

A Message From the President of the Board of Directors

Thank You for the Advocacy

Those emails and phone calls worked!



Diane Aubin

Our human rights movement for people with IDD and their families, The Arc Eastern Connecticut, has been going strong for 70+ years. **The fight for inclusion is far from over, but this year we finally saw a positive shift.**

For decades, even as other social service sectors received funding increases, service dollars for people with IDD fell behind – mirroring our greater fight for equality and inclusion. **The oversight shortchanged people with IDD and their families, and it shortchanged our hard-working, excellent team members too.**

But this year, the Connecticut Legislature listened. **For the first time in 20 years, The Arc ECT**

was able to implement pay raises that out-paced inflation. Thank you for embracing economic empowerment in service delivery and for wages. *Your voice made a difference!*

For the first time in 20 years, The Arc ECT was able to implement pay raises that out-paced inflation.

Thanks, also, to everyone participating in The Arc ECT's ongoing facilities study. **With your input, we will make informed decisions about the ways our agency will optimally serve Eastern Connecticut in the coming years.**



Our Annual Appeal mails soon. *Please be generous!*

A Message From the Chief Executive Officer of The Arc

Wages and Benefits Improve!

You made it happen . . .

News of 6% wage increases, up to a 5% retirement match, and an \$18 minimum-wage met with great excitement last Summer.

In 14 years as your CEO, the only things I ever lost sleep over were flat service rates and flat wages. Thanks to your emails and phone calls, we've finally made strides toward equity.

News of 6% wage increases, up to a 5% retirement match, and an \$18 minimum-wage met with great excitement last Summer.

Thank you also for responding to our Community Satisfaction Survey, which will inform our ongoing facilities study. **Your opinion will ensure our programs and infrastructure continue to provide top-quality supports** to as many people with IDD and

their families in Eastern Connecticut as possible.

11 Secrets of Nonprofit Excellence is now available on Amazon. Please email ABellenoit@TheArcECT.org if you'd like a signed copy.

Excellence matters all day, every day at The Arc ECT. After all, we wrote the book on it. *Thanks for being on our team!*



Don't miss our 46TH Strides Walk, Run and Roll on October 1, 2023. Register: TheArcECT.org/strides.



Kathleen Stauffer

The Arc NEWS

Spring Legislative Events Keep Disability Funding Front and Center

Groups from The Arc ECT's Day programs in both northeast and southeast CT joined a packed Legislative Office Building on **May 4th for Family Hearing Day**. Hosted by the IDD Caucus, the event drew friends, family members, caregivers and people with IDD from all over the state presenting testimony to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and legislators regarding the need for increased funding for disability services. Director of Community Outreach Director Denise Tift was part of the CL&A crowd. **"This Family Hearing Day was held as the budget was being worked on, so our group also delivered letters directly to their legislators, making sure they didn't forget about funding for IDD supports."**

The push for increased funding didn't stop there: **The Arc CT's Legislative Reception at the Capitol** on May 11th gave legislators the opportunity to meet representatives from all the different Arc chapters. The Arc ECT also attended the **May 15th Nonprofit Day** at the Capitol, organized by the CT Nonprofit Alliance and followed by their **May 26th Rally**. The pressure did not go unnoticed. **"We've finally been heard,"** said The Arc ECT's CEO Kathleen Stauffer. "Thanks to the emails and phone calls from all our team members, their families, the people we support, and the families we serve, the **Connecticut State Legislature at long last acknowledged the funding disparity that has long existed among nonprofit providers who serve people with IDD and other social service providers.** We appreciate our hard-working legislators' efforts. We still have a way to go, but this is a constructive step forward."



The Arc ECT's Self Advocates made sure their voices were heard at this year's Family Hearing Day at the Capitol.

Real Work for Real Pay: The Arc ECT *MicroEnterprise* update

A Truly Grand Opening at The Cookie Factory



CEO Kathleen Stauffer received the CT General Assembly's Citation on behalf of the agency and The Cookie Factory. Shown with her are from L to R: Scott Soares and Tricia Anderson of USDA, one of our grant partners, NE Chamber President Shawn Johnson, and Woodstock First Selectman Jay Swan.

Over 75 community members, legislators and donors who made the Woodstock micro-enterprise possible were on hand for its **official opening on April 26**. The Northeast CT Chamber of Commerce helped attendees tour the commercial kitchen, where they met the bakers, sampled cookies, and praised the new venture.

And as of July we've had **5 winners who found the Golden Chip sticker** in a bag of our cookies and received a platter of 150 cookies!



Our bakers were super excited to meet everyone at the Grand Opening

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Donation Station Recycling Bin Update!

We now have 29 bins throughout eastern CT. They're at parks, playgrounds, and local businesses from Thompson to Chesterfield to Groton Long Point.

View our **handy bin location map** at

TheArcECT.org/donation-station-locations.

Keep CT clean and green

—and support jobs for people with IDD while you're doing it!



The Arc ECT Wins Contract for Transformational Services

The “Movin’ On Transformation Program” is a joint venture between the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The Arc ECT was one of its first awardees, and **will receive funds to increase and customize supports for people with IDD** in more independent and community-based settings.

The program will work in conjunction with The Arc’s cluster housing transition initiative, in which 7 people with IDD will move from residential supports to supervised apartments at a new mixed-unit apartment building in New London, opening in late summer.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for us to help the people we support move towards more integrated and community-based settings that promote independence and freedom of choice,” said Yvette Hobson, Deputy QA Officer — Individualized Services, the department overseeing the project. “We’ll also be moving another 8 participants when Phase 2 of construction is completed, so the funding for these services is crucial to helping us promote meaningful opportunities for people to fully participate in their communities.”

The Arc’s Community Satisfaction Survey: Part of a 3-Year Initiative

You may have received a link to a survey this summer asking for feedback on The Arc ECT’s programs and services. The survey, conducted by GreatBlue Research of Glastonbury, is part of an **extensive study commissioned by the Board of Directors to insure that we are geographically and programmatically positioned to best serve the needs of people with IDD and their families.** We’re responding to our constituents’ needs in the best and most effective way possible. The facilities assessment, conducted by Northeast Collaborative Architects of Middletown, involved a **deep dive into the placement and condition of all our buildings as well as an analysis of transportation routes to insure maximum efficiency.** Results and recommendations will be available from both consultants in October. Then the real planning begins!



Founders Day 2023: Fun, Celebration . . . and No Rain!

June 26 was about as iffy as you could get weather-wise, but the sun came out just in time for over 120 team members, legislators, and community partners to enjoy an evening of camaraderie, lawn games, and wood-fired pizza at Mohegan Park in Norwich. The Arc ECT’s yearly celebration honors the families who formed The Arc in 1952. CEO Kathleen Stauffer and Board President Diane



Aubin presented the **Community Service Award to Mario Lorcas and his family from Lisbon Tire** (in photo above) for keeping our enormous vehicle fleet on the road. **Woodstock First Selectman Jay Swan received the Legislative Award** for his support of our Redemption Center and Cookie Factory micro-enterprises. **And Steven Crowell received the Volunteer Award** for his dedication and leadership in CL&A’s Volunteer Corps. Kathleen thanked **outgoing Board member Mary Ellen Snyder** and welcomed **new members Don Trella and Kelly Allard.** Several team members also received length of service awards for up to 30 years with the agency.



Team members enjoyed our Summer theme and The Arc beach balls!

Receive The Arc News Online!

Help us switch to a digital mailing format and cut down on paper products by emailing dtift@thearcct.org, and **get your bi-annual The Arc News online!**

The Transitional Employment Services (TES) Program

—career exploration, continued learning, and community involvement

At the mention of “Math Day,” most people would be groaning in despair, but not Karlee. “I love Money Class!” she exclaims, and she’s not alone. Karlee and her fellow participants in The Arc ECT’s Transitional Employment Services program (TES) in Danielson look forward to Monday and Wednesday afternoons, where they learn money management skills—from making the right change to keeping a checking account balance—but it all starts with math skills. “I want to be a cashier,” says Karlee, so I know my math skills have got to be really good.”

Money Class is just one of the many programs and activities offered through TES, which provides three years of hands-on community-based vocational training and experience to people aging out of the school system, and helps them prepare for employment or volunteer work in the field of their choice. “It’s a pretty busy schedule,” says Danielson TES Coordinator Mindy Barton. **“All our activities are geared towards career exploration and building new skills.** And we offer a lot of volunteer opportunities in the community.” When Mindy says “a lot,”



Mindy (L) and Karlee explore the ins and outs of working in a greenhouse

“What’s great about the program is that we can meet people where they are and give them the tools they need to get closer to their goals.”

she isn’t exaggerating. The group usually does a different volunteer activity each weekday morning—at local food banks, horse rescue farms, and local nonprofits like TEEG (Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group). Then it’s back to Danielson for an afternoon of Life Skills classes including nutrition, personal grooming, resume building, interview practice—“Everywhere we go, there’s something to learn,” says Mindy.

James Hyman, Director of Employment Services, agrees. **“We also offer TES at The Employment Transition Center in Groton.** We’re slowly re-establishing the internships with local organizations and businesses that we had pre-pandemic. They’re key in giving people real-world experience. **TES is all about choice, and giving people with IDD as many career options as possible.** In our educational field trips, participants learn not only about the history behind where we’re going but also get the **opportunity to do some career exploration—we ask, ‘What type of jobs do people do here? Is there a position**

you would be interested in?’ TES Team members recently secured Dylan a spot as a baker trainee at The Arc’s Cookie Factory in Woodstock. “It’s what I’ve always wanted to do; I’m really excited to start!”

Some people in TES, like Karlee, are already employed part-time but need some extra training to advance in their current position or transition to one with more responsibility. “Everyone comes in with very different needs, desires, and skills,” says Paula Kowalski, Director of Education and TES. **“What’s great about the program is that we can meet people where they are and give them the tools they need to get closer to their goals.** Our goal is for people to be fully employed after three years, or able to successfully volunteer with an organization that can give them the supervision and support they need. So this combination of volunteer opportunities and life skills assistance is really important—without these things, it’s hard to succeed and gain independence in your community.”



Josh loves volunteering at Shag Bark Lumber in East Haddam

The TES group has a favorite fall recipe they make for area Seniors—look for it on p. 7!

Our Community Partners Make Dreams Come True

Our heartfelt thanks to these great organizations, who provided grants and operating funds to support a variety of vital programs between April and August 2023.

- ☀ The Towns of Waterford, Stonington, Groton, and Killingly, and the City of Groton generously included us in their 23/24 budgets to support Community Life & Advocacy.
- ☀ The Town of Groton provided a grant through its ARPA funds for upgrading our financial and micro-enterprise tracking software.
- ☀ We'll be starting our new Social Equity/DEI program thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, and a partnership with Berkshire Bank.
- ☀ Pfizer Connecticut Labs provided funds to purchase rain gear for our Volunteer Corps members who help at community events regardless of the weather.
- ☀ The United Way of Southeastern Connecticut awarded FY24 operating funds to our Community Life & Advocacy program.
- ☀ A grant from The Eastern CT Savings Bank Foundation covered the cost of meeting space for CL&A's Self-Advocacy group, as well as a voice amplifier for its peer coordinator.
- ☀ The Arc ECT's Redemption Center/Donation Station was awarded one of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's 2023 Beverage Container Recycling Grants to augment its Center in Woodstock.
- ☀ The Edward and Mary Lord Foundation awarded our supported residence in Danielson funds to replace its kitchen cabinets.
- ☀ And many thanks to the AHEPA Foundation for its generous yearly contribution to help us continue to provide programming and supports.

We're also deeply grateful to the **friends, family members, employees and their companies' matching gifts programs, and community partners** who have contributed to our Annual Appeal since March 2023. Your generosity has helped further our mission of walking "in partnership for full equality" for people with IDD.

The Arc Eastern Connecticut in the Spotlight

CONGRATULATIONS!

Lewis Beasley has been promoted from House Manager to Director of Residential Services, Southeast.

Rachel Gallogly, who will be the new Assisted Living Coordinator at the Bayonet Street, New London development, is now a Certified Assistive Technology Assessor.

Michelle Torres has been promoted to Director of In-Home Supports.

Former IHS Director **Yvette Hobson** is now Deputy Chief, Quality Assurance for In-Home Supports.

Devon Pugh has been promoted to Coordinator of the Individualized Supports program.

WELCOME!

Emily Utz joined us in May as the new HR Assistant.

We welcome **Colin LaSaracina**, our new Operational Support Specialist, who will be assisting the COO.

Self Advocacy Corner

-by Jamie Lazaroff

Self-Advocacy Coordinator

The Self Advocacy United Group is finally meeting in person after almost two and a half years on Zoom! We received **a generous grant from the Eastern Connecticut Savings Bank Foundation to rent a space for our meetings.** The grant also includes money for a microphone that I will be utilizing to help me to project my voice to the group, which is getting larger all the time.



March was National **Disability Awareness Month.** Community Life & Advocacy members visited two hospitals in the area to spread awareness about what people with disabilities can do when given the chance to succeed.

If you would like to learn more about the Self-Advocacy group and membership, contact Jamie at — selfadvocate@thearect.org.

The Arc Through My Eyes

by Kristina Emerson



In this issue of **The Arc News**, Reporter Kristina Emerson interviews residential program team member Louisena Jean, whom everyone calls Jean.

Kristina: How long have you worked at The Arc?

Jean: Just 5 months—I started in May.

Kristina: Wow! I thought it was longer.

Jean: Yes, when I first came here, I didn't know whether I would stay. But I fell in love with you guys, so I quit my other job.

Kristina: You even like taking us to sports practice?

Jean: Oh yes, I love that—it's the only time I do sports myself! I do like to watch basketball on TV though.



Kristina: Did you also like it when we went fishing?

Jean: That was the best! I even caught two baby porgies. Which we put back.

Kristina: Yeah, that was a bummer. What do you do for fun?

Jean: I play with my two girls—that's my fun. I also have twin boys but they're much older.

Kristina: Is your family here in the area?

Jean: Some are here and some are in Queens. I've been in CT for 19 years; my husband joined us from Haiti 9 years ago.



Kristina: What do you like best about working for The Arc?

Jean: Every day is a good day here. I'm so grateful to be working with you guys; you're so nice to be with.

Kristina: We treat each other with respect.

Jean: Yes you do, and that's so good to see.

What's THE Best Fall Road Race in Eastern Connecticut?

It's Strides of course! Our **46th Annual Jack O'Keefe Memorial Strides Road Race** blasts off from the starting line at beautiful Camp Harkness in Waterford on Sunday, October 1, for a blissful 5k or a slightly more challenging 10k. The course is scenic and well-marked, the prizes for top finishers are great, and the food is fantastic! We also have **raffle prizes, a Family Fun Run/Walk/Roll around the Camp grounds, and great swag**, including collectible race T-shirts (some runners have kept theirs for over 40 years!)



This year's event is sponsored by Gerardi Insurance, Berkshire Bank, The O'Keefe Foundation, and our Hero Sponsors (find them on our website TheArcECT.org/sponsors.)

We are proud to announce that **this year's timer is SNERRO** and **our food sponsor is US Foods**.

100% of proceeds from our fundraisers goes towards providing programs and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our CL&A and camp programming.

If you or your business can't attend but would like to help out, **we'd love it if you'd consider sponsoring this great event—or volunteering on Race Day!**

For more information, and to register:

Visit TheArcECT.org/strides

or contact Denise at

T: 860.889.4435 x116 **E:** dtift@thearect.org



An Early Fall Treat: Broccoli & Cheese Soup

—The Transitional Employment Program's Cooking Class made this delicious soup for the Retired Seniors Program in Danielson. "I'm so glad we got to take some home!" said Dylan.

INGREDIENTS

1 Tbsp + 4 Tbsp unsalted butter, divided
1 small or medium sweet yellow onion, diced
1 clove garlic, peeled and minced
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups vegetable or chicken stock
2 cups half-and-half (can substitute milk but will be less creamy)
2 to 3 cups broccoli florets diced into bite-size pieces + 1 cup stems, optional
2 large carrots trimmed, peeled, and sliced into thin rounds
3/4 tsp salt or to taste
3/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper or to taste
1/2 tsp paprika, optional and to taste
1/2 tsp dry mustard powder, optional and to taste
1 pinch cayenne pepper optional and to taste
8 oz grated extra-sharp cheddar cheese (do NOT use pre-grated cheese —it won't melt)

DIRECTIONS

1. Sauté 1 Tbsp butter & the onion, over medium heat for 4 minutes. Stir intermittently.
2. Add garlic. Cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and set pan aside.
3. In a large pot add remaining butter, flour. Cook over medium heat for 3-5 min, whisking constantly, until flour is thickened.
4. Slowly add the vegetable stock, then the half-and-half, whisking constantly.
5. Allow to simmer over low heat for 15-20 min, whisking intermittently until thickened. Add broccoli & carrots.
6. Add the salt, pepper, paprika, mustard powder, and cayenne. Simmer over low heat for 20-25 mins, or until thickened. Whisk intermittently.
7. Add most of the cheese, reserving a small amount for garnishing bowls. Stir in cheese until melted and incorporated fully.
8. Transfer soup to bowls, garnish with reserved cheese, and serve immediately.



Mechanic Street's New Patio: A Gift from the Eastern CT Chamber's Leadership Class

On June 29, members of the Eastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Class of 2024 held a ribbon-cutting at our **Day Support facility on Mechanic Street in Danielson to celebrate the completion of a**



Crystal G, center in gray skirt and Nikki, in red top, cut the ribbon to officially open the new patio, joined by (L to R): Kathleen Stauffer, Chamber President Tony Sheridan, Sen. Cathy Osten, and Warren R.

wheelchair accessible concrete patio in back of the building. "This is a wonderful addition to our programming," noted Director Susan James. "Our participants will now be able to use the back yard safely, and do all kinds of activities outside in the nice weather." Invited guests included Sen. Cathy Osten, who praised the work of the Leadership Class, who chose The Arc's project from several submissions. **Class members, representing businesses and organizations from around the region, were in charge of completing the entire project** from fundraising to marketing to construction as part of their year-long course-

work. Class member Dan Desrochers explained that the project's focus on accessibility and its straightforward design criteria made it the ideal project choice.



Members of the Chamber's 2024 Leadership Class present a \$5,000 check to The Arc ECT as a result of their fundraising, which will go towards the cost of outdoor furniture for the Day program. L to R: Karen Walters, Dan Desrochers, Craig Koenigsnecht, Miria Gray and Warren R. Receiving the check are Nikki (L) and CEO Kathleen Stauffer.



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TheArcECT.org



IN
**PARTNERSHIP
FOR FULL
EQUALITY**

The Arc NEWS

Thanks to Everyone Who Made our 35th Annual Gardner Johnson Memorial Golf Tournament a Success!



From our 2023 Gardner Johnson awardees Brandy Hapgood and Lynn Bourque (pictured here with Brian Carillon from Centreville Bank) to the extremely good sports who helped us celebrate our “Welcome Summer” theme, the yearly fundraiser exceeded expectations, drawing 29 teams and raising over \$43,000 to help

support programming and services for people with IDD. Thanks also to Tournament Sponsors Berkshire Bank and Gerardi Insurance. (For a complete list of sponsors, please visit our website.) It was a fantastic day!



SAVE THE DATE!

M is for March 2024... & Murder!

Mark your calendars for
Saturday, March 30, 2024,
and join us for our spring
fundraiser,
"Murder at the Museum!"

Watch our website for details.

Saturday March 30, 2024