

Creating a Lifetime of Abilities
For People with Disabilities

ARCLIGHT™



**Workshop
Closure
Opens
New Doors**

***Arc in
Motion
Means
Community
Inclusion***

Spring/Summer 2015



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About the Cover: Kevin Jones and Steven Berkowitz are enthusiastic members of one of ARC of Rockland's *Arc in Motion* groups, the focus of which is immersion in the community. Whether it is through volunteerism, recreation, education or employment—inclusion is the goal. The story begins on page 20. Inset: Michael Brenner at WFDU radio station. Story on page 8.



3 Annual Election of Officers



25 Prime Time Graduation



6 2015 Golf Classic

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From the President



Richard S. Sirota

Since its inception more than six decades ago, families affiliated with ARC of Rockland have recognized the importance of giving back to this agency. We have done so by attending fundraisers, volunteering our time, donating generously, becoming members and perhaps most importantly, by passing on a legacy through wills, trusts and bequests. Contributing to ARC in one way or another has always been a priority. Today, however, it is my belief that giving back has become an imperative.

I say this not as the president of the ARC Board of Directors, but as the father of a young woman who lives in an ARC home and participates in ARC activities. From the time she was in preschool, our daughter—and by extension—we, her parents, have counted on ARC of Rockland to provide the experiences that would enhance both her life and our lives.

It is true that government funding accounts for a significant portion of the services and supports available through ARC, but government funding cannot possibly pay for all that we have come to expect from this exceptional organization. Donations earmarked for recreational activities, transportation, computers and other technological equipment help to ensure that people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities are thoroughly immersed in community life.

The hopes and dreams espoused by ARC's self-advocates speak to this agency's emphasis on liberty, justice and individual rights. However, bringing dreams to fruition frequently requires funding well beyond the level afforded by the government.

In recognition of all that ARC gives to the people we love, I urge you to reciprocate.

From the Executive Director



Carmine G. Marchionda

Thanks to an enlightened and educated populous, *inclusion* has become a way of life in Rockland County. Whether it concerns employment, volunteerism, recreation or education, people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities are making significant inroads within the community. This issue of *ARCLIGHT* focuses on opportunities.

Where once, parents and professionals were the primary spokespeople within the field, today, self-advocates have taken the stage. With determination and confidence, people with disabilities are expressing their needs and asserting their rights—and the public is listening.

Despite concerns about the impending closure of sheltered workshops, here at ARC of Rockland, we are taking measured steps to ensure that we are headed in the right direction. To read about the process and the plan, please turn to page 10.

On page 20 you will learn of initiatives that exemplify the power of networking. Just as we will continue to reach out to others, it is our hope that our friends and neighbors will reach out to us when they are looking for capable volunteers or employees—or when they hear of an event or activity that might be of interest.

There is no question that there is change afoot in our industry. But at ARC of Rockland, we view this as a time of great potential—for the people who rely on us and for the population as a whole. It has been a long road, but we have arrived. People with developmental disabilities are, at long last, being recognized for their abilities. From this point on, it is a matter of forward motion.



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Full House at ARC Annual Meeting

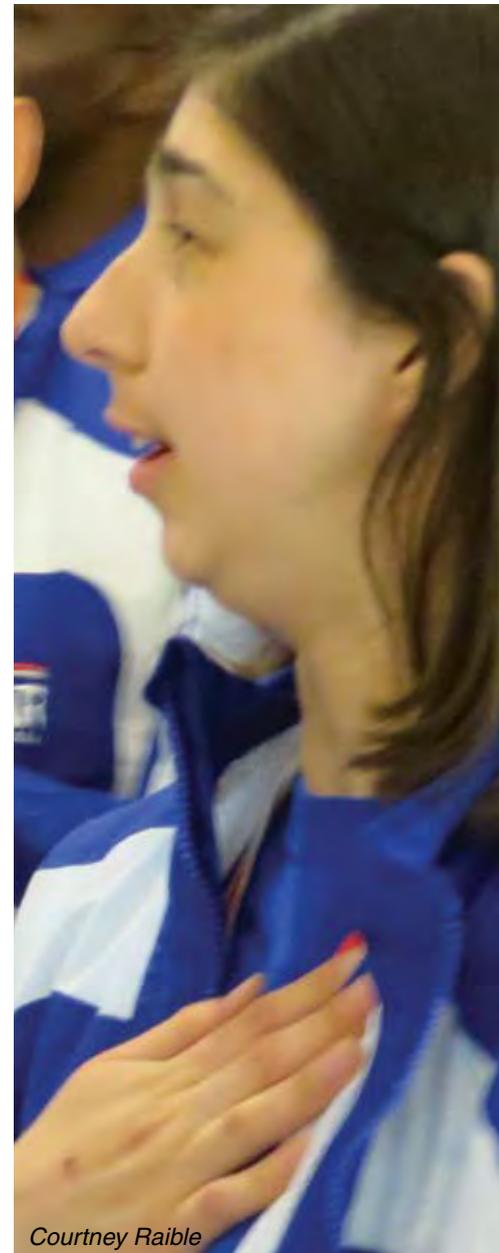
Installation of officers for the ARC of Rockland Board of Directors and the ARC Foundation Board took place May 20 with Hon. Thomas Zugibe officiating. ARC Executive Director Carmine Marchionda thanked Board members, families, ARC staff members and the people who receive supports through ARC of Rockland for their commitment and dedication to the agency. A presentation by the Coordinator of Community Connections Bryan Connelly illustrated the increasing number of volunteer, employment and recreational activities within Rockland and its environs. The appreciative audience gave Special Olympians a standing ovation following their moving rendition of *God Bless America*. The evening's program concluded with a spirited dance performance by ARC's 20 *Somethings* Drama Group led by Coordinator of Children's and Teen Recreation Colleen Rogers. ■



Hon. Thomas Zugibe, left, with inductees



Bryan Connelly



Courtney Raible



Alan Albert on SANYS Board

Self-Advocate Alan Albert was elected by his peers to serve on the Board of the Self Advocacy Association of New York State (SANYS).

Mr. Albert was named to the position during the June 9th Hudson Valley Regional Self-Advocacy Conference at Palisades Center. The theme of the event was 'REAL'. Speakers discussed *real* jobs, *real* relationships and *real* living.

Mr. Albert says he was not expecting to learn the outcome of the vote at the convention. "I'll tell you, right now, I got a little nervous," he says. "I figured I would have been told in a couple of weeks. But they did it that day, and I'm still a little in the air."

"The Board of Directors of SANYS is unique among nonprofits because it is made up of more than 20 people with developmental disabilities," explains Jordan Jankus, Hudson Valley Regional Coordinator for SANYS. "They set the policy and goals for the organization."

During his three-year term, Mr. Albert will meet with



Bonnie Patrikis and Alan Albert

members of New York State government and with members of the executive team of the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Says Mr. Jankus, "The main focus of the organization is to help people speak up for themselves—an especially important mission during this time of great transition within the system of services."

Mr. Albert has been affiliated with ARC of Rockland for more than 35 years. He resides in an ARC of Rockland home. In October, he will celebrate his 26th year as an employee of Verizon Wireless in Orangeburg, NY. Mr. Albert is an active member of the ARC of Rockland Self-Advocacy Committee.

Bonnie Patrikis, ARC Case Manager, says of Mr. Albert's election to the SANYS Board of Directors, "Alan and I have known each other for almost 30 years. I am so proud of the way in which he articulated his passion for self-advocacy during the SANYS Conference. It was a great moment for ARC of Rockland and for Alan when his peers voted him on the Board." ■



Introducing Dinorah D'Auria Director of Clinical and Family Services

Dr. Dinorah D'Auria, has joined ARC of Rockland as Director of Clinical and Family Services. She earned a Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology from

Carlos Albizu University in San Juan, Puerto Rico and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Interamerican University in San Juan.

Prior to her position with ARC, Dr. D'Auria was Vice President of Clinical and Ancillary Services for Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey (CPNJ).

"We are pleased that Dr. D'Auria has come on board as member of our professional staff," says ARC Executive Director Carmine Marchionda. "Her experience and expertise will be an asset to this agency. Whether we are

offering respite care, nursing care, therapeutic services, education, housing or helping an individual determine his or her plans for the future, our approach is holistic. We view the needs and aspirations of each person on an individual basis. Dr. D'Auria will serve as a liaison, overseeing the coordination and integration of services and supports across departments, always with the individual at the hub."

Dr. D'Auria is enthusiastic about her role. "What I find especially compelling is the resourcefulness of the staff at ARC of Rockland. ARC employees appreciate the importance of teamwork," she says. "I enjoy working with an agency that brings together all of its resources to maximize each person's potential."

Dr. D'Auria and her husband Peter are the parents of 20-month-old Michael and six-year-old Josie. The family lives in Emerson, New Jersey. ■

Jason Hopper on the Training Team



“I see myself as a salesman, and I’m selling knowledge,” says Jason Hopper, newly appointed ARC Coordinator of Staff Development and Training. “I want people to be excited about learning something that will help them on the job.”

Mr. Hopper, of Congers, NY, joined the ARC staff in 2005. Prior to his

current position, he was the Manager of an ARC residence for nearly a decade. “The hardest part of accepting my new role was leaving the men who live in the home. They were my second family,” he says. “It can be difficult when staff members leave. As much as possible, I plan to stay involved in their lives. The people who live in ARC homes need to know that we are not just passing through.”

It is precisely the message of involvement that Mr. Hopper stresses when teaching both new and long-term ARC employees. In addition to specifics such as CPR or how to prevent a choking incident, Mr. Hopper provides subtle lessons that convey dignity and respect. Required courses differ according to the position an employee holds within the agency.

All ARC staff members—from the men and women who work in the business office, to the people who work in ARC homes, from the nursing staff to the agency’s administrative assistants—are required to attend annual classes on topics relevant to the field of developmental disabilities.

When speaking to Direct Support Professionals who work in an ARC home, “I talk about the various roles we play,” says Mr. Hopper. “Sometimes people see us as chefs, sometimes as bankers, as surrogate parents or friends.”

Jacqueline Phillips, ARC Director of Staff Development and Training says of Mr. Hopper, “He is an excellent addition to our department. He brings with him the knowledge he has gained by working in our Residential Division. He understands that in order for people to do a good job, we have to provide them with the skills to do that job, and we have to do this on an ongoing basis.” Also in the position of Coordinator of Staff Development

and Training is Shelly Plansky-Miller. She has held this position for several years. “Both Shelly and Jason are assets to ARC of Rockland,” says Ms. Phillips.

Mr. Hopper emphasizes that safety and security are priorities, but he explains, “We have to make sure that each individual attains as much independence as possible. We need to remember that employment at ARC of Rockland is not about us. It is not about what time we come to work or leave work. It’s about what we do when we are on the job. It is about concentrating on the people who are counting on us.

“Whatever the area of expertise, we insist on a standard of excellence,” states Mr. Hopper. “That means as staff trainers, we provide employees with the information, the tools and the training to live up to that standard. I am very excited to be teaching, and I am proud to be developing coursework that will benefit the people who work here and the people we support.”

Mr. Hopper holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology from Montclair State University and an MBA from Fairleigh Dickinson University. He and his wife Dawn are parents of Alex, 8 and Cassie, 5. ■

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A HOLE IN ONE FOR ARC

Perfectly manicured greens under nearly cloudless blue skies made for a great day of golfing at ARC of Rockland's 30th annual Golf Classic.

"This was a terrific event for a truly great cause," said Harold Peterson, President, ARC Foundation Board of Directors and Chairperson of the Golf Classic since its inception in 1986. "It is my good fortune to be part of this wonderful organization. The staff, the families, the volunteers and the people who rely on the services provided by ARC are among the most dedicated and caring individuals I have had the privilege to know."

On behalf of ARC of Rockland, ARC Executive Director Carmine Marchionda presented Mr. Peterson with an engraved pocket watch in recognition of the countless hours he has donated towards the success of the ARC Golf Classic. "This event is just one aspect of Harold's involvement with and commitment to ARC over many years," said Mr. Marchionda. "We cherish the dedication of this stellar member of our ARC family."

The June 17th Golf Classic included a buffet breakfast, lunch on the course, prizes, a gift of golf shoes for all participants and a delicious buffet dinner served in the Ballroom on the grounds of Paramount Country Club.

CONTEST WINNERS

Gross Score – 1st Place

Tom Burgess • Kyle Crosley • Paul Metcalf • Jim Mickler

Gross Score – 2nd Place

Jeff Warminsky • Jay Glicksman • Dean LeFemina • Wally Brooks

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Eric Black • Mike McGarvey • Gary Reetz • Mariana Monaco

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Jason Lieberman • Mariana Monaco

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L-R: Joey D'Auria, Peter D'Auria, Joe D'Auria, Harold Peterson



L-R: Carmine Marchionda, Frank Recine, George Carmel, Chris Wilson



Valerie and Mariana Monaco





Michael Brenner at WFDU Radio Station

“I’m happy,” says Michael Brenner. “I like my life. I love my mom, my dad, my sister, my girlfriend, my friends, my job.”

The job to which Mr. Brenner refers is a volunteer position with WFDU radio station located on the Metro campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, New Jersey. “We are an eclectic college station run primarily by volunteers, but our volunteers are not college students,” explains WFDU Chief Engineer Michael Phillips. Many of our volunteer broadcasters are professional musicians.”

It is Mr. Brenner’s responsibility to categorize the dozens of CDs submitted by musicians. “I listen to the music and try to figure out if it is jazz, rock, soul, blues, country or gospel,” explains Mr. Brenner. To help determine the correct placement in the music library, he also looks at the album covers and the liner notes (the description on the back of the CD), and he reads the cover letters. “At first it was difficult. But I’ve got it now,” he says.

“What Michael does here is very difficult to do,” says Mr. Phillips. “Only people sensitive to the music can discern the category in which a particular piece of music belongs. If Michael comes across something about which he is unsure, he calls one of us. Otherwise, he is on his own.”

Mr. Phillips describes the WFDU format as block programming. “Listeners tune in at a specific time to listen to a specific music show. The bulk of what we play is not music that you’d hear on other radio stations. You would come to us for deeper music styles. We play music that can be hard to describe.”

Mr. Brenner enjoys the challenge of “finding the fit.”

His position at WFDU came about as the result of ARC of Rockland’s ongoing Personal Outcome Measures (POMs) project. During conversations with ARC staffers, individuals who receive services through the agency describe their goals and dreams. ARC then tries to help each person achieve those goals. During one such discussion, Mr. Brenner expressed an interest in working in the field of radio or television. The conversation was relayed to Jacqueline Phillips, ARC of Rockland Director of Staff Development and Training, who conveyed Mr. Brenner’s desire to her husband Michael Phillips. Mr. Phillips agreed to meet with Mr. Brenner.

“I was familiar with the term *inclusion*,” says Mr. Phillips, “and I was certainly willing to interview Michael.” The result was a win-win situation for both. Mr. Phillips believes that people with developmental disabilities should be given opportunities to pursue their aspirations. However, he says, “It can be difficult to know a person’s capabilities. Potential employers have to be sensitive to the needs of the person, and they have to be honest. The task has to be matched to the individual.”

“When I first met with Michael, I know that he was thinking ‘I can do this,’ but I wasn’t sure what he was capable of doing.”

It did not take long for Mr. Brenner to prove himself. “He fits right in,” says Mr. Phillips. “I have no problem assigning things to him. He is one of the guys. That’s pretty much what this business is like. Once you’re through the door, you’re one of the guys.”

Mr. Brenner hopes that his work at WFDU will one day translate into a paid job in the broadcast field. In the meantime, he looks forward to his weekly stint at the station. He also volunteers

at the Valley Cottage Library where he categorizes children’s DVDs, video games, TV shows and music. He participates in ARC’s *Art in Motion* group where he takes photographs, is involved in art projects and visits museums, galleries and sites of historical interest with like-minded friends. He volunteers weekly at the Jawonio Playing and Learning Together Preschool. He is an avid sports fan. “I like the Yankees, the Jets and the Knicks,” he says. And he is an aficionado of all things related to comics. Without fail, Mr. Brenner and his father David attend the yearly Comic Con Convention at the Javits Center in Manhattan.

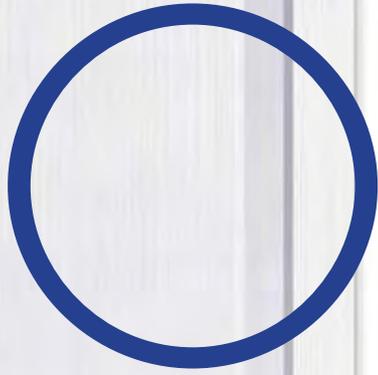
A willing student and a hard worker, Mr. Brenner finds his time at WFDU to be one of the highlights of his week. “There is always something happening here. This is radio,” says Mr. Phillips. “This is fun.”

Mr. Brenner concurs and adds, “Michael (Phillips) is a cool guy.” ■

WFDU Radio is located at 89.1MHz on the radio dial and is aired live Tuesdays through Fridays from 1:15 am to 3:45 pm and all weekend long until Monday at 3:45pm. Content is continuous on the web at wfd�.fm.



From Left: Kenny O’Boyle, Operations Manager; Duff Sheffield, General Manager; Alex Hamme, Intern; Michael Phillips, Chief Engineer. Michael Brenner, seated at center



OPENING DOORS

Meaningful employment for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities has been an objective of ARC of Rockland since the agency's inception more than 60 years ago. Traditionally, that objective has been satisfied through a combination of employment opportunities in business and industry in the County and through the operation of a Sheltered Workshop. While the more skilled workshop employees earn a sufficient wage, some workers receive a Department of Labor authorized subminimum wage.

"Years ago, the concept of people engaging in piecework for payment in a sheltered setting was forward thinking," explains ARC Director of Career Services Kathy Canter. "Despite the original intention, times have changed. It's important that all people have the chance to participate in meaningful community opportunities in integrated settings."

The current agenda for the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), states that all workshops will close by 2020. The plan—which mirrors a national trend—is based upon an agreement reached with the Federal government.

In recognition of the need to secure integrated employment opportunities, ARC of Rockland applied for and received funding from the State to transition people from the workshop setting to the community by 2017. This goal, however, is subject to modification in the event that State or Federal legislation give additional choice to people employed in workshop settings.

THE TRANSFORMATION

“The thinking behind this is a commitment to ensure that people of *all* abilities are integrated into society-at-large,” says ARC Executive Director Carmine Marchionda. “People with disabilities live in our communities, attend our schools, frequent our shops and are involved in recreational activities. It stands to reason that there is no need to shelter people simply because they require some support by agencies such as ARC.”

Through ARC of Rockland’s Career Services Division, some 100 men and women currently work full or part time in businesses and industries at locations throughout the County and surrounding areas. Approximately 190 adults live in in one of ARC’s 28 homes in Rockland neighborhoods. On a daily basis, dozens of people volunteer their time with non-profit organizations including Meals on Wheels, Keep Rockland Beautiful and People to People. Whether it involves education, housing, employment, volunteerism, recreation, attendance at houses of worship or social functions, most individuals who require support through ARC of Rockland are involved in activities and events in the broader community.

However, approximately 150 adults work full or part time in ARC’s Sheltered Workshop. For some, the workshop has been a daily destination for decades. As is often the case for longtime employees of any industry, there is a reluctance to leave the comfort and familiarity of the setting.

THE FUTURE

“Moving from the known to the unknown—even if the latter is a better choice—can be unnerving at the very least,” says Ms. Canter. There are those for whom the transition is a smooth segue into employment elsewhere.

For others, transition means choosing and participating in a variety of daily activities that take place at sites throughout the County. “This could be anything from volunteering at a local animal shelter to taking swimming lessons, to touring area museums with a group of friends,” says Jessica Pizzutello, Senior Director of Day Habilitation Services. “The bonds established in the workshop setting are important. Whenever possible, we see to it that friendships are maintained. And we work closely with our Residential Division to encourage former co-workers to get together on weekends and evenings. Our goal is to expand horizons, but we want to maintain the positive links that were forged during the years people spent in the workshop.”

Mr. Marchionda acknowledges that fostering a smooth transition for all 150 people is not an easy task. A grant in the amount of \$579,926 is helping to fund the ARC project entitled, *The Bridge to Success*. The grant was awarded to ARC in January, 2015 by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities through the New York State Balancing Incentive Program (BIP) Transformation Fund.

THE PROCESS

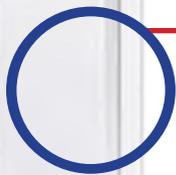
“We have hired professional Transition Coordinators and Community Specialists to assess the skills and goals of each of the men and women. Based upon the assessments, the Specialists will design personalized transition plans to help each person find his or her niche,” says Dr. Steven J. Rubinsky, ARC of Rockland Deputy Executive Director. Dr. Rubinsky spearheaded the grant application process.

Kristi Ramos, a 16-year veteran of ARC of Rockland, has been named Coordinator of *The Bridge to Success*. Most recently, she was Assistant Director of ARC Staff

Continued on page 12



L-R: Dr. Patrick McGreevy, Kristi Ramos, Kathy Canter, Carmine Marchionda, Jessica Pizzutello, Dr. Steven J. Rubinsky



OPENING DOORS

Continued from page 11

Development and Training. In her new position, she oversees two Transition Coordinators and six Community Specialists and is responsible for ensuring that the initiative moves

forward while not losing sight of the impact it has on each person involved. “We intend to be systematic and methodical in implementing this project. It is not one size fits all, and we expect to devise individual plans that make sense for each person’s future,” says Ms. Ramos. Prior to finalizing transition plans, team meetings will take place with the individual, staff members, family members and other people whose input the person feels will be helpful in planning for a new phase of his or her life. Says Ms. Ramos, “I see the *Bridge to Success* as a way for people to benefit from new experiences and new opportunities.”

AN OVERVIEW

The guiding force behind the transition project is Patrick McGreevy, PhD, BCBA-D, a renowned expert in the field of behavior analysis. “Dr. McGreevy has come on board as a consultant to ARC during the roll out of the transition

project,” says Dr. Rubinsky. “He has met with our staff members, members of our Board of Directors, families and the people we support. His book, *Essential for Living*, co-authored with Troy Fry and Colleen Cornwall, is the model we are using for individualized

assessments, skills training and transition planning.”

From Dr. McGreevy’s perspective, “Living means participating in every aspect of life to the best of one’s ability.” To that end, Dr. McGreevy has delineated a series of eight functions which he believes are essential to functioning within society and within an employment environment.

“Communication is first and foremost,” says Dr. McGreevy. “Can you let your employer know when you need something?” he asks. “Everyone needs a method of communication. But there are people with developmental disabilities who are exclusively listeners.”

“Can you wait when someone asks you to wait?” Dr. McGreevy wants to know. “Can you wait if your supervisor is busy at the moment?” According to Dr. McGreevy, the ability to bide one’s time is requisite.

With *Essential for Living* as a guide, ARC’s Community Specialists and Transition Coordinators are meeting with each of the people currently employed in the workshop to determine which, if any of the essentials could use improvement. “There are two ways to evaluate an individual. One is to interview someone who knows that person well and ask questions about what skills that person might have,” says Dr. McGreevy. “You could interview the person in question, but in general, we are not usually the best reporters of ourselves.

“The other way to assess skills is to observe people in community settings and see how they fare.” By way of example, Dr. McGreevy asks. “Does the person know how take public transportation to his or her job?”

Dr. McGreevy explains that



Patrick McGreevy, PhD

“LIVING MEANS PARTICIPATING IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE TO THE BEST OF ONE’S ABILITY.”

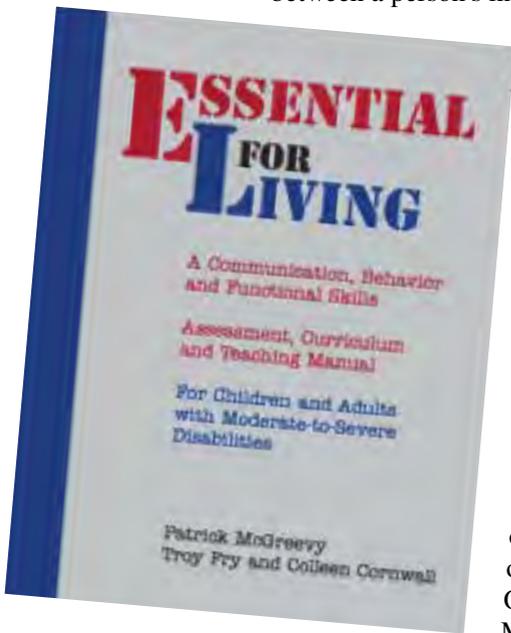
ESSENTIAL FOR LIVING

1. Can you make your needs and wants known?
2. Can you wait when someone asks you to wait?
3. Can you make transitions, take turns and share?
4. Can you willingly do things that people ask you to do?
5. Can you accept ‘no, later’ and ‘no, never’?
6. Will you follow directions related to health and safety?
7. Will you complete tasks of daily living related to health and safety?
8. Will you tolerate situations related to health and safety?

sometimes out of concern for the man or woman, or because of time constraints, caregivers do things that someone could and should do for him or herself. “For example, even if it is more expedient to assist a person in putting on his or her coat, if that person is physically capable of doing so, than the skill can and should be learned. Assessment need not take long. In general, once several deficits are recognized, the Community Specialist should stop assessing and teach the skills.”

MOVING FORWARD

When it comes to practical application, Dr. McGreevy notes that, “In order to be effective, generalization has to occur. There is a difference between a person’s knowing how to



fold one’s clothing at home and transferring that skill to the folding of merchandise in a retail clothing store.”

The transition plans dovetail with ARC of Rockland’s ongoing focus on Personal Outcome Measures

(POMs). Instituted in 2013, every person who receives services through ARC is participating in a POMs conversation with an ARC staff member. The conversations are designed to determine the individuals’ short and long-range needs, dreams and aspirations. Plans are then set in motion to help each person achieve the desired outcome. Transition assessments take into account the information gathered through POMs conversations. Dr. McGreevy notes that sometimes one has to be introduced to new opportunities in order to define dreams—hence the importance of opening doors to the community.

“Whatever the driving force behind the concept—the closing of the workshop, POMs conversations, assessments or transition plans—the bottom line,” says Mr. Marchionda, “is the immersion of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities into life within the community.” ■



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Jason Ross in the Driver's Seat

Jason Ross, 35, of New City, New York, holds a Bachelor's Degree in biology with a minor in psychology from C.W. Post College (now LIU Post). He is a graduate student at the CUNY School of Professional Studies where his designated area of interest is Disability Studies. He is employed as the Self-Advocacy liaison for Independence Residences Inc. in Woodhaven, NY. He has an active social life, a long-term career goal and a reputation for dogged determination. Mr. Ross is Autistic.

SELF-ASSURANCE

“A person gets to choose if he or she wants to use *person first* identity (as in a person with autism) or *identity first* language (as in Autistic person—with a capital A),” he explains. “I prefer to be known as an Autistic or Neurodivergent person because I celebrate and embrace my identity. It is okay to be different.”

Although he did not receive a diagnosis of autism until the age of 23, Mr. Ross says, “I always felt different. I tried being like everyone else for a long time. As a child, I saw a neurologist, a pediatrician, a psychiatrist. Even after my diagnosis, I still felt different until I got involved with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN). That is when I started developing a sense of who I am.”

The self-confident attitude exhibited by Mr. Ross was hard won. “I have never met anybody who has the strength and tenacity that Jason has,” says Mr. Ross’ mother Lois. Although she suspected that something was “not quite right” from the time he was an infant, the professionals did not confirm her concerns. “There were just things about Jason—he didn’t smile, he rarely cried, he didn’t know how to interact with other kids. I kept complaining to my pediatrician, but he said Jason would outgrow it.” For a period of time, the young Jason was schooled in self-contained classrooms, but he was ultimately mainstreamed and graduated from Clarkstown North High School in 1997.

A social worker by profession, Ms. Ross says, “I have seen kids struggle, and I’ve known parents who don’t want to hear that there is something wrong with their child. But

there is nothing wrong—it is just that some children are different from what society calls normal. Jason is what he is today because of his strength and passion and all of the love and support he has gotten along the way. My goal was to make sure my kids reached their full potential and were able to function in society as adults.”

Mr. Ross credits some of his success to the support he has received from his family. His mother, his father Rick, older brother Brandon and younger brother Eric have been a source of strength.

The determination to achieve is an ongoing theme in Mr. Ross’ day-to-day life. He is currently among a growing group of men and women receiving Self Directed Services through the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

SELF-DIRECTION

Unlike the traditional manner in which services are made available via OPWDD funds, “Jason will be in charge of all of his services. He will hire the staff, he will determine where and when he wants to live independently,” says ARC Service Coordinator Alexander Messer. “Jason is making all the decisions for his life.”

Mr. Messer holds a Master’s Degree in Social Work from Fordham University. As is the case with Mr. Ross, “I worked while attending graduate school. When I look back now, I wonder how I did it. I feel as though Jason and I have that connection. I understand some of the pressures he is under. Jason is one of the most self-aware people I have ever come across. He knows his weaknesses as well as his strengths, and he is looking to hire support staff to assist him in overcoming his challenges.”

It is the role of Self-Direction Broker Dana Dago-Clark of the Westchester Institute for Human Development to help Mr. Ross manage his budget in a manner that conforms to regulations promulgated by OPWDD and the Centers for Medicaid Services.

According to Ms. Dago-Clark, when an individual applies for Self-Directed Services, the results of a comprehensive series of assessments determine that person’s needs for support in areas ranging from health and cognitive behavior to skills and aspirations. “The assessments are thorough and extensive and ultimately generate scores which determine a budget amount allocated to that person. Once that budget has been determined, the broker who has been selected by the individual, works together with that person, the Medicaid Service Coordinator, family members, friends, coworkers and any other people selected by the individual to determine more precisely how the allotted funds should be spent. Quarterly meetings enable the group to evaluate the success of the plan and, while they cannot increase the budget, “we can, within reason, re-allocate funds within the plan,” explains Ms. Dago-Clark. “Jason is a



Jason Ross with parents Lois and Rick

remarkable individual and a very strong advocate for himself—very thoughtful in the way he manages the relationships around him and articulates his needs. It may take him more time to achieve his goals, but if he takes it slow and steady, he will do well.”

Among Mr. Ross’ goals is that of living on his own within a year’s time. Towards that end, he will hire people to help him better manage his finances. He also intends to improve his cooking skills. “And when I am out in the community, sometimes I think out loud. I want to be able to know how to control that.”

Looking towards the future, Mr. Ross wants to create a nonprofit organization, “to help Autistic youth and adults—mostly youth—to feel empowered, to live with self-determination, to be able to do the same things non-Autistic people do, to be comfortable with who they are in society and not be judged, stigmatized or stereotyped.”

EMPLOYABILITY

Employment, from Mr. Ross’ perspective, remains a stumbling block for many people with autism spectrum disorders. He has contributed to a book entitled, “An Autistic View of Employment ... Advice, Essays, Stories and More from Autistic Self Advocates,” published by the

Continued on page 18



Jason Ross in the Driver's Seat

Continued from page 17

National Autism Resource and Information Center and The Autism Self-Advocacy Network.

Mr. Ross believes that prospective employers should be more willing to make accommodations for people who may exhibit characteristics associated with autism. Difficulty in making eye-contact, for instance, or occasional hand-flapping, should not preclude hiring a qualified candidate. "Employers need to understand that just because someone is Autistic doesn't mean that he or she isn't a capable person." He suggests that "Self-actualization among Autistic people is one way to help society (and employers) understand and accept differences among people. Human life is imperfect," he states. "And disability is part of the human experience." He regularly conveys this message in his professional role at Independence Residences Inc. where he works two days each week. The organization provides both residential and day services to people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

"One of the things we have been trying to promote is self-advocacy on an individual and program level," says Doug Triebel, Director of Quality Improvement and Staff Development. "Among other responsibilities, Jason's job entails working with groups of people for a period of time, helping to facilitate their meetings and helping them learn how to voice their rights. Jason is also involved in identifying ways in which programs can better connect individuals to their communities. He sits in on the agency's orientation meetings where he provides input from the perspective of the individuals we support. He stays on top of self-advocacy issues locally, statewide and nationally. He's energetic, bright, tech savvy and resourceful, and he has an incredible network of peers."

BUILDING BRIDGES

Networking, according to Mr. Ross, has been essential to his professional life and equally important to building his social life. "It's not that I don't want to be with people who are not Autistic, but I am more comfortable with the Autistic community," he explains. Among his many friends is Danielle Lazzara of Queens, NY.

"I met Jason at *Adaptation*, a program at the JCC in Manhattan for young adults with special needs who

have a high level of independence," says Ms. Lazzara. "I'm the one who told him about Self-Direction because Jason is bright and assertive. He makes people realize their full potential. I want to see what Jason is going to become in the world."

Chester Finn is the Client Advocate with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), a two-term member of the Equal Opportunities Commission and another example of the power of networking. "I was at a conference and met someone who knew Jason and thought Self Direction would be a good

fit. So I called Jason and talked with him and helped him." In the ensuing months, Mr. Finn invited Mr. Ross to attend an Equal Opportunities Forum in Washington, DC. The event concerned employment, housing, social security and the rights of people with disabilities. When Mr. Ross applied for a Kennedy Fellowship (which he ultimately received), he asked Mr. Finn to serve as his mentor. Says Mr. Finn, "I think Jason will achieve most of his goals, and it's always good to have some extra goals towards which you can strive."

Jason Ross is confident that Self Direction will serve him well as he moves forward in pursuit of his dreams. Says Mr. Ross, "Right now, I need some things to help guide me so that I can live my life 100 percent." ■

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—JASON ROSS



Jason Ross with ARC Service Coordinator Alexander Messer

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*Philomena Simons
volunteering at Catholic
Charities Community
Services Food Pantry
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*Zach Canter and Cindy Gousse with
dog treats they baked and delivered to
Hudson Valley Paws for a Cause*



*Above: Debbie Greene,
right, with Janet Fischer at
the Lion's Share Commu-
nity Friendship Garden in
Pearl River, NY*



*Aaron Wolfe,
along with other ARC
of Rockland volunteers
helped prepare a
mailing for the Garner Art
Center's Art Festival in
Garnerville, NY.*



*At Left: Michael Dowe and
Greg Wilson volunteering
at Tevaland, Petting
Farm in Hillburn, NY.*

“I want to be able to do things to better myself. If you are out in the community, you are doing something.”

Steven Berkowitz knows whereof he speaks. He works several days each week at Old Navy in the Palisades Center Mall. On the remaining days, he participates in *Arc in Motion*. This popular ARC offering provides a range of opportunities for people to become involved in activities in Rockland and neighboring counties.

“Each *Arc in Motion* group is comprised of four or five individuals with similar interests,” explains Team Leader Jodi Taylor-Getz. “For some, this means potential employment, for others it involves volunteer work or recreational programs. It’s all about giving adults choices as to how and where they wish to spend their days.”

Art, in its many forms, is the common thread for members of one *Arc in Motion* group. “Typical destinations are art exhibitions, museums and galleries in the tri-state area,” says Ms. Taylor-Getz. Participants also enjoy being part of community-based art projects or honing their skills as photographers. “Some of their photos wind up on ARC of Rockland’s Facebook site and homepage—with photo credits given to the photographer,” notes Ms. Taylor-Getz.

A love of animals bonds the volunteers who donate time to the Hi Tor Animal Care Center in Pomona, the Staten Island Hope Animal Rescue at PETCO in Nanuet and other animal-related venues. “Depending upon the needs of the site, the volunteers might find themselves walking dogs, cleaning cages, feeding the animals or playing with the cats and kittens,” explains Ms. Taylor-Getz. “Volunteering time with animals could ultimately lead to jobs.”

For individuals who want to participate in the community by giving back, *Arc in Motion* offers several options. Organizing items at thrift shops including Angel’s Attic in New City and the Second Time Around Thrift Shop in Suffern, delivering food through Meals on Wheels and stocking shelves at the TOUCH Food Pantry in Congers are examples.

Where fitness is a priority, playing basketball at the St. Lawrence Community Health & Sports Center in Hillburn and walking the trails in local parks and nature preserves allow for daily interaction with other exercise enthusiasts.

One *Arc in Motion* group is geared exclusively towards honing skills with an eye to employment. Setting tables at Brighton Gardens, an assisted living community in Saddle River, NJ, or stocking supplies at the Bergen Regional Medical Center in Paramus, NJ, are ideal pre-vocational sites.

Linda Roeser attends classes at the Successful Learning Center on the grounds of Dominican College, sets tables at Brighton Gardens two days each week and is enrolled in a Work Readiness course at the Rockland Independent Living Center in New City. “I like going out to different places, meeting new people. I want to learn different things,” says Ms. Roeser. “This is new for me.”

Kevin Jones concurs. “I like it,” he says of *Arc in Motion*. “I love going to a lot of places because I don’t want to be bored. *Arc in Motion* is a good thing.” Mr. Jones enjoys classes at the Successful Learning Center, bowling and playing basketball. “I love delivering for Meals on Wheels,” he adds. “I help people out in the community. I like being helpful.”

“Not every person participates in *Arc in motion* every day,” explains Ms. Taylor-Getz. “Some people work part time or have other obligations. The overall goal is to help the members of each group become integral members of the community. It is rewarding to watch people thrive in new environments. We know that *Arc in Motion* is making a difference.” ■



Linda Roeser volunteering at Brighton Gardens, a division of Sunrise Senior Living



Nancy Murdock, Rob Abel and David Gundlach volunteer with Halfway Hounds, a not-for-profit organization that takes in dogs from area shelters.



Francesco Vitiello, Jacob Feinstein and Solomon Lee help with weeding and mending fences as volunteers with the Mahwah Environmental volunteers Organization (MEVO). The group meets each Monday at the MEVO Farm at the Campgaw Mountain Reservation in Mahwah, NJ. Produce is donated to local food pantries.

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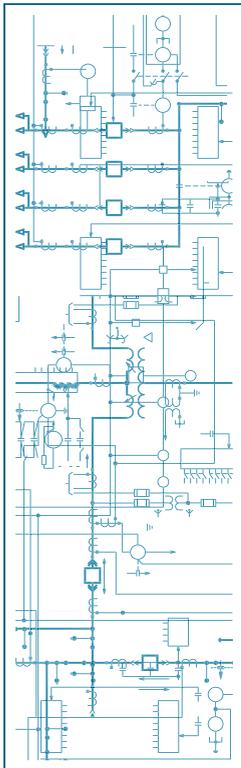


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Highlights & HAPPENINGS

The Good Earth

Danny Skrzec volunteers at Catholic Charities garden in Haverstraw, NY. The vegetables grown in the garden are given to families who utilize the Catholic Charities food pantry. Catholic Charities Services' Food Bank is available to Rockland residents on a one-time-per month household basis.



The Alchemy of Art and Science

Habilitation Specialist Amanda Skrapits teaches participants how to use a heat source (in this case, a hair dryer) to melt crayons onto canvas in order to create unique works of art. Pictured with Ms. Skrapits is Kimberly VanSlyck.

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Professional Health Care with a Heart

Located at 25 Hemlock Drive, Congers, NY, ARC HealthResources specializes in the care of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Please visit and 'like' the new ARC HealthResources of Rockland Facebook page. To learn more about ARC HealthResources please call 845.267.0110.

Pictured: Medical Director Dr. Galit Sacajiu with Andrew Raush.





Abigail Suchanyc

Thomas O'Neill

Pomp and Circumstance!

Fifty-one boys and girls made parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends proud as they accepted diplomas during the June 25th graduation ceremony at ARC's Prime Time for Kids Early Learning Center in New City. There were tears and cheers as the children performed for a standing room only audience. For additional photos of the big day visit the Prime Time Schools of Rockland Facebook page.

Teamwork

That was the name of the game during Sports Week. Upper School students Rocco Arena and Nico Boffoli are pictured at a Rockland Boulder's Game. Frankie Jennings spent some time with the Boulder Bird. The Prime Time Upper School emphasizes the importance of involvement in community activities. What better way than to enjoy a hometown baseball game?



Club ARC Summer

Sports, trips, games, friends... that's the essence of Club ARC, a unique camp experience for tweens and teens headquartered at Camp Bullowa in Stony Point, NY. Activities include archery, swimming in ARC of Rockland's indoor therapeutic pool in New City, bowling, and dance lessons at New York DanceSport in New City. It is never too early to plan for next summer. Please call Colleen Rogers at 845.267.2500 to learn more about Club ARC.

Pictured Standing L-R: Luis Ceballos, Larissa Ward, Gordon Cooper. Sitting: Shmuel Fishman, left, and William Sicklick

Highlights & HAPPENINGS

Strike!

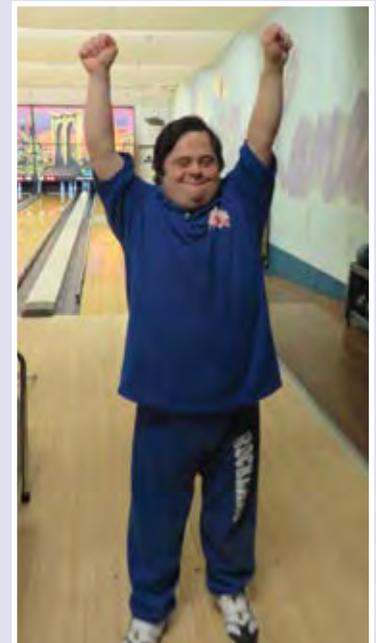
ARC of Rockland was the winner at the agency's annual Bowling FUN-Raiser, March 8 at Hi-Tor Lanes in West Haverstraw, NY. Family and friends joined ARC's recreational and competitive bowlers for a morning of fun and fund raising. Trophies were presented to high-scorers: Eva Melingeni, Michael Marchionda and Scott Edwards.



Scott Edwards



Ervin T. Williams and Eva Melingeni



Mark Nowak



Carmine Marchionda, center back, and family



Kathy Bernhardt and Karen Gritmon



Tara Lewis-Hicks with Savannah, 2, and Bryce, 7

Rockland County Executive Director Ed Day with Colleen Rogers. Sam Varano in background

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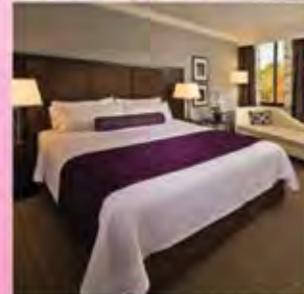
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Rose Baronian



ARC of Rockland mourns the passing of Rose Baronian. Ms. Baronian passed away February 16, 2015 at age 85. A beloved resident of an ARC home since 1990, she was also an enthusiastic member of ARC of Rockland's Senior Center and a participant in many activities sponsored by the ARC Recreation Department.

Described by friends as 'feisty and spirited,' Ms. Baronian pursued a range of interests. "She enjoyed sewing, cooking (she loved cookies and bananas), shopping and singing," says Team Leader Sue Roth. Always polite and well mannered, she voiced her gratitude with a cheerful 'Thank you, honey.' Ms. Baronian was interested in fashion—frequently commenting on shoe and clothing styles.

Birthdays held special significance. "She looked forward to a cake and gifts," recalls Ms. Roth. "Rose enjoyed talking about her family. She had a soft spot for children and was thrilled when she received packages from relatives."

"Rose's smile warmed the hearts of those around her," states Residential Manager Miraline Rivera. "Her laughter was like music to our ears. Rose was just a wonderful and sweet woman. We miss her."

Direct Support Professional Myrva Lapointe says of Ms. Baronian, "She was a kind woman who made others laugh with her quick-witted comments and sweet demeanor."

Ms. Baronian is survived by niece Lucine Kouyoumjian and husband Joseph, half-sister Anna Azizian and husband Vic and niece Jacqueline Baronian and husband Robert Kahn. ■

Gloria Botwinick



Gloria Botwinick, advocate par excellence for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities, passed away on May 16, 2015 at age 80. A member of the Jawonio Board of Directors for more than 40 years, she also served on numerous committees at ARC of Rockland.

Ms. Botwinick and her husband Arnold (A former

member of the ARC of Rockland Board of Directors) were a dynamic duo, working hand-in-hand to help create a range of services and supports, including community residences and transportation. The Botwinicks were recognized publicly for their contribution to the field of developmental disabilities. In 2009 they were recipients of the NYS Rehabilitation Association Martha Fitzpatrick Citizen Award, and in 2014, they were inducted into the Rockland County Civil Rights Hall of Fame.

In 1995, Ms. Botwinick retired from her position as Coordinator of Volunteer Services for the Rockland County Department of Social Services.

"Gloria Botwinick was a dynamo—smart, quick-witted, determined and loving," says ARC Deputy Executive Director Steven J. Rubinsky. "When it came to advocating for the rights of people with disabilities, she understood the meaning of the phrase, 'actions speak louder than words.'"

"Gloria was passionate in her commitment to equality and justice for people with disabilities. Whatever it took—bus rides to Albany, meetings with legislators, attendance at ARC and Jawonio events—Gloria was there. She was one of a kind," says Jane Zemon, Associate Executive Director for Quality Services. "We miss her."

Ms. Botwinick is survived by her husband Arnold, daughter Barbara and son-in-law Michael Algranati, son Michael and grandchildren Josh, Jacob and Samantha Algranati. ■

Brendan Normoyle



Brendan Normoyle was a respected and much loved member of the extended ARC of Rockland family. He is sorely missed by the many friends he made through his longtime affiliation with this agency.

A participant in ARC's day program for 33 years, Mr. Normoyle passed away on March 25, 2015 at the age of 53.

"I had the privilege of working with Brendan for ten years," says ARC Habilitation Specialist Samuel Yankson. "He had a good sense of humor and a delightful smile. It was always a joy to see him."

Mr. Normoyle took pleasure in adhering to daily routines. He enjoyed playing ball, and he especially liked taking long walks. "He was easy to please. Whatever the activity, Brendan was a willing participant," says Mr. Yankson. "He got along well with his peers and with ARC

staffers. We are deeply saddened by his passing.”

Crystal Miller is Residence Supervisor of the New York Foundling Home in Nanuet where Mr. Normoyle lived since 1989. Having held that position for less than a year, Ms. Miller says she came to know Mr. Normoyle primarily by visiting him in the hospital. “He was a vibrant, sociable man,” she says. “His housemates loved him and miss him.”

“Brendan was a gentle person,” says Justine Christakos, Associate Executive Director for Day Habilitation. “Staff members enjoyed spending time with him. Brendan was a mild-mannered and good-natured man. We think of him often. He was very much a positive presence in our lives.”

Mr. Normoyle is survived by his parents Anne and James, his sisters Noreen and Peggy and brothers Seamus and Kevin. ■

Henry Umansky



Henry Umansky, described by friends as a handsome, soft-spoken gentleman, died Friday, March 6, at age 77. He was a kind and dear friend to the entire ARC of Rockand community.

“Henry loved swimming. He spent his childhood with his family in Massachusetts and grew to love the ocean,” says Director of ARC Senior

Services Juliette Shreeves-Asamoah. “He was always eager to swim in ARC’s heated, therapeutic pool in New City. He thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the art therapy group in the Senior Center, and we could always count on Henry to participate in our Earth Day activities. He liked watching movie classics. He held several jobs when he was a young man. In the months before he passed away, Mr. Umansky spent time volunteering at the Orangetown Jewish Center.

At a memorial service for Mr. Umansky, Miguel Gonzalez, a former housemate said, “We did things together—swimming, playing bingo.” No matter what activity was suggested, “Henry never said no.” Another friend who is visually impaired recalled the many times that Mr. Umansky helped to guide him from one place to another. “Thank you, Henry,” he stated. “You held my hand.”

Mr. Umansky is survived by his sister Susan Abraham, brother-in-law Philip, brother Jack, nieces, nephews and grand nieces and nephews. ■



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