

Lifetime

Spring 2006

NBC's Hockenberry Inspires Self-Advocates

"My Life, My Choice" Attracts 200

Former *Dateline NBC* correspondent, four-time Emmy award-winner and disability rights activist John Hockenberry inspired self-advocates with personal stories about tenacity and self-esteem at "My Life, My Choice" on March 7 in White Plains. Westchester Arc's first self-advocacy summit attracted 200 individuals with developmental disabilities, family members and staff, representing 10 regional advocacy organizations. Workshops held throughout the day were an opportunity to share experiences in building independent lives and making one's own choices. The conference was capped by a press event featuring self-advocates' stories about their involvement with the greater community and a spirited panel discussion about changing expectations for inclusion.

Hockenberry, who has covered news stories throughout the world, has used a wheelchair since the age of 19 when he was involved in a serious car accident. "The most powerful aspect of self-advocacy is that we are no longer aspiring to be 'normal,'" he said during his luncheon address. "Mainstream society should be aspiring to learn about us."

"You made a good speech," responded an audience member.

Hockenberry was introduced by Sue Swenson, executive director of



Self-advocates Scott Fowler and Arthur S. spoke at two of the summit's workshops.



Michele Tombini stresses collaborating with job coaches to unlock the potential of employees with developmental disabilities. With her is Joey Lombardozi.

The Arc of the U.S., who applauded attendees for their commitment to fighting stereotypes. She was on her way to the G8 summit in Moscow, where she promised to carry the conference's demand for social integration.

The day's workshops covered a wide range of topics—serving on boards, balancing health and safety concerns with the desire for independence, assistive technology and more.

During the late afternoon press event, Joey Lombardozi, a legal assistant with the law firm of Pappalardo, Tombini & Wolff, described his personal and professional growth since beginning to work full-time. "I like to be professional, and I like to earn a paycheck," he said.

Lois and Patsy Ginese, one of the first couples with developmental disabilities to marry in New York State, discussed their decision to wed 20 years ago, despite the misgivings of many. They have since renewed their vows.

And Bob Smith, a poet and entrepreneur, who lectures throughout New York with the aid of a voice synthesizer, shared his determination to express himself, build a business and change

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From Our President

Mohan Mehra

Mohan Mehra

This is my last column as president of Westchester Arc. It does not seem so, but it has been almost five years since I was first elected by the membership. It has, indeed, been an eventful time, and we have accomplished much for the children and adults we serve.

In June 2001, I said that there were three things I wanted to accomplish during my term of office:

1. Build our membership to 2,500;
2. Take actions to ensure the long-term financial viability of Westchester Arc;
3. Increase public awareness and recognition of the work done by Westchester Arc.

Build our membership: From a count of 550 members in 2001, we have successfully built our membership to 2,514 in 2005 and expect to grow by five percent this year. This has resulted from the efforts of our membership committee and a number of targeted direct mail campaigns.

Ensure long-term financial viability of Westchester Arc: In late 2003, we established the Westchester Arc Foundation to build financial support for the programs and services of Westchester Arc. The Foundation has its own board, led by Katharine Conroy, and is focused on developing a long-term fund to help support under-funded services, as well as new, innovative services. The fund currently stands at \$800,000. The creation of the Foundation has also helped increase the focus on fundraising agen-

cy-wide, including giving by members of the board of directors.

Increase public awareness of the work done by Westchester Arc: We have strengthened our marketing staff, and, under the leadership of the marketing committee, developed a marketing plan to guide our activities. This plan was based on an extensive survey of our families, consumers, staff and donors. This resulted in changing the agency name to Westchester Arc with a new logo and tagline. The quality of our newsletters and public communications has improved and has received recognition from NYSARC.

In September 2003, we embarked on perhaps the most ambitious goal in the agency's history. We were presented with an opportunity to purchase land in Hawthorne to build a new central site to replace our building at 121 Westmoreland Avenue in White Plains. The board approved this and developed a vision for what Westchester Arc should be 10 to 20 years from now. The new building will serve as a "Gateway to the Community," a place that will assist individuals and families in exploring choices, developing plans for the future and accessing the resources and supports they may require. Since then, the board and staff have worked together to retain an architect to design the building, worked with NYSARC to develop the financing plan, and along with the Westchester Arc Foundation, launched a capital campaign to raise funds. We plan to start construction this summer and, if everything proceeds on schedule, move into the new building in 2007.

All of this has been made possible by the leadership provided by our board of directors and the hard work of our dedicated staff, led by Ric Swierat and Tom Hughes. For that, I am most grateful. ■

Pre-School Celebrates 50th Year



Executive Director Ric Swierat celebrates the "Week of the Young Child" with pre-schoolers at the Country Children's Center in Katonah, one of 12 community-based pre-schools to offer "inclusion" classes in partnership with The Children's School for Early Development.

This year The Children's School for Early Development celebrates its 50th birthday. In tribute to this special occasion, here is a look back at the pre-school's history, innovative contributions and milestones...

In 1956, Westchester Arc opened the first pre-school program in the county for children with developmental disabilities at the Starbright School in Pelham Manor. Though the class represented changing social attitudes, children with developmental disabilities remained in self-contained classrooms for years to come.

"When I first came to Westchester Arc in 1968, there was little opportunity for social inclusion, and education for children with developmental disabilities was not a front-burner issue," recalls Fran Porcaro, director of educational services.

During the 1970s and '80s, the pre-school expanded its services to support a significantly more diverse population. Major emphasis was placed on early intervention. Designed for children from

birth to three years of age, early intervention combines a variety of home- and community-based services, including special education, speech, physical and occupational therapies and social work.

"Early intervention is absolutely vital to a child's progress," stresses Kathy Higgins, a service coordinator and educational advocate at the pre-school. "By starting intervention at a young age, a child has a better chance of reaching his or her true potential."

Inclusion Classes Begin

By the 1990s, parents were more knowledgeable about their educational rights and choices and, with the help of the pre-school, many more of them began advocating on behalf of their children.

In 1994, The Children's School responded to the growing need for individualized services and social inclusion by establishing the first inclusion class at Whitney Young Head Start in Yonkers. In inclusion classes, children with disabilities

are taught alongside their typically developing peers, offering them more opportunity to imitate the speech and behavior of their classmates. In turn, their classmates gain a better understanding of individual differences. All students benefit from the increased staffing provided by The Children's School—state-certified teachers with graduate degrees, as well as psychologists, social workers, and speech, occupational and physical therapists.

"After the 1994 school year, we had a lot of requests from parents, especially those of typically developing children, to develop in-community classes in their school districts. By 1999, we were opening our seventh class," says Fran.

Autism Specialists

Additionally, The Children's School became the first school in New York State to offer day-long, community-based classes for children with autism. The school's staff are trained in state-of-the-art techniques by Dr. Vincent Carbone, a nationally recognized expert in learning environments for individuals with autism. Their approach, known as ABA/VB (applied behavior analysis/verbal behavior), combines intensive, highly structured techniques with a flexible, natural approach to learning speech and communication patterns.

Today, The Children's School collaborates with 12 community-based pre-schools to provide innovative educational, social and support services to over 200 children with developmental disabilities. And the school continues to grow.

"Offering more early intervention programs and building our speech department are top priorities. We've also started a new toddler group for children with autism," notes Fran.



From Our Executive Director

Richard P. Swierat

Richard P. Swierat

There was standing room only on March 7 at Westchester Arc's first self-advocacy summit, "My Life, My Choice." Another 100 people were turned away for lack of space.

They clapped for the famous tv journalist who told them about defying people who said "no" to his dreams. They shouted encouragement to each other in workshops on empowerment. And they shared their conviction that life's choices, large and small, should be theirs for the shaping.

It was a day for declaring pride while recognizing all-too-prevalent hurdles to full social inclusion. "You made us feel like we're not in the dirt," said one audience member in response to John Hockenberry's luncheon address.

Self-advocacy is about individuality and dignity, and it is rich in its implications. It can mean deciding what to eat for lunch or being on a board of directors. During a NYSARC-led session on leadership, attendees noted that their most important values were trust, honesty, family and helping others. Political candidates should take note.

In another session, a participant observed that even the best of intentions can be smothering: "We want parents and staff to give us space, privacy and the opportunity to take risks, make new choices and determine our own fate." In other words, the opportunity to grow.

A lot of the talk had to do with changing perceptions—both those of self-advocates and of society at large. "A wheelchair isn't an obstacle. It gives me the freedom to do what I want," said Bob Smith during a discussion of assistive technology.

In still another workshop, which was devoted to stories of personal choice, Lois and Patsy Ginese, married for two decades, talked about concerns relating to

their eventual retirement—common Baby Boomer conversation that is nearly nonexistent in discussions of disability issues.

The outpouring of interest and the day's many passionate exchanges are proof that people with developmental disabilities want to work for important social change. As John Hockenberry noted, "Self-advocacy is a key component to social policy."

Tom Maul, commissioner of OMRDD (Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities) pointed to \$100 million in funding for OPTS (Options for People Through Services), an initiative for creating "cafeteria style" social service delivery systems so that people can pick and choose programs meeting their personal needs.

Today's self-advocates are entering a new phase in their quest for fulfillment. As one attendee explained, "I told my staff and family that I was happy to have them around, but they couldn't take my independence away." ■

Families Rate Agency Services Surveys Shape Strategic Plan

Family members have given high marks to Westchester Arc's clinic, day habilitation, recreational and residential services in a survey measuring satisfaction with staff, program content and many other aspects of agency operations. Very few nonprofits conduct this kind of "customer" research, which is standard practice in the corporate sector. The results are intended to provide benchmarks for measuring ongoing improvement as part of the agency's "promise" to be "caring, innovative and professional" in all interactions. Nearly 200 responses were received.

Ninety-one percent of those participants indicated that they were "very/some-

what satisfied" with Westchester Arc overall. Across the four programs surveyed, the percentage of the respondents who were "very/somewhat satisfied" with staff skills and helpfulness, consideration of family wishes and consumer safety ranged from 85 to 95 percent.

Although scores were also relatively high for "timely response" and "communicating information" (72-88 percent very/somewhat satisfied and 72-83 percent very/somewhat satisfied, respectively), those areas will receive special attention. Detailed reports were presented to the board-level committees responsible for each program, and the results will drive the agency's strategic plan. "We take

each response very seriously," comments Executive Director Ric Swierat. "We collected an enormous amount of data, and we'll be analyzing the implications for months to come. Although I am very proud of the overall results, Westchester Arc is committed to continuous improvement."

By the end of 2006, the agency plans to survey both consumers and family members across the entire range of Westchester Arc programs. We are very appreciative of the time that respondents devoted to their thoughtful answers and encourage families and consumers to participate in future phases of this important project. ■

NBC's Hockenberry Inspires Self-Advocates

"My Life, My Choice" Attracts 200

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Panelists are captivated by John Hockenberry's (far right) knowledge and sense of humor.

attitudes towards people with cerebral palsy. Smith presented a copy of his book, *Reflections of My Life*, to Hockenberry.

A spirited panel discussion of "Changing Expectations for Community Participation" was chaired Thomas A. Maul, commissioner of New York State's OMRDD (Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities). He was joined by Chester Finn, chairperson of SABE (Self-Advocates Being Empowered); Bruce Campbell, father of a six-year-old with developmental disabilities, and Michele Tombini, a longtime employer of individuals with disabilities.

Tombini repeatedly stressed the enormous contribution that Lombardozzi has made to her law firm. "He performs 75 percent of the paperwork involved in each real estate closing. When he's out of the office, our productivity suffers." She talked about working with his job coach to understand the best ways to develop Lombardozzi's po-

tential and of the close working relationship he enjoys with the rest of her staff. "He is my right arm," she declared.

On the role of language in perpetuating stereotypes, Chester Finn explained, "Language is very important to the way people look at you. Old language doesn't match the new times. The "r" word is just as offensive to me as the "n" word. You have to let people with disabilities define what they want to be called."

Bruce Campbell explained that full educational and social inclusion for people with developmental disabilities is a "social experi-

ment" for which we do not yet have agreed-upon language or well developed models. He described the ongoing tension between social institutions and his young son's determination to participate fully in activities with other children his age. "At age six, my son is already self-determined. As parents, we are interpreters, but my son is clearly his own advocate."

"Self-advocacy saved my life," claimed Commissioner Maul, who talked about the outpouring of concern he received from self-advocates when he suffered a heart attack. "They formed a circle of support for me to help me lose weight and stop smoking."

All of which confirms journalist Hockenberry's assertion that "to truly embrace diversity and understand the meaning and value of inclusion, you have to abandon the



OMRDD (Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities) Commissioner Tom Maul chairs a discussion on changing expectations for community inclusion.

idea of 'normal.' Only then can one see communities for what they really are, richly collaborative networks of all kinds of people." ■



From The Foundation

Katharine Wilson Conroy

Katharine Wilson Conroy
Foundation President

By the time you read this, we may have broken ground for our new building. Let me update you on the progress of the capital campaign—the first in the history of Westchester Arc.

We are raising funds for the new building that will replace our current site in White Plains. The building will provide a welcoming home, as well as a gateway to community resources for children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families for generations to come. Groundbreaking for the new building is scheduled for May 18,

2006, and we will invite families, consumers, staff, board and committee members, local government leaders and our future neighbors in Hawthorne to join us in observing the ceremony and celebrating the new facility.

A second goal for our campaign is the Fund for the Future, a long-term capital fund that will ensure that programs like guardianship can sustain themselves and grow so that the people in our care can count on us to be there when they have no immediate family.

The campaign is in its leadership phase, which means that the members of the steering committee are privately approaching those who might be willing to contribute a gift of leadership size. I am pleased to report that we have had a number of generous gifts. Two of them have been in the form of

bequests. Others have ranged from \$25,000 to \$400,000. With a goal of \$7.5 million, total gifts and pledges to date are more than \$4.1 million. We are more than halfway there, but we still have a long way to go. Attractive naming opportunities enable donors to honor families or individuals. We would be glad to share them with you.

This campaign is the result of years of planning. The strategic plan created by the board and staff describes a vision for what this agency can be—and must be—to meet the challenges ahead. Continuing its leadership will require new resources and new commitments from Westchester Arc’s family and friends. We will continue to keep you informed of progress and welcome your interest and participation.■

Staff Recognized for Longtime Service



Yvette Vargas receives a Staff Recognition Award from President Mohan Mehra for aiding a Westchester Arc consumer who required medical attention.

Westchester Arc’s board of directors honored Yvette Vargas, accounts payable coordinator, with a Staff Recognition Award at their January meeting. Last December, Yvette displayed compassion and heroism by

coming to the aid of a Westchester Arc consumer who required medical attention.

The incident occurred at the department of social services in the Bronx, where Yvette was taking care of a personal matter. As she waited in line, a commotion broke out between a police officer and a man who was disoriented, out of breath. Yvette recognized the individual as a Westchester Arc consumer and immediately got offline to help him.

“It was just a gut reaction. I saw someone in need and I wanted to help,” she recalls. Yvette defused the situation by vouching for the individual’s identity and explaining that he had gotten lost on the public bus. She accompanied him to the hospital and, even though it was her day off, remained by the man’s side until he was feeling better.

“Yvette’s compassion is a shining example of what Westchester Arc represents,” says Executive Director Ric Swierat. “We’re very proud of her.”

“I’m just happy I was able to help. But it’s nice to be recognized,” says Yvette.

Playing by Heart: Chris K. Shares Joy through Music



Musician Chris K. entertains seniors at My Second Home in Mount Kisco.

“Nothing makes me happier than playing music for people,” states accordionist Chris K., while conducting a sing-along for seniors at My Second Home, an adult day center in Mount Kisco. Chris, who has developmental disabilities, visits the center every Thursday, performing *Love Me Tender*, *The Saints Go Marching In*, *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling* and other favorites.

“I really enjoy Chris’s performance. It’s my favorite part of the day,” says one audience member.

Chris began playing the accordion four years ago. “I was inspired by Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell. Their music always makes me feel good. I wanted to learn an instrument and perform so that I could make others feel good, too.”

In 2003, Westchester Arc’s day habilitation services helped Chris get involved with My Second Home. During each visit, he is accompanied by agency staff and friends who give moral support.

“It’s a perfect fit,” comments Cheryl A. Croce, program coordinator at My Second Home. “Chris brings great joy to our seniors, while building up his own self-confidence. When he performs here, the audience doesn’t see someone with a disability, they see a musician. There’s a great feeling of acceptance that comes with that.”

Family Resource Days Address Diverse Groups

A diverse crowd came out to learn about the issues affecting individuals with developmental disabilities at agency-sponsored Family Resource Days, held on March 12 at the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Mid-Westchester in Scarsdale and on March 19 at the Yonkers Public Library’s Riverside Branch.

The March 12 event, co-sponsored by the JCC and funded by the Westchester Community Foundation, focused on the emotional needs of people with disabilities and their family members. Children between the ages of seven and 12 kicked off the day with Sibshop, a game-filled, non-threatening session where kids openly discuss their feelings toward a brother or sister with disabilities. The format was developed by Don Meyer of The Arc of the U.S., who facilitated the session. Another popular workshop outlined therapeutic methods for strengthening family supports. It was conducted by Dr. Theodore Roth, a psychologist specializing in children with special needs and their parents, who discussed the importance of support groups for moms and urged dads to take a more active role in their families.

“It’s always reassuring to know that there are other families out there like yours,” comments Nancy Succoso, Westchester Arc assistant executive director. “In addition to education and resources, this day provides a sense of comfort.”

The March 19 event, conducted in Spanish, focused on Latino families. Attendees learned about their educational rights and how to successfully advocate on behalf of their children with the public school system. Representatives from Westchester and Putnam’s Independent Living Centers provided information in Spanish on parents’ rights and how to access the educational system. Resources for legal services were also available.

“There was a real need for a Latino Family Resource Day,” explains Mary Ann Shelton, family outreach coordinator. “Latino families comprise a large population in Westchester, yet most are underserved because they are unaware of available resources. Families that attended this workshop came away with the knowledge and resources to become strong advocates and make informed decisions about their children’s future.” ■

Pre-School Hosts Families, Fun and Fire Trucks



Over 100 students, family members and friends attended The Children’s

School’s second annual Family Fun Day on February 11, sponsored by the preschool’s PTA. The event, which was organized by PTA president Theresa Mooney, raised over \$1000 for new computers and furniture. Attendees enjoyed face-painting, arts and crafts, and a visit from members of the Hawthorne Fire Department, who handed out fire hats and took kids aboard their fire truck. ■



In Memoriam

The board of directors, staff and entire Westchester Arc community mourn the passing of Jay Robison. Jay lived in a Westchester Arc residence and enjoyed spending his summers at Camp Echo, which is sponsored by the agency's recreation department. Those closest to Jay describe him as having been "endearing," "independent" and "charismatic."

A Sister's Appreciation

I want to say a few words about what it has meant to me that my brother Jay had Westchester Arc to provide the care and the stimulation that I could not have provided for him all these years, even if I had sacrificed family and career to do so. Westchester Arc has been especially important to me since I became Jay's de facto guardian in 1988 and his legal guardian in 1994, upon the death of our father (Jesse Robison, a former Arc board member).

I was three and half years younger than Jay. When I was a little girl, first I did not see, and then I did not care about, Jay's limitations. He was my beloved older brother. But as I began to observe other children tease and jeer at him and as I watched adults becoming frustrated and angry with him—and as he increasingly withdrew into his private world—I became alienated from him.

As Jay responded to the love and acceptance he found at the Westchester Arc, his personality blossomed. And I began to see him again through loving eyes. At the end I think we were quite close.

For this above all, I thank all of you at the Westchester Arc, both consumers and staff. I already miss him dearly, and I shall miss all of you, too.

Peg Espinola

Manzi Center Workers Contribute to Hollywood Festivities

Workers at The Ann Manzi Center in Mount Kisco recently delivered an award-winning performance by packing "Ultimate Nominee Bags," gifts sent at "Oscar" time to the likes of Reese Witherspoon, George Clooney and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Each bag was valued at over \$70,000 and contained an Avianne & Co. three-carat diamond watch, membership to the Classic Car Club, a weekend retreat at the Elk Mountain Resort in Colorado, GPDeva skincare and other goodies.

This project was the result of an ongoing partnership between Westchester Arc and Jane Ubell-Meyer, editor-in-chief of Madison & Mulholland, a trend-spotting website (www.madisonandmulholland.com) and VIP product placement company

that creates luxury gift bags for top Hollywood stylists, A-list celebrities and notable events.

The Children's School
for Early Development
5th Annual

Golfing For Kids

Benefiting Children with Autism and other Developmental Disabilities

Tuesday, June 6, 2006
Westchester Hills Golf Club

For information, call Fran Higgins
at 914-428-8330, ext 3028,
or email: fhiggins@westchesterarc.org.

Day Hab Lends a Helping Hand



Volunteers were eager to help a special cause.

Five White Plains day habilitation attendees recently donated their time and energy to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Hudson Valley Chapter by stuffing envelopes and preparing mailings for a major fundraiser.

The benefit was two-way. Volunteers toned office skills, experienced working in

the community and enhanced their self-confidence, while the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society was offered cost-effective, quality workers.

"I really liked doing this kind of work," said volunteer Jackie P. "I want to do more of it."

"Westchester Arc was a big help in getting this important job done," comments campaign manager Lori Kelly. "The volunteers took the job very seriously, stuffing over 300 envelopes in an hour. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society is very grateful for this partnership, and we hope to continue working together in the future." ■

Westchester Arc Opens 40th Residence



Residents feel at home at Westchester's Arc's Pemart House.

Westchester Arc recently opened its 40th residence for individuals with developmental disabilities on a quiet street in Peekskill, New York. Six housemates share the home on Pemart Avenue with its five large bedrooms, spacious living and dining areas and pleasant backyard. Westchester Arc has renovated the bathrooms, lowered kitchen counters, widened doorways and built a backyard ramp to make the building wheelchair-accessible. It is staffed around-the-clock by direct care professionals.

For some, moving to this residence represents the first time they are living apart from their families. "We've done our best to create a home-like setting. Almost all of our activities, from eating dinner to going to the movies, are done as a group," comments Program Director LaWanda Hodges. "Though it's only been a few months, residents really feel comfortable here. Even the shy ones are starting to communicate in their own way. Working here is a rewarding experience for me, as well."

In Memoriam

The board of directors, staff and entire Westchester Arc community mourn the passing of Robert Koerner. Robert was known throughout the agency for his charismatic personality and great energy. Those closest to Robert describe him as "charming,"

"articulate" and "the life of the party." He loved dancing, action films and Italian food. Robert was involved in Westchester Arc's day habilitation, guardianship and recreational programs.

Photo Contest Teaches Technical Skills



"Wampus Pond" by John S.

Westchester Arc's day habilitation attendees learned art and science skills through an agency-sponsored photo contest, held on March 13 at the United Methodist Church in Mount Kisco. Seventeen contestants from Mount Kisco, Ossining, Peekskill, Port Chester, White Plains and Yonkers drew praise from friends and staff for their original winter images.

John S. of Mount Kisco won first prize for his landscape, "Wampus Pond," while Chris B. of Ossining came in second with "Life Goes On." Third prize went to "Winter Shelter," a collaborative effort by Susan P., Kenneth G., Lisa M. and Orville S. from Peekskill. Winners received a basket filled with paints, brushes, drawing pads, canvas, glitter, photo albums and other items meant to inspire creativity.

For many contestants, the activity served as an introduction to digital

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Westchester Arc's Recreational Services Promote Independence, Inclusion and Healthy Lifestyle

A Westchester Arc-sponsored exercise and nutrition program at Club Fit in Jefferson Valley is teaching young adults with developmental disabilities that a healthier lifestyle can be fun. Participants attend aerobics and swim classes, which help build strength and muscle tone, burn off fat and increase metabolism.

"The great thing about this program is that young adults have the chance to exercise while enjoying a night out in the community with their friends," comments Annabel Bayon, recreation specialist.

After their two-hour workout, participants learn about the importance of a balanced diet. Fruit and salad are served as a snack in place of potato chips and candy.

"Club Fit is fantastic. I love it," says Kimberly J. "Exercising makes me feel healthier and happier. It also makes me want to eat better. I've started limiting my food portions so I can stay in shape."

In addition to Club Fit, Westchester Arc's recreational services provide a wide variety of leisure and learning activities designed to help children and adults with developmental disabilities build friendships, learn social skills, gain independence and transition from school to work.

Camp Echo provides an opportunity for individuals with disabilities of all ages to enjoy summer in the beautiful woods of Fahnestock State Park in Putnam County. The residential program includes swimming, boating, crafts, sports, hiking and nature study.

Club Echo gives individuals 18 years of age and older the chance to enjoy fun-filled vacations with their friends, while accompanied by knowledgeable, dependable staff. Day trips are taken to local sports venues, theaters, museums and other sites of interest. Weekends trips, four-

day mini-excursions and longer trips have included Lake George, Cape Cod and the Pinegrove Dude Ranch.

Echo Arts is a fine arts program for individuals with developmental disabilities of all ages. Classes are conducted at the agency's Katzenberg Center, select residences and Manhattanville College, where college students work one-on-one with people with disabilities to create original artwork. The program builds confidence as it encourages self-expression and creative problem-solving. Students have the opportunity to experiment with various media, from brushes and paint, to pencil and paper. Exceptional work is displayed in Westchester Arc's annual art show, held in conjunction with the agency's annual meeting.

Echo College is a week-long, overnight program for young adults, ages 16 to 25, who live at home. Held at Western Connecticut State University in nearby Danbury, it offers a chance to sample "college life" by taking classes, sleeping in the dorm, eating in the cafeteria and mingling with other students.

Echo Onstage is a weeklong, musical theater workshop held on the campus of Westchester Community College. Young adults, ages 16 to 25, build self-esteem and muscle tone while learning dance numbers. Role playing and improvisational exercises promote creative thinking and improve verbal and social skills. At the end of the week, participants showcase their talents to family and friends.

Echo Outdoors offers a nature-oriented getaway for high school students, ages 16 and over, who have developmental disabilities and live with their families. The weeklong, overnight program is held at the Taconic Outdoor Education Center (TOEC) in Fahnestock State Park. Attendees go on nature hikes, sleep in cabins and roast marshmallows, while learning about the environment.



Kimberly J. (right) learns how maple tree sap becomes syrup.

Yakkety Y.A.C. gives young adults, ages 15 to 25 and living at home, the chance to become a little more independent. Through leisure activities, such as going to the movies or a baseball game, they form new friendships and learn life skills. The program is especially helpful to young adults making the transition from school to work.

For more information on these programs, contact David Gasparri at 914-428-8330, ext. 3218, or dgasparri@westchesterarc.org.

Tributes

The following tribute donations were received between January 20, 2006, and April 4, 2006.

IN MEMORY OF THOMAS ABINANTI, SR.

Mr. Bernard L. Johnson and Mr. Paul P. Johnson

IN MEMORY OF HARRIET BI-ENENFELD

Horticultural Solutions
Mr. William Spitzer

IN MEMORY OF RICHARD J. DALTON

Ms. Elsie F. Allen
Horticultural Solutions
Mr. William Spitzer

IN MEMORY OF BENNY DEL-L'OLIO

Ms. Camille R. Tomao

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Dr. and Mrs. Eli W. Zucker

IN MEMORY OF ETHEL KRAMER

Mr. and Mrs. Alan Schulman

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES NUNNO

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IN MEMORY OF JAY ROBISON

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Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Espinola
Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Kestenbaum
Ms. Janet S. Schnee

IN HONOR OF CRISTIAN AMESBURY

Mr. and Mrs. Stephan C. Amesbury

IN HONOR OF MATTHEW FITZGERALD

Mr. Peter N. Chetta

IN HONOR OF JUSTIN ISRAEL

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Blau
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IN HONOR OF DAN MOLINO

Mt. Carmel Pharmacy, Inc.

IN HONOR OF MR. AND MRS. MORTON ROSS

Brad, Dru, Chip, Jane, Alliya and Laurie Ross

IN HONOR OF NOLAN R. SPTIZER

Ms. Dorothy Mancuso
Mr. and Mrs. William P. Robbins Jr.

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Mr. and Mrs. Derek Sean Larson

IN HONOR OF MR. ADAM STOLER AND MRS. BARBARA KAIL

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Westchester Arc Vehicle Detailing Services



- Exterior \$40
- Interior / Exterior \$60

Extra Charge for SUV's Vans
**Service by appointment only*

567 Yonkers Avenue
Yonkers, NY
914-963-1600

MBA Invitational

Twenty-Second Annual

22

Golf & Tennis

Classic to benefit

the

Westchester Arc

Foundation and

Special Olympics

Hudson Valley

Region

SEPTEMBER 18, 2006

For information:

Elyse Fowler

914-428-8330, ext. 3027,

efowler@westchesterarc.org

Photo Contest Teaches Technical Skills

Continued from page 9



John S. of Mount Kisco wins first prize for his landscape, "Wampus Pond."

tal photography. Participants worked with day hab staff over a three-month period to learn about adjusting the flash, zooming in, deleting photos, using a tripod and other camera functions. After capturing an image, participants learned how to use a computer to crop, resize

and add effects to their photos. The activity encouraged individuality and creative thinking and helped contestants build self-esteem."

During the exhibition, attendees also enjoyed arts and crafts, posing in cardboard cutouts and light refreshments. ■

and add effects to their photos.

"Though we could only award three prizes, every contestant was a winner," comments Lynn Minzloff, treatment coordinator/senior social worker and event organizer. "Each participant used his or her own style to create beautiful depictions of winter and received nothing but positive feedback from the

Calendar of Events

May 18, 2006

Groundbreaking for
"Gateway to the Community"
265 Saw Mill River Road
Hawthorne, New York
1:00 p.m.
Contact: Cassandra Leary, 914-428-8330,
ext. 3347.

June 6, 2006

6th Annual Golfing for Kids
Benefiting children with autism and
other developmental disabilities.
Westchester Hills Golf Club
401 Ridgeway
White Plains, New York
Contact: Fran Higgins, 914-428-8330,
ext. 3028, fhiggins@westchesterarc.org.

June 9, 2006 - June 11, 2006

Bresnan Bike Tour 2006
Annual bike tour from New York to
Vermont to benefit Westchester Arc
Foundation and Special Olympics,
Hudson Valley Region.
Contact: Elyse Fowler, 914-428-8330,
ext. 3027, efowler@westchesterarc.org.

June 13, 2006

Westchester Arc Annual
Meeting and Art Show
6:00 p.m.
Crowne Plaza Hotel
66 Hale Avenue
White Plains, New York 10601

July 23, 2006

PACDS Annual Picnic
John Downing Park
Yorktown, New York
Contact: Anne Majsak, 914-328-7909,
amajsak@optonline.net.

September 18, 2006

MBIA Invitational
Golf and Tennis Classic to benefit
Westchester Arc Foundation and Special
Olympics, Hudson Valley Region.
Contact: Elyse Fowler, 914-428-8330,
ext. 3027, efowler@westchesterarc.org.

Chili Bakeoff Raises \$400 for New Building



MaryAnn Shelton samples staff specialties.

Westchester Arc spiced up March with its second annual Chili Bakeoff, a fundraising event sponsored by the Westchester Arc Foundation. Sixty-five people attended, raising over \$400 towards the new building that the agency plans to construct in Hawthorne, New York.

Guests sampled personal chili specialties prepared by Westchester Arc staff and voted for their favorites by secret ballot. Nancy Succoso, assistant executive director, assisted by husband Joe, won first prize for her barbeque chili. Runners-up were Kristin Springer, maintenance supervisor, for Moroccan chili and Renee Darby, career planner, for turkey chili.

"The new building represents new possibilities and unlimited potential for

staff and consumers. Those that came to the Chili Bakeoff were instrumental in supporting our agency's future," comments Elyse Fowler, director of individual giving, who organized the event. "The Westchester Arc Foundation would also like to thank Costco, C-Town, Plaza Deli, Proftech, Stew Leonard's, Pizzeria Uno, Sam's of Gedney Way and TGI Friday's for donating to the event."

Partners

Westchester Arc works with 400 businesses, government agencies and other organizations to identify career opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. Here is a new partnership....

Littman Krooks, LLP
81 Main Street, Unit 502
White Plains, New York 10601
914-684-2100

Littman Krooks, LLP, is a law firm that specializes in elder care and estate planning. The firm strongly supports employment opportunities for people with disabilities and recently hired a Westchester Arc consumer to assist with mailings and perform data entry. The employee is very happy at the firm and even appeared on its weekly radio show.



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