

Thank you for your ongoing support of our programs and mission.

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Annual State of the Agency Meeting



On May 17, 2018 over 40 ARI family members and friends gathered for a presentation on the State of the Agency led by our President and CEO, Susanne Kuligowski. She provided a detailed overview of the current programmatic and financial position at ARI, related State of Connecticut matters, and what is on the horizon for the year ahead.

We continue to work to improve the quality of our programs and the variety of meaningful activities offered. There have been a number of changes in our Day Program Services. On September 30, 2018 we closed our Pre-Vocational Services (aka “sheltered workshop” or “production”), which was driven by state and federal mandates. We started a new community-based, individualized program model for those who are unable or uninterested in participating in our existing day program options. In addition, thanks to a generous

grant from Pitney Bowes, we purchased a large number of interactive, educational games and program supplies to enrich our Day Service Options (DSO) group activities. Our DSO groups also researched, planned and presented on topics to expand our appreciation of diverse cultures and learn about our history. Finally, we were forced to close for two state mandated furlough days in the summer, 2017 which cost ARI approximately \$10,000 per day.

Our Residential Program Services have seen several changes. One individual passed away, one moved out of a group home into his own apartment and two others are preparing for a move to a shared apartment. We are also working to transition the operations of Ridgefield Sunrise Cottage to another agency that provides other services in that area and has the size and scale to operate that program more efficiently. We continue to expand activities for our residents and have added monthly gatherings to learn about and celebrate holidays together.

In addition to program specific initiatives, we have expanded our fundraising efforts and have received several generous grants. We had a wonderful, successful 65th Anniversary celebration in October, attended by nearly 300 guests. We received a \$311,000 Connecticut State Bond Grant and \$70,000 grant from Friends of ARI to purchase 10 new vehicles. Included are four accessible vans, which are greatly needed. We also received a \$70,000 Stamford Block Grant to repave the parking

lot on Richmond Hill Avenue. ARI was also the beneficiary of a \$140,000 bequest from the estate of Denise Grove and a \$100,000 donation from an anonymous donor. Finally, we have been evaluating our real estate assets and have put a vacant property lot on Weed Hill Avenue on the market.

Our financial challenges continue, but our day to day operations have stabilized. In FY 2017 we had a slight surplus. This was only one of three years in the past decade that we realized a small surplus. The current fiscal year is coming to a close on June 30th and we anticipate another small surplus. State funding has decreased by nearly \$100,000 and we have not had any high school transition students this year. However, we kept our expenses down so we have remained stable for the year. The year ahead will be again be filled with many challenges and opportunities. We will see an increase in state funding for the first time in over a decade! Grant funding will be down, health insurance costs will be up. Vehicle expenses will be down, needs will be increasing, and hiring staff will become more of a challenge. However, the State of Connecticut, DDS is committed to exploring new and creative ways to serve more people and to minimize burdens on providers. That is good news indeed!

For a copy of the State of the Agency presentation or for more information about how you can help, please contact Susanne Kuligowski at kuligowskis@arict.org or (203) 324-9258 ext. 3028.

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

Photo by Bernie Weiss



Summer has finally arrived! It's a very busy time in everyone's lives with lots of celebratory events and it's a busy time at ARI as well! We are wrapping up our winter/spring events and looking forward to summer outings and vacations. We enjoyed a successful Walk and look forward to our Golf Tournament. Now we

are in the throes of planning our Fall Gala. We are closing out the fiscal year, spending the last bits of FY 2018 grant funding. We are looking forward to receiving and spending funds for new projects in the coming year.

It has been very exciting to see so many of the projects we dreamt of come to fruition! One of the most satisfying projects has been updating our fleet of vehicles. Over the past two years, we have replaced nearly every one of our old vehicles with new (or like new) ones, and expanded the number of accessible vehicles from two to six, in order to keep up with the needs of our aging population. This has significantly enhanced our program services now that we have dependable vehicles. We take comfort in the safety features of the newer vehicles, and are able to use our resources to enrich people's lives, rather than paying for the constant repairs.

During the past several months we have focused our attention on the CT State budget and the legislative agenda. Due to the tremendous advocacy work of individuals and their families, staff, provider agencies, and The Alliance (as association for community nonprofits), the Senate passed HB 5460 on May 5. This raises the wages of all people who provide supports for individuals with I/DD at community agencies. This is the first rate increase agencies have received in over a decade. Please thank your legislators!

This newsletter highlights the work and activities that have kept us busy over the past several months, and the exciting things that are ahead. I hope you will take time to read it, and call me if you have any questions, comments or ideas to share. I can always be reached by email at kuligowskis@arict.org or by phone at (203) 324-9258 ext. 3028.

It is a real privilege for me to be a part of this incredible ARI "family," and to work with you as supporters, volunteers, advocates, staff members and friends. Together we truly can, and do, make a difference in the lives of the individuals we support every day.

Thank you!

I wish you a very relaxing, safe and joyful summer!

With sincere appreciation,
Susanne D. Kuligowski
President & CEO

IN MEMORIAM



Mary Grace Festo passed away peacefully on January 5, 2018, at the age of 58. Mary Grace was a life-long resident of Stamford. She graduated from Stamford High School in 1980. In 1983, she moved into an ARI group home. She was a well-decorated special Olympian, winning many medals and trophies for swimming. Mary Grace loved to walk at Cove Island Park with her family, as well as cook and set the table for meals. In her free time, Mary Grace loved to read magazines and books and get manicures with her sister, Rosanne. She will be missed.



Kwanda Bracey passed away on June 5, 2018. She had received services at ARI since 1991. Kwanda worked on the housekeeping and landscaping crews for many years, and then received services within the Day Service Options program. Kwanda was a hard worker and was very proud of her many successes. She also was a part of the art initiative, played golf, and participated in the Special Olympics. She will be missed.

ARI Wish List – You can help!

There is an opportunity at ARI for everyone to participate and support our programs. Whether you are looking for a once-a-year project for a few hours, a weekly commitment, or something in between, we have an opening for you! If you have a skill, hobby, or interest you would like to share with ARI, let us know. If you have time, but aren't sure what you would do for ARI, we can help you figure it out. You can make a real difference in the lives of the people we support by giving your time, talents and/or treasures to ARI.

- Join the Board of Directors
- Join a committee – Finance, Nominating, Development, Special Events (Walk, Golf Tournament, etc.)
- Share your talents
- Teach yoga, gardening, cooking, arts & crafts, sports, etc.
- Complete property repair/maintenance projects
- Website design, event photography, social media communications

For more information, please contact Gerard Gasparino, Manager of Development & Recreation at (203) 324-9258 ext. 3023 or email gasparinog@arict.org.

If you are interested in receiving the newsletter and all other communications from ARI electronically, please email gasparinog@arict.org.

Day Services



The Day Service Options (DSO) program has an expanded array of activities available for our participants, thanks to a generous grant from Pitney Bowes. The new activities focus on expanding life and social skills, career readiness, increasing physical activity and improving motor skills. These activities include a variety of interactive educational games, art activities, cooking classes and much more. Everyone has been thoroughly enjoying the new games, supplies, and activities.

Throughout the month of March, the DSO program celebrated Women's History Month. Each of seven groups chose a woman to research and present to the others. Everyone learned about significant women in American history, such as Mother Teresa, Harriet Tubman, and Rosa Parks. In the past, these groups studied different cultures, representing where we are from and how holidays are celebrated.

Our Group Supported Employment (GSE) team completed a contract with Scholastic Books in Danbury, CT. This was a follow up to the Scholastic contract completed in the late summer of last year. It's a long trip from Stamford, but the skills learned are well worth the ride! We are grateful for our new partnership with Scholastic Books and the opportunities they provide for individuals who work on our GSE team. The GSE team has also begun their seasonal landscaping work, maintaining all of ARI's properties.

We continue to work with individuals to develop their career plans and find work in the community.



Staff News

New Hires:

Vinroy Bell, Residential Counselor, Palermo

Lauralee Brown, Senior Residential Manager, Lotstein & Truglia

Marvette Clemons, Residential Counselor, Tally Ho

Jordan Collins, Residential Counselor, Individual Home Supports

Shantee Grace, Residential Counselor, Per Diem

Maria Lategui, Residential Counselor, Palermo

Jasmine Loyd, Residential Counselor, Tally Ho

Tanaja McKune, Residential Counselor, Truglia

Nina Plummer, Residential Counselor, Tally Ho

Celia Spencer, Registered Nurse

Congratulations to Juan Tavaréz-Espinal on his promotion from Residential Counselor to Temporary Residential Manager, Sunrise Cottage

Grants and Community Support



Without the support of individuals, organizations and corporations in our community, we would never be able to fulfill our mission and maintain the high quality of services we provide.

In recent months ARI received a donation of \$15,000 from the Knights of Columbus, St. Augustine Council

We received a grant of \$12,688 from the Workers' Compensation Trust through their Safety Grant. Funds from this grant will be used to purchase equipment to assist with caring for individuals with physical challenges and to increase the safety of our staff and the individuals we serve.

ARI also received \$15,654 from Montclair Rehabilitation Organization (MRO) in memory of Donald Axleroad. MRO was founded by Donald's mother seventy years ago. In December of 2017, MRO discontinued their services and all remaining funds were distributed to agencies that had been supported by Mr. Axleroad.

In addition to funding, we depend heavily on groups to help us maintain and beautify our facilities. On January 12th, The Richman Group painted bedrooms at the Palermo Residence. Fifteen employees participated in this project with the help of Rebuilding Together Fairfield County. Each resident chose the color for their own bedroom and all were delighted with the results. (see photo above)

We would like to thank all of these groups for their commitment to ARI. We continue to seek support from the community. If you are interested in supporting ARI with a grant or volunteer project, please contact Gerard Gasparino, Manager of Development & Recreation at gasparinog@arict.org or call (203) 324-9258 ext. 3023.

Residential Services



Individuals in our residential program have enjoyed getting together on a monthly basis to celebrate holidays and other occasions. On March 24, they decorated ceramic Passover Seder plates and Easter eggs. Lara from Palermo taught the group the Italian words pertaining to Easter, spring and Passover. All enjoyed holiday foods including matzo, potato pancakes, matzo ball soup and desserts. Everyone received information about the holidays. A great time was had by all! In April, we celebrated Earth Day, decorating pots and planting flowers. In May, we enjoyed was a Memorial Day celebration and in June we celebrated Flag Day.

In April, we welcomed an individual from our day program into the Tally Ho group home, for temporary respite during a family emergency. A transition plan was put into place to ensure that she would transition smoothly. This is our mission at work ... enriching the lives of individuals *and* their families.

On March 12, Ryan reached one of his dreams: moving from the Sunrise Cottage home into his own apartment in Ridgefield. He had worked hard to develop the necessary skills and prove that he was ready for this big step. When asked about living alone, Ryan said, "It is nice to get out of everyone's way and have my own personal space. I love it a lot!" He added, "I couldn't have done this without the staff, Susanne, Wendy and my parents."



Ryan says he "Has more friends than he realized," who have supported him. He also discovered he likes cooking. "When you just move from a home with five other people and you have your own apartment, it recharges you" and you realize "I have a better life!"

Congratulations Ryan! We are so proud of you! You are a great role model for your peers!

Recreation

We would like to thank the Knights of Columbus and Celebrations by Lina for hosting both the Valentine's and St. Patrick's Day Parties. Each party was attended by over 80 individuals, including staff, family members and friends.

On March 15, 39 people attended the Bridgeport Sound Tiger Hockey Game. We are grateful to TANGO, The Schuster Group, and their Partners for donating these great tickets.

The weekly art classes and aquaerobics have concluded for the season and the summer golf program has begun.

Many of these events would not happen without the support of the several dozen volunteers at ARI. We thank all them for assisting with the recreation program, as well as other events and activities.



12th Annual Walk For Independence

The 12th Annual Walk for Independence was a great success! Over 300 people joined us on April 29th at Cove Island Park to support ARI and the individuals who depend on our services. The Walk brought the community together with our consumers, board members and staff, to raise much needed funds, and to raise awareness about our programs and services.

The event was a great success thanks to all involved, including our walkers, elected officials, donors, sponsors, volunteers and the Stamford Police Department. Mayor David Martin and State Representative Caroline Simmons were on hand. Mayor Martin led the walk. The Dance With El team, led by Eleanor Casale, got everyone warmed up and the Stamford Police started the walk with a round of sirens from their vehicles. The Bubble Bus created a sea of bubbles and spread joy and laughter throughout the park. Over 50 businesses and families joined the event as sponsors.

We especially would like to thank John and Robin Russo, and their family, for organizing the set-up and food preparation. We are grateful for our sponsors, including Liz Sue Bagels, Napoli Meat and Sausage Company, Pepsi, Pepperidge Farms, Konica Minolta and Subway of West Main Street for providing food and drink for the event. For a complete list of sponsors please visit our website, www.aricr.org.





ARI of Connecticut, Inc.,
174 Richmond Hill Avenue
Stamford, Connecticut 06902
WWW.ARICT.ORG



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For more information, please go to <http://arict.org/> or call 203 324-9258, ext. 3023

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, October 26, 2018

ARI of Connecticut, Inc. *Gala Celebration*

6 pm

The Waters Edge at Giovanni's

Black Tie Optional

For sponsorship, tickets and more information contact

Gerard Gasparino at 203 324 9258, ext 3023, or

gasparinog@arict.org

Shopping online? Go to our website www.arict.org and click on the **AmazonSmile** logo on the ARI website. Designate ARI of CT and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to us whenever you shop. You can also click on the Good-shop Logo and a portion of purchases made on this site will be donated to ARI.

ARI of Connecticut, Inc. • Established 1952

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PRESIDENT & CEO

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