

A Celebration of Excellence

This edition of Update is dedicated to the 2008 Arc Award winners. We are grateful for these champions who are promoting opportunities and positive change for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Congratulations!

Bill Ohge, Jr., Outstanding Citizen

Bill Ohge, Jr. has been a dedicated employee of the Census Bureau for over 29 years and manages a copy center within the Bureau. Bill lives independently and has overcome many personal obstacles in order to create a fulfilling life for himself.

Part of what gives meaning to Bill's life is his enduring commitment to advocacy efforts on behalf of his friends and colleagues with developmental disabilities. Many people involved in advocacy efforts in Prince George's County and throughout the state know Bill. They have served on a committee, attended a rally or testified in Annapolis with him.

Bill has served on The Arc of Prince George's Board of Directors. He is currently a member of The Arc's Quality Assurance Committee, in which he visits residential homes to ensure people enjoy the best possible quality of life. He has been a member of The Arc's fundraising committee and is a regular volunteer and participant in the Bowling Bash—a fundraiser for the Sarah Petit Fund.

Bill has also served on the Board of Directors of Resource Connections, and he continues to serve as a member of their standing and steering committees. He is also a former member of *Self-Advocacy: Becoming Empowered*, and he has worked to get people out of institutions.

People on the Go, a self-advocacy group, has benefited from Bill's extensive knowledge of the advocacy movements. He has served as an officer for both the local chapter and the state group.

Bill is also an active member of his church, St. Joseph's in Largo, where he assists with altar service. Truly, Bill is an Outstanding Citizen!



Mary Solko, Lifetime Achievement Award

Mary Solko, an early grassroots advocate in Prince George's County, has spent her life establishing programs and advocating for people with developmental disabilities. She worked alongside other parents to help start Vocational Service Industries (VSI, now known as New Horizons) in 1969. This was initially formed as a workshop program for young adults with developmental disabilities. After finishing public education, young adults had an opportunity to participate in a productive work experience during the day at VSI.

The emphasis of Mary's efforts stem from her love for her late daughter, Charleen, who had a developmental disability, but her labors reach far beyond her own daughter. Mary sees the bigger picture and has spent her life advocating for everyone in the community who has a disability.

Mary was worried about what would happen to

Charleen after she and her husband were gone, as well as what would happen to other people in the community with developmental disabilities when their loved ones passed away. She began to dream of starting a residential program for people with developmental disabilities. For 10 years, Mary and other parents worked to gain licensing and Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) funding. Mary's dream finally came true when CALMRA opened its doors and established two homes in the community for six people. Today, CALMRA operates 15 homes in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties.

Mary's efforts have led to the expansion of rights and opportunities that people with disabilities have today. Even now, at the age of 91, Mary continues to advocate, educate, and compel people toward excellence in the field of developmental disabilities. Thank you, Mary for dedicating your life to people with developmental disabilities.



Dorris Dennis, Award of Excellence for Education



Dorris Dennis, Jr. is a Vocational Coordinator in the Community Referenced Instruction (CRI) Program at Central High School. As a special education teacher, Mr. Dennis understands how children learn and grow, and continually creates a motivating and productive learning experience for each student. He bonds with students and makes them feel safe, cared for and valued. His motto in assisting children is “whatever it takes.” If a child needs help at school, he gives it; if a child needs help at home, he offers it; and if a child needs someone to trust, he is there.

Mr. Dennis’ teaching does not end in the classroom. As a vocational coordinator, he works with community employers to secure successful experiences for students preparing for the world of work after graduation. He enjoys the students’ annual camp outing and excels at teaching the students about the great outdoors. Mr. Dennis is such a firm believer in having students experience a variety of activities, that he personally offers scholarships to students who cannot afford to attend.

As a Special Olympic Coach, he is committed to having as many students participate in Special Olympics as possible, and he has dedicated and contributed many volunteer hours to the organization.

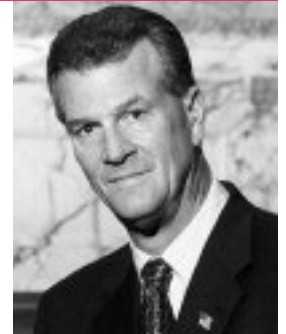
Mr. Dennis’ vision for “his kids”, as he refers to them, is as broad as any natural parent, and like a parent, he leaves footsteps for them to follow.

Delegate Jim Hubbard, Award of Excellence for Governmental Affairs.

For 15 of his 16 years as a state delegate, Jim Hubbard has championed the cause of people with developmental disabilities and their families in Maryland. Early in his career he recognized the needs of the disability community and formed a strong partnership with The Arc of Maryland. Delegate Hubbard has authored or co-authored hundreds of bills intended to benefit individuals with disabilities, their families and the agencies supporting them. He works hard to educate his colleagues on disabilities so that they are not just aware of the issues, but have an understanding of them.

Jim’s efforts go beyond the legislature. For years he played an active role in the Partners for Policy Program, providing advice and training on the workings of Annapolis to parents and self-advocates. He spends time with The Arc of Maryland’s Governmental Committee, reviewing a past year’s successful and not-so-successful legislation and advising on the forthcoming year’s agenda.

Delegate Hubbard has been, for the majority of his career, a staunch advocate who has improved the lives of Marylanders with developmental disabilities. We are proud that he is a member of the Prince George’s Delegation and grateful for his work on our behalf.



Melonee Clark, Award of Excellence for Advocacy



Melonee has been an outstanding advocate since the birth of her now 15 year-old daughter, Ciera. From the beginning, Melonee took it upon herself to learn as much as she could about the world of disabilities. She attended workshops, trainings, conferences, and was a graduate of Partners in Policymaking, a statewide program for future advocacy leaders. She volunteered her time, serving as co-chair of The Arc Education Committee, speaking to professionals about raising a child with a developmental disability and serving on both Board of Education and County task groups.

As Ciera matured, and as Melonee grew in knowledge and confidence, she began working at The Arc as its Family Specialist. She continually thinks of new ways to assist families and does so, with or without compensation. She initiated the *Parents of Special Tots* Coffee Break, coordinates the *Ready at 21* series for transitioning youth, facilitates the *VIP* group, (*Very Important Parents*, parents with cognitive disabilities), coordinates presentations on topics such as transition, special education, and long-term planning and attends numerous schools’ PTA’s.

Melonee’s energy, outreach and connection to families are phenomenal. She is an exceptional role model for parents by teaching them skills, providing them with the tools and resources they need while encouraging and supporting them to advocate for themselves. Melonee stresses advocacy with parents and assures them that there is no better way to advocate for their children than by becoming involved with The Arc. While her “reach out and touch a future Arc parent” is by no means overbearing, it is extremely effective. She has introduced hundreds of families to The Arc in just a few short years and she is determined to ensure that each one, through The Arc, will become an even stronger advocate for their child.

GIVE A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING.

The Arc relies on generous donations from people like you. Give a gift to The Arc this holiday season and help us continue to advocate and provide quality programs for people with developmental disabilities in Prince George’s County. Look for our Holiday Appeal in the mail this December, or donate online at www.thearcofpgc.org.



The Columbia Bank, Award of Excellence for Corporate Involvement

Cristine Marchand, Executive Director of The Arc of Maryland with Katrice Simpson and Mike Ahearn of The Columbia Bank, and Martin Lampe, President of The Arc of Prince George's County.

The Columbia Bank has partnered with The Arc of Prince George's County for nearly two decades. When Arc finances were tight and other banks would not provide the association a line of credit, The Columbia Bank stepped forward. Over the years the relationship has grown into a full-fledged banking partnership that has been based upon quality service, trust, and mutual admiration.

While The Columbia Bank has been a good business partner, they have been an even better philanthropic supporter of The Arc. There is never a fundraising event in which The Columbia Bank does not participate. When the Annual Bowling Bash lost its major sponsor, The Columbia Bank stepped up to the plate to become the major corporate sponsor. The Columbia Bank is not only a major sponsor of The Arc's golf tournament, but makes sure that its parent bank, Fulton Financial, is equally involved. Every December, The Arc is also the recipient of a sizable contribution to the holiday appeal compliments of The Columbia Bank.

The base of the partnership is the wonderful relationships The Arc has with the long-standing staff of the bank. The Columbia Bank is excelling in the area of corporate involvement and making Prince George's County a better place for people with developmental disabilities.



Cantwell-Cleary Company, Award of Excellence for Employment

Bruce Canham and Bill Stevens from Cantwell-Cleary Company receive their award from Cristine Marchand and Martin Lampe.

For the past twenty-two years, The Cantwell-Cleary Company has provided exceptional support and ongoing commitment to a gentleman in The Arc's Employment Program, Richard Lank.

In 1986, Mr. Lank began working at Cantwell-Cleary as a custodial worker. After several years of working in this position, Richard's supervisor recognized his commitment to his job and his many untapped skills, and promoted him to a warehouse worker. This highly responsible front line position is an intricate component to the success of the company. Richard is responsible for preparing packages for distribution to customers. This task includes packing, weighing and labeling the merchandise. Richard has also been taught to use various machines to bind multiple packages. In 2001, his supervisor once again acknowledged his contribution to the company and Richard received special recognition for his years of service.

Richard has expressed that working at Cantwell-Cleary is one of the most important things in his life, and he has developed such a strong relationship with his co-workers and supervisors that he views them as his extended family.

For the extraordinary natural supports that Cantwell-Cleary provides to Richard, The Arc is happy to have presented them with the Award of Excellence for Employment.

Jake Linger, Award of Excellence for Media




Jake Linger, sports editor for *The Bowie Blade-News*, responded this spring to a press release about The Arc's Bowling Bash fundraiser. He had an immediate interest in the organization, the fundraiser, and the funds' destination—the Sarah Petit Fund, which helps subsidize vacation experiences for people with developmental disabilities. He scheduled a photographer for the event and conducted an extensive interview with the event coordinators. The article that Mr. Linger wrote clearly outlined the goals of The Arc and the Sarah Petit Fund, and highlighted the successes and abilities of people with developmental disabilities.

Mr. Linger clearly understands the importance of disability issues and has since responded to numerous disability related press releases by writing articles or ensuring stories are placed in the hands of appropriate editors at *The Bowie Blade-News*. This spring he was instrumental in informing Bowie residents of the new YMCA inclusive childcare center for children with and without disabilities. This summer Mr. Linger carved out a generous portion of the sports section to highlight The Arc's Bridges Medical Day Center Summer Olympic Games.

When The Arc sent out an urgent Action Alert detailing the possibility of a cut to the DDA budget, Mr. Linger responded immediately to the alert and researched how the cut would impact members of the Bowie community. His subsequent article, "P.G. Arc Expects Budget Shortfall", received front-page billing in *The Bowie Blade-News*. Mr. Linger undoubtedly understands the importance of covering disability related issues in the media and actively works to improve the community's understanding of people with developmental disabilities.

A Celebration of Excellence: The Arc Countywide Awards Program

 Over 125 people celebrated the achievements of award winners at Florian Hall in Bowie on October 23rd. Award winners were nominated by community members throughout Prince George's County and selected because of their dedication and efforts on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and their families.



*front row: Melonee Clark, Mary Solko, Katrice Simpson, and Dorris Dennis
back row: Delegate James Hubbard, Jake Linger, Bill Ohge, Jr., Bill Stevens, Bruce Canham, and Mike Ahearn*



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