

Old Farm Inn celebrates a year of service

By Dimitra Lavrakas Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, August 26, 2015 1:00 am

ROCKPORT — Tucked back away from the road and just down the street from Halibut Point State Park, the Old Farm Inn celebrated its first year of operation Tuesday with a cookout.

The historic property, once an inn, is now a cognitive learning and living center for people with brain injuries. Besides the handful of residents, guests included close to 60 clients coming in from other similar facilities to enjoy the food and a day outside.

Three organizations came together to renovate this historic inn on Route 127, a project years in the making: Old Farm Rockport, a non-profit organization formed by a group of North Shore families and friends of individuals with brain injuries and cognitive or neurological disorders; Supportive Living Inc., an award-winning developer of independent housing for brain injury survivors; and Advocates Inc., which provides health care services for the men who live there.

The property was purchased by Old Farm Inn Inc. in 2011 for \$825,000, according to assessing records. Renovation of the two buildings on the 1.8 acre lot was paid for by state and federal money, including \$275,000 in Rockport Community Preservation Act funds. And the Federal Loan Bank of Boston, through the Institution for Savings, provided direct grants for the affordable housing project.

The project was driven a settlement in a 2007 class-action suit, Hutchinson vs. Patrick, filed by five individuals living with brain injuries, the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts and the Stavros Center for Independent Living. The individuals wanted to be able to live in the community and not be warehoused in inappropriate nursing facilities and rehabilitation hospitals that could not address their unique needs.

“The residents of our facilities need 24/7 care,” said Peter Noonan, director of Supportive Living Inc. “But we also focus on wellness programs — physical fitness even for people in wheelchair.”

There are raised-bed gardens on the property that residents in wheelchairs or walkers can reach to



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Dimitra Lavrakas/Staff photo Joe Cooper, a resident at the Old Farm Inn in Rockport, enjoys a cookout with dozens of residents from other convalescent homes on the North Shore.

plant and harvest produce to be used for their meals.

There is also a research component at the inn, where as many different programs are tried and their effectiveness evaluated in enhancing the lives of the residents.

At least one of the Old Farm Inn residents attending Tuesday's cookout calls the program a success.

"It's a nice place to live, but I've outgrown it," Joseph H. "Joe" Cooper said. "I do everything myself now, but people need this kind of service. It has beautiful grounds and the staff is good."

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