A message from our PHILANTHROPY DIRECTOR

It has been just over six months since I joined the May team, and each day still feels like my first! I learn something new every day and am humbled by the incredible depth and breadth of services offered across this organization. It is why I am so excited to bring back the Giving@May Newsletter. I invite you to join me to learn more about the amazing work happening at May.

From staff to donors, business partners to volunteers, program participants to board members; enclosed in these pages you will read about people coming together to create a strong, vibrant, and supportive community where the individuals we serve can reach their greatest potential. Whether it is kicking a winning goal, celebrating a milestone, or starting a new job, each of us has an important role to play and together we can achieve so much more!

I am honored to be part of such an incredible team of professionals and grateful to readers like you for investing your time to learn more.

Sincerely,

Rebecca L. Giraldez

May Institute

CLASSROOM TO COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
New funding creates opportunity for student workers

Post-COVID vocational training programs across May Institute schools are rebuilding and stronger than ever!

Partnerships with organizations like Old Colony YMCA, Salem Food Market, and Walgreens are providing volunteer and paid work opportunities for students in our Randolph school in an inclusive, community-based environment.

The Todd Fournier Center for Employment Training and Community Inclusion is an integral part of the May Center School for Autism and Developmental disabilities in Randolph. It is a highly specialized program that serves older students (ages 14 to 22) who are ready for a more intensive vocational training experience.

The curriculum at the center addresses two of the most critical aspects of adult independence—the ability to engage in meaningful employment and function as successfully as possible in day-to-day life in the community.

Students perform a variety of tasks while on the job such as data entry, shredding, food preparation, and
A year of celebration for the May Center School

The first time participating in the state-wide Special Olympics soccer tournament, no one was expecting to win.

The boys were simply happy to be competing, something that isn’t always possible for young people with a brain injury or neurobehavioral disorder. Winning was secondary for the Bulldogs, with a collective emphasis placed on working as a team and having fun.

It wasn’t until the final seconds of the deciding game that they realized they had not only won, but had also clinched first place in the tournament! The three game-ending whistles blew, and the team erupted in a cheer, racing down the field and drenching each other in Gatorade.

“It was amazing!” recalls Zach, the team’s goalie. “I never won a championship before!”

The victorious Bulldogs hail from the May Center School for Brain Injury and Neurobehavioral Disorders in Norwood, Mass. This year marks the school’s 30th anniversary—what better way to celebrate such a milestone than with first-place medals?

For the past three decades, the school has been providing exceptional care to students aged 5–22 with a variety of neurobehavioral challenges, including brain injury, seizure disorders, and intellectual and neurodevelopmental disorders. It was one of the first programs to serve this population in the United States, and remains a standout program in the realm of special education.

Since the school’s conception in 1993, nearly 400 students have benefitted from the wide range of educational, behavioral, and rehabilitative services offered.

"Over the past 30 years, our program has created opportunities to excel for every student enrolled and has touched so many lives," comments Executive Director Andrea Potoczny-Gray, M.Ed., CBIS.

"I look forward to the school continuing to contribute to special needs education and the brain injury community for years to come!"

Not only is the school celebrating a milestone birthday; it’s also celebrating one year on a beautiful new campus in Norwood. The expansive grounds have allowed the school to accommodate and broaden its student body. Three on-site residences, along with the gorgeous, updated school building, create the feeling of a true school campus.

The Norwood location includes an upgraded library and cafeteria, state-of-the-art gymnasium, enhanced space for transitional and vocational training, and rehabilitation and therapy suites. Thanks to a significant gift from a major donor, the school was also able to build a playground and outdoor area designed for children with special needs. In fact, the Bulldogs were able to get in lots of practice time leading up to the soccer tournament on the brand-new outdoor turf field!

There’s certainly a lot to celebrate this year, like the Bulldog’s first place win. But the truth is, there has always been a lot to celebrate inside the doors of the May Center School.

Scan to watch a video about the team’s championship win!
CAFE DONORS RAISE FUNDS TO ENRICH THE LIVES OF LOCAL ADULTS WITH AUTISM

Nothing says summer more than grilled hot dogs and ice cream sundaes except when you are a resident at one of the nearly 100 residential group homes at May Institute. For adults in our May Centers, summer BBQs also include karaoke!

Enriching the lives of the adults we serve with autism, intellectual disabilities, and other special needs is an important part of what happens every day in our adult Day Habilitation programs and community-based residences.

Activities such as bowling, yoga, dining out, and walks in the park are just some of the ways these adults stay connected with the communities they live in and with their peers. Expanding access to experiential learning opportunities would not be possible without the generosity of May donors; funds for community inclusion activities like these go beyond what is possible with state and federal funding.

The team at May Institute would like to extend a most heartfelt thank you to Carl F. Riedell & Son Inc., and Stray Cat Fishing. They have partnered together again this year to participate in the 7th Annual Charter Cup recently held in Hyannis, Mass.

Funds raised at this event will support the May Centers for Adult Services on the Cape and in Southeastern Mass., and will enhance the individualized, person-centered enrichment experiences that are so important to the individuals we serve.

COVER STORY CONTINUED: Vocational Program

delivery, store inventory, shelf stocking, and janitorial and laundry service. The real-world community integration provided by organizations like Old Colony YMCA and others gives May students the chance to hone their professional job routines and practice important life skills. Experiencing new environments beyond their residential and classroom settings encourages them to broaden their horizons and helps identify the kind of work that makes them happy.

Ellen Greene, Vice President, Stoughton Branch, Old Colony YMCA recently said, “We are so pleased to be able to partner with May Institute to provide inclusive, community-based work opportunities for the students in their care. The Y is and always has been about strengthening individuals and the communities we serve. Every day, we help people connect to their purpose, potential, and to each other. I believe our core values are very much in-line with the vocational training program May has created and I just love meeting the students.”

Training begins in the specially equipped spaces at the Fournier Center. A general store, Todd’s Café, and a hotel suite introduce students to real-life work environments where they can begin to learn, practice, and perfect transferable vocational and life skills that can then be applied to work positions.

A recent grant provided by Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital–Milton will provide a renovation of the general store. Student opportunities at the store go beyond vocational training and include opportunities for all students to shop, make purchases, and practice communication skills that will help them in everyday life. When the hard work is done, these opportunities give them a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

STUDIES SHOW THAT STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WHO HOLD COMMUNITY JOBS DURING THEIR SCHOOL YEARS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE INDEPENDENT AND CONTINUE TO WORK IN THE COMMUNITY AFTER THEY HAVE TRANSITIONED INTO ADULT SERVICES.
Soon after taking her first desk job with an IT company right out of college, Laura Previlar realized that her heart wasn’t in it. She couldn’t shake the interest that had been culminating over the course of her life: to work with individuals with autism and other special needs.

She had volunteered with this population before, but didn’t think she could make it a career! It was with one simple search on Indeed that she found out she could, thanks to a job posting from May Institute.

Laura joined May Institute as a teaching assistant (TA) at the May Center School in Randolph in 2018. In that role she was a reliable figure of love and support, helping students transition from residence to classroom, and ultimately learning a great deal.

“Because I was new to the field, I really focused on learning from the lead teachers. That first year, I took in a lot.”

It didn’t take long for Laura to realize that it was the work environment she had always wanted for herself. Helping students achieve milestones on a daily basis became her motivation. The small victories drove her growing passion for working with kids with autism and other developmental disabilities.

“I’ll never forget the eight-year-old boy who came to us from the public school system, who was completely nonverbal. Over his time at May, he started to form singular words, then groups of words, and then small sentences. It was amazing!”

After spending time as a TA, Laura was accepted into a master’s program to obtain her teaching license. Upon completion, she became a lead teacher, helping her students reach memorable milestones in and out of the classroom.

“More than anything, the biggest thing that I took away from working at May was how to communicate with people, not just people with disabilities. It taught me how to approach everyone with patience and compassion. Working there completely shaped my career.”

Fast forward to today, and Laura is fundraising and training for the famous Falmouth Road Race. This year, she joins 11 other runners that form the annual May race team with a goal of raising funds and awareness. It’s her fifth year running on behalf of May Institute, and her second year running as a former employee. Despite the fact that she has moved on from the organization, Laura is adamant about supporting May Institute for the long haul.

“A lot of people don’t understand autism at the profound level. I want to continue to raise awareness wherever I can!”

As she prepares for the race, Laura looks back at her time with May. She reflects on the many firsts she witnessed, and the many lessons she’s carried into her new role in therapeutic services.

“May will always hold a place near and dear to my heart. I run because I want to continue to be a voice for kids who don’t have a voice, and an advocate for their parents. I want it to always be a part of my life.”

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**Laura Previlar: Runner, Fundraiser, and Former Employee**
**Lee Ann Fatalo: May Institute Board of Directors**

“There are so many worthy non-profits today working to solve big problems; it can be hard to know where to place your support,” shares Lee Ann Fatalo, in her eighth year as a Board Member at May Institute.

“That is why I really enjoy taking an active role at May. Not only do I admire the mission, but I also feel that my contributions have big impact in very tangible ways.”

As a certified financial planning professional, Lee Ann has long understood the importance of planning ahead for her financial future and those of her clients. Her experiences at May have deepened her understanding of the issues some of those clients face when supporting family members with autism or other special needs.

“We are so fortunate to have Lee Ann as a longtime member of May's Board,” says Lauren C. Solotar, Ph.D., ABPP, May Institute’s President and Chief Executive Officer. “She is a proven leader in her field and provides insightful perspectives in her role on the Board and as a member of the Finance Committee.”

In addition to her generous contributions of time and talent, Lee Ann is also a major donor at May. She supports the Exceptional Service Awards for employees, sponsors the yearly Evening of Hope & Possibility fundraising event, and donates to key fundraising initiatives to strengthen and expand the organization’s reach.

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**corporate & foundation grant highlights**

- **A grant from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center - Milton** is allowing the May Center School for Autism and Developmental Disabilities in Randolph, Mass., to **enhance its Todd Fournier Center for Employment Training and Community Inclusion**. The initial focus will be on the school store, where students can learn and practice valuable employment and life skills, such as stocking shelves, taking inventory, serving customers, and completing transactions. Many of the school’s other students who visit the store will also benefit from the experience of shopping and practicing social skills.

- **More employees than ever will participate this year in our Journey to an aMAYzing Manager (JaMM) Program**, thanks to a recent grant from the **John W. Alden Trust**. JaMM is a comprehensive 10-week, 50-hour training and development program for new managers and rising direct service employees. The program has significantly enhanced the organization’s existing training and professional development portfolio, and helps prepare trainees for their day-to-day job responsibilities in a constructive and supportive learning environment.

- **The Constance O. Putnam Foundation** has awarded May Institute a grant to support the **construction of a new playground** at the May Center School for Autism and Developmental Disabilities in West Springfield, Mass. The playground will give students the opportunity to gather and play outside in a beautiful, safe, custom-built area, and will include equipment for students of all ages and abilities. Teachers will be able to develop additional teaching lessons for students to work on their strength, fitness, and social skills, and especially so they can have fun.
In January 2023, the National Autism Center at May Institute developed and implemented an inaugural virtual autism training series: Pathways for Parents. This six-session free training series was presented by clinical experts in the field of autism from the National Autism Center and provided valuable information about topics of concern to families of autistic children including bedtime, toilet training, restricted eating, communication, and increasing play.

The series was held online on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 5:15 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. between January and June, 2023. It was attended by hundreds of parents, caregivers, and clinicians across the world, ranging from all over the United States to New Zealand!

One participant shared their thoughts on the trainings: “I liked the openness. The ability to participate and ask questions. The helpfulness of the presenter. The ability to relate to other parents. The availability to attend the webinar for free and to obtain a recording afterwards to review on our own.”

Pathways for Parents will continue this fall with a new round of 10 free online trainings! To join our email list, please visit mayinstitute.org/events.

A PSYCHOLOGIST’S REFLECTIONS ON BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS: THEY ARE OUR TEACHERS.

One of the special attributes that many people with brain injury (children as well as adults) have is their positive adjustment. Having a brain injury changes everything from the way you walk and talk, to all your life plans. Still, brain injury survivors move on.

I’ve known hundreds of people who have survived a brain injury, and most have developed a joy for life. Very few express despair. Tough moments happen throughout a lifetime of recovery, and life will never be the same, but, as one young man in our school says, “Keep moving forward.” It’s his special mantra, a form of “self-talk,” except he says it aloud. “Keep moving forward,” he says when things are upsetting, are not right, or he makes a mistake. “Keep moving forward.”

And then there is another young guy who suffered a series of strokes and secondary injuries in childhood. At first, he struggled to accept using a walker. With some gentle persistence and a lot of patience, he gave it a try, got quite good, and then graduated to some supported steps. He’s quite proud of his progress. But even before that form of recovery, he let us all see his amazing sense of humor, his jokes, and his intelligent wit. He loves puns and wordplay, and he shares them with a beautiful smile. Lots of injury, lots of struggles, but lots of resilience too.

It takes time to make an adjustment like this. It requires an optimistic team and gentle persistence. But when it happens, it’s remarkable and inspiring.

These children are our teachers. Learning from brain injury survivors is one of the best perks of the job. They teach us that life goes on and it is always possible to find joy. Keep moving forward. I hope I can live those lessons as well as they do.

Joseph N. Ricciardi, Psy.D., BCBA-D, CBIST, is the Senior Clinical Director at the May Center School for Brain Injury and Neurobehavioral Disorders in Norwood, Mass.
Our Evening of Hope and Possibility, May Institute’s yearly fundraising event, was a beautiful and memorable night at Granite Links in Quincy, Mass.

More than 300 friends, families, sponsors, donors, and staff attended, sharing their spirit and love with our community. Together, we raised $350,000 to benefit the children, teens, and adults with special needs served through May programs.

During the evening, we celebrated milestones that have shaped and defined May Institute over our nearly 70 years. Guests enjoyed a cocktail hour, dinner, and music provided by three members of Tony Bennett’s touring and recording quartet until the performer’s retirement: pianist Tim Ray; guitarist Gray Sargent, and bassist Marshall Wood. A live auction included trips to Portugal, Tuscany, Charleston, S.C., and New York City.

“It was wonderful to highlight the wide range of programs that May offers, and the significant milestones we celebrate this year,” said Eileen Pollack, Senior Vice President of Communications and Philanthropy. “We are grateful to our sponsors and donors who gave generously, and to all who joined us for this meaningful celebration.”

Major sponsors of the 2023 Evening of Hope and Possibility Celebration were:

- Eastern Bank, Lead Sponsor
- Amplified Insurance Partners
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
- H.L. Holdings
- Philadelphia Insurance Companies
- Joan Solotar

Visit our website to view the full list of corporate and individual sponsors!
Heartfelt thanks!

Thanks so much to everyone who contributed to May Institute during the past year! We are grateful to the individuals, families, donors, and employees who allow us to share their stories. They bring our mission to life.

To learn more about May Institute and the impact of our programs and services, visit mayinstitute.org

Join our online community!

We invite you to follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. We’d love to connect with you!

- Twitter: twitter.com/mayinstitute
- Facebook: facebook.com/mayinstitute
- LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/the-may-institute
- YouTube: youtube.com/mayinstitute
- Instagram: instagram.com/mayinstitute

ABOUT MAY INSTITUTE

May Institute is a nonprofit organization that is a national leader in the field of applied behavior analysis, serving individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities, brain injury and neurobehavioral disorders, and other special needs.

Founded more than 65 years ago, we provide a wide range of exceptional educational and rehabilitative services across the lifespan.

The organization is one of the largest and most well-respected providers of services and special education schools for children and adults with autism and other special needs in Massachusetts and in the U.S.

May Institute has evolved into a national network that serves thousands of individuals and their families annually. With corporate headquarters in Randolph, Mass., the organization operates more than 140 service locations in more than a dozen states across the country.

Give Today!