



always  
reaching for  
independence

ARI of Connecticut, Inc. Annual Report 2008

# ari president/ceo

ARI had another great year, full of accomplishments by clients, staff and volunteers.

One of the highlights was a fantastic exhibit and opening reception of the ARI Artists' Initiative at Norwalk Community College. From this exceptional art show a calendar was created and made available to the public. Subsequently we participated in the Stamford Harbor Parade of Lights, which was another opportunity to exhibit work done by our talented artists.

We continued to develop and sustain support for our agency through our annual appeal, the 2nd annual "Walk for Independence" and our 13th annual Lotstein/Martin Golf Tournament. All were successful in soliciting generous donations as well as community awareness.

As we strive to maintain delivery of high quality services we face many challenges—the largest being a flat cost of living adjustment from our major funding source, the State of Connecticut. As our costs escalate we must seek alternate ways of making ends meet for those who depend upon us.

To this end, we have begun the intense process of preparing for accreditation by CARF—The Rehabilitation Commission. International standards will be applied in ARI's business and service areas as we strengthen our operating systems and innovative programs. Our site visit and evaluation will be in August, 2008. We'll seek to renew our 3-year accreditation term.

ARI is extremely fortunate to have a wonderful group of extremely dedicated and caring staff members who continue to give us their all, day in and day out. They go above and beyond their job responsibilities to ensure uncompromised care. A day does not go by without our compassionate staff members making ARI a better place to work and live. We recognize and thank them all.

We will remain committed to focusing upon our mission and core values, in spite of the challenges and hurdles we face. We will succeed with your help, for which we are deeply grateful.

—Matthew P. Reyher

# ari board chairman

The difficult economic conditions that have affected Fairfield County have certainly had an impact on ARI. The combination of rising energy and food costs coupled with paltry funding increases put extraordinary pressure on social service agencies like ours to deliver the quality services that our clients expect and indeed deserve.

As I write this, the State of Connecticut has proposed a zero percent cost of living allowance for the next fiscal year. Simply stated, ARI is being told to do more with less. As difficult as it may be, we, as an agency, must maintain our focus and navigate through the stormy waters ahead.

But we have much to be thankful for. ARI is blessed with a dedicated Board of Directors that devotes their energies and talents to the agency. I am pleased to be passing the gavel to Allan Sussman, the founder of the ARI Walk for Independence,—our new annual fundraising event at Cove Island Park. Allan and his Executive Board will be worthy stewards of ARI in the coming years.

The financial results contained in these pages are the hard earned result of our dedicated staff's sacrifice. Matthew and his management team make the tough decisions in the trenches every day. But for their tireless dedication and selfless sense of service, this agency could not have achieved these results. I applaud each of them for a job well done.

How does one thank our dedicated, enthusiastic staff and volunteers? A "thank you" never seems to be adequate. They truly enhance the lives of others and make it possible to reach for independence and celebrate the potential in us all.

I also thank all of our valued donors for their support. You have repeatedly responded to our pleas for help and I am confident that ARI will continue to earn your trust each and every day.

—Mario Musilli

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# residential services

## group homes

ARI of Connecticut provides services to 28 individuals living in 4 group homes in Stamford and 1 in Ridgefield. They are licensed by the State of Connecticut as CLS, or Community Living Arrangements. We provide 24-hour, 7-day-a-week supervision which includes health monitoring, psychological services, and a wide variety of community based services.

Our homes reflect the individual interests and activities of the residents. Individuals living in group homes participate in recreational and leisure time activities of their choosing. Residents of the group homes work with the staff on personal goals created to achieve the maximum level of independence possible. We continue to assist individuals to acquire skills so that they can live in the least restrictive environment possible.

## supported services

We serve over 25 individuals who require less than 24-hour supervision. These individuals need assistance but also relish the opportunity to enhance their skills and to do things on their own.

Based on individual need, ARI provides assistance with budgeting, banking, bill paying, menu planning, food shopping, cooking, addressing health issues, and a wide array of other areas identified by the individual, his/her family, and the interdisciplinary team.



# day services

Participants in our Day Services Program spend their days working, volunteering and participating in a variety of community experiences in Stamford. We provide services to 105 individuals on a daily basis. This past year 7 new individuals chose ARI as their day support provider.

## day services options

ARI provides options for community service, therapeutic recreation, leisure and functional activities to 38% of our clients. Over 10 clients participate in volunteer opportunities, giving them a chance to give back to the community as well as focus on job skill development. Clients are given opportunities to develop skills necessary for independent living by participating in structured activities throughout the day.

## employment services

From supported to independent job placement, 62% of our clients choose to participate in some type of work program. We have been able to offer more work opportunities for individuals in our production center this past year. Our work crews continue to provide structured work experiences in and around the Stamford area. Our placement department helps individuals to advance into competitive, independent community employment. Five individuals were placed in competitive jobs this last year. Additionally, ARI provided job placement support to 15 individuals through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

## transition services

ARI helps prepare students for adulthood by offering vocational, functional and social skill instructions throughout the day. This past year we worked with 8 students from Stamford Public School System. ARI strives to provide a variety of opportunities to enable students to learn, work and live as independent as possible after graduation.

# human resources

It has been an exciting and busy year in the Human Resources department. There have been a total of 25 new successful hires and 7 promotions. Our turnover rate increased from 16% to 21%, still well under the average for non-profits in our field.

We have been working with the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA) and other non-profits in the area on implementing the College of Direct Support programs to provide online training for our staff. This is a comprehensive, convenient and cost-effective option for continuing education. Our goal is to continue to encourage our staff be on-going learners and to become as knowledgeable as possible in our field. Some of the courses offered include Direct Support Professionalism, Documentation, Person Centered Planning and Supports, and Community Inclusion. We expect to have this important program available by December 2008.

Last fall we entered into wage negotiations with the union. After a few months of negotiations we were able to come to an agreement.

The Human Resources department participated in "Take Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day" on Thursday, April 24, 2008. We hosted 7 children ranging in age 8 to 17. The national theme was "Making Choices for a Better Tomorrow." We all thoroughly enjoyed this nationally recognized program.

We have begun using a new provider for our reference checks. This service is much more time efficient and cost effective. Utilizing the new system has helped streamline the hiring process. We have also been working on Staff Identification Cards for all employees. This will increase the safety in our buildings and help our employees to be easily identified in the community.

As always, our goal in the Human Resources department is to provide the best training options for our staff and to give them the ability to grow at the agency. We also look to hire the best individuals we can and to retain them for many years to come.

# in memorium

This past year the ARI family lost two great friends.



In July of 2007, Michael Burl, a member of the ARI Landscaping Crew, passed away. Michael lived in his own apartment while receiving support from ARI staff. He was a role model for his co-workers on the ARI crew and a passionate golfer. Michael, along with 15 other ARI clients, participated in the Challenged People in Motion Golf Program. As a result of his long involvement and passion for the game, they have named two awards in his memory.

In March of 2008, Stephen Condaris, a member of the ARI Housekeeping Crew, passed away. Stephen lived with a good friend for the past several years in our Supported Living program. Stephen was a great friend to many ARI clients and was an avid bowler. Stephen put a smile on our faces when he appeared with a coke held high, exclaiming "Caff-e-no" or signature phrase "bust 'em up, bust 'em down." Stephen was known by many in the community and developed a lasting relationship with many of the staff of Brooke's Pharmacy, where he liked to visit.



Both Michael and Stephen will be remembered and missed by us all.

# development

This has been another great year for the Development Department. Gerard J. Gasparino was promoted in January as the new Manager of Development and Recreation.

Last fall the ARI's Artist Initiative held an art exhibit at Norwalk Community College. Over 25 pieces produced by 8 artists were on display from September to October. The opening reception drew over 50 people and was well received by all in attendance. From this art show ARI produced its first annual Artists' Initiative calendar. Over 100 calendars were sold. We thank Donald Axleroad, ARI Artists' Initiative founder, for all the work he put into the calendar and the art show. ARI would also like to thank Hudson Valley Bank for sponsoring the calendar.

On Sunday, May 4, 2008, we held our 2nd annual Walk for Independence at Cove Island Park. Close to 200 clients, families, friends, board members, volunteers, and staff attended this great event. Stamford Mayor Dannel Malloy and State Rep. Gerald M. Fox, III attended and greeted the crowd. Breakfast was supplied by Grade A, LizSue Bagels and Village Bagels and a picnic lunch was provided by SUBWAY. This year we honored teams of clients living in all of our group homes and apartments. The 3rd annual Walk for Independence is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, May 3, 2009—we hope to see you there!

On Thursday, June 26, 2008 ARI hosted its 13th Annual Lotstein/Martin Golf Tournament at Sterling Farms. This event continues to be a success and we hope to continue the tradition for many years to come.

As we move forward it is important to continue creating a strong and lasting awareness of ARI in the Stamford community. For instance, we hope to hold a Gala in 2009 to celebrate and showcase our work. While donations can be a benchmark for the success of an agency, it is just as important to develop friends and community partnerships to create a solid presence for ARI. We will continue to work with our neighbors and business associates to do so.

Lastly we thank our many supporters. It is their commitment and contributions that afford our clients the ability to reach their goals and a level of independence they would not otherwise achieve.

# recreation and volunteers

Our clients look forward to attending recreational activities provided by ARI of Connecticut, Inc. The recreation department strives to make activities available to each and every individual served by ARI as well as others from the local community. This past year over 200 clients participated in our activities. The recreation department has broadened its scope in the past year to include activities for active and non-active individuals. ARI offers a weekly cooking class, arts & crafts, aqua-aerobics, men's and women's nights out, social nights, bingo, bowling, golf, Special Olympics, art classes, trips to sporting events and much more. This past year ARI sponsored 2 vacations in which 8 clients were able to go away.

Over this year roughly 80% of ARI clients attended at least 1 activity with over 50% attending at least 1 activity per month. With the help of volunteers, the ARI recreation program continues to increase opportunities for individuals to have fun. This past year volunteers participated in over 600 hours worth of activities. This year we saw over 30 new and repeat volunteers attend multiple events.

The ARI Youth Corp (re-established in 2007) is largely responsible for the growth of volunteers at ARI. Over 25 high school students meet once a month and volunteer their time to ARI. This group has been an integral part of the success of the 1st and 2nd Annual Walks for Independence. They volunteer at parties and many of them have developed friendships with the clients.

Holly Bosley has been hired as Recreation and Volunteer Coordinator with the hopes of bringing in more volunteers and thereby providing even better opportunities for our clients



# finance

## purpose

The Finance department's primary goal is to manage and safeguard the public's and consumer's financial resources. We are the "Custodian of Public Funds". Additionally, we strive to provide prompt and courteous service to our staff, our clients, and the public.

In order to do this, we have set up a number of procedures and controls to ensure that this is being done. To this end, we have an annual audit done each year by an independent accounting firm, we perform bank reconciliations monthly, internal audits are performed throughout the year, two signatures are required on all checks, all payments to vendors have proper backup prior to making payment, financial statements are presented to the Board monthly, and an annual budget is completed each year.

## services

The Finance department consists of five dedicated staff that provides service in the following areas: Accounts Payable, Payroll and Benefits Administration, Internal Audits and Consumer Entitlements, Billing and Accounts Receivable, Bank Reconciliations, Financial Budgeting and Reporting, and Cash Management and Investments.

## major accomplishments

This year our department had a number of accomplishments. We have cross-trained our staff to ensure that if someone is out for an extended time there will be no interruption in the services we provide. Our staff have created better efficiencies such as weekly filings, automatic payments to pay vendors (which reduces the number of checks processed weekly), automated payroll deductions, a new health and wellness newsletter with each payroll check, monthly meetings between managers and the billing personnel to ensure accuracy, engaging managers in the budget process, and enhancing staff's knowledge by taking finance courses and classes. Lastly, we are looking forward to working with a summer intern from the Stamford Academy of Finance for the next six to eight weeks. He or she will get first-hand experience working in the Finance department and learning how we operate on a daily basis.

## goals for the f/y 2008–2009

- Ensure that proper controls and procedures are followed
- Ensure that inventories are done in a timely manner
- Continue to enhance the financial reporting process to the Board
- Continue to improve access to financial reports to managers
- Continue to promote staff development
- Continue to enhance customer service
- Review and Establish a five-year capital budget
- Implementing processes for expanding waiver billing

ARI of Connecticut, Inc.  
UNAUDITED FINANCIAL REPORT 2007–2008

SUPPORT & REVENUE	
Fees	\$6,578,565
Workshop Contracts	\$152,666
Grants	\$60,002
Misc. Income	\$108,612
Investment Income	\$42,212
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$6,942,057</b>
EXPENSES	
Administration	\$1,015,858
Day Programs	\$1,800,415
Residential Programs	\$2,625,529
Supportive Living Services	\$1,135,835
Other	\$152,541
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$6,730,178</b>
NET PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE OVER EXPENSES BEFORE DEPRECIATION	
	\$211,879
Depreciation	\$171,428
<b>NET PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE OVER EXPENSES AFTER DEPRECIATION</b>	<b>\$40,451</b>

The financial report presented is an unaudited report. The audit for the fiscal year 2008 will be completed by October 15, 2008.

# donations

July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008

Thank you to the following individuals, businesses and organizations for their kind generosity. Please call us at (203) 324-9258, ext. 3028 to find out how you can help by making a donation to ARI or volunteering your time for those we serve. You can also find more information at [www.aric.org](http://www.aric.org).

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