

Cotting Connection

A tradition of innovation and excellence since 1893.

WINTER 2026



Allie B. worked at Crumbl Waltham last year through Cotting School's Project Bridges program.

Finding Her Voice: Allie's Journey Through Project Bridges

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Having expressed a strong interest in working with children, Capstone student Allie B. found her voice through Cotting's Project Bridges program. Last year, she volunteered at the YMCA Waltham Child Care Center, an experience that encouraged her to step outside her comfort zone in all the right ways. "It could be challenging, but she really enjoyed it," said her mother, Juli. "What I really like about Cotting's Project Bridges program is that it gives the students a variety of work opportunities, so they get a sense of the breadth of possibilities out there and are able to contribute in a meaningful way."

During her time at the YMCA, Allie discovered a way to connect with children that felt authentic to her. Using the text-to-voice feature on her phone, she introduced herself and invited

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Allie's Journey(*continued*)

interaction with simple phrases like, “My name is Allie,” “What’s your name?” and “Do you want to play?” For her job coach, Connie Sousa, those moments stood out. “It was very exciting to see her engaging with the children in her own way,” she said.

Through Project Bridges, Allie has continued to explore a wide variety of interests, having worked at Crumbl Waltham, Indigo Fire Pottery Studio and Cake Niche. She is currently developing a resume and gaining an appreciation for her strengths and interests by volunteering at Henry Bear’s Park and in the kitchen at Sancta Maria Nursing Facility. “I’ve seen her growth,” Juli confirmed. “Project Bridges is preparing her and building her confidence for engaging in the community in a more independent way.”

Project Bridges is Cotting’s community-based volunteer work experience program, designed to help students like Allie develop their vocational skills and transitional readiness. By partnering with local employers, students gain

hands-on experience, build essential workplace skills and begin to see themselves as active, valued members of the greater community—beyond their homes and the Cotting School campus.



Allie is currently volunteering at Henry Bear’s Park.

President’s Letter | *Bridget Irish, MBA*



Amidst the flurry of excitement at the start of the school year we were especially thrilled to welcome 16 new students and their families to Cotting. I am grateful to our faculty, staff, students and families for helping our newest community members feel so at home and working so diligently to set them up for success.

In November, we had the opportunity to recognize the importance of the work we do when we joined the Massachusetts Association of Approved Private Schools (MAAPS), federal and state officials, special educators, advocates, parents and students at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This landmark legislation guaranteed a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities across the nation.

We were incredibly proud of our student ambassadors at this historic event. Lower School student Hannah S.

and Middle School student Savina I. served as greeters, Capstone student Jacob G. did a fantastic job introducing Lieutenant Governor Kimberly Driscoll and Capstone student Logan D. accepted an award for winning the MAAPS art contest for a beautiful Bluetooth speaker system he designed in Industrial Arts.

Shortly after Thanksgiving, we had more cause for celebration thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors for Giving Tuesday. We not only exceeded our goal, but also had another record-breaking year, making an extraordinary impact for Cotting students. What made it especially meaningful was the many different people who came together to sustain our mission, including Trustees, Advisory Council members, current and former staff, parents past and present, new friends and longtime supporters.

As we head into the second half of the school year, we can’t help but anticipate all of the exciting events we have lined up. I look forward to seeing many of you on Cotting campus, whether it’s at a basketball game in February, the Arts Showcase in March, our Play It Forward fundraiser in April or Graduation in June.

Alumni Profile: Erin Flannery '24

Since graduating from Cotting School, Erin Flannery '24 has continued working hard to reach her goals. She attends the EMBARK program, located on the Salem State University campus, which serves post-secondary young adults continuing their education beyond high school and allows Erin to take advantage of university resources to enhance her experience.

At EMBARK, Erin focuses on strengthening her independent living skills, academics and career exploration. As part of the program, she works off campus twice a week; she was excited to start earning a paycheck for the first time last year! While at Cotting, one of Erin's favorite volunteer work experiences through Project Bridges was assisting our youngest students in a Lower School classroom. Building on that experience, she recently became an intern and role model at Kevin O'Grady School, an integrated preschool in Beverly, Mass. Erin is happy to be there, continuing to pursue her dream job as a program assistant working with students with disabilities.



Erin at Alumni & Capstone Bingo Night in October.



Erin attended a guided paint night event at Cotting Transition Institute this fall.

But Erin's striving to meet her goals hasn't stopped there. "I also dream of fostering dogs someday," she commented. "I work once a week at the Northeast Animal Shelter, which I really enjoy." Erin is already getting great experience with her dog, Tinkerbell, having recently trained her to wear a muzzle on walks to help with her anxiety around other dogs.

When Erin's busy schedule allows, she enjoys getting together with friends from Cotting. A few of them are also in her class at EMBARK. But one of her favorite ways to stay connected is playing on the alumni basketball team, the Roadrunners. "I love playing on the alumni basketball team! It's fun to see friends--both those still at Cotting when we play against them and those who have graduated, like me," she said.

Becoming a member of Cotting Transition Institute (CTI) has given Erin another way to stay connected with old friends, in addition to meeting new ones. She recently enjoyed participating in a guided paint night. She is looking forward to attending more social events at CTI and taking advantage of the transition resources it offers.



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Save the Date

Please mark your calendars for these upcoming events taking place on campus.

Play It Forward Fundraiser

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 5:30-9 p.m.

Play It Forward brings together friends, families and community supporters for an unforgettable night of fun and games in support of Cotting School's sports and after school programs. Learn more: cotting.org/event/pif26

Project Bridges Employer Appreciation Breakfast

Wednesday, May 20, 2026 9-10:30 a.m.

Join employers, students, family members and Cotting staff for a light breakfast to celebrate the success of the year.

Graduation

Saturday, June 6, 2026 9:30-11 a.m.

Join us in joyful celebration of this momentous occasion for our graduating seniors.



We look forward to this year's Play It Forward event and hope you will join us!