

The Arclight



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Rockland
New York

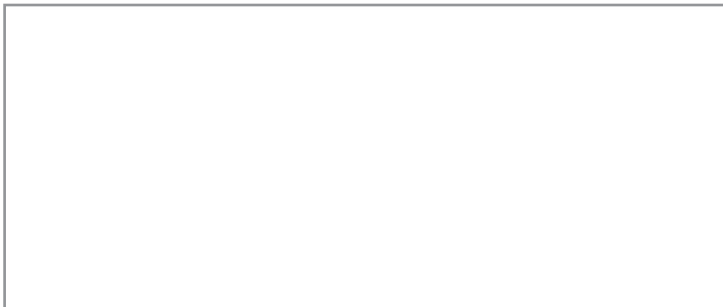
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A family-based organization
for people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities



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Dear Readers,

It has been my privilege to serve as editor of *The Arclight* through its transformation from a black and white newsletter to a full color magazine. Now, once again, it is time for a positive change. This is the final printed edition of *The Arclight*. Henceforth, *The Arclight* will appear in digital format via email.

On a bi-monthly basis, *The Arclight* online will deliver well-researched stories on topics of interest to families, educators, legislators, medical professionals, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and members of the broader community. To receive these articles, please forward your email address to Arclight@TheArcRockland.org

We hope you will join us as *The Arclight* online enters the realm of paperless publishing.

– Anna Gottlieb

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From The President

Jackie Curtiss

If you are reading *The Arclight Magazine*, you probably have a family member, a friend, a coworker with a developmental disability. Whatever the link—you have a connection with The Arc—and that matters to me.

If you are reading this magazine, you probably know that where finances are concerned, this is not a good time for our field. Government funds have been cut substantially for agencies such as ours. But, there are two ways to look at the situation. We could wait for the tides to turn, or we could view this as a rallying cry for action. I vote for the second option.

We are a loyal bunch with plenty of experience and a healthy dose of moxie. Nearly 65 years ago, a group of parents not unlike ourselves, stood where we stand now—but they had nothing—they had to build The Arc from scratch. We have so much more, and everything to gain.

The founders of The Arc traveled back and forth to Albany endlessly to fight for the rights of their sons and daughters, sisters and brothers. They shouted and marched and cajoled, until they were heard—until the money began to come in—not just from the government, but from colleagues, peers, friends, members of the community.

We are, once more, at a crossroads. But, now is definitely not the time to sit back. Now is the time to stand on the shoulders of our predecessors. Join one of The Arc's committees. Donate your time or dollars or both. Join forces with The Arc's professional staff as we plan for a vibrant future. Please Email me at jcurtiss@TheArcRockland.org. Or call me at 845.267.2500. I will help you get involved.

We are in this together.



From the Chief Executive Officer

Carmine G. Marchionda

What we do here at The Arc Rockland is all about people—the people for whom we provide services and supports, the people who are employed by The Arc, the volunteers who sit on our Boards and the many others

affiliated with this agency.

While we recognize the host of exceptional individuals in our midst, we could not include everyone in the pages that follow. We have chosen instead to highlight some of the men and women in positions of leadership. While each of their stories is different, all share the common thread of a commitment to excellence. Taken together, they are a powerful force for good—not just for the people we support—but for the broader community.

Beginning on page 16, you will see photos representing The Arc Rockland's annual *Golf Classic* and the 23rd annual *A Taste of Rockland*. We are proud to count the participants in these events—from the chefs to the golfers to the guests—among our strongest supporters. Plans are in the works for even more expansive celebrations in 2019 in recognition of The Arc Rockland's 65th anniversary.

As we embark on the New Year, we look back with much gratitude to the families, friends, neighbors, business associates and government officials whose efforts on our behalf have helped to ensure the inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life.

Wishing you a happy, healthy, safe and peaceful New Year.



*A family-based organization
for people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities*



Jackie Curtiss

Jackie Curtiss, President of The Arc Rockland Board of Directors, drives a 23-foot center console fishing boat. “I have my New Jersey Boater’s Safety License. I like to go clamming with friends in the bay,” she says. “My husband Kenny and our son Ryan go shark and tuna fishing all the time. Last year, Ryan caught a 250-pound mako shark by himself.” Son Danny and daughter Kelly, “love hanging out on the boat,” says their mother, “but they prefer the bay to the ocean.”

Boating, fishing, crabbing, clamming—life on the water—is nothing new to the Curtiss family.
Kenny Curtiss is a tugboat captain at the Mario Cuomo

Bridge where he is employed by the New York State Thruway Authority. “He is available for bridge inspectors and gives tours of the bridge to the governor and other dignitaries,” says Ms. Curtiss.

For the past twelve years, the Curtiss family, of Nanuet, has also owned a home in Manahawkin, New Jersey. Although she had spent time near the ocean as a child, “We would vacation here and there. It was never anything like this,” says Ms. Curtiss. “Now, I spend long weekends there all year long. That’s my sanity. I think I am able to work (She is Cemetery Manager at Rockland Cemetery in Sparkill, NY), and still volunteer as much as I do because I know I have a place to go and kind of recoup.”

Prior to their move to Nanuet, the family lived in Pearl River for 23 years. Ms. Curtiss served on the Pearl River School Board of Education for 15 years and as president for the last four years. “I got involved with the special education PTA when Danny was in school in Pearl River. I concentrated on helping children with special needs.” Today, Danny is a member of The Arc Rockland’s Nyack hub where he and his friends begin each day before heading out to volunteer and participate in educational and recreational activities throughout Rockland.

Ms. Curtiss' commitment to the field of developmental disabilities has grown along with her son. "When Danny was four or five, we were told he had a speech delay," recalls his mother. "We took him to different doctors—an audiologist, a neurologist—and they would say, 'He's going to be fine.' Finally, I took him to Hackensack University Medical Center. They did a battery of tests. At the time, he was classified as Multiply Disabled." It wasn't until their son was eight or nine years old and began receiving services at the Ardsley Union Free School District, that he received a definitive diagnosis of autism.

In the years since, the young Mr. Curtiss has made significant advances. "As a small child, he was frustrated by his inability to communicate," recalls his mother. "We couldn't wait for him to talk, and now he talks nonstop."

It was at the behest of Karen Feinstein, Vice President of The Arc Rockland Board of Directors, that Ms. Curtiss became involved with The Arc. "Karen bullied me into getting involved," Ms. Curtiss quips. "I coach Special Olympics soccer, floor hockey, basketball and track and

field—teams on which Ms. Feinstein's son plays. Ms. Curtiss served on several of The Arc's committees, a prerequisite to joining the Board of Directors. "As the parent of a child with a developmental disability, I think it is important to become familiar with the agency that is providing supports to your son or daughter. People should not feel as though they don't know enough to participate. The best ideas come from other

parents. I had somebody ask me just today about putting her child on a gluten-free diet. We did that for Danny when he was in the second or third grade. It worked for a while."

Ms. Curtiss is also the treasurer and secretary for the New York Raptors Special Hockey team in Elmsford, NY. "Special hockey is a hockey program designed to bring the thrill of hockey to players of all abilities," says Ms. Curtiss. "Danny and other members of our Arc family also participate on this team. Keeping our children active and involved is so important."

Ms. Curtiss notes that parents sometimes become frustrated with the system when trying to obtain services

and supports for their children. "The earlier you connect with an agency such as The Arc, the better, so that you can begin to understand and acknowledge the disability and the services that are available. It is really very simple. Come to a committee meeting. Share your ideas and thoughts. You will learn as you go. There is no easy fix to a developmental disability and everybody is different." Of her son Danny, Ms. Curtiss says, "He is one of the happiest people I know. He is sweet and caring and thoughtful. We have tried to include him in everything we do."

If she were to advise other families, she says, "I would say, teach your sons and daughters the skills they can grow with. Get them involved in recreational activities so that they can make friends and make bonds. And, let your children do things on their own. Let them make decisions. Give them space. You will know yourself when the time is right."

To learn more about the role you may play in The Arc Rockland, please contact Ms. Curtiss at jcurtiss@TheArcRockland.org ■

"The earlier you connect with an agency such as The Arc, the better, so that you can begin to understand and acknowledge the disability."



Jackie, Kelly, Danny, Ryan and Kenny Curtiss



Dr. Daniel Spitzer

Dr. Daniel Spitzer is president of The Arc Foundation of Rockland.

The retired neurosurgeon is an avid tennis player, a serious photographer, a stickler for healthful eating and a champion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He and his wife Heidi are parents of two adult children, one of whom receives supports and services through The Arc.

Although Dr. Spitzer refers to himself as a “very private person,” in 2016, he agreed to accept the leadership role on the Foundation. “I don’t enjoy being front and center,” he says, “but when it comes to supporting The Arc, I feel that it is my responsibility to be involved. As family members, we cannot rely solely on the agency’s professional staff to do all of the heavy lifting when it comes to fundraising.”

Members of The Arc Foundation of Rockland participate in and promote agency events and activities, help to secure

donations towards agency programs and serve as ambassadors to the broader Rockland community. “With diminishing government

funding, it is imperative that we, as Board

members, make every effort to secure resources to make up the deficit in funds,” states Dr. Spitzer. “Parents founded this organization and we continue to play a significant role in shaping the direction of The Arc. It is to the advantage of our loved ones that we play an active role in the agency.”

Dr. Spitzer appreciates the transparency with which The Arc approaches fiscal matters. Regular reports from The Arc’s CEO Carmine Marchionda, and the Chief Financial Officer Ganeene O’Brien, “give us insights into how we can best help The Arc plan for the future.”

Referencing his life’s work as a neurosurgeon, Dr. Spitzer says, “Positive outcomes are never made in a vacuum. Whether it concerns the health of one person, or the health of an organization, it is important to look at potential long-range and short-term results in preparing a course of action. There is wisdom in crafting a strategic plan that allows for flexibility. Sometimes, what seems feasible initially, is overshadowed by unforeseen circumstances—a cut in funding for example. How, where and in what manner we provide services at The Arc must

be fluid. It is our commitment to the people that we support that remains rock solid.”

Dr. Spitzer notes that in the years ahead, there will be less focus on brick and mortar and more on the ways in which to strengthen peoples’ lives. He has been instrumental in guiding The Arc to implement healthful eating and regular exercise programs throughout its day programs and residences. “Once people learn about proper nutrition, most never turn back,” he says. “There is truth to the saying, ‘You are what you eat.’”

Where exercise is concerned, Dr. Spitzer practices what he preaches. He plays tennis every day, and he is spearheading a tennis component to the agency’s annual Golf Classic.

“We know the benefits of exercise for people of all abilities,” notes Dr. Spitzer. “And we know the effects of a lack of exercise.” The Arc offers a range of options to people with disabilities, including time spent in its therapeutic

pool in New City, participation in fitness, Zumba and dance classes at local gyms and studios and the use of workout equipment in The Arc homes.

Dr. Spitzer also advocates the pursuit of outlets beyond daily jobs or typical routines. “This could mean art, music, cooking, gardening, reading—something that enhances our lives.” Of his interest in photography, Dr. Spitzer says, “I began taking pictures as a teenager when my father gave me an antique camera along with the assignment to become the family photographer.” In the years since, and “more so

now that I have retired, it has become a second vocation. My profession as a neurosurgeon taught me the powers of concentration and focus. In some ways, photography is similar. I like the commingling of intensity and freedom inherent in this art form—the ability to capture a moment in time.” ■

“With diminishing government funding, it is imperative that we, as Board members, make every effort to secure resources to make up the deficit in funds.”

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Jessica Sirota

“Self-Advocacy means speaking out for your rights, believing in yourself—having a voice,” says Jessica Sirota, President of Self-Advocacy for The Arc Rockland. “It means standing up for people who can’t stand up for themselves and teaching people to believe in themselves. . . in their hearts.”

Ms. Sirota explains that self-advocates help one another learn how best to make their needs and aspirations known. “Anger is not the right way—when people get angry they get intense,” she says. “We have to learn to take a deep breath and to express ourselves appropriately.”

The Arc Rockland’s self-advocates number nearly 100, representing various departments within the agency. The groups work separately on specific projects, but members of each group are welcome at one another’s meetings. “We work as a team,” says Ms. Sirota. “When we work together, we

have more ideas.” As she does with other aspects of her life, Ms. Sirota approaches her role as president with confidence and enthusiasm. She encourages people of all abilities to join her in asserting as much control as they are able in all areas of their lives. By way of example, she says, “We have a right to manage our own money, to go to the bank, to write checks and handle bills. We have a right to be taught about banking and cooking, to be given choices. We have a right to be in a relationship, to go on a date.”

In many instances, as is the case with Ms. Sirota, “We should be able to make our own doctor and dental appointments. I do that myself. For local appointments, I put the numbers in my cell phone.” Knowing when to rely on oneself and when to request the help of others is part of being an advocate. “My parents arrange for doctors’ appointments in the city.” When shopping for clothes, a staff member accompanies Ms. Sirota. She selects items that she likes, and as long as the price is within reason, she says, “I put it on my credit card.”

Monthly meetings of The Arc’s Self-Advocacy organization take place at The Arc headquarters in Congers. After calling the meeting to order, Ms. Sirota follows an agenda which she prepares beforehand with the assistance



Self-advocacy meeting at The Arc Rockland

of Bonnie Patrikis, The Arc Rockland's Director of Guardianship and Self-Advocacy.

Topics include items of local, state and national importance—everything from fund raisers to defray the cost of attending a statewide Self-Advocacy conference, to voter registration, to what should be served at The Arc's annual Stardust Ball. Guest speakers frequently contribute to the educational components of the meeting, focusing on such areas as the industry's recent move from Service Coordination to Care Coordination organizations.

Ms. Sirota and other members of The Self-Advocacy executive team attend monthly regional meetings in a conference room at the Palisades Center Mall, where representatives from other organizations that support people with disabilities gather to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Ms. Sirota comes to the position of president with a wealth of leadership experience. She has addressed audiences in Rockland County and in Albany.

She has served as keynote speaker at events heralding abilities, including a presentation at the graduation ceremony of BOCES' Jesse J. Kaplan School in West Nyack, NY. Most recently, she was among the 18 self-advocates from The Arc Rockland to attend the annual Self-Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS) Conference at the Albany Marriot. Highlights of that event included sessions concerning Self-Direction (a service that allows the individuals to choose supports, staff, provider organizations and scheduling), focus groups, dance parties and opportunities to socialize with self-advocates from throughout the state.

In 2016, Ms. Sirota and her colleagues were vocal proponents of New York's successful BFair2Direct Care campaign for higher wages for Direct Support Professionals. Ms. Sirota notes that people with intellectual

and developmental disabilities rely upon DSPs every day. "The DSPs need to know that they can count on us."

In 2010, Ms. Sirota was honored as one of Rockland County's Forty under 40. A 1998 graduate of Tappan Zee High School, Ms. Sirota works as a Teaching Assistant at Learning Ladder Child Care Center in West Haverstraw, NY. A proponent of continuing education, she has taken courses through the Successful Learning Center. She takes weekly piano lessons and performs at venues throughout Rockland County. A Special Olympian, she has won medals in the javelin throw, softball and the 50 meter walk. Her extremely busy schedule includes Sunday bowling at Hi-Tor Lanes in West Haverstraw with The Arc Rockland's bowling league.

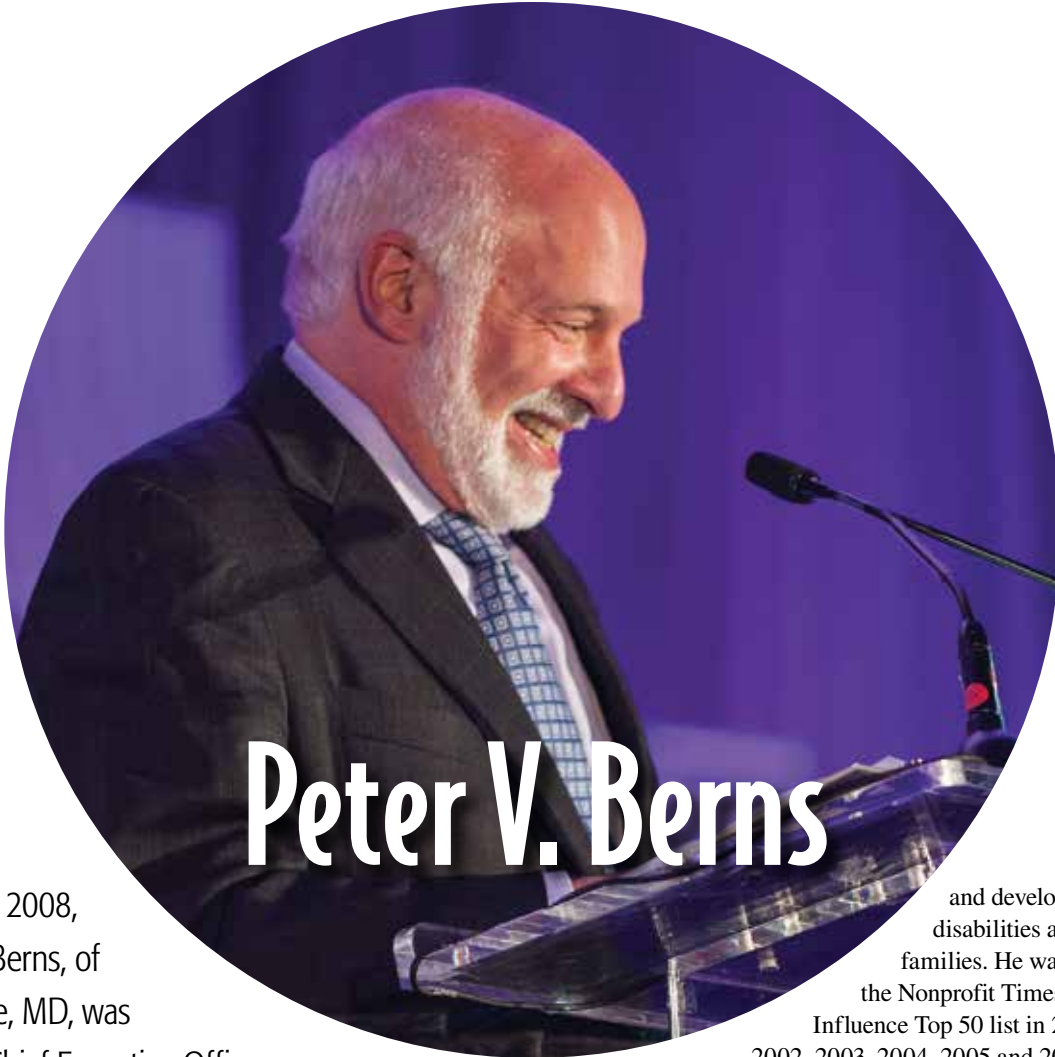
When time allows, she enjoys travel for the experience of seeing new places, "and meeting new people," she says. "It's a great way to make new friends." She believes strongly in the value of friendship and counts her housemates of 16 years among her closest friends. The five women live together in The Arc home in Pomona, NY.

In the years since she has been affiliated with The Arc, Ms. Sirota has seen positive change in attitudes towards people with disabilities. "When I was in high school there were some kids who would use

words that were not very nice... like the R word. Sometimes that would get to me. But we are doing better now because we are out in the community, working and volunteering," she says. "People know us now."

Her comments spoken at a presentation to The Arc New York some years ago continue to ring true. "We need to advocate for ourselves because we are citizens of this County and this State. We have the right to ask for what we need and desire. And, we need to advocate for ourselves because we can. Better than anyone else, we know what it has taken to make us the people we are today." ■

"When I was in high school there were some kids who would use words that were not very nice... like the R word. Sometimes that would get to me."



Peter V. Berns

In July of 2008, Peter V. Berns, of Baltimore, MD, was named Chief Executive Officer of The Arc. His decades' long employment in several arenas has been punctuated by accolades for superior work in the field of developmental disabilities. Of his current position at the helm of the national organization, he says, "This has been the best fit of anything I have done in my career."

Before taking on his current role, Mr. Berns was Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations for 16 years. In 1996, he was named Outstanding Professional of the Year by The Arc of Maryland. As a public policy advocate, his efforts were critical to reforming state and federal Medicaid regulations for improving life for people with intellectual

and developmental disabilities and their families. He was named to the Nonprofit Times Power and Influence Top 50 list in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2015.

Mr. Berns received his JD cum laude from Harvard Law School and an LLM in advocacy from Georgetown University Law Center. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in psychology, magna cum laude, from the University of Pennsylvania.

Previously held positions include Deputy Chief of Consumer Protection in the Maryland Attorney General's office. In May of 2011, President Barack Obama appointed Mr. Berns to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, providing advice and assistance to President Obama and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

While he does not have a family member with a disability, Mr. Berns says, "I did care for my parents in later years and have had some experience with Medicaid. And, one of my first cases as a law student involved representing a man who had disabilities and the challenge he faced in keeping his Medicaid benefits."

Mr. Berns is proud of the progress that The Arc has achieved in its history but acknowledges the difficulties

that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities continue to face today. “I think one thing is really clear. In the 68-year history of The Arc as an organization, we have made tremendous progress to support and create a better life and greater opportunities for people compared to where we were in the 30s, 40s and 50s. But we still have a long way to go to achieve the vision of people living full, inclusive lives in their communities. It is unfortunate that we have to fight against the dismantling of a lot of what we have built up over the years. Most recently, there have been a few too many attacks on programs and services by political leaders.”

On a national level, Mr. Berns sees the state of public education for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as one of the most serious concerns. “It is still the case that too often students are relegated to separate classrooms and separate schools when more of them could be included in their public schools. We often have students graduating without a high school diploma when, with more support, they could have graduated with a diploma. And, charter schools are not as open and welcoming to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities as traditional schools.”

Employment

When it comes to employment, Mr. Berns believes “There is a lot that we need to do—particularly to encourage the private sector to open its doors and give people a chance to show what they can accomplish.”

Caregiving and family supports are other issues requiring a course of action, and one on which The Arc of the United States has been focusing. “Nationwide there are probably a million households in which an adult with developmental disabilities is living at home with Mom and Dad, and Mom and Dad are in their 60s or older. From our research we know that a lot of those families do not have a plan for the future. We have been working hard to create resources to help support families in planning for the future.”

The difficulties surrounding recruitment and retention of Direct Support Professionals are causing high levels of anxiety among chapters of The Arc across the country. The Arc of the United States is collaborating with the University of Minnesota to create tools designed to help agencies supporting people with developmental disabilities effectively deal with these issues. Mr. Berns sees increasing restrictions

**Rockland County operates an Alternative to Incarceration Program for Defendants with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The program partners with BRiDGES, a Rockland organization offering individual planning, case management and referral services in an effort to provide a path forward and avoid incarceration among people who may not have understood the nature and/or consequences of a crime.*

on immigration as having a negative effect on the field. “Somewhere in the neighborhood of 25 or 30 percent of the direct support professional workforce is comprised of immigrants,” he says. “One of the consequences of having stricter immigration policies is that we are reducing the potential supply of workers. Immigrant workers often come from a tradition of caregiving for family members. In the interest of tightening our borders, we may, in fact, be making it harder for our industry. It is difficult to hire people under temporary protective status, for example, with the knowledge that their status may expire shortly. Nobody in the federal government is thinking about how we are going to replace this pool of potential employees.”

Criminal Justice System

Another one of The Arc of the United States’ key focus areas is the relationship between individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, law enforcement and the criminal justice system. “People don’t like to think about it, but there are huge issues around how people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are treated when they become entangled in the criminal justice system. The fact of the matter is, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are overrepresented in the juvenile and adult justice systems—with numerous instances of people receiving long sentences for relatively minor infractions.”*

Advocacy

Although he is fully aware of the hurdles ahead, Mr. Berns says, “Overall, I am optimistic. What we can’t be is complacent. What we have seen over the history of The Arc, and the reason I am optimistic, in addition to the passion and justice of the cause, is that when families speak out, when families organize and take concerted action—that leads to results. Family advocacy and self-advocacy have led to concrete improvements in the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and their families. That is what has led to new laws, funding streams, programs, services, employment and inclusive educational opportunities. So, we have to get to work again, like The Arc did in the early days. We have to attract a lot more people to our cause so that people from outside the disability community become involved. If the average member of the public does not know someone or have a family member with a disability, they probably assume there are systems in place to care for those people. They think there is a safety net in place that will support the individual to have a decent life. They have no idea of what the challenges are or what their families face.”

“While it is true that showing up and getting facetime with your legislator or governor or some high public official

Continued on page 12

Peter Berns (cont'd)

Continued from page 11

is important, there is a lot that can be done through social media—through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. We really need to ramp up our grass roots advocacy and do some online community building. We need to broaden our focus so that it is not only directed at government but is also directed at the private sector.”

His work with The Arc consumes a great deal of his time and energy, however, Mr. Berns believes strongly in the importance of home life. He and his wife Melissa Zieve are the proud parents of two sons and two daughters ranging in age from 17 to 28. “The youngest is a high school senior, the oldest is a recent law school graduate,” says Mr. Berns. “Books and movies are big in our household—and lately a lot of junky TV,” he adds with a laugh. The family enjoys spending time together on the beaches of Delaware. Mr. Berns and his sons are avid backpackers, hiking sections of the Appalachian Trail each summer.

Whether he is discussing members of The Arc family, or talking about his wife and children, The CEO views family as a number one priority. “Family,” he states, “is the real focus of my existence.” ■



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- Top left: "Since 1952"
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Mark van Voorst

“My generation and the one after that had a sense of social service imbedded in us—a desire to give back. We felt pride in terms of serving individuals, and society supported that mission,” says Mark van Voorst, Executive Director of The Arc New York. Noting the large number of vacancies for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) across the state, he says, “I think that passion still exists in people, but the funding isn’t there to support it, and at what we pay, the jobs are becoming less and less enticing.”

The Arc New York includes 52 Chapters, representing 60,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities statewide. Mr. van Voorst took the reins in 2017, following decades of success within the field. He graduated

from Hope College in Michigan with a double major in philosophy and political science and, in 1978, he earned a Master of Divinity Degree from Princeton Theological Seminary.

“I knew that I didn’t want to go on for ordination,” he explains. “During school, I had done a fair amount of work in hospitals, including stints as a chaplain in a general hospital and a hospital for people who were terminally ill. I really didn’t know what I wanted to do, but I did like working with people who were facing problems.”

At the suggestion of a family member, he applied for and was hired by the Jefferson County Arc, now Jefferson Rehabilitation Center, where he was a Rehabilitation Counselor in the sheltered workshop, “when workshops were still state of the art,” comments Mr. van Voorst. Over time, he worked in the agency’s residential and day treatment programs. Then, he joined the staff of the Fulton County Arc, now The Arc Lexington, where he oversaw several programs before ultimately being named Associate Executive Director of the Chapter.

Career Trajectory

In 2001, his career took a significant geographical turn. “Intrigued” by an offer to work at Lifespire, a Manhattan-

Mark van Voorst (cont'd)

Continued from page 13

based agency providing services to people with developmental disabilities, Mr. van Voorst was named Chief Executive Officer—a position he would hold for 17 years.

“I wondered if I could make it in the big leagues,” he says. “When you are in rural counties, you might think you are good, but you don’t know how you would fare in the City, where you are competing with at least 130 different agencies going after the same clientele, in terms of hiring staff. I thought when I went to the City I would have this plethora of very, very smart people to draw from. In fact, the people in the City are not that much different from the people up here. The challenges of running an urban organization are really no different than what you have in many counties in the State. I bet if I looked at my turnover rate in the City it was no different than what chapters are experiencing today.

Mr. van Voorst expected to start his job with Lifespire in October 2001. “But following 9/11, I called to ask if they wanted me to start earlier. Two days later I was in the City trying to figure out north, south, east and west.” During his tenure there, Lifespire grew from a \$56 million organization to a \$103 million organization. “I probably went through some of the best times that The Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) had in terms of funding programs. Up until my 37th year in the field, I had never considered closing a program. When rate rationalization* came into being, it became clear to me that our industry had to stop looking at itself as just a human service entity. We had to look at our services as a business. We have to provide superior quality of care to people who need it, but we can’t offer carte blanche services.” He notes that difficulties were magnified by “a reduction in the revenue stream, while providers were being asked to care for people with even greater needs—people with significant behavior problems or people who are more medically involved.”

Funding Issues

“Today, we are held to the same performance standards with less government funding to do so,” says Mr. van Voorst. “We need to inject more money into the system. We have to get back to the point at which young parents are up there

in Albany screaming for things. Once the pressure is off, we will slowly go backwards. The result of so many battles fought on behalf of people with developmental disabilities in the early years is that families began to feel confident their loved ones will be taken care of. There is an expectation among many people today that the government is responsible for providing needed supports and services, but the funding to do so is slipping away.”

Mr. van Voorst gives residential services as an example in which he has seen a dramatic change over the past six to eight years. “In my early years, if there was a vacancy in a home, we could select from a pool of people and place the person who would best fit into that home,” he says. “Prior to that, we talked about filling beds. Now we are back to taking about beds again. Some Chapters are actually going back to larger homes because there isn’t enough money to support smaller homes, or because the Chapters can’t find staff. Small is good, but small is more expensive.”

While providers are tightening their purse strings, they are simultaneously facing a series of transformations in the field. While Mr. van Voorst is a champion for innovation, he cautions against a black and white approach to change in the field. “OPWDD has a tendency to do something new, then look at the old and say it was terrible. There are absolutely folks who should have the opportunity to work in their community, but there are also people who feel fulfilled and happy in a familiar workshop setting. By eliminating sheltered workshops, we are eliminating that choice for them. In some cases, we’re displacing them from long-time work communities and moving them into settings where they may feel less purposeful. I think a better approach is to acknowledge there is a spectrum of folks with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The service models we create should offer a spectrum of choice, based upon the needs of the individual.”

Inclusion

If we are truly seeking integration for people with disabilities, Mr. van Voorst says part of that spectrum of choice is the freedom to take risks and make mistakes, which he believes are intrinsic to independence. “We are not supposed to look at ourselves as caregivers, but rather as agents of independence,” he states. “Yet many executives see the role of our Chapters as one of guardianship. We look, as we should, to protect the people in our care. On the other hand, there are families, perhaps particularly among parents of children with autism, who push hard for normalization and integration. They are willing to accept that their child will be put at risk in some situations. The challenge is to define what full integration means for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We ask our staff to let people

**Rate rationalization restricts the interchange of funds between various waiver programs. Prior to rate rationalization, providers were funded under a budget-based methodology for their largest programs—providing the flexibility necessary to generate an operating surplus in one program and use it to support another program facing a financial challenge.*

explore options, but that means allowing them to take some risks. And when people take risks, mistakes will be made along the way. However, for our providers, if someone is not fully insulated from risk and mistakes and something goes wrong, The Justice Center* will likely get involved, and staff may find their jobs on the line. Faced with this precarious balance between safety and independence,” says Mr. van Voorst, “providers and staff are understandably reluctant to encourage a measure of risk. In turn, the people they serve are protected from true opportunities for integration and independence.”

Notwithstanding the weighty issues at hand, Mr. van Voorst maintains a positive outlook. After years of living in Manhattan, New Jersey and White Plains, he saw several major advantages to his position with The Arc New York. He relishes the challenge of “trying to salvage a vital system of services that I was afraid was in danger of collapsing.” The position also allowed him to move closer to his children (he has four) and grandchildren (he has seven). He and his wife Cindy live in Saratoga, NY, where they had maintained a second home throughout his career. The new position allows him to work a normal work week, he says, and come home to his family. “If I actually wanted to, I could mow the lawn on a Wednesday evening.”

Home Life

Mr. van Voorst enjoys watching movies and dining out. He and his wife like to explore foods from different cultures. “And I do like to shoot. I don’t hunt, but I have a collection of firearms, and I like to practice,” he says. He has recently taken up golf. “After years of running golf events where I would ride around in a golf cart all day and just wave at

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people, I figure now it might not be a bad thing to try to play.”

He finds enrichment reading books on business, biographies or autobiographies. “The books may be several hundred pages long, and I may find only a paragraph or two that are relevant,” he says, but he finds those relevant passages worth the read. “When I was in the City, I bought a tremendous number of books and distributed them to anyone who wanted to read them—books on training methods and similar topics helpful to people who wanted to be promoted. Personally, I think our industry is plagued by not having defined career paths. That’s something we’re working to establish.”

Where the future of the industry is concerned, Mr. van Voorst suggests that people will thrive if we break down the silos. “If you begin your career in Residential Services, for instance, you may stay there for decades, never considering a move to Day Habilitation Services.” He hopes that agencies will encourage a more open environment in which employees try other areas within the field, and explore opportunities for advancement. His own career trajectory is proof of the potential for growth. “Honestly, when I started in the field, I was at the bottom of the ladder,” he says. “Now, 40 years later, to be running the collective of Arcs across the state is humbling and surprising.” ■

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33rd ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

Blue skies, groomed greens and sunshine spelled a great day for The Arc Rockland's Annual Golf Classic, June 20, 2018.

Carmine Marchionda, The Arc Rockland CEO, thanked the golfers, guests, Golf Committee members, volunteers and sponsors for a memorable day at Paramount Country Club, New City.

Dr. Daniel Spitzer, President of The Arc Foundation Board of Directors introduced a video highlighting the ways in which people who receive supports and services through The Arc are integral members of the broader Rockland community.

New in 2018 was a Beginners' Golf Clinic. An enthusiastic show of hands ensured that the Golf Clinic will be in full swing for the 2019 Golf Classic, Wednesday, June 19.

"I am always impressed by both the caliber of the golfers and their commitment to our agency," said Mr. Marchionda. "Where The Arc Rockland is concerned, "every shot was a hole in one." ■



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**Save the Date
6/19/19
at Paramount**



PHOTOS BY: SAMANTHA FINCH



Save the Date
9/23/19
 at Hilton
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“The grandest *Taste* to date”—was an apt description of this year’s festivities at the Hilton Pearl River. Four hundred guests enjoyed cuisine, fine wine and spirits and sumptuous desserts provided gratis by area restaurateurs, chefs and beverage purveyors. Lively bidding during the silent and live auctions added to the spirit of the evening.

New City Little League received a special thank you for its donation of \$5,800 raised during the annual New City Little League Tournament for the benefit of The Arc.

The Lagana Challenge, begun six years ago by Joseph Lagana garnered \$45,884, an increase of 43 percent over last year’s Challenge.

“The 23rd annual *Taste* was a testament to the hearts and souls of our community,” says The Arc Rockland CEO Carmine Marchionda.

“It is true that

A Taste of Rockland is a spectacular dining experience and a glamorous evening—but more importantly, it is our agency’s premier fundraiser. Every dollar contributed will enhance the lives of children, women and men with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To all of those who participated in this event, please know that The Arc Rockland extended family is grateful beyond measure for the enthusiasm and generosity that define your participation in the *Taste*.”

PHOTOS BY: SAMANTHA FINCH



“The Grandest Taste to Date!”

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■ On the Cutting Edge

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■ A Growth Field

Jobs in Human Services are expected to grow by 16% from 2016 to 2026; Outsourcing is impossible in a field that relies upon person-to-person interaction.

■ Part of the Whole

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Carmine Marchionda

"I think the future of this organization is in the development of our workforce," says The Arc Rockland CEO Carmine Marchionda. "Our Leadership Academy, our tuition reimbursement program and our fully funded Master's Degree program are aimed at giving employees a career path. It is easy to be discouraged when we look at funding issues or shortages in the workforce, but we are continuing to impact people's lives in a positive way—that is what lifts us up and moves us forward."

With Arc Rockland's 65th anniversary this year, Mr. Marchionda reflects on the parental initiative that brought the agency into being. "It remains important for us to have a family presence, but for a variety of reasons, it is harder

for families today to become engaged. There is a misconception on the part of some that the programs we offer are fully paid for by the government. Families don't realize how important it is to partner with us in advocating for monies to pay for the essential supports and services that they expect.

"Families also need to be aware of a tremendous shift that will take place in the way that agencies such as The Arc will be paid for services and supports. By 2021, managed care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be a given. The Arc Rockland will be paid based upon supports and services that offer quality outcomes that can be measured. In selecting organizations to provide supports, families will want to know how we assess quality. Metrics and outcomes will drive the way we are paid—the amount of time a person spends in the community, nutritional and medical care and support needs—these and other aspects of a person's life will be measured. Families will research organizations to determine which agencies provide the highest quality of care, which are accredited, which have the highest staffing levels and staff members with strongest educational and experiential credentials. Mr. Marchionda believes that an increasing number of people

PHOTO BY: JOSEPH SCOLLO

will receive supports in their homes rather than at center or community-based settings. More people will afford themselves of opportunities such as Self-Direction through which individuals manage their own budgets for services and supports.

An aging population gives Mr. Marchionda pause for concern. “It is not acceptable to move people from one of The Arc’s two-story homes in which they have been living to another home because it is too difficult for them to climb stairs or utilize the bathroom without the aid of specialty equipment. The only way to solve this problem is to build or purchase houses that are accessible—houses in which people can age in place.” To that end, an architectural firm hired by The Arc Rockland has drafted the design for a single-story home that would serve as a model for the future.

“When it comes to the younger generation, transition planning has to start much earlier,” says The Arc CEO. “The moment students age out of school at 21, the supports to which they have become accustomed are no longer there. Individuals and their families need to begin researching post-high school programs and employment options when the

“By 2021, managed care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be a given.”

students are in their early teens. There needs to be a focus on functional academics designed to teach skills which allow each student to succeed in real-life situations at home, school and in the community to enable a smooth transition after graduation.”

Whatever the issue, Mr. Marchionda states, “Individuals are becoming increasingly more comfortable in speaking up for themselves. (See story page 8) Rather than relying on others to tell their stories, self-advocates are expressing their needs and interests, and we at The Arc are listening and acting upon what they say. Self-advocates sit on a number of our agency’s committees and our Business Advisory Council.”

Overseeing the day-to-day operations and the long-range strategic plan leave little R&R time for the CEO. On the home front, in Ogdensburg, New Jersey, Mr. Marchionda enjoys cooking with his family. He and his wife Michelle are the parents of four, ranging in age from 12 to 20. “When they were younger, I prepared meals and froze them to be eaten during the week, anticipating my absence due to work and continuing educational commitments. Now, the kids cook as well—they even like researching recipes and shopping for ingredients.”

Although he does not follow sports, “I’m not a golfer, and I don’t watch football or baseball,” Mr. Marchionda says, “but I enjoy all aspects of the outdoors—skiing, snowboarding, hiking with the family, fishing and hunting. When I was young, I worked as a Direct Support Professional in a hospital in Paterson, New Jersey. Another DSP and I used to dream about hunting and harvesting our own food. One day, we decided to get our hunting licenses. Nobody in my family had ever hunted or fished before. I won’t harvest an animal that we can’t take home to eat. To me, it’s more about time spent outside with friends and family or sitting alone and thinking beside a babbling brook in the forest.”

While he appreciates the rare occasions for down time, Mr. Marchionda maintains high standards when it comes to a work ethic. “I was the first one in my family to go to college. My father lives in Bloomingdale, New Jersey. He came here from Italy as a young man. He went through elementary school there, finally earning his GED in America. In Italy, he worked the olive and grape fields and spent his summers tending sheep in the mountains. In this country, he was a baker for Nabisco, he worked in a restaurant making pizza, and he always had side jobs as a laborer. But at every chance, he made it clear that the key to opportunity was education. He was relentless. He is also compassionate,” says his son.

Continued on page 24

Nicolas, Michelle, Carmine Jr., Michael, Melissa, Carmine Sr. in Alaska



Carmine Marchionda (cont'd)

Continued from page 23

“He has always believed in helping others. I can’t tell you the number of weekends we spent painting people’s houses, shoveling neighbors’ driveways, mowing lawns, helping people carry groceries. I think when you put that together with his work ethic and his insistence on our schooling—we, his children, are the products.”

Mr. Marchionda earned a Master’s Degree in Public Administration and Healthcare Management from Kean University and a Master’s Degree in Business Administration and Finance from William Paterson College. He is a licensed Nursing Home Administrator in New York and New Jersey.

Mr. Marchionda’s mother, the late Lucille Marchionda, began her career as a nurse’s aide “She worked her way up to an administrative position in a hospital. Because of her influence, I started my career as a Direct Support Professional in a hospital at the age of 15.” He continued working there through college and graduate school. “To this day, I think that is the most impressive credential on my resume,” he says.

For ten years prior to his position with The Arc, Mr. Marchionda was President and Chief Executive Officer of Spectrum for Living, a New Jersey-based human services organization supporting people with developmental disabilities. Before Spectrum for Living, he was employed by the County of Sussex, New Jersey where he filled a variety of executive roles including: Nursing Home Administrator, Long-Term Care Consultant, Deputy County Administrator and ultimately, County Administrator overseeing 40 departments serving some 150,000 residents.

Carmine Marchionda credits his ability in securing leadership positions to the encouragement of his family—especially his wife. “She is a Registered Nurse and has always been extremely supportive of the mission-based services that have defined my career.” He also pays tribute to his first mentor—“a dynamic healthcare administrator,” for whom he worked immediately after graduating from college. “She was dogged in her pursuit of quality services. And she had the highest expectations for herself, her team and the people who worked for her. She pushed and worked me hard—not only to be a better administrator, but to be a better person. She urged me to go back to school to pursue advanced educational degrees. It took nearly 12 years attending graduate school at night to earn my two graduate degrees.” Like his father and his mentor, Mr. Marchionda values education. “I encourage the staff at The Arc to go back to school. I talk to them about how to pay for their education. While it is expensive, it’s a lasting investment that pays dividends over one’s lifetime.”

“I encourage the staff at The Arc to go back to school.”

Reflecting on his decision to remain in the nonprofit sector versus working for corporate America, Mr. Marchionda says, “Let’s be realistic, as a nonprofit executive, I have to be extremely efficient in every aspect of what happens here. We don’t have layers and layers of management, unlimited resources of stock or shareholders, so it is not uncommon for somebody on our staff to work with colleagues to develop a plan, write the plan, find the funding and implement the program. Handling a project from start to finish—that, in my opinion, is leadership. It is important that I set an example—not just by coming up with ideas, but by follow-through.

“Some of the mentors upon whom we rely are experts from other fields—the men and women who willingly contribute their wealth of experience to The Arc,” says

Mr. Marchionda. He is especially grateful to “the leaders of business and community who sit on The Arc’s Boards and committees in the spirit of cooperation for the betterment of people of all abilities.”

Of his leadership style, The Arc CEO is of the opinion that “No one person can be responsible for success at all levels. I believe in empowering people on the team—and by team, I mean all of the employees of The Arc—to make decisions, to exercise the authority they have been given, to be transparent, to delegate and to participate in decision making.

“I consider myself fortunate to be working with a family-governed organization in which the people involved are extremely passionate and dedicated because their loved ones are here. I respect their personal connection and their commitment. And, I like the fact that The Arc Rockland is part of The Arc New York and The Arc of the United States—links that enable us to collaborate with peers on issues that have an impact on all of us.

“Working in a not-for-profit arena is never easy. There are always obstacles,” says Mr. Marchionda.

“But part of being a CEO is facing obstacles with ingenuity. For the most part,” he adds, “I tend to see the glass half full.” ■



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Jane Zemon

PHOTO BY: JOSEPH SCOLLO

When questions arise at The Arc Rockland about almost any aspect of the human services field, chances are, Jane Zemon has the answers. Her soft-spoken, unassuming manner may not show it, but during the more than 40 years of her professional career, Ms. Zemon has worked her way up through the ranks to positions of great responsibility in a variety of not-for-profit agencies both large and small. Yet, growing up in East Providence, Rhode Island, all she knew was that she wanted to work with children.

“At first, I thought I would go into education, but I didn’t want to be a teacher and stand in front of a classroom,” she admits. “Then, as an undergraduate at Stonehill College in North Easton, Massachusetts, I took some classes in

psychology that required us to do an internship. I did mine in a tiny program located in the basement of a church, with a mix of about ten children who had a variety of developmental challenges. I enjoyed the small, non-traditional setting.”

Ms. Zemon decided to major in Child Psychology. Her first jobs after receiving a Bachelor’s Degree involved working in a direct teaching capacity at a residential school for children who, in addition to having significant developmental disabilities, also had either visual or hearing deficits, or both.

In the mid-1970s, though, the country had begun to shift towards deinstitutionalization and Ms. Zemon became a part of the process as a Program Coordinator for the South Shore Collaborative in North Weymouth, Massachusetts. “My job was to find statewide education programs for children living in state institutions and help get the children placed into appropriate programs in the public school system. We were so successful that within three years all the children had been placed and the program ended.”

After college, Ms. Zemon shared a house with friends in Brookline, MA, some of whom were in graduate school. They introduced her to Vance Zemon, a greatly-admired fellow graduate student in the Department of Psychology.

They were married in 1979, and moved to New York where her husband pursued a career in brain research (“He studies visual functioning—how the brain processes visual information,” she explains) and now teaches at the Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, a part of the Albert Einstein School of Medicine.

Ms. Zemon continued on her career trajectory, becoming Director of the Day Treatment Center at Catholic Charities in Brooklyn, and then a Treatment Team Leader at Letchworth Village Developmental Center in Thiells, NY, during which time she and her husband had their first child, a daughter, Rebecca (Becky).

In 1984, Ms. Zemon became Executive Director of the South East Consortium for Special Services in Harrison, NY. “I loved that job,” she says. “The program was funded by several municipalities to provide therapeutic recreational services for children with developmental disabilities. I was responsible for fundraising, policy development, community relations, as well as fiscal and personnel management.”

The job was short-lived, however, as fate intervened. “I was pregnant at the time when I was interviewed for the position and gave birth to a son with severe medical complications. I just couldn’t juggle it all—my daughter, the baby and the job, so I resigned in order to be with my family.”

Sadly, the baby died just a few weeks after she left the job. He was not quite a year old.

Ms. Zemon began the healing process with a part-time job at The Arc Rockland in 1987, working as a Respite Coordinator. “I really wasn’t ready for a full-time job yet,” she admits. “But this was exactly what I needed. I managed the overnight respite program for people with developmental disabilities.”

After a brief stint at Jawonio as Intermediate Care Facility Director, she returned to The Arc Rockland in 1992. “Initially, I was hired as the Coordinator of Case Management, in charge of Case Management and Family Services.”



Jane and Vance Zemon

As it turned out, her connection to the world of Developmental Disabilities would also take a more personal turn. The Zemons had another son, Aaron, born with multiple disabilities. “He has Cerebral Palsy, uses a wheelchair, doesn’t use words to communicate,” Ms. Zemon explains. For many years, the Zemons arranged for one-on-one home care for him, “but as he got older, we just couldn’t guarantee that he had the adequate, safe oversight he needed. He requires total care. He has to be lifted out of the wheelchair, out of bed, into the tub... .” When Aaron was 16, the family decided to move him to a residence operated by Camp Venture for teens with disabilities. “The Arc Rockland did not offer housing for teenagers. Aaron continues to live in a Camp Venture residence which he shares with several friends. He attends The Arc’s Day Habilitation program at Franklin Square in Pearl River.”

Ms. Zemon’s responsibilities at The Arc Rockland have expanded over the years. As Chief Program Officer, she currently oversees Employment Services, Residential Services, Community Services, Day Habilitation Services, Children’s Services, Recreation and Quality Improvement. “A lot of what I do is mentoring and supporting the Division Directors,” she explains. “I also have my own projects. For example, I have fiscal responsibility for the programs, determining how to increase revenue and decrease expenses. I was also responsible for ensuring that we received our first Council on Quality Control and Leadership (CQL) accreditation four years ago.*

“One of the greatest challenges of the job is trying to maintain quality services under the budgetary constraints we now face, caused in great part by cuts in government spending,” she adds. “Equally challenging is hiring staff at the direct care level. They have a tough job. Some have to work evenings and weekends, and many need to work a second job. They are the backbone of the agency, yet the budgetary issues mean we can’t offer the pay they deserve. And if there is a staff shortage, then the ones who are here have to do overtime.

“But over the years, it has been very rewarding to see the evolution of our agency,” she notes. “Our programs are now less center based and more community based. Five years ago, we only had one Day Habilitation group that was out in the

Continued on page 28

**CQL provides human service organizations with a framework for quality monitoring and enhancement. The accreditation process involves not only on-site visits but also ongoing reviews of organizational policies and procedures, and ensuring that those policies are actually playing out in agency supports and the lives of people receiving those supports.*

Jane Zemon (cont'd)

Continued from page 27

community. Now we have 26. Residential is changing also, as we seek to provide individuals with a home in more family-like settings where each can have his or her own room and, we are renovating houses so that people can age in place.”

“When I first took on the role of Chief Program Officer, the various agency divisions were working independently, without much collaboration. Now they work as a unit, not in silos. This is an area where there has been significant change.”

Even as the scope of the job grows, so does Ms. Zemon’s family. Daughter Becky earned an MBA degree, married Brendan O’Neil and Ms. Zemon is now the proud grandmother of three-year-old Charlotte. The Zemons’ son Aaron, now 33 years old, is well-cared for at Venture and The Arc Rockland. And their younger son, Jacob, earned a Master’s degree in statistics and works for a consulting firm. He and his wife Miriam live in Philadelphia and are the

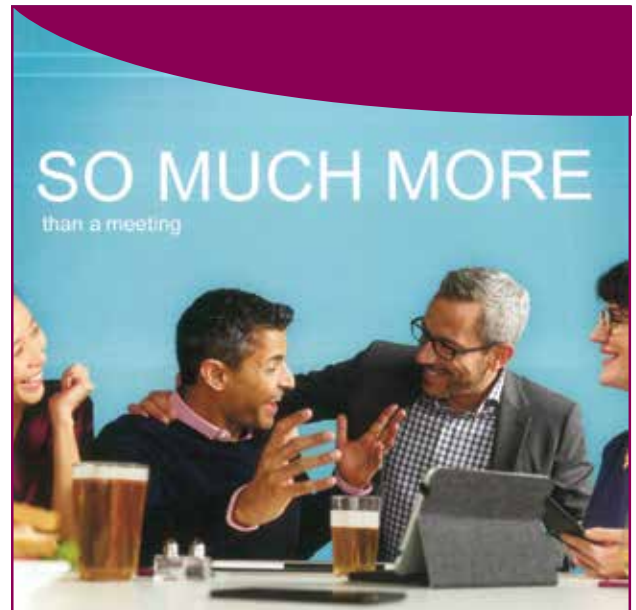
“One of the greatest challenges of the job is trying to maintain quality services under the budgetary constraints we now face, caused in great part by cuts in government spending.”

parents of Anne, who was born in September, 2018.

Life, in fact, is so full that Ms. Zemon has had to give up her hobby of many years—making beaded sterling silver jewelry. “It was getting too time-consuming,” she explains. Instead, she spends more time with family. “My husband and I went to Paris and the Champagne region in the summer so that he could attend a conference there. It was lovely. We went to a little town called Reims: cobblestone streets, historic buildings, good food and, of course, champagne with every meal. It is, after all, the Champagne region,” she says with a smile.

Years ago, she and her husband started a tradition of family vacations on Cape Cod. “We used to go there every year for a week or so with our own kids when they were young. That was a long time ago. But maybe we’ll do that again with the grandchildren,” she muses.

“I grew up in a working class family in Rhode Island. My father was a brakeman on the railroad and my mother worked in a GE factory,” she recalls. “I was one of four siblings. I think I was the first of the extended family who went to college. I am thankful for that. It enabled me to have a wonderful career.” ■



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Ganeene O'Brien

Even as a young child, Ganeene O'Brien loved math. "I wanted to become a math teacher, but my father—a practical man who owned his own business—suggested I become an accountant," she recalls. "Little did he know I would end up working for non-profits—not exactly as lucrative a career as he'd hoped," she adds with a smile. "But I've never regretted it for a moment."

A local Rockland County native through and through, Ms. O'Brien grew up in New City, graduated Clarkstown North High School, and St. Thomas Aquinas College where, with her father's blessing, she majored in accounting.

Thanks to the College's Job Fair, she landed her first job in the Office of the Attorney General of New York State, in

the Medicaid Fraud Unit. "It was a great job and a very interesting one. I investigated Medicaid providers, including not-for-profit agencies, doctors, nurses, hospitals—reviewing their reported costs and billings for accuracy and legitimacy."

She describes a case that is still engrained in her memory. "There was one provider, a General Practitioner, who was performing procedures for the removal of cysts. But he was billing every body part for every patient. It stood out as strange," she says. "When we questioned the billing, he had the nerve to take us to trial and insisted that his assistant did it, even though the notes were in the Doctor's handwriting."

Over the 13 years that she spent in the Attorney General's Office, Ms. O'Brien dealt with several of the not-for-profit agencies providing health care in New York State. "I became familiar with OMRDD and other agencies, and I was impressed with their work," she explains. "So in 2000, when an opportunity for a job at The Arc Rockland presented itself, I took it." She started as Assistant Controller, and was then promoted to Controller. In 2008, she left The Arc and became the Controller at Crystal Run Health Care, a multi-specialty private medical practice in

“We interact with the people we support on a daily basis—either at our headquarters in Congers or at The Arc’s other sites.”

Middletown. “The job involved many, many long hours, and I began to feel that if I was working that hard, I’d prefer to do it in a non-profit organization. I missed that world.”

In 2014 she accepted a position as Director of Finance at Jawonio, a not-for-profit service provider for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Mid-Hudson Region of New York. “Then, in 2016, I got a call from the then Chief Administrative Officer at The Arc Rockland telling me about the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) opportunity here.”

“I always loved The Arc,” she notes. “During the time I had worked here previously, I saw it as a progressive agency that put the individuals first.”

Ms. O’Brien also has some personal reasons for the fact that the agency holds a special place in her heart. “When I worked here the first time around, my children were five and two. The agency was very accommodating to the needs of working parents.”

“I oversee the day-to-day activities of payroll, accounts payable, and accounts receivable,” Ms. O’Brien explains. “My main focus is ensuring the fiscal stability of the agency—meaning, trying to make sure we don’t spend more money than we have coming in.”

That, however, is not as easy as it sounds. “The biggest challenge has been the way funding has shifted over the years. Our revenue has shrunk due to State and Federal funding cutbacks. In fact, we have lost a few million dollars in revenue since 2014. That forces us to be more cost-efficient in everything we do and to look for cost-saving opportunities.

“I consider the Finance Department/Business Office as a support division to The Arc’s various programs,” she continues. “We give them the financial information so that they can make program decisions based on the funding available. Purchasing is part of our department, so we’re constantly looking at the best pricing, encouraging the departments to share resources. Everyone is doing more with less.”

Since taking on the position of CFO, Ms. O’Brien has helped to re-build the Finance/Business Office to meet the new challenges.

“We have added two new staff members: Leon Fishman as Controller and Amelia Sumadchat for the newly created position of Director of Revenue Management. They are a pleasure to work with. With the addition of those key staff members, I feel we have created a team that is cohesive and effective in reaching our goal of being a reliable source of information and support for the agency.”

The Arc Rockland is not alone in facing these fiscal issues. “I sit in on lots of webinars. All the non-profit agencies are in the same boat,” she says. “New York’s Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies Inc. (IAC) holds monthly fiscal meetings to help us all cope with the new fiscal realities.”

Of course, this is not to say that Ms. O’Brien’s life is all work and no play. “I love doing anything outdoors: hiking, biking, going to the beach. My parents retired to Del Ray Beach, Florida. My Mom has since passed away, but my Dad still lives there, on a lake, just six minutes from the beach. When I retire, I’d love to be in an area like that.”

Her other great love is spending time with her family. “Family is very important to me,” she says. “I spend a lot of time with the extended family and hopefully, I’ve instilled the importance of family in my kids.”

The satisfaction she derives from her work is also high on her list of life’s rewards. “Working in this agency has been so satisfying. Our Chief Executive Officer Carmine Marchionda, has a vision for the agency that has brought the Administrative group together, working cohesively with one goal in mind: to improve the lives of those we serve. It is such a positive experience.

“We are also privileged in being able to get to know the individuals in our programs. We interact with the people we support on a daily basis—either at our headquarters in Congers or at The Arc’s other sites.”

Ms. O’Brien’s career choices and enthusiasm for her job seem to be contagious. Her daughter Angela, now 23, holds a Master’s Degree in Special Education and her son Joseph is considering a career in business. Her sister also worked at The Arc, and now works for a local Hospice.

“When I was studying accounting, I always assumed I would work in a CPA firm and continue my career from there. I never saw myself working for a non-profit. But I have never looked back. I love what we do here, and I love being part of it.” ■

Family dinner from left: Anthony Branca, Donna Branca, Julia Branca, Angela O’Brien, Ganeene O’Brien, John Branca, Joe O’Brien, Rocio Lucero and Mark Paul





Deborah Carr

Deborah Carr, The Arc Rockland's Chief Human Resources Officer, has a ready smile. She clearly enjoys her chosen career.

"What I like about Human Resources is making a difference for the people with whom I work," she says. "The goal of our department is to make sure that we support our staff to the best of our ability so that they can best support the people who rely on The Arc for services."

As is the case with many not-for-profit organizations, financial compensation is rarely the impetus for joining the team. "This is especially so for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)," notes Ms. Carr. During the past several years, she and other members of the agency's executive team have successfully led The Arc Rockland in the campaign to

increase state funding for DSPs. Of the agency's 750 employees, 435 are DSPs. "Theirs is a difficult job," says Ms. Carr. "They are the men and women who work directly with the individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. They perform a range of roles as mentors, teachers, guides and friends." According to Ms. Carr, studies have shown that successful Direct Support Professionals possess the qualities of empathy, honesty, humility, extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. "We have to find the right people for these positions—people who have passion for the work and who understand that they are responsible for helping people achieve as much independence as possible."

Ms. Carr relishes both the challenges and the successes of the field. "I always knew I wanted to work in Human Resources," she remarks, and then backtracks a bit recalling that, "When I was in high school I wanted to be an interpreter for the United Nations." (She studied Spanish and French). During her early college years, she considered being a psychologist. "There is a lot of psychology in HR," she notes. "And there is a lot of education involved in helping employees help themselves." Ms. Carr earned a Business Degree in undergraduate school and a Master's Degree in Business

"I really believe in The Arc and the people who work here."

Administration, both from SUNY New Paltz.

The term multi-tasking suits the Chief Human Resources Officer perfectly. Whether she is establishing career ladders for The Arc employees, crafting college reimbursement initiatives, inaugurating a free Master's Degree program for eligible staff members, negotiating the best possible health benefits or planning employee recognition events, Ms. Carr is ever mindful of the needs of employees, the people who receive supports through The Arc and the ever present budgetary constraints.

In commenting on her style of leadership, Ms. Carr says, "When I studied leadership in college, I was drawn to the concept of servant leadership. (The servant-leader shares



Deb and Patrick Carr

power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.) I was inspired by leaders such as Herb Kelleher, the co-founder of Southwest Airlines.

There are not enough hours in the standard work day to accomplish all that Ms. Carr wants to accomplish on behalf of The Arc. She attributes her strong work ethic to her parents, both of whom worked in education—her mother as a Special Education teacher. After a long day at the office, the Chief Human Resources Officer drives 75 minutes to her home in Pine Bush, NY. "I have been offered positions closer to home," she says, "but I really believe in The Arc and the people who work here. The long drive is worth it."

For relaxation, she reads historical fiction and mystery novels, and she enjoys walking and gardening. She has traveled throughout the United States and to Italy and Switzerland. "But my favorite thing to do is to spend time with my family," including her husband Patrick, sons Timothy, Greg and his partner Lauren, and one-year-old grandson Patrick.

Prior to accepting the position at The Arc Rockland, Ms. Carr was Vice President of Human Resources for the Greater Hudson Valley Health System, where she worked for 25 years. When seeking her next professional move

she says, "I was looking for a mission-driven organization with a leadership that cared about its employees." In the four plus years that she has been with The Arc, Ms. Carr has emphasized the importance of "developing our employees and managers. Whenever possible, we want to grow from within. Providing opportunities to advance in their careers keeps employees engaged and motivated."

Ms. Carr makes a point of getting to know each of The Arc's employees. "I want to make sure that each staff person understands how to implement the agency's mission and values in his or her role." She and her team work diligently to "develop a culture of trust," explains Ms. Carr. "Trust is a two-way street. It requires respect and communication among and between colleagues, among staff members and the individuals and families we support and among the employees of The Arc and the broader community.

"Ours is a unique industry. We are people, charged with the responsibility of providing supports and services for other people. Everyone who works here has the potential to exert a positive impact on the lives of others. The Human Resources and Staff Development & Training Departments play an important role in making sure this happens. This is a very rewarding career." ■

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Dr. Dinorah D'Auria

The paths we chart in life are often complicated, surprising, and serendipitous. For Dinorah D'Auria, the path to a career in human services began in the Catholic schools she attended in her native Puerto Rico, where the students were urged to get involved in volunteer work. Her assignments included helping families through the Department of Social Services, working at a local college-sponsored day care program for children with disabilities and at an orphanage. "I loved the interaction with families and thought I would become a family therapist," she says.

PHOTO BY: JOSEPH SCOLLO

Then came the next turn in the road. During her first year as an undergraduate majoring in Psychology at Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, she received a call from a cousin who was a Clinical Psychologist. He told her about a family with a two-year-old son who had autism. The family was bringing in a specialist from California to train a team of college students in the use of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)—a system using the principles of learning and motivation to modify social behaviors, especially in the case of autism. That team would provide around-the-clock ABA services to the child. Would she be interested in joining the team, he asked.

"I had never heard of ABA," she admits, "but it sounded so innovative and exciting."

In fact, she found it so intriguing that she continued with that youngster for the next 16 years—working part-time throughout college, during graduate school at Carlos Albizu University where she earned a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology, and even while working on her post-graduate studies.

It was the experience that cemented her interest in working with individuals with developmental disabilities and led her to work as a consultant to other families and organizations

starting their own ABA programs in Puerto Rico.

When she was a child, Dr. D'Auria's father, a teacher, took a position in Massachusetts and she spent several years in the United States. She had often thought of returning. In 2001, several factors combined to make that move a reality.

That year, while working on her Doctoral degree at Carlos Albizu University she met her husband-to-be, who just happened to be from Rockland County, NY. "He was a naval officer stationed on the Naval Base in Puerto Rico and working as a prosecutor for the Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG). Soon after I met him, he retired from the Navy and returned to Rockland County."

Another impetus for her move to the United States was her interest in working with families of children with autism. In 2002, she was invited to work for the Autism Partnership in Los Angeles, and in 2004 was accepted for an internship at Trinitas Regional Medical Center in Elizabeth, NJ, which has one of the few inpatient psychiatric units in the tri-state area for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"It was a hectic period for me," she says. "My internship involved working in virtually every department—which was one of the best things that could have happened to me as it gave me broad exposure to all aspects of the mental health field. But I was also working on my dissertation and flying back and forth to Puerto Rico to meet with advisors."

After just one year of internship, she was hired by the hospital to direct their Childhood Partial Hospitalization Program for children with emotional and psychiatric needs.

"We're piloting the first telemedicine program in one of our residences with the goal of reducing Emergency Room visits and hospital admissions."

"I went straight from being an intern, to being a Director. It was quite a leap," she notes. Over the next five years, she helped dramatically increase the number of participants in the program and build a strong team of clinicians and mental health workers.

In 2010, married and with her first child, Dr. D'Auria opened her own practice and continued to work as a clinician in a variety of settings. For two years, she worked as Vice President of Clinical Services at Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey, headquartered in Livingston.

So how did she end up at The Arc? "I had always had my eye on The Arc Rockland because of a personal tie: my husband's cousin receives services here. Also, The Arc has a national reputation."

Hearing that The Arc Rockland was considering establishing a new position, Director of Clinical and Family Services (now combined under the title of Chief Clinical Officer), she applied and began working here in 2015.

Dr. D'Auria's responsibilities are numerous. She supervises the Behavior Specialists—psychological counselors who help individuals whose disabilities may interfere with learning or social functions. "We have four Behavior Specialists within adult services and a Director of Behavioral Supports who reports directly to me," she explains. Her ABA background is especially relevant at The Arc, as "ABA is incorporated into all of our behavioral support services," she explains.

She also supervises services provided by the Nursing Department, Arc HealthResources (including on-site and satellite programs) and serves as liaison for community-related health services such as hospitals, clinics, pharmacies and insurance companies.

When she first started at The Arc Rockland, Dr. D'Auria supervised the Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSCs). Recently, though, the State mandated that Service Coordination be moved to independent Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs). However, Dr. D'Auria still acts as a liaison between The Arc and the CCOs. In addition, she supervises all Family Services, which includes any services (such as such as sibling support programs, family education, guardianship training and self-advocacy) that impact the families of the people supported by The Arc.

Though much of her day is spent meeting with staff members, helping in the planning and delivery

Continued on page 36

Dinorah and Peter D'Auria with their children, Michael and Josie



Dr. Dinorah D'Auria (cont'd)

Continued from page 35

of the services she supervises, Dr. D'Auria also has the opportunity to get directly involved with individuals and their families, especially when there are complex needs. "Being able to be very hands-on is one of the greatest rewards of this position," she says.

As full as her days at The Arc can be, Dr. D'Auria always finds time for her family and her personal loves. Her face lights up as she talks of her husband Peter, a Trial Attorney for the Department of Justice, United States Trustee Program. And a framed photo of her daughter Josefina (Josie), age 9, and her son Michael, age 5, sits proudly on her desk.

"We're a very out-doorsy family," she says. "My daughter loves horseback riding, which is something I used to do as a kid. We like going to the beach. And I love to cook. I wish I had more time to do it, but when I can, I cook a lot of Puerto Rican dishes.

She travels back to Puerto Rico as often as possible to visit family and friends. Last year's devastating storm hit the island hard and many of her relatives were affected. "I still can't believe that my aunt was without power for more than seven months," she says. "It was traumatizing to be here,

seeing what happened, and not be able to go there and help."

Just as she sees recovery coming gradually to the island, she also sees improvements and expansion coming to The Arc.

"We're planning to expand the agency's healthcare services, adding new programs for families and for children," she explains. "We're also piloting the first telemedicine program in one of our residences with the goal of reducing Emergency Room visits and hospital admissions, thus reducing costs and the individuals' potential exposure to contagious illnesses. In addition, we're unifying and expanding behavioral supports across all adult services programs."

"The greatest challenge and the most rewarding aspects of the job are insuring the happiness and well-being of the people we support," she adds. "Our jobs are very complicated. We have to navigate shrinking resources, balance differing thoughts and opinions about the way to help individuals and deal with the emotional issues and the impact of disabilities on families and individuals. But when our programs and services work, and we're most blessed that they usually do work, that's the best reward." ■



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William Marlowe

“There was something about this position that pulled me in,” says Bill Marlowe, Chief Administrative Officer for The Arc Rockland.

Mr. Marlowe joined the agency’s executive team in June of 2018. He plays a significant role in a range of initiatives such as The Arc’s business enterprises: Strawtown Jewelry in New City and Glaze Pottery & Art Studio in Orangeburg; The Arc’s marketing, fundraising and public affairs activities; The Information Technology department; agency security issues; and real estate projects including the construction and purchase of homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. “Mine is a bit of a catch-all position, and I like that,” he says. “I like bringing fresh eyes to some of the projects.”

Prior to joining The Arc, Mr. Marlowe was Hospital Administrator for the Department of Surgical Services at St. Joseph’s University Medical Center in Paterson, New Jersey. But, his employment career began years earlier.

“I’ve been working since age 14,” he says. “I started out as a bus boy in a kosher style deli/restaurant. I worked there

every weekend for nine years throughout high school and college.” The young Mr. Marlowe moved up in the ranks, becoming a food runner, a cashier and a waiter. “By the time I left the job after graduating from college, I was General Manager.”

Reared primarily by a single mother, Mr. Marlowe says he learned about the value of money by watching his mom. “I bought my first car in cash, and I purchased my first house when I was 23.” That house and several others were investment properties. “I started watching House Hunters on HGTV when I was 16,” he explains.

A graduate of the University of Maryland, Mr. Marlowe earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Financial Economics and landed a position with the law firm of Greenberg Traugott in Tysons Corner, Virginia. “One weekend, I visited my friend who was living in Jacksonville, Florida. The property next door was for sale, and I decided that it would be a good investment property as it had a main house and a carriage house.” He kept it for nine years and rented it to a series of tenants. “When I sold it, I bought another house, and then another.”

In 2011, Mr. Marlowe graduated from The University of North Florida with a Master’s Degree in Health Administration. “My mother is a nurse. I guess I always thought I would go into the health care field.”

**“What we do at The Arc has meaning—
a larger purpose because it has a direct and
immediate effect on people.”**

Health care, however is just one of his passions. At age 27, while employed at St. Joseph’s University Medical Center, he joined the United States Air Force Reserve. Several years prior, “When I was maybe 23 or 24, I was doing the tourist thing—visiting Arlington National Cemetery,” he recalls. “I saw headstones of people who were 17 or 18 years old and I thought, ‘Here is a 17-year-old who died in World War II or Iraq or Afghanistan.’ I understood that I had had every opportunity anyone could ask for. I had never had to worry about a roof over my head or food on the table. I realized that I had never given back.”

He considered joining the Navy, but when an Air Force recruiter called, he listened. “Six months later, I was raising my right hand.” Today, Mr. Marlowe is a Medical Service Corps Officer in the United States Air Force Reserve. As a reservist, “You can be activated as needed,” he explains. Such was the case when, in January of 2017, he was sent to Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar where he served as an Aeromedical Evacuation Operations officer. “We evacuated troops from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Depending upon their injuries, they were sent back to the United States or to Germany for treatment.” Mr. Marlowe is obligated to serve one weekend a month and

an additional two weeks during the year, the latter of which he accomplishes on weekends. “It’s exhausting,” he says, but I am

happy to serve.” Although he is not required to do so, he hopes to make a 20-year commitment to the armed services.

In the little time he finds for recreation, Mr. Marlowe enjoys swimming. “I competed when I was in high school, I participated on an exhibition team in college, and I was a swim coach for three summers.”

He says watching movies is his “ultimate relaxation. I don’t ask for a lot out of movies, I just want to be entertained. I love all types of food—Indian food is my favorite—the spicier, the better. And, I love to travel.” He has visited sites throughout the United States—including stops in Iowa to visit his twin brother, his sister-in-law and their children. On an international scope, he has spent time in Thailand, Cambodia, Dubai, France, Italy, Monaco, Croatia,

Montenegro, Greece and England. “Life is short,” he states, “and there are so many things to see.”

Mr. Marlowe finds his position with The Arc to be particularly meaningful. “In some ways, I feel that I have come full circle. I volunteered for the Arc of Montgomery County, Maryland when I was in high school. What we do at The Arc has meaning—a larger purpose because it has a direct and immediate effect on people. I knew from the first interview that I would like this place. I like the connection with individuals. I like knowing that what I do makes a difference.” ■




William Marlowe with his mother Karen

In Doha, Qatar



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Amanda Rick

“There is usually some personal experience that brings people into the field of human services,” notes Amanda Rick.

“That certainly is true in my case.” For Ms. Rick, originally of Binghamton, NY, the trigger was seeing her grandfather spend his last years in a nursing home that she describes as “mismanaged and short on staff.”

“I was very close to my grandfather, and seeing what he went through affected me deeply,” she explains. “I made up my mind to choose a career that would make a difference in people’s lives, that would enable me to see the bigger picture and help provide services in a more effective and humanistic way.”

The first step she took to achieve that goal was attending the State University of New York in Oswego, “where the wind is so strong on some days that the school allows students to

skip classes if they are under a certain weight, and where typical snowfalls bury the cars,” she notes with the wry humor of someone used to challenges.

While at school, majoring in Human Development and Psychology, she interned at an assisted living facility. “It was so well run that I realized that, unlike the facility where my grandfather had been, it is possible for a health-related agency to operate effectively.”

She subsequently landed a position in Binghamton with Community Options, a national non-profit organization supporting people with disabilities. In a remarkable career trajectory, she started out as a temp, and over the course of 12 years, worked her way up to the position of Executive Director.

“I found my calling,” she says simply.

Approximately 18 months ago, her significant other of 17 years accepted a job offer in New York City, leaving her in a quandary. “I loved my job in Binghamton and loved the individuals as well as staff there. But being apart from him was difficult.”

Then opportunity knocked. “I was recruited for a newly-created position as Chief Compliance Officer and Managing Director of Quality Services at The Arc Rockland. It meant

“Our past is what makes us who we are, and I am grateful for everything in my life.”

I could move to the New York City area.”

As Chief Compliance Officer, her job is to oversee and monitor the Corporate Compliance program at The Arc Rockland. “A Corporate Compliance program is designed to prevent and detect breaches of any laws, regulations, standards or codes which businesses must comply with, as well as detect fraud, waste and abuse or other violations of the law,” she explains. “It is a broad umbrella to ensure compliance across our agency.

“I also oversee preparations for our continued accreditation by the internationally-recognized Council on Quality Control and Leadership (CQL). The complex accreditation process ensures that we meet the CQL standards of excellence established for human services agencies,” she adds.

When wearing her second hat, as Managing Director of Quality Services, Ms. Rick works with virtually all of The Arc’s programs—Residential, Day Habilitation, Prime Time for Kids and Arc HealthResources—to make certain that the services are indeed of high quality. “I have been visiting The Arc residences, and meeting with some of the individuals and staff members in our various departments. I want to provide whatever supports they need to strengthen existing programs and create new systems where necessary,” Ms. Rick explains.

“My experience as an Executive Director was with an agency that provides many of the same programs and supports to a little over 500 individuals with disabilities. I knew I had to come into this position with open eyes and learn the way things are done here,” she notes. “Everyone has been so helpful. I was able to hit the ground running and just join the team. The Arc is truly incredible.”

In addition to the challenges of a new job, Ms. Rick is still dealing with the move from Binghamton. “I’ve been handling the sale of the house, moving, and adjusting to a new community. We have been trying to take short trips every weekend to explore the area.”

Ms. Rick also has another passion: event planning. “I always like to have one in the works. Right now I’m planning my grandmother’s surprise 85th birthday party,” she says. “I think the best event I ever held was an employee appreciation dinner in 2017 at my previous job. Staff knew what they wanted from the event, and I managed to put it all together,

including decorations, a photo booth, a video interviewing individuals about their favorite

staff members, awards, a special appreciation song performed by the managers, which was a parody of a Taylor Swift tune. It was a wonderful night and a great deal of team work went into putting it together.”

She credits her entrepreneurial spirit to her grandfather. “Our past is what makes us who we are, and I am grateful for everything in my life,” she explains. “My grandfather had his own automotive business and I used to help him out. Everyone in Binghamton knew him. He remains my hero even though he passed away quite a while ago. Thanks to his influence, I was the first in my family to graduate college, and I have him to thank for this wonderful career.”

Ms. Rick with her nephew Gage



Ms. Rick says that she likes reading inspirational books. But it is clear that her real inspiration is seeing the results of her work in the smiles of those she has helped over the years.

On a shelf in Ms. Rick’s office is a photo of the individuals in the first group home she established in her previous job, as well as

artwork that some of the individuals gave her before she left. “It makes me feel at home,” she says. ■

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Jessica Pizzutello

Jessica Pizzutello has a personal connection to The Arc Rockland. It's where she met her husband, Paul Pizzutello. That was 17 years ago. It would be tempting to conclude that he was the reason she stayed on here. But, Mr. Pizzutello left The Arc in 2008 to become a school administrator. Ms. Pizzutello remained, receiving a series of promotions over the years.

Growing up in Westchester, she chose to enter the field of human services, "because I wanted a career that would enable me to impact others in a positive way," she says.

She enrolled in Fordham University, majoring in Psychology and Sociology. Upon receiving her BA degree in 2001, she took a job at The Arc Rockland ("just one month before 9/11," she notes). "I didn't know specifically what I wanted to do career-wise, but I chose to get some human

services experience to help me decide." She began as a Direct Support Professional (DSP), working with individuals in what was then known as a Sheltered Workshop at The Arc headquarters in Congers. Through a series of contracts with area companies, the Workshop staff provided individuals with supervision, support and training as they filled, sorted, packaged, sealed and labeled products for businesses. The Workshop closed at the end of 2016 following a mandate by the NY State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) designed to ensure full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in the broader community.

While employed full time as a DSP, Ms. Pizzutello earned a Master's Degree in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College in NY. "At the time, I was interested in how Human Services professionals could work more collaboratively and effectively with law enforcement personnel to support people with disabilities in the community," she continues. But she chose instead to stay with The Arc. "The staff here is dedicated and compassionate. It feels like a family. As an agency, we take everything to the highest standard, expecting the best from people, always looking at new and innovative ways to achieve our goals. It's something you don't always

see in the workplace.”

After two years as a DSP, Ms. Pizzutello was promoted to Team Leader in the Day Habilitation department. “That was in 2003, when The Arc opened its Franklin Square location in Pearl River. The Franklin Square program was designed to help young people with developmental disabilities transition from high school to the adult world by providing training in employment skills and independent living,” she explains. “I was a front-line supervisor and the main contact with the families and the individuals’ care teams.”

Ms. Pizzutello went on to be named Assistant Director for Day Habilitation, then Director, Senior Director and now, Managing Director of Community Services.

“When I first came to this department, Franklin Square and Hemlock Drive were the only two Day Services sites. Now we have seven program locations, which is amazing. Four of those have opened in the last 2 years,” she says.

“In fact, the Community Services Department is currently going through yet another expansion. Community Habilitation services are being expanded and offered as an

“The ongoing changes in this field mean that we constantly have to adapt and evolve, that’s a good thing, but there is a lot of work involved. We have recently brought all adult day services under the umbrella of the Community Services Department.”

alternative to traditional day services. This service will allow us to provide highly individualized services to people one-to-one, both in a person’s home and in the community. Instead of having the individual come to one of The Arc’s facilities for a group program, we can have a staff person go to the home, help the individual get ready in the morning, then maybe help him or her get to work, the gym, or any activity of their own choosing.”

“The ongoing changes in this field mean that we constantly have to adapt and evolve,” she adds. “That’s a good thing, but there is a lot of work involved. We have recently brought all adult day services under the umbrella of the Community Services Department. This includes Day Habilitation Services, Employment Services (providing job training, placement and supervision) and Community Habilitation (the individualized program described above.) This will enable the day services programs to work together more collaboratively and offer a wide variety of services that are seamless to the



Jessica and Paul Pizzutello with daughters Ruby, Grace and Mia

individuals supported. The focus on smaller groups and community-based hubs and activities requires even higher staffing levels. The people who work here are wonderful. We just need more of them. That, too, presents quite a challenge.”

Ms. Pizzutello’s department isn’t the only thing that has expanded over the years. So too has her family. She and husband Paul are parents of three daughters, an 11-year-old and 8-year-old twins. “Thinking about it, maybe one of my biggest accomplishments was continuing to come to work every day until just one week before the twins were born,” she jokes.

“We try to spend most of our free time with our kids,” she says. “We love to take them on family adventures and enjoy traveling together. We also love outdoor activities and often go hiking, skiing, snow-shoeing, swimming and biking.”

The family has three dogs—two of which are rescues. “If I had more time, I’d like to be more involved in animal rescue and foster dogs in need of a home.”

Ms. Pizzutello has had the pleasure of seeing some of her personal interests become incorporated into her professional life. “Many of the individuals who receive supports through The Arc volunteer with animal rescue organizations. Our primary goal is to have individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities become part of the greater community, where they can explore interests, pursue dreams and experience life. I would love to be able to provide more people with the opportunity to participate in local programs, to spend their days immersed in local life, learning, volunteering and developing new skills. We have created a comprehensive network of community-based experiences. This enables us to match people with their areas of interest and build strong connections between individuals and their fellow citizenry. When a person is known by name to the people in his or her neighborhood, it creates a more meaningful experience. This is my goal for everyone supported by The Arc.” ■



Rachel Shemesh

Rachel Shemesh has lived on three continents, served in the Israeli army, worked at a foreign embassy, run a private practice in clinical psychology and served as Executive Director of a non-profit organization—all prior to joining The Arc Rockland. Her eclectic background has enabled her to develop a variety of skills that all come into play in her role as Managing Director of Residential Services.

Ms. Shemesh was born in Jerusalem, Israel. “My mother was a social worker, and from her I learned about compassion and the importance of helping others,” she explains. “As a child, I got used to seeing people coming in and out of the house, as my mother would help them in all sorts of ways. But she did it in total confidence. She never drew attention to what she did. She probably modelled her own behavior on that of her father, who was a famous Rabbi.”

Growing up in Israel in the early stages of the country’s existence also instilled certain values. “People were very idealistic then, working hard to establish the country. My Dad was a builder,” she notes. “I have three brothers, and as the only girl, you’d think I would have been spoiled. But there was no time for spoiling a child. People were focused on a goal and everyone felt part of a team. It was a very happy childhood. Even serving in the army—in Israel, most young people join the army right after high school—was a good experience. That’s where we made friendships that would last a lifetime.”

After the army, Ms. Shemesh attended the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. But, before she could complete her degree, her husband, Jacob, was sent by his company to Europe to work as a medical equipment specialist in nuclear medicine. The last of his postings was in Paris, where Ms. Shemesh attended the Alliance Francaise and worked at the Israeli Embassy.

From there, they moved to Buffalo, NY, where Ms. Shemesh was able to earn her Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology and Communications. That was followed by a move to Chicago, where she earned a Master’s Degree in Clinical Psychology from Roosevelt University.

Their last move, about 26 years ago, landed them in

“A pilot program is already underway in which we will be creating categories of homes based on medical and behavioral needs and degree of independence of the residents.”

Oradell, New Jersey. “I spent the first few years in private practice as a clinical psychologist,” she says. “Then I took a full-time job at New Concepts for Living, a New Jersey agency serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.” She had never worked with people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities before, yet she stayed at the New Jersey agency for 20 years, starting out as a behavior specialist, then staff psychologist, and ultimately, after several promotions was named Executive Director, a post she held for seven years.

Ms. Shemesh left that agency three years ago, thinking she would pick up on her private clinical psychology practice, seeing patients on a part-time basis. She is a member of the American Counseling Association, the National Association of Cognitive Behavioral Therapists and the American

Psychological Association. “But about a year later, I kind of stumbled over this opportunity at The Arc Rockland,” she says. “A friend told me about an opening

here. I contacted the agency and met with the executive team. We talked about the need for new residential programs and for opening new homes. I had opened four new homes for New Concepts, so that was the trigger for me to take this job.”

The position, which involves overseeing 300 staffers and more than 30 residences, “is so exciting and challenging,” she says. For example, the State recently awarded The Arc the opportunity to develop a Transitional Apartments Initiative. The goal is to have individuals, over the course of two years, acquire skills of independent living that will enable them to move into a residence within the community with less than 24-hour-a-day supervision. Once a group of four individuals completes their transition, the next group will begin the program.

“Another challenge we are facing is the restructuring of our residential department,” Ms. Shemesh continues. “A pilot program is already underway in which we have created categories of homes based on the medical and behavioral needs and degree of independence of the residents. By having these groupings, we can share resources, staff and training and have our management staff supervise several homes for greater efficiency and focus.”

Despite the challenges (or perhaps because of them), Ms. Shemesh has found ways to unwind. Family is one of them. She and her husband have a son and a daughter and five grandchildren ranging in age from 6 months to 7 years. They also have several hobbies. “We love classical music. We have a music room with special audio equipment and go to concerts and the opera. I also really like gardening and planting. It’s very therapeutic for me.”

Another source of pleasure is the teamwork she has experienced here at The Arc. “I could have worked for other agencies that serve the same population, but the team here is amazing. I learn from the people here every single day,” she notes. “I’ve also learned about the importance of educating people in the community regarding the rights and abilities of those we serve. These individuals can benefit so much from receiving proper supports and a sense of personal empowerment. It is so gratifying to see what they can achieve. This job is about making a difference in people’s lives, and it makes me look forward to coming to work every single day.” ■



Rachel Shemesh with mechanical gramophone in Jerusalem



David Saulpaugh

David Saulpaugh with Isabella Caramanica

PHOTO BY JOSEPH SCOLLO

One recent afternoon, David Saulpaugh, The Arc Rockland's Director of

Children's Services, received a phone call from his son Michael. "He was scheduled to play bass that evening with a group performing locally, but their keyboard player had just backed out. Michael wanted to know if I would fill in. I hadn't played a professional job since 1997, but I said okay.

We played music of the sixties and seventies. The lead singer was great, he sounded like Jay Black of Jay and The Americans. The drummer was also a fill in, but the band sounded as though we had been together for years."

A weekend musician for 25 years, Mr. Saulpaugh performed at weddings, in nightclubs and at resorts throughout the Catskills. Before moving to an apartment in Fairlawn, New Jersey, the Saulpaughs always had a piano in their home. "Our basement was set up like a band, and we would go down there and play. Both Michael and his brother Stephen are musicians. My wife Marie—we celebrated our

34th anniversary in 2018—can sing, and all of my uncles were musical."

Music is one of Mr.

Saulpaugh's interests. "I am also an avid sports fan. I like both the Mets and the Yankees ... always a New York team," he says. "When they're playing against each other, I just enjoy the game."

The Director of Children's Services sees a link between music, baseball and education. "In each situation, success depends upon teamwork and communication."

Prior to accepting a position as head of The Arc's Prime Time for Kids Early Learning Center in 2015, Mr. Saulpaugh spent 34 years with the New York State Public Education system where he held a variety of positions. "I was a Special Education teacher, Dean of Students and an Assistant Principal in the Saugerties and Marlboro school systems. I've worked in elementary, middle and high school levels. Prime Time is my first stint with preschoolers. It's nice to be involved with the little ones at the beginning of their educational careers."

Mr. Saulpaugh holds an Associate's Degree in the Arts from Ulster County Community College; a Bachelor



"No two people are the same—each of us has strengths and weaknesses."

of Science Degree in Education from SUNY, Geneseo; a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology from The College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY, and a certificate of advanced study in Educational Administration and Supervision from SUNY, New Paltz.

Prime Time for Kids Early Learning Center provides center-based Early Intervention classes to eligible children ages birth to three and preschool classes to children with and without developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders, to youngsters ages three to five.

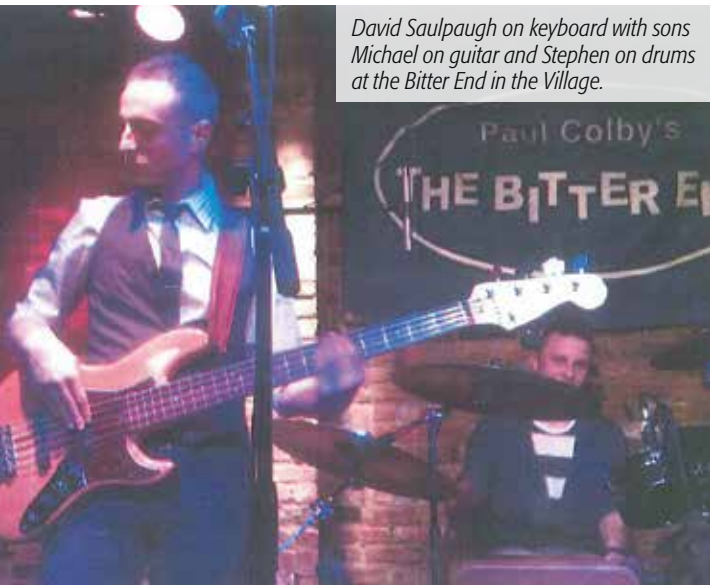
"All children benefit from early education, but for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities or delays, the younger they begin to receive services and supports, the better," states Mr. Saulpaugh. "No two people are the same—each of us has strengths and weaknesses. Preschool is the ideal place to begin interacting, socializing, relying on and learning from and with children of all abilities. These are some of life's lessons we teach at Prime Time."

Mr. Saulpaugh says the feedback he receives from parents is positive. "They love our school and the services we provide. They often tell me that they are grateful for the quality of our professional staff."

Regular parent-teacher conferences take place throughout the year, but daily contact occurs between the teachers and families when parents drop off or pick up their children, through phone calls or written communication.

With a student population of 110, approximately 30 percent are children of Spanish speaking or bilingual families. Administrative Assistant Mariluz Hernandez serves as a translator when necessary.

Says Mr. Saulpaugh, "Our school is growing by leaps and bounds. We added two new classrooms in September of 2018. The students have the benefit of learning from a truly caring and competent staff. And, the educators learn from the students every day. In my opinion, Prime Time is a really special place." ■



David Saulpaugh on keyboard with sons Michael on guitar and Stephen on drums at the Bitter End in the Village.



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Dr. Andrea Ritchin

Sometimes Andrea Ritchin sings to her patients. Sometimes she holds a person's hand. On occasion, she removes her white coat if that seems to be causing anxiety. When examining someone, Dr. Ritchin may crouch or sit to meet the person at eye level. "I take my cue from the individual," she says. "I try as best I can to understand who the person is, and I work around whatever vibe I'm getting. I give people space and time."

Dr. Ritchin is Medical Director of Arc HealthResources of Rockland and The Arc Rockland. She joined the staff in September of 2018. "I am pleased to be part of The Arc team," she says. "I believe the best way to care for a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities is to partner

with the individual, her or his family and my professional colleagues. All of us at The Arc work together, helping the patient achieve wellbeing."

PHOTO BY: JOSEPH SCOLLO

The combination of professionalism and compassion is essential to Dr. Ritchin's practice. "I went to medical school specifically to be a family medicine doctor," she notes. "Caring for people as members of their families feels to me like a more human way to be a physician."

While the broader society has begun to embrace the concept of inclusion of individuals with special needs, Dr. Ritchin notes that this is not necessarily so among medical practitioners. Through her work with The Arc, she hopes to raise awareness of the specific needs of people with disabilities. "A lot of my medical colleagues are uncertain about how to approach an individual who has special needs," she states. Dr. Ritchin believes that, for the most part, "These doctors' tension is simply an absence of experience and exposure." With Arc HealthResources, she hopes to institute a rotation for medical students and nurse practitioners, "to give them some experience in a supportive, professional medical office," she says.

Expanding horizons—even changing direction mid-course—is familiar territory for Dr. Ritchin. "Medicine is my

second career,” she explains. “Before becoming a physician, I was a professional dancer for 12 years.” Trained in classical ballet, Dr. Ritchin performed nationally and internationally with modern dance groups. “I did a lot of touring. It was exhilarating, yet exhausting.”

When choosing a new career path, Dr. Ritchin originally planned to become a physical therapist. “I went back to school, but I didn’t have any of the requisite sciences. I had majored in English and dance as an undergraduate. Based upon a growing interest in healthcare and encouragement from family and friends, she ultimately determined that “medicine would be a better fit.”

Dr. Ritchin earned her medical degree from Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai. She completed training in family medicine at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx where, for nearly 20 years, she provided primary care to a diverse community. Among her patients were many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Before joining The Arc Rockland, Dr. Ritchin worked with Opengate, a

“Caring for people as members of their families feels to me like a more human way to be a physician.”

private agency providing residential and day services to adults with disabilities in northern Westchester County.


To maintain good health, Dr. Ritchin advocates a balance between body and mind. Fitness is a priority. “I take Zumba classes or swim laps for exercise multiple days a week,” she says. “I also enjoy reading, both fiction and nonfiction. I’m very active in my progressive synagogue, and two years ago, I started taking viola lessons.”

Dr. Ritchin and her husband live in White Plains, NY. They are the parents of two daughters. “Our older daughter advocates for immigration reform with a Washington, DC group. Our younger daughter is a junior in college.”

As a new member of The Arc Rockland staff, Dr. Ritchin acknowledges the scope of work ahead. “There are a lot of things for me to learn,” she says. “New people to meet, new patients, new responsibilities—even a new electronic medical records system.” She looks forward to the challenges. For Dr. Ritchin, trying something new is a way of life. ■




Dr. Ritchin in her garden



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Leadership Academy

On a sunny Thursday morning in September, the first of four groups of 25 people sat in a classroom at the Arc Rockland's Prime Time site for the kick-off session of the agency's Leadership Academy.

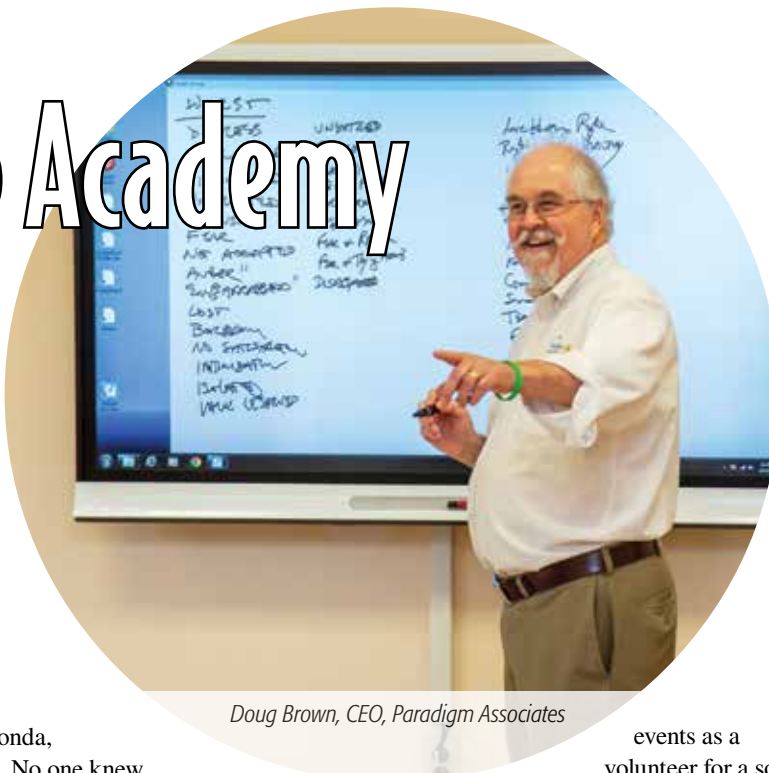
It was an unusual group of students—encompassing leaders from all levels of the organization, including CEO Carmine Marchionda, program directors, managers and team leaders. No one knew exactly what to expect. But they all knew why they were there: to improve their leadership abilities.

Creating Leaders

“Good leadership is the key to a well-functioning organization,” explains Mr. Marchionda. “We believe that leaders can't rely only on past experience or innate talent. Leadership is an ongoing learning experience. That is why we included Leadership Development as an initiative in our Strategic Plan. And that is the reason for launching the Leadership Academy. It is a major commitment to move 100 people, representing a variety of ranks and departments, through an intensive seven-week program focused on leadership skills and team building.”

The sessions are facilitated by Doug Brown, founder and CEO of Paradigm Associates, a consulting firm based in Cranford, NJ. Mr. Brown, who has built an international reputation for his work on strategic planning and leadership development issues, has worked with The Arc before, helping to formulate the Strategic Plan that started the ball rolling on this training process.

Mr. Brown begins the session by having each individual answer a series of questions: name and position within the organization, three greatest personal and professional accomplishments, hobbies and interests. This seemingly standard group exercise leads to surprising results. People who may have known each other for years suddenly learn to see each other in a different light. One tells of having skated with Disney on Ice, another runs charitable fundraising



Doug Brown, CEO, Paradigm Associates

events as a volunteer for a social organization; yet another has a recording company, several are first generation immigrants, or the first in their family to obtain a college degree.

“The reason for these introductions,” Mr. Brown explains, “is that it is hard to form a cohesive team with people you don't know. It's hard to trust people you don't know. But teamwork is essential to a well-run organization. Moreover, most organizations don't really tap into all the knowledge that employees can bring to the table because they don't know about these people's prior lives, or their experiences outside the office.”

Theresa Dos Santos, Assistant Director, Supported Employment Services (SEMP); Kathy Canter, Senior Director, Employment Services; Susan Roth, Assistant Director, Day Habilitation; Lodeen Wellington, Residence Manager; Shirley Thankachan, Director, Community Habilitation Services; Kristi Ramos, Quality Outcomes Coordinator; Merrilou Thiesmeier, Assistant Controller, Affiliate Companies; Caryl Reeves, Accounts Payable Manager



The Leadership Academy was designed specifically for The Arc Rockland. “Our executive team discussed what we saw as important in terms of leadership skills and we came up with three core leadership competencies,” explains Deborah Carr, Chief Human Resources Officer at The Arc. “Those three leadership skills are: Leading the Organization, Leading Others and Self-Management. The core competencies were then divided into sub-topics, many of which are covered in the Leadership Academy sessions.”

The 100 participants in the Academy attend seven 3.25-hour sessions spread over 11 weeks. There are four cohorts of 25 participants each: a morning group and an afternoon group in the fall, and a morning and afternoon group in the winter.

As the kick-off session continues, Mr. Brown touches on some key areas of leadership, including thinking outside the box, setting realistic goals, and the importance of a positive attitude. Participants learn that each session will deal with one or two set topics and that in some of the sessions they are broken down into smaller groups of three or four to tackle a specific challenge facing the agency, as it relates to the topic of the day. For example, they may take on the challenge of how to reduce employee overtime, or how to improve employee recruitment.

Encouraging Ideas

“With managers from all tiers and areas of the organization participating, there is a cross pollination of ideas and a chance to see issues through different perspectives,” Mr. Brown explains. “There is also an opportunity for upper management to really hear the concerns of other managers. Of course, that means everyone has to be willing to say



Evelyn Lynch, Payroll Manager; Tarana Badío, Residence Manager

what’s really on their minds. Part of my job is to act as referee and to provide a safe environment for that kind of interaction to take place.”

The Leadership Academy is a rigorous program, and a considerable amount of homework is required. “Participants receive online recordings and printed materials that they are expected to read or listen to,” notes Mr. Brown. “They are given assignments, such as setting personal and professional goals. Learning to set goals within the boundaries of what can actually be achieved, and foreseeing obstacles along the way, is an essential part of leadership. We can measure the success of this learning process by having them report on whether they were able to do what they set out to do.”

Gaining Skills

At the end of the kick-off session, Mr. Brown asks participants what they hope to get out of the process. “Learn to balance my personal and professional life,” many say. “Find a new way to look at things, gain new tools and new ideas to move forward, acquire better time management and organizational skills,” are among the other answers. Some admit to skepticism about the program. “I’ll have to wait and see,” says one. Others are enthusiastic.

“I really enjoyed the session,” states Melissa Tarantino, Assistant Director of Day Habilitation at the Congers site. “A lot of what Mr. Brown said is very applicable to my situation and the presentation is engaging. Even though we all think we can be great leaders in some capacity, he made us aware of areas in which we can improve.”

Diana Zernone receives services from The Arc and participates in the Board of Directors’ Joint Work Group on Programs and Services. As such, she is particularly well suited to comment on the potential benefits of the Leadership Academy. “It is helpful to me and others at The Arc to have well-trained staff,” she says. “As leaders, they should be knowledgeable and respectful.” ■



PHOTOS BY: JOSEPH SCULLO

Master's Class



Ed Del Gaizo, PhD, in jacket, with students

PHOTO BY: JOSEPH SCOLLO

Fifteen employees are working towards Master's Degrees in Liberal Studies through Stony Brook University. The 2.5 year program is fully subsidized by The Arc Rockland. Classes take place weekly at one of the agency's sites with additional coursework online. The coursework includes a concentration in Human Services with some classes geared specifically to The Arc. Among participants' eligibility requirements is a two-year post- degree employment agreement with The Arc Rockland.

"I definitely feel that the agency has invested in us as employees," says Residence Manager Andrea Remy. "I have been with The Arc for 13 years. Knowing that the agency cares about us and wants us to grow along with it is an incentive."

Opportunity Knocks

Ms. Remy holds an undergraduate degree in Liberal Arts with a focus on Psychology from the College of New Rochelle. "I had thought about pursuing a Master's Degree before, but financially, I couldn't afford it. I have a 21-year-old daughter who is in college. It was the expense that kept me back," she says. "This opportunity will allow me to enhance my career as a leader. It will give me the tools I need to be more productive and it will open my mind to see what is going on in the field."

Erica Amoroso, Community Specialist, says the initial coursework has already proven valuable on the job "I took the opportunity to incorporate what I am learning in the classroom and apply it to my lesson plans at work. In a way,

the individuals I work with are learning alongside me and are just as interested and supportive.

They are my biggest fans."

Ms. Amoroso graduated from Rider University with degrees in Public Relations and Psychology. "What drew me to this field was the human aspect of the job," she says. "The opportunity came at a perfect time, when I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do next. My older sister has Down syndrome, so aside from my being relatively new to the field professionally, I have had a lifetime of experience. It is a feeling of excitement, fulfilment and inspiration to be in a learning environment with people of different ages, with different academic degrees, working in different positions—they offer diversity through experience. I believe the objective of this course is not only to teach us how to lead, but more importantly how to be led."

On the Job

Ed Del Gaizo, PhD, Adjunct Professor at Stony Brook University, teaches a course entitled Professional Leadership in Action. The focus, he explains, is to introduce students to various types of professional leadership, to give practical skills. This course in particular teaches students how to apply that to various aspects of their work. "When people are employed full time, I think they bring part of what they have learned at work into the classroom and part of what they learn in the classroom to work.

What The Arc Rockland is doing is really great. It helps the organization as well as the individual. In today's environment, having a Master's Degree really gives you an advantage." ■

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Celebrating 65 Years



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- JANUARY 11 **A Taste of the Taste** • Guilios, 154 Washington St., Tappan, NY
18 **Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration** • The Arc Rockland, 25 Hemlock Drive, Congers, NY
-
- FEBRUARY 8 **Boogie Night** • Strawtown Jewelry, 40 S. Main St., New City, NY
21 **A Taste of the Taste** • Wasabi, 110 Main St., Nyack, NY
-
- MARCH 14 **Bowling Fun-Raiser** • Lucky Strike Bowling, Palisades Mall, West Nyack, NY
17 **St. Patrick's Day Parade** Pearl River, NY
-
- APRIL 11 **A Taste of the Taste** • Banchetto Feast 75 W. Rt. 59 & Middletown Rd, Nanuet NY
17 **Film Screening "Intelligent Lives"** • The Arc Rockland, 25 Hemlock Drive, Congers, NY
26 **Pocketbook BINGO** • Raymour & Flanigan, 43 Hutton Ave, Nanuet, NY
-
- MAY 4 **Special Olympics** • West Point
10 **A Taste of the Taste** • Hudson Water Club, 606 Beach Rd., West Haverstraw, NY
-
- JUNE 19 **34th Annual Golf & Tennis Classic** • Paramount Country Club, 60 Zukor Rd, New City, NY
-
- SEPTEMBER 23 **23rd Annual A Taste of Rockland** • Hilton Pearl River, 500 Veterans Memorial Dr, Pearl River, NY
-
- OCTOBER 25 **3rd Halloween Pub Crawl** • Karma, Casa del Sol, Taco Lounge, Maura's Kitchen, Nyack, NY

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