

Around The Arc

News of The Arc of Chester County

Winter 2013

The Arc is an Award Winner!

The Arc of Chester County has been named the J. Dewees Mosteller Community Service Award winner by the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce, in recognition of its ongoing, outstanding commitment to the community. The award, given annually since 1961, was presented at a banquet held February 5 at the Mendenhall Inn. Executive Director Jeanne Meikrantz, board members and members of The Arc's senior staff attended.

In addition, Michelle Talis, who receives Arc services through Agency with Choice, Comprehensive Employment Services and Family Support Services, was invited to attend the dinner, with her parents.

Michelle's presence was a living example of the quality of The Arc services and the way they support different facets of an individual's life. Michelle is currently employed at Cosi's restaurant in Exton where she delivers food and busses tables. Cosi was selected as The Arc's Employer of the Year in 2012.

"Michelle has a spar-

kling personality and fits right in with their team," said Carol Huyett, Director of Comprehensive Employment Services. "She loves her job and the regular customers at Cosi love her and look forward to seeing her," Carol said. "Michelle goes above and beyond her duties," added Kristi Russell, Michelle's job coach, "and she really enjoys helping others." She also enjoys bowling and baking, and participates in the West Chester University Best Buddies program.

Earlier in the day, the Chamber held a breakfast meeting attended by local and state dig-

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Local and state officials present The Arc with citations (left to right) Borough council member Holly Brown, Chester County commissioner Ryan Costello, Pennsylvania Representative Dan Truitt, representative of Senator Andrew Dinniman's office Don Vymazal, Chester County commissioner Terence Farrell, The Arc Board President Tom Beckett, Executive Director Jeanne Meikrantz, Chester County commissioner Kathi Cozzone and President of the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce Mark Yoder.

Upcoming

events...

"Tune in to the Arc"

March 2, 2013

6:30pm-11:00pm

@ Chester Valley Golf Club

Legislative Breakfast

Spring, 2013

Date yet to be determined

Arc Achievement Walk and Fun Day

June 9, 2013

11:00am - 2:00pm

@ West Goshen Community Park

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inside...

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Message from the President - Tom Beckett

Dear Friends,
As I think back over the years I have been associated with The Arc, I am struck by the role The Arc has played in educating the community. Raising awareness of disabilities has been an integral part of our mission and we have accomplished that in so many ways. We have changed

the public dialogue around the words describing disabilities by promoting "People First" language and discouraging the use of the "R" word. Our Count Me In© puppet show teaches elementary-aged students that children with disabilities are not so different after all. The First Step Early Intervention program

partners with numerous local organizations to give its students opportunities to swim at the YMCA, go grocery shopping at the Acme and practice getting a haircut. The Advocacy program has recently begun to offer free clinics to parents to give them the tools they need to advocate for their children in the local school districts. I am proud that The Arc continues to lead the way in encouraging a respectful and inclusive attitude toward people with disabilities through both its example and its innovative educational programs.

Sincerely,

Tom Beckett
President

Generous Community Supporters of The Arc

The Arc has recently been the recipient of several generous donations from a diverse group of organizations.

- Roger Fryberger, husband of Robin, The Arc's Director of Administration, suggested The Arc to his employer, Tri-State Tech Sales of Malvern, as the recipient of their annual holiday gift to a local non-profit. Nine of their employees, including Roger, contributed funds which were then matched by the company for a grand total of \$3,430.
- DaVita Health Care Partners, an international Fortune 500 company which offers kidney dialysis services, chose The Arc for a holiday donation through their "Community Cares" program, at the suggestion of Kelly Smith, an employee at one of their Philadelphia locations. Kelly has a relative who was

served by The Arc and wanted to show her appreciation. A total of \$3,000 was given by the company.

- Eric Warmkessel, a student of the Gateway program of the Chester County Intermediate Unit, heard about the need for supplies for First Step's home-based program for infants and toddlers and immediately organized a fund drive at his school. This enterprising young man was able to generate a total of \$776.04 from the staff and fellow students.
- Fox and Roach Charities continues to give generously to the First Step program of The Arc, as they have done over the last three years through a connection made through Past President Amy Koegler's mother, Joanne Koegler, an agent in their Devon office. This year was their largest gift ever, of \$654.



(from left to right) Roger and Robin Fryberger join Fred Freeman from Tri-State Tech Sales as he presents their donation to Jeanne Meikrantz, Executive Director.



(from left to right) Anne Bernstein, Director of Early Intervention, accepts a check from Gateway program students Eric Warmkessel, Damian Paterno, and Aaron Cattin.

Community Partnerships



A Hershey's Mill resident offers Halloween goodies to First Step student Madison, accompanied by teacher Tina Tauss (left) and intern Casey Skurka (right)

The Arc of Chester County has numerous partners in the community who support our mission and help us provide individuals with disabilities and their families with the services and programs they need. Our goal is to integrate and include people with disabilities into the community but we can't do this work alone. Here are some groups who have reached out to us because they are drawn to our mission and want to offer their time and energy:

Hershey's Mill

Trick or treating is a typical childhood activity with which children with disabilities may struggle. Costumes, noise and knocking on an unfamiliar door can cause stress and anxiety in children who experience sensory issues. Residents of the Quaker Ridge neighborhood in Hershey's Mill opened up their doors several days before Halloween to give our First Step students a chance to "practice" trick or treating. Teachers and therapists worked with the children to break down the process into manageable steps, which allowed the children to experience the excitement of learning a new skill outside of their classroom. The residents enjoyed it as much as the students, resulting in the addition of several new volunteers to our First Step program. Harriet Bernstein and June Duncan will be bringing their love of music into the classrooms by playing piano and singing songs with the children.

Christ Church in the Valley

This Royersford church has a loyal volunteer group who has helped us in the past with a variety of necessary tasks. This year, they undertook the big job of hand-addressing the hun-

dreds of envelopes for our Milestones campaign. Our development staff is extra-grateful for this help!

Shipleigh students

Middle School students from Shipleigh School in Bryn Mawr have been working with our First Step students in the classroom once a month. They have taken on the additional project of learning and practicing our Count Me In© Puppet Show, that is presented to local schools and community groups to educate children about people with disabilities. They were able to present the puppet show to fellow students at Shipleigh's Disability Awareness Day.

Upper Main Line Rotary

This enthusiastic group of local business-people is new to The Arc, but they've already made a huge contribution by helping out at our Breakfast with Santa event. They kept the kitchen running smoothly, flipped pancakes and assisted wherever needed. They are already looking forward to returning regularly throughout the year to help out with other events and activities.

A special thanks to our other Breakfast with Santa volunteers, who worked together to make the event a success for the over 100 children and adults who enjoyed this fun holiday activity: Kate Brown, Paul Cardell, Joe Kelleher, Bob Koperna, Susan March, Bill Mullin, Norma Silver, Paul and Terri Weaver and the Abbes and Friars service groups of West Chester University.

We couldn't do it without you!



Cheers! Members of the Upper Main Line Rotary and other volunteers hoisted their pitchers of pancake mix for Breakfast with Santa.

The Arc Helps Develop Future Social Workers

For 35 years, The Arc's First Step program has been utilized as a year-long field placement for students in local university undergraduate and graduate programs who are studying to be social workers. Our current interns spend 16 hours per week here and each has a caseload of about four families. They are working as liaisons between the First Step staff and families whose children are served in the program. Their interactions with the families include such things helping them through the process of obtaining Medical Assistance, answering general questions from families about their child's day and visiting families in their homes to ensure continuity of care between school and home.

Several of our current interns spoke with us about their reactions to the placement. Haley, who is interested in becoming an equine-assisted psychotherapist working with children and young adults, shared that one of the most important lessons she has learned is how to be a professional member of a team. "Also, I've been exposed to many different types of families, of diverse cultures, who represent worlds beyond what I've ever experienced," she explained, "and I'm learning how to relate to people whose customs, practices and languages are unfamiliar to me." Christine, whose goal is to work with Hispanic families, offered the perspective of coming from a different state whose laws and regulations differ from Pennsylvania and Chester County. Both young women agreed that the most challenging issue they've encountered is learning how difficult it is for some families to access services, or even to be aware of what's available.



Parent and former board member Kathy Potts, First Step interns Christine and Haley and development director Catherine Binz presented the Count Me In © Puppet Show to students at Sugartown Elementary School.

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nitaries, who presented The Arc with congratulatory citations of recognition and appreciation from the mayor's office, the Chester County board of commissioners, Pennsylvania State Representative Dan Truitt and Senator Andrew Dinniman.

The Chamber also created a video highlighting The Arc's services and its work in the community. To view this heart-warming video, go to www.arcofchestercounty.org.



The Talis family (left to right) Judy Talis, Michelle Talis and Robert Talis.

invest in *The Arc*

All gifts are important to The Arc of Chester County, regardless of their size or method.

Be part of our 2013 Milestones Campaign, which runs through June 30, 2013. Gifts of \$25 or more entitle you to an Arc membership.

What's the quickest, easiest way to donate? Simply go to www.arcofchestercounty.org and click on the orange Donate button. Fill out the information required and that's all it takes!

Have you asked your employer for a matching gift? We can help with the paperwork. You can also ask the human resources department at your company for instructions or a form. This is a great way to leverage your gift.

Thanks to a partnership with Goodsearch.com, The Arc can benefit every time you search online. Simply select "The Arc of Chester County" as your charity of choice. You can also generate funds for The Arc by stopping at GoodShop.com before shopping at your favorite online retailers.

Clip those box tops from your favorite General Mills products. The First Step classroom program participates in Box Tops for Education. Simply drop off your box tops next time you're at The Arc. Each top is worth 10 cents, which adds up.

Clear space in your driveway by donating your car. Call 1-877-ARC-CARO or visit www.thearc.org to get started.

Remember The Arc of Chester County in your will. We can help with the details. Are we already in your will? Please let us know.

To learn more about how you can invest in The Arc, please contact Catherine Binz, director of development, at 610-696-8090 ext. 202 or cbinz@arcofchestercounty.org.



From the Executive Director -

Jeanne Meikrantz

Dear Friends,

I am so excited we were selected by the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce to receive the Annual Mosteller Community Service Award. As the new executive director, I know how fortunate I am to have been given the opportunity to join such an incredible organization and community. This award is a great testament to the dedication and contributions of those who have worked so hard to fulfill the mission of The Arc and provide quality services to individuals with disabilities. Whether hosting an event such as Breakfast with Santa, adopting individuals and families in need during the holidays, advocating for a child's right to education, finding meaningful jobs or supporting an individual in their home or community, The Arc of Chester County welcomes every opportunity to serve.



I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know that Carole Ferguson, dedicated employee and representative for The Arc

Carole marched alongside Ruth Wood, one of our founding members, in support of community services for people with disabilities.



Carole Ferguson speaks with the Chesko family at the 2012 Gala.

for 34 years, retired effective February 15, 2013. Through her roles as Program Director and advocate, Carole has worked tirelessly to safeguard the rights of individuals with disabilities. No problem was too big or too small for Carole to take on. Carole was unstoppable in her work to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. She worked extremely hard to make sure individuals had a safe place to live and were connected to needed services. Through her dedicated teaching of self-advocacy skills to individuals as well as facilitating services on their behalf, she formed true friendships with those she served. Carole will be sorely missed and fondly remembered, for her indomitable spirit, her sense of humor and her unwavering commitment to enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families.

Sincerely,

Executive Director

Holiday Shopping Event a Huge Success!

Thanks in large part to the efforts of Kera McHale, certified occupational therapy assistant (COTA) with the First Step program, the Holiday Shopping Extravaganza raised over \$3,000 for the benefit of First Step! The event was Kera's brainchild and she recruited popular vendors such as Tastefully Simple, Pink Zebra, Stella & Dot, Mary Kay, Thirty-One Gifts, Pampered Chef, and Silpada to present their goods for sale and then generously donate a large portion of their proceeds. Beautiful handknit scarves and hats as well as yummy baked goods were also for sale. It was a wonderful opportunity for those who attended to get a jump on their holiday shopping and enjoy a fun afternoon, while raising funds for a worthwhile cause. The event will definitely be repeated in 2013, so watch for more details next fall.

Annual Report Corrections

When publishing our Annual Report, we make every attempt to be accurate and complete. Unfortunately, our 2011-2012 report contained the following errors:

- Ron Welch's name was spelled incorrectly. The correct spelling is Welch, not Welsh.
- Marie Lewis' name was inadvertently omitted from our Board of Directors' list.
- Memorial tributes to Beth Stafford Quay and Al Fort should have included Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Carey.

We apologize for these errors. A corrected PDF version of the 2011-2012 Annual Report has been posted on our website, www.arcofchestercounty.org.



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West Chester, PA
Permit No. 102

900 Lawrence Drive
West Chester, PA 19380
(610) 696-8090 phone
(610) 696-8300 fax

www.arcofchestercounty.org
facebook.com/arcofchestercounty

Our Mission

To advocate, educate, and provide services to empower individuals with disabilities and their families to enhance the quality of their lives.

Affiliated with the United Way, The Arc of Pennsylvania, and The Arc of the United States



Tune in to The Arc

Don't miss our Ninth Annual Community Celebration on Saturday, March 2 at the Chester Valley Golf Club! This festive event promises to be an exceptional evening of delicious food and drink, unique items available through silent and live auctions and a welcome opportunity to mingle with members, staff and friends of The Arc of Chester County. Funds raised through this event will benefit programs and services for individuals and families with disabilities in Chester County and neighboring areas.

Exciting auction items are arriving every day! Are you a Flyers fan? We've got tickets. Enjoy a sight-seeing tour over the Jersey Shore for two. Visit one of the many museums, restaurants or historical sites in the local area. Many other special activities and items will be available, so don't miss your chance to bid on them!

We still have a few sponsorship opportunities available. Would your company like to support The Arc? Sponsorship levels range from \$500 to \$5000 and include prominent name recognition before and during the event, free tickets and advertising in our program book.

For more information, visit our website at www.arcofchestercounty.org or contact Leslie Rahling at 610-696-8090. We're looking forward to seeing you there!

Board of Directors

Officers

Tom Beckett - President
Jessica Straghan - 1st Vice President
Donald Faix - 2nd Vice President
Anne Webster - Secretary
Patrick Sullivan - Treasurer
Amy Koegler - Immediate Past President
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