

The Arc of Warren County Winter 2020 Newsletter



Letter from the CEO of The Arc of Warren County, John Whitehead

2020 is a year that none of us will soon forget. As with all organizations, The Arc of Warren County has had to adapt in many ways to continue to provide services and keep those in our care safe. I am very proud of the way that our staff have succeeded in this charge, from all of our DSPs to the support and administrative staff.

We were fortunate over the last few months to begin getting our people out a little more and to plan for the reopening of Day and Recreation Services. Unfortunately, the resurgence of COVID-19 is once again creating more restrictions. Despite this setback, I have faith that all our staff will rise to the occasion for the good of everyone who depends on The Arc.

We continue to plan for the reopening of Day Services and will continue to offer virtual services when possible. The Recreation Department will be planning for future social outings and Camp Warren next summer. Community Based Services will continue to provide essential services to our families throughout Warren County, as they have throughout this pandemic.

Project First Step has gone above and beyond to provide Early Intervention Services to families through virtual therapies and, more recently, offering center based and in-home therapies. While we will likely see this revert to primarily virtual services in the near future, rest assured that our clinicians and administration will do whatever is needed to provide families with these very important services.

So, while our world may be in turmoil, our mission remains the same. The Arc of Warren County is here for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities just as we have been for 66 years.

Feel free to contact me by phone at (908) 689-7525, ext. 218, or by email at jwhitehead@arcwarren.org



CEO of The Arc of Warren County
John Whitehead

Note from the Director of Public Relations & Fundraising, Annamaria Lalevee

The Public Relations & Fundraising Department continues to bustle with activity. The Second Annual Arc of Warren County Food Truck Fest was an astounding success. We didn't know what to expect because it was our first in-person opportunity since the pandemic, as most of our involvement with Radiothon was handled virtually. It was a pleasure working with Donaldson Farms as they were able to make it a safe and fun opportunity for all involved.

It was the first time that The Arc of Warren County tried a different approach with the Golf Classic and joined forces with another non-profit to hold the event. We were approached by The House of the Good Shepherd's new CEO, Susan Lanza and now retired Director of Hospitality Services, Craig Stroud, to hold a Golf Classic together. It was a great experience to

collaborate and provide this fundraising event for the community. The response was extremely positive from those who attended, as individuals were very pleased with the experience.

Our Annual Appeal and Membership renewal should have hit your mailboxes and emails. I want to thank everyone who have become members of The Arc of Warren County and have also supported our Annual Appeal in the past. We hope that you will consider it again and, as always, we appreciate the support.

I am always open to collaborating with other organizations for different opportunities, so please feel free to reach out at (908) 223-0884 or alalevee@arcwarren.org



Director of Public Relations
Annamaria Lalevee

The Arc of Warren County is Awarded with a \$10,450 Grant from The John A. & Margaret Post Foundation

The Arc of Warren County was recently awarded a \$10,450 grant from The John A. & Margaret Post Foundation for the cost of a power generator for a group home in Phillipsburg. This opportunity allows the residents of that group home to maintain consistency in their lives when there is a power outage.

The new generator will alleviate disruption and provides those who

reside in that home with uninterrupted care and a consistent schedule. In addition, it alleviates having the Agency incur additional expenses for lodging and food when residents and staff must take a temporary residence elsewhere.

This is the second year that The Post Foundation has provided funds for generators for our group homes. The Arc of Warren County community

is extremely grateful that The John A & Margaret Post Foundation afforded the Agency with this impactful opportunity.

The Arc of Warren County's Board of Directors (BOD) Executive Team Weighs in On Why the Organization Inspires Them

Insight from the BOD President Leslie Schott

Leslie Schott, The Arc of Warren County's Board of Directors current President, started at The Arc of Warren County 27 years ago as a staff member. She started working in the Finance Department, then as Executive Secretary, Administrative Assistant, Executive Assistant and Office Manager.

"I found my career at The Arc of Warren County to be very satisfying," says Leslie. "It was an organization that I became quite passionate about. I enjoyed getting to know consumers and families. I also became a liaison to the Board."

The staff, according to Leslie, also adds to the appeal of the Agency.

"A lot of the staff have been here a long time," says Leslie. "They almost become like family. You feel vested in knowing them personally and feel like you have been there for their marriages, children's births, sometimes divorces. I think that the employees really have a connection to each other."

In 2017, Leslie retired and Kevin Guyette, the late longtime Executive Director for The Arc Foundation, asked her to consider becoming a Board member and the rest is history.

"Being on the Board has provided me with a different perspective. Instead of being involved in the day to day Arc

functions, I was now in an advisory role. It has been an interesting experience. All of the board members come from such diverse backgrounds and that is what makes us effective. And what we do is fun!"

When she was approached to become the Second Vice President on the Board, Leslie knew that meant that it would be an eventual progression to Presidency.

"I thought this opportunity could be so impactful on the Agency," she says. "I truly know the ins and outs of the organization."

She credits John Whitehead, The Arc of Warren County's CEO, for his innovative style of leadership. And typically urges other board members to immerse themselves in the Agency by visiting a group home or touring Camp Warren.

Leslie wants to thank her predecessor, Karen Woodcock for her leadership. "She is a hard act to follow. Karen has done so much for The Agency and we are all grateful for her continued commitment."

Leslie looks forward to her future work as President. One of the goals of the Board and the Agency, in general, is to have consumers make a move back to safe socialization and integrating recreation activities in group homes.



Lesli Schott, President of The Arc of Warren County's Board of Directors

"I know what this organization does to change the lives for individuals and families for the better. As a retired staff member and now President of the Board, I can attest that the mission of The Arc gets into your heart. This is an organization that you can be passionate about and believe in."

A Perspective from BOD Vice President Dr. Nancy Wilson-Soga

Dr. Nancy Soga-Wilson's involvement with The Arc started way before she became a board member three years ago. After she moved from Oklahoma to New York, she became employed by The Rockland Arc as a Registered Nurse and a Case Manager from 1987 to 1992.

"It was an intrinsically rewarding experience," says Dr. Wilson-Soga who is now the Vice President of the Board of Directors.

Nancy became a Director of Senior Services at The Rockland Arc in 1992 before she moved to New Jersey. Since then she earned a PhD in Counseling Psychology, had her own mental health practice and is a Professor of Psychology and Chair of Social Sciences at Warren County Community College.

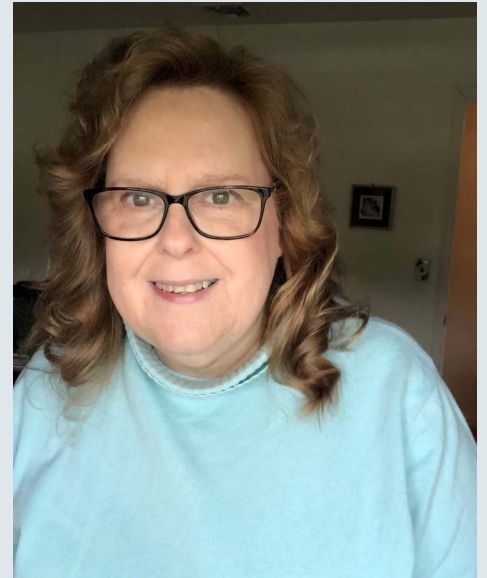
She was approached by a Board member who had worked at the Family Guidance Center to join the

Board. Since she had decided to devote her career focus to Warren County Community College and move away from private practice she had some time to focus on helping a professional organization such as The Arc of Warren County.

"What impressed me almost instantly was that The Arc of Warren County is a well-run ship," she says. "The employees are dedicated and it was nice to see a number of employees are my former students."

Dr. Wilson-Soga is the Board representative for the Early Intervention program. In this role, she meets with the Early Intervention Department every two months as an advisor. The program has had to shift quickly since the beginning of the pandemic to virtual services, but is thriving. Face to face services are now starting again and the possibility of center-based resources are being explored.

As Vice President, she is looking forward to being part of the process in determining what The Arc of Warren County is going to look like in a post COVID environment and examining what "we, as an Agency, had to learn."



Dr. Nancy Wilson-Soga, Board of Directors Vice President

Interested in Becoming an Arc of Warren County Member?

Membership for The Arc of Warren County is renewed each January. The cost is \$25 for an individual and \$50 for a family. We are very interested in hearing from you how you would like to be engaged as a member. Members also have voting rights for the Board of Director Annual Meeting and discounts for Serendipity.

Membership dues can be mailed to The Arc of Warren County Membership Renewals, 319 West Washington Avenue Washington, NJ 07882.

Please e-mail alalevee@arcwarren.org or call (908) 223-0884.

The Rest of the BOD Executive Team Share Their Thoughts on The Agency

Second Vice President George Elsaesser comes from a commercial advisory background and was introduced to the Agency from Chief Administrative Officer Gregory Beben.

“I know nothing about the healthcare industry or human services,” says George. “I do have a lot of business experience, however, and that is where I felt that my involvement would be a good fit. I did learn quickly that the employees at The Arc of Warren County not only provide care or support their consumers in a multitude of ways, but they are caring. There is a significant difference and that shows.”

George is the Chair of the Membership, Public Relations and Recognition Committee. It is his goal to continue raising the level of awareness for the organization. In addition, he is a member of the Bylaws Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee and the Executive Evaluation Committee.

George looks forward to Board meetings, working with dedicated individuals and being able to make a difference in an organization that has such an important mission to the community.

Jay Shulman, Board of Directors’ Treasurer, was aware of The Arc’s programs as his son is on the autism spectrum. He was enrolled in The Arc of Warren County’s Early Intervention program and the program had a profound positive impact on his son and his family. He has been on the Board for three years and is a great

fit for the role of Treasurer as he is a Certified Public Accountant and Tax Director with Trane Technologies.

“I enjoy being part of the organization,” says Jay. “I feel that the work that we are doing makes a difference.”

Ginny Vogt, Secretary of the Board of Directors, has been involved with the Agency at some level for over 30 years. Her daughter, Allison, has autism and was part of the Project First Step program. Allison was also involved in Special Olympics as a rhythmic gymnast and Ginny was one of her coaches. As Ginny’s daughter and her sons got older, Ginny got involved with The Arc of Warren County as far as networking with other parents. She felt that the organization made a positive impact on their lives and the lives of so many people. During this time, she started her own transport business because her daughter went to school out of district to a school that specialized in supporting non-verbal children. She also became employed by The Allegro School that serves children with autism in Cedar Knolls in the Administrative Office.

“During all of this, I always felt connected to The Arc of Warren County,” says Ginny. “The Board is jam packed with people with knowledge about this industry and business. Each brings a unique perspective to the table and that is what makes the Board strong and effective.”

Thank you to these Board members for sharing their stories!

Do you know...

Did you know that The Arc of Warren County won The New Jersey Self Advocacy Project’s Disability Awareness Month Poster Contest? The winners were scheduled to be honored at the Statehouse for this accolade, which unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. The winning entry was submitted to The Arc of New Jersey by five individuals. Carrine Buzzuto, The Arc of Warren County’s Training Coordinator and Self Advocates Advisor and Group Home Manager Linda Gunter provided support for this project. The contest theme was “Our Time to Shine.”

The Agency received a certificate for this achievement, as well as a \$100 gift certificate to be utilized by the Go-Getters Self Advocates.

“This is a wonderful win for the entire Agency,” says Buzzuto. “The poster shows that we should promote ‘inclusion, freedom, strengths and ability’ for individuals with DD, so we destroy ideas of ‘institutions, exclusion, labels and disabilities.’ The result is beautiful and it is Our Time to Shine.”

Board Member Carolyn “Kerry” Wolf Shares Insight about Resources Related to Down Syndrome and Changes Throughout the Years

“I will be eternally grateful for the amount of support The Arc of Warren County provided to my family.”

When Kerry’s son, Chris, was born 50 years ago, there was little information provided by professionals to her about the support services available to individuals who were born with Down Syndrome. This was during a time when people with Down Syndrome were regularly institutionalized. According to Kerry, it was an isolating experience.

She was not referred to The Arc of Warren County by her baby’s pediatricians at that time. It was later through word of mouth from other parents when she learned about the

Agency. At that time, early intervention services were not readily available. The Arc members were knowledgeable and understanding and worked together to uphold and promote the Agency’s mission.

Together, The Arc of Warren County built an advocacy movement which has vastly improved the quality of life of people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and, consequently, the lives of their families and caregivers.

Through Arc activities, recreation and social events brought parents and children together. By being able to be involved in so many activities, it taught her son socialization skills. He would

not have developed these talents, according to Kerry, if he did not have those experiences. As a result, Kerry feels that he has been wholeheartedly welcomed into his community.

“My son and my family have benefitted greatly through his having received Arc services as a young child,” says Kerry. “Participation in the varied services that were available to him, such as recreational programs and Camp Warren, advocacy and information services, respite and employment support were positive experiences for Chris. In addition, those involved consistently give information, emotional support and comfort to those who are justly concerned about their family members.”



Boo in the Barnyard

Donaldson Farms invited The Arc of Warren County to participate in Boo in the Barnyard. It was a great event to participate to build awareness for the Agency. 500 families had the opportunity to participate in many fun activities and receive treats from local businesses and our non-profit.

Greg Beben, Chief Administrative Officer, and Annamaria Lalevee were on hand to greet them!

A special thank you to ShopRite of Greenwich for covering the costs for the candies for the Agency.



The Arc of Warren County Receives A Congressional Certificate of Recognition

What could be better than having a successful Food Truck Fest?

Receiving a visit from a Congressman's Office and being presented with a Congressional Certificate of Recognition.

Kady M. Toledo, Community Outreach Liaison, attended the event and provided the Agency with the Certificate on behalf of Congressman Gottheimer for the Agency's commitment and dedication to the Warren County community.

"I'm grateful for the important work The Arc of Warren County does in helping in our communities and those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. I'm proud to represent every corner of the Fifth District, and one of my bedrock

responsibilities is to always have the backs of those who are carrying out vital work in our local communities and ensuring they get the recognition they deserve," said Congressman Gottheimer (NJ-5).

Not only was the event well-attended and those who participated were able to enjoy food from premiere food

trucks, great music and fun activities, but it also brought awareness to our Agency. The Arc of Warren County raised almost \$12,000 as a result of this opportunity.

A new date is scheduled for July 24, 2021 for the 3rd annual Arc of Warren County Food Truck Fest.



What is Like to Be a DSP?: Insight from John Ndegwa

“We Have a Great Day at Work!”

“It is important to have compassion,” says John Ndegwa when referring to an attribute that one must have to be successful as a Direct Support Professional (DSP).

John has been employed by The Arc of Warren County after relocating from Essex County in 2013. He has worked at various group homes. Most recently, he has spent most of his time working in Alpha. There are 17 different group homes located throughout the county, which are all conveniently located to his home in Phillipsburg.

“It appealed to me because I am a people person and a problem solver,” says John. “I wanted to go back to school and having a flexible schedule allowed me to earn my Associate’s degree in Criminal Justice from Warren County Community College. I was so proud that I was able to balance work and my studies nicely and graduated with a 3.964.”

He asserts that he has learned a lot working with individuals and that the position is very hands-on. It involves engaging the consumers in different activities and communicating with doctors, family members and anyone that is needed to ensure the well-being of the individuals who are under my care.

“I feel like what I do has purpose,” says John. “I work with a great team and everyone plays a significant role in the progress in striving toward the promotion of some independent living. I always live my life with the mind-

set to have respect and individuals will respect you back. This goes for everyone whom I interact with.”

John now has an infant son and finds the ability to be at work during the evenings and weekends freeing and provides him with the type of schedule that he needs. He recommends those who are interested in a position that provides the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of others to consider becoming a DSP.

“Being a DSP is a rewarding career,” says Dori Howell, Director of Community Living Arrangements at The Arc of Warren County. “I started as a DSP 34 years ago. It brings a great deal of satisfaction knowing you can make a difference in someone’s life but what ultimately happens is they make a difference in yours. John is a very kind man. He always ensures the happiness and well-being of the consumers. That is his number one priority. He has a positive outlook and is greatly respected by both consumers and his fellow staff members.”

Those who are interested in learning more about this position should contact Crystal Gild at cgild@arcwarren.org or call (908) 689-7525, ext. 241.



John Ndegwa

New Brochure

The Arc of Warren County recently designed a new Marketing brochure for the Agency. It is available online at arcwarren.org

The Arc of Warren County and The House of the Good Shepherd's First Golf Classic

The Arc of Warren County and The House of the Good Shepherd decided to move forward with their plan to run the organizations' first joint Golf Classic as a result of the ability to resume these types of events in the State of New Jersey.

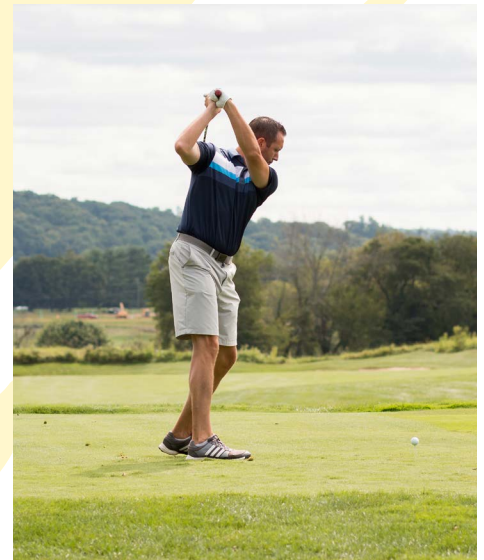
It was a great decision, as the event was well-received. Feedback from the attendees was extremely positive with many individuals requesting that we join forces again. The organizations raised close to \$13,000 collectively.

As a result, the organizations are going to hold another Golf Classic next Fall! The 2nd Arc of Warren County and The House of the Good Shepherd's Golf Classic will take place at Hawk Pointe Golf Club on September 13, 2021, so please Save The Date!

A special thank you goes to Leslie Schott, Norman Worth and all of our volunteers and sponsors. A special thank you goes to our Gold, Silver and Bronze sponsors who are as follows:

- Mutual of America (Gold)
- Nisivoccia, LLP (Gold)
- Blue Ridge Lumber (Silver)
- Fellowship Senior Living (Silver)
- Fulton Bank (Silver)
- George Salamy in memory of Barbara Salamy (Silver)
- WRNJ (Silver)
- Bakertilly (Bronze)
- Edward Jones – Robyn Jensen Financial Advisor (Bronze)
- Hackettstown Medical Center (Bronze)
- Hackettstown Rotary Club (Bronze)

In addition, we would like to thank Rossi GMC Chevrolet for serving as our Hole-In-One Sponsor and the many individuals and donors who sponsored tee signs, donated funds and donated products. ShopRite Liquors and Rocky's ACE Hardware by themselves donated over \$800 of products as part of the prize packages that were available.



Testimonials are Needed for Website

How have the services at The Arc of Warren County made an impact on you or your family? We would like to add what you would like to say on The Arc of Warren County's website!

Please reach out to Annamaria Laveve at alaveve@arcwarren.org or at (908) 223-0884 if you would like to submit a testimonial of how our services have made a positive impact for your family.

Here are some recent testimonials:

"The resources that we received from the Early Intervention program helped us reduce and eliminate the tantrums our child threw. It taught us new ways to deal with situations and help discover new ways to communicate with our child's limited expressive speech. The service and the team we worked with were beyond amazing in helping us each step of the way. We are grateful for the work they helped us do and the changes we made!"

– Brittany Burke, Early Intervention Parent

"My son can now eat solid food and his motor skills have improved. Honestly, I would not know if we would have progressed as well without the Early Intervention Program."

– Rebecca Griffin, Early Intervention Parent

It Has Been Eight Years and I Wouldn't Give Up Working with Our Consumers For Anything!

Written by Courtney Graffin, Program Manager, Washington Supervised Apartments

I don't remember the exact moment when my life was changed by someone with a developmental disability. The memories seem far away, blurry, as if they don't belong to me. But this is what happens after you've been working with adults with developmental disabilities for years. You change.

They don't tell you that when you're filling out your application. Instead, they tell you about the hours, the health benefits, the 401K plan, the programs and the strategies. But, they don't tell you about the fact that if you do it right, you'll never be the same.

They don't tell you it will be the most amazing job you will ever have. On other days, it can be the worst. They can't describe on paper the emotional toll it will take on you. They can't tell you there may come a time where you're more comfortable surrounded by people with developmental disabilities than you are with the general population. They don't tell you that you will come to love them. There will be days when you are more at home when you're at work than when you're home, sitting on your couch. But it happens.

They don't tell you about the negative reactions you may face when you are out in the community with someone with a developmental disability. Adults will stare. You will want to say something, anything, to these people to make them see how wonderful they are. At the end of the

day, your hands will be tied because some things can't be explained with words. They can only be felt. And most of the time, until someone has had their own experience with someone with a developmental disability, they just won't understand.

They train you in CPR and first aid, but they can't tell you what it feels like to have to use these skills. They don't tell you what it is like to learn someone is sick and nothing can be done. They can't explain the way it feels when you work with someone for years and then they die.

When you apply for this job, they do tell you that you will be working to teach life skills. What they don't tell you is while you're teaching someone, they'll also be teaching you. They have taught me it is okay to forgive myself when I have a bad day. There is always tomorrow and an error here or there doesn't mean it is the end of the world. They have taught me to slow down, to ponder, to take the time to just look around and take in this beautiful world and all of the simple joys we are blessed to encounter every day.

So, when did I change? I realize now there wasn't one pivotal moment. Instead, it was a million little moments, each important in their own way. When all of these experiences were added together, it changed me. And I am grateful for each one.

Most of the DSPs I know are still working through the pandemic. As stressed as we are, the individuals who we serve are feeling the same way!



Courtney Graffin
Program Manager for Washington
Supervised Apartments