Dear Friends,

In 2015 we saw an agency-wide culture shift on how we not only perceive, but provide services for the individuals we support. In September, Arc of Onondaga was awarded a three-year national accreditation from the Council on Quality and Leadership—an internationally recognized non-profit agency which is dedicated to the improvement of quality of life for people receiving human services. This accreditation, and the rigorous process leading up to it, allowed us to critically look at not only how we provide services, but to learn what the people we support think about those services. We launched our first-ever “Spread the Word to End the Word” campaign—a national day dedicated to educating youth about the harmful and stigmatizing use of the “r-word” in everyday vernacular, and we were able to fully-integrate our Onondaga Blvd. Day Hab into the community through a partnership with All Saints Church.

Arc of Onondaga navigated through many changes in 2015, bringing to fruition much of what has been alluded to over the past few years. We saw rate changes, concerns about meeting HCBS waiver setting rules, decreased referrals to some of our long-standing services, and lengthy openings in our residential settings due to OPWDD control over who can move. All of this has forced us to look closely at how we do what we do – how to do it more efficiently and how to do it in a more person-centered way – proving that change, though sometimes necessary and most certainly unavoidable, can bring about new and innovative opportunities that lead to great success!

So, while the times continue to be uncertain and change remains inevitable, we still find ourselves flooded with opportunities. Opportunities to help individuals determine what matters most and help them achieve their goals. Opportunities to provide services in a different kind of way. Opportunities to make changes that are beneficial to both the people we support and employ. Opportunities that better lead to a life of inclusion and success.

Sincerely,

Ellen Gutmaker
Executive Director

James Cannon
President of the Board

Board of Directors

James Cannon
President

Jeannine Nolan
First Vice President

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Vice President

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Brian Pulvino
Klaus Schroder
Denise Stephens

Onondaga Blvd. successfully transitioned into a fully-integrated day hab program

Onondaga Day Hab closed its doors in 2015 and relocated its administrative offices to the All Saints School along with recreation and Milestones. The site currently houses 25 individuals and 11 staff who are hitting the streets of Onondaga County in search of new and exciting opportunities. Before officially closing their doors in September, Onondaga Day Hab spent two months “practicing” to make sure everyone was up for the new adventure. Every day the group meets and decides where to go. Sometimes they will break up and do different activities – encouraging the individuals to decide what they would like to do for the day. Some of the outings they’ve conquered so far include volunteering, hiking, going to the library and park, Friday morning exercise, visiting the sunflower maze in Camillius, and even enjoying a boat ride on the Erie canal.

“I like doing different things. Every day we go somewhere new. I like being out.”

~ Stephanie
Success is challenging and encouraging others to advocate for themselves and their peers so that their message can be shared and heard. In 2015 the PAC shared their collective voice through agency-wide projects including Spread the Word to End the Word, I Am, and What Matters Most. They also participated in a CQL focus group, visited with assemblymen and senators, and wrote letters to the Governor of New York State. They are a dedicated group that strive to advocate for the causes and people that matter the most to them, so they may be regarded and respected as active participants in the life of their communities.

The Participants Advisory council changed their name to the Participants Advocacy Council (PAC) to better reflect the work they do both in the agency and within the community.

Francis currently works weekday evenings at the West Genesee Day Habilitation site on a NYSID contract. He has been with Arc’s vocational division, Monarch, for two years, and after his first year on the job, was asked if he would consider managing his own site. The first person ever to be asked to take on such a task, Francis would be required to not only work independently with minimal supervision, he would also have many additional responsibilities including keeping the keys for the building, utilizing proper time management skills, and maintaining and monitoring inventory including cleaning supplies and building necessities. The idea of having an individual maintain their own site was never even a thought until Francis came to work for Enclaves. The more staff worked with him, the more they realized how much more efficient they could be by streamlining productivity efforts and doing more with less. Francis was the first person to demonstrate all the necessary skills that would be needed for someone to work independently at his own site, including having his own transportation.

Seven individuals served through Monarch’s Enclaves now work without daily supervision; managing their own site and all the responsibility that comes along with it.

Advocacy is...

“Giving other people a chance to speak and speaking for others who don’t have a voice; bringing ideas to the table and fighting for the rights of others and being a friend” ~ Pat

“Enriching the community’s voice” ~ Isaiah

“Sticking up for your rights, don’t let people push you around and call you names” ~ Dori

“Learning new things, helping out and change” ~ Lisa

“Sticking up for myself and others and being part of a group” ~ Joe

“It was such a confidence boost. I just kept thinking, I bet this is what a promotion feels like. There are terrific people over there at the day hab. They deserve the cleanest and safest environment possible. I’m happy to be able to work for them.” ~ Francis
Arc of Onondaga was awarded a three-year National Accreditation from the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL), confirming their shared vision for person-centered solutions and commitment to continuously improve the quality of life for people receiving supports.

"Arc of Onondaga is commended and congratulated for achieving accreditation with CQL’s Quality Assurances Accreditation methodology and for its ongoing commitment and efforts to exemplify how a singular focus on the lives of people supported leads to making meaningful discoveries about What Really Matters."

Becoming CQL certified allows Arc to better serve individuals by providing a robust person-centered approach in the services provided. It means really listening to those who receive supports to find out what matters most to them, and assisting them in finding ways to achieve those outcomes. These supports help individuals to facilitate and achieve their personal goals and aspirations. Becoming accredited is an international symbol of quality for the work we do.

“We all need to respect each other. If you want to know something about disabilities, ask someone who knows, ask me.”
~ Mary

Spreading the Word

Arc of Onondaga, in partnership with GIGI’s Playhouse and social justice leader Don McPherson, set out to educate teens at local area high schools about the stigmatizing and offensive use of the word “retard” in common vernacular. Asking them to take a pledge via social media, online, and by signing their names to a travelling banner, McPherson, along with individuals supported by Arc and GIGI’s, visited East Syracuse-Minoa, Jamesville-Dewitt and West Genesee High Schools to talk about how the “r-word” is not only disrespectful and isolating, but also further stigmatizes those with different abilities. The movement to discontinue the use of the “r-word” is part of the national Spread the Word to End the Word campaign which is supported by over 200 organizations worldwide.
Success is being able to determine what matters most to the individuals receiving supports. Conversation, observation and empowering inclusive decision making helps individuals lead self-directed lives. Dori, who lives at an Arc residence and works for Monarch, has shared huge accomplishments with her friends, family, co-workers and Arc staff this year. Dori had a fear of stairs and falling which lead to her living a sheltered life. Afraid to leave her apartment, Dori spent a lot of time indoors and not participating in many of the activities her friends enjoyed on the weekends and after work. Recognizing her need for more physical independence, staff worked with Dori to move her into a one level Arc residence with no stairs—a big change for Dori who spent over 10 years at her old apartment. Since moving, Dori's growth can be seen in every aspect of her life. She walks everywhere now and no longer needs assistance, including doing mail delivery at Arc's administrative building. Her self-esteem and confidence levels have sky-rocketed, she joined the Participants Advocacy Council, advocates for herself to attend appointments on her own, and has lost 50 pounds due to her new active and unrestricted lifestyle. Staff continue to celebrate her successes and provide supports when needed, and Dori is now excited and enthusiastic to try new work experiences proving that change can lead to great rewards.

“Success is being able to determine what matters most to the individuals receiving supports. Conversation, observation and empowering inclusive decision making helps individuals lead self-directed lives.”

—I love doing the mail run for Arc. It’s a good opportunity for me. I like seeing people and I like the exercise.”

~ Dori

“I’m thankful for the new adaptive device that was built for me because it helps me be more independent in my work area and I don’t have to rely on others to do my job. I think it’s important to have adaptive equipment for all people with all sorts of disabilities.”

~ Heather

Opportunity is knowing that work is meaningful to the people we support. Developing person-centered vocational goals starts with understanding each individual in order to best recognize what they personally want to work for, their needs and desires.
2015 Audited Financial Information - Arc of Onondaga

Arc of Onondaga’s services and programs cost over $26 million to operate in 2015 and is continuing to revise the supports and services provided to meet the growing needs of people with developmental disabilities in Onondaga County. Among the individuals Arc serves, more than 100 live in residential homes and apartment settings provided by Arc’s community residence program. Over 300 people receive day services at one of eight sites and almost 200 more people are employed by Monarch, Arc's vocational division. It takes approximately 500 full and part-time staff to provide Arc’s high-quality services to over a thousand individuals and their family members living in Onondaga County.

Expenses

Sources of Revenue

Diamond Circle: ($10,000 & up)
- Mrs. Masue Bernholz
- P. Drescher & Co.
- Ms. Carol Ann Fisher
- Mr. & Mrs. John Horsington
- Mr. Klaus Schroder
- Mr. Robert Walsh

Ruby Circle: ($5,000 - $9,999)
- Mr. & Mrs. Sean Broderick
- Mrs. Joyce Carmen
- Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Eyer
- Mr. & Mrs. William Fisher
- Ms. Michelle Gillespie
- Ms. Ellen Gutmaker
- Mr. & Mrs. Mark Hettler
- Mr. & Mrs. Dale Morris
- Dr. & Mrs. David Mason
- Mr. James Moran
- Honorable Thomas Murphy

Platinum Circle: ($2,500 - $4,999)
- Mr. Raymond Hackbath
- Mr. Daniel Bingham & Ms. Gail Hamner
- Ms. Peggie Keib
- Ms. Lauren Kochian
- Ms. Barbara Petitto
- Mr. Jim Pitts
- Mr. & Mrs. Russell Smith
- Mr. & Mrs. Jarrod Shupe

Gold Circle: ($1,500-$2,499)
- Mr. & Mrs. Edward Dabrowski
- Mr. Stephen Fournier, Key Bank
- Mr. Michael Ferony, UPS
- Mr. & Mrs. Edward Kochian

Silver Circle: ($1,000-$1,499)
- Ms. Evelyn Carter, Wegmans
- Dr. & Mrs. Howard Weinstein
- Bronze Circle: ($500-$999)
- Mr. & Mrs. Alfred Falcone
- Mr. Chuck Fougnier, Oneida Nation Foundation
- Ms. Lynne Ryan
- Ms. Carolyn Stark
- Mr. Joseph Tracy
- Ms. Sheryl Wood

Thanks to the dedication of Arc’s direct support professionals, Arc resident Mike was able to go on his very first bicycle ride. Through continual encouragement and support, DSPs have been inspiring Mike to try new things. He not only was the first in his house to brave a bike ride to the end of the block and back, he has also been playing basketball at a local park with DSP Dykel and fellow housemate, and has shed pounds in his personal goal to lose weight. His enthusiasm and eagerness are infectious and have encouraged those around him to try new things as well.

“Becoming CQL certified allows DSP’s the opportunity to really listen to individuals to find out what really matters most to them, assisting them in finding ways to achieve their own personal goals and aspirations.”

Dykel Howard, Direct Support Professional
Arc of Onondaga
600 South Wilbur Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13204

Arc of Onondaga is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Photos: Christine Hall
Cover photo: Jan Regan Photography