

The YMCA – Arc Partnership, a Great Beginning for Every Child!

With the help of a \$229,000 grant from the Maryland Department of Education, the YMCA has joined forces with The Arc of Prince George's County to provide needed childcare to more children within the county. The YMCA is expanding its capacity, reopening its Infants and Toddlers Program, and adding a full-time nursing staff for children with medical needs—all while providing excellent inclusive education and socialization for all children.

Ande Kolp, associate executive director at The Arc says, "Many families of children with medical needs are unable to work because they do not have a day care center they can use. Typical child care centers just can't manage the level of care some kids need."

Through the grant, the YMCA is now able to provide higher than usual caregiver-to-child numbers. The ratio of caregivers to children will be 1:3 caregivers for infants and toddlers, and 1:4 caregivers for children ages two and up.

Jessica Bennett, director of the Bowie YMCA says, "I am so excited about expanding our program. Our



Alanis Martinez makes music at the YMCA open house held on April 16.

Continues on page 2

Two Advocates Turn 90

Something good happened for the field of developmental disability 90 years ago—two activists that would start the fight for educational rights, equal housing, and vocational opportunities for people with developmental disabilities were born. Bob Ziepol, the first president of The Arc of Prince George's County; and Mary Solko, the founder of CALMRA have both spent much of their lives advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.

Bob Ziepol sits at his dining room table; photos of his three children decorate the room. He describes what happened in the basement of St. Luke's Church in Bladensburg in 1952. "A group of parents met because our children were all coming of school age and the county didn't provide anything for them. There was no special education back then. The coun-



Bob Ziepol.

ty would pay some money to send your child out of state, but we didn't want to do that. So, we formed The Arc, and our primary goal was to get special education started in the schools."

Two years later, after many meetings with the school board and the superintendent, their efforts paid off with the opening of the first special education program at the Calvert School in Riverdale. "We also went to work on the University of Maryland to establish teacher training programs there," says Ziepol.

While The Arc's goals of advocacy, support, understanding and opportunities have always been the same, the association was very different in the 1950's from what it is now. "The first Arc office was in my basement!" Ziepol says with a chuckle. "We took to the streets asking people for funds; eventually we got



Mary Solko.

Continues on page 6

Session Summary

The Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP) celebrates a budget increase of \$4.6 million in FY 2009. The MITP provides services for more than 900 children in Prince George's County and 13,300 children with developmental delays and disabilities throughout the state. This budget increase will help provide more early intervention services for children who need them. Research shows that children experience better academic and social outcomes if their needs are identified early and interventions are quickly put in place. In 2007, 26% of children who participated in the MITP did not need to continue in special education when they entered public school. This is great news for the children involved as well as Maryland taxpayers who save money in future special education costs.

Parents are still asking for an increase in funding to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to end **The Waiting List**. Over 17,250 people are on the DDA's list and are waiting for services. Nine families from Prince George's County, who are on The Waiting List, joined forces for a letter-writing gathering in Bowie to make their situations known to Governor O'Malley. Each family wrote a letter that presented their family's situation and explained how early supports could benefit their child and help preserve their family structure. While the creation of a multi-year initiative to end the wait was not added to this year's supplemental budget, parents are still advocating for change and hoping that eventually their pleas will result in more services to more families at a quicker rate.

Governor O'Malley's initial budget provided for a 1.5% **Cost of Living Adjustment** (COLA) for community service providers, while the Community Services Reimbursement Rate Commission recommended a 4% inflationary increase to keep pace with the cost of providing quality services. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of many concerned citizens, the House and Senate finally agreed upon a 3% COLA as long as the lottery over-attainment reaches \$13 million.

The funds necessary to close **Rosewood Center** and the funds needed to support all **new transitioning youth** in the coming year were provided in the FY09 budget. Many thanks to the advocates who helped attain this year's victories.



Joanne Mosley describes her family's situation in a letter to Governor O'Malley.



Parents write letters to Governor O'Malley, asking him to end the DDA Waiting List.

*From page 1:
The YMCA, Arc partnership ...*

mission is to include everyone and provide an environment of mutual respect for all, and this expansion matches the mission exactly!"

The YMCA provides a healthy environment where children enjoy music activities, gym and playground time, dramatic play, field trips, and are also taught the literacy, math, science, and social skills they need in order to be ready for Kindergarten.

This program will benefit typically developing children as well as children with disabilities. Kolp says, "It benefits humanity to have kids of all different ability levels live and breathe and go to school together. It's one of The Arc's founding beliefs."

The fees for the program are \$990 per month for infants, \$800 per month for the 2 and 3-year-old class, and \$750 per month for the 3 and 4-year-old class.

The program accepts children between the ages of six-weeks and five-years; however, the YMCA also offers after school programs for children of all ages.

The YMCA operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and accepts Medicaid and day care subsidies.

For more information or to enroll your child in the YMCA program contact Judy Tribby, RN at jtribby@thearcofpgc.org or 240-308-9186 or Jessica Bennett at jbennett@ymcadc.org. ■

Fully Included

Erin McLaughlin is in Ms. Antonelli's 3rd grade classroom at Laurel Elementary School. Like a typical 3rd grader, she rotates to different subject classes with her peers, learns about geology, and helps pass out papers to her classmates. Erin's favorite aspect of school is her friendships; she mentions several friends by name and says, "We like to play inside games."

When Erin was born with Down Syndrome, her parents, Mike and Jackie, knew that she was meant to be a part of her local school and community. Erin spent her early years at Francis Fuchs Early Childhood Center and James E.

Duckworth School, where she was placed with children with more severe disabilities than her own. The McLaughlins wanted Erin to have access to the general education curriculum and have peers who would model proper speech for her.

The school system did not recommend full inclusion for Erin, but the McLaughlins were determined that she would be with her non-disabled peers. With her parents advocating for her, and the support of Principal Melinda Lee, Erin has been fully included in Laurel Elementary School since Kindergarten.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that students with disabilities be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment, meaning that they should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible.

Erin sits in class with her peers and receives the general education instruction, however,

she is pulled out during parts of the mathematics and literacy lessons to work one-on-one on a modified curriculum with Ms. Maxwell, her special education teacher. "Erin is doing well with the modified curriculum, but academically Erin is very far from her peers," says Maxwell. She goes on to say that pieces of the curriculum cannot be implemented because Erin is the only child in the 3rd grade at her aca-



Erin McLaughlin, 3rd grade student.

demic level. "Erin misses out on group discussion and the community based instructional piece. The modified curriculum suggests community trips so Erin can practice what she is learning, but we don't have the ability to take just one child out every week."

All of Erin's teachers agree that she has made profound social growth this year. "There is a group of girls that play with Erin every day at recess," says Ms. Antonelli. She goes on to say that Erin's presence within the classroom has been beneficial to the other children, "Many of the children have really learned to be accepting of Erin."

Mr. Potter, Erin's science and social studies teacher says, "Many of the academic concepts are above Erin's head, but socially it is good for her to be here. She has one particularly great friend who always works

with her when we break into pairs. She chooses Erin because she genuinely wants to work with her."

Mike McLaughlin says, "Putting Erin in the general education classroom has led to significant language gains. When she started at Laurel Elementary, she experienced an immediate jump." However, he goes on to describe the negative aspects of peer learning, "Erin came home earlier in the year, using profanity that she had picked up on the bus. There are definitely drawbacks as well as benefits to peer-learning."

Dr. Downing-Hosten, director of Prince George's County Public Schools Special Education says, "We are continually trying to make our programs more inclusive. Students have a continuum of needs and we offer services along that continuum."

Erin is taking her journey one step at a time, and next year's fourth-grade curriculum may ask her to take even bigger steps. Erin's Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team will decide whether the social gains outweigh the growing academic divide between Erin and her peers. As members of the IEP Team, Erin's parents are right behind her, ready to help her take whatever steps are best for her.



Erin McLaughlin (2nd from right) poses with a few of her 3rd grade classmates at Laurel Elementary.

The Arc of Maryland Award Winners



Jackie Anderson, recipient of the Gilbert John Zucchi Outstanding Arc Employee of the Year—Direct Care Award, has worked with The Arc since 1990. She supports three people who live in an Arc house in Beltsville. Kelly Shaner, Northern Residential Director says, “Jackie constantly ensures the highest quality of life for the people she supports and does everything in her power to provide access to resources and activities they enjoy—including a yearly vacation to the beach!” Jackie has helped create a home that is comfortable, loving, and truly reflects the interests of the people who live there. Shaner says, “All you have to do is mention Jackie’s name around Billy (one of the men Jackie supports), and his whole face lights up!” The Arc is proud to have an employee like Jackie, who takes her job seriously and makes life brighter for the people she supports!



Janet Tanner, director of Nursing for Bridges for the past 17 years, is this year’s recipient of The Arc’s Certificate of Appreciation. Ann Brady, director of Bridges says, “Janet instinctively knows which of the 53 participants requires her immediate attention. She not only identifies problems, but also explores solutions.” Janet’s vision for people extends beyond concern for their health needs. She is an active participant in individual team meetings, and frequently suggests ways that will enhance people’s day at Bridges. She has participated in the acquisition of equipment such as a portable feeding pump that enables people to be out and about in the community despite their requirement of continuous feeding via a g-tube. “You should see the way people in Bridges respond to Janet. She is their nurse, but she is a lot more; they know she really listens,” says Brady. “By the way, did I mention that Janet is listening to 53 people who do not use speech for communication?”



Mike McLaughlin, recipient of The Arc of Prince George’s County Volunteer of the Year Award, knew when his daughter, Erin, was born with Down Syndrome that she was meant to be a part of her local school and community. This belief has spurred him on to become a strong and passionate advocate for Erin and other children with disabilities. Mary Funk, deputy executive director says, “Encouraging inclusion within a large system geared toward providing more segregated settings for students with developmental disabilities is not an easy task! Mike, however, undertook this mission and successfully achieved inclusion for Erin.” Mike has also collaborated with The Arc and Prince George’s County Public Schools to host a forum on inclusion for parents; which resulted in a report entitled, *The State of Inclusion in Prince George’s County Public Schools*. The report has been widely distributed and cited as a reference for change. Mike serves as president of the local Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC) and is active on The Arc’s local and state education committees. He never misses an opportunity to advocate for quality education for children with developmental disabilities.

Extreme Make-over in Largo

The Largo Vocational Services site got a face-lift this winter as walls and hallways were removed to reveal a more usable space.

Michael Visloski, director of the Largo Program says, “We hadn’t had anything new done in a while. We needed to paint, install new flooring, and figure out new ways to use our space, so we decided to do it all in one big project. It was time for an update.”

Everyone in the building seems excited and energized by the renovations. Monica Baum, a program participant at Largo, walks across new laminate flooring in the freshly decorated office, sits in front of the com-



Monica Baum works on the Internet in the newly renovated office in Largo.

Continues on page 6

Taking Care of our Own

Sonya Bailey loves to go swimming, adores her mom's special blend of sweet iced tea, and likes hugs from family and friends. For almost 20 years Sonya has received supports from The Arc through Bridges Medical Day Program and Community Supported Living Arrangements (CSLA).

Sonya is now on a difficult journey. Her mother, Sharon was recently diagnosed with adenoid cystic carcinoma, an incurable form of cancer, and her father, Sonny has a difficult time caring for himself after three strokes and a heart attack. Sonya's osteoporosis and arthritis have progressed to a level that severely limits her mobility. Keishia Fells, Sonya's caregiver at Bridges says, "I'm sure Sonya realizes her mom is sick; they have been on such a roller coaster with everyone's health. This is a family in crisis."

Sonya's CSLA coordinator, Hellen Odebode says that Sonya's osteoporosis has limited her ability to use the tub in the house and she needs a new accessible bathroom. "The family is having problems with her bathing needs; the bathroom really is the main thing."

Matthew Holmes, a long-time neighbor and family friend decided to rally the community

around the Baileys and help squelch the crisis and create a home that Sonya can live in easily. Holmes and two other friends nominated the Baileys for the T.V. show *Extreme Makeover, Home Edition*. "We didn't get it, but we didn't let that stop us," says Holmes.

Holmes put together *Project Taking Care of Our Own* and began soliciting local contractors and community members to donate labor, materials, supplies and equipment to make Sonya's home completely accessible. Eleven contractors have jumped in to bring the plan to life. The Arc is providing extra nursing support for Sonya during the project, and local restaurants are donating food for the building crew. "The whole community is coming together to truly take care of our own," says Holmes.

Holmes describes himself as the Oliver Twist of his day and credits the Baileys as "the people who helped me reconstruct my life. They were the first people to open their door, trust me, and love me. Sonya has impacted my life in a major way. She has opened my eyes and helped me see her as an individual and not just a person with a disability. I want to give back to Sonya."

On the morning of the project

kick-off, the Bailey's yard is flooded with community contractors, movers, and television crews. Sharon, overwhelmed by the level of community support, says, "People are coming out of the woodwork like guardian angels." Sonya becomes agitated by all the noise and commotion, but Colleen Rose, her CSLA nurse, gives her some of Mom's special sweet tea to calm her down.

Sharon is most excited about the new accessible bathroom that is being created for Sonya. "Water is just her favorite thing. I can't wait for her to get in the shower and fully experience the water again."

Since the home will be fully accessible after the makeover, Sharon hopes that The Arc can use it as a residential facility when she and her husband pass away. Sharon becomes emotional and through her tears says, "The Arc has been a lifesaver for all of us. If I have questions, they always either have the answers or they get them for me. If Sonya didn't have Bridges, I don't know where she'd be; she just loves going there."

Hopefully Sonya's journey will be a little smoother from here on out, with the support of not just The Arc, but the whole community behind her.



► Sharon, Sonny, and Sonya Bailey in front of their house.



► Members of the community help kick-off the renovation project in front of the Bailey's house.



► Sonya drinks tea with Matthew Holmes.

From page 1:
Two Advocates turn 90...

sponsored by United Way and that was great.”

Some of The Arc’s early advocacy efforts are finally paying off today. Ziepolt recalls touring Rosewood Institution with his wife in the early 50’s. “That place was like a snake-pit. I couldn’t get the stench out of my nostrils for two weeks.” While not everyone agreed on what should be done with Rosewood, some Arc members began advocacy efforts to close the institution. Finally, more than 50 years later and 12 years after the closure of Great Oaks Institution, the Governor has called for its closure.

Mary Solko, another early advocate, sits in her living room and recalls early grassroots efforts by parents in Prince George’s County. “We worked for our children to have a public education, but after they turned 21, there wasn’t much out there for them. So, Bob Ziepolt and I helped start Vocational Service Industries [VSI, now known as New Horizons]. It was a workshop program so our children could have something productive to do during the day.”

Mrs. Solko points to an old photograph of her daughter that hangs on her wall, “The emphasis of all my efforts is in that photo of that girl up there. I started to worry about what would happen to Charleen after my husband and I were gone, and what would happen to other people’s children, too.”

Solko’s dream was to start a residential program for people with developmental disabilities. For 10 years Solko and other parents worked to gain licensing and Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) funding. “It was such a long, drawn-out affair,” Solko recalls. “We kept hitting walls. Mac Ramsey [executive director of The Arc] started coming to our meetings and really helped us to get things going.” Solko’s dream came true when CALMRA opened two homes for six people.

“So much has changed for people with disabilities,” says Solko. “When I go to the store, I see employees with disabilities. That never used to happen; people used to be afraid of people with disabilities.”

Bob Ziepolt agrees that a lot has changed in the past 60 years. “People kept their children hidden; they were ashamed or something. There has been a big attitude shift in the general public. My daughter, Elsie, has a job at Chick-Fil-A, and travels overseas with her friends. These are great experiences for her!”

The efforts of Bob Ziepolt, Mary Solko, and many other parents like them have led to the expansion of rights and opportunities that people with disabilities have today, and no doubt the next generation of parents and people with developmental disabilities will continue the fight to gain even more opportunities! Bob and Mary, take a bow!

From page 4:
Extreme Make-over in Largo...

puter and says, “I really like it; I like that everything is new. I come in here and work on the Internet.”

Renika Brame, an employee at the Largo program for almost 13 years says, “The overall attitude is so much better now that we have more space. Everyone seems calmer and really enjoys being in the new areas.”

The exterior walls remain the same, but moving interior walls and removing hallways has made the building more functional. Another participant, Denita Bradley enjoys coming to the program every day and comments on the renovations, “It’s cool, and there is more space! It is easier to relax now. I love watching movies in the new theatre room.”

On a crisp afternoon a few weeks ago everyone in the program congregated in the theatre room—people came from their vocational rooms, the new music room where they enjoy creating and listening to fresh tunes, and the lunchroom that has been transformed into a bistro style café. Two musicians from the U.S. Marine Band helped christen the new theatre room with a performance of Irish folk songs. Visloski says, “It is so great that everyone can be in one room together to enjoy the show. This is a great place for celebrating, learning, and relaxing.”

Visloski is excited about the building and says, “This whole project has enabled us to better utilize our space,” but comments that this transformation comes hand-in-hand with efforts to utilize other spaces within the community. “We are really doing more in the community too. The Focus on Fitness program is expanding to include bowling, therapeutic horseback riding, and day trips to see different places of interest within the community.”

Call Michael Visloski at 301-925-2730 to arrange your tour of the center!



Participants enjoy Irish tunes performed by members of the U.S. Marine Band in the newly created theatre room in Largo.

FISCAL YEAR 2008 - FAMILY PLEDGE DONORS

Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Andrews
 Ms. Dora Bartley
 Mr. & Mrs. Paul Bauer
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Bean
 Mrs. Neome Goodman Berg
 Mr. & Mrs. Don Blakley
 Mr. & Mrs. William Bryant
 Mrs. Eileen Carzon
 Mr. & Mrs. Edward Ciesielski, Jr.
 Mr. & Mrs. Gilmore Clark
 Ms. Herta Clark
 Mrs. Dorothy Cole
 Ms. Denise Coleman
 Mr. & Mrs. Frank Compitello
 Ms. H. Louise Coomes
 Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Cox
 Mr. Thomas Dugan
 Mr. Eugene Ebel
 Ms. Susan Eicher
 Mr. & Mrs. William Eicher

Ms. Marilyn Farrell
 Mr. & Mrs. William & Linda Fern
 Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Finnance
 Ms. Maria Foster
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Gaskins
 Mr. & Mrs. Clifford George
 Mr. Dawit Getachew
 Ms. Helen Goldsmith
 Col. & Mrs. James Hall
 Ms. Marian Hamby
 Ms. Jo Handley & Mr. Kurt Wiegand
 Mrs. Lorraine Handzo
 Dr. Dagmar Hering
 Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Hluchyj
 Ms. Charlotte Jackson
 Mr. & Mrs. Leroy King
 Mr. & Mrs. Thurmus King
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Lee
 Ms. Ellen Markham
 Ms. Lisa Matthews-Martin

Ms. Christina Mays-Katholnigs
 Ms. Helen McCormick
 Ms. Mary Jo McGovern
 Mr. & Mrs. William Mullins
 Ms. Martha Myers
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Newman
 Mr. & Mrs. John O'Connor
 Mr. & Mrs. Wesley Paulson
 Ms. Anne Petersen
 Ms. Paula Proctor
 Mr. Steve Pyles
 Mr. & Mrs. Ray Revels
 Mrs. Elizabeth Scorsune
 Mr. Harold Sharlin
 Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Southerland
 Mr. & Mrs. Louanna & Carroll Sturm
 Mr. Chi Truong
 Ms. Marcia Whitehead

Smashing, Bashing Success!

The 9th Annual Arc Bowling Bash, sponsored by The Columbia Bank and UnitedHealthcare, proved to be the best one yet with over \$35,000 raised for The Sarah Petit Fund! The Bowie AMF Bowling center was pushed to capacity as over 300 bowlers, volunteers, and supporters filled the lanes for the two-weekend event. Popcorn, pizza, balloons, prizes, Louie the Bowie Baysox mascot, and the Baltimore Orioles Bird helped add to the already festive atmosphere as bowlers laughed the afternoon away.

Bill Fink, an active bowler at the Bash for several years, smiles as he says, "The best part was having my mom and sister and all my friends there to watch me bowl."

Marianne Tropp, event organizer says, "The thing that sets this event apart is that everyone can participate, no matter what their age or ability. Wheelchair ramps and bowling ball ramps help make a great sport accessible."

The festivities focused on fundraising efforts for the Sarah

Petit Fund. Created in memory of a young woman who had multiple disabilities and loved to travel, the fund provides recreational and travel scholarships for people with developmental disabilities.

The grants have helped people explore places such as San Diego, Florida, and even Jamaica. Other people have used the grants to take horseback riding lessons, swimming lessons, and attend summer camps. "We just approved a grant that will help a recipient fly to Hawaii for a cousin's wedding! He will meet relatives he's never seen

before," says Betsey Petit, who along with her husband, Pat, established the fund in their daughter's memory. Betsey goes on to say, "The grants are all about helping people have fun and live more fulfilling lives."

The \$35,000 raised at this year's Bowling Bash will enable lots of people to go places, make friends, and have fun! For more information about the Sarah Petit Fund, contact Trayah Baldorado at 301-925-7050, ext. 269. We look forward to seeing you at next year's Bowling Bash! Visit our website at www.thearcofpgc.org and check out a great article about the Bash published in the *Bowie Blade*.



William Lampe enjoys a great game at the 9th Annual Bowling Bash. Photo by Barbara Sigler

MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND DINNER

Make sure you make it to the Annual Membership Meeting! Join us on May 22 at 6:30 p.m. at the Newton White Mansion in Mitchellville, MD as we elect officers and present staff awards for years of service. Delegate Joanne Benson will be our special guest for the evening. The cost is only \$10 per person for a marvelous evening and terrific food! Please R.S.V.P. to Bola Owoye at bowoye@thearcofpgc.org or 301-925-7050, ext. 238.

Mary Dugan (1937-2008)

The Arc lost a long-time friend, advocate, and mentor with the passing of Mary Dugan on February 18. Mary served on our board of directors a total of 18 years, and held the position of president from 1986 to 1988. She played a crucial role in the governmental affairs arena, coordinating Arc families' telephone calls and visits to legislators, and was well known in Annapolis for her energy and commitment to people with developmental disabilities. Mary lost her son, Tommy, eight years ago, yet remained active and involved in opening doors and bettering lives for the individuals we support. We will miss Mary greatly and will work hard to fulfill her vision of complete participation in the community for all people with developmental disabilities.



1401 McCormick Drive
Largo, MD 20774
301-925-7050
www.thearcofpgc.org

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Hyattsville, MD 20785
Permit No. 3655