



Achieve

A quarterly newsletter for Members and friends of The Arc of Atlantic County

Summer 2008

Spring Fundraisers Gross \$130K for Arc Programs

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From upcoming events to special accomplishments, there's always something happening here at The Arc of Atlantic County. Now you can be the first to know what's new by joining our e-mail list! Simply visit our website at www.arcatlantic.org and add your email address to the space in the upper right-hand corner.



In just over one month, The Arc brought in nearly \$130,000 to support programs like recreation, family support and case management through two major fundraising events--the annual Tribute Dinner and the Step Up for The Arc Walk held this past spring.

On March 26th, The Arc honored Senator and Mrs. Gormley for the couple's work on behalf of the community at the Carriage House in Galloway, NJ. With a silent auction that rivaled some of the best in the region and a pair of honorees highly deserving of this recognition, this year's Tribute Dinner was a stunning success, raising more than \$108,000.

Deborah Davies, CEO, said, "Thank you especially to Senator and Mrs. Gormley for allowing us to recognize their contributions to our community, which include the Senator's work to promote the economic development of the region, and Mrs. Gormley's work on behalf of children and families through her role in Family Court and AtlantiCare. We are grateful for their support of The Arc through the years and for helping to make our area a great place for all people to live."



Special thanks to Senator James Whelan for serving as this year's Honorary Chair and playing a key role in raising significant dollars for The Arc through corporate sponsor-

ships. Also, additional appreciation goes out to Michael Charlton, President of Icon Hospitality (Carriage House) for once again providing an exceptional facility for this event.

Turn to page five to see photos from the Tribute and a list of our generous sponsors.

The 2008 Step Up for The Arc Walk was held Saturday, May 3, 2008 on the Ventnor boardwalk and brought in more than \$21,000 for Arc programs. More than 150 walkers and volunteers participated in the event, including the Masonic Lodges of the 23rd District, The Arc's Saturday Program children and staff, Richard Stockton College's women's soccer team, and a host of Arc employees, consumers and family members.

The top fundraising team was Team Saturday Program, which raised more than \$2,000. Individuals who raised more than \$1,000 each included Linda Ilg, Debbie Davies and Kathi Lentz. Unity Lodge was the top grossing Masonic Lodge and Dina Scoppa was the top grossing Arc service recipient. All received prizes for their efforts.

Many thanks to all of the Ventnor businesses who supported the event by joining on as t-shirt sponsors.



Team Saturday Program members Jason and Annie enjoy a rest after the walk.



Regina Johnston Receives 2008 NJACP Community Star

Regina Johnston of our Forestbrook group home in Galloway was one of 40 individuals statewide selected as a 2008 Community STAR in June by the New Jersey Association of Community Providers. Congratulations, Regina!

Regina was accompanied by her friends and staff to the June 9th awards dinner in Princeton and beamed with delight when she saw her star-shaped trophy. As she took to the stage to accept her trophy, she said "Thanks mom!" in recognition of her mother, who recently passed away.

Forestbrook Group Home Manager Melissa Kramer submitted the following letter which resulted in Regina's selection:



"Regina Johnston is one of those individuals that it just feels good to be around. Her bright smile and positive attitude warm the hearts of those she meets. Whether a long-time friend or a stranger she meets at the grocery store, Regina will strike up a conversation or offer her help. Her cheerful demeanor is contagious. Regina actively participates in her community, has a steady boyfriend of 10 years, is a supportive daughter for her mother confined to a nursing home, and is an active participant and friend to her housemates living at the group home. What is now a part of her daily routine has not always come so easily for her.

At the age of 18, Regina left her family home and moved to Vineland Developmental Center, where she spent 11 years with limited options. In 1981 she moved to an Arc group home where she had an increased opportunity for personal choice, self-determination, and community life. Regina lived and actively participated in the community for 25 years. She moved from a group home to an apartment and she worked in the community. A few

years ago she went through a period where her life became bleak and unfulfilling. She lacked interest in most things including herself. The most disturbing was her desire to remain in bed most days and not do anything. The challenge of getting out of bed and facing the day was overwhelming for her and prevented her from experiencing life's joys.

With support, encouragement, and determination, Regina has overcome these challenges and regained a zest for life. Now everyday is a new beginning and Regina awakes at the crack of dawn to embrace her interests, relationships, wants, and desires. She takes pride in her appearance, her responsibilities, and her community. Despite Regina's disability, she has used her talents and abilities to triumph. As stated by Churchill, "Life is not always what one wants it to be, but to make the best of it, as it is, is the only way of being happy." Regina has certainly made the best of her circumstances and created for herself a truly satisfying life. She is a star that shines brightly to her friends, family, and community." --Melissa Kramer

Arc Hires Operations Director



Scott Hennis recently joined The Arc of Atlantic County as the Operations Director of residential services and will oversee the management of The Arc's nine group homes and 17 supervised apartments.

Scott joins The Arc after 16 years with The Arc of Cape May County and most recently with Family Service Association. He holds a bachelor of science from The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

"I am thrilled to be a part of The Arc of Atlantic County and look forward to helping the agency continue on its path of success", Hennis says. He resides in Ventnor with his wife and three children.

Storage Facilities Donate Units

The Arc frequently receives offers of gently used furniture for our residents' use but has not always been able to accept these donations due to lack of storage space. Thanks to three generous storage facilities in our region, however, we now have free storage spaces so we can better respond to donors and meet the needs of our residents. Thank you to Clayton Self Storage, Premier Self Storage and Simply Self Storage for your



generosity! Pictured is Arc Development Director Debbie Given, left, with Kathy Coggins, manager of Simply Self Storage in Egg Harbor Township.

Arc Collaborates with Local Organizations to Produce Variety Show

"Heal the world, make it a better place, for you and for me and the entire human race!"

These inspirational words were sung by Dee Dee Caldwell and the 24-member cast of the Spotlight Players Group in the final act of their annual variety show held at the Jewish Community Center (JCC) in Margate in April. The standing ovation proved that the performers did more than just show off their talents this year—they spread a deeper message about what can happen when we support dreams of people with developmental disabilities.

The event was the second annual production presented by The Arc and the JCC. The partnership between these two local organizations was further enhanced this year by a collaboration with the Ocean City Fine Arts League, which has been providing a group of Arc service recipients with weekly art lessons since the fall of 2005.



Judy Johnson sings her rendition of "Mr. Postman"

With the support of lead teacher Jim Penland, Arc staff and

program volunteers, they constructed a series of painted panels featuring a cityscape. Each artist contributed a panel with their own unique style, but they all came together beautifully for the show's backdrop", said Deborah Davies.

The show kicked off with a rendition of Debby Boone's "You Light Up My Life" and continued with everything from 80's pop hits to rock and roll classics. John Dunkley's version of Poison's "Every Rose Has Its Thorn" was a crowd favorite, especially with Dunkley dressed as lead singer Bret Michaels.



John Dunkley singing Poison's "Every Rose Has its Thorn"

Joe Andrade's performance of "Under the Boardwalk" was supported by backup dancers, and Chris Cotterall's 'Chicken Dance' got the crowd moving.

This year's performance was once again made possible with funding from the Alan Perskie Program for Special Kids and the Local Arts Developmental Program of the NJ State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through the local arts grants program administered by Atlantic County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs. Special thanks to the Honorable Steven Perskie for serving as the emcee of the event.

Achieving real choices: John and Ellen Miller

Choosing a Life Together

Photo courtesy of Tom Schench

For John Miller and Ellen Rosen it was love at first sight. “My friend, Rita kept telling me to go talk to him,” Ellen recalls of their first meeting. “We were at an Arc dance at the Mays Landing Country Club. I’m kind of shy but Rita kept saying, ‘Go talk to him’. Finally I did.”

“That’s called matchmaking,” John said through his boyish grin. John knew almost right away that he wanted to marry Ellen. “I wanted to get married for forty years,” John recalls. “I just wasn’t ready yet. You have to be ready.”

John explained that for many years he preferred spending time with his friends, playing his guitar and living the bachelor life. But soon after he met Ellen, he knew he was ready for a change. On February 14, 2003 he got down on both knees and proposed.

“We were at the Sweetheart Dance,” Ellen recalls. “He got down on his knees in front of everybody and I was embarrassed.”

In spite of her embarrassment, Ellen happily accepted. They spent the next five years getting to know each other and planning for their special day.

On April 12, 2008 they participated in a commitment ceremony held at The Arc. Fifty close friends and family members were in attendance including John’s mother, Ann, Ellen’s mother Theresa and her brother John. Duncan Lane, one of Arc’s supported living counselors and assistant pastor at his church, presided over the ceremony. The multi-purpose room was decorated in red, white and blue and guests enjoyed great food, refreshments and music provided by DJ Dan MacDonald.

Now that the celebration is a wonderful memory John and Ellen reflect on their life together. Both agree that living together has been an adjustment and both are learning to compromise. They have



John and Ellen cut the cake together at their commitment ceremony. The cake was generously provided by John’s friend and art program volunteer Pat Walsh.

varied interests that sometimes take them in different directions.

John still enjoys playing his guitar and takes both guitar and piano lessons. The day after the wedding, John performed in a variety show as part of The Arc’s Performing Arts Program. He is also very involved in The Arc’s Fine Arts Club and has sold a few of his creations. John is a member of Kiwanis and president of his Self-Advocacy group. In addition to all these activities he holds a part-time job with World Class Flowers.

Ellen recently joined a gym and works out regularly now. She has lost over 37 pounds for her efforts. She also enjoys going to the mall to shop with friends.

The couple is able to live independently with the help of The Arc’s Supportive Living Program. Program coordinators and counselors provide support according to their needs.

John and Ellen acknowledge that their relationship, like most relationships, is challenging at times. But they agree that it is worth the effort. John said, “We got married for love and to take care of each other.”

We all wish them well.



Ronnie Town and Charlie Wimberg, left, of Atlantic City Electric, pose with the Gormleys. Atlantic City Electric was a Presenting Sponsor for this year's Tribute.



Brian, Pam and Stephanie DeCicco (left to right) with Arc employee and event volunteer Traci Scott.



Carmen Gonzalez, Kim Townsend and Bernadette Cummings, of Pinnacle, left to right. Jessica Townsend is second from left.



Ernie Simmers, left, and Joe Andrade enjoyed a moment in front of the camera.

2008 Tribute to Senator William Gormley and Virginia A. Gormley Wednesday, March 26, 2008 The Carriage House

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Kathi Lentz, Linda Cobb, Diane Kalin and Dee Madu (left to right) were just a handful of Arc employees who volunteered their time to help with the silent auction.



The RMS group home residents and staff attend the Tribute Dinner each year. Pictured above from left to right are Mary Ann Berman, David Schollenberger, Crystal Reed, Shirley Massey, Gloria Brown, Francis Chambers, and Billy Thomas.



Emeritus board members Bob Frank and Gene Arnone, with their spouses Bev and Cindy.



The Gormley's made a special presentation to their friend Michael Ridgway, who introduced Senator Gormley during the program.

Photo courtesy of The Arc

Photo courtesy of The Arc

Photo courtesy of The Arc



Night of Safety

The Arc sponsored a *Night of Safety* for all Supportive Living service recipients and their families in April. Sixty-eight attendees participated in a number of learning stations including fire safety, personal identification safety, in-home safety, appropriate emergency calls and preventing exploitation. Each attendee received a goody bag with information and first aid kits. According to Operations Director Renee Bird, the goal of this event was

to present safety awareness in a more serious-yet fun-way. Pictured at right, Chanise Rhoades learns how to put out a real fire with an extinguisher. Assisting Chanise is Arc Supportive Living Coordinator Mark Henry and several members of the Farmington Fire Department. Special thanks to Farmington Fire Department's Captain Dennis Sharp and Galloway Township Police Department's Corporal Harvey Bird for your expert assistance!



People in Our Community

The couple living next door, the young man bagging your groceries, the season ticket holder next to you at the baseball game, the casino porter greeting you with a big smile, the woman at your gym riding the stationary bike—many people in the community whose paths you regularly cross are supported by The Arc of Atlantic County.

Through The Arc's Supportive Living Program people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are able to live independently in the community. Arc Operations Director Renee Bird explains, "We have five supportive living coordinators and 17 counselors. Our staff supports 54 individuals at approximately 45 residential locations. We help people with finances, grocery shopping, doctors' appointments, job coaching, transportation, recreation, volunteering and just about anything else they need to live as they choose."

"The goal of our program is to help people integrate into the community," says Shereen MacDonald,

supportive living coordinator. "That means something different to everyone. Each person in our program has a unique vision of the kind of life he or she wants. From assisting with filling prescriptions to planning a wedding--whatever it is, we help make it happen. I remind people that what we do is not supportive existence, it's supportive *living*."



Arc Supportive Living staff at a recent staff meeting.

Stellar Speller Christian Thompson



Christian at the registration table at the 81st Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC.

Many of our local readers may have read stories in the Press of Atlantic City this spring about Abscon 8th grader Christian Thompson, who won two local spelling bees and went on to compete in the 81st Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. Although Thompson, 13, was eliminated in round two with the word 'obstetrician', he went home a winner in more ways than one. Christian has Asperger's syndrome, a pervasive developmental disorder that impacts social and time management skills. But thanks to his own determination and the help of his family, school and The Arc, Christian is able to focus on

his strengths—which happen to include a lot more than spelling. "Christian is a very bright boy with a passion for tennis, playing with his friends, biking, bowling, computers, math and numbers," said Arc case manager Lannie Thomas who works with the Thompson family to help them navigate through the Division of Developmental Disabilities for services that include summer camp. When asked about his career aspirations, Christian says he hopes to be a professional tennis player or an accountant or financial advisor. Congratulations on your accomplishments, Christian, and best wishes for a bright future!

Thank You for Helping Us Grow!

(Donors listed made a gift of \$25 or more between January 1, 2008 and May 31, 2008. Listings do not include gifts related to the Tribute Dinner)

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Kathy Brady, left, of Prudential Fox and Roach, presents a check from Fox and Roach Charities to Deborah Davies.

Would your company, church or service organization like to support our mission? Call Arc Development Director Debbie Given at 609-485-0800 ext. 135 to learn how you can help The Arc and be recognized as a supporter of the region's leading social services agency for people with developmental disabilities!

Mural Donated by Stockton Alumni



The Arc is the grateful beneficiary of a beautiful mural, which was painted in our multipurpose room by recent graduates of Richard Stockton College's department of education this past winter. The mural project was spearheaded by Anna (Ginny) Swift, right, and Benjamin Dey (second from right) and was made possible with financial support from several Stockton faculty members including Nancy Fiedler, left. Also pictured is Susan Schafer-Walker, second from left, who helped complete the mural. The Arc's multipurpose room is a central meeting spot for many Arc programs and events and the beach scene adds color and beauty to this oft-used room. The artists were recognized at our Annual Membership Meeting in June.

A Message from the C.E.O

Dear Friends of The Arc,

We hope you enjoyed reading this edition of Achieve, The Arc of Atlantic County's quarterly newsletter. We are proud to highlight stories like the long awaited wedding of John Miller and Ellen Rosen, the variety show presented by the Spotlight Players, and The Arc's successful fundraising activities.

This past June, we celebrated the achievements of our service recipients at our annual membership meeting. From the many volunteer projects conducted by our Self Advocacy Club to those who have celebrated employment milestones, we paid special tribute to those who have achieved their dreams, both large and small.

Your support helps to make all that we do for individuals and families possible. If you are a contributor, you have my sincere gratitude. If you would like to become a contributor, just complete the enclosed form and return it with your gift. You can also visit our website at www.arcatlantic.org to donate securely online. Every gift makes a difference.

Thank you for your interest in The Arc of Atlantic County. I hope you and your family are having a wonderful summer.



Cordially,

Deborah Davies, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

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of Atlantic County

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Vision

People with developmental disabilities have the opportunities and supports they need to live the lives they choose.

Mission

The Arc of Atlantic County improves the lives of people with developmental disabilities in our community. Through direct services, advocacy, education and prevention activities, we work in partnership with individuals and their families to make choices possible about how and where they live, learn, play and work.

Deborah Davies, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

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