

With new logo, agency communicates more choices

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Joseph Lombardozi turned a three-month internship at an Elmsford law firm into a permanent job two years ago, after impressing his supervisors with his diligence and outstanding work.

Lombardozi labeled and compiled some 300 boxes worth of real estate files

from transactions closed through Pappalardo Tombini & Wolff LLP. With help from Westchester Arc, he returned to his job full time in September 2003, and saw his duties expanded beyond keystroking. They now include categorizing legal documents, archiving files, packing files for delivery to an off-site storage facility and most recently, photocopying.

"When he came back after he was hired full time, he did the same work without the teacher's aide he had as an intern. He made not one keystroke error," said Michelle Tombini, a partner with Pappalardo Tombini & Wolff LLP. "As long as you can isolate a task and it's repetitive, he'll teach it to you."

Linking employers like Tombini and people with developmental disabilities like Lombardozi in community settings will be an even stronger priority during the coming year for the White Plains-based not-for-profit agency that made the match.

At its annual meeting Tuesday, Westchester Arc will unveil a new logo and slogan intended to convey that commitment, "Envision possibilities, explore choices," and the message behind it, namely the increasing variety, convenience and choice of services offered by the not-for-profit agency.

"We're finding the people we serve and their families really want the same kind of choice that everybody wants. They want to live in the community, work in the community, have leisure time in the community," said Richard P. Swierat, executive director of Westchester Arc.

Westchester Arc will also unveil a new logo incorporating the new way it spells its name. After years of using "ARC," an acronym for "association of retarded citizens," the organization will now spell the word out in upper and lower case letters.

The change, Swierat says, reflects a new commitment to connecting the people it serves, or "customers," with their communities. It's also another step away from the word "retarded," which Westchester Arc says has become outdated now that many of the people it serves have other diagnoses, from autism to cerebral palsy and epilepsy.

"As we get better at determining people's learning disabilities, the title of our organiza-

tion really doesn't meet the reality. It has been a barrier to people who wanted to serve our organization, and in some cases it has scared people away," Swierat said.

Another priority for the organization, Swierat said, is helping businesses take more advantage of its labor force through joint ventures.

Established in 1949 as Westchester Association for the Help of Retarded Children, Westchester Arc employs 700 and operates on an annual budget of \$41 million.

By playing up the breadth of disabilities

of its customers, Swierat acknowledged, Westchester Arc also hopes to have an easier time qualifying for state grants targeted to people with specific developmental disabilities.

"While this was a business decision, it was a business decision driven by our customers," Swierat said.

Two of those customers, Alison Barajas and Anthony Antolino, have become valued employees at the Port Chester Nursing and Rehabilitation Centre by assisting its activities department staffers, said George Storey, the center's director of activities.

"They are responsible for several activities. We have cards every Tuesday and movies every Saturday. They bring people up to where our residents are," Storey said. "In addition Anthony is fluent in English and Italian, and that helps us because many of our residents are Italian and a few of them speak only Italian."

"He is often asked by our nurses to translate for us something a resident has said. So having him as a translator is something remarkable," Storey added.