



**Dear Employees, Friends, Families, Partners and Supporters,**

2022 will mark a milestone anniversary for The Arc of Somerset County. This year we will celebrate our 50th anniversary!

I am both honored and proud to be a part of the celebration of our Golden Anniversary. Throughout the year we will have many opportunities to celebrate our past and to look forward towards the next 50 years. Some activities will include:

- A monthly “ disability advocacy moment” write up on our social media platforms
- Our 5K Run and Walk on Saturday May 7th will feature a 50th Anniversary commemorative T-Shirt
- The Arc Foundation of Somerset County will host our 50th Anniversary GALA on Friday, June 10th
- We will be the featured guests of the Somerset Patriots at the July 8th 2022 ball game and fireworks

In addition, we will be launching a new strategic plan to kick off The Arcs’ new direction in 2022.

We have so much to look forward to during this next year, however as we kick off our 50th anniversary, I would like to pause to look back at our Journey.

The Arc of Somerset County was started in January 1972 as a spin off of the Raritan Valley Arc; which later became the Arc of Middlesex County. The Somerset County “unit” was born out of the determination of local mothers to find a program for their young children with disabilities. This first program (a pre-school) was started with just 2 employees a several children in the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Somerville, NJ. Two of the original children served in this program are currently being served in our residential programs ( Jill C. and Trish G.). The program was our foundational program and is still in operation today as our Jerry Davis Center for Children and Families. Our first Day program (The Gannett Center) opened shortly thereafter, and our first group home (on route 202) opened in 1984. In 1976 Camp Jotoni was purchased by The Arc and has provided summer camp to children and adults every year continually (except in 2020 due to Covid) since then. Currently The Arc has over 30 separate programs throughout Somerset County, with a staff of over 300 dedicated employees. Our original Executive Director, Joan Sapienza ( Director form 1972 – 1987); is credited with much of this growth; but she is remembered mostly for her being the driving force of advocacy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in NJ and across the nation. She worked tirelessly to ensure all children with disabilities had early supportive and therapeutic services (now our Early Intervention program) and that adults with disabilities received the services they needed. She is responsible for helping to bring many, many individuals who were living in institutions back into their communities with their families.

Joan Sapienza was a visionary in her day, as she set the tone for not only The future of The Arc, but also the future advocacy for full inclusion of children, adolescents and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her values will continue to drive our mission and vision today and in the future.

Sincerely,

*Lauren Frary, Executive Director*