

The Assistive Technology Summit!

In a spectacular showcase of each of our programs, NEAT (New England Assistive Technology) welcomed over 100 visitors to our Hartford Campus to get to know our services a little better! Between tours, demonstrations, complimentary equipment tune-ups, and moving testimonials from actual NEAT clients, everyone in attendance developed a deeper understanding of assistive technology and what we offer at Oak Hill!



In Memoriam:

Treasured Members of the Oak Hill Community

Diane Ahern
Donald E. Ahlberg
John Bathrick
Rebecca Benson
Joy Carney
James Carpenter
Josephine Carrier
Erica Carter
John Cashman
Raymond Conant
Robert DeFonce
Patricia Deluca

Yvon Desaulniers
Steven Famiglietti
Errol Francis
Anne Georgetti
John Grady
Jacqueline Haines
Albert M. Heinzmann
Susan Hendricks
Sean Hobson
Mark Hochberg
Claudine James
Stephen Kaplanka

Arlene Kivlehan
Mary Lacava
Louis Lucifora
George Lynch
Kathleen McCormick
Dina Parlato
Peter Quick
Melissa Reynolds
Kenny Rogers
Elizabeth Russell
Joseph Tartara

Oak Hill Moments & Memories



Oak Hill Newsletter

A Newsletter for Friends of Oak Hill

Anne Fiyalka: A Legacy of Love and Courage at Oak Hill

For many of us, the act of flying takes courage. We try to stay calm as the plane roars down the runway. We close the windows and turn on a movie to tune out the moment our feet leave the ground. Anne is not like most of us.

As a 15-year-old high school student in Bridgeport, CT, Anne Fiyalka took to the skies. Amelia Earhart, a pioneer aviator, visited Anne's classroom and addressed the students. Anne, a top scholar, was selected from among her peers to accompany Amelia as she flew the Connecticut shoreline. Anne, now 102, recalls the exhilarating feeling of riding in a plane before commercial air travel: "It was unlike anything anyone had ever seen."

Anne's life has been an adventure ever since. A mother of four children, Anne has fielded every curve ball life can throw at a person. Tragically, Anne lost her husband to a stroke, leaving her to care for their four children alone. Arlene, Anne's youngest daughter, was born different. As a young child, Arlene's profound needs necessitated a placement at the Southbury Training School. Anne felt in her heart that this was not the right setting for Arlene. She fiercely advocated for Arlene to rejoin their community in southwestern Connecticut. As a resident of our Cloverdale and Bruns Road houses for more than twenty years, Arlene found a caring and supportive home here at Oak Hill. Sadly, Arlene passed away in 2009.

Memories of Arlene still burn brightly for her loved ones and her staff at Oak Hill. This spring, Anne visited the Bruns Road home for the first time since 2009. It was as though no time had passed. Anne and staff members like Darlene, who cared for and supported Arlene, reunited for a beautiful afternoon of lunch, perusing old photo albums, and introductions to the house's new residents. Anne had the opportunity to meet Diana, the individual who now lives in Arlene's old room. The connections between the women of the Bruns Road home are strong and enduring. Though Arlene no longer calls that space home, Anne will always be welcome.

Ever grateful to Oak Hill, Anne has remained a committed donor since 1994. Something of a local celebrity in her home of Easton, CT, Anne just turned 102 years old. When we asked Anne the secret to a long life, she replied: "You can never be bored. You have to keep busy." Anne took her own advice last year when, to celebrate her (belated) 100th birthday, she soared through the Connecticut skies once again, charting the course she took with Amelia so many years ago. She has never been one to shy away from a new experience. Born during a time when women had just earned the right to vote, Anne has never taken for granted what it means to be a woman in our society. Plucky as ever, Anne recalled Amelia Earhart's words of wisdom, delivered to her 87 years ago: "It's a man's world, but it's a woman's world too." Anne and Arlene embody the strength, wisdom, and sheer courage it takes to move through life with pride. We at Oak Hill count ourselves lucky to know the Fiyalka women and live by their example.



Donor Spotlight: Zoey Garver’s Mitzvah Project, Honoring Oak Hill’s 30 Year Impact on the Garver Family

Zoey Garver is not your average 13-year-old. Demonstrating maturity beyond her years, Zoey chose to focus on a matter close to her family for her Bat Mitzvah project. Zoey’s uncle, Eric, has lived in our Andover group home for over 25 years. Father to Eric and Zoey’s mother, Elaine, Dr. Barry Baron and his wife Joan were staunch advocates for individuals with disabilities. Dr. Baron was a frequent face at the CT State Capitol, always testifying in support of more rigorous services for his son. A skilled musician to boot, Dr. Baron could frequently be found behind his beloved grand piano.



Zoey and her grandfather, Barry.

Given the tremendous impact her uncle Eric and grandfather Barry have made at Oak Hill, Zoey honored them through her Bat Mitzvah project. Working closely with her mother, Elaine, and father, Brett, Zoey chose to engage her community on Long Island, New York. Encouraging everyone to work together, Zoey successfully raised over \$6,000 dollars for Eric’s group home and, to honor her “Papa,” Oak Hill’s Music Therapy program! Oak Hill is deeply grateful to Zoey, her parents, and all who donated for making this amazing gift possible! Thanks to them, more individuals with disabilities will have the opportunity to experience the joy of music. We can’t wait to see what Zoey will do next!

To make Oak Hill the beneficiary of your next fundraiser, or make to a gift today, please contact Michael Hoffer, Director of Annual Giving, at Michael.Hoffer@oakhillct.org.



Zoey and her parents, Brett and Elaine.

Innovations in Grants

Our Oak Hill Grants Team is on a roll! From their inception just over a year ago, the dynamic trio of Kate McOmber, Susan Orred, and Katrina Duffy have been securing new opportunities for Oak Hill left and right. The impact cannot be overstated:

The grateful recipient of a \$45,000 award from the **Easterseals Intersection Collective**, Oak Hill School will expand access to resources, knowledge, and services for caregivers of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) children with disabilities. To kick off our efforts, Oak Hill School held a resource fair in June that brought together a variety of different community resources like mental health services, nutrition, and income assistance. Parents and guardians were able to explore the opportunities available to them and secure the support they need! Another fair is being planned for September!

Thanks to a grant from the **Bank of America Charitable Foundation** of \$22,500 for Oak Hill School’s Vocational Training Program, our students can now earn up to \$15 an hour for their vocational work experiences! A key part of Oak Hill School’s curriculum is experiential learning. Many of our students will go on to work in traditional workplaces, so we encourage them to engage in vocational placements where they gain professional experience and develop confidence in a supportive environment. Thanks to this amazing grant, our students will also earn money and start to learn how to manage their earnings since this grant also supports expanded financial management training. For individuals with disabilities, financial understanding and freedom are vital aspects of independence.

Summer is in full swing at Oak Hill, so we can’t forget about Camp! Thanks to generous support from the **Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust** in the amount of \$5,500, Oak Hill Camps and Recreation can provide financial support to campers in need! For individuals with disabilities and their families, the cost associated with summer recreation can often be prohibitive. Oak Hill wants everyone to have the opportunity to participate in our new summer enrichment programming like *Camp to You* and *Camp Out Getaways*. Thanks to this transformative gift, campers will make new friends, enjoy the great outdoors, and have myriad adventures, without worrying about the cost.

Oak Hill relies on support from grants and foundations to innovate new programs and empower individuals with disabilities. **To learn more or get involved, please contact Kate McOmber, Director of Innovation and Grants, at Katherine.McOmber@oakhillct.org.**



Oak Hill School students show off their vocational skills by serving ice cream at the Golf Classic.



Program Highlights: Social Club!

Social Club is back and better than ever! A staple of Community Programs before the pandemic, Social Club is an opportunity for the individuals who reside in our group homes to socialize! The club recently visited a bowling alley for an afternoon of strikes, spares, and lots of laughs.



Runways, Red Carpets, and Graduation Caps!

Our Oak Hill School students have sure been busy! From a fashion show, to Prom, to Graduation, our students are having a summer they won’t soon forget!

