

## County Executive Cooks for Gourmet Fundraiser

### Architect for New Building Announced



(Top) Chefs and committee members for *A Matter of Taste*. (Right) Architect Richard Dattner will design the new agency building. (Below) Celebrity Chef Spano at work.



Westchester County Executive Andrew J. Spano joined some of the area's top chefs on Tuesday evening, October 26, at Whitby Castle, Rye, to net more than \$70,000 for The Westchester ARC Foundation. Over 300 people dined and danced into the night at *A Matter of Taste*, which paired gourmet food with 60 wines from around the world.

"I spent 12 years involved in special ed," explained Spano, who served his version of caponata, an Italian egg-plant salad, to the crowd. "I've seen the work that Westchester ARC does and how important it is. That's why I'm doing this. It's about involving people with disabilities in the community. If you feel you can contribute to society, you can be a very happy person."

"There was an enormous outpouring of support from the business community," says Joseph F. Manzi, event chair-

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westchester  
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From Our Executive Director

*Richard P. Swierat*  
 Richard P. Swierat

As I watched the presidential election results on the evening of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the commentators explained the strategies used by the political parties to attract voters from a wide range of demographics in this country. The one group that was never mentioned, however, was voters with disabilities. All candidates, of course, had position papers on their websites and in their literature, but I never heard or read about a campaign speech related to disabilities issues.

**An Important Constituency**

It is estimated that there are 40 million voting-age Americans with disabilities in the United States. During the 2000 elections, it was reported that roughly 16 million voters with disabilities cast ballots. These statistics suggest that voters with disabilities represent roughly 20 percent of the voting public. Can any candidate ignore 20 percent of the voting public?

And what are voters with disabilities looking for in a candidate? Many of the issues are the same as the general voting public, with some added interests. The added areas that could have been discussed

include voter rights, access to jobs, technology, health benefits, training and housing. I spend a lot of time reading the newspapers and watching cable news, and I never heard one of the candidates focus on these issues as they relate to people with disabilities. If one of the candidates had focused on the voter with disabilities, would the election results have been less tight?

**Getting Out the Vote**

This year, as in the past, Westchester ARC served as a voter registration site. We provided the opportunity for approximately a third of our consumers (approximately 300) to exercise their right to vote, if they so wished. As an organization that believes in empowering people, we provide training in how to make choices and how to advocate on your own behalf. But maybe we need to do more. It may be time to participate in the American practice of politics and encourage the development of PACs and political movements among voters with disabilities. It seems that the candidates listened to voter groups who represented financial support and political clout.

It is time for voters with disabilities to move from issuing position statements to becoming power brokers. Organizations such as Westchester ARC must empower voters with disabilities with the political tools that lead candidates to address them in their campaign strategies.

**People with Disabilities Head to the Polls**

The November elections saw a record voter turnout. With so much at stake for our country, Westchester ARC worked hard to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities registered to vote.

Seventy consumers registered this year, thanks to the efforts of Melanie Fields, director of staff training. Melanie spent the last five months educating people about the voting rights of individuals with developmental disabilities and

encouraging them to register. "I'm very happy the program was a success. We are all equal in this society, and everyone deserved to have a voice in this election," says Melanie.

"I was really excited about voting for the first time," comments Janet S. "My parents always talk about voting and making a difference, and now I've experienced that for myself. I want to thank Westchester ARC for helping me get this chance."



# Best Practices Awards

The agency's Best Practice Awards recognize staff's innovative, creative and dedicated approaches to enriching the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. The latest winners are:

**1<sup>st</sup> Prize - Barbara Powell** (senior social worker), for starting a support group for new mothers who have disabilities. The Parenting Skills Program for Mothers with Special Needs uses role-playing and repetitive lessons to help the moms grasp how to care for their children. (See story below.)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - Mavis Dehaney** (assistant residence manager), for sharing her personal life in order to help a resident who isolated himself get involved in social activities. When Mavis discovered that religion and music were important to this individual, she invited him to attend Sunday mass with her. He quickly bonded with the parishioners and is now an active participant in the congregation's recreational activities.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize - Cherry Charlton** (assistant residence manager), **Thomas Bennett** (residence manager), **Alfreda Harris** (residence manager), **Yvonne Petty** (residence manager), **Sonia Brown** (residence counselor), **Clifford D. Hibbert** (residence counselor) and **Remalin Lewis** (residence counselor) for working with individuals in our residences to plan person-centered activities building on their strengths and abilities.



Barbara Powell (far right) receives first prize in agency's Best Practices competition.

**4<sup>th</sup> Prize - Karen Heidmann** (community program/day habilitation coordinator), for her role in making Sibshops, a support program for children who have brothers and sisters with disabilities, a success. Karen attended every meeting, initiating conversations and activities that helped kids cope with their feelings.

**5<sup>th</sup> Prize - Sandy Hicks** (treatment coordinator), **Tonya Bradshaw** (treatment coordinator), **Sandy Woods** (community/day habilitation instructor), **Leann Coldwell** (treatment coordinator) and **Margaret McTigue** (behavior therapist) for organizing the first "Strawberry Festival" for individuals in day treatment/day habilitation. Events such as the strawberry relay race and cake-eating contest helped consumers build motor skills, while arts and crafts tables encouraged creativity.

VISIT [WWW.WESTCHESTERARC.ORG](http://WWW.WESTCHESTERARC.ORG) FOR UPCOMING EVENTS, PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS AND PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

## Parenting Workshop Keeps Families Together

Barbara Powell, senior social worker and supervisor of Westchester ARC's crisis project, leads a busy life. When she's not caring for her two children, she helps to ensure that mothers with developmental disabilities are caring for theirs.

Barbara is coordinator of the Parenting Skills Program for Moms with Special

Needs, a joint effort between Westchester ARC and Effective Counseling and Consulting Services in Mount Kisco. Barbara recently won first place in Westchester ARC's Best Practice Awards for initiating the program. She has started a similar program for dads with disabilities.

Parents in these programs benefit from

weekly childcare workshops covering such topics as health and nutrition, home safety and basic infant care. Westchester ARC's crisis intervention team provides 24/7 phone support at 914-949-8200 to help handle questions that don't come up at meetings.

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From  
Our  
President

Mohan Mehra

We are embarking on an exciting journey to build a new central site for Westchester ARC, replacing the current facility at 121 Westmoreland Avenue in White Plains. The existing building was acquired in 1968, and it has served us well over the last 36 years. But it no longer meets our needs. We want a place that is more attractive and welcoming to the people we serve and to their families and that has adequate parking facilities. It should also provide a pleasant environment for the staff that works so hard on behalf of our loved ones.

The new building will focus on services that allow children and adults with developmental disabilities to participate as fully as possible in the community. The Charles R. Kingsley Life Planning Center, service coordination, career services and S.T.A.R. (Students in Transition Accessing Resources) will be located there. The facility will support the philosophy of

person-centered planning by providing space and resources to develop an individual's goals for education, recreation, employment and housing.

The building will be a place to teach consumers job skills and to showcase their accomplishments. Consumers will be employed at the new site in a variety of positions. Their art will be displayed and their onstage performances will be highlighted. The facility will be a place to train staff and to share information with families. We want this resource center to become a national model for providing services to children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

During the past 15 years, we have opened smaller regional sites in Mount Kisco, Port Chester, White Plains, Ossining and Peekskill to provide services closer to home and to promote community-based activities. Those locations will continue to be supported, and we will open more as needed.

In April 2003, the board of directors approved the purchase of 3.2 acres of land off Route 9A in Hawthorne. Since then, we have worked with an architect to develop an overall vision for the building and a space requirement plan. We reached

another milestone on October 26, 2004, when we announced that the Richard Dattner & Partners will design the building. A committee comprised of board and staff members made this decision after conducting a thorough search.

We will soon launch a capital campaign to help finance both the building and a Fund for the Future. The project will be the joint responsibility of the agency and The Westchester ARC Foundation. A capital campaign committee, which will spearhead this campaign, will be announced soon. To date, we have secured \$2.2 million through a very generous gift from Gerard Gleeson, whose son, Lenny, lived in one of our residences. In the coming months, we will reach out to our families, friends and supporters in the Westchester community to help us make this dream a reality. As you plan your charitable giving, please keep this project in mind.

We will keep you posted on our plans and the progress in future issues of *Lifetime* and through special mailings. In the meantime, I welcome your suggestions, comments or questions. Please contact me at [mmehra@aol.com](mailto:mmehra@aol.com) or Executive Director Ric Swierat at [rswierat@westchesterarc.org](mailto:rswierat@westchesterarc.org).

## News 12 Hosts Consumers

Consumers recently toured the News 12 Westchester studio in Yonkers as part of a day treatment educational program. "Take this Job" enables people with disabilities to meet someone whose work they are interested in learning more about. So Denise B., James B., Duane G. and Richard S. went behind the scenes of a working newsroom to learn how the weather forecast is prepared and how highlight reels are edited. They especially enjoyed getting in front of the

camera to deliver a weather report. "I really want to be a weatherman now," confides James.

On-air personalities Dave Curran, Matt Samson and Brian Conybeare signed autographs and posed for pictures as they guided their guests through the facility. "It was a chance for consumers to learn about different jobs within the community, and the News 12 team couldn't have been more welcoming," says Margaret Forrester, Westchester ARC treatment coordinator.



James B. practices weather reporting.



# Westchester ARC Opens Residence

In mid-August, Westchester ARC opened its 39th residence for people with developmental disabilities in a quiet neighborhood in Cortlandt Manor. Six individuals will occupy the lovely two-story house, which features a large living room and dining room, three bedrooms, a porch and 24-hour staff supervision. "I love it at this place. I can't wait for my friends to come back and visit," adds Fred H.

For some, the move to Gallows Hill represents a new beginning, the first time they are living apart from their families. "Moving away from

family can be hard, but I think our residents really feel at home at Gallows Hill," says Residence Manager Michael Swann. "The staff has been great about helping everyone get to know each other through group meals and social activities. Residents who were shy at first have really opened up and become a vital part of the house."

Over 50 friends and family members attended an open house in late October. Resident Kim S. enthusiastically showed guests around.

*continued on page 11*



# Westchester ARC Leads in Employing People with Disabilities

Kenny L. loves working for Westchester ARC. For over five years he has been the assistant housekeeper at the agency's Armonk residence, an environment he describes as "nice, supportive and friendly." Kenny's responsibilities include mopping, vacuuming and maintenance.

"Kenny is an excellent worker. He takes direction very well and is always happy to pitch in where he can," says Residence Manager Roseanne Piacente. "He's very personable, and everyone here just loves him."

Westchester ARC directly employs 34 consumers throughout the county in jobs ranging from clerical aides to warehouse workers. They typically work 25 hours per week and earn an average of \$6.50 an hour, 26 percent above the national minimum wage.

"The consumers we employ are a real asset to this agency," says Justine



**Marian O. receives vacation time as part of her benefit package.**

Pagano, senior job placement specialist. "Working for Westchester ARC is something that they feel proud of, so they are

always enthusiastic about doing the best job they can. In many cases, I've seen individuals increase their self-esteem and build more confidence after getting a job within the agency."

As receptionist for the agency's 39 Westmoreland Avenue offices, Marian O. fields phone calls, greets guests and provides clerical support. She has performed these tasks since 1999, and thanks to hard work and a stellar attitude, she was recently promoted from temporary employee to staff member. She now receives a benefits package, including paid vacation and more.

"I am so thankful to Westchester ARC. They gave me my first paying job with benefits. I love working here," says Marian.

"It's Westchester ARC's goal to find consumers more full-time jobs with benefits within the agency," adds Kim Spahn, assistant executive director.



From  
The  
Foundation

*Anne Sweazey*  
Anne Sweazey  
Executive Director

As we prepare for a capital campaign in support of a new resource center and endowment, I want to take special note of the leadership gift that has made it all possible. The gift came about because of the generosity of a Westchester ARC family. Let me tell you what I know of their story.

### The Gleeson Family

For over 30 years, Westchester ARC had the privilege of sharing in the special relationship between Gerard Gleeson and his son, Lenny. Gerard and Lenny were the best of buddies. Fondly remembered by Westchester ARC staff and friends as “the dynamic duo,” father and son were practically inseparable. They would often be seen side-by-side at dinner dances, parties and restaurants around town. They took yearly trips to Ireland together. Gerard was committed to helping Lenny lead a full, enriching life but realized he

couldn't be around all the time. He searched for an agency that could help Lenny achieve his true potential in the same caring, nurturing environment that he had always provided for his son. He found that in Westchester ARC.

Lenny made use of the agency's resources to build on his everyday living skills and establish relationships. Susanne Panepinto, Lenny's service coordinator, remembers him well. “Lenny loved the time he spent here,” she recalls. “He found it very easy to make friends with fellow consumers and staff and enjoyed participating in recreational activities. Lenny also liked working in the mail department, collating and sealing envelopes. He would always tell me how important it made him feel.”

### Gaining Independence

After a few years with Westchester ARC, Lenny decided he wanted to become more independent by moving into the Park Circle Residence. Gerard was extremely proud of his son's decision, and even though they no longer lived together, Gerard continued to visit him every weekend and to accompany him to recreational activities. “Mr. Gleeson had the most

incredible devotion I've ever seen,” continues Susanne. “Everything he did in life was for Lenny. Even when he was a little older, and a little less able to get around, he would come to the house just to make sure Lenny had money in his wallet.”

### Generous Supporter

Gerard Gleeson remained a great supporter of Westchester ARC through the years, offering time and energy for volunteer events, and generous financial contributions. Though father and son have passed away, their memory and the spirit of their relationship will live on through Westchester ARC.

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the Gleeson family through a bequest gift, the agency was able to complete the purchase of property in Hawthorne, which will serve as the new resource center, replacing the existing facility on 121 Westmoreland Avenue in White Plains.

Westchester ARC was founded by families and continues to be run by families. The Gleeson family's kindness is a shining example of how planned giving can help many other families far into the future.

## MBIA Invitational Sets Record

The 20th annual *MBIA Golf and Tennis Invitational* raised a net of \$250,000 on September 20 for The Westchester ARC Foundation and the Westchester-Putnam Special Olympics. An all-time high of 435 participants hit the links and tennis courts at the Brae Burn, Mount Kisco and Whippoorwill Country Clubs, making the event one of the largest of its kind in New York State.

Anne Sweazey, executive director of The Westchester ARC Foundation, expressed appreciation of MBIA's support. “The *MBIA Invitational* is the largest source of private funds for Westchester ARC



Co-founder of the MBIA Invitational, Jack Butler, receives a medal from Special Olympian Michael T.

programs. Because of this support, the two beneficiaries have been able to provide extraordinary programs for people with developmental disabilities.”

Celebrities in attendance included former Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Ralph Branca, former New York Yankees pitcher Jimmy Key, longtime NFL official Tony Veteri, Olympic medalist Bob Beamon, former NFL running back Lydell Mitchell and sportswriter Maury Allen. Sports announcer Al Trautwig was master of ceremonies at the awards banquet.

A highlight of the banquet was the presentation of the annual Charles R. Kingsley Award to the family of Dr. and Mrs. Walter Manzi for their longtime activism on behalf of people with disabilities.

For photo highlights, visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org).



## Local Businesses Give Generously to *A Matter of Taste*

The following restaurants, wine purveyors and other local businesses generously donated food, wine and time to Westchester ARC's first-time gourmet fundraiser, *A Matter of Taste*. Please consider patronizing our good neighbors.

- An American Bistro
- Casanove-Opici Wine Co.
- Charmer Industries
- Claystation Wines
- Club Chefs of Westchester
- Dallis Brothers Coffee
- Desserts by Bradley
- Don Sebastiani & Sons
- Eastchester Fish Gourmet
- Emilio Ristorante
- Equus
- Euro Bar
- Fattoria Vitticcion / The Shaw Agency
- Frederick Widman & Sons
- Harrys of Hartsdale
- Lauber Imports
- Longford's Own-Made Ice Cream
- Macmenamin's Grill & ChefWorks
- Martin Scott Wines
- Paramount / Eber Bros. Brands
- Pelligrino
- PLATES
- Premier Wines & Spirits
- RG Catering
- Solera on Hudson
- Tempranillo Inc. / Jorge Ordonez Selections
- Trotters
- Underhills Crossing
- Veuve Cliquot Champagne
- Whitby Castle of Restaurant.Associates
- Wine & Spirits Emporium of Bronxville
- Winebow/Leonardo Lacasio Selections
- Zurro's

## A Matter of Taste Serves Up a Dream

Darnell W. wants to work in the food service industry, and he recently took a big step toward that goal at the Westchester ARC fundraiser, *A Matter of Taste*. Darnell and another consumer, Michael G., helped bus tables at the event, a fast-paced job that demanded a lot of time, energy and attention.



Darnell W. (right) seeks a career in food service.

But they were up for the challenge. "I love this. I want to do it all the time," said Darnell, as he zipped by to clear another table.

"Darnell and Michael did an amazing job," commented Senior Development Officer Fran Higgins, who was responsibility for many of the evening's logistics. "They knew exactly what to do with little

direction and performed with precision. This night was about helping people with disabilities achieve their dreams, and it was especially uplifting to see that happen

for Darnell, since this work is consistent with his career goals."

Steve Palm, the event's co-chair, trained the consumers at his Underhills

Crossing restaurant in Bronxville. "They were very serious about their duties," he said. Asked about Darnell in particular, he recalled, "My staff really enjoyed his company during the training. He was very open-minded and willing to learn. The customers loved him, and he worked well under pressure. What a great guy!"

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## County Executive Cooks for Gourmet Fundraiser

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man. "The food and wine for this event—not to mention personal time—were all donated by people of goodwill. We are deeply grateful."

"We were very pleased by the number of new friends we made through this event," adds Anne Sweazey, executive director of The Westchester ARC Foundation. "We attracted people who had never before attended one of our fundraisers, so we consider it an enormous success."

Westchester ARC President Mohan Mehra announced that the architectural firm of Richard Dattner & Partners has been chosen to design and build a new resource center for the agency in Hawthorne, New York. "We chose this architect because of his experience working with users having special needs and

with helping clients to reach their highest aspirations with limited resources."

Individuals with developmental disabilities contributed to the evening's success. Artwork by a person with disabilities was featured on all promotional materials, including two posters that were autographed by the chefs and auctioned off. Notecards featuring the art of Andrew O., who has been involved with the agency for the last decade, were included in gift bags received by all guests. "He wanted to give something back to Westchester ARC," explains his mom.

Westchester ARC's highly acclaimed "Art with Heart" traveling exhibit was also on view, and people with disabilities helped to wait on tables.

*For photo highlights, visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org).*



## Happy Birthday, John!



John I. celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday with family and friends from Westchester ARC on August 15 at the VFW Post in Yonkers. He's a talented painter and world traveler—he recently attended the Olympic Games in Greece—who loves to dance to rock and roll. John currently lives in Borchert House, one of the agency's community-based residences. His dad, Justin, is a former Westchester ARC president and a current Westchester ARC Foundation board member.

## Agency Honored for Educating Children with Autism

The Westchester Foundation for Autism and Related Developmental Delays (WFA) recently honored Westchester ARC and Phyllis Rizzi, program coordinator of The Children's School for Early Development, for outstanding contributions to the education of children with autism. Phyllis developed the first pre-school class in Westchester County for children with autism and designed a home program offering cutting edge services that focus on communications, social skills and behavior management. County Legislator Tom Abinanti (D-Greenburgh) declared October 1, 2004, Phyllis Rizzi Day in Westchester County.

The recognition took place on October 1 at WFA's fifth annual Celebration of Hope Gala. Using community-based classes and techniques developed by renowned experts such as Dr. Vincent



Octavio Gomez, father of a Children's School graduate, gave Phyllis Rizzi her award.

Carbone, the Children's School has helped hundreds of children to lead full, productive lives. WPIX news anchor Jim Watkins presented Westchester ARC with the award, which was accepted by Children's School Director Fran Porcaro. The father of a former Children's School student presented Phyllis with her citation.

## Children's School Opens Three Inclusion Classes

The Roosevelt School in Ossining and Little People's Learning Center in Somers are the newest community pre-schools to offer inclusion classes, sponsored by The Children's School for Early Development. Roosevelt, where both morning and afternoon classes are being held, represents the second community inclusion site to be opened in Ossining. There are now 14 community-based classes in The Children's School's growing network. Ossining is the second public school district to open an inclusion class, following the example set by the Lakelands School District last September.

"It's our expertise, our professionalism and our commitment to serving the needs of children with developmental disabilities that encourage the community to work with us," says Fran Porcaro, director of The Children's School.



Brianna R. attends pre-school in Ossining.

In-community classes enable students with disabilities to learn from the behavior of their typically developing classmates. In turn, typically developing kids are exposed to the range of individual differences. They learn compassion and tolerance at the same time that they benefit from the increased staffing provided by The Children's School—

state-certified teachers with graduate degrees, as well as psychologists, clinical social workers, and speech, occupational and physical therapists.

"Inclusion classes have been a wonderful foundation for my daughter to get all of the services she needs to develop and grow in a setting where no one feels like they are out of place," says Jo-Ann R., whose daughter, Brianna, participated in the pre-school's toddler program last year and now attends the Roosevelt School.

Brianna is now able to carry on a conversation, is more aware of her surroundings and feelings and can even sing the alphabet. I have this program to thank for it."

"Inclusion classes represent true integration and equality," comments Mierla Puello, the Roosevelt School's principal. "I am very happy that the Roosevelt School can provide these opportunities for our community and strongly encourage other schools to do the same."



## Travel Clubs Combine Learning and Fun



On the beach in Seaside Heights.

going to the beach. “This was a family-style trip,” recalls Recreation Specialist Annabel Bayon. “Everyone pitched in to make dinner, clean up and help each other get ready to go out.” One night Annabel treated consumers to her famous chocolate-covered strawberries.

“That was a real bonding experience. We all sat around eating strawberries, watching the Olympics and chit chatting about our lives.

Westchester ARC’s Club Echo and Reunion Club regularly provide exciting social opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. Club Echo gives consumers the chance to enjoy fun-filled vacations with their friends, accompanied by knowledgeable, dependable staff. And the Reunion Club offers local outings for consumers living at home. Whether it’s a week-long trip or a visit to the movies, these programs have something for everyone.

Club Echo’s 20 trips this year included a Yankees game, the New York Renaissance Faire and *Footloose* at the Westchester Dinner Theater. Long weekends were spent in Mystic, Connecticut, at The Hudson Valley Resort and Spa, and in Las Vegas. Those seeking a longer get-away enjoyed time in Cape Cod, Lake George, Seaside Heights, Bermuda, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

### Jamaica and Jersey

Travelers to Jamaica visited Dunn’s River Falls, local straw markets and a show celebrating African and Jamaican culture. They also went clubbing and danced the night away.

In Seaside Heights, New Jersey, vacationers enjoyed strolling along the boardwalk, riding rollercoasters and

### A Few Hours Out

Sometimes it’s nice just to get out of the house for a few hours. Reunion Club is the perfect opportunity for consumers to get together with friends, while family members take time for their own needs. Reunion Club promotes socialization skills and community involvement. Activities are based entirely on the interests of participants and have included bowling, movies, dinner and dancing at the Tarrytown Marriott, a Westchester Wildfire basketball game and pumpkin picking.

Some of the Reunion Club members’ favorite trips have been to New York City. At the Bronx Zoo, they gazed at gorillas, spotted snow leopards and learned about hundreds of other different animals. During a trip to the New York Hall of Science, they enjoyed a day of hands-on learning. They constructed sample molecules, watched a laser in action and composed their own music.

For information on joining the Reunion Club, contact Annabel Bayon, [abayon@westchesterarc.org](mailto:abayon@westchesterarc.org), 914-428-8330, ext. 3220.

## Resources

### Empire State Games

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

This website provides information on Empire State Games, a series of sports events for athletes with disabilities. The program is sponsored by New York State and is free of charge to athletes and spectators. Individuals aged five to 21 are invited to participate in activities such as track and field, archery and swimming on either the competitive or non-competitive level.

### LD Online

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

This website is a forum for parents, children and teachers wishing to learn more about diagnosing and treating learning disabilities. It contains discussion boards, up-to-date news and links to camps and schools. The website also features writing and artwork by children with disabilities.

### Parent Link

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

Parent Link is a support group for parents of children with high functioning autism, asperger syndrome and other pervasive development disorders. This website helps parents, friends and interested professionals advocate for educational programming, increased social and recreational opportunities and meaningful employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. It also helps parents build a network of support through bulletin boards, event listings and links to useful community resources.



## Partners

Westchester ARC works with 250 businesses, government agencies and other organizations to identify career opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Here are two we'd like you to know about....

### Syms

395 Tarrytown Road  
Elmsford, New York 10523  
914-592-2447

Syms has employed two consumers for over 16 years. This is a very supportive employer who remains committed to providing a safe, friendly work environment where everyone is treated fairly and individuality is encouraged.

### The Zodiac Café at Neiman Marcus

Westchester Mall  
2 East Maple Avenue  
White Plains, New York 10651  
914-428-2000

The Zodiac Café at Neiman Marcus has a long-standing history of hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. One person hired through Westchester ARC has worked there for nearly 20 years. This business partner has remained patient and understanding of employee needs in learning to work in the fast-paced world of food service.

# Rain Fails to Dampen Spirits at *Golfing for Kids*

The fourth annual *Golfing for Kids*, held on September 28 at the Westchester Hills Golf Club in White Plains, netted over \$100,000 in donations for pre-schoolers with developmental disabilities, despite gloomy skies. The event was sponsored by



Master Berlow of United Martial Arts Center, his wife Kathy and The Children's School's Phyllis Rizzi.

Westchester ARC's Children's School for Early Development in partnership with United Martial Arts Center.

Disregarding heavy rains, brave individuals traded off between golf clubs and umbrellas to enjoy a day on the green (an optional rain date of October 26 was offered to those preferring less inclement weather). Almost 200

people attended an evening banquet, including guest speaker County Legisla-

tor Tom Abinanti (D-Greenburgh). "It's a common misconception that the government covers all the needs of an individual with a develop-

mental disability," Abinanti commented. "In reality, it is the work done by Westchester ARC, as well as the support of family and friends, that helps a child live a fulfilling, balanced life. It is so important for people who care about children to let government officials know there is a lot more to be done for this cause."

*For photo highlights, visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org).*

## Hughes Elected to APSE Post

Tom Hughes, Westchester ARC's associate executive director, was recently elected chair of The National Delegates Council of the Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE). APSE is the largest national organization dedicated to expanding and improving integrated employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. APSE members include government officials, consumers, family members and supported employment professionals.

"I believe my election to this position is a tribute from national leaders in the field of supportive employment to Westchester ARC for the energy and determination in our efforts to provide employ-

ment for persons with developmental disabilities," comments Tom.

In his new role, Tom represents APSE state chapter presidents at the national level. He will have the opportunity to influence national policies and direction of funds. Tom previously served as co-president of the New York State chapter. Westchester ARC has been actively involved with APSE since its inception in 1988.

"There remains a great deal to do in providing more employment choices to individuals with developmental disabilities," says Tom. "Westchester ARC's close connection to APSE ensures that the very best efforts will be made in this regard."



## Parenting Workshops

*continued from page 3*

“Every mother needs support,” says Barbara. “Mothers with special needs may need a little more, but with the right assistance from the home and community programs such as this one, these moms can do a great job caring for their babies. I remember one woman who had to give up children in the past. She was so dedicated to keeping her newborn that she appeared in court the day after he was born. When the judge saw that she was linked to the Parenting Skills Program, he let her keep the baby. It really does make a difference.”

In addition to the Parenting Skills Program, Barbara coordinates the Support Group for Parents with Special Needs Children. Five families attend weekly meetings in Yonkers, where they share the latest information on schooling, advocacy and therapy—and help each other realize the joys of parenthood.

“The most important thing is for parents to know they are not alone,” continues Barbara. “I’ve seen a lot of parents show up to their first meeting with a lot of grief, only to take comfort from others going through the same thing. These meetings are about people making connections with each other and learning how to connect better with their children.”

“There was one parent who couldn’t potty train her child. I recommended a doctor in Connecticut with a special program, and he was able to help her. Never underestimate the power of networking.”

For more information on these programs, call Barbara Powell, 914-428-8330, ext. 3201.



170 S. KENSICO RD. • WHITE PLAINS • 328-9020 • WWW.SPLASHCARWASHES.COM

Splash Car Wash has named Westchester ARC the recipient of this year’s holiday charity gift card sale. Gift cards can be used to purchase washes, detail services and store items.

Splash will donate up to 15 percent of the proceeds from gift cards sold online and five percent of the proceeds from cards purchased at their facility at 170 S. Kensico Road, White Plains, New York.

The sale runs through December 24, 2004.

Visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org) or [www.splashcarwashes.com](http://www.splashcarwashes.com) for more information.



## Westchester ARC Opens Residence

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“This is a beautiful home. I’m sure Kim will be very happy here,” commented her dad, Eglon.

The new house represents another big step toward community involvement for those living there. “Some people may have a misconception about living near a group residence,” said Michael, “but our residents have jobs, are active in community events and respect our neighbors. Our home is like any other, yet special in its own way.”

## A Matter of Taste Serves Up a Dream

*continued from page 7*

“I am so proud of Darnell for working toward his goals,” says Sandra Rosario, Darnell’s guardian-ship advocate, who took him shopping for something to wear. “He’s so vibrant, friendly and likeable, working in a restaurant is a perfect fit for him.”

Do you have a favorite restaurant that could profit from an employee with Darnell’s professionalism? If so, please contact Barbara Melhado, 914-428-8330, ext. 3115.

## Tributes

The following donations were received between August 10, 2004, and November 4, 2004.

**IN MEMORY OF ROSE CRISAFI**  
Ms. Barbara Marie Gardner

**IN MEMORY OF GIROLAMO DISISTO**  
Sulzer Inc.

**IN MEMORY OF DAVID KREINESS**  
Ms. Matilda Tell

**IN MEMORY OF APRIL PILIERO**  
Ms. Dorothy G. Van Bortel

**IN MEMORY OF ROSA LUZ RODRIGUEZ**  
Mr. and Mrs. Jesus Tapia

**IN MEMORY OF RICKY SILVERA**  
Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Brown  
New Rochelle High School Science Department

**IN MEMORY OF FREDERICK L. SWANSON, SR.**  
Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Swanson

**IN HONOR OF MRS. K. LAUNHARDT**  
Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Launhardt

**IN HONOR OF MICHELE MASI**  
Ms. Mary Ann Dantin

**IN HONOR OF FRAN PORCARO**  
Fairstein Enterprises, LLC

## ***The Journal News*** **Wins NYSARC Award**

A story written by Abby Klingbeil of *The Journal News* and nominated by Westchester ARC has placed second in the "Best News Article/Editorial" category of the NYSARC Media Awards. Entitled *Job Opportunities Increasing for People with Developmental Disabilities*, the feature story details Westchester ARC's success in finding community-based jobs for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Westchester ARC has partnerships with over 250 companies throughout the county and found jobs for over 60 people last year. Klingbeil shatters stereotypes as she tells the heartwarming story of Yaniv Gorodischer, Raymond Frost and Jason Kingsley, three longtime friends with disabilities, who live together in a Westchester ARC-supported home, hold jobs and are active members of the community.

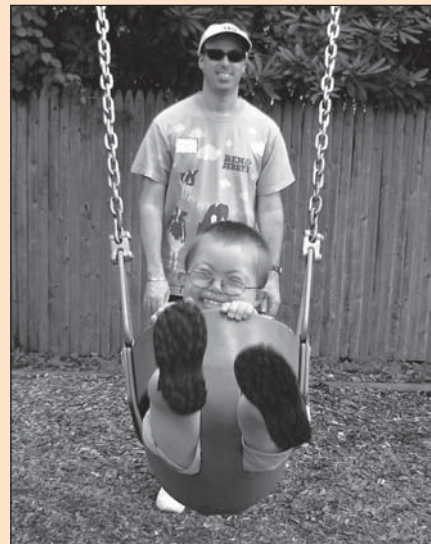
"The best thing I like about my job is helping people," Klingbeil quotes Raymond as saying of his job at Petco, where he has worked for the past seven years.

The statewide NYSARC Media Awards recognize the important contribution made by print and broadcast media towards furthering the public's awareness and understanding of mental retardation and developmental disabilities. NYSARC is the largest non-profit agency in the nation serving persons with developmental disabilities. Westchester ARC is the local chapter of NYSARC.

## **PACDS Picnic Celebrates 32 Years of Family Support**

Fifty families attended the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual PACDS (Parents Assistance Committee on Down Syndrome) picnic on August 14 at John Dowling Park in Yorktown, New York.

PACDS helps new parents of children with Down syndrome to understand their babies and develop their full potential. Monthly meetings give parents the chance to ask questions, share thoughts and experiences and have family playtime. For more information on PACDS, call Anne Majsak, 914-328-7909.



Benjamin L. and his dad, Michael, enjoy quality time.

## **Kids Raise \$10,000 at Kickathon**



Young athletes perform to raise money for pre-schoolers.

Pre-schoolers with disabilities joined students from United Martial Arts Centers ([www.umacenters.com](http://www.umacenters.com)) for a Kickathon and Championship Exhibition that raised \$10,000 for Westchester ARC's Children's School for Early Development. Over 100 people attended

the event, held on September 11 at the Briarcliff Middle School, Briarcliff Manor, New York. More than just a fundraiser, the Kickathon demonstrated the benefits of social inclusion, featuring kids with developmental disabilities performing martial arts alongside typically developing youngsters.

The pre-schoolers have studied Tae Kwon Do as a means of developing motor, language and life skills, having a lot of fun in the process. The championship exhibition featured board-breaking and form demonstrations, and participants delivered 500 kicks in eight minutes.

For photo highlights, visit [www.westchesterarc.org](http://www.westchesterarc.org).



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