



HERALD

A MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Existing services for people with disabilities are in serious jeopardy. This is due in part to continuously eroding funding from the State of New Jersey.



Governor James McGreevey presented his budget proposal on February 27th for the State fiscal year beginning July 1st. That proposal contains a number of items for which The Arc community is very grateful. It also has some items that cause great concern.

First, let's share the good news. The proposal includes the much-anticipated \$7.3 million dollars to fund fifty new group homes for individuals who were promised placement in 2003. It includes \$16.2 million dollars for the "Real Life Choices" program and \$10 million new State dollars for the Early Intervention Program.

In addition, \$9 million dollars are budgeted to address the hazards of lead-based paint. All of these issues are important to The Arc and the people we serve.

Here's where the proposed budget falls short. The proposal includes a 1% increase for all agencies that have contracts with the Department of Human Services. It is the modesty of this increase that is the problem. While

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FAMILY FUN EVENT

The 2nd Annual Step Up for The Arc Walk 2004

The Arc of Somerset is pleased to announce that Step Up For The Arc Walk 2004 will be



Excitement at the starting line of last year's Arc Walk

held on May 15th at Duke Island Park. The annual walkathon is being presented by The Arc of Somerset in conjunction with The Arc of New Jersey and all of the 21 local county chapters. Last year The Arc of Somerset raised more than \$8,300 for people with mental retardation and their families living in Somerset County. With the help and support of Honorary Chair David Livingston, Superintendent of Schools for Somerset County, The Arc plans

to reach out to the students to raise awareness and funds.

Step Up For The Arc is a great way for coworkers, friends, neighbors, classmates, and families to raise money and have fun while doing it. More than 125 people took part in the 2003 Walk. The Arc of Somerset Walk will start at 9:00 a.m. with registration. The Somerset County Sheriff's Department will be participating with their child identification services, Moogie the Clown will paint faces, and the 4-H Clowns will entertain.

Sparky, the mascot of the Somerset Patriots, will join in the fun. There will be a live band, Kasey and The Girls Next Store. Food and refreshments will be provided to the walkers and their families by the Free and Accepted Masons District #12 of the Grand Lodge of New Jersey.

See Arc Walk on page 3.



Sparky and friend

Camp Jotoni Camperships

The Arc's Camp Jotoni will celebrate its 28th year of summer fun and therapeutic activities for children with special needs! For these children, it is critically important that their education and enrichment continue when school lets out for the summer.



Financial Resources CEO and President Eugene T. Reilly Jr. presents Camp Jotoni camper Kyle with a capital improvements donation of \$25,000 from their Annual Golf Outing. Arc Executive Director Lou Baldino assists.

There are countless would-be campers every year who lack the financial resources to afford camp tuition. Although we keep costs to a minimum, for some, this cost is still out of reach. It is our hope to send every child regardless of his or her family's ability to pay.

Help us make camp a reality for a child this summer – so that every young person can swim, swing, hike, create and enjoy friends.

Any gift, large or small, will help us send as more children to camp this summer. Thank you in advance.

ON THE CALENDAR

Earth Day Volunteer Projects with United Way
– April 22, 23, 24 –

Step Up for The Arc Walk 2004
at Duke Island Park – May 15 –

Annual Membership Meeting & Election
at Somerset Hills Hotel – June 28 –

Mission of the Arc of Somerset

The mission of The Arc of Somerset County is to provide advocacy and services for persons with developmental disabilities and their families. In pursuit of this mission, The Arc dedicates itself to promoting the principles of individual informed choice, community inclusion, and the prevention of disabilities.

ARC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Carol Geary

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to be writing to you now, in this time of positive change. This newsletter with a new name and format represents one tangible sign of the many positive changes that are underway.

The Board recently has adjusted its structure to better enable The Arc to use its expertise. We are engaging the talented professionals on our Board and beyond to facilitate operational improvements in support of our mission by using an active board committee structure. The Committees include Human Resources, Government Affairs, Program Planning and Review (PPR), Membership, Finance, Fund-raising, Facilities and Safety, and Information Technology (IT).

Several Board Members and our Executive Staff are working together to construct a strategic plan that we can all embrace. This process has required us to recommit to the mission and purpose statements. It also has encouraged us to state openly our values as an organization. These discussions and commitments are enabling us to work together more effectively and more passionately.

Finally, we are in the midst of an organizational diagnosis. This diagnostic process is similar to a



routine physical exam. After taking a meticulous look at ourselves, we have a better understanding of our strengths and limitations. We are noting the strengths, and challenging ourselves to build upon them. The process is illuminating some opportunities for improvement, too. In this time of change, we are making a paradigm shift, and are determined to take full

advantage of our opportunities for making positive changes.

It is during this time of change that I ask you to re-examine your commitment to The Arc, as well. Can you help us to help our consumers and their families better through a donation of time, money or other resources? Can you help us to serve you better by informing us of opportunities to help that currently we may be missing? I would be delighted to have you embrace the process and participate in the positive change.

I look forward to the opportunity to work with you and for you. And I look forward to hearing your feedback as the changes are accomplished throughout the organization.

Warmest Regards,

Carol Geary

New Residential Group Home in Montgomery

The Rocky Hill Group Home passed the DDD Licensing Inspection on February 19, 2003 and officially opened its doors on February 26, 2003 for one of six proposed consumers. Since that time two additional consumers from the Old Stirling Group Home have moved into the Rocky Hill home. We will fill the three remaining vacancies as appropriate consumers are identified and as additional staff are hired.

Rocky Hill is a two-story home with three separate double occupancy units. Each consumer has his or her own bedroom.

The first floor has two barrier free units to support four individuals. Each first floor unit has a living room, kitchen, and fully accessible bathroom. The second floor unit is an apartment setting for two individuals with its own living room/kitchen and bathroom.





This year T-shirts will boast the state sponsor logos, program sponsor logos, and residential community sponsors. Many retain centers throughout Somerset County will support The Arc with donor cards purchased for a dollar or more and displayed at the establishment.

Family teams, school teams, and corporate teams are challenging each other to raise as much as possible for the cause. Walker pledge forms can be downloaded from The Arc website.

The Arc is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and is a Somerset County United Way-affiliated agency and receives financial support from United Way's Community Care Fund.

The 2004 statewide sponsors for the walk are the Grand Lodge of New Jersey, Free and Accepted Masons and Masterfoods, makers of M&M's Chocolate Candies.



Assemblyman Christopher Bateman

Every step you take helps raise funds for the many programs offered by The Arc of Somerset. including the Jerry Davis



The Arc of Somerset County sponsors receiving thank you awards: from left, Mr. Ron Olexa - Grand Lodge of New Jersey -12th Masonic District; Mr. Jay Brown - Wal-Mart Store #2651- Manville; Sheriff Frank Provenzano, Sr; Margie Figliolino - The Arc Walkathon Chair; Assemblyman Christopher Bateman; and Lou Baldino - Executive Director; not pictured, Scott Ritter of Schering-Plough, county sponsor

Early Childhood Center, the Early Intervention Program, Camp Jotoni, the PACT program, five employment services centers, and twenty-two residential locations throughout Somerset County.

For more information about Step Up For The Arc Walk 2004, call 908-725-8544 x 612 or visit their website at www.thearcofsomerset.org or the state website at www.arcnj.org and click on the Step Up For The Arc Walk 2004 logo.



Guardianship and Estate Planning Seminar

Herbert D. Hinkle, a well-known attorney specializing in the field of disabilities, addressed the concerns of 45 people who attended the March 15th seminar "Guardianship and Estate Planning. There was no fee.

This is the first of a series of informative seminars to assist families and guardians who care for persons with developmental disabilities.

To propose ideas for speakers and member events, please contact: Bonnie Sovinee, Dir. of Development, at 908-725-8544 x 612.

March is National Mental Retardation Awareness Month

The Freeholders of Somerset County recognized The Arc of Somerset with a proclamation signifying March as National Mental Retardation Awareness Month. Carol Geary, President



From left, Development Director Bonnie Sovinee, Freeholder Director Denise Coyle, and The Arc of Somerset President Carol Geary

of the Board of The Arc, thanked the Freeholders for their recognition of the important work performed by the staff, and for realizing the importance of community awareness and the need for inclusion

of people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. The Arc is grateful for the support of the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ARC?

One Parent's Story

You may be a parent or relative, or may simply be someone with compassion for those with disabilities. Perhaps you've wondered about joining The Arc. Well, I'm a parent first, and here's my membership story.

Our daughter, Katie, was born in 1992. Initially, she passed all her developmental tests with flying colors. However, my wife, Sarah, with her finely tuned intuition, felt Katie was somehow "different" than our first child, born two years earlier. She was less active, less alert.

We received a diagnosis for Katie of "developmentally delayed" shortly thereafter. Nothing prepared us for the decisions we needed to make, all while dealing with our collective shock and heartache. We had so many unanswered questions. Eventually, we realized that we needed to focus on which organization could most help Katie. We faced the veritable "fork in the road" knowing our daughter's future depended on our course of action.

When our pediatrician recommended we contact the Arc of Somerset County we thought, "not another organization of social worker types." However, when we enrolled Katie in the Jerry Davis Early Childhood program we met many parents, to our surprise, who were just like us. We met Arc teachers who believed that people with disabilities could be empowered to live rewarding and valued lives. We saw the beginning of a positive socialization process for Katie and realized that The Arc is the "go to" organization for people with developmental disabilities in New Jersey. Katie is now eleven years of age and has long since left the early intervention program, but we'll remember how The Arc was there when we truly needed them. In the future when we transition to residential housing

and vocational services, The Arc will be there again.

Why have I supported the Arc by becoming a member? First, The Arc was there for us. Second, The Arc continues to be there for us every day, in Trenton, in Washington, and in our communities. They provide the legislative advocacy for Katie in ways that I, as an individual, cannot. The Arc is a powerful national organization that is our "watchdog" and that seem to be in the middle of every issue. I've also become a member to insure my daughter's future. Someday after I'm gone, various Arc programs like group homes or in a vocational program will care for her. As I stated earlier, I support The Arc through my membership because they stepped up to my plate when I needed information, programs and a positive direction. Today, Katie smiles a lot. Much of her smile and optimism began during her Jerry Davis experience.

When you see a smile from someone you love, think about it. Consider how important it is to become an Arc member, too. The Arc is there for our loved ones; we can be there for them, too. Please, send your membership contribution today.

Yours truly,

William Mackay III
Arc Parent

Note: The membership donations received in 2003 will continue until the end of the fiscal year 2003, which is June 30, 2004. This is a change from the calendar year of January to December. Additional donation levels are available for membership for fiscal year 2004.

TEA WITH HONEY CELEBRATES 5TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

Volunteers Raise \$19K

Excitement filled the air as mothers and their children arrived, and together studied the wonderfully diverse baskets and colorful presentations of items for children and families to enjoy. Sunday, February 8th was the fifth annual Tea with Honey, an event run completely by volunteers for the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center. Co-chairs Gia Dunn and Melinda Gillespie made some changes to enable more people to attend this much anticipated, sold-out event.



Children enjoyed Miss Linda's "Gotta Dance," and the Dynamic Dancers.

Mr. Ray performed after lunch while mothers placed their final bids.

The bidding became competitive on several baskets, as parents and children hoped theirs would be the final bid. Ultimately, \$19,000 was raised to help the children of the Jerry Davis Center.

The wonderful volunteers worked hard for months. The story to the right helps to explain why.



*Gia Dunn with her three daughters (from left):
Lucy, MacKenzie, and Kendall*

Photo courtesy of Debbie Weisman

ARC ANGELS CELEBRATE 10 YEARS Volunteers Raise \$250K at Event

On December 12th, the Fiddler's Elbow was transformed into a classy Vegas Casino complete with dining rooms named after famous Vegas clubs: Sahara, Congo, and Sands.

Janet and Jay Michael Petrillo were the event honorees, paying homage to their many hours of volunteer work on behalf of the Arc. Majella and George Matyas served as co-chairs for "The Arc Angel Presents – Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas."



Michael McDonald

Michael McDonald thrilled the crowd of 400 with his sultry vocals and foot tapping arrangements. There was dancing in the aisles.

Attendees were treated to McDonald's most recent CD, a golden box of chocolates from Godiva, and a remembrance ornament, Ace of Hearts, denoting the casino portion of the night's activities.

The Angels Among Us Program recognized 11 worthy area high school students who volunteer their time to assist people with disabilities.

The Ultimate Sports Raffle drawing held many in suspense, as tickets were purchased from "cigarette costumed dancers." Drawn at random during The Arc Angel event, the drum filled with ticket stubs was spun vigorously to tumble and mix the raffle stubs. The winning stub was pulled and the announcement



From left, Jay Michael, Janet, Majella and George

made: "And the winner is...Eric Mayerson of Teaneck, ticket number 1456."

The Arc is grateful to the many corporate friends who graciously donated to the event. Thank you to the many volunteers who sold, and generous business people and individuals who purchased, raffle tickets. All proceeds from the raffle benefit The Arc of Somerset County.



Nine of the 11 Angels Among Us 2003

Photos courtesy of Debbie Weisman

Special Kudos to The Arc Angel committee for working so hard for so long to raise \$250,000 to benefit people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities.

"Jacob": A Living Miracle

by Susan Donovan in collaboration with other teachers at the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center

Success is measured in many different ways. Hopes and expectations may not be the same as what is achievable in reality. But sometimes, miracles happen.

Born premature (3 months early), weighing a mere 1 pound, 7 ounces, "Jacob" needed intensive special care. He spent the first three months of his life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at St. Peter's University Hospital. He received daily nursing care at home for the next 18 months. Jacob had developmental delays, which qualified him for services from the Early Intervention Program (EIP) at The Arc of Somerset County.

Through The Arc's EIP, Jacob received occupational, physical, and speech therapies at his home. Jacob attended the Developmental Daycare at Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center (JDECC) in September of 2000. While there, he continued

to receive two hours of Early Intervention per week. The nurturing, patience and direction from a variety of therapists, teachers, and staff members helped to pave the way for Jacob's success. As his fragile health status improved, he experienced a whole new world. Since his family lived in an apartment complex without a nearby park, he did not have the opportunity to play outside until he attended JDECC Daycare. At first he was frightened and overwhelmed by his playground experience. He had been so sheltered that he had no idea what to do outdoors. Once he became acclimated to playing outside, he craved the sensation of running, climbing, and swinging in the clear fresh air. It was wonderful to see these milestones in Jacob's physical development, but his social and emotional development were still delayed. His inability to communicate effectively compounded his frustration, and resulted in his

See Jacob on page 6.

isolation from his classmates. Easily frustrated, without the ability to speak, Jacob grunted, gestured, pointed, and cried.

Although Jacob made significant gains developmentally, he was still delayed for his age. When he turned three, he transitioned into the Preschool Disabled program at Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center. He attended school Monday through Friday for five hours and received speech therapy and occupational therapy several times during the week.

The transition was difficult at first. When "Jacob" was upset, he would lash out at others. Self-calming skills were non-existent, which added to his tantrums. He fought with other children, screamed, banged his body on furniture, and lost control of himself. As the school year progressed, Jacob's skills did not improve. When upset, he began to lash out at the staff. Although his cognitive and speech skills were improving, his impulsivity was keeping him from making positive social and emotional progress.

During the summer session his teachers and therapists met to discuss Jacob's skills and developed a plan specifically tailored to meet his developmental goals. In fall 2003, Jacob returned to preschool and began to change and flourish.

All that the staff had been working on to achieve with Jacob seemed to be working. His language skills emerged into sentences with a gentle voice. Even more encouraging was Jacob's newfound ability to react calmly and to use his words when he was frustrated. Along with the success came the willingness to interact with his peers in a positive way. Isolation gave way to parallel play, with Jacob becoming a new peer for his typically developing friends. His Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals were upgraded to incorporate inclusion time in the Private Preschool Program for typically developing children, at the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center. Today he is actively involved and enjoys cooperative play activities with several students.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Employee of the Year – 2003

Norma Branker was selected as the 2003 Employee of the Year by a committee of her peers. Norma was employed with Arc from October 1990 until October 1995. After a few years, in August 1998, she resumed her vocation with The Arc in the Ardsley Group Home, as a Support Counselor. Her coworkers describe Norma as a team player with outstanding initiative skills. She plans Arc-consumer parties, uses her own time to organize

group home records and is an invaluable member of the Ardsley Group Home staff. Norma accomplishes all of these things working only 25 hours per week for The Arc, because she is a full-time employee of a different company in New York City!

The Arc Employee of the Year Award was presented at The Arc Staff Holiday Party on December 18, 2003.

STAFF PROFILE

New Director of Development at The Arc of Somerset



You may have spoken with a new person from development. She's active and involved in many aspects of The Arc of Somerset. Bonnie Sovinee comes to The Arc as a sibling of Phillip, a former consumer in Manville who has moved out-of-state. As such she was aware of the Monday night dances, and the training centers, but had no idea about just how many functions The Arc really performs.

When asked about her impressions of the organization, Bonnie replied, "It's a real eye-opener to me as a sibling...I knew of only a small portion of the work being done by the dedicated, hard-working staff and passionate volunteers. I encourage family members to become more involved so that they can truly appreciate the care provided for their loved ones."

Bonnie works with her fellow directors to help the consumers by locating funding and other resources for the programs in as

many ways as she can. So if you get a call or an email from her, consider her a new friend, and the contact an opportunity to help.

Working with a committee, Bonnie is responsible for the new logo, creative marketing ideas, and the look of the new website that is now under construction. She also manages volunteer recruitment and placement, grant writing, and special events such as the Arc Walk. She is very happy to work with such dedicated fund raising volunteers as Majella Matyas, chair for the Arc Angels event last December; Gia Dunn and Melinda Gillespie, who co-chaired "Tea with Honey"; and the volunteer Board members.

Bonnie's expertise is in marketing and public relations. She owned her own retail business for 20 years. In addition, she was tourism director for the Chamber of Commerce, program director for Business and Education Partnership, and marketing director for Somerset County's economic development team.

Philanthropy Report – The Arc Says “Thank You”



From left, football Jets celebrity John Schmitt and his son John; a camper from Camp Jotoni, Kyle; Board Member Carol Fanning; and Arc Executive Director Lou Baldino at the Financial Resources Golf Outing on September 29, 2003



A grant from Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceuticals of \$10,000 bought a variety of therapeutic equipment for the Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center.



Warren Knights of Columbus #11409, John Truglio presents a donation to Camp Jotoni Director Christopher Regan, on June 3, 2003.



Ron and Lou accept a donation from the Manville Knights of Columbus in August of 2003.



Warren Knights of Columbus #11409, John Truglio, presents Lou Baldino with a donation on June 3, 2003.



SJP Properties donates \$17,000. Pictured (from left) Amy Perrine, Director of The Jerry Davis Early Childhood Center; Carol Geary, The Arc Board President; a family member with a Jerry Davis student; Mrs. Pozycki of SJP Properties; and Arc Executive Director, Lou Baldino in November 2003 at Aventis, an SJP Property.

ALSO A BIG THANKS TO:

The Gannett Foundation for their grant of \$2500 to The Arc for Life Skills Training Tools for People with Developmental Disabilities to be used by Supportive Services, Supportive Employment, Occupational Training Centers, PACT - Parents and Children Together, and Literacy Training.

Jim Ashworth of the Dunellen Knights of Columbus, Council # 2544 who presented Bonnie Sovinee of The Arc with a \$2,000 contribution in August 2003.

Executive Director, continued from page 1

this increase is much needed and appreciated, 1% is not nearly enough. This increase is just too small, especially considering that there was no increase in the previous year, and only 1½% the year before. Meanwhile costs continue to rise at alarming rates, for everything from employee health care to the fuel that heats our group homes. This increase does not come close to keeping pace with the cost of providing quality services to people with disabilities. The Arc employees have not seen salary increases since 2001 and this proposed budget offers no hope of an increase for the future.

One pressing concern is how are we to keep good direct care and support staff, our most important resource? Without competitive remuneration, they leave for better paying positions. This leaves The Arc understaffed or inadequately staffed, thus forcing cuts in services for the people we serve.

The budget proposal is with the legislators, who can add or subtract specific items before sending it back to the Governor for final approval. We need your help to receive more funding,



Governor McGreevey meets with a group from The Arc of Somerset to provide proper services.

We must educate our representatives about the need to adequately fund essential services for people with disabilities. We must convince them that 1% is only a start and must be increased significantly if we are to maintain quality programs in New Jersey.

Pictured above you can see Arc members meeting with Governor McGreevey and other State Representatives. That is the beginning of the process. We will continue to let our representatives know about the needs of people with disabilities and the funding required to meet those needs. Hopefully as an Arc supporter, you will help, too.

Best regards,

Louis M. Baldino
Executive Director



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