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Quarterly Newsletter of The Arc of Chemung | Spring 2015



Annual Membership Campaign



Class Act Self-Advocates On the Capitol Steps

For over 60 years, The Arc of Chemung has provided excellence in service to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Chemung County area. Support from members in our community and on our agency's staff has helped make this dedication to quality possible. In 2014, The Arc of Chemung welcomed 2,208 members. This year, our goal is to exceed 3,000. We can't reach this goal without your help!

Today, The Arc of Chemung serves over 700 people and their families. Yet, despite our progress, much work remains to be done until the dreams of integration, independence, and individuality for people with disabilities is fully realized. You can help make the dream a reality by supporting the mission of The Arc of Chemung.

Why is The Arc of Chemung's Annual Membership Campaign So Important?

Your support and inclusion in the agency helps people with disabilities become more independent, productive and integrated in our local community. Without your help, there is less opportunity for personal growth and achievement.

Membership provides our agency the ability to advocate legislatively at the state level. As we move into a new decade, our agency continues to face enormous challenges given the current economic climate of our state and nation. It would be helpful for our advocacy with legislative and government officials to have the largest membership ever.

New Brand Identity

We are proud to join The Arc's national brand with a reenergized spirit and a renewed commitment to providing opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families.

This dynamic new logo is the new face of The Arc of Chemung, formerly Chemung ARC, and it will be on our publications, website, signs, community events, and more. The logo will unite our affiliated chapters across the country under the banner, "Achieve with us," a call to move forward and take the road leading to progress, inclusion, and respect.

The logo design reflects the energy and determination of The Arc to support and embrace people with I/DD and their families across their lifetimes and across diagnoses, including Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, and other intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Enroll in The Arc of Chemung's Annual Membership Campaign online or contact 607.734.6151 ext. 127 for more details.

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Founded in 1953, The Arc of Chemung is a person-centered, not-for-profit organization committed to meeting the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in the Chemung County area. The agency provides quality supports and opportunities for individual growth for every person supported by means of education, increased community acceptance, and participation.

The Arc of Chemung supports more than 700 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families annually. Learn more at ArcofChemung.org. The Arc of Chemung is a chapter of the state agency, NYSARC, Inc. and is nationally accredited by The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL).



From the President

As we make the transition from Chemung ARC to The Arc of Chemung, I'm very excited about our new name, our new logo—and the new opportunities presented by this change!

In addition to being part of “something bigger” – namely The Arc’s national brand – this initiative unites our chapter with other affiliated chapters across the country that share our mission of providing opportunities to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our new identity will also enable us to establish stronger community connections locally, resulting in increased community awareness. Most importantly, this increased brand presence for our chapter will ultimately enhance the community inclusion opportunities for the people we support, and increase our fundraising potential.



Susan Post, Board President

The Board of Directors is in full support of our new brand, particularly in light of the continued changes in the developmental disabilities field. We applaud The Arc’s renewed and re-energized commitment to the people we support and their families, and thank our staff members and volunteers who have devoted much of their time and talents to ensuring the success of this initiative.

4th Quarter Recreation Fundraisers a Huge Success!

As the result of incredible community support, our 2014 Arnot Mall Gift Wrapping and Annual Appeal were a huge success, raising nearly \$14,000 to support The Arc of Chemung’s Recreation Program.

Recent cuts to state funding have posed a threat to our recreation program. While this program does involve sports, the arts, and travel, the term “recreation” may tend to diminish its perceived importance. What the program really does is provide social interaction and engagement opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Social isolation is something we have long fought to prevent. Elimination of these important opportunities would essentially isolate the people we support, significantly diminishing their quality of life.

“I really enjoy seeing my friends a lot more because of living on my own now. You

also make new friends! It gets you out of the house and into the community,” said Marie Dean, who is supported by The Arc of Chemung’s Recreation Program.

Thank you to all who made a 2014 contribution in support of this critical program!



Gail Beecher, Participant in Recreation Program’s Bowling League

Families Can't Be Caregivers Forever

The Story of Connie Bliss

Recently, Governor Cuomo vetoed four bills critical to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The lack of communication with advocates prior to the Governor's action gave many the impression that the Cuomo Administration does not appreciate the very serious issues now confronting people with developmental disabilities and their families. In particular, these bills would have begun to address the growing waiting list of people living at home in critical need of service. Many are cared for by aging family members. However, a growing number of those family members have become too disabled themselves to continue managing the intensive demands of caring for an adult child with severe disabilities.

Families, advocates, and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities around the State are imploring the Governor and their State legislators to include funds in the upcoming State budget to provide critical services. They are urging State legislators to make their case to the Governor that critically needed residential and day supports and services be included in his 2015-2016 Executive Budget. Here is the story of Connie Bliss, grandmother of a young man who needs this support.

Brett is a 21-year-old man who has, in the last five years, lost both his mother and father. After his father passed away, Brett's grandmother stepped in to care for him as she knew someone needed to. At



Brett (left) and friends

the age of 69, Connie cared for Brett for about 7 months, and although she wanted to keep him in her care, she could not. Connie works a full-time job that requires a commute and did not accommodate the need to adjust her schedule when Brett had doctors' appointments. She was required to take days off using her own personal time.

While trying to mourn the loss of her son, Connie now struggles to establish guardianship for her grandson. She really never had the ability to process her own loss as she knew that Brett needed her and he was who was most important at the time! "When I lost my son, it was the most devastating thing! Determining guardianship for my grandson was something I never imagined I'd be faced with," said Bliss.

Brett's family decided to have him live at one of The Arc of Chemung's residential locations. "He is his own person! This is

what is best for Brett," said Bliss. In addition to having a place to call home, Brett participates in many activities and outings that he enjoys, including school. "He loves school!" said Bliss. "They keep him busy in his home and in the community, taking him to volunteer, and accommodating his personal interests. These are things I could not do for him while in my care. His handicaps don't matter; he amazes me!"

In addition to establishing guardianship for Brett, Connie has another developmentally disabled grandson that she looks after, 27-year-old Brian. Brian lives independently in an apartment community, primarily for the elderly. Although he receives assistance there, Bliss says, "I wish there were more apartment buildings like these for others his age. He is very independent but socially isolated." She also has an aging, ill mother that requires her time and attention. "The government needs to help these people. They are people, too! They need help."

Membership Campaign Kick-Off Event

On **Friday, March 20th**, The Arc of Chemung will be hosting the **Inaugural "Shot on Goal" Membership Campaign Kick-Off Event** at the First Arena in Elmira, NY as the Elmira Jackals take on the Wheeling Nailers at 7:05 p.m.

What:

Learn more about The Arc of Chemung and the important services provided to this community.

Enroll in membership in The Arc of Chemung. For just \$5, individuals will receive a full calendar-year membership, along with the chance to win some fantastic prizes!

Presented by: Elmira Structures, Inc.; Fire Alarm Service Technology, Inc.; The Hilliard Corporation; KV Engineering PLLC; Mengel Metzger Barr & Co. LLP; Ray Jewelers; Southern Tier Custom Fabricators; and Valicenti Insurance Services, Inc.



The Arc

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*It's a new day at
The Arc of Chemung*



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