

2020 Annual Report




The Arc
Northeastern Pennsylvania
Achieve with us.



Annual Report 2020

The Arc of Northeastern Pennsylvania welcomed 2020 with enthusiasm and anticipation! We looked forward to celebrating 65 years of leadership and advocacy in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities and Autism IDD/A. However, very early in the year, we were faced with the difficulty and challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a team approach, The Arc quickly analyzed alternate methods of

best practices and focused on immediate concerns and quality outcomes. The pandemic gave us opportunities to re-examine programming and delivery of services. ZOOM became our new friend. As you read through the departmental reports, you will have a better understanding of how creativity and planning was used to provide the care and compassion that our folks need, want and deserve.

Around The Arc – A Departmental Review

Kelly Peters – Senior Manager of Licensed Services:

Both Adult Day and Residential departments have done an excellent job with keeping up on the announcements and guidance published by the Office and Developmental Programs ODP and PA Department of Aging regarding COVID-19. The way we did business as a service provider has changed greatly since March 2020:

- o The Arc has worked extremely hard to ensure that risk mitigations have been put in place across all services and staff are afforded proper personal protective equipment PPE to decrease the risk of exposure to both consumers and staff
- o Direct Service Professionals DSPs, Supervisors, Managers, etc. adapted to a new way of holding meetings safely (via ZOOM) while still being able to review, communicate, and implement recommendations as per the Interdisciplinary team and regulatory requirements
- o Residential services have been able to fill all vacancies and welcomed new individuals to The Arc family
- o While given the current state of the health care pandemic and strict safeguards that The Arc

was required to put in place, families have been thankful for the protections and extremely pleased with how the use of technology has maintained a presence in their loved one's lives

- o The Arc has a reintegration plan for Adult Day Services which can be found on the agency website. This plan will serve as a blueprint on how services will be provided when approved to re-open by ODP
- o The Arc continues to participate in weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly ZOOM meetings/trainings with Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources PAR, ODP, and Lackawanna/Susquehanna L/S provider sub-committee reintegration group

Adult Day Services – Mike Williams

The Arc's Day Services continued toward increased community activity between January and March of 2020, planning and facilitating an increasing number of activities in integrated, community settings. In March, we suspended day services in order to keep our staff and consumers safe from the COVID-19 pandemic. Between March and July 2020, our program specialists maintained contact and conducted



wellness checks with all the individuals we serve.

In July, we were able to begin offering limited 1:1 in-person activities with a total of 25 individuals. These activities were only permitted to take place outdoors in safe, socially distanced settings. In September, we began planning for a safe reintegration of facility services for individuals capable of social distancing and wearing mask. We began offering facility-based services to approximately 30 individuals in the first week of November.

We also began planning our virtual services at this time. Virtual services were gradually rolled out in November. By Thanksgiving,

we were offering combined virtual and in-person services to 45 individuals.

At the beginning of December, we had to suspend all facility-based services as community spread of COVID-19 increased. Between December and January, our focus has been on increasing virtual offerings, and gradually reintegrating safe, socially distanced 1:1 activities in the community. Beginning in January of 2021, we are serving individuals between virtual and community based 1:1 programs. Our program specialists continue to maintain contact with families and conduct wellness checks on all consumers who are not currently receiving services.

Residential – Noreen Cosmark

The Arc's residential service operates with dedicated staff, keeping our individuals well and happy. The protocols put in place by our agency are followed by staff ensuring a safe and healthy environment. The holiday season had a different feel this year, but the celebrations were festive and gave joy to our folks. Due to COVID-19, they were unable to spend time with their families. We worked with families, so they could maintain contact through FaceTime, phone calls and even at times through windows for loved ones to see each other.

The residential staff also worked together to manage and implement new trainings for all staff. Also, we were able to offer Community Participation Supports CPS, both in-person (1:1) and virtually which offers quality activities and an alternative when facility-based services are suspended. We have 12 community-based homes serving 41 men and women and continue to provide service and support options which include Life Sharing through Family Living and Supported Living.

Advocacy – Roseann Polishan and Mandy Colville

Prior to COVID-19, a meeting was arranged to discuss issues due

to lack of services for those with disabilities in Pike County. Parents and professionals presented stories of how the lack of services impacted their families to our Pike County Commissioners, Rep. Mike Pfeifer, Senator Lisa Baker and a staffer from Rep. Rosemary Brown's office. The discussion revolved around changes needed legislatively, the need for more funding and services in Pike, and the need to understand the challenges of those with disabilities living in a rural area. The discussion was very well received by our elected officials. Unfortunately, the shutdown came soon after and the focus has shifted in the meantime.

2020 has been quite the year for everyone across the world, including here at The Arc of NEPA. The mission of advocacy which stands out has not changed due to the pandemic, the delivery just had to be adjusted. More than ever, folks needed assistance navigating the complexity and ever-changing policies of the pandemic world.

Many of our planned in person events and community outreach programs were not possible in 2020. We had to postpone Wings for All, Intelligent Lives and our Future Planning Workshop until pandemic conditions improve but we look forward to hosting them again in the future.

Since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, the Advocacy department has learned to adapt to remote operations. We have been participating in new trainings on a weekly basis to keep informed of the ever-changing guidance, particularly with special education, so that we can best serve our consumers. We have been utilizing technology to attend and participate in IEP meetings, review documents, meet with families and share resources. There have been many useful presentations that were not previously available to us due to location that now are through the widely used technology platforms. The Advocacy department has developed and implemented a new



training series offered virtually that began this Fall, which will continue monthly through May.

The advocates have arranged for the following presenters to pass on information and knowledge to families using Zoom: PaTTAN Parent Advisors (Department of Education Resources), Bradley Goldsmith Special Education Attorneys (COVID-19 related educational questions), Asert (Autism Resources) and HUNE (Bilingual Special Education support). We have been able to utilize new resources, collaborate with other agencies and reach a wider audience even beyond our coverage area with these new initiatives. Our training series has been very well received and it continues to evolve with our advocates conducting their own presentations virtually beginning in 2021 on topics of early intervention transition process, ABC's of IEPs and more.

Human Resources – Mary Ann O'Shea

"Sorry, I was still on mute" was a phrase we heard way too often this year! Like many of the other departments within the agency, the Human Resource team had to adapt to new ways of completing the typical duties of the department, due to COVID-19.

Recruiting and retaining a caring staff remained a priority throughout the year. We participated in several virtual job fairs at local colleges and universities. In September, we hosted our very own virtual job fair via Zoom. To minimize exposure, interviews were completed virtually through the Zoom application. The Arc of NEPA welcomed 33 new employees to the team!

We support the recruitment and retention of quality staff through competitive wages and benefits. In their continuing efforts to recognize the great work and dedication of staff, the Board of Directors approved two prorated bonuses. The Human Resource team conducted Benefits Open Enrollment virtually this year, and we are happy to announce there was no increase in cost share for the 5th year in a row!

DSPs are the backbone of The Arc of NEPA and this year, more than ever, we wanted to celebrate DSP week, even if it meant celebrating virtually! DSP Week was celebrated throughout the week of September 13th. The Human Resource team created a list of daily activities, such as 'Together Tuesday', where staff showed us how they were spending time with consumers that day, whether solving a puzzle, playing a game, or making some grilled cheese sandwiches together! Staff had the chance to win Amazon gift cards throughout the week, and everyone was gifted an Arc T-shirt, mask, and a McDonalds gift card!

Practicing universal precautions is nothing new to The Arc. However, COVID-19 was a new virus, which brought forth a new set of challenges to the agency. The

Human Resource team learned as much as they could about this new virus and was tasked with developing policies and protocols to ensure the health and well-being of the staff and consumers we support. We continue to share and educate staff on the importance of preventive measures, including the donning/doffing of (PPE). The announcement of a COVID-19 vaccine is promising, and one more tool we have in our toolbox. As we approach the New Year, we will work with staff to ensure anyone who would like to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, is scheduled.

While 2020 certainly brought its obstacles, the Human Resource team adapted and overcame through new and creative ways of communicating and completing tasks. We anticipate incorporating some of these ideas in the years going forward and look towards a healthier 2021!

Public Relations and Development – Eileen Rempe

New Fund Raiser! - The Arc-NEPA participated in the 2020 Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community. The event was virtual. All walking was at the participant's leisure and donations were made on-line. We created a video to show case all the walkers and their wonderful ideas on how they walked, hiked, rode, strolled, etc.

The Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community is an annual fundraising walk that benefits local health and human service agencies. Highmark Inc. coordinates and underwrites the cost of the walk so that 100 percent of the money raised by walkers goes to the participating nonprofits. The primary goal of the walk is to help participating organizations raise money for their individual missions. The secondary goal of the Walk is to energize community members to have a greater hand in their health by becoming or staying physically active. We had a great time and would love for you to join us gain this year!!



Auxiliary Happenings:

The ladies find ways to brighten spirits by sponsoring fun activities for the folks in our programs such as: buying needed supplies for each camper, handing out ice cream and supplies for yummy sundaes, purchasing Halloween decorations for each home along with hats and gloves to keep our folks warm, ordering fleece suits so our guys and girls will be toasty as we move into the colder months, provided all the scrumptious supplies for a delicious Ice Cream Social at each home for all the consumers and staff to enjoy, purchased pies for Thanksgiving, Christmas decorations for each home and cookies. The Auxiliary

postponed their activities for this year but have worked extremely to continue to fund projects that benefit the men and women we serve.

Arc Stars – Theater Program:

We have been informed by the Lackawanna County Department of Arts and Culture that we are receiving a grant for Theater Arts for adults with disabilities for the fifth year in a row!!! Our theater program gives participants a creative way to express themselves while learning all about the world of acting, dancing, singing and all the behind the scenes efforts. It is our goal to continue the educational and fun learning experience that the Arc Stars enjoy.

NEPA Gives is a one-day online giving extravaganza that's all about giving back to the community. Scranton Area Community Foundation, The Luzerne Foundation, Greater Pike Community Foundation, Wayne County Community Foundation, and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Nonprofit & Community Assistance Center (NCAC) teamed up to host NEPA Gives. For 24 hours—donors made secure donations to their favorite local nonprofit organizations through the NEPA Gives online platform. This initiative replaced the Match Day event from prior years. This event supports the educational component of The Auxiliary.

Over the years, we have said, "Goodbye" to some of our friends and it has been painful to know that we won't be sharing a lunch or "happy ending" sundae with them or hearing about their families and listening to their stories. They are missed in so many ways... The Auxiliary board, who is more of a family, was built by ladies who are blessed with extraordinary gifts and talents and they all complement each other in beautiful ways. When one of our family members passes

away, we cherish their memory by continuing their stories and talking about how much we miss them. Eileen Williams completed a project that will remind everyone of who these ladies were and how important it is to keep their memories alive. Please remember these kind and courageous women...they will forever remain in our hearts: Pat Albrecht, Connie Wolff, Claire Maldonato, Jeanne Gardier and Liz Toms. A memorial plaque will be hung in the conference room so everyone can remember the wonderful ladies who helped the Auxiliary become what it is. We feel so honored to have had their time, talent and expertise.

Foundation Overview:

The 20th Annual Golf Tournament which was held on September 14th was a wonderful success. Everyone was thrilled to spend the day together in a safe and beautiful venue. Carol Chisdak offered so much support which lead to a great event. Bobby Robbins was the celebrity chair of this year's tournament. Bobby is an avid golfer and medalist for Special Olympics. In 2015, Bobby competed in the Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles, bringing home a silver medal with his partner, Jeff Snyder. He and his family were very excited to be a part of this event and we were thrilled to have their enthusiasm. Glen Oak went above and beyond to help us have a great event.

Breaking News: Carol Chisdak has confirmed the date for next year's tournament - May 24th! Kayla Morgan is the 2021 Celebrity Chair! Please mark your calendars...

The End of the Year Foundation "Ask" appeal was designated to help support our Advocacy efforts. We want to ensure that all people with IDD/A are treated with dignity and respect and secure the services that they need. Advocacy services alleviate some of the burden and



stress that is placed on families who need help, guidance and direction. In the past, everyone has been very generous to us and we are grateful to have the support of the community.

Grant News:

The Arc is in multiple phases of renovations in the main building, at the group homes and also, working on several educational/learning components: We are working on bathrooms, flooring, air/heat handling, emergency exits and security, sidewalks, tree removal and our group home kitchen is on hold for now. We are very grateful that we received several generous grants and donations for COVID assistance which really helped

with expenses, plus we received funding from new foundations which is wonderful. Establishing and fostering new relationships is very beneficial to our organization. Thank you to all who help to market The Arc.

We will also continue to work on trainings to assist with nutrition issues for our folks, renovations of the first floor (old tenant area), pursuing additional classes at Lackawanna College, expansion into Luzerne County and providing incentives to all the staff as a reminder that we are always appreciative of their dedication and hard work.

As part of the observance of the 75th anniversary of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month and also the 30th anniversary of the ADA, The Arc-PA highlighted the employment work that local chapters are doing. Please check out a ZOOM interview featuring Jerry M. and Fiorelli's in The Arc of PA's "Making Connections For The 21st Century Workforce". https://youtu.be/bcYCF3pe_5w

Membership renewals are vital to our organization. As you know, the more members we have the more votes we have when it comes to legislative issues affecting the folks we serve. Benefits of becoming a member: Your membership gives you: (Arc-US) - Access to the latest information, including our newsletters; Up-to-the minute alerts about the latest on Capitol Hill so you know when to take action; Discounted registration to our annual national events such as National Convention; Access to exclusive insurance coverage rates through our partner Mercer - Includes Group Term Life Insurance, Health Insurance such as major medical, Medicare supplement, life line screening, hospital income, and accidental death and dismemberment insurance. Coverage and availability may vary by state. The more members we have the more votes we have

when it comes to legislative issues affecting the folks we serve. (Arc-PA) - In Touch E-Newsletter; PA Message Quarterly Newsletter; Advocacy Action E-Alerts and (The Arc-NEPA) - The Articulate; Participation at the Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Luncheon and local fund raisers.

The Arc Vehicle Donation Program which accepts all cars, trucks, motorcycles, RVs regardless of their condition. Please visit our website for more information.

The Arc has a Memorial/ Honorarium program. Several of you utilize this way of expressing your thoughts and remembering your loved ones, friends, neighbors, etc. We are very grateful for your generosity and please continue to let us send along your notes.

Please do not forget about using Amazon Smile, when you shop - Amazon gives! AmazonSmile is a program where Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization selected by each customer. It is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charity every time you shop, at no cost to you. Soooo, when you shop on Amazon, please think Arc and Happy Shopping.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to all the folks and community groups who support The Arc's programs and services. Your dedication and compassion mean the world to us. Please continue to spread the word about using Amazon Smile; The Arc's Vehicle Donation Program; The Arc's Memorial/ Honorarium program.

Recreation – Mari Pizur

Before the pandemic, we provided "Thursday Evening Recreation" opportunities that varied with the feedback from our consumers at quarterly Advisory Meetings. On Tuesday and Friday nights we had



bowling leagues with approximately 155 bowlers. We are proud to say that there are 155 bowlers and our bowling banquet typically has about 350 in attendance. The banquet is usually held in June.

When COVID-19 shut down our programs in March, our consumers were devastated, and we shared in their sadness. We were used to seeing between 100 to 200 happy, fun-loving people a week. In April, we moved to virtual programming, which proved to be challenging but with some guidance, we were ZOOMing in homes and offering options in a safe yet fun way.

Using the capability of a virtual

experience, we provided three recreational opportunities via Zoom, every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday. EJ the DJ played his tunes for a dance party; Mindy Hill offered instruction on Chair Yoga and Marianne Scrimalli-Davis encouraged movement through her Dance/Exercise program. We helped with the ZOOM instructions and started an iPad lender program for individuals who needed a way to connect. Attendance tripled over the months and we were thrilled to see some of our folks smiling faces again!

In June, we were unable to have our "Gala Event" of the year which is the Bowling Banquet. When each family was called, it was heartbreaking to hear how sad some of our bowlers were because it was cancelled however, with a little creativity and help from the Scranton Parks and Recreation Department; we were able to have a parade around Nay Aug Park. The parade began at the museum with the bowlers who received Certificates of Achievement and had the trophy winners at the end of the parade standing outside their cars with their families as their friends, neighbors and more family drove by them beeping and cheering for their bowling success. Over 255 cars participated, and a unicorn joined the parade. It was so exciting; the smiles were endless and a great success!

After the excitement of the parade, we were notified that we had to cancel camp. Once again, I could hear kids pleading not to cancel camp. My heart was broken and knew we had to do something. Hence "Camp in a Box"! With the support of the County, we put together a plan for a camp experience that included: Three hours daily; Monday through Friday for five weeks; iPad lender program; supplies, snacks and drinks weekly; two to four camp counselors; four to five hours a

day. Camp 2020 would be a virtual camp!!!

We had great teamwork with our counselors. We saw the campers gain self-confidence talking about themselves, improving their communication skills and acquiring computer knowledge. The camp counselors jumped in with ideas on how to make the virtual camp a success. The camp counselors were on board with making the summer virtual camp the best experience for our campers. We brainstormed with each other and focused on their strong points and implemented them. The virtual camp was a win-win-win; we learned a lot from the experience, the campers and the counselors.

During the week, we continued to provide two nights of virtual Recreation Programs for our adults. "EJ the DJ's Dance Party" is a well-loved and on Thursdays, we provide different themes that are driven by our consumer's "Advisory Surveys" and success of programs from camp like Bingo, Scavenger Hunt and "The Arc Idol Talent Show."



A Look Ahead

The Arc of Northeastern Pennsylvania has a remarkable team of staff who are dedicated to the children and adults we serve. These essential employees made it possible to navigate the challenges presented by the pandemic and to continue the provision of critical supports.

We remain committed to our mission to promote and protect the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as we actively support their full inclusion in the community throughout their lifetimes. We will take the good things we have learned in these challenging times into the future as we look

forward to being together in person again.

Respectfully Yours,

Maryclaire Kretsch
Executive Director

P.S. Eileen Williams, who is a parent and Auxiliary Board member is working with several staff members to gather a Parent Group. The group will meet quarterly and discuss areas of interest, as well as, invite speakers who will give overviews of topics pertaining to their concerns and questions. We will keep you posted!

Thank you, Eileen!



Vision -

People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) are entitled to live full, self-determined and respected lives.

Mission -

The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with IDD and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.



Northeastern Pennsylvania

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