

COTTING CONNECTION

a tradition of innovation and excellence since 1893

Fall 2013

Transition Planning: Turning 22

Like most parents of children with special needs, Cotting parents start thinking well in advance about the time when their child will turn 22 and special education services end. In Massachusetts, schools are required, beginning in middle school, to include language in a student's Individualized Education Program that reflects preliminary thinking about "Transition" planning, and invite students to participate in that process.

Parents ask a variety of questions to help them think about the future, such as: Where might my adult child live? What support services will s/he need, and where can funding be found? Which state agencies can be helpful? What jobs or volunteer work is available? How can my adult child make new friends and keep current friends? What kinds of recreational activities are available?

Finding answers to these questions can seem daunting to tackle alone, which is why Cotting offers HOPE-house, a 5-day a week residential program (see article on page 3), along with a variety of Transition workshops throughout the year hosted by Cotting's Family Support Coordinator, Dr. Pam Varrin, and Guidance Counselor, Kathy Tyrer. The workshops cover a variety of topics, such as guardianship decisions, community programs, lead agencies, housing issues, and more.

The list in the next column has a few tips parents may find helpful as they embark on the journey to Turning 22. Our thanks to Perkins for the inspiration for this article.



Kaila M. graduated Cotting in 2013 and is now a "post-grad" student. She'll turn 22 in March.

Suggestions for Transition Planning

1. Start Early

It can take two to three years to learn what options are available, and to find programs, activities, and funding that make sense for your child, and to ensure access.

2. Have a Vision

Develop a flexible vision with your child about what his or her ideal post-Cotting life might look like. The final result may not be exactly like your original vision, but it's important to have a starting point, a place to begin dreaming.

3. Conduct Research

Investigate and explore potential living arrangements and existing programs. Call state agencies and local nonprofits to get more information. The internet can be a huge resource for some of that data. Knowing what's out there can help you have a realistic picture of what the options are.

4. Explore Funding

There are agencies at both the state and federal level that have programs to support adults with disabilities. The school district will help determine which one might be appropriate to be the "lead agency" for your child's future services.

5. Be Realistic

For some parents, this can mean wanting your child to live in a group home in a walkable neighborhood, or live at home and have access to volunteer activities, or take a class at a local community college, or play a sport weekly with a friend. The final choices will depend on knowing your family and your child.

6. Talk to Other Parents

Parents of children with special needs are happy to share what they know about community resources, and have often walked through similar situations and found solutions that work for their child's unique circumstances.

Neither Rain Nor Sleet Nor Snow...



Things are looking up at Cotting School this fall. An important piece of our "Go Green Initiative" was recently completed with the installation of a new metal roof on our school building. Our students will be better protected from the elements of the upcoming winter as we continue our ongoing efforts to improve our energy efficiency. Look for us to add solar panels to the new roof in the future!

In recent years, we have added a high-efficiency heating plant, energy-saving lighting and water systems and an expanded campus-wide recycling program. We try to teach our students by our own example.

The new roof was made possible thanks in large part to the generosity of the Charles H. Taylor Family. Charles H. Taylor served as Trustee and Trustee Emeritus from 1934-1979, and as President of the Board of Directors of Cotting School from 1941-1973.

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Cotting School recently forged a new partnership with Birthday Wishes, an organization that provides birthday parties for homeless children. Cotting's Mary Perry House is now headquarters for their "Birthday-in-a-Box" program for the Boston area.

Upper School students will shop for supplies, package partyware, assemble goody bags, bake cupcakes, wrap gifts and birthday boxes, and deliver prepared boxes to shelters with Cotting staff and Mary Heveran, the "Birthday-in-a-Box" coordinator for the Cotting site. Mary is very happy to join our community.

Birthday Wishes was founded in 2002 as a volunteer organization serving one local shelter, and has expanded to serve more than 185 shelters and transitional living facilities in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Long Island, New York. It serves as a model for programs that serve homeless families. Visit them at www.birthdaywishes.org.



AAC Camp Opens at Cotting in 2014

Talk2U is a new, 5-day camp opening in the summer of 2014 for tweens and teens whose primary mode of communication is high-tech or low-tech Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Led by Program Director Melissa Mulvey, MS, CCC-SLP, ATP, campers will work together to make a music video as a public service announcement to share the power of communication with friends, family and the community. Talk2U will help campers develop skills in taking initiative, interpersonal communication, self-advocacy, and personal empowerment. As they work on new skills, they'll make new friends and have fun! More information about the program will be available soon. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact Melissa Mulvey at mmulvey@cotting.org.

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Students Bridge the Gap



2013 "Bridging the Gap" Summer Camp participants

Bridging the Gap is an inclusive, summer travel day camp that pairs typically developing students with those with disabilities, and is designed for campers ages 10-14. The 5-day camp provides recreational and social experiences through visits to a wide variety of Boston-area excursions, such as Franklin Park Zoo and Kimball Farms. Program Directors Allison Conelias and Susan Haley developed the program through the Augustus Thorndike Fellowship. Next year's camp will expand to two sessions in August, and more information and registration materials will be available in the spring. In the meantime, contact Allison Conelias at aconelias@cotting.org or Susan Haley at shalley@cotting.org.

HOPEhouse Welcomes Residents

HOPEhouse at Cotting School is a co-ed, 5-day, residential Transitional program for 17 to 22 year olds. On opening day in September, staff members welcomed new residents, Riley and Keaton, who live on campus Monday through Friday and return home to their families on weekends where they continue practicing independent living skills.

"We've all been very busy since that first week," said Director Zoe Thibodeau, "and everyone has adjusted well. It's been a great start."

Riley and Keaton have been learning and practicing a variety of independent living skills, including time management, budgeting, housekeeping, and menu planning. They use a calendar app on their iPads to keep track of community trips, doctor appointments, chores, cooking, and their weekly recreational, sports, and leisure activities.



Back row, left to right: Riley, Teacher Jenna Wharff, Program Director Zoe Thibodeau, and Program Assistant Jessica Morin. Front row: Keaton

They track expenses and deposits both for the house budget and their personal budget, and shop for groceries weekly. They're practicing cooking skills using the stove, oven, and microwave, and learning to use small appliances like a George Foreman Grill®, a quesadilla maker, and a griddle. Riley and Keaton have also been learning more about work skills through their vocational placement, and have been writing about their experiences at HOPEhouse. They plan to post their writing to a social media site in the future.

In the meantime, Riley and Keaton are looking forward to welcoming several more students to HOPEhouse, which accepts applications for new students on a rolling basis. The co-ed program can serve up to 10 students ages 17-22 who have mild to moderate learning and intellectual disabilities, multiple physical challenges, moderate to severe communication needs, and/or complex medical conditions requiring less than 24-hour nursing supports. Students will join Riley and Keaton and engage in a variety of independent living skills and activities, and live on campus Monday through Friday.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Russell, Director of Admissions, at erussell@cotting.org or 781-862-7323 ext. 114. Visit HOPEhouse on the web at <http://tinyurl.com/9rda6x4>

Cotting Honors Dr. Carl Mores



Above, left to right, Heather, Carl, Glen, and Jeanne Mores, with Dave Manzo, Cotting President.

On Tuesday, October 15, 2013, Cotting School dedicated the HOPEhouse building to our former President and Executive Director, Dr. Carl W. Mores. Current and former staff who worked with Dr. Mores gathered to honor him for his many years of service. Staff members spoke of his commitment to the education of students, the well being of staff, and the long-term stability of the school. Dr. Mores was instrumental in moving Cotting from its former Boston location on St. Botolph Street to its current location in Lexington, and in building a brand new campus. One of his greatest accomplishments was bringing the construction project in on time and under budget, but it's for his warmth, caring and ongoing commitment to the School that he was honored.

Celebrate!
120 YEARS

Cotting School was opened in Boston in 1893 and has been continuously educating students with special needs ever since. Thanks to the foresight and excellent planning of the first board of directors and the good doctors, Augustus Thorndike and Edward H. Bradford, Cotting is still a solid, reputable institution. This year, we're celebrating our 120th year educating students with disabilities and hope you can join us with a gift.

Would you join in our 120th celebration by giving an additional \$10, \$25 or \$100 per month for the next 12 months? Visit us on the web to make your gift, or use the remittance envelope that came with this issue. Thank you!





THE COTTING SCHOOL
453 CONCORD AVENUE
LEXINGTON MA 02421

Would you prefer to receive the
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Send an email to info@cotting.org



Making things Possible:

Social and Recreational Connections
for Students With Special Needs

The Burr Family Conference for Parents

November 16, 2013

at Cotting School

Cotting's inaugural conference for parents, "Making Things Possible: Social and Recreational Connections for Students with Special Needs," will be held at Cotting School on Saturday, November 16, 2013 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Professionals are welcome. Our goal is to help families make connections to social and recreational opportunities in the community, and decrease the isolation that families with children with special needs sometimes feel.

Joining us this year as our keynote speaker is Anna Wood, Therapeutic Recreation Specialist for the Town of Sudbury. Anna developed and expanded year-round, affordable, community-based programming for adults and children with disabilities. She strives to improve quality of life through continued and successful involvement in sports and recreation programs. Our special guest, Karen Levine, Ph.D., will offer perspective and insight on "Managing Anxiety."

Other workshop topics include social interactions, sibling groups, the parent perspective, nutrition, social media, and transition. Visit cotting.org for more information.

Our Mission

*To enable students
with special needs to achieve
their highest learning potential
and level of independence.*



Celebrate 120 Years! Give Monthly

Will you join our celebration of 120 years of educating students with special needs by giving an additional gift of \$10, \$25 or \$100 per month for the next 12 months? Visit us at www.cotting.org to make your gift or use the remittance envelope included in this issue.

Cotting Connection

David W. Manzo, President

*Elizabeth C. Peters
Director of Advancement*

*Suzanne O'Neil
Communications Associate*