

The Arc of Warren County Winter 2023 Newsletter



Letter from the CEO

In the fall our agency underwent an organizational assessment to help us identify our performance in a variety of areas. This was accomplished through a survey of staff at all levels. We continually strive to make The Arc of Warren County a model of excellence in services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and this assessment will assist us in meeting this goal.

The most encouraging thing that came out of this process is that our staff expressed a strong commitment to our Mission and feel that we are providing excellent services. While I have long believed that The Arc of Warren County consistently provides excellent services, it is gratifying to have evidence that our staff at all levels feel a strong commitment to our Mission too. For us to truly succeed, it cannot just be the direct support staff that are committed to those we serve. Even those whose jobs are performing “business” functions are encouraged to take the time to see why we do what we do.

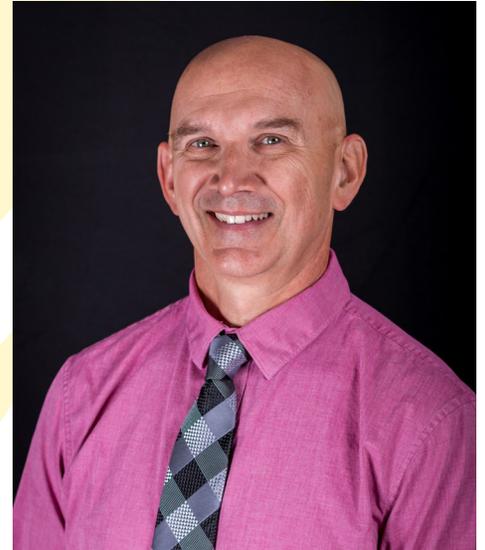
An example of this was when the participants of the Day Program did the judging of the office staff

Halloween costumes. Or when office staff were invited into the Day Program to sing Christmas carols while the music therapist was there. Or in the summer when office staff visited Camp Warren during camp season.

When employees get to see the wonderful things that The Arc of Warren County does, no matter what their job is, it makes it all worthwhile. It makes it clear that the mundane, yet necessary, tasks that we do have purpose. There are always challenges when operating an agency such as ours, but the positive impact that we can make on so many lives is what motivates our staff... all our staff.

Thank you to our donors and members who also recognize the important work that we do and the dedication that is evident at The Arc of Warren County agencywide.

Best,
John Whitehead
CEO



CEO of The Arc of Warren County
John Whitehead

Development and Communications Letter

From a development and communications standpoint, The Arc of Warren County is brisk with activity. Every single day is a busy day filled with much accomplishment.

We have changed the dates of our upcoming events for 2023 from the timeframe that we had been focusing on in recent years.

They are as follows:

- The Arc of Warren County Radiothon with WRNJ – April 19, 2023 (formerly held in June)
- The Arc of Warren County Food Truck Fest with Donaldson Farms – June 3, 2023 (formerly held in July)
- The Arc of Warren County Triathlon with DASH Multisport – July 15, 2023
- The Arc of Warren County Golf Classic – September 18, 2023

- The Arc of Warren County Community Excellence Awards – November 16, 2023

This is an excellent opportunity to space out some of our events and provide our sponsors with more of a spread-out selection regarding event sponsorship. We also have some membership events planned and are thrilled to partner with Mansfield Township Elementary School for National Disability Awareness Month at 7 p.m. on March 28, 2023. The Arc of Warren County will partner with Abilities of Northwest Jersey once again and will hold a presentation for the community at 6:30 p.m. on May 18, 2023 with world renowned Autism Awareness Advocate Dr. Kerry Magro. The event will be sponsored by the Greenwich Autism Alliance Foundation and the topic is “I Used to be Bullied for Having Special Needs: Here’s When It Stopped.”



Chief Development and Communications Officer
Annamaria Lalevee

We are excited for what the future will bring!

Best,
Annamaria Lalevee
Chief Development and Communications Officer

Help support our Annual Appeal

You may have seen our annual appeal for the Jonestown Renovation Project. Thank you to all who have donated thus far, but we still need your help. It will cost close to \$400,000 to renovate this residence as it needs an enormous amount of updates including the following:

- Providing the four bedroom/two-bathroom home with all necessary structural and cosmetic repairs

- Renovations to provide for wheelchair accessibility, including widening hallways and doorways and installing ramps
- Driveway and sidewalk repairs to ensure the safety of residents
- And much more!

Please consider funding this project. Please open your hearts to make a big difference!



Jonestown Renovation Project

The Arc of Warren County's Community Excellence Awards

The Arc of Warren County's first community awards event dinner in over five years was a resounding success. It was rebranded as the Community Excellence Awards and it took place at Bello Giorno Estates. Eighty-five individuals were in attendance to celebrate with our honorees.

Awardees were nominated by staff and members of The Arc of Warren County for advancing the mission of The Arc of Warren County or for their work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in general. The event was emceed by Annamaria Lalevee. Remarks were delivered by John Whitehead, CEO of The Arc of Warren County; Tom Baffuto, Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey; Dr. Nancy Wilson-Soga,

President of The Arc of Warren County's Board of Directors and Melanie Thiel, President of The Arc Foundation Board. Phillipsburg High School students, Reid Nitzsche and Aidan O'Shea, performed a bass and guitar musical interlude. Award nominators also delivered remarks to each of the award recipients.

Pictured from left to right are as follows: Norman Worth, General Manager and President of WRNJ Radio, who accepted the Community Partner Award on behalf of WRNJ Radio; Karen Woodcock, past Board President of The Arc of Warren County, who accepted the Lifetime Commitment Award on behalf of Pieter Woodcock (posthumously); Jeff Hill of J. Hill Carpentry who received the Distinguished Service Provider Award;

Heather McTigue of St. Luke's Family Practice who received the Healthcare Provider Award; Doctor D. of Doctor D. Entertainment who received the Volunteer Award and Jamie Stem of Phillipsburg High School who received the Educator of The Year Award.



The Arc of Warren County Employee Feature – Kayla Conklin

Congratulations to Kayla Conklin, an Arc of Warren County Coordinator who earned her Associate of Arts degree recently while working full-time!



Kayla Conklin

Kayla has been employed by The Arc of Warren County for over sixteen and a half years. When she applied for a position at The Arc of Warren County, she had never heard of The Arc before. The position appealed to her because she needed a job that had good health benefits. Her younger sister has autism and she assisted children with different types of disabilities while in school, so she had some informal experience.

She was sold on The Agency at her interview. So much so, in fact, that she told now CEO, John Whitehead, that she expected to be a “lifer.”

In May 2006, Kayla was hired as a Direct Support Professional for West Blvd. The program had not opened yet, so she started at the Respite home on Jonestown Road (which is now the

subject of The Arc’s Annual Appeal). As a result, Kayla acquired a lot of experience with people with different types of intellectual and physical disabilities, as well as individuals with behavioral issues because, as a respite program, the individuals who were served changed often. “I assisted individuals with their activities of daily living, which varied from person to person based on their personal needs,” says Kayla.

Kayla was quickly promoted to a Senior Direct Support Professional, and in 2009 Kayla was promoted to Manager at the Asbury Group Home. She already had experience completing progress reports, medication question and answer forms change to QA, as well as being a point person to handle doctor’s appointments.

“This was an exciting development professionally,” says Kayla. “Managers are responsible for ensuring things run smoothly in the group home, which includes the health and happiness of the individual. They are also responsible for training staff and getting them on track with any behavior plans or changes in policies that need to be implemented. At this program, I was honored to have worked with two of the sweetest and funniest men that have lived at the Asbury Group Home. At the end of 2014, I became a Program Coordinator, which is a type of middle management position. It acts as the middle person between managers and the Director of Community Living Arrangements.”

In this role, Kayla is an extra set of eyes for the residential programs to ensure thoroughness of care. During her

tenure as a Coordinator, Kayla covers shifts at programs and provides guidance on how to handle situations. Kayla decided to pursue a degree in hopes of furthering her career.

“When I started, I was interested in obtaining a degree in Psychology, but found that I really enjoyed Sociology classes,” says Kayla. “I was able to obtain my Associates degree in Liberal Arts, with a focus on Social Sciences in four semesters, in just about 14 months.”

Kayla explains that working full-time and attending college full-time was no easy feat.

“My family will attest to the fact that I had no free time and was more stressed than usual,” says Kayla. “Almost every day, I would come from work and immediately sit down and start with my schoolwork. Most nights I would stay up until about 1 a.m. working on my assignments. The biggest challenges came in my last two semesters where my father became quickly and suddenly ill, passing away in a very short period while at the same time my program became short staffed. I was able to finish the degree while going through a very difficult time personally. I am very happy and proud to say I was able to get my Associates Degree in a year while maintaining a high GPA. However, I will not work myself like that again.”

Kayla plans to obtain her Bachelor’s degree in Sociology. Best of luck in your professional and educational endeavors!

Upcoming Partnerships

The Arc of Warren County will partner with Mansfield Township Elementary School at 7 p.m. on March 28, 2023 for National Disability Awareness Month.

In addition, The Arc of Warren County connected Mansfield Township Elementary School with World Down Syndrome Advocate Diana Stolfo. She will visit Mansfield Elementary School on World Down Syndrome Day this year and talk with Mansfield kindergarten to sixth grade students about her life experiences.

“I am so pleased to attend Mansfield Elementary School to talk about my life experiences and provide students with awareness about Down Syndrome,” says Diana Stolfo.

As mentioned in the Development and Communications Letter of this Newsletter, Dr. Kerry Magro will be presenting to the community about a very important topic titled “I Used to be Bullied for Having Special Needs: Here’s When it Stopped” at 6:30 p.m. on May 18, 2023 at Warren Hills High School. This event was made possible through a grant from the Greenwich Autism Alliance Foundation. This event is presented by our Agency and Abilities of Northwest Jersey. Members of the community are encouraged to attend.

Please R.S.V.P. to Annamaria Lalevee at alalevee@arcwarren.org



Dr. Kerry Margo

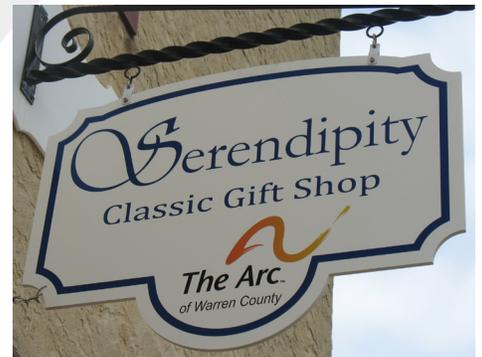
A Look at Serendipity

A local trip to Serendipity in the center of Washington provides the shopper with a one-of-a-kind experience that includes employees who will engage with you and help with your purchase.

What is Serendipity, you may ask? Serendipity is a specialty shop owned and operated by The Arc of Warren County. The store’s employees are adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Much of the store’s merchandise is created by loved ones of those with disabilities. Employees help ensure that customers’ overall experience is one that is positive. All proceeds that are generated by sales

directly fund programs of The Arc of Warren County.

Serendipity is a charming store that features a variety of products that are designed to inspire the visitor. They sell cards, candles, soaps, jewelry, accessories, and much more. It is the perfect location to purchase thoughtful gifts to brighten someone’s day. Plus, their website advertises specials, new products, and discounted items. A visit to Serendipity is a wonderful experience and whatever you buy will leave an imprint on someone’s heart.



Serendipity is managed by Beverly Stewart who gives great product recommendations. Jennifer Speth, Director of Day Programs and Community-Based Supports at The

cont. A Look at Serendipity

Arc of Warren County, oversees the daily functions of the store including staffing, financials, and general coordination of store and employee relations. Serendipity's objectives are to increase the quality of the experience for the shopper and the quality of life for the employee.

Please visit when you shop local for gifts and the like! Serendipity is located at 40 East Washington Avenue in Washington. For more information, please visit Serendipity on the web at www.arc-serendipity.com.

Membership Breakfast with Tom Baffuto, Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey

Register Now for Membership for The Arc of Warren County 2023

The Arc of Warren County hosted an informational breakfast event for its valued members this fall. It was an honor to host Mr. Thomas Baffuto, Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey as the guest speaker.

Tom Baffuto's presentation to employees and The Arc of Warren County's members was exceptionally interesting and eye-opening. In his presentation, he explained the current state of affairs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in New Jersey. He discussed the advances in public policy through advocacy.

Baffuto also explained the diverse portfolio of programs under The Arc of New Jersey's umbrella. These include special initiatives to address crime and criminal justice in the population that we serve, mainstreaming medical care, self-advocacy efforts, and overall planning for adult life.

Baffuto reported that \$1 billion of new funding has been added to the

DDD budget over the last five years. Because of this, there are more people being served by The Arc's services and the organization has a greater reach through the state. There is also a renewed attention being paid to supportive employment goals for the I/DD population with vocational training and consultation included. There also have been rate increases for

consumer employment and increases in hourly rates for direct service professionals (DSP).

The presentation also addressed educational goals of this population in Warren County. The data was promising for those graduating through the local systems and statistics provided a projected jump in the rates



cont. Membership Breakfast with Tom Baffuto, Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey

of graduation through 2025 because of added educational supports. Tom outlined the current priorities of The Arc of New Jersey, which are as follows:

- Revitalizing outreach efforts after the public health emergency
 - Addressing the mental health issues and prevalence affecting this population
 - Providing information regarding transitioning from school aged years to adult life
 - Adding to statewide Community living options
 - Informing family members of the resources they need and will require if long-term care is appropriate.
- A membership with The Arc of Warren County provides many benefits which include: discounts at The Arc's

Serendipity giftshop in Washington, special events and newsletters, and volunteer opportunities that enrich both the individual and consumer.

Members also have voting rights at the Annual Election of the Board of Directors in June.

Another Membership event held on February 23, 2023 at 5 p.m. Members from the Mansfield Township Elementary community discussed the transition from the Early Intervention Program to Elementary School.

Feel free to contact Annamaria Lalevee at (908) 223-0884 for more information.



Pictured are representatives from Mansfield Township Elementary School – Brianna Vogt, Matt Magnuson, Lisa Foster-Clarke, Patti-Jo Raiello, Deboranne Marley and John Whitehead.

“Even Miracles Take a Little Time”... The Arc of Warren County’s Disney Prom Submitted By Carinne Buzzuto, Training Coordinator at The Arc of Warren County

Residents of The Arc of Warren County’s Community Living Program are experts at throwing fun, fantastic events including their annual prom! The “Disney” themed event was intended to take place in 2020, but due to the pandemic it was delayed. As Cinderella’s famous quote says, “Even miracles take a little time.” After waiting two years, the Disney Prom was finally held and, in fact, was miraculous.

A group of more than 20 adults who live in the Arc of Warren’s Community Residential Programs acted as the

official “Prom Committee.” They planned every detail of the prom. Carinne Buzzuto, Training Coordinator/ Self Advocacy Advisor, supported the committee and helped develop their ideas. Kristin, Arc resident and Prom Committee member, had secured Carinne’s promise to throw the Disney Prom as soon as it was safe to do so. Kristin happily states, “Carinne kept her promise to us!”

The Prom Committee was comprised of Chris, Cori, Ralph, Robbie, Judy, Jean, Mona, Liz, Karen, Suzanne, Joe,



Pictured is Jill at Prom

Cont. “Even Miracles Take a Little Time”... The Arc of Warren County’s Disney Prom

Mary, Carol, Steve, Terri, Kim, Marie, James, Kristin, Jess, and Natalie. They want to express their thanks and gratitude to the wonderful people who helped make this event so magical. Thank you to Ann Perucci, Flynn’s on the Hill manager, and all the wonderful staff. Flynn’s provided a beautiful venue complete with chandeliers and mirrors that created a true Disney castle ambiance. Additionally, the food and service were indeed fit for a Disney Prince or Princess. There was even a game where all seven dwarfs hid and the participants who found them won Disney prizes.

Flynn’s on the Hill was transformed into “Captain Hook’s” Bar for the evening thanks to Reni Piperata, The Arc of Warren County’s LPN, disguised as “Hook.” Captain Hook opened guests’ O’Doul’s beer and thankfully did not make anyone “walk the plank!” In addition to the O’Doul’s beverage, guests drank “Dizzy Disneytinis”, “Mickeytinis” and “Minnietinis.”

Linda Gunter and Jennifer Speth, Arc staff, went above and beyond (as always), to prepare and manage the big event. In fact, every single staff person that was in attendance is owed a big “Thank You” for their support, energy, and enthusiasm for the evening. This organization is truly blessed to have so many wonderful staff members. Addie Speth and Shantalina Blake did a fantastic job as the night’s “junior” volunteers. The committee would also like to thank Amanda Perelli, the volunteer photographer and former Arc employee, for capturing all the smiles



Pictured is Carrine Buzzuto and Reni Piperata, LPN.

and beauty of the celebration. The photos were truly outstanding!

Finally, the Prom Committee is grateful to “Doctor D”, DJ Dan Torrone, for his entertainment and enthusiasm for the night of the Disney Prom. The committee is so blessed to know him and not just for the amazing songs to get people dancing. Doctor D refuses to let a single guest leave without a smile! His one-of-a-kind energy and interaction with the party goes is exceptional! The committee votes on all prom details, but one vote is always unanimous ... “Doctor D/ DJ DAN is the best.”

The planning for Prom 2023 will begin in Spring 2023. The committee will form and gather once again to

create another opportunity for dining, dancing, and fun. The memories of this magical Disney prom will last forever.



Pictured is Linda Gunter and Kim.

Wishes for 2023

Some individuals who participate in the Agency's Day Program were interviewed to find out what they are looking forward to doing in 2023. Here are their answers:

James would like to return to Sandy Hook, N.J. to see some dolphins when the program revisits the shore in the warmer weather. He also was passionate about visiting Aruba someday to see all the palm trees. They are a personal favorite of his. James would also like to attend Musik Fest and the Farmer's Fair. Finally, he added he was happy to be with all his friends at the program and wants to continue doing his Wednesday coffee run with the staff.

Missy hopes to eat grilled cheese sandwiches every day in 2023. She also loves coming to The Arc of Warren County's Day Program to be with her peers and her favorite staff members.

Lance wants to see his favorite baseball team play this year, which is The Red Sox. He also loves the beach and is very excited to go sailing one day when the warmer weather arrives.

Bob claims that he has not done too much sleigh riding or skiing in the recent past and is interested in doing that this year. He also would like to craft with play dough. Lastly, Bob would like to visit Florida.

Happiness is sprinkled around by these individuals and their smiles have the power to turn a bad day into a great one. The Arc of Warren County's Day Program is open five days per week with hours from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Currently, the program is structured daily with music therapy, activities to improve fine motor skills, crafts for the creative, movies for special occasions and holidays, outings throughout New Jersey, and various shopping trips.



Pictured is Missy



Pictured is Bob

Meet Kayla DeAngelis – New Board Member for The Arc Foundation, Warren County

Kayla DeAngelis is a new Board member for The Arc Foundation. Kayla has lived in the local community for many years and serves as a first responder for the Hackettstown Rescue Squad. She currently serves as Financial Center Supervisor for Fulton Bank on Mountain Avenue in Hackettstown. She has been employed by Fulton Bank since 2011.

Fulton Bank has been a longtime supporter of The Arc Foundation and when Kayla was approached to serve

on the Board, she thought it was a good fit.

"I had the opportunity to be part of The Arc of Warren County's Food Truck Fest and felt that I would like to be involved in helping raise awareness and funds for such a wonderful organization," says Kayla. "I feel that I can make a difference to the betterment of the organization."

Welcome aboard Kayla!



Kayla DeAngelis

Meet Amanda Jones-Gransky – New Board Member for The Arc of Warren County

Amanda Jones-Gransky is a new Board member for The Arc of Warren County. Amanda's daughter, Madison, utilized The Arc of Warren County's Early Intervention services. Becoming a Board member appealed to Amanda as it was an opportunity to get more involved in The Arc of Warren County.

"The Early Intervention Program made such a positive impact on my daughter," says Amanda.

Before Amanda became a Board member, she had been interviewed several times for Radiothon, Madison was featured in the Annual Appeal and Madison, Amanda and her husband Steve were featured in The Arc of Warren County's video.

Even though Madison has graduated from The Early Intervention Program, Amanda and Steve continue to keep in touch with her therapists as they made such a positive impact on her.

"It was a huge blessing to get involved as early as we did," says Amanda. During her tenure on the Board, Amanda would like to be involved in more programs and be involved in discussions regarding expanding services.

Professionally, Amanda served as a teacher when she lived in Honolulu and moved back to the area for family support after Madison was born.

Amanda's advice to parents whose children are experiencing developmental delays is to get involved with Early Intervention as early as possible.



Amanda Jones-Gransky, her husband Steven and children Nate and Madison

"Don't be hesitant to explore your local Early Intervention program," says Amanda. "Just go for it. I wish we knew more about Early Intervention right from the beginning."

We are so pleased that Amanda is a member of the Board.

Carolyn Wolf is Inducted into the Warren County Community College Hall of Fame

Longtime Arc of Warren County Board of Directors member Carolyn “Kerry” Wolf was inducted into the Warren County Community College Hall of Fame.

This event was emceed by Dan Hirshberg of CHP Communications. Below is Carolyn’s induction speech:

“There are talkers and there are doers. There are those who say they are committed but only leave the work to others. Carolyn Wolf is a doer and she is committed, and as the old saying goes, rolls up her sleeves to get it done.

Arguably the strongest advocate anywhere for The Arc and the people they work with, Carolyn has taken the word dedicated to enormous heights.

She has been involved with The Arc of Warren County dating back to the early 1980s. She served as their first Executive Director, worked to establish the first community residential homes and family support services, and oversaw the expansion of Camp Warren.

Of her many accomplishments, the one that stands out in her mind is the launching of Project First Step. On this, she collaborated with Warren County Special Education Services Directors and Public Health Nursing to create the early intervention program which serves children, newborn up to three years old, who are born with developmental delays. For her, Project First Step was particularly meaningful since it didn’t exist when her son Christopher was born. When the program started there were just eight students;

now there are about 200. She also served as The Arc of Warren’s Director of Recreation Services, coached in Special Olympics and was always available for a myriad other Arc events and projects as a volunteer.

Doer, committed, dedicated. Three words that certainly sum up Carolyn Wolf, our newest member of the WCCC Hall of Fame!”

The Arc of Warren County community is so pleased that Kerry was honored in this manner!



Pictured is Kerry Wolf and her son Chris

The Recreation Department's Annual Valentine's Day Dance

Here is a photo of the Recreation Department's Annual Valentine's Day Dance, which was held at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church. Thank you to the volunteers from the church's youth group and Notre Dame High School.

Sharbel Koorie of Fly Guy Music Productions. Refreshments were donated by Daddy's Place Restaurant. The kindness that was exhibited to us from the community made a significant positive impact on the night's celebration.



Thank you to the host of the evening

Radiothon Letter - A Message from Our Radiothon Co-Chairs

We are so pleased to serve as co-chairs for the fifth year in a row. We both have a strong commitment to Radiothon and this initiative has been ongoing through the support of WRNJ for the past 33 years. It has been a longstanding tradition to support this organization and devote a day of programming and share feedback from many who have been impacted in a positive manner by The Arc of Warren County.

Even though this project has been in existence for over three decades, it is an initiative that remains very important to us. Help us spread the joy associated with services that are made possible through The Arc of Warren County.

The Arc of Warren County Radiothon with WRNJ helps fund the many programs that the organization offers to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. One of the main programs that benefits from this fundraiser is Camp Warren, The Arc of Warren County's camping program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The property is located

in Knowlton Township and campers enjoy fun-filled days packed with programs including arts and crafts, swimming, music, sports and games, nature appreciation, group activities and more.

Did you know that –

- \$575 will purchase one campership for Camp Warren.
- The property at Camp Warren needs four HVAC systems and a generator.

Part of funds generated from this will be earmarked for this initiative,

as well as other Arc programs. This is the 69th year anniversary of The Arc of Warren County, so the goal for this project is to raise \$69,000. Help us reach and surpass this goal.

Don't forget to tune in from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 19th to participate in Radiothon!

Sincerely,

Jim Travis and Norman Worth, Co-Chairs
The Arc of Warren County Radiothon 2023

