



ArcLife



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ADVOCACY UPDATE: THE ARC ONTARIO HOSTS PANEL DISCUSSION WITH LOCAL LEGISLATORS

For over a decade, New York's not-for-profit provider agencies of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or other challenges have faced a historic pattern of underfunding and cuts, resulting in a dire workforce crisis brought on by wage stagnation and the ever-increasing costs of providing quality services for people with I/DD.

Please turn to page 4.



The Arc Ontario is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to assisting individuals with disabilities or other challenges and their families. We offer personalized services and supports that foster life-long fulfillment through active citizenship and enriched community living.

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On the Cover: Jenny G., an individual supported by The Arc Ontario, speaks during a panel discussion with local legislators about her experiences and how lack of investment in our field has affected her.

MESSAGE FROM ANN SCHEETZ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Ann Scheetz

It is my hope that this newsletter finds you healthy, in good spirits and enjoying all the warmth that spring has to offer. As we reflect on yet another eventful year, we feel great pride in all that we have accomplished together. Spring is a time to celebrate new beginnings, and thanks to the hard work and dedication of our committed staff, there is much to celebrate here at The Arc Ontario.

The agency officially launched Autism Connections, a compilation of services and supports available to people with autism spectrum disorder and their families, caregivers, staff and community members. This is an exciting development that will allow the agency to act as an additional resource for our community in providing quality autism services and supports, testing for and diagnosing autism, and exploring the best steps moving forward.

In order to meet our growing needs, The Arc Ontario once again announced wage increases for direct support professionals, now offering a new starting rate of \$16.25 for day programs and \$16.75 for our residential program. While many employer's wages fell behind the pace of inflation, The Arc Ontario has continued to invest in the backbone of our organization – the talented group of professionals providing services and supports to more than 700 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or other challenges living in Ontario County. As you read through this newsletter, you will also hear about some of the reasons our staff members choose to work at The Arc Ontario.

In March, we observed National Developmental Disability Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and promote inclusion and acceptance for people of all abilities. The agency also hosted its 2nd Annual Trivia Night fundraiser at Clifton Springs Country Club. A special thanks to Clifton Springs Country Club and our event volunteers for making the night such a success.

The Arc Ontario co-hosted a panel discussion with local leaders at our main facility on March 10. The discussion focused on advocating for an 8.5% cost of living adjustment and wage increase for direct support professionals, among other important issues our field is facing. In attendance were local legislators, staff members from The Arc Ontario and The Arc Wayne, individuals we support and their families and caregivers. It was an incredibly productive discussion and we are thrilled to have gained the full support of our local representatives in advocating at the state level for greater investment in our workforce and the people we support.

Throughout the month of April, the agency celebrated Autism Acceptance Month with a host of activities to help educate others and promote autism acceptance, inclusion and self-determination. Staff members kicked off the month by donning blue Autism Acceptance t-shirts that featured a logo created by the talented individuals at our Victor Depot program. The shirts were available for purchase at our social enterprises, Bad Dog Boutique and North Star Café, as well as our main facility. Over 100 shirts were sold in support of Autism Connections at The Arc Ontario.

The agency also hosted a Sensory-Friendly Egg Hunt on April 1 at Dryer Road Park in Victor, and an Autism & First Responders Event on April 15 at Richard P. Outhouse Memorial Park in Canandaigua. A special thanks to all who attended and helped make the events possible.

As we look to the future, we are confident that the amazing stories happening every day at The Arc Ontario will continue to inspire our community to invest in a world where people of all abilities can truly flourish and become one with their communities.

Wishing you a lovely spring,

Ann Scheetz, Executive Director

CELEBRATING AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH!

Each April we celebrate Autism Acceptance month by raising awareness, promoting autism acceptance, celebrating each individual's unique differences, and fostering inclusivity and connectedness in our community. To kick off Autism Acceptance Month, staff members at The Arc Ontario wore blue t-shirts that featured an Autism Acceptance logo created by our Victor Depot program. The t-shirts were available for purchase online, at The Arc Ontario's main facility and its social enterprises, Bad Dog Boutique and North Star Cafe. More than 100 t-shirts were sold in support of autism services at The Arc Ontario.

The agency held a sensory-friendly egg hunt on April 1 at Dryer Road Park in Victor, NY, and an Autism and First Responders family event on April 15 at Richard P. Outhouse Memorial Park that featured sensory-friendly spaces, raffles, and lawn games. Both events had a wonderful turnout. A special thanks to Canandaigua Emergency Squad, the City of Canandaigua Fire Department, the Ontario County Sheriff's Office, Operation Safe Child, Project Life Saver, Pet Connections, and the Town of Canandaigua Highway Department.

The Arc Ontario also officially launched Autism Connections, a compilation of services and supports available to people with autism spectrum disorder and their

families, caregivers, staff, and community members. Autism Connections assist in increasing awareness, education, and personal development. From initial assessment and diagnosis to treatment recommendations and planning, our experienced staff will be there to guide people with an autism spectrum

disorder and their families through their possibilities and options.

To learn more about Autism Connections at The Arc Ontario, please visit www.thearc.org/autism-connections or contact JoEllen Schaefer, Family Support/Intake Coordinator, at (585) 394-7500 ext. 2118 or jschaefer@TheArcOntario.org. ✨



To kick off Autism Awareness Month, our staff members gathered for a photo at the agency's Eberhardt Center on March 31 wearing blue shirts in support of Autism Services at The Arc Ontario.



Volunteers from Hobart and William Smith Colleges joined us for an Autism & First Responders Family Event hosted by The Arc Ontario on April 15 at Richard P. Outhouse Memorial Park.



First responders from Cheshire Volunteer Fire Department showcased one of their firetrucks during our Autism & First Responders Family Event on April 15.



Officers from the Ontario County Sheriff's Department also joined us for the event, taking fingerprints for Project Lifesaver and Operation Safe Child, initiatives designed to promote child safety.

THE ARC ONTARIO INCREASES WAGES FOR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

The Arc Ontario once again raised wages for direct support professionals, now offering a new starting rate of \$16.25 for day programs and \$16.75 for our residential program in order to meet our growing needs.

The Arc Ontario is committed to providing a competitive living wage for all of our staff members, and in the past 18 months we have increased staff wages up to an unprecedented 27.3%. Rate increases have occurred agency-wide

and were not exclusive to direct support positions. While many employer's wages fell behind the pace of inflation, The Arc Ontario has continued to invest in the backbone of our organization – the talented group of committed professionals providing services and supports to more than 700 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or other challenges living in Ontario County.

We are tremendously grateful for our staff, and we will continue to advocate at



Doraliz Rodriguez (center), a direct support professional at The Arc Ontario's Eberhardt Center, smiles for a photo with Mikayla A. (right) and Melissa A. (left) during a grocery shopping excursion in Canandaigua.

the State level for greater investment in our workforce and the amazing people we support. ✨



Local legislators joined us on March 10 at our main facility for a panel discussion on the need for greater investment in our field and the individuals and families we support.

Advocacy Update: The Arc Ontario Hosts Panel Discussion with Local Legislators continued from cover

On Friday, March 10, The Arc Ontario and The Arc Wayne co-hosted a group discussion at The Arc Ontario's Main Facility. This panel discussion, facilitated by Ann Scheetz, Executive Director, The Arc Ontario, and David Calhoun, Executive Director, The Arc Wayne, featured local legislators including Assemblyman Brian Manktelow (Assembly District 130), Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan (Assembly District 131), Stephanie Hann (on behalf of Assemblywoman Marjorie Brynes, Assembly District 133), and Donna Schaertl (On behalf of State Senator Pam Helming, Senate District 54). It was an

extremely productive discussion that allowed our representatives to hear firsthand how our direct support staff, their supervisors, and the individuals we support have been affected by this crisis.

Our sincerest thanks to all of the panelists, staff, self-advocates, family members, and supporters of The Arc Ontario and The Arc Wayne for attending and participating in this legislative panel discussion, and for courageously advocating for the inclusion of the statutory 8.5% Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) and an establishment of a DSP Wage Enhancement (DSPWE) to reduce the hardships on Direct Support Professionals and the people and families they support. ✨

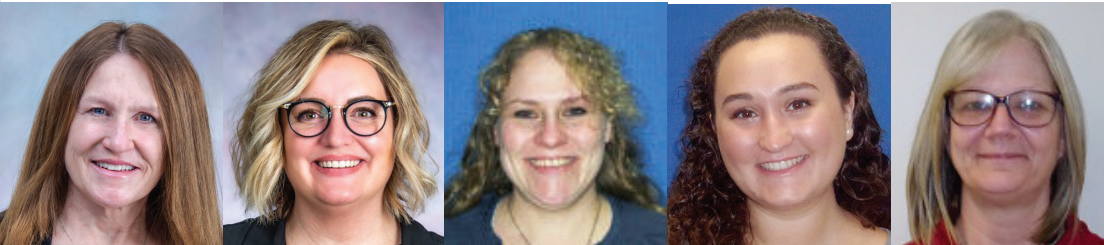
MARCH WAS NATIONAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH!



Luis celebrates his first successful painting session after the agency's Art Specialist, Dr. Cici Coen, was able to secure specially designed equipment that allows him to participate in our Creative Expressions art classes.

In March, we celebrated National Disability Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and promote inclusion and acceptance for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or other challenges. The Arc Ontario provides services and supports to more than 700 individuals with I/DD or other challenges and currently offers over 40 programs and services. Your support helps us realize our mission of fostering lifelong fulfillment through active citizenship and enriched community living for the individuals we support.

Whether they are volunteering throughout the community, beginning college, starting a first job, or learning how to how drive and obtaining a driver's permit, there are amazing success stories happening every day at The Arc Ontario. Follow along with the latest happenings and success stories at the agency by following us on Facebook or Instagram! ✨



Pamela Stewart

Casey Scheid

Dana Kincaid

Liana Posella

Media Gann

INTRODUCING OUR NEW HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM

The Arc Ontario would like to introduce our newly structured Human Resources team. The agency now has five Human Resources staff members that will help support our core mission:

- Pamela Stewart, *Sr. Director, Talent Management, Quality Assurance and Staff Development*
- Casey Scheid, *Assistant Director, Human Resources*
- Dana Kincaid, *Human Resources Manager*
- Liana Posella, *Human Resources Generalist*
- Media Gann, *Human Resources Generalist*

To meet our growing needs, The Arc Ontario has invested in a larger Human Resources department that will supplement our talent management and recruitment efforts, compensation and employee benefits, training and development, compliance, and workplace safety. ✨

Our new Human Resources email address is: HRstaff@thearcOntario.org. Please use the aforementioned email address whenever contacting our Human Resources department.

AGENCY HOSTS 2ND ANNUAL TRIVIA NIGHT FUNDRAISER

We would like to thank everyone for coming out to support The Arc Ontario on March 30 at our 2nd Annual Trivia Night

held at Clifton Springs Country Club! This fun-filled event raised over \$1,000 to benefit The Arc Ontario's growing menu



Team Taking Care of Quizness, comprising of current and former staff members at The Arc Ontario, took home the first place trophy at our annual Trivia Night fundraiser held on March 31st at Clifton Springs Country Club.

of innovative programs and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or other challenges.

Congratulations to teams CETGV and Rolling Thunder/Risky Quizness for scoring the highest in our four rounds of trivia, and to Rolling Thunder/Risky Quizness for finishing with the highest final score of the night!

Our sincerest thanks to North Star Café, Bad Dog Boutique, Charlie's Restaurant and Faro's Pizza for donating items towards our basket raffle, and to Clifton Springs Country Club for hosting us. A special thanks to our volunteers for making the night such a success! We look forward to hosting another Trivia Night soon! ✨

WHY WORK AT THE ARC ONTARIO?



David Deming, Director of Information Systems

Employees return and stay at The Arc Ontario for a variety of reasons, whether it's our flexible schedules, unsurpassed benefits or the fulfilling feeling they

are making a difference every day. David Deming, Director of Information Systems, shared why he chooses to work for The Arc Ontario.

"During the nearly 25 years I've worked here, I have seen the agency continually evolve and change," said Deming. "Throughout that time, the things that have stayed constant are the compassion and commitment to the individuals we support," he continued. "We have never lost sight of who we are and why we are here, and I enjoy being part of a team that is making a difference. Even more, the staff and individuals of the agency have become like a second family to me, and that means a lot," said Deming.

Tammy Erick, our Residential Director, has been with the agency for 20 years. At our recent awards ceremony, honored staff members were asked if they wanted to share a few words.

"I'm grateful for the opportunities, my co-workers and the dedicated people across the agency," said Erick. "The Arc Ontario is unlike any other organization. I don't want to work anywhere else," she added. "It is worth the 45-minute drive."

Jessica Cooper, Supervisor of our JET Connections program, left the agency nearly two years ago to pursue another opportunity but wound up coming back to continue the work she loves. She was also recently asked about the reasons she chooses to work at The Arc Ontario, and she echoed a similar sentiment.

"The reason I decided to come back to this agency was the wonderful people, staff and individuals that you get to see and work alongside every day," said Cooper. "I missed making a difference in someone's life and feeling like I'm part of something bigger than a workplace," she continued.

"I feel like the overall culture at The Arc Ontario is what makes people stay or brings them back," she added. "The support and respect I have received from

people all across the agency is absolutely unmatched to any other place I've worked."

Everyone at The Arc Ontario has their own unique story; from the talented individuals we support to the first-rate staff members who provide them with high quality supports and services. We would love for you to write your own story at The Arc Ontario by joining our team and helping us make a difference every day in the lives of many. *For more information about working at The Arc Ontario, or to view and apply to current openings, please visit www.thearcontario.org/careers.* ✨



Jessica Cooper, Program Supervisor, JET (Jobs, Exploration and Training) Connections

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BECOME A CHAPTER MEMBER OF THE ARC ONTARIO TODAY

As we launch our 2023 Annual Fund/Chapter Membership campaign, we are once again asking you to support The Arc Ontario by becoming a chapter member. The more members we secure, the louder our voice in Albany when issues arise regarding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or other challenges and the workforce that supports them. While we were thrilled that Governor Hochul and the State Legislature had initially announced unprecedented investment in our field, we were disappointed to find that those promises have fallen short. It is up to us to continue advocating for greater investment in our field to truly ensure that no New Yorker gets left behind.

Please consider becoming a chapter member of The Arc Ontario today. Together we are building a better world where people of all abilities can flourish and become one with their communities. If you have any questions, please contact Michele Wistner at (585) 394-7500 ext. 2156 or mwistner@thearcontario.org.

