



# HERALD

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO and Executive Director



Judy C. Miao

This year has been one of transformation toward realizing The Arc of Somerset County's vision of Education, Caring, Hope, and Opportunity (ECHO). We are focusing, first, on the well-being of consumers and their families as they advance through The Arc's continuum of care. Our new management team is implementing innovative strategies to ensure the highest quality services and staff, financial stability, fundraising and development, and board governance. Their operating focus is "excellence at the point of contact."

The Arc of Somerset County has developed new strategic partnerships and collaborations with organizations as prestigious as the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, which is sending pediatric residents to work at the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center. The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities has established a steering committee to enhance the career development of

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## Volunteers from sanofi-aventis Refurbish Camp Jotoni

More than 75 volunteers from the Information Technology department at sanofi-aventis in Bridgewater spent June 8 scrubbing, mowing, and repairing facilities at Camp Jotoni in Warren just in time for its summer opening. From scouring sinks and bleaching mattresses to weeding and trimming trees, a team led by Veronique De Bock, Executive Associate, sanofi-aventis, applied elbow grease and ingenuity to housecleaning, gardening, and even woodwork. Moreover, sanofi-aventis donated \$1,500 to cover the cost of cleaning and restoration materials. "The volunteers left every cabin and building gleaming," said Kathleen Hofer, Director, Development, The Arc of Somerset County.

"Everyone went far beyond their list of essential tasks," Kathleen added. "One person painted a cabin ceiling so that it wouldn't look dingy." Others mowed grass, repaired paths, planted flowers, leveled and mulched an entranceway for wheelchair access, and even power washed



*Volunteers from the Information Technology department at sanofi-aventis in Bridgewater spruce up Camp Jotoni.*

concrete around the pool. Eric Angloher, Supervisor, Video Conferencing Services, sanofi-aventis, brought a trailer that contained his own woodworking shop as well as an all-terrain vehicle for colleagues to drive around camp. A trained carpenter, Eric worked with colleagues

*See sanofi-aventis on page 3*

## A Message from Edmond A. Brown, President

Dear Friends,

We are at the starting point of a new fiscal year when we renew our focus and commitment to those whom we serve. Our mission is simply to make The Arc of Somerset the best. We aim to be the best in the eyes of our consumers, our employees, and our donors.

We are realigning our organization and initiatives so that our consumers and their caregivers in the surrounding communities can feel even more proud of the services they receive. We recognize that our employees are the ones that make it happen. Generally most people spend more time at work than any other place besides home, so we will be working hard to be more competitive while



Edmond A. Brown

rewarding and recognizing employees for their accomplishments. We also want our donors to feel good about where they put their money. We compete with many other nonprofits and noble causes. We want to ensure that donors can see the fruits of their giving and that they have comfort that those funds are being put to good use.

Our mission is directed at continuing along the path that we were already going down except to narrow our focus and concentrate even more on the things that matter most to those we serve.

Warmest regards,

*Edmond A. Brown*

## The Arc of Somerset Mission

The Arc of Somerset County helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families realize their dreams by providing lifelong advocacy and quality services.\* We also promote the prevention of developmental disabilities.

\*The word *families* includes all biological family members, as well as friends, caregivers, guardians, and advocates.

### THE ARC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President.....Edmond A. Brown  
1st VP/Secretary .....Eric Mandelbaum  
2nd VP ..... Eileen Bradbury  
Past President..... Bill Mackay

### THE ARC BOARD MEMBERS

Julie Bliss, EdD, RN      Evelyn Morris  
Tom Brooks      Brian O'Malley  
Russell Ditzel      Fred Patterson  
Lisa Dudzik      Scott Ritter  
Carol Fanning      Kapila Seshadri, MD  
Sandi Hill      Tarun Shah  
Fran Maher      Ron Slahetka  
Belinda Malave

### CEO &

Executive Director .....Judy Miao  
Associate Executive Director  
.....Lauren Panarella

### STAFF DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS

Camp Jotoni.....Chris Reagan  
Childhood Services ..... Laura Liebel  
Continuous Improvement..... Karen Ennis  
Development..... Kathleen Hofer  
Early Intervention  
Program.....Jennifer Orlick  
Employment  
Services.....Christopher Corvino  
Finance.....James Richart  
Human Resources .....Jeanne Radich  
Information Technology..... William Scheib  
Jerry Davis School, Principal.... Gail Strong  
Nursing Services ..... Elaine Giannascoli  
PACT .....Jeanne Guarnieri  
Residential Services ..... Chris Gunning  
Safety &  
Maintenance ..... Gabe Trepiccione, CFM

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## Chris Corvino Is Appointed Director, Employment Services

Christopher Corvino was named Director, Employment Services, effective April 23. "I feel lucky to be in an agency with folks who have such longevity," said an enthusiastic Christopher. "It's a big help for the new kid on the block to work with colleagues who know the people they serve so well."

Chris came to The Arc of Somerset County with more than 13 years of experience. His previous positions included Program Manager for the Center for Family Support in Roselle, Case Coordinator for the Douglass Outreach Center in New Brunswick, and Director of Employment Services at the NJ Association of the Deaf-Blind in Somerset.



Chris Corvino

"I was attracted to The Arc of Somerset County because it is so forward looking and has such a positive impact on our area," Chris said. He praised his predecessor for establishing a portfolio of solid business contacts and a strong community presence. As Director, Employment Services, Chris would like to expand The Arc's customer base with even more financially lucrative, interesting projects.

Said Lauren Panarella, Associate Executive Director, "I am confident Christopher's experience and knowledge will be an asset to the Employment Services Department of The Arc of Somerset County. Please join me in welcoming Christopher to his new position."

## Sergeant Allan Obace Expresses Gratitude for Thanksgiving Gifts

Before Thanksgiving, The Arc of Somerset County sent 12 cartons of food and toiletries to Sergeant Allan Obace and his Marine unit in Iraq. Sergeant Obace is the son of Stella Guludene, Assistant Director, Residential Services. In April, a grateful Sergeant Obace visited The Arc to present a Certificate of Appreciation to Judy Miao, CEO & Executive Director, as well as a flag that was flown in Iraq. Both the certificate and flag are now on display in The Arc of Somerset County's front lobby.

Pictured above are Sergeant Obace and Stella Guludene, Sandi Hill —a significant contributor—and her two sons, Matthew and Andrew. Matthew, standing in center,



benefited from the Early Intervention Program at the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center.



*Sanofi-aventis, continued from page 1*

to size and cut wood for missing pieces of window and doorframes, before sanding, painting, and replacing them.

"Camp Jotoni gave us an opportunity to step outside our lives and make a difference in someone else's life," Eric said. "Our sanofi-aventis motto is 'Because health matters.' Camp Jotoni offers people with disabilities a different kind of medicine."

Every year, labor and resources are needed to keep the facilities and the 15.5 acres of woodlands at Camp Jotoni safe and accessible for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Thanks to the generosity of sanofi-aventis volunteers, 200 campers are once again enjoying the restorative tranquility of nature. "Thank you sanofi-aventis," said Judy Miao, CEO and Executive Director. "We could not have done it without you."





# 2007 ANNUAL MEETING: BOARD MEMBERS

The Arc of Somerset County's 2007 Expo, Election, and Awards celebration on June 25 at the Somerset Hills Hotel attracted nearly 140 consumers, families, board members, staff, volunteers, and guests. In welcoming attendees, Judy Miao, CEO and Executive Director, described this year as one of transformation toward realizing the agency's vision of Education, Caring, Hope, and Opportunity (ECHO).

The keynote address was given by Shawn McNerney, Regional Assistant Director, northern and upper central region, NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). Shawn reported on the recent reorganization of the NJ Department of Human Services and DDD, describing the environment as very open. "They are listening to you," he assured the audience.

## HONORING RETIREES

Board President Edmond Brown honored four retiring board members for their years of dedicated service: Brian Bosenberg, Edana Desatnick, Susan Donovan, and Demi Lappas. The retirees have made a difference in the lives of many within the Arc community.

## CONGRATULATING BOARD MEMBERS

Re-elected unanimously are board members Julie Bliss, Tom Brooks, Eddie Brown, Lisa Dudzik, Fran Maher, Belinda Malave, Brian O'Malley, Fred Patterson, Scott Ritter, and Kapila Seshadri. Fran Maher, Chair, Nominating Committee, congratulated her colleagues while welcoming two new appointees: Sandi Hill and Ron Slahetka.

## ANNOUNCING THE 2007 AWARDS

KAPILA SESHADRI, MD, Medical Director of Pediatric DD at Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center, received the Healthcare Professional of the Year Award for her many contributions, including the Pediatric Residency Program now offered at the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center.



MARY SEMAMBYA won the Martin Papish Award for her extraordinary service since 1994. Most recently, Mary applied characteristic initiative and compassion to her role as Residential Manager for the Stevens Lane Group Home and the South Street supervised apartments.

SHARON MCCLELLAN was named Professional of the Year for her sensitive and enthusiastic commitment as Social Worker for both PACT (Parents and Children Together) and Jerry Davis. Sharon makes herself available to families in need of assistance almost every hour of the day.



DEBBIE WEISMAN received Volunteer of the Year Award for providing exceptional photography for public relations purposes and at special events, and for helping to spruce up Camp Jotoni. Not only does Debbie consistently volunteer her own time at Camp Jotoni, but she recruits others to help as well.

Also recognized as Volunteer of the Year was ROGER ALLEN, another avid volunteer at Camp Jotoni and a leading force in rallying civic groups to help. Roger plans as well as manages cleanup, repair, and landscaping efforts that span several weekends in the spring and fall.



Honored for Distinguished Community Service were CITI'S WARREN TECHNOLOGY CENTER and HSBC.



# ARE ELECTED, AWARDS PRESENTED

Employees at both companies have generously given of their time, initiative, and resources to ensure that Camp Jotoni is safe and accessible for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Recognition was given to all Arc volunteers including: the UNITED WAY for hosting 17 Days of Caring; 21 corporations, 4 civic organizations, and 635 volunteers for providing more than \$200,000 in donated time and materials; 135 volunteers from HSBC, 75 volunteers from SANOFI-AVENTIS, KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS Council 11409, LIONS CLUB of Warren, and WATCHUNG HILLS ELKS Lodge 2252 for sprucing up Camp Jotoni; 80 volunteers from CITI WARREN TECHNOLOGY CENTER for refurbishing the Valley Park Employment Center; and the FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS District 12 for supporting The Arc Walk.

To all of The Arc's cherished award winners, thank you and congratulations!



*Knights, Lions, and Elks Volunteers*



*Citi Volunteers*



*United Way 17 Days of Caring*



*HSBC Volunteers*

## Arc Angel Gala Is Set for December 1

The Arc of Somerset County is going to celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary at this year's Arc Angel Gala scheduled for the evening of Saturday, December 1, at the Hamilton Farm Golf Club in Gladstone. Save the date —we hope you can attend! More information will follow in the next issue of the *Herald*.



### Tara Trew Is Development Coordinator

Tara Trew has been appointed Development Coordinator, effective immediately. A graduate of The Smeal College of Business at Pennsylvania State University, Tara has a B.S. Degree in Management and Economics.

Said Kathleen Hofer, Director, Development, "Tara brings experience from the for-profit and nonprofit worlds. She has successfully completed internships in business analysis and global sourcing at Bristol-Myers Squibb, and in marketing and fundraising at the Washington County Community Foundation in Pennsylvania. Please join me in welcoming Tara to The Arc of Somerset County."



## “Tea With Honey” Raised Net of \$48,000 To Benefit Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center



From left to right are Monica Ihlefeld, Katie Mohan, Kathy Krell and Kathleen Mastrangelo.

On February 11, more than 375 parents and children attended the “Tea with Honey” fundraiser at the Old Mill Inn in Basking Ridge, raising \$48,000 in net revenues to benefit the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center. Of that, at least \$25,000 came from the “Giving Tree” created by Kerri Mandelbaum as a community service project to complete her Bat Mitzvah.

“I was absolutely amazed and humbled by all of the talent that went into putting this event together,” said Laura Liebel, Director, Childhood Services. “The activities flowed seamlessly and everyone had a great time.” Children dined on chicken fingers and french fries, while their mother or father bid on live auction items, such as a trip to Disneyland. Entertainment included a magician and karate exhibit.

“Tea with Honey” was produced by committee chairpersons Monica Ihlefeld, Kathy Krell, Kathleen Mastrangelo, and Katie Mohan, as well as committee members Bern Barrett, Alyson Binder, Lisa Boylan, Claire Drain, Melinda Gillespie, Marie Irwin, Maureen Johnson, Holly Landon, Kim Lyons, Debra Mandelbaum, Maureen McNally, Mary McNamara, Olivia O’Connor, Ryan Parker, Liz Reid, Robyn Sabel, Tracey Seebode, Amy Stauffer, and Arlene Ward.



During a visit to the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center in July, Kerri Mandelbaum visited with Rebecca Stokes, on the left, and Ava Lindley, on the right.

“The chairs of this event did a phenomenal job,” said Debra Mandelbaum. The Giving Tree—created by Debra’s daughter, Kerri—had net revenues skyrocketing from \$29,600 last year, to \$48,000. “We never had a Giving Tree before,” Debra said.

“The chairs took a leap of faith. They left information on the tables, included Kerri in the program, and supported her on every level.”

### REVENUES MEET ESSENTIAL NEEDS

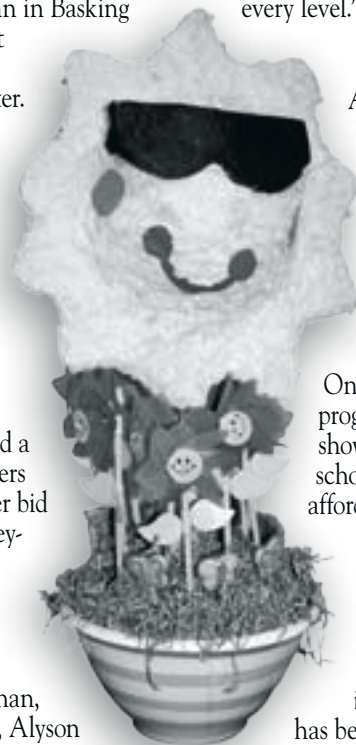
Artistically inclined, Kerri conceived of the Giving Tree while searching for a community service activity that would improve the lives of children – particularly those she met while touring Jerry Davis. In January, Kerri dug a small tree out of her backyard, spray painted the branches, and decorated it with hearts listing donations ranging from \$50 to \$1,000 and the essential item each donation would buy.

One heart, for example, showed \$200 for a CD program that strengthens auditory processing. Others showed items ranging from puzzles to four \$1,000 scholarships for children who need therapy and can’t afford it. “Today, people want to know where their money is going,” Laura explained. “What’s great about a Giving Tree is that it provides that information.”

Since Feb. 11, every item on the tree has been purchased by attendees, friends, and family members. The Giving Tree was so successful that committee members intend to make it a “Tea with Honey” tradition.

“We were ecstatic to be able to buy a new washer and dryer,” Laura said. “That may not sound exciting to some people, but we do a lot of laundry, particularly for our preschool students, and our dryer was dying. The children’s clothes took forever to dry. This is a huge help!”

“The members of the ‘Tea with Honey’ committee all have children and are busy themselves,” Laura said. “Yet they donated this extraordinary amount of time and expertise. Everyone at Jerry Davis really appreciates it.”



Kerri Mandelbaum



## **“Step Up for The Arc” Raises \$23,300 – Up from \$21,750 Last Year**

**O**n a sunny May 20, approximately 250 volunteers “Stepped Up for The Arc” at Duke Island Park on Old York Road in Bridgewater, generating \$23,300 in net revenues – up from \$21,750 last year. “Local supporters of this year’s walkathon did an amazing job,” said Kathleen Hofer, Director, Development. “You can see how donations as small as \$5 and \$10 add up to a significant contribution.”

The Arc of Somerset County is grateful to everyone who participated in this pivotal fundraiser. A special thank you to the following honorees: ERIC MANDELBAUM, Top Individual Fundraiser; BARBARA CORNELIUS, Top Individual Consumer Fundraiser; the INZITARI FAMILY, Top Family Team; and the FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS, DISTRICT 12, Top Community Team.

Over the past five years, District 12 of the Grand Lodge of New Jersey’s Free and Accepted Masons raised \$9,700 alone. Moreover, they donated refreshments as well as 625 hours of planning, shopping, cooking, and feeding walkers. This year, Union Lodge 19 even hosted a pancake breakfast for The Arc.

Corporate sponsors included Peapack-Gladstone Bank in Gladstone and Skylands Community Bank in Warren. Contributions from other companies included 25 cases of water from the American Wholesale Service in North Arlington, food from Wegman’s Food Market in Bridgewater, coffee from Starbucks of Branchburg, and donuts from Dunkin’ Donuts of Manville.

Walkers delighted in music provided by DJ Ben Auletta and the playful antics of the 4-H clowns and Sparkee, the Somerset Patriot’s Mascot. Girl Scout Troop 995 of Basking Ridge offered face painting and arts and crafts, while Lieutenant Tim Pino of the Somerset County Sheriff’s Office provided fingerprinting for child identification purposes.

Said Kathleen Hofer, Director, Development, “The Arc community is grateful for the dedication and commitment of all sponsors, contributors, and volunteers. Their generosity is instrumental in helping individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities learn to live their dreams.”





## Therapeutic Drumming Puts Rhythm into Residential Life

Bongo Night on Friday, April 13, at the Valley Park Adult Training Center in Bridgewater, had dozens of Arc residents drumming and laughing while refining basic skills such as counting. The event came at the end of a three-day Train-the-Trainer Workshop led by Eddie Tuduri, Director, The Rhythmic Arts Project (TRAP), based in California. As a result of the workshop, Arc Managers and Direct Service Providers will soon be offering Arc residents the option of drumming as recreational therapy.

"Eddie uses more than drums," explained Judy Miao, CEO and Executive Director. "He incorporates all percussion instruments." Participating in Bongo Night were representatives of the Somerset Hills YMCA and The Arc of Mercer County. "Bongo Night was great!" Judy said. "It was a collaborative event that drew people out of their shells, and had many of them asking for more."

TRAP offers more than the myriad benefits of music and entertainment. Eddie's program meets key educational standards in areas such as spelling, counting, social skills, prepositional concepts, and bi-lateral conditioning.

Eddie, a professional drummer, developed the program while recovering from a broken neck he suffered

while body surfing. During rehabilitation, Eddie began drumming to help regenerate his nerves and impulses. Healthcare workers noticed how Eddie's musical rhythm was benefiting other patients as well. Gradually, he developed The Rhythmic Arts Project — getting fellow patients to clap, play along with the music, learn musical notes, build concentration, and, most important, have fun.

With the help of doctors, nurses, therapists, and healthcare workers, Eddie —who had been completely paralyzed by his accident —walked out of the hospital in slightly more than five weeks. Subsequently, Eddie's project was approved by the hospital as recreational therapy and eventually expanded to assist people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

To reach as many people as possible, Eddie began training facilitators throughout the U.S. The Arc of Somerset County is grateful for the training and thrilled to add TRAP to residents' repertoire of recreational therapy. Thank you, Eddie!



## Celebrating The Arc's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Delivering Newspapers to Hospital Patients

The Arc of Somerset County is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary delivering the daily Courier News newspaper to patients in Mullenberg Hospital in Plainfield from 1997 to 2002, and the Somerset Medical Center in Somerville from 2002 to 2007. Arc consumers Barbara Cornelius, Barbara Wolf, Sharon Yefchek, and Elvina Grimes (who works as a substitute) pick up the newspapers from the reception desk of the Somerset Medical Center, and deliver them from a cart to patients in all areas of the hospital except critical care. They also leave newspapers in the waiting areas.

"The patients are very happy to have a paper delivered promptly every morning," said Cathy McMullen, Director, Volunteer Services. "It's a delightful service."

Sponsoring this program is Brandywine Senior Living based in Mount Laurel. Aishani Patel, Director, Community Relations, Brandywine Senior Living, believes that buying newspapers for patients and hospital staff is a way to give back to the community. "We have a wonderful working relationship with

physicians and emergency caregivers at the Somerset Medical Center," Aishani said. "Any time one of our residents requires hospitalization, we know that they will receive the best care possible."

Marlena Javier, Single Copy Manager, The Courier News, is equally pleased. "The Arc does a very good job for us," Marlena said. "They are on time every day, and are always reliable. If we provide an insufficient number of newspapers or something goes wrong, they always call and let us know."

"Everybody likes the program," Marlena added. "People have called to ask who is sponsoring this program so they can thank them."

The Arc community is grateful to The Courier News, Somerset Medical Center, and Brandywine Senior Living. To Sharon Yefchek, Barbara Wolf, Barbara Cornelius, and Elvina Grimes, congratulations for a decade of success!



## Nurse Brenda Maehr and son, Bobby, Come Full Circle at The Arc



Bobby Maehr

Brenda Maehr and her son, Bobby, became affiliated with The Arc of Somerset County in 1986, when Brenda worked part-time at the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center and Bobby, then 3, attended the Early Intervention Program. Now Brenda is a full-time nurse at Jerry Davis, and 24-year-old Bobby works at the Branchburg Employment Center.

Not until three years ago would Brenda consider accepting a full-time job. "Bobby has a congenital heart defect and I never knew what was going to happen," she said. "I hoped and prayed we'd get through, and we have been fortunate. Now that Bobby's health has stabilized, I can work full-time."

Even working part-time turned out to be therapeutic. "I was feeling devastated and The Arc provided me with a little escape," Brenda recalled. "I have made many friends, and met many parents of children with disabilities. Being here has made me feel less sorry for myself because I've seen people with such a wide range of disabilities."

Working at Jerry Davis also gave Brenda an opportunity to keep an eye on Bobby. Most memorable was the day Bobby became instant friends with a little girl who, like Bobby, was diagnosed with Down Syndrome. "The two of them kept

running around and putting their chairs together," Brenda recalled. "The teacher separated them, and, rather than get upset, Bobby just stood up and said, 'bye, bye.' It was so cute. That was the first time I saw Bobby as a child, rather than a diagnosis."

Having been both the recipient and provider of services, Brenda has developed a good rapport with other parents of children who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. "I like working with people at The Arc," Brenda said. "They have been a great source of support for me."

Laura Liebel, Director, Childhood Services, praises Brenda's commitment and skill as a nurse. Sometimes Laura can hear Brenda singing and reading to the children, while tube-feeding them. "Brenda is really dedicated to our students," Laura said. "This is not just a job for her."

Brenda's advice to other parents is simple: love and enjoy your child. "Disabilities and medical issues happen to people of all nationalities and socioeconomic groups," Brenda observed. "Realize that your child is an individual. Have faith. Do the best you can and just take it from there."



Brenda Maehr

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## Staff Learns State-of-the-Art System, Automates Administrative Work

To date, 280 staff members of The Arc of Somerset County have completed computer training and have gone live with Therap Services, a state-of-the-art secure Internet application providing integrated online reporting, documentation, and communication technology for organizations working with people who have developmental disabilities. This includes Direct Support Professionals who work with consumers and representatives from development and human resources.

Said Karen Ennis, Director, Continuous Improvement, "I would like to thank the staff who participated in our pilot programs at the Ardsley, Respite, Warren, and Old Stirling Group Homes, the Gannett Adult Training Center, and the Supported Employment Department for their patience and dedication in helping to work out the 'kinks and bugs' of implementing this system."

The Arc of Somerset is the first developmental disabilities provider in New Jersey to implement Therap Services. This Web-based application stores, backs up, and updates daily documentation in a manner that is compliant with HIPAA, the US Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Therap Services gives staff instant access to consumers' healthcare records, making it easier and faster to follow up on support needs, recurring medical issues, incidents, and individual service plans. Staff can also use Therap Services to record medical and other essential information, communicate with co-workers, collect data, and track upcoming appointments. Optional features include billing support and a training management system.

"We've received amazingly positive feedback from all of the participants in our six pilot programs," Karen said. No one had anything negative to say about the system. In fact, Karen and Therap Administrative Assistant, Jesica Dominguez, are finding it a challenge to keep up with requests for additional features and applications.

The latest system update includes a new and improved site-specific calendar for planning day-to-day activities, including recreation, and scheduling staff. Said Karen, "The agency's support and dedication in implementing Therap Services is making this project a great success!"

Congratulations to all staff members who have completed their introductory training!

## The Arc Community and DSPs Are Urged to Influence Legislators

The high turnover of direct support providers (DSPs) takes a toll on caregivers, not to mention the people they serve. "People with intellectual and developmental disabilities need consistency of care," said Alison Malnak, an Arc Employment Consultant. "It takes time to build a relationship based on trust." Increasing wages and benefits will help recruit and retain DSPs. It will also lighten the load of those presently meeting escalating needs.

The Arc of Somerset County relies on its members, DSPs, and other stakeholders to advocate for improved services. One way to improve services is to advocate for DSPs and improved Medicaid reimbursement. As an Arc affiliate, family member, or DSP, you can directly influence legislators in Washington, D.C. Your telephone calls and office visits make a huge difference. Visit the ANCOR Action Center at [www.ancor.org](http://www.ancor.org) and participate in Action Alerts. Moreover, you can write to local, state, and national legislators.

DSPs can also help by participating in advocacy events. Last July 27 and 28, Alison participated in a Capitol Hill Congressional Breakfast hosted by ANCOR to advocate for better support for DSPs. The stars at the breakfast were not dignitaries, but those whose lives were most affected by low wages, high turnover, and the reliability of a stable, qualified workforce.

Henry Latimer, an aging parent from Vienna, Virginia, touched the audience with his concern over who would ensure quality care for his adult child after his death. The audience gained a glimpse into a father's worry over the future of a child who has developmental disabilities, when fast-food workers are receiving better wages and benefits than DSPs.

### MEET WITH LEGISLATORS ON SEPTEMBER 10-11

This year, on September 10-11, ANCOR is hosting a Government Activities Seminar at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington, D.C., to give DSPs an opportunity to meet

with Congressional Representatives, provide a firsthand view of the workforce crisis, and urge support for the Direct Support Professional's Fairness and Security Act of 2007.

Bill H.R. 1279 will amend Title XIX of the Social Security Act to provide funds to states to enable them to increase the wages paid to targeted direct support professionals in providing services to individuals with disabilities under the Medicaid Program.

As of June, the only New Jersey Representative to sign H.R. 1279 was Congressman Steve Rothman of the 9<sup>th</sup> District. Said Jessica Sadowsky, ANCOR, "Your representatives are there for you. They won't know what issues are important to you unless you tell them."

Those who supported H.R. 1279 last year —and may be interested in supporting the Bill again —are Congressmen Robert Andrews of the 1<sup>st</sup> District, Donald Payne of the 10<sup>th</sup> District, and Rush Holt of the 12<sup>th</sup> District.

Scheduled for DSPs on September 10 is a continuing education program and, in the evening, entertainment by the comedy group The Capitol Steps. September 11 activities include a continental breakfast, pre-lobbying session, box lunch, rally on Capitol Hill, and visit to Congressional offices.

Thanks to the generosity of ANCOR contributors, DSP registration is free. Advocates, service recipients, and family members are invited to attend, but they must be sponsored by a member of ANCOR, The Arc of the United States, United Cerebral Palsy, or Lutheran Services in America.

To register or obtain information, e-mail ANCOR Advocacy Consultant Daryn Demeritt at [ddemeritt@fieldgoals.net](mailto:ddemeritt@fieldgoals.net)



Alison Malnak

## Frantz Vaval Is Named Assistant Director, Residential Services



Franco Vaval

Frantz (Franco) Vaval was appointed Assistant Director of Residential Services, effective March 26. While overseeing activities at the Warren, Old Stirling, Franklin, and Cambridge Group Homes, Franco is also pursuing a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling at University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ). "I absolutely love it here," Franco enthused. "This is a great agency. There is a team atmosphere and everyone is supportive."

Franco's previous positions included Program Manager at the Bloomfield Group Home for The Arc of Essex, Assistant Director at Community Access Unlimited in Elizabeth, and Residential Coordinator at the Federation of Multicultural Programs in Bayonne.

Said Chris Gunning, Director, Residential Services, "Franco has a wealth of knowledge in the field. Please join me in welcoming him to The Arc of Somerset County."

## Dawn Malavenda Is Appointed Support Specialist

Dawn Malavenda was named Support Specialist, effective March 11. Previous positions at The Arc of Somerset County included Assistant Center Manager and, most recently, Director, Employment Services. Dawn has a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Social Work from William Patterson University.

Said Lauren Panarella, Associate Executive Director, "Dawn's years of service and positive relationship with our consumers will be a tremendous asset in her new position." Congratulations, Dawn!



## Old Stirling Group Home Delighting in the Character of Each Resident

Assistant Manager Lucy Mwangi speaks fondly of the four men and five women living at Old Stirling Group Home in Warren. Their personalities are very distinct. Richard Cox, for example, enjoys doing laundry and making sandwiches. “Richard is a very sweet man who can be quite jovial,” Lucy said. The life of the party, however, is Doreen Delaney who is always teasing people and making jokes.

An appreciative David McMahon lights up when he sees women, and tends to go with the flow. Judith Jensen is equally easygoing. Hailed as a peacemaker, Judith likes to keep everyone at the Old Stirling Group Home calm. “She’s always telling people to take it easy,” Lucy said.



From left to right are Judith Jensen, Doreen Delaney, Sheila (Dawn) Prag, Anne Wilson, and Marci McGlynn.

The grandmother of the house is Marcella McGlynn. “Though generally quiet, Marcella will speak up when she wants something,” Lucy said. More than anything, Lucy wants residents to speak their minds. “Richard, who uses a walker, is the only resident at the Old Stirling Group Home not in a wheelchair,” Lucy explained. “While our residents need 24-hour care, we still want them to have their freedom.” Resident Dawn Prag helps by advocating for housemates, notifying staff when someone has difficulty sleeping or is unhappy.

To help residents live with as few restrictions as possible, this past spring, Lauren Panarella, Associate Executive Director, purchased adaptive feeding equipment which allows residents to eat and drink more independently. JoEllen Pozarek, Speech and Language Pathologist, worked with staff and residents on an individual basis to explain the equipment and demonstrate the safest and most effective feeding techniques.

“The residents are such wonderful human beings,” said Lauren. “I’ve known some of them for 17 years.”

Lauren and resident Annie Wilson have been taking turns scratching each other’s backs for years. Annie’s best friend, though, is quiet Donald Kirsch. “They are always together,” Lucy said.

Last year, studious and spiritually-minded resident T.J. Christian was portrayed in an article by the *Newark Star Ledger* as an outstanding performer for his role in “Wings of a Dove,” as part of the Matheny Arts Access Program.

Many of the Old Stirling Group Home residents are in their 70s. Meeting their needs are The Arc’s Assistant Managers Lucy and Alexandria Simmons-Rhodes; Direct Service Providers (DSPs) Rich Aburam, Vincentia McGrath, Agnes Mwangi, Edward Okumu, Izogie Onaiwu, and Evelyn Williams; and Cook Patrick Vivona.

While meals are provided, the kitchen counters at the Old Stirling Group Home are low enough for residents to wheel under and prepare snacks. Two full-time nurses — Annmarie Ingram, LPN, and Eunice Onyoni, LPN — administer medical procedures and meds daily.

Presently, the Old Stirling Group Home has several job opportunities. Given the extent of the needs of the residents, Lucy would like to increase the number of staff to offer one-on-one care to each resident. “The staff sometimes get overwhelmed,” she said. “It’s hard to find dedicated staff willing to take on so many responsibilities with our limited financial resources.”

The rewards for those who do, however, are heartfelt and memorable. Said Lucy, “Seeing the residents well cared for and happy is my greatest joy.”



From left to right are Richard Cox, Donald Kirsch, and David McMahon.

Direct Service Providers. And the Somerset Hills YMCA is collaborating on programs, such as therapeutic drumming, featured in this issue of the *Herald*.

We have made great strides in technology, becoming the first provider in New Jersey to subscribe to Therap Services, a state-of-the-art Internet system that provides integrated online reporting, documentation, and communication. For Direct Service Providers and staff, we have conducted our formal performance evaluation process.

In the area of fundraising, The Arc of Somerset County continues to receive support from funding agencies and donors such as the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities, the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the NJ Department of Education.

Our improved sense of vision is providing new opportunities for the people we serve. During this year of learning and discovery, we have hired and retained qualified staff at all levels, reduced job vacancies, and made decreasing the turnover rate our top priority. We have increased training and mentoring opportunities and have implemented a pilot program to continue to evaluate and improve the quality of services that are being provided. Most important, we are serving with compassion—giving our consumers and staff the hope and opportunity to live their dreams.

Enjoy the Summer!

*Judy Miao*

CEO & Executive Director

## Need To Know Where To Go For Help? Dial 2-1-1

New Jersey has launched a community resource helpline and Web site that informs residents where to go for assistance and resources. Whether you are looking for information on health or human services, community resources, or government assistance, help is at your fingertips. Call 2-1-1 or visit [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org) and a caring professional will refer you to the appropriate resources. All 2-1-1 calls are free and confidential!

*2-1-1 call centers, supported by the United Way, have been established to ensure that all state residents have access to essential services.*

The Arc of Somerset County is a 501(c)(3) organization.

