

New role for Bridgewell's Chris Tuttle

By Bella DiGazia

Chris Tuttle is settling into an unexpected role.

The Beverly resident was hired as Bridgewell's chief operating officer earlier this year. Today, he is the interim CEO, taking over from the agency's late CEO Kelly Martin, who died last summer.

"I think the toughest part since I've been here, has been the passing of Kelly," he said. "The agency has done extremely well and a lot of that has to do with Kelly's legacy and what she had built for the last 35 years. My time with her was short but (...) what struck me most was her commitment to the individuals that we serve..."

Now in its 60th year, Bridgewell's mission is to provide services that assist people with disabilities to live independently through community housing, day programs, outpatient treatment, recovery services, education and employment training. The nonprofit recently moved its headquarters to Peabody.

Bridgewell serves 6,500 people

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annually, with offices dedicated to services for autism; developmental and intellectual disabilities; substance abuse and recovery treatments; affordable housing and homelessness; behavioral health; professional innovation; and recreational initiatives; and four clinics in Lynn, Danvers, Lowell, and Chelmsford.

Tuttle said Martin's legacy was centered around innovation, inspiration and dedication. She left a very strong foundation for him to build upon, he added. The organization is not seeking a permanent CEO and senior executives are evaluating the nonprofit's next step, he said.

The 54-year-old's resume is packed with years of experience working for child welfare nonprofits, especially cases involving children who have experienced trauma.

"There are a lot of things I am still learning on the go," said Tuttle. "The adult (care) world is something I am still learning, but the wealth of expertise that is within Bridgewell has been a huge benefit to me."

He was drawn to Bridgewell, he said, by the many services it provides North Shore residents. The staff has welcomed him, even though he is a New Yorker, he said.

Tuttle said he hopes to expand Bridgewell's recovery and substance abuse treatment services

by recruiting more coaches for the recovery program.

"There is no shortage of people who are in need of help and dealing with addiction," he said. "I think we have made great strides but it is a long fight. People in recovery need to know they are not alone, especially when those dark moments come and the temptations creep in, and they need to know there are people they can call and places they can go."

He also said his plans include programs for 22-year-olds with autism who are working to become adults. Bridgewell will also form a new family and individual advisory committee, he said.

"I want to end my career here, whatever role that might be," said Tuttle. "I also hope to be able to try and root for the Red Sox, at some point."

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