



# HERALD

## A MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

It is with mixed emotions that I leave my position as executive director of The Arc of Somerset County. On April 15, after more than 28 years with The Arc, I am taking early retirement. I plan to spend more time with my family before starting the next chapter of my career.



Lou Baldino

It has been my privilege to work with so many caring, dedicated people in fulfilling our mission of serving those with developmental disabilities. I have always taken great pride in The Arc and all that we have accomplished. I am grateful to the people we serve, their families, my colleagues, and The Arc's staff and volunteers for their tremendous support over the years. I am confident that The Arc will continue to thrive as a resource for those who rely on our services.

Please be assured that the board of directors has already launched an extensive search for a new executive director. To maintain continuity during this process, Mary Burke has been named acting executive director. Mary is a very capable administrator, and I have worked closely with her over the last few months.

See Executive Director on page 8.

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## Dendrite Employees Pledge To "Step Up for The Arc"



The Arc of Somerset County's 2005 "Step Up For The Arc" Walkathon is scheduled for May 14, beginning 9:00 a.m. at Duke Island Park in Bridgewater. Joining in the fun will be Moogie the clown, Sparkee, the mascot for the Somerset Patriots and the 4-H clowns, and disc jockey/entertainer Ben Auletta with his toe-tapping music.

The Arc's annual Walkathon is a fun way for families, friends, neighbors, and classmates to raise money for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Last year more than 125 people participated in the Somerset Arc's Walkathon, raising more than \$12,000. This year employees from the Dendrite Corporation are among those who have already pledged to walk.

Supporters who are sponsoring the Walkathon, held in conjunction with The Arc of New Jersey and county chapters, include District 12 of the Grand Lodge of New Jersey's Free and Accepted

Masons, M&M's® Chocolate Candies, Commerce Bank, Wal-Mart of Manville, Volvo of Bridgewater, Applebee's, Wegman's Food Market, Fullerton Ford, Somerset Hills Hotel, Budget Print, and Assemblyman Kip Bateman.

"The Arc of Somerset County is honored to have so many sponsors supporting us," said Bonnie Sovinee, director of development. Their generous contributions go a long way toward ensuring that we can assist as many Somerset County families as possible."

The Somerset Arc's programs include the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center, Early Intervention, Camp Jotoni, PACT (Parents and Children Together), and Employment

and Residential Services. The Arc, a 501(c)3 non-profit agency, receives funding from the Somerset County United Way and the United Way's Community Care Fund.

For more information, call 908-725-8544 or visit [www.thearcofsomerset.org](http://www.thearcofsomerset.org) or [www.arcnj.org](http://www.arcnj.org).



## A Message From the Chair of the Board



Fran Maher

who has led our organization through a long and stable period of growth. He and the many warm-hearted people who work at The Arc of Somerset County go to extraordinary lengths

Dear Friends,

As he prepares for retirement, I thank Lou Baldino for how deeply he cares for my son and all of the children and adults we serve. Much has been accomplished under the stewardship of this man

to assist consumers as if they were members of their own families.

As an organization we have pledged to continue to improve:

- our abilities to attract funding for the programs serving individuals
- our efficiencies
- our relationships with our governmental partners, agencies, and elected representatives, local, state and national
- volunteer opportunities at The Arc of Somerset

See Fran Maher on page 8.

## The Arc of Somerset Mission

The Arc of Somerset supports persons with developmental disabilities, and their families\* in realizing their dreams by providing life-long advocacy and quality services. We further support efforts towards the prevention of developmental disabilities.

\*Families includes family members, as well as friends, caregivers, guardians, advocates, etc.

### ARC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Lou Baldino Champions

**L**ou Baldino started work at The Arc of Somerset County in 1976 as a bus driver, while studying for a master's degree in social work at Rutgers University. Innate sensitivity and an appreciation for people with developmental disabilities led Lou to dedicate 28 years to the Somerset Arc, the last 18 as Executive Director.

Now that he's retiring, Lou has had a moment to catch his breath and reflect on the Somerset Arc's impressive growth. Three decades ago, the organization could afford only a few day programs and transport vehicles. Today the Somerset Arc boasts lifelong services and sponsorship for people with developmental disabilities, with programs spanning early childhood intervention to employment training and residential care. Said Lou, "It feels good to have been a part of that."

The Arc's advocacy has affected the entire field. "Only recently have organizations offered people with developmental disabilities options for education, housing, and employment," Lou said. "Basically, you kept your son or daughter home, or placed your child in an institution. Not until professionals tailored services to the needs of individual recipients did our results dramatically improve."

Lou attributes much of The Arc's progress to parents who have spearheaded the national, state, and county boards. "Parents of children with developmental disabilities have firsthand experience," he said. "And they make powerful advocates."

One parent is Fran Maher, the Somerset Arc's board president. Fran praises Lou for linking The Arc to the wider service community. "He's been appointed to a number of committees that significantly affect the future of our families," Fran said, pointing to the National Conference of Arc Executives and the Somerset County Human Services Advisory Council. "He has been enormously devoted to our mission."



Fran Maher

## FRIENDSHIPS ARE HIS REWARD

Another board member is Brian O'Malley, a Somerset Arc consumer. Brian has known Lou most of his life and regards him as instrumental in his success as a Pathmark employee and an Arc television spokesperson. "Lou is one of the finest people I've worked with," Brian said. "All I can say is 'thank you very much.'"

Lou fully intends to maintain the friendships that are the greatest reward of his career. "I've known many of these people from the time they entered early childhood programs, to the time they moved into group homes and independent apartments," he said. "I've watched many of them grow. They're not just consumers. They're friends."



Belinda Malave

Apparently the affection is mutual. Another Arc consumer, Belinda Malave, would do anything for her cherished friend. "Lou is not an ordinary director," Belinda explained. "He was very supportive when I started work. When I was ill, he

would come and tell me that everyone wants me back. He's not just a paper pusher. If you need a ride or anything, he gives it to you."

Belinda views Lou's retirement with mixed emotions—she's happy for him, yet sad to see him go. "He's the kind of person you want as a service provider. He really puts himself out there," she said, "and respects your opinion."

Lou takes pride in the number of Arc recipients who are competitively employed. "Finding the right fit sometimes takes time," he said. It took a couple of tries before one client landed a successful job at a production plant, where he has happily worked for 10 years.



Brian O'Malley

# Somerset Arc Friends

## ADVOCACY IS AN HONOR

Fred Patterson, the parent of a consumer and chair of the Governor's Council on the Prevention of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, is grateful to Lou for devoting his life to those "on the fringes and in the shadows." Said Fred, "Lou begged professionals to allow one of our consumers to live in a group home when others rejected her as too tough a challenge. For 28 years, he has been her best friend."



Fred Patterson and Lou Baldino at the 2004 ArcWalk

Lou feels honored to serve as an advocate. Even if that boils down to making sure that two people who enjoy each other's company get to share the same supervised apartment, or get to move when they'd rather live apart. "It's

about offering people the opportunity to share typical life experiences," he said.

Some of Lou's reminiscences are far from typical, however. Consider the two-year-old whose difficulty communicating led her to the Somerset Arc's Preschool Program. Upon close observation, an Arc therapist noticed that the child had difficulty filtering out extraneous noise. A specially designed headset improved the girl's listening so quickly that, by the end of the first

grade, she no longer qualified as developmentally disabled.

"The girl is now in a typically developing classroom," said Lou, his dark eyes sparkling. The girl's ecstatic mother took a job teaching at the Somerset Arc's Private Preschool.

Beyond the basic necessities, Lou wishes the Somerset Arc could afford more nature outings. A few years ago, staff members took clients on a boating expedition in Point Pleasant. Said Lou, "It took six of us to carry one person's wheelchair onto the boat, but once we got out in the water, everyone had a good time.

"Some people never get to go on outings," he added. "Sitting around the house can be isolating."

## MORE FAMILY TIME

Outdoors is where Lou met his wife Rosaria, a special education teacher in Bridgewater. He was playing around at a Special Olympics event in a clown costume. Despite his attire on that first meeting, Rosario took him seriously enough to marry him. They now have four children, two of whom are adopted.

**"He is renowned for his kindness and respect. We will miss him greatly."**

Mary Burke, Acting Executive Director

Lou looks forward to spending more time with his own family. He may even be able to resume hobbies, such as fishing and hiking. A few months after leaving the Somerset Arc, however, Lou hopes to apply his fondness for social work more directly.



Lou and his daughter at the 2004 ArcWalk

Mary Burke, the Somerset Arc's Acting Executive Director, believes that Lou's contributions will influence consumers and staff alike for years to come.

"He is renowned for his kindness and respect," she said. "We will miss him greatly."



Mary Burke



## In Employment Services, Revenues Rise



**DID YOU KNOW...**that The Arc of Somerset County has more than 200 adults available for work every day at four different production centers?

**DID YOU KNOW...**Thanks to Branchburg, Valley Park, and Gannet, revenues generated by the Somerset Arc's production centers increased 114 percent

from January 2004 to January 2005. This is Employment Service's highest average in more than five years!



**DID YOU KNOW...**The Arc of Somerset County has been awarded its first set-aside commodity contract to sell products to New Jersey's county, state, and municipal governments.

**DID YOU KNOW...**An OTC customer told another soliciting agent that The Arc of Somerset County was his preferred choice.

**DID YOU KNOW...**The OTC is always looking for projects for the Arc's production centers. Anyone who needs help with work is welcome to contact Jim O'Rourke at 908-707-0920 or [jimo@thearcofsomerset.org](mailto:jimo@thearcofsomerset.org).

## Isabelle Owsik Is Acclaimed a Raffle Queen

For more than 20 years, Isabelle Owsik, mother of Arc consumer Joe Owsik of the Franklin Group Home, has sold raffle tickets for The Arc of Somerset County. Her personal style has charmed hundreds of people into mak-

ing raffle donations every year. Thank you, Isabelle, for your dedication and commitment. You are acclaimed as the Somerset Arc's beloved Raffle Queen!

*Dot Gubernot*

## Honoring the Lives of Longtime Friends and Supporters

The Arc of Somerset County community celebrates the lives of longtime friends and supporters who died recently. It is with heartfelt gratitude that these cherished individuals will always be remembered and loved.

**NICK VERGA, 89**, passed away on February 17, at the Somerset Medical Center. In 1987 Nick moved to the Warren Group Home from an institution. He lived there until 2004, when he moved into the Old Stirling Group Home. In both places he enjoyed gardening and growing tomato plants. For many years, Nick worked at the Bridgewater Recycling Center, a job he loved. He also worked at the Kirby Avenue Activities Training Center and, most recently, at the Valley Park Activities Training Center.

**GERALDINE REGA, 80**, died on January 22 at the Tall Woods Care Center in Bayville. For many years, Geraldine worked as a sales representative for Stanley Home Products. She also volunteered at the Salvation Army's soup kitchen, and at the Community Medical Center in Toms River where she

arranged food baskets for needy families. A native of Newark, Geraldine lived in Cedar Grove and Livingston before moving to Berkeley Township 10 years ago. She is survived by four sons, Anthony of the Commons Group Home, Richard, Stephen, and John Rega; a daughter, Susan Cifelli; three grandsons, Tommy, Michael, and David Cifelli; two granddaughters, Amanda and Gina Rega; and three sisters, Joyce Santangelo, Elaine Shimansky, and Lorraine Callahan.



*Nick Verga and friends from Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceuticals*

**MARY L. LAWRENCE, 82**, one of Somerset Arc's original board members, passed away on March 19 at the Somerset Medical Center. As one of the parents who founded The Arc of Somerset County, "Aunt Mary" volunteered daily at the organization's first Early Intervention program for six preschoolers in a Somerville church basement. A graduate of Alfred University, Mary taught high school English throughout the 1940s and 1950s. She was born in Dobbs Ferry, NY, and lived in Alfred, NY, and Nutley before moving to Bridgewater more than 30 years ago. She was predeceased by her husband, Walter F. Lawrence, who worked at RCA in central Jersey, and her son, Walter Robert Lawrence, who suffered from Down's Syndrome and died at age 5 from leukemia. Mary is survived by Elin M. Johnston of Bridgewater.

# KEEPING AN EYE ON PREVENTION

HALF OF THE 350 CAUSES OF MENTAL RETARDATION ARE PREVENTABLE!

## *The Wall Street Journal* Offers Safety Tips Concerning Car Seats

More states are requiring children as old as eight to sit in booster seats. Instead of buying various sizes to accommodate your child's growth, adjustable models are available.

1. Next month the Evenflo Company will introduce a car seat with headrests, harnesses, and straps that adjust to growing bodies. Designed for children weighing 20 to 100 pounds, Evenflo's Generations Harness Booster will sell for \$110 in stores such as Target and Babies "R" Us starting in May.
2. Dorel's Juvenile Group introduced the Safety 1st Intera, which sells for \$140 and can be used as a rear-facing car seat for children weighing five to 35 pounds, a forward-facing

seat for children weighing 20 to 40 pounds, and – with the back removed – a booster seat for children weighing up to 100 pounds. Dorel also offers the \$150 Cosco Alpha Omega for children from infancy to 80 pounds, and the \$160 Cosco Alpha Omega Elite for children weighing up to 100 pounds. For a list of retailers carrying Dorel's convertible car seats, visit [www.safety1st.com](http://www.safety1st.com) and [www.coscojuvenile.com](http://www.coscojuvenile.com).

3. To find certified technicians who can assist in properly installing a car seat, visit [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/CPS/CPSFitting/Index.cfm](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/CPS/CPSFitting/Index.cfm).



## Lord & Taylor Donates \$50,000 in Holiday Fun Drive



George and Pat Sevchuck, sibling of Arc consumer Christine Lusch, won a 2004 Porsche Boxster and a \$50,000 donation to the charity of her choice from the Lord & Taylor's 2004 holiday charity fun drive. Happily Pat's charity of choice was The Arc of Somerset County. She asked that her donation be used for renovations at the Mobus group home in North Plainfield, where Christine lives. Thank you, George and Pat Sevchuck, for your generous donation!

At Bridgewater Commons, Lord & Taylor's general manager, Karen Orsini, presented a \$50,000 check to the Somerset Arc's executive director Lou Baldino. Beside them are George and Pat Sevchuck, standing in front of the 2004 Porsche they won in the retailer's holiday charity fun drive.

## CARF Awards Employment Services With Highest Accreditation

The Arc of Somerset County's Employment Services received a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. CARF reported that the Occupational Training Center provides "services, personnel, and documentation that indicated established practices of excellence." In its Unusual Incident Reporting Analysis, CARF awarded Employment Services with an "exemplary status."

A three-year accreditation is an honor bestowed on agencies that meet or surpass CARF's compliance standards. Said Dawn Malavenda, director of employment services, "This



achievement attests to our dedication and commitment toward improving the lives of those we serve."

CARF carried out its intensive three-day survey in August, inspecting facilities, reviewing paperwork, and interviewing families, state funding representatives, community employers, board members, staff, and consumers. Considerations included facility safety, responsiveness and accessibility to consumers, leadership and effectiveness, and customer satisfaction.

Congratulations to Employment Services for achieving a standard of excellence.

## **“Ask the Advocate” Day Informs Families About Special Ed**

For those who have questions about special education and their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), The Arc of Somerset County hosted an “Ask the Advocate” Day on March 2 at 141 South Main Street in Manville from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. During private 25-minute sessions, families learned about effective advocacy and their rights under special education laws.

For information about The Arc's next “Ask the Advocate” Day, call JoEllen Pozarek or Lauren Panarella at 908-725-8544, extension 626. Care will be provided for dependents accompanying parents to the seminar.



*Costco in Bridgewater and Somerset's Youth Leadership donated a Bounce Around for children attending the Somerset Arc's Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center. Accepting plaques of gratitude, from left to right, are the Youth Leadership's Dan Puntillo and Jennifer Weissner and Costco's Sean Boatwright. Presenting the plaques are the Somerset Arc's Lou Baldino and Amy Perrine.*



*At a Somerset County Freeholders Meeting, board member and consumer parent Bill Mc Kay receives a proclamation declaring March “Mental Retardation Awareness” month.*

## **Free April 27 Seminar Explores Individual Education Plans**

The Arc of Somerset County will host a free seminar on “Getting the most out of your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP)” April 27 at 7:00 p.m. at the main office on 141 South Main Street, Manville. The featured speaker will be community resource facilitator Verna E. Wallace from The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities of the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

An advocate for more than 25 years, Verna Wallace is executive board member of the New Jersey Association for Persons

in Supported Employment (NJAPSE) and chairperson of the Training and Education Division and the Leadership Network of New Jersey. She participated in writing, designing, and implementing the DDD Regulations Manual.

Attendance will be limited. To reserve a seat, please call Geri Tarinelli, senior employment consultant at 908-707-9190, Ext. 33, and state your name, phone number, and the school your student attends. You will receive a call confirming your reservation.



*Kim Artis congratulates “Angel Among Us” Ashley Artis at this year's Arc Angel event, where mother and daughter received awards.*



*Community Access Unlimited bestowed its “Advocate of the Year” Award to Belinda Malave.*



*Lou Baldino accepts a \$787 check from John Daus of Manville's Knights of Columbus #6573. Not pictured is Grand Knight Joseph Morella.*





Somerset County Social Services named Jeanne Guarnieri, LRC, its Outstanding Woman for 2005. Jeanne is founder and director of the Somerset Arc's PACT Program (Parents and Children Together), a parenting program for families headed by individuals with developmental disabilities. Jeanne's clinical experience includes family counseling, workshops, educational training, and intervention. Her areas of expertise include mental health for people with developmental disabilities, educational advocacy, and positive behavioral support techniques.



Presenting Lou Baldino, Amy Perrine, and Mary Burke with a check from the "Tea with Honey" event are chairs Melinda Gillespie, Beth Robinson, and Tracey Seebode.

## Preschooler Prepares for Kindergarten

Sarah has come a long way since birth, when a collapsed lung, weak vital signs, and inability to suck or swallow left her hospitalized for six months with a tracheotomy, feeding tube, and oxygen. Even when Sarah went home from the hospital, she required around-the-clock nursing. To help, her parents took on a special education teacher, and speech, occupational, and physical therapists. Thanks to their loving persistence, at age 3, Sarah was strong enough to attend preschool.

When joining the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center's Preschool Disabled Program, Sarah was unable to walk or stand for long periods. Although she had strong cognitive skills, physical disabilities made communications a struggle.

The teachers and staff at Jerry Davis provided Sarah with the motivation and tools to succeed. When Sarah became disheartened, the staff encouraged her to persist. Before long, Sarah was not only meeting her goals, but seeking greater opportunities.

Now at four years old, Sarah walks around the Jerry Davis classroom, speaking with staff and peers. While she has more abilities to develop, Sarah has already accomplished more than some thought possible. The teachers and staff at Jerry Davis never doubted her abilities. It is with great pride that they are presently preparing Sarah for kindergarten.

## Bart Bing Enjoys Competitive Employment

In July 2002, Bart Bing asked the Arc of Somerset County for work. Staff at Employment Services first had Bart establish his goals and objectives. They assigned him an employment consultant who used evaluations and interviews to help ascertain Bart's interests, skills, and a possible career path.

After trying out different scenarios, Bart found satisfaction working in a cafeteria setting. Wood's Dining hired Bart to work part-time in Merck Pharmaceuticals' cafeteria, recycling boxes, cleaning tables, restocking condiments, and taking out the garbage. During Bart's downtime, Employment Services provided him with additional training.

In August 2004, Bart learned that a new vendor, Aramak, was taking over Merck's cafeteria work. Thanks to the former vendor's favorable recommendations, Bart kept his job at the same hourly rate. Bart's relief lasted until January 2005, when he learned that Merck was moving to a facility outside Somerset County. Aramak asked Bart to go with them, but the distance was too great.

Bart's work experience made it easy for the Somerset Arc's employment consultant to find another job at Auten Middle School's cafeteria. Although Bart is a man of few words, he made it clear to the consultant that he was very happy.

## Mental Retardation Awareness Suggested Reading List

*The Best of AAMR: Families and Mental Retardation: A Collection of Notable AAMR Journal Articles Across the 20th Century*, editors Jan Blacher and Bruce L. Baker, in paperback.

*Out of the Darkness and into the Light: Nebraska's Experience with Mental Retardation*, editors Robert L. Schalock and David L. Braddock, in paperback.

*Embarking on a New Century: Mental Retardation at the End of the 20th Century*, editor Robert L. Schalock, et al, in paperback.

*The Rights Stuff: Self Advocates Learning and Using their Rights* by Wendy Hollo, et al, 2000, in paperback.

*Guidelines for Library Services for People With Mental Retardation*, 1999, in paperback.

**DON'T MISS THE 2006 BUDGET  
"COST OF PROVIDING CARE" RALLY**

at the State House Steps in Trenton, NJ,  
on May 23 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

*Executive Director, continued from page 1*

I am extremely fortunate to have been part of this wonderful organization. I know that The Arc will continue to be here for those who need our growing services.

Best Regards,

*Louis M. Baldino*  
Executive Director

*Fran Maher, continued from page 1*

- relationships with our members, our benefactors, the community at large
- our point of service excellence
- our advocacy efforts, including prevention
- our ability to be a great employer, providing encouragement and making resources available to our staff at all levels, especially the front line of 275 employees who work directly all day long supporting and teaching the individuals we serve.

Our commitment to these and other pledges in the Arc of Somerset County's Strategic Plan – a living, breathing document – is improving the way we provide services, guidance, teaching, and everyday joy to those who rely on our education, work, and housing.



Where people with developmental disabilities  
learn to live their dreams.<sup>SM</sup>

141 South Main Street  
Manville, NJ 08835



Somerset County  
United Way  
Affiliated Agency



Bonnie Sovinee of the Somerset Arc accepts a generous donation from Carl and Gloria LaGrassa of the Pluckemin Inn at the new restaurant's grand opening on April 16.

Changes in leadership challenge us to re-think, renew, and refresh the way we look at ourselves and work together – and also to keep the best of what has always been so good about The Arc of Somerset – its great heart.

Everyone plays an important role in this process. We have all been touched by the mission of this organization, especially by the people being served.

On behalf of the board and fellow parents, I extend my gratitude to Lou Baldino for his unwavering commitment and dedication. And I thank everyone involved in the Somerset Arc for their energy, passion, and enthusiasm for the work of this great organization.

Warmest Regards,

*Fran Maher*

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