



Mark L. dishes out a dessert he helped create.

Yonkers Day Hab Teaches Life Skills

Consumers in the Yonkers day habilitation program are now seasoned chefs, having recently participated in an activity based on the popular TV cooking show, "The Iron Chef." Divided into two teams, they were asked to research recipes and create dishes based on a single surprise food item—bananas. Adriana DeStefano, community instructor, assisted the Red Team, while Itasha Ross, assistant community instructor, helped the Blue Team. Michele Amendola, treatment coordinator and organizer of the event, got ev-

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Congress Strengthens IDEA

In mid-November, Congress re-authorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This public law, first enacted in 1975, guarantees students with disabilities the right to a free public education. The principles stated at that time are still the cornerstone of the legislation:

- ★ Children with disabilities are entitled to a free, appropriate education.
- ★ The rights of children with disabilities and parents are protected.
- ★ Programs are evaluated for their effectiveness.
- ★ Local and state governments must commit resources.

Over the last 30 years, the re-authorization process has prompted much discussion among legislators, parents and professionals. For one thing, the federal government has re-neged on its initial commitment to provide resources to support IDEA. Further, since 1975, there have been many negotiations on topics such as legal assistance for parents, eligibility assessments, the definition of inclusion, professional training and classroom discipline. Each re-authorization has faced the possibility that rights would be diluted, but strong advocacy by the Arc of the U.S. and similar groups has actually strengthened the legislation. That's the case this year, as well. Here are some of the 2004 re-authorization's key points:

Accountability

Over the past few years, state and federal education officials have focused on educational outcomes, primarily in the form of assessment tests. The New York State Board of Regents insists on using the Regents process, and the federal

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ARC Lifetime
winter 2005

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Clinic Promotes Healthy Lifestyles

Westchester ARC's clinic has increased the number of patients it serves by at least 20 percent—to a total of 400 individuals—since Tibi Guzman became director last June. She attributes that growth to expanded programs and fewer missed appointments.

Nutrition has become a priority. "Obesity has reached epidemic proportions," notes Mary Pat Hughes, the clinic's nutritionist. "Over 60 percent of



Nutritionist Mary Pat Hughes (right) emphasizes good eating habits and exercise.

Americans are overweight, which can cause serious health issues, such as diabetes and heart diseases. Our goal at the clinic is to monitor individuals who are at risk for serious medical issues and improve their health and life expectancy."

Mary Pat is a registered dietician, who works with patients to develop a personalized diet and exercise plan. By encouraging individuals to walk more and to eat a

balanced diet, she has helped many people to stay trim, lower cholesterol, and reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

The clinic's psychological services have also grown. In addition to individual counseling and psychotherapy, we now

offer family and couples counseling. We also have expanded support for the psychological evaluations required by the guardianship process, as well as sexual consent

and intellectual capacity evaluations.

Services are provided by the agency's credentialed therapists in patients' homes, and at the clinic itself (121 Westmoreland Avenue, White Plains). Clinic hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Evening and weekend appointments may be arranged. For more information, call Tibi Guzman, 914-428-8330, ext 3401.

Martha Pisculli Recognized for Outreach

The Yonkers Chamber of Commerce recently honored Martha Pisculli, outreach specialist, for her work with the city's Hispanic community. She received a Community Development Award at a dinner hosted by the municipality in honor of local activists.

"Yonkers has been my home for a long time now, so I want to do everything I can to help build and promote a progressive city, one that serves the needs of all of its residents," comments Martha.

Through Westchester ARC's family outreach program, Martha visits schools, libraries and businesses in search of people with developmental disabilities who may currently be under-served by the community. Once she identifies them, she helps them apply for healthcare and other public benefits. She also assists the person or family in contacting many of Westchester ARC's partner organizations

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Westchester ARC Foundation Announces Donations for Pre-School and Recreation

The Walbridge Fund, Westchester Community Foundation, and John H. and Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust recently donated a total of \$54,000 to Westchester ARC's pre-school and recreational services. .

The Walbridge Fund earmarked \$25,000 for Camp Echo, a summer program for adults who have developmental disabilities. Campers spend a week living at Fahnestock State Park, where they learn about the environment and participate in activities such as swimming, boating, hiking and crafts. Camp Echo helps attendees build confidence and independent living skills, while promoting a sense of community. The Walbridge grant will help pay for staffing, training, day trips, equipment and supplies.

The Walbridge Fund is an independent foundation that focuses on environmental programs, and this is the fourth consecutive year that the organization has given to Camp Echo.

Westchester Community Foundation contributed \$9,000 to Echo Onstage, a theater arts program introduced last summer in partnership with Westco Productions. Echo Onstage performers learn dance numbers, which simultaneously strengthen muscles and memories. They also role-play and improvise, which promotes creative thinking and improves reflexes. This donation will be used for theater rental, consulting staff and production supplies.

Westchester Community Foundation is a non-profit community endowment for the benefit of Westchester

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Fall Best Practice Awards Highlight Excellence

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



Jody Handley congratulates Bernadette Baudrin.

First Prize - Bernadette Baudrin (service coordinator), **Marcia Oliver**, **Donald Ruffin**, **Beverly Williams**, **Joan Lewis**, **Michael Okereke** and **Marlene Wilson** (counselors), for becoming a surrogate family to an individual temporarily living at the agency's Respite House. They accompanied him to medical appointments and used personal funds to purchase clothing and other items for him. Their efforts have been credited with helping to change a very quiet individual into an affectionate, confident and happy person.

Second Prize - Jill Potter (psychology service coordinator) and **Richard Nussbaum** (residence counselor), for helping a resident in one of the agency's group homes overcome behavioral problems. Jill spent an extraordinary amount of time working with the individual, enrolling him in a community day program designed to specifically address one of his disabilities. Richard, who used personal time to drive the consumer to the day program, became the first person to effectively communicate with him.

Third Prize - Rosemarie Salmon (secretary), for developing a tracking sheet for The Children's School's therapy logs, significantly increasing efficiency.

Fourth Prize - Cathy Staniewicz (community instructor), for managing a project through which participants in Peekskill day habilitation helped decorate their classroom. They gained a sense of pride as their work contributed to creating a warm, inviting atmosphere.

Fifth Prize - Camille Smith-Pow (residence manager), for helping someone realize a dream. When Camille discovered that one of her residents was interested in cars, she helped him get a job volunteering at an automotive dealership. The resident has formed a great friendship with his fellow workers and was even invited to celebrate his birthday at their annual dinner/dance.



From
Our
President

Mohan Mehra
Mohan Mehra

One of the ways in which Westchester ARC has been able to enhance its services to children and adults with developmental disabilities has been through partnerships with other community organizations. In an era of tight budgets, as well as increased accountability, oversight and competition, partnerships promote efficiency. Whether they involve other human service organizations or for-profit businesses, they enable us to creatively and cost effectively leverage our resources. I'd like to tell you about the

commitment of some of our major partners and to thank them for their support:

For over 20 years, **Special Olympics New York - Hudson Valley Region** has provided opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to participate in athletic events. Its message to competitors resonates beyond athletics—"You can do it. All you need is the chance."

The management and employees of **MBIA** are deeply committed to improving the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in our county. Their invitational golf classic has raised over \$5 million during the past two decades for both Westchester ARC and the Hudson Valley region of Special Olympics New York. And the event has grown into one of the largest, most successful fundraisers in New York State.

Westco Productions, Westchester's premier theater group for young people, has collaborated with Westchester ARC for the past three years. The musical theater workshop for children with Down syndrome teaches motor and memory skills while it builds self-esteem. Another program, Echo Onstage was launched last year. Young adults learn to dance and role-play. You can read more about Westco, below.

The **United Martial Arts Center** is a great partner to our Children's School. It all began when Laura Giacovis, a former pre-school teacher who is now a black belt instructor, brought United Martial Arts into our pre-school classes to teach kids Tae Kwon Do. The kids loved it and learned motor,

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Westco Productions: A Creative Partnership

Children and adults with developmental disabilities are building self-esteem and muscle tone through performing arts workshops sponsored by Westchester ARC in partnership with Westco Productions, the county's premier theater company for young audiences. Two highly successful, recent efforts are Echo Onstage and the Musical Theater Workshop for Children with Down syndrome.

Echo Onstage, a theater workshop for young adults, was launched at SUNY Purchase in conjunction with Westchester ARC's Echo College. Participants learned dance numbers and improvised, which



"To be a performer is to be respected by mainstream society," notes Westco's Susan Katz.

promoted creative thinking and improved reflexes.

Now in its third year, the Musical Theater Workshop for Children with Down syndrome helps the children's memory retention and motor skills, while they enjoy learning how to act, dance and

sing. The workshop is a partnership between Westco, Westchester ARC and PACDS, a volunteer support network that helps new parents of children with Down syndrome to understand their babies and develop their full potential.

"There is nothing like the magic of theater," says Susan Katz, Westco's ex-

ecutive director. "I've seen so many children who were timid and afraid at first, and by the end of the workshop, you couldn't get them off the stage. The confidence, the camaraderie and that proud feeling they get when mom and

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Eighth Graders Give Gifts to Pre-School

Students at the Seven Bridges Middle School got into the holiday spirit this year with gifts to Westchester ARC's Children's School for Early Development. Team Eight West, a group of eighth graders committed to community service, focused on The Children's School after a discussion with teacher Pauline Daglio on people with disabilities.

"We came across some literature about Westchester ARC, and when the students learned there were programs for young children, they got really excited about contributing to the Children's School," recalls Pauline

Team Eight West actively encouraged fellow students to participate, passing out Children's School pamphlets and—based on suggestions from the pre-school—indicating that gifts such as stickers, crayons and toy cars would be appropriate.

"It was such a nice assortment of classroom materials," says Fran Porcaro,



Pre-schoolers thank "the big kids" for helping out.

assistant executive director, educational services. "The kids are enjoying them every day. We're very thankful to everyone at Seven Bridges for such a kind gesture."

"Encouraging kids to think and behave philanthropically at an early age

can make all the difference in their heart-and-mindset as adults," adds Anne Sweazey, executive director of The Westchester ARC Foundation.

"Students and staff at Seven Bridges stand as a role model to us all."

Pisculli Recognized for Outreach

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throughout the county. One of the outreach program's many successes has involved helping undocumented individuals register with the county in an effort to track demographic data, which will help to focus attention on their needs.

"The family outreach program has had a significant impact on the Yonkers community," continues Martha. "Our efforts have become so well known that I get phone calls from clinics, churches, hospitals and social workers seeking assistance."

The Road More Traveled

Consumers in Westchester ARC's S.T.A.R. program (Students in Transition Accessing Resources) are becoming more independent, partly due to Job Coach C.J. Santoianni. In addition to teaching vocational skills, he helps consumers learn to use Westchester County's public bus system.

C.J. is with consumers every step of the way—helping them read schedules, plan the best routes and often going along for the ride. The first time they decide to take the bus on their own, he follows them in his car to ensure that they arrive at their destinations.

"It's amazing how quickly they adapt to taking the bus," he says. "Once they take it to work a few times, they

start going other places like the mall or the movies on their own. Taking the bus gives consumers the chance to be fully integrated into the community."

In addition to gaining a sense of independence, travel training helps consumers with organizational and math skills, communicating with others, managing money and paying attention to detail.

Individuals with developmental disabilities who are not involved with S.T.A.R. can receive free travel training through the county. The program is designed to provide an alternative to Para Transit and gives consumers more choices at a lower cost. For more information on Westchester County's travel training program, call 914-965-6060.



From The Foundation

Katharine Wilson Conroy
Foundation President

The beginning of this new year has brought a painful reminder of how vulnerable we all are as human beings. Along with that awareness has come a fresh recognition of our connection to others around the globe.

As you plan your charitable commitments for 2005, you will no doubt respond to tremendous needs in many different places now in our world. But there is another dimension—the future. We want not only to make a difference in the lives of people today but to plan for the future needs of people and causes that are important to us, as well. The way to do that is through a bequest, a gift made in your will.

A bequest takes effect at your death under the terms of your will or trust. Your will is a written testimonial of your

concern for community, family and the people you love. It is a way to show others what you value above all in life by providing support for the organizations you believe make a difference.

There are various ways to make a bequest. You can leave a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your assets. You can make a gift to a specific program or service of Westchester ARC. You might name The Westchester ARC Foundation beneficiary or partial beneficiary of a qualified retirement plan, pension, annuity contract or life insurance policy. Talk with your financial planner, lawyer, accountant or insurance agent about the options most suitable to your needs.

To honor this level of commitment, The Westchester ARC Foundation has established the Legacy of Love Society, comprised of generous people who have let us know that they have made provisions in their wills for a bequest to benefit Westchester ARC. They have told us about their generosity because they hope to inspire others to take similar steps.

On February 9, along with Ric Swierat, Mohan Mehra and Anne Sweazey, I hosted a dinner to recognize the Legacy of Love Society. Joining me as members of the society are:

- Gazella Allen**
- Judith and Peter Christ**
- Ann and John Coneys**
- Annette Edwards**
- Justin Israel**
- Emily Perl Kingsley**
- Lucille Kirschner**
- Julia McGuire**
- Margaret Mulvey**
- Theresa Pietsch**
- MG and Dennis Power**
- Rose Simon**
- Judith Solomon**
- Heljo Vosari**
- Gertrude and Irving Wasserman**

They are making a difference to the people they love, to their communities and to their own lives. A difference both today and tomorrow.

Beth Mount Honored for Everyday Heroes



Dr. Beth Mount helped create Westchester ARC's Everyday Heroes initiative.

Dr. Beth Mount, a nationally known expert on person-centered planning and a consultant to Westchester ARC, has received a 2004 Moving Mountains Award for her role in establishing the Everyday Heroes Leadership Initiative for community inclusion. Her work with Westchester ARC, dating from 2001, helped lay the foundation for similar programs that are now proliferating throughout the U.S.

The award, which was presented by the University of Minnesota and National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals, was also given to Denise Persky and Shelly Okure of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) for related work.

Everyday Heroes is a process through which the direct support professionals in agency residences use the principles of person-centered planning to assist consumers in reaching their goals and becoming active participants in mainstream society.

Helping a person with a passion for cooking prepare a meal for his friends; becoming a surrogate father to someone who misses his dad; taking a resident for a manicure, creating an exercise program for individuals with limited mobility. These are just some examples of how Westchester ARC's Everyday Heroes have improved the lives of those we serve.



Congress Strengthens IDEA

continued from page 1

government, through the “No Child Left Behind Act,” requires educational accountability from all states. This provides a challenge to some students in special education. While IDEA 2004 supports the need for accountability, it includes language for local officials to provide alternative testing for special education students, aligned with state and local standards. Further, this section of the law requires districts to report accurately on suspension, expulsion and dropout rates of special education students to assure that reports fairly represent the experiences of all students in that system. These provisions in the law assure that special education students are provided the opportunity to fully participate in the educational opportunities in the community.

Medical Services

Another area of debate has been the provision of aligned support services for special education students who may have special medical needs. Prior law provided for speech and language, physical, psychological and occupational therapies. The re-authorization added nursing and interpretive services to this list. Further, the law assures these services to children who are homeless and in foster care. It also provides intervention services to children, from birth to three years of age, who have a developmental delay in physical, cognitive, communication, social, emotional or adaptive development. It is hoped that the inclusion of these rights will end the debates over services in the school board meetings.

Better Communication

The law sets standards for compliance, monitoring and enforcement of all provisions by federal and state officials.

The law also provides for improved, simplified parental involvement, particularly relating to IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings. Parents have often complained that IEP meetings are held at times inconvenient for working families. Now, however, the law lists teleconferencing and videoconferencing as communication options. It also requires that parents receive quarterly reports to better prepare them for these discussions. The establishment of parent training programs and information centers encourages balanced resolution of disputes.

The law promotes and strengthens teacher training; planning for post-secondary school needs; early diagnosis; a disciplinary process assuring student rights and safety; due process regarding suspensions; timely hearings and resolution of disagreements; reduced paperwork, and a recommitment of a full 40 percent federal share of special education costs by the year 2011.

For a more detailed description this legislation, visit www.westchesterarc.org.

IDEA and similar laws that provide for the rights of people with disabilities are the work of many individuals. The most important person, however, is you. As a member of the Arc of the United States and Westchester ARC, you can be proactive in supporting the work of our legislative leaders. Your membership and participation assure that federal and state officials never forget their responsibility to assure the rights of people with disabilities in our community every day. The re-authorization of IDEA in November 2004 is an example of the power of advocacy and membership.

by Ric Swierat
Executive Director, Westchester ARC

Legislative Activism Is Key to Equal Rights

Successful Healthcare Fight

The 2005 federal and state legislative agenda could affect people with developmental disabilities for years to come. Proposed Medicaid budget cuts raise serious issues concerning the funding for many key services. But consumer and family activism can make a difference, as a recent victory illustrates.

Self-advocates, relatives, Westchester ARC and NYSARC (the statewide non-profit agency serving people with developmental disabilities) have won a long-fought campaign in the state legis-

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Staff Recognized for Service

Sixty-five Westchester ARC employees were honored for their long-time service — between five and 30 years — during Staff Recognition Night, held on December 2 at the Crowne Plaza, White Plains. Above, Joe Cavallo, industrial operations manager, celebrates 30 years with the agency. With him are board member Laura Scolaro and President Mohan Mehra.



Resources

C.A.N. (Cure Autism Now)

www.canfoundation.org

C.A.N. is an organization of parents, clinicians and leading scientists committed to funding autism research, education and outreach. C.A.N. provides a variety of innovative programs designed to identify the causes of autism, find the best methods of treatment and ultimately find a cure.

Developmental Delay Resources (DDR)

www.devdelay.org

DDR is a non-profit organization dedicated to meeting the needs of professionals working with children who have developmental delays in sensory, language, social and emotional areas. DDR publicizes vital research that determines identifiable factors related to developmental delays and maintains a registry that tracks possible trends. DDR also provides a support network for professionals and parents of children with developmental delays.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

www.nichcy.org

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities offers the latest information on programs, services and effective treatment for infants, children and young adults with disabilities. The website also provides information on special education laws and is open to families, educators, administrators, journalists and students.

From Our President

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language and life skills. Since then, the United Martial Arts Center has hosted “Kickathons” that have raised over \$15,000 for The Children’s School. As Chris Berlow, owner and Master Instructor, has said, “We have a culture of selflessness. We try to do the right thing for its own sake.”

Our Children’s School has been a leader in developing community-based, pre-school classes for children with developmental disabilities. The **ABC Pre-school Center** in White Plains worked with us to open an inclusionary class in 2002, and since then a second class has been added. Linnea Fargo of the Pre-school Center has also arranged for us to use their facilities for a variety of teacher training sessions and parent group meetings.

Transitioning from high school to the adult world is an important milestone. We have worked with **White Plains High School** for over 10 years to prepare more than 50 students with developmental disabilities for life after graduation. We have worked together to provide personalized career planning and to

identify internship and permanent job opportunities. We have also provided job coaching, travel training and counseling on appropriate work behaviors.

Westchester ARC works with over 250 organizations to identify job opportunities within the community. The firm of **Boies, Schiller and Flexner, LLP**, worked with us on a customized employment model that provides full-day service and onsite job coaching. Eight people with developmental disabilities now perform a range of tasks for the law firm, including the controlled flow of mail and documents throughout the organization. Last November, they referred the law firm of **O’Connor, Redd, Golihue & Sklarin** to us, and four of our consumers now perform filing and records management for this new partner.

There are so many more examples—and we value them all. We simply could not perform our mission without partners who are committed to giving people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to contribute to their communities.

TRIBUTES

The following donations were received between November 5, 2004, and January 10, 2005.

IN MEMORY OF DON BENZ
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Coschigano

IN HONOR OF DEBORAH DAVIDSON
Mrs. Gloria Kail

IN MEMORY OF KAREN ANN COLEMAN
Ms. Virginia Donovan

IN HONOR OF JUSTIN ISRAEL
Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Peck

IN MEMORY OF BENNY DELL’OLIO
Ms. Camille R. Tomao

IN HONOR OF EMILY KINGSLEY
Dr. Gladys Rashkoff

IN MEMORY OF SARA JANE HILLMAN
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hillman

IN HONOR OF JEFF KIRSCHNER
Ms. Maris Beckerman & Mr. Charles Strouchler

IN MEMORY OF LEONARD MEHLER
Mrs. Gloria Kail

IN HONOR OF BEVERLY MAZZELLA
Ms. Farrah Kucinskis

IN MEMORY OF DAVID NADEL
Mr. and Mrs. James Nadel

IN HONOR OF ANNE SWEAZEY
Ms. Mary Sweazey Cowles
Mr. George E. Sweazey



Westchester ARC Foundation Announces Donations...

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County. Its mission is to develop and manage philanthropic resources and to distribute them in a way that is responsive to donor interests and community needs.

“Thanks to the generosity of the Walbridge Fund and Westchester Community Foundation, we can continue to provide cutting edge programs such as Camp Echo and Echo Onstage in a way that is cost-effective,” comments Dave Gasparri, director of recreational services.

The John H. and Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust has given \$20,000 to The Children’s School for Early Development, which offers educational, social and support services for preschoolers with developmental disabilities. The grant has already helped the school launch two community-based classes in Ossining. Such “inclusion” classes enable students with disabilities to learn from the behavior of their typically developing classmates. At the same time, typically developing kids

learn tolerance and compassion, and benefit from the The Children’s School’s expert staff. Last year, The Noble Charitable Trust donated \$15,000, which provided the means to open a class in the Lakeland School District—the first such partnership with a public school. The John H. and Ethel G. Noble Charitable Trust provides grants to organizations that care for children with developmental disabilities, as well as elderly citizens with low incomes.

Day Habilitation Promotes Inclusion



Consumers learn faster and remember more from community experiences, according to staff members.

Over the past 10 years, Westchester ARC’s day habilitation has moved from the classroom to the community. “It’s much easier to learn by example,” says Avery Valins, day treatment program director. “A visit to the grocery store teaches money management and social skills, while going to the movies shows consumers there are certain behavior patterns they have to adapt to given situations.”

“Consumers definitely learn and retain information faster this way,” comments Patti Corbi, Mount Kisco program director. “We’ve been able to establish relationships with local businesses and residents, and that really makes consumers feel included in the community.”

In some cases, being out in the community has helped consumers overcome behavior problems. “I remember one consumer who wasn’t very confident and was afraid to go out in public. She relied heavily on her social worker, insisting on meeting her five days a week. But once she went out into the neighborhood with Westchester ARC staff and peers, she achieved a real comfort level, gained confidence and hasn’t once asked to see her social worker,” recalls Tim Synan, Yonkers program director.

Activities are planned according to the wants and needs of participants. Consumers in Yonkers, for instance, expressed an interest in sports, so staff arranged trips to baseball games, wrestling matches and bowling alleys.

Mark Your Calendar

MARCH 11, 2005

Westchester ARC’s Employer Recognition Breakfast

8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Hilton Tarrytown, 455 South Broadway

Call Fran Higgins, 914-428-8330, ext. 3028

APRIL 14, 2005

Northern Westchester League Pot Luck Lunch

11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

The Methodist Church in Mount Kisco

Call Rita Ross, 914-238-4669



Partners

Westchester ARC works with 250 businesses, government agencies and other organizations to identify career opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Here are two new partnerships...

Bennigan's

2 Executive Boulevard
Yonkers, New York 10703
914-966-1100

Bennigan's recently hired a Westchester ARC consumer to assist with food preparation and table setup. This employer is patient and understanding of the employee's needs and provides a safe, friendly work environment.

Nathan's

2290 Central Park Avenue
Yonkers, New York 10710
914-779-1800

A Westchester ARC consumer joined the Nathan's team a few months ago. The employee helps with maintenance and table bussing, and really enjoys working in the fun, fast-paced restaurant.

Mehra Elected to Arc of the U.S. Board



Westchester ARC President Mohan Mehra was elected to the Arc of the United States board of directors at its annual meeting in Boston in November 2004. He is one of 23 board members and the only representative from New York State. The Arc of the U.S. is the leading national organization advocating for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is a membership organization with over 900 local and state chapters across the country.

Educational Grants Support Career Dreams

Resident Manager Camille Smith-Pow knows how much difference a little financial help can make. Working towards a B.A. in psychology, she has used \$4,000 in grants from the agency's educational assistance program to buy books and help pay off her student loan. "The agency has always been supportive of people wanting to further their education," she explains. "It's nice to have a job that encourages you to work and go to school at the same time."

As the 2004 winner of the agency-administered John Bodnar Educational Scholarship, Camille received an additional \$1,000. Her long-term plan is to earn a master's degree in gerontology. "It's my goal to become a clinical leader, and I'm fortunate to have Westchester ARC there every step of the way."

Concetta Muratore, teacher's assistant, is another staff member benefiting from the agency program. Inspired by her work at The Children's School for Early Development, she is earning credits toward an associate degree and plans to eventually obtain an M.A. in education. "I hope to have a classroom of my own one day," she confides. "Without this financial assistance, I wouldn't be able to go to school and pursue my goal. Thank you, Westchester ARC, and everyone at The Children's School who has encouraged me."

Financial assistance is still available for any staff member wishing to continue their education. For further information on this program, contact Kerri Connors, 914-428-8330, ext 3110.

Yonkers League Raises \$4,000



The Yonkers League's annual holiday bazaar raised over \$4,000 to benefit The Westchester ARC Foundation. Several hundred people turned out for the event, held at the Sheib Center. Merchandise included holiday decorations, jewelry and toys, with all leftover inventory donated to the Thorpe Family Residence, which serves homeless women. The Yonkers League is a volunteer arm of Westchester ARC, sharing the agency's commitment to social inclusion and empowerment for individuals with developmental disabilities. Pictured (from left) are Pauline Crotty and Laura Scolaro, bazaar chairperson.



Yonkers Day Hab Teaches Life Skills

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everyone into the right spirit by providing aprons and chef hats.

“I am having so much fun. I feel like a cook at a restaurant,” said Gary C. Once all the food was prepared, the teams presented their dishes to a panel of judges and an audience of friends. The Red Team went for the sweet tooth with dishes that included banana crepes with whipped cream and banana smoothies. The Blue Team got imaginative, producing banana walnut bread and banana chimichangas.

“Everything is so delicious. It’s so hard to pick what’s best,” pointed out Margaret Forrester, one of the judges.

In the end, it was the Blue Team that took home the ribbon, winning a gift certificate to lunch at Gasho, a Japanese hibachi steakhouse in Elmsford. But no one went home empty-handed; all received a cookbook for their efforts.



Todd T. puts the finishing touches on banana smoothies.

“It was a great activity. Consumers worked really hard, had a lot of fun, and got to be creative, while learning

valuable skills in the kitchen and community,” comments Program Director Avery Valins.

Donald C. Retires After 27 Years

Donald C. recently retired from his job as elevator operator at the agency’s 39 Westmoreland Avenue location after 27 years of service, an accomplishment he celebrated with friends. Over 30 people attended the party, which was organized and funded by the supported employment department.

Guests expressed their gratitude for Donald’s commitment, service and friendship. “We will miss you, Donald,” said one. All applauded Donald as he cut the cake and spoke about his plans.

“I will miss working here, but I’m looking forward to relaxing

and doing arts and crafts,” he said. Always the gentleman, he waited for each guest to get a piece of cake before digging in himself. After refreshments, Justine Pagano, senior job placement specialist, and Peggy Mead, job placement specialist, presented Donald with parting gifts, including a sweater and a box of chocolate, one of Donald’s favorites. Sandra Rosario, Donald’s guardianship advocate, gave him a watch for “all the time he has now.”

Donald graciously thanked everyone, then joked, “Okay, party’s over, I have to get back to work.”



Donald C. received warm wishes from his many friends and colleagues.

Legislative Activism Is Key to Equal Rights

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lature concerning healthcare rights. At issue was the ability of guardians to reject the use of "extraordinary measures" to prolong the dying of someone with a developmental disability. In the past, that decision often rested with New York State.

"Individuals with developmental disabilities were not entitled to the same rights as the state's other citizens," recalls Larry Faulkner, the agency's general counsel. "Consumers and parents approached Westchester ARC and NYSARC, asking for change." In response, Larry began collaborating with Ben Golden, NYSARC's associate executive of government affairs, in order to educate consumers and families concerning state law and to draft a bill that would ensure personal dignity and protection for persons with developmental disabilities. Self-advocates and parents traveled to Albany, sharing their stories with senators and assembly members and insisting on the bill's passage.

"It was a long fight," continues Larry, "but tenacity paid off. There is nothing more powerful than a committed electorate when it comes to persuading legislators. We would not have been successful without the active involvement of consumers and their families."

"Getting this bill passed represents a moral and social victory, and sets a precedent for things yet to come," adds Ben Golden.

HOLIDAY PARTY



The Westchester ARC recreational department held a holiday dinner dance for Yakkety Y.A.C. and the Reunion Club at the Tarrytown Marriott Westchester on December 17. Guests enjoyed dancing, karaoke and spending time with their friends. Yakkety Y.A.C. and Reunion Club provide day trips and social activities for individuals with developmental disabilities living at home.

Westco Productions: A Creative Partnership

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dad see them performing—it's unmatched by anything else. To be a performer is to be respected by mainstream society."

The 10-week session concludes with a performance for family, friends and the community. Last year's show, "Give My Regards to Broadway," was held on December 11 at the Mamaroneck Avenue School auditorium. Over 200 people attended the event, which featured children and young adults with disabilities performing musical numbers from *Grease* and *Pocahontas*. Westco productions will present a special encore production on March 5 at the Westchester Broadway Theater. The groundbreaking show, called "Give OUR Regards to Broadway," will promote true

community integration, as children and young adults with Down syndrome perform alongside typically developing youngsters. More theater workshops for children with developmental disabilities are planned for the future.

Westco recently celebrated 25 years of service to the county. In addition to workshops and productions for young audiences, the not-for-profit organization offers outreach programs for families with low incomes and brings live theater and a little cheer to hospitals. To find out how to purchase tickets to a Westco performance or to get more information, call Susan Katz, 914-761-7463, or visit www.westcoprods.com.



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