

# Lifetime

summer 2005

## Westchester Arc Charts Bold Plan for Community Inclusion

### Annual Meeting Signals Evolving Mission

#### Newly Elected Officers

President - Mohan Mehra

First Vice President - Timothy Sullivan

Second Vice President - Susan Walker

Treasurer - Anne M. Majsak

Secretary - Sarah E. Phelan, Esq.

#### Children with Disabilities Deliver Magical Performance

Westchester Arc's annual meeting featured a special performance by the Magic to Do Players, a theater troupe of children with developmental disabilities. The group is sponsored by Westco Productions, the county's premier theater company for young audiences. The players sang and danced to numbers from *The Wiz* and other popular musicals, rousing audience members to clap their hands and sing along.

The children learned how to act, dance and sing through Westco's Musical Theatre Workshop for Children with Developmental Disabilities, run in partnership with Westchester Arc and PACDS, a volunteer support network that helps parents of children with Down syndrome understand their youngsters and develop their full potential. Now in its third year, the workshop helps the children build motor and memory retention skills and increase their self-esteem.



OMRDD Commissioner Tom Maul (left) is honored for his public service by board member Carolyn Holodak and Executive Director Ric Swierat.

Westchester Arc unveiled an ambitious three-year strategic plan at its 56<sup>th</sup> annual meeting on June 7, reflecting a mission that has evolved in response to changing demographics and raised expectations (for details, please refer to "Publications" at [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org)). President Mohan Mehra, elected during the meeting to his fifth term in that office, explained that Westchester Arc will redefine its services as "bridges to the community" in answer to deepening desires for inclusion. The goal is for children and adults with disabilities to learn, work, socialize and live alongside the general population, in accordance with personal choice and capabilities.

Executive Director Ric Swierat explained that, in order to meet the increasingly diverse needs of people with disabilities, greater emphasis will be placed on services tailored to the individual. Westchester Arc also plans to enhance its support to the Hispanic community, which represents the fastest growing ethnic group in the county.

#### Self-Advocates Speak Out

Speaking at a meeting of self-advocates earlier in the evening, OMRDD Commissioner Thomas A. Maul encouraged audience members to take charge of their lives. Describing a woman with disabilities whom he met *continued on page 4*



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## From Our Executive Director

*Richard P. Swierat*  
**Richard P. Swierat**

The first goal identified in Westchester Arc's three-year strategic plan says it all: Evolve to effectively meet future needs. A huge mandate given the changing composition of our population and its increasingly diverse requirements.

The number of children under six has surged 84 percent in the past three years. During the same time, 56 percent more individuals between 15 and 21 have sought our services.

Meanwhile, due to improvements in healthcare, the over-40 population has remained stable.

More than half the people in our programs continue to live at home with their families, so there are likely to be increased needs for family supports, respite, recreation and guardianship.

### Upsurge in Autism

There's also been a dramatic upsurge in autism, challenging us to develop new skills. Our pre-school is already expert in communicating with children having autism. Now we're beginning to train direct care staff throughout the agency in the same techniques.

Cultural background plays a role, too, with the number of Hispanic individuals doubling and the number of African Americans up by eight percent during the same period.

How will we meet the expectations of this increasingly diverse community? In some instances, we are uncertain of the changing requirements. During the coming year, we will study the needs of individuals with autism and of se-

nior citizens. We will ask about interest in after-school programs.

We are also identifying staff throughout the organization who are fluent in Spanish, and our goal is to have bilingual support in every program. Our second Family Resource Day, scheduled for October 1, will feature an all-Spanish workshop.

We will carefully identify the services that we can provide with excellence, then recruit community partners that can complement our strengths. We will increasingly become a centralized source of information about services provided anywhere in Westchester for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

### Funding Challenges

As always, funding will present challenges. Many of the services that will be most in demand—such as recreation and guardianship—do not conform to traditional means of public support. The Westchester Arc Foundation was established two years ago to lessen our dependency on government budgets. So we will increasingly turn to our friends for the financial support that will make these services possible—support such as The Thomas and Agnes Carvel Foundation's five-year gift to lease and insure a vehicle for our community services program. We are deeply grateful for the generosity that has enabled staff to drive consumers who cannot use public transportation to meetings with doctors, employers and prospective landlords.

This is an exciting time for Westchester Arc, burgeoning with opportunity. With the support of families and caring neighbors, we can build the bridges necessary to fully include people with developmental disabilities in community life.



## From Our President

*Mohan Mehra*

Mohan Mehra

### OUR PROMISE

Westchester Arc is a caring, innovative and highly professional organization that assists people with developmental disabilities as they envision possibilities and reach for their dreams. It serves children and adults of all ages, helping to build bridges to a wider world.

As Westchester Arc updated its three-year strategic plan, we asked ourselves a number of basic questions. “Who” is Westchester Arc? What differentiates us from other service providers? In discussions with board, staff and families, several words repeatedly surfaced — **caring, innovative and professional**. And it occurred to us that by embodying them in a formal “promise,” we could establish a standard for all

our interactions with those we serve and their families, our partners and the community at large.

**CARING.** Westchester Arc is, first, a heart-driven organization. You can see it when a pre-school teacher breaks through a toddler’s isolation. Or when an Everyday Hero helps to enlarge someone’s world with a pen pal. Our guardianship program, the largest of its kind in the state, provides the caring and support of a family to individuals who do not have parents or other relatives to help them manage their lives.

**INNOVATIVE.** Westchester Arc has always been a pioneer. In 1949, when the agency was created, its radical vision of educating and employing people with developmental disabilities inspired consumers, families and other concerned citizens. It is this dedication to creative problem solving that has enabled us to grow and adapt over the years. The Without Walls program brings day habilitation participants into the heart of

community life. Career services uses “job carving” to define new positions that match the skills of those we serve, while enabling a potential employer’s existing staff to be more productive.

**PROFESSIONAL.** This is our promise of quality. Our COMPASS certification, granted to only a handful of agencies statewide, attests to our commitment to high standards. So do our Best Practice Awards, peer recognition for outstanding performance that goes beyond the requirements of job descriptions.

We recognize the great trust you place in us by choosing Westchester Arc to serve your loved ones. We pledge that in our everyday interaction with those we serve, we will be caring, innovative and professional. To help our staff live this everyday, we will ensure that our internal values, communications, staff training and recognition systems are aligned with this promise. That is our promise!

## Encore! Echo Onstage Celebrates Second Year

After an amazing debut last June, Echo Onstage returned this summer for a second successful season. Sixteen young adults with developmental disabilities participated in the musical theater workshop, held June 28 to July 1 at SUNY Purchase. The program is sponsored by Westchester Arc’s recreational services in partnership with Westco Productions, the county’s premier theater company for young audiences. Gifts from The Arc of the U.S., Ginsburg Foundation and Westchester Community Foundation made the workshop possible.

“Echo Onstage serves a rapidly growing group within the Westchester Arc “family,”



Young performers wow the audience.

individuals between 16 and 25 who still live at home,” says Executive Director Ric Swierat. “Our strategic plan calls for us to offer more services to these young people, and we are

especially concerned with identifying leisure activities. Thanks to a longstanding partnership with Westco, we’ve been able to help this population learn new skills at the same time that they’re making friends and enjoying themselves.”

Participants built self-esteem and muscle tone, while learning dance numbers. Role playing and improvisational exercises promoted creative thinking and improved verbal and social skills. At the end

of the week, they showcased their talents for family and friends, performing song and dance routines to hits such as *YMCA* and *Who Let the Dogs Out?*



# Westchester Arc Charts Bold Plan for Community Inclusion

Continued from page 1

when she was living in a large, anonymous institution, he noted that “now she is married and has her own home.” He then urged attendees to demand their rights and have the “determination to succeed.” Carolyn Holodak, who chaired the session, discussed some of the group’s goals, which include receiving more respectful treatment from society, creating opportunities for people with disabilities to develop their talents and working in the community.

NYSARC Executive Director Marc Brandt spoke to the self-advocates about the importance of pending legislation that would affect the funding of services for people with developmental disabilities. He encouraged them to be activists and to educate legislators about the effects that budget decisions will have on daily lives.

## Family Workshops

Workshops on residential opportunities, financial planning and services for school-aged children were also held.

“There has been great progress in community acceptance for our residences,” declared Larry Rufo, a director



Stephen N. and his sister, Eileen Madison, are interviewed about needed services by staff writer Mark Williams.

of residential services for the agency. “Our residential staff are more than ‘just’ caregivers. We’re teachers and advocates helping individuals with disabilities achieve their dreams.”

A session on financial planning focused on supplemental needs trusts, which enable families to set aside funds to support vacations, music lessons and similar life-enhancing activities.

A third workshop featured families discussing how they had worked with their school districts to develop educational plans for their own children after graduation from pre-school. The public supports change radically between pre-school and kindergarten, often causing great confusion. “You are your child’s best advo-

cate. Don’t ask for the best program in your school system, ask for the most appropriate one for your child,” advised Leslie Jeris, former PTA president for The Children’s School for Early Development and currently a Westchester Arc board member.

## New Name and Logo

To signal Westchester Arc’s evolving mission, the agency announced changes to its name,

logo and tagline. As Westchester “Arc” rather than Westchester “ARC,” the name can no longer be misinterpreted as an acronym. “Arc” refers to bridging gaps and building supportive connections between people with developmental disabilities and the community.

Westchester Arc’s new logo conveys the theme of “reaching for opportunities and journeying to a wider world.” The new tagline, “Envision Opportunities, Explore Choices,” refers to the agency’s commitment to person-centered planning and customized services. The tagline also invites the greater community to enrich itself by embracing people with disabilities as students, employees and neighbors.

## Tributes

The following tribute donations were received between May 4, 2005, and July 17, 2005.

IN MEMORY OF HELEN CARACUZZO  
Mr. and Mrs. Alan B. Armstrong

IN MEMORY OF MONA DEGORY  
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Litzinger

IN MEMORY OF MARIGOLD GELFAND  
Mr. and Mrs. Alan Schulman

IN MEMORY OF KATHERINE HANRATTY  
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Misthal  
Mr. Charles B. Page

IN MEMORY OF LEONARD PESELNICK  
Ms. Matilda Tell

IN MEMORY OF MATIAS SCHAPIRO  
Mr. and Mrs. Alan Schulman

IN MEMORY OF LEE SHERMAN  
Mr. Justin Israel

IN HONOR OF AVERY CONNORS  
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Litzinger

IN HONOR OF JUSTIN ISRAEL  
Strong Foundation of New York

IN HONOR OF EVY AND DAVID SEYBOLDT  
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Litzinger

IN HONOR OF KATHY WIEGAND  
Katharine Wilson Conroy, Esq.

## Art Show and Auction Charm Attendees

Forty-three individuals with developmental disabilities competed in Westchester Arc's ninth annual art show, held in conjunction with the agency's annual meeting. Elizabeth W. won first prize for a painting characterized by imaginative shapes and swirling motion. Natasha M. and Denise S. claimed second and third places for abstract watercolors. Ten honorable mentions were awarded to works that spanned a wide variety of media, including pencil drawings, photography and collage. The art show was made possible through the generosity of the Bulova Foundation.

Attendees were given an opportunity to purchase the distinctive work of previous prize-winners Lauren F. and Derwin J. during a special auction. Program Director Bill Porcaro, carrying an over-sized gavel, fired up the audience for a friendly bidding war.



**Jamila L. enjoys viewing her friends' art. Forty-three individuals with developmental disabilities displayed their work.**

Lauren's painting was sold for \$300, while Derwin's went for \$500. Half of the winnings went to the artists, while the remainder will help to fund Westchester Arc's art classes.

"This was one of the best shows yet," claims Dave Gasparri, director of recreational services. "Everyone who viewed the work commented on how original it was, and there was a great turnout, including many of the artists, who were excited about

showing off their accomplishments to proud family members and friends."

Though the show was open to all individuals with developmental disabilities, many submissions came from students in Westchester Arc's Echo Arts program. "Art classes promote individuality, creativity and self-esteem," comments instructor Steve Lipkin. "That can certainly be seen in the works displayed here tonight. I'm very proud of my students, and all of the artists, for their creative achievements."

### Belated Thank You

In the last issue of *Lifetime*, we neglected to recognize three generous donors whose gifts to the Yonkers League honored that volunteer group's years of hard work and dedication. A heartfelt thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Haas, Justin Israel and John Panko.

## 2005 Annual Meeting Awards



### Public Official Partnership Awards

- Commissioner Thomas A. Maul
- Senator Nicholas Spano

### The Katzenberg Award (for longtime support of people with developmental disabilities)

- Milton Sincoff

### Family Partnership Award

- Eglon and Renee Simons

### Media Award for Awareness Leadership

- *The Journal News*

**Senator Nicholas Spano (center) is congratulated by Executive Director Ric Swierat and President Mohan Mehra.**



## NOT-TO-BE-MISSED EVENTS

### 5th Annual Golfing For Kids

September 13, 2005, at the Westchester Hills Golf Club



Now in its fifth successful year, Golfing for Kids raises funds for Westchester Arc's Children's School for Early Development. Last year's efforts brought in over \$100,000, and we're hoping 2005 will be even better. So, on September 13, break out your golf clubs and sink a hole-in-one at the Westchester Hills Golf Club. You'll enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner and have opportunities to buy raffle tickets for a \$10,000 jackpot, a vacation in London and other fabulous prizes. For more information, call Fran Higgins, 914-428-8330, ext. 3028, or visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org).

Committee members (from left to right, standing) - Tony Rizzi, Marcello Santucci, Phyllis Rizzi, Anne Sweazey, Lou Barelli, Norm Szymanski, Scott McGuirk, Amy Laskin, Ralph Mauro, Gene Porcaro, Jamie Smith, Louann Paladino, Val Taubner III, (seated) Celia Barelli, Silvia Santucci, Kathy Higgins, Annette Mauro, Fran Porcaro, (not shown) Bob Paladino, Janet Abinanti, Penny and Tom Chiusano, Steve Cohen, Eileen Marchese-Cohen, Gretchen Connors, Summer Costin, Sheryl Frishman, Laura Giacovas, Doreen Goldstein, Fran Higgins, Leslie Jeris, Michelle Kapica, Erika Louman, Marci and Tony Mamo, Denise McCarthy, Ellen McGuirk, Theresa Mooney, Una Murray, Kristie Paladino, Anne Shaw, Michael Shoemaker, Barbara Spatola, Ric Swierat, Mari Yuro.

### 21st Annual MBIA Invitational

September 19, 2005, at Anglebrook Golf Club, Mount Kisco Country Club and Whipoorwill Club



Take a swing in support of Westchester Arc and Special Olympics New York-Hudson Valley Region at the 21<sup>st</sup> annual MBIA Invitational on September 19. The MBIA Invitational is the largest event of its kind in New York State, featuring a day of golf, tennis and good-will at three of the county's premier clubs—Anglebrook, Mount Kisco and Whipoorwill. Meet celebrities, enjoy a cocktail reception, then attend the evening awards banquet. Last year's event saw an all-time high of 435 participants and raised \$350,000 for two great causes. With your help, 2005 will be another outstanding year. For more information, call Elyse Fowler, 914-428-8330, ext. 3027, or visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org).

Committee members (from left to right, standing) - Barry Steelman, Patricia Froehlich, Richard Mann, Elyse Fowler, Jerry Peters, John Zanzarella, Ric Swierat, Tom Hay, (seated) Deirdre Christiansen, Michael Ballinger, Andrea Madden, (not shown) Lois Baldwin, Bob Dinozzi, Maria Madero, Maryann Martini, Regina Moore, Robby Morris, Bob Pinchbeck, Raymond Schultz, Anne Sweazey, Sue Voltz.

### A Matter of Taste 2

November 2, 2005, at Westchester Country Club



Back by popular demand, A Matter of Taste 2 is a celebration of the culinary arts. At the Westchester Country Club on November 2, you'll sample specialties from the area's finest restaurants, paired with an international wine list. Last year's event raised over \$85,000 for people with disabilities and drew high profile guests such as County Executive Andrew J. Spano, who cooked one of his favorite dishes for the crowd. New this year is a VIP reception, during which guests can meet and take photos with the chefs, enjoy champagne and get a head start sampling the scrumptious fare. For details, call

Fran Higgins, 914-428-8330, ext. 3028, or visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org).

Committee members (from left to right, back row) - Mohan Mehra, Henry Keating, Lisa Hery, Ric Swierat, Christine Goonan, Anne Sweazey, Steve Palm, Joe Manzi, Marc Guild, Elizabeth Maitland, Marilyn Perito, (front row) Tibi Guzman, RuthAnn Brazill, Fran Higgins, Stephanie Filardi, (not shown) Cathleen Bahan, Lois Baldwin, Beth Beck, Steve Jagde, Dean Lombardo, Regina Rodriguez-Servidio, Anne Sweazey, Norm Szymanski.

## Pre-Schoolers with Disabilities Move to Community Kindergartens

Nearly half of the 79 children who just graduated from Westchester Arc's Children's School for Early Development will attend typical kindergarten classes in their home school districts next year. Graduates who were once non-verbal are now speaking in full sentences, singing songs and reciting the alphabet. "Eight of this year's graduates no longer require any special supports," notes Fran Porcaro, the school's director.

The Children's School collaborates with 17 community-based pre-schools through out the county, and each site celebrated graduation with a special ceremony. In Hawthorne, students shook hands and said good morn-



Children's School graduate Baruc T. celebrates with dad, Paul, at the school's Hawthorne site.

ing to one another, spelled out their names and recited the days of the week. At the Country Children's Center in Katonah, graduates sang *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*, named the months of the

year and described the weather—demonstrating memory retention, speech and social skills they learned at the pre-school.

Jeremy F. is one of the graduates moving to a typical kindergarten. Prior to attending The Children's School, Jeremy had difficulty staying calm and focused. He also had issues with personal space. After receiving early intervention services, he was enrolled in a community-based class at the Boys and Girls Club in Mount Kisco.

A year later, Jeremy now enjoys participating in group activities, gets along well with others, sits and listens to stories, and is very aware of his surroundings.

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## David S. Celebrates 31 Years With Westchester Arc

This summer David S. celebrates his 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary with Westchester Arc. David first came to the agency in 1974 at the age of 20. "I considered myself a pretty independent person, but I also realized I needed a little help finding a job," he explains. "Westchester Arc taught me job skills. The agency's workshops helped me earn money to support myself."

Over the last 31 years, David has observed some important changes in the agency, including its recent name change. "I'm all for it. I hate being referred to as retarded," says David, citing the fact that many people erroneously believed that Westchester "ARC," the previous name, was an acronym. "I may have a disability, but I'm working



with that disability. I have dreams and goals just like everyone else."

One of those goals is to find office work. "These days Westchester Arc

seems more focused on finding people with disabilities jobs in the community. One of the reasons I've stayed with this agency for so long is because I know they can help me achieve that goal."

In his spare time, David enjoys playing the clarinet and listening to classical music. "I like Bach a lot. I'm also a fan of *La Boheme* and *Rigoletto*. Seeing those operas performed live at the Metropolitan Opera House was a big thrill," he says.

David lives independently in a group home and is an aspiring writer. "I was inspired to write by my favorite TV show, *Murder She Wrote*," says David. "Everyone always respected (Angela Lansbury's character) J. B Fletcher on that show. I'm hoping my writing will get others to respect me."



## Job Shadows Shed New Light on Career Choices

Earlier this year, Westchester Arc's S.T.A.R Program (Students in Transition Accessing Resources) began working with the Tuckahoe Union Free School District on a new program called job shadowing. The service gives students an opportunity to visit local businesses in order to better explore career paths. They go behind-the-scenes, learning how each company is run and gaining hands-on experience. Two or more trips are planned each month, with recent visits including Nathan's, Best Buy, Trader Joe's, and Linens 'n Things.

"It can be hard for students to choose the right career path when they don't have a sense of what's out there," comments Paul Siragusa, director of

special education for the Tuckahoe Union Free School District. "Job shadowing exposes them to many different work environments and helps them understand that they have career choices."

Job shadowing made a world of difference to one student, who graduated in the spring. Initially uncertain about what to do after high school, he decided to pursue a career in the food service industry after spending a day at a local restaurant.

In addition to job shadowing, S.T.A.R. offers vocational training, job coaching and internship development. "S.T.A.R provides all of the tools a stu-

*Continued on page 11*

## Shari Lewitt Named "Rising Star"



Shari Lewitt, director of career supports, was named a "Rising Star" by The Business Council of Westchester at a special reception held on June 1 at MasterCard International in Purchase. The "Rising Stars" program recognizes individuals under the age of 40, who exemplify leadership, foresight and vision for the future of Westchester County.

"Ms. Lewitt is responsible for supervising over a dozen staff members who support more than 200

*Continued on page 11*

## Kickathon Raises \$4,000 for Pre-Schoolers



Supporters enjoy a day at Rye Playland.

Students from United Martial Arts Centers ([www.umacenters.com](http://www.umacenters.com)) raised \$4,000 for Westchester Arc's Children's School for Early Development at a June 4 Kickathon and Family Fun Day. Over 100 people attended the event, held at Rye Playland Amusement Park. After the "Kickathon," donors spent the day riding the Dragon coaster, ferris wheel, Old Mill and other Playland attractions.



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## Pre-schoolers with Disabilities Move to Community Kindergartens

*Continued from page 7*

"Jeremy has come such a long way thanks to the support and dedication of The Children's School. He even went to camp this summer without an aide," notes mom, Leann. "I don't know where Jeremy would be without this program."

## Spring Best Practice Awards Highlight Excellence



**Staff involved day hab attendees in a pet treat project.**



**Second prize went for a creative solution to the bus strike challenge.**

The agency's Best Practice Awards, presented twice a year, recognize the staff's innovative and caring approaches to enriching the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. The latest winners are:

**First Prize – Suzanne Uργο (treatment coordinator), Terence Robinson and Andrea Hudson (day habilitation specialists),** for encouraging consumers' love for animals. After volunteering at a local pet store, consumers expressed an interest in doing more for the animals. Staff helped them bake Peanut Butter and Honey Dog Biscuits and Tuna Delight Kitty Treats, which they donated to local shelters. This activity helped consumers develop stronger ties with the community and improve motor, teamwork and organizational skills, while fulfilling their desire to help animals.

**Second Prize – Arnie Silverberg (program coordinator), Benny Colon and Orben Pastranna (job coaches), Gene Martinez (job placement specialist) and Sal Miniaci (employment specialist),** for driving consumers to and from work during the Westchester County bus strike. This support helped many consumers keep their jobs.

**Third Prize – Rohan Robinson (assistant residence manager),** for writing a reggae song celebrating individuals with developmental disabilities. Rohan has performed the song, *I Feel Like You Do*, at various state conferences and is in the process of recording a CD.

**Fourth Prize – Sandra Woods (treatment coordinator), Roselle Gilmore (community habilitation specialist) and Ray Royall (habilitation instructor),** for managing a consumer talent show that built self-esteem and raised money for various agency activities.

**Fifth Prize – Terence Robinson (day habilitation specialist),** for sharing his love of fishing with consumers. After talking to consumers about their experiences at camp, Terence learned that many liked the idea of fishing but had never tried it. He established a fishing class, teaching them how to hook bait and reel in fish and where to get the best catch. Participants loved the class and were very excited about learning a hobby they could share with friends and family.

## Rich Anderson Wins President's Award



**President Mohan Mehra praises Rich's talent.**

Publications Manager Rich Anderson, who designed the agency's updated logo, is the first recipient of Westchester Arc's President's Award, a newly established means of recognizing individuals whose innovation has resulted in significant cost savings to the agency. The award will be reserved for instances of unusual accomplishment and will not be presented on a scheduled basis. "In an environment characterized by threats to public funding and tight budgets, our staff must be increasingly creative in order to maintain high standards of quality," explained Executive Director Ric Swierat.

"Most organizations do not attempt to design a logo inhouse," explained Marketing Director Cathy Bahan. "They usually employ an outside marketing communications firm, something that we could never have afforded."

The award was presented to Rich by President Mohan Mehra and Public Information and Marketing Committee Chair Leslie Jeris at the June board meeting. "Rich's enormous personal talent has saved the agency tens of thousands of dollars and given us a symbol that will inspire us for years to come," said Mohan as he congratulated Rich.

## Resources

### The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD)

[www.ncpad.org](http://www.ncpad.org)

NCPAD provides information and resources that enable people with disabilities to become as physically active as they choose to be. This website offers links to popular activities, games, recreational opportunities and sports adapted for individuals with disabilities. It also provides public forums, references, contacts and other useful information.

### Disability Resources, Inc.

[www.disabilityresources.org](http://www.disabilityresources.org)

Disability Resources is a non-profit organization established to help individuals with disabilities live independently. This website provides information on disability organizations, independent living centers, rehabilitation facilities, educational institutions, and health and social service providers.

## To Bee or Not to Bee

### Consumers Showcase Spelling Abilities Talents

Westchester Arc's day habilitation program held its first annual spelling bee on June 29 at the Katzenberg Center in White Plains. Fifteen contestants from Mount Kisco, Ossining, Peekskill, White Plains and Yonkers drew cheers from friends and staff members as they tackled such words as "zoology" and "community." Jennifer M. of Yonkers won first place with the word "translate," while Michael V., also of Yonkers, came in second. Denise B. of White Plains took third place. All participants demonstrated great sportsmanship.

"I loved the spelling bee," says Denise. "Some of the words were hard, but we figured them out. I'm happy so many people were here to support us."

"This activity was a success on so many levels," comments Margaret Forrester, treatment coordinator and one of the event organizers. Gail Barker, program director, and Margaret McTigue, behavior therapist, also helped out with the program. "Participants



**Jerilyn A. showcases her abilities at the first annual spelling bee.**

increased their memory retention, spelling and vocabulary skills," Margaret continues. "They also won praise from family and staff, which helped increase their self-esteem. Standing up there in front of a large audience isn't easy, yet everyone managed to have a good time. We're all really proud of the participants for their courage and achievements."

## Mauro Family Raises \$1,700 for Pre-Schoolers with Disabilities



**Jennifer Mauro, successful young fundraiser.**

Jennifer Mauro, an alumna of Westchester Arc's Children's School for Early Development, just completed the third grade at Pelham's Prospect Hill School. She has been attending the school since kindergarten, at which time she was the first student with Down syndrome to ever be enrolled there.

From the first, Jennifer was welcomed with open arms by classmates, teachers and administrators. And a recent fundraiser that she and her mom, Annette, launched on behalf of The Children's School, attests to her popularity and the school's embrace of inclusion. Offering a Westchester Arc tee shirt to thank contributors for gifts of \$25 or more, the Mauro family brought in over \$1,700.

"The response was overwhelming. All of the kids and their parents really wanted to support Jennifer and that made us feel included," comments Annette.

Since starting classes at Prospect Hill, Jennifer has earned stellar grades, joined the school's chorus, begun attending music and gym class without her teaching assistant, and worked with fifth grade tutors to increase her academic, listening and social skills.

"I will miss her warm, beautiful smile that lights up our classroom," says her third grade teacher, Mrs. Kaiser.

## Tour de Bresnan

### Bikers Put Wheels in Motion to Help People with Disabilities



**Bicyclists overcame bad weather and daunting terrain.**

Fifty-four cyclists peddled from New York to Vermont on June 10-12 for the annual Tour de Bresnan, raising over \$200,000 for Westchester Arc and Special Olympics New York-Hudson Valley Region.

“The Tour de Bresnan is a very special event. There is a real camarade-

rie that develops among all involved, and the special partnership between Westchester Arc and Special Olympics inspires participants to return year after year,” comments Tom Hay, executive director, Special Olympics New York-Hudson Valley Region.

Cyclists endured extreme heat and heavy rain to complete the 200-mile tour. Thirteen volunteers from Westchester Arc and Special Olympics served as a support team.

“This was the first time I participated in an event of this magnitude, and I enjoyed every minute of it,” says volunteer Harold Marcelin. “I was so inspired by the bicyclists. Despite bad weather and demanding physical challenges, they remained motivated and driven by their desire to help individuals with developmental disabilities.”

“The care and attention given by our support team was crucial to the event’s success,” notes Ric Swierat, Westchester Arc executive director. “This was one of our best events, and a great example of a community working together toward a common goal.”

## Shari Lewitt Named “Rising Star”

*Continued from page 8*

individuals with developmental disabilities employed in the community,” notes Assistant Executive Director Kim Spahn, who nominated Shari for the award. “Her person-centered approach makes her a strong advocate for those we serve.”

Shari joined Westchester Arc four years ago as a supported work coordinator. With her high energy level, leadership ability and great attention to detail, Shari quickly became a respected member of Westchester Arc’s management team. She has played a key role in maintaining policies and procedures to meet

federal and state guidelines, which also govern the high quality of Westchester Arc services. In addition, she is an active member of the New York State Rehabilitation Association and The New York State Association of Persons in Supported Employment.

“Shari is an excellent supervisor and role model,” says Justine Pagano, senior job placement specialist. “She is always available to listen, problem solve and even lighten a situation with her good sense of humor. I feel fortunate to work with her and to have her as a supervisor.”

## Partners

Westchester Arc works with 250 businesses, government agencies and other organizations to identify career opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. Here are two longstanding partnerships....

### Stop & Shop

**670 North Broadway  
White Plains, New York 10603  
(914) 682-3279**

Stop & Shop has partnered with Westchester Arc for the last seven years. The store currently employs four Westchester Arc consumers. General Manager Glenn Miller is supportive of his employees’ needs and relates to them with sensitivity and respect.

### Modell’s Sporting Goods

**119 Tarrytown Road  
Greenburgh, New York 10607  
(914) 428-8777**

Modell’s Sporting Goods has employed a Westchester Arc consumer for eight years. Manager Michael Tartaglia was recently honored as a Consumer Advocate at Westchester Arc’s 2005 Employer Recognition Breakfast. He has provided a comfortable, safe work environment and maintains a great working relationship with this employee.

## Job Shadows...

*Continued from page 8*

dent needs to successfully transition into the working world,” continues Mr. Siragusa. “Students, parents and faculty couldn’t be happier with the program.”

S.T.A.R currently partners with seven schools throughout Westchester County. For more information, contact Rochelle Saks, 914-683-5177.

## Calendar of Events

**August 22 - August 26, 2005**

### **Echo Outdoors**

Fahnestock State Park, New York  
Call Jody Handley  
914-949-9300, ext. 3221

**September 13, 2005**

### **5th Annual Golfing for Kids**

Westchester Hills Golf Club  
White Plains, New York  
Call Fran Higgins  
914-428-8330, ext. 3028

**September 19, 2005**

### **MBIA Invitational**

Anglebrook Golf Club, Mount Kisco  
Country Club and Whippoorwill Club  
Call Elyse Fowler  
914-428-8330, ext. 3117

**October 1, 2005**

### **Family Resource Day**

White Plains High School  
White Plains, New York  
Call Nancy Succoso  
914-428-8330, ext. 3319

**November 2, 2005**

### **A Matter of Taste 2**

Westchester Country Club  
Rye, New York  
Call Fran Higgins  
914-428-8330, ext. 3028

**For additional listings,  
visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org)**



The Children's School for Early Development  
5th Annual

## **Golfing for Kids**

Benefiting Children with Autism and  
other Developmental Disabilities

**Tuesday, September 13, 2005**  
**Westchester Hills Golf Club, White Plains**

For information, call Celia Barelli at 914-347-3227,  
ext. 104, or visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org)

## Twenty-First Annual **MBIA** *Invitational*

Golf & Tennis Classic to benefit the Westchester Arc Foundation  
and Special Olympics New York- Hudson Valley Region

### **SEPTEMBER 19, 2005**

Anglebrook Golf Club • Mount Kisco Country Club • Whippoorwill Club

For information, call Elyse Fowler at 914-428-8330, ext. 3027

Join the Westchester Arc Foundation for its annual benefit

## *A Matter of Taste 2*

AN EVENING OF CULINARY ARTS

**Wednesday, November 2, 2005**

**Westchester Country Club, Rye, New York**

Sample signature recipes from the area's finest  
restaurants, paired with wines from around the world.

For more info, call Fran Higgins at 914-428-8330, ext. 3028



## **Family Resource Day**

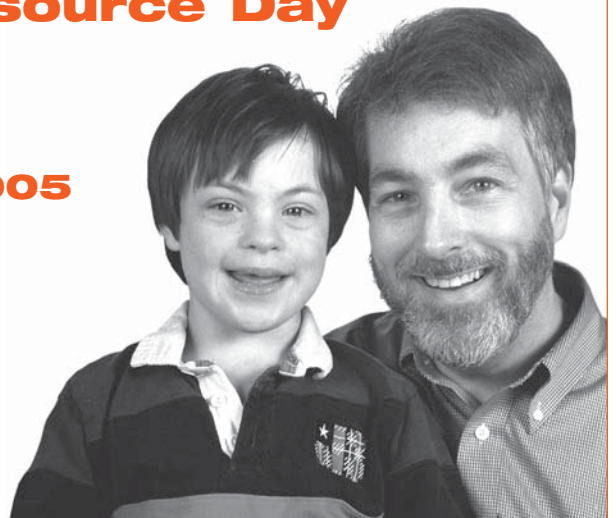
Presented by  
**Westchester Arc**

**October 1, 2005**

**Workshops**  
**Networking**  
**Vendors**

White Plains High School  
White Plains, New York

For info, call Nancy Succoso  
at (914) 428-8330, ext. 3319



  
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