
William and Michelle French
In Honor of Justin Doyle
Rochelle Senator
For the Melville Ave. residence
Alison Franco
In Honor of Elissa and Thomas Franco
William Larkin
In Honor of TILL staff for the wonderful care given to John
Allison Collins
In Loving Memory of my Uncle Billy Mahoney
Robert Fernberg
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Deborah Rush
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Arnis Berger
Elvira Montero
Enrico DiChiappari
In Memory of Bernadette Gillis
George Muszynski
Erika Bianchi
Rosalyn Chefitz
Laura Francis
Jill O'Reilly
Evelyn and Robert Cushing
Janis Fox
Harry and Donna Leigh
Mary Decker
John and Virginia Holmes
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Greer Klimas
Barbara and Michael Mancini
Carole McInnis and Heather Frasso
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Donna and Ove Bjerregard
Greg and Wendy Stevenson
John and Elaine Chaisson
Michael and Regina LaRose
Heather Frasso
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Jane Churchill
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Eileen Plichta
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Margaret Walker
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Mathew Wong
Ann Griffin
Marikay Tillet
For Melville Ave. residence
Richard Calabro, Sr.
Paul Leclair
Thomas Pilleri
Raymond and Jenny Shih
Pat Bernard
In Memory of Bill Mahoney
Robert Barney
In Memory of Michelle M. Richardi
Ester McKenzie
Alon and Victoria Bodnya
Yongwen Liu
Catherine Birchmore
Howard and Deborah Reef
For Springboard
Maria Gordon
Ida Davidson

Above and Beyond Award

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. These employees were honored during TILL's FY2021.

- ☆ **Aaron Bento**, *Residential Support Professional*
- ☆ **April Schindler**, *Senior Day Support Professional*
- ☆ **Carla Ingalls**, *Job Developer*
- ☆ **Carolina Daniel**, *Residential Support Professional*
- ☆ **Cecilia Nyakoe**, *Residential Support Professional*
- ☆ **East Main Street**, *Westboro Residential Team*
- ☆ **Elise Morgan**, *Administrative Assistant*
- ☆ **Emma Riffelmacher**, *Residential Support Professional*
- ☆ **Esther Brown**, *Relief Staff*
- ☆ **Gbalee Blamo-Slopadoe**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Jennifer Polischuk**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Kelly Megowen**, *Licensed Practical Nurse*
- ☆ **Kingsley Brown**, *Assistant Director, Community Connections*
- ☆ **Newton Residential Team**
- ☆ **Paula Aiesi**, *Director, Community Connections*
- ☆ **Pinecrest Road**, *Andover Residential Team*
- ☆ **Sandra Nakaggwa**, *Residential Support Professional*
- ☆ **Sandy Brook Road A**, *Burlington Residential Team*
- ☆ **Sandy Brook Road B**, *Burlington Residential Team*
- ☆ **Sheree Wynter**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Strattus Mental Health Services Team**
- ☆ **Tahia Yiiga**, *Residence Manager*
- ☆ **Yemmallo Drive**, *Brockton Residential Team*



A Gift in Memory

A special thank you to the George Mavridis Foundation, which so generously donated 35 Chromebooks to TILL's residential programs in memory of Brian Staniewicz. These devices have provided a valuable resource for making and maintaining vital connections during this challenging time.



Giving Back – Summer Eats

TILL's Essence of Thyme and Cravings (ETC) Food Service offers unique work training opportunities in our entrepreneurial café/catering business and retail gift shops in Hyde Park, MA, and Nashua, NH. Working side-by-side with our professional staff, ETC trainees obtain/strengthen skills necessary for employment.

As part of TILL's commitment to our communities, ETC is a USDA Summer Food Service Program Sponsor, providing free meals to children and teens through this federally-funded nutrition program. ETC prepares and serves healthy and delicious meals "to-go" at their Hyde Park Ave. location throughout the summer, and is an equal opportunity employer. Summer Eats is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with support from the Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread. meals4kids.org

Recognizing Excellence

The Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers, Inc. seeks nominations from member agencies to their annual Awards of Excellence. TILL proudly submitted two nominations for this coveted recognition, and look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of all nominees at the Providers' 46th Annual Convention in October.



Nominated by TILL for the **Business Partnership Award**, **Thien Simpson is the Executive Director of Hyde Park Main Streets**, a local non-profit organization that promotes this vibrant Boston community. Thien, a former TILL employee, has provided outstanding support of our ETC Food Service business in Hyde Park, and our vocational training mission.

TILL's nomination for the **Volunteer of the Year Award** recognizes the **residents and staff of our Lynnfield home** for their long history of volunteerism, in sync with TILL's belief in the transformative power of community and giving back. The Lynnfield team's commitment is defined by two key factors: continuity and inclusive participation.



Lynnfield uses the power of volunteerism to become truly involved in community life and all that it has to offer.



The group recently raised funds for Project Bread through their homemade "Cookies for a Cause" kits.

TILL's Wave Gallery Turns

Did you know? The idea for an art gallery came about after TILL celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2015. The Anniversary Gala held at UMass Boston featured custom-made and colorfully painted wooden pillars for a gallery-style photo display. Hoping to put these beautiful pillars to permanent use, Dafna Krouk-Gordon mentioned to Paula Aiesi that store-front space at TILL's Watertown site was about to be vacated. "Why don't we have an art gallery?"

TILL has always used art in expressive and therapeutic forms, so the idea of a gallery was an opportunity to create new connections to the community and inclusion in the art world. Five years later, the gallery continues to inspire with its well-known and empowering motto - Art for All, By All.



The Wave Gallery's summer exhibit — In My Backyard — runs through August 20. Wave Gallery, 264 Arlington St., Watertown

Remembering Friends

A life that touches others goes on forever.



Kelly Brock
Vicki Colby
Shalom McCord
Michelle Richardi

Hazel Brewer
William Mahoney
Lance Brooks
Frank Folsom
John Morine

Alice Loat
Craig Wright
Donna Reil
Chris McGilvray

