

EVERY GIFT IS  
SIGNIFICANT.  
THANK YOU  
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## The Faces of ARI's Future

To understand the true value of the services we provide, we want to share a few of our recent ARI success stories. These examples showcase the lives of three young individuals who embarked upon their journey to adulthood with the ARI High School Transition program. Each one has matured and experienced things they never thought possible. Along the way, we gave them the best, most effective services available and will continue to support them as they enjoy successful, fulfilling lives. With the life skills and employment guidance we provide, they made the transition from high school to adult life look easy!



**Michelle Bernardo** graduated from Westhill High School in 2002. She participated in the ARI High School Transition Program where she experienced various volunteer opportunities and underwent work assessments. During that time, Michelle volunteered at the Tandet Center Day Care Program and loved working with the 3 and 4 year olds. Since moving on

from the transition program, she has been successfully employed at Target in downtown Stamford.

**Bobbi Nieves** graduated from Westhill High School in 2011. While there, he had the opportunity to participate in the ARI High School Transition program and then entered our Day Services Program. In 2013, he began working in Group Supported Employment as part of the Housekeeping Crew. He is doing a great job and continues to enjoy this satisfying work.



**Anthony Huyhua** graduated from Westhill High School in 2010. In the High School Transition program, he worked on social skills and community involvement. When Anthony came to ARI he was very shy and had difficulty socializing with others. Anthony is now a member of ARI's Self-Advocacy Group and assisted with the planning of the formal dance in September, 2014. He participates in several activities offered within the Day Services Program.



This month, we are rebooting the ARI High School Transition program by providing services to a newly-identified 19-year-old student at Westhill High School. A transition team (including the student, her family and WHS and ARI staff) completed a full assessment and developed tangible goals that will accommodate the student's needs. The goal is to provide her, and all our transition students, the means by which they can achieve successful passage into adult life. ARI will proudly continue to partner with the Stamford Public School System as more students with disabilities approach graduation and need our transition services.

For more information on the ARI High School Transition or Day programs, please contact Darlene Caviness, at (203) 324-9258 ext. 3027 or email [cavinessd@arict.org](mailto:cavinessd@arict.org).



*The ARI Self-Advocacy Group, most graduates of the transition program, at their formal event.*

Enriching the lives of people with disabilities and their families by enabling them to achieve their fullest potential at home, at work and in the community.

## From the President & CEO

Bernie Weiss Photo



I am so delighted to be back at ARI after more than a dozen years. It has been a joyful time reconnecting with so many consumers, family members, staff, volunteers and friends of ARI. I have enjoyed sharing fond memories of the past while looking ahead and dreaming of the opportunities to come.

I am thankful to Matthew Reyher for his nine years of leadership and dedication to fulfilling the dreams and meeting the needs of those we serve. I look forward to building upon the work he has begun. We are facing many challenges and they will not be overcome easily or quickly. It will take a great deal of time, dedication, creativity, openness to new opportunities, and teamwork.

As always, our greatest challenge is funding because our primary source of funding, CT Developmental Disabilities Services, continues to shrink. We are striving to be as efficient as possible with less resources as we look for new funding sources. We hope to expand our array of services to new individuals and partners. One exciting new partnership is with New Covenant House of Hospitality. We are excited about sharing our Richmond Hill Avenue building with them, not only for the revenue that is generating, but also for the opportunities that will develop for the individuals we serve.

We depend upon and are grateful for our donors and business/community sponsors. Our Annual Appeal was mailed out in December and donations are still being received. We are in the planning stages of our 9th Annual Walk for Independence (May 3) and our 20th Lotstein/Martin Golf Tournament (July 30), while developing new partnerships and sending out grant requests. If you, or someone you know, is aware of corporations or foundations that might be interested in supporting ARI, please let me know. In addition to financial contributions ARI welcomes donations of goods or services and we are always looking for volunteers. We know for a fact that working with our consumers on any level is the most rewarding experience there is.

We have over one hundred consumers who are depending on us to tackle our financial challenges. There are many more on waiting lists in great need of our services. Each one of these individuals has dreams for their futures. The realization of those dreams depends on *our* ability to continue to provide high quality services and supports for them.

I look forward to working with them and our staff, volunteers, family members, friends and the Board of Directors to make these dreams come true. My motto from day one has been “**Teamwork makes the dream work!**”

– Susanne D. Kuligowski



## From the Board Chair

Bernie Weiss Photo



It gives me great pleasure to welcome back Susanne D. Kuligowski as our President & CEO. Previously, Susanne worked for ARI from 1994 to 2001, in various positions including Residential Manager, Director of Programs, Vice President of Operations and even Interim President & CEO during a period of transition. We look forward to many successes under her leadership.

As you know, back in 1952, some parents of children with developmental disabilities started an organization that would provide innovative, bold services as their children grew and prospered.

Since then, ARI has remained true to their vision by providing services and supports to their children and countless others. The individuals we serve rely on us to reach their full potential in myriad of ways. For some, it means living in a group home while learning skills and experiencing social activities together. For others, it means living in their own apartment, working independently in the community, or competing in the Special Olympics.

In recent years, ARI has faced some new challenges. Our consumers are living longer and facing the same struggles of aging that we all do. There is a greater need for support, which very often is not funded by the state. Despite this dilemma, we continue to ensure that our consumers age with comfort and dignity. And as many of our consumers reach their sunset years, we are fortunate to serve a new generation of young and vibrant people as seen in our cover story. With this energetic group comes a new level of goals and expectations, and pushes us to be more creative and resourceful.

We have been fortunate to assist so many on their life's journeys. We've seen them achieve rich and fulfilling lives. However, each day this becomes more challenging. The State of Connecticut continues to cut our funding while our costs increase. We have responded by reducing expenses, while still providing necessary 24/7 services . . . but the programs and opportunities that truly enrich our consumer's aspirations and goals have been cut significantly.

We ask for your support to assist with the continued gaps in funding. It has been your support that has allowed ARI consumers the opportunity to achieve so much, and it will be your support that will allow them to reach their dreams. We understand that it may be difficult to support us at this time; however, it is only with your contribution that we will reach our long-standing mission.

Our consumers are your neighbors. They bag your items at the grocery store, deliver newspapers to patients at the hospital, serve meals at the local center for the hungry, work out next to you at the fitness center and they eat dinner at your favorite restaurant. We will continue to advocate for them, protecting their rights and doing everything we can to give them every opportunity to “always reach for independence.” But we need YOU!

Their success is not possible without your generous support. Please return the enclosed appeal envelope today or make a donation online at [www.arict.org](http://www.arict.org). Your contribution truly will make dreams come true.

Thank you for opportunity to serve as your Board Chair. I look forward to working with you.

– Peter A. Buck

## 62nd Annual Meeting



The 62nd ARI Annual Meeting took place on Monday, June 30, 2014 at the Knights of Columbus in Stamford, CT. Over 120 people were in attendance, including staff members, board members, consumers, family members and other community leaders. We thank Gloria DePina, Deputy Majority Leader Stamford Board of Representatives and Michael Pollard, Past ARI Board Member and current Chief of Staff for Mayor David Martin for joining us. Special thanks to our Keynote Speaker Morna Murray, President & CEO of Connecticut Community Providers Association.

We celebrated the successes of ARI over the past year and heard about the importance of providing high quality service to the over 150 consumers. Both Morna Murray and Michael Pollard spoke about the importance of agencies like ARI in providing services to people with disabilities. Michael Pollard read a proclamation from Mayor Martin.

ARI awarded its annual volunteer of the year award to Valerie Bell of Connecticut Pharmacy for her dedication to ARI. Ms. Bell, a former Stamford resident, volunteers her time at ARI working on the three major event committees and has been the co-chair of the Walk for Independence for the past two years.

ARI awarded two other community awards. The first recognized the New Covenant House as the Community Partner of the Year for their continued support of ARI consumers. The New

Covenant House is a volunteer placement for ARI consumers. Several consumers volunteer checking people in and serving food during lunch. The second recognized Party City as the Corporate Partner of the Year for their dedication to ARI as an employer of ARI consumers.

ARI awarded staff awards to the following employees:

### 20 years of service

Darlene Caviness

### 15 years of service

Cynthia Lowe and Paulette Wilson

### 10 years of service

Carline Archer, Renee Atkins, Laura Floyd, Marjorie Mair-Riley, Maxine Mereigh

### 5 years of service

Clifford Beauleau, DeKenya Bell, Jheanell Dhamalie, Ahisha Douglas, Felicia Drungo, Taria Hunter, Solange Jacques, Kouassi Kouakou, Yolanda Morales, Nanotte Pierre, James Roan, Hector Torres, Tammy Upchurch

**Rookie of the Year** – Patrizia Scialis

**Heart of the Agency** – Gerard Gasparino

**Always Reaching for Independence** – Carline Archer

**ARI Team Award** – Truglia Residence Staff

This year we recognized consumers for their accomplishments. These consumers accomplished new goals and excelled above and beyond all expectations.

### Consumer Awards

**Employment:** Ruth Green, Kenny Fahan, and Mike Flynn

**Day Services Options:** Marlene Serrano and Amber Squire

**Volunteering:** Laura Gold and Francine McMillian

**Residential:** Elena Bruno and Stacey Reynolds

For a copy of the 2014 Annual Report please visit [www.arict.org](http://www.arict.org) or email [gasparinog@arict.org](mailto:gasparinog@arict.org).

## Thank you for Supporting ARI of Connecticut!!

Just fill out and mail this form to ARI of CT, 174 Richmond Hill Avenue, Stamford CT 06902.

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For more information, please call 203 324-9258, ext. 3023

## Grants and Support

Throughout the year we have been fortunate to have volunteer groups perform work at several of our facilities. Thanks to:

### **Ernst & Young – Palermo Residence (4th year)**

On Friday, September 19, 2014 employees of Ernst & Young did some landscaping and stained the back deck.

### **St. Mary's Church in Bethel – Palermo Residence**

Over twenty high school students from Church of St. Mary in Bethel worked hard from June 24, 2014 to June 27, 2014 landscaping the yard and staining the front ramp railings.

## Grants and Gifts

- \$12,746 in funding from the **United Way of Western Connecticut** for the 2014 – 2015 fiscal year for its Individualized Home Supports (IHS) program.
- \$10,000 from **Knights of Columbus** through the annual Tootsie Roll Drive and Frank J. Robotti Memorial Golf Outing.
- \$7,500 grant from the **First County Bank Foundation** will be used to offset costs incurred by consumers in the IHS program they would otherwise not be able to pay.
- \$2,000 from the **Berkowitz Law Firm Charitable Trust** for general support.
- \$1,000 from the **Fairfield County Community Foundation** through the FC Gives Day on March 7, 2014. FCCF's gift was awarded to us for being one of the fastest organizations to raise \$1,000. In total, ARI received over \$6,000 from this event.
- \$1,575 from the **First Congregational Church Toys, Tales & Trinkets Sale** in November and December of 2014.

## Staff News

### New Hires

Leah Bel Jean: Residential Counselor, In-home Supports  
Ruchmy Bellefleur: Residential Counselor, Floater  
Lori Civitella: RN, Medical Department  
Patricia Clarke: RN, Medical Department  
Natacha Exantus: Residential Counselor, Palermo Residence  
Daniel Franco: Payroll & Benefits Administrator, Finance  
Matthew Isacs: Manager of Day Service Options  
Jamel Jacobs: Residential Manager, Truglia  
Susanne D. Kuligowski: President & CEO  
Christine Lindeberg: Residential Manager, Palermo Residence  
Mesheka Lowers: Day Service Options Coordinator  
Kelly Novo: LPN, Medical Department  
Kathryn Prete: RN, Nursing Supervisor  
Alonda Powell-Johnson: Residential Counselor, Lotstein Residence  
Patrizia Scialis: Director of Residential  
Tamara Thomas: Residential Counselor, Floater  
Mary Lue Williams: Residential Counselor, Floater

### Staff Promotions

Mary Louise Brinson to Residential Manager, Lotstein Residence  
Darlene Caviness to Director of Day Programs  
Willie Clark to Employment Specialist  
Taria Hunter to Residential Manager, Tally Ho Residence

## IN MEMORY

MARIA D. FRATTAROLI of Stamford, CT passed away Tuesday, February 11, 2014 at the age of 63. Maria was born in Settefrati, Italy on September 18, 1950. She came to the United States in 1967. Even though Maria was born with Cerebral Palsy, it didn't stop her from her travels with her mother. Maria could be seen every Sunday at the 10:30 Italian mass at Sacred Heart Church with her long french braid and painted fingernails. Maria attended ARI of Connecticut for over 47 years. She loved music and dancing, and especially enjoyed the holiday parties hosted by ARI at the Knights of Columbus.

BRUCE ROBERTS MARTIN, 76, passed away Friday, March 21, 2014 at Fairview of Fairfield Nursing Home, Southport, CT. Bruce was served by ARI of CT for most of his life. He lived independently for several years and then with friends at ARI group homes. He worked in various jobs around Stamford and participated in many recreational and social activities. He was best known for playing bocce and for his love of Italian language and food.

STEVEN DICHTER passed away on Sunday, September 28, 2014. Steven was a part of the ARI family most of his life. Steven lived in his own apartment for many years and enjoyed baseball, going out to eat, and being with friends. Over the past few years, Steven was able to attend ARI parties, bingo and other social gatherings despite not living in an ARI residence.

These dear friends of ours will be sorely missed.

## ARI News

During the fall of 2014, ARI contacted Sharon McCloskey, Professor of Occupational Therapy at **Sacred Heart University** to assist with assessments of several ARI consumers who suffer from Sensory Processing Disorder. As a result, Professor McCloskey assigned three graduate students to work with three individuals. As part of the student's field work, they observed the consumers and worked with ARI staff to develop recommendations for programs and overall Occupational Therapy assessment plans. As part of the recommendations, the students created activity books that would benefit the consumers and could be, in fact, used by others. Sensory Processing Disorder affects people who are either too sensitive or not sensitive enough to sensory stimuli such as taste, touch, sound and kinesics. The premise is that behavioral challenges in these consumers may be caused by the disorder. The goal of this project is to find alternate stimulation that will assist with relaxing and calming individuals who may have some form of the disorder. We are grateful for the assistance of Sacred Heart in allowing us to better serve our consumers.

•••

Beginning in February of 2015, **The New Covenant House of Hospitality** will utilize space in the lower level of the Richmond Hill Avenue building. Their mission is "to provide a nutritious meal to all those who are hungry. By creating a safe, warm and compassionate environment, we are taking the first steps toward empowering men, women, and children to reach their full potential and regain their dignity and self-respect." NCH provides meals and other services to members of the community in need.

•••

ARI was the recipient of funding from the **Stamford Community Development Block Grant** for the installation of an access control system for the main entrance of the Richmond Hill Facility. We are pleased to announce that this system was activated on Tuesday, January 20, 2015. The purpose of this system is to control access to the building and give an added level of security to both staff and consumers. As you are aware, incidents of violence, such as the incident at Sandy Hook Elementary School, have raised awareness regarding security.



## Recreation and Volunteer Events



The recreation program continues to offer diverse activities including Aqua-Aerobics, the ARI Artists Initiative classes, Bingo, Men's and Women's Night Out, as well as the annual Halloween, St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day and Winter Holidays parties.

In September, consumers were treated to a formal event called *A Royal Evening at the Prom* on Friday, September 5 at the Knights of Columbus. The event was the result of hours of planning by the Self-Advocacy Group, under the supervision of Darlene Caviness, Director of Day Programs and Michelle Lowers, Group Leader for Day Service Options. Sixty-five consumers attended in formal attire and truly enjoyed the evening of dining and dancing. Everyone received a commemorative photo. We hope this will be an annual event.

On Saturday, July 27, Donald Axleroad, former Board Member and founder of the *ARI Artists' Initiative*, hosted a summer gathering at his home in Stamford. Over fifty consumers, staff and board members enjoyed a day of food and entertainment.

## 19th Lotstein/Martin Golf Tournament

The 19th Annual Lotstein/Martin Golf Tournament took place on Thursday, July 31 at Sterling Farms Golf Course. This year's tournament took place in the afternoon followed by a dinner.

The Tournament drew over 100 golfers and was sponsored by over 40 groups, businesses and individuals. We would specifically like to thank our major sponsors Axel Johnson Inc. and the Stamford Hospital. We also wish to thank our generous tee sponsors and those who supported the raffle and auction.

Congratulations to all of the winners, specifically GMC of Watertown, low foursome.

Many thanks to all the golfers, volunteers and dinner guests for making this year's tournament one of the most successful yet. We look forward to the 20th Annual Lotstein/Martin Golf Tournament tentatively scheduled for July 30, 2015 at Sterling Farms.

*If you are interested in volunteering for this or any of our programs or events, please contact Gerard J. Gasparino, Manager of Development & Recreation at [gasparinog@arict.org](mailto:gasparinog@arict.org).*

## Donations and Contributions July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014

Thank you to the following individuals, businesses and organizations for their kind generosity. Please call us at (203) 324-9258, ext. 3023 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 @www.arict.org

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