



## “The Biggest Resource We Have”

At times, I get frustrated when I hear how we lack resources in our field, and how everyone thinks of money first. But the most important resource we all have in our lives are people, and in our field, our direct care staff. In a time like ours where the workforce crisis continues to challenge many every day, it is urgent that we all make sure that our direct care staff are seen, heard, and valued, as well as that we find ways to minimize burnout or losing them. Now more than ever, we must learn how to recognize and celebrate our staff and helpers, especially during this holiday season!

### Finding and keeping staff is everyone’s responsibility!

Therefore, during this workforce crisis time it is crucial that government departments, agencies, professionals, and families work together. Moreover, it is important that the people we support, and their families, become part of the whole journey of finding, hiring, supporting, and keeping our staff.

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“When we do the best we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another” – Anne Sullivan



# Letter from the CEO

## *The Biggest Resource We Have continued..*

### Emotional Intelligence

It takes Emotional Intelligence, time, and inquisitiveness to get to know each other. And our staff are not different! Moreover, it takes time and effort to find ways to value and show our appreciation to our staff. Also, it is important that during this workforce crisis our agencies, those we support, and their families, be more careful not to take advantage of the staff and their willingness to serve and please as it is sometimes so easy to do so. Direct care staff are part of the team. Their role is crucial and their voice essential.

Also, during this time we all must be more Emotionally Intelligent and careful about the cultural and political differences between us. We must be more mindful about our language and surroundings, and willing to create respectful atmospheres where these differences are treated with respect, as well as avoid potential and unnecessary conflicts, staff losses, or misunderstandings.



### Where would Helen Keller be without Anne Sullivan?

Most staff share the feeling of devaluation that many of the people we support have, and often they express how they don't feel valued, seen, or heard either. I used to often think that if we did our job right, we wouldn't be needed. However, years ago I had a mother ask me, "Where would Helen Keller be without Anne Sullivan?". She pointed out to me how Helen's voice and her mother's voice was not enough. And that it wasn't until Anne Sullivan came that Helen was able to move from the shadows into the light. Furthermore, she expressed how we professionals and staff will always be needed and how hopefully like Anne Sullivan, we might make the commitment for life or as long as possible. As we look ahead and move forward it is important that we keep these concepts in mind as we continue to build and expand our workforce.

Wishing everyone a peaceful and joyous holiday season!

*Luis M. Bachman*  
Chief Executive Officer

### MISSION

*"To Advocate, Educate, and Explore Opportunities for Personal Growth and Fulfillment"*

### EXECUTIVE TEAM

*Luis Bachman CEO*

*Lisa Aiello COO/CFO*

### DIRECTORS

*Axel Valentin*  
Director of Human Resources

*Andrea Morris*  
Director of Family Support Center

*Bridget Crowley*  
Director of Peer Support & Self Advocacy

*Heather Hess*  
Director of AFC

*Grimaldy Rios*  
Director of DDS Programs

### MARKETING AND EVENTS

*Bianca Gill*  
Manager of Marketing, Events & Administration

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Steve Kapp President*

*Peter Carbone Vice President*

*Dana Marks Treasurer*

*Mary Ann Dunlavey Secretary*

*Eileen Duff*

*Diane Hanley*

*Sandra Jones*

*Therese LaPorte*

*Jeff Dickinson*

*Milva Santarelli*

*Joseph Graham*

*Joe Romatelli Director Emeritus*

**Achieve with us.**

# Family Support Connects

## *Special Olympics Partnership Announcement!*

The Arc of GHN is embarking on a new pilot partnership with Special Olympics and the Haverhill Stars Program to add recreational/competitive sports to our recreation programming. We currently support many individuals who already participate and/or compete with Special Olympics, and we are happy to support them in this additional capacity.

The current sports offered are:

- *Winter Season (Nov-Mar) - Basketball (Unified and traditional) and alpine skiing (traditional)*
- *Spring Season (Mar-June) - Track and field (traditional) and swimming (traditional)*
- *Summer Season (June-Aug) - Softball (Unified and traditional)*
- *Fall Season (Aug- Nov) - Flag Football (Unified) and cheerleading (traditional)*

The sports offered are both traditional and/or unified, meaning athletes with and without disabilities participate. Each program runs 6-8 weeks and requires commitment and excitement.

### **COACHES & VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

We are looking for committed, patient, enthusiastic people willing to volunteer as coaches, assistant coaches and chaperones (you need not be an expert; Special Olympics will provide sport-specific training for those in the coaching roles).

For more info to become an athlete or coach/volunteer please contact Tracy Johnson, Special Olympics & Haverhill Stars Coordinator, at [tjohnson@thearcofghn.org](mailto:tjohnson@thearcofghn.org) or Neala Mercier, Recreation Supervisor at [nmercier@thearcofghn.org](mailto:nmercier@thearcofghn.org).

Or sign up online using the following link or QR Code below: [www.specialolympicsma.org/join-our-community](http://www.specialolympicsma.org/join-our-community)



**Special Olympics**  
Massachusetts



For more information on the Family Support Center visit us at [www.thearcofghn.org](http://www.thearcofghn.org)

**Andrea Morris, Director of Family Supports**  
[amorris@thearcofghn.org](mailto:amorris@thearcofghn.org) or 978-373-0552 x211

**Sreya Shepard, Family Support Center Manager**  
[sshepard@thearcofghn.org](mailto:sshepard@thearcofghn.org) or 978-373-0552 x241

**Rowan DeAza, Bilingual Family Support Navigator**  
[rdeaza@thearcofghn.org](mailto:rdeaza@thearcofghn.org) or 978-373-0552 x216

#### Locations:

57 Wingate St, Suite 301, Haverhill MA 01832  
4D Winter St, Newburyport MA 01950

# Peer Support & Self Advocacy Connects

## ***New Peer Support Youth Group: “Stronger Together”***

In September, we kicked off an exciting new support group, “Stronger Together,” for young people aged 18-26 to find their voice and create the lives they want. Destiny Yeager and Bridget Crowley are co-facilitating this interactive group. Destiny is shining as a thoughtful and empowering mentor for the next generation of leaders. In December we will celebrate the holidays with friends from the AFTER Program and Peer Support.

In January we are planning to meet up for a cooking class! If you are interested in this group, please e-mail Bridget at [bcrowley@thearcofghn.org](mailto:bcrowley@thearcofghn.org).

**STRONGER**  
*Together*

## ***Supported Decision Making and Alternatives to Guardianship***

The Arc of GHN recruited a wonderful group to talk about how they are making decisions and the kind of support they want with The Institute for Community Inclusion on August 29th. This information helped to shape a grant we created to increase knowledge and understanding of guardianship and alternatives. You can learn more about this topic here: <https://www.youth-voice.org>. Thanks to Emily, Ollie, Nichelle, Destiny and Dan for joining Bridget Crowley and staff from ICI. We had a very lively discussion with the following invaluable insights regarding rights and choice:

*“People don’t really know what we’re thinking. We are the people going through it.”* Destiny

*“IEPs are way too linear.”* -Dan

*“I thought I had to do what my teachers recommended. I didn’t know I had a choice about what to do after 18.”* - Nichelle

*“If you’re not being respected like an adult, how are you going to rise to the occasion?”* -- Destiny

*“If you aren’t advocating you aren’t going to be happy with the results. People with disabilities should put in the work too. We should be able to do that.”* -Dan

## ***Leadership Development & Education***

Our Peer Support group held their annual Leadership Retreat in mid-October exploring ways they can grow as leaders and work together. We had a beautiful day together highlighting the gifts we all bring to the world. We are already seeing our team grow stronger. As you’ll see below, we are dedicated to helping everyone have a good life and learn self-determinations skills. We do this by sharing our stories, supporting each other and partnering with others to make it happen.



Our members have been on the move this summer and fall helping educate others in our region and across the State. Here are a few highlights.

- Sandy Jones received the Judi Rodger Mentorship Award at the annual MASS Conference on Oct. 26th
- Nichelle Delgado presented her transition story at the Lawrence Partnership to Employment Consortium Meeting on August 3rd.
- Therese LaPorte and Christina Marchand spoke about the importance of voting at two Voting Forums at the Haverhill Public Library on September 16, 2024.
- Nichelle Delgado presented her story on October 10th at the APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) Conference in Worcester.
- Nichelle Delgado, Bridget Crowley and Luis Bachman presented at the Statewide Self Direction Conference in Marlborough on October 22nd on Empowering Individuals and Families in Their Role
- Therese LaPorte is working to promote Think College to let everyone know about the options to go to college and gain experience outside your home. Stay tuned for more to come on this.

Looking ahead to January we will kick off our year with creating our Vision for 2025. Our first Peer Support Meeting of the year will be on Thursday, January 16, 2025 4-6PM at 57 Wingate Street, Haverhill, basement level.

# AFC Connects

## Success Story - Demitri Ballou

Demitri Ballou is a young friendly member of our AFC program. Over the past few years, Demitri has been working hard towards his independence with the support of his loving family.



When Demitri turned 22 in April 2024 he started working at an elementary school cafeteria for a few months. He now works at Triton Regional High School two days a week in the cafeteria and loves serving food to the students. He fills an important role in the kitchen, restocking items and washing dishes. Aside from work Demitri is also passionate about physical fitness. He goes to the gym on his own a couple times a week. He also works out at home on days he cannot make it to the gym.

Demitri also makes it a priority to stay involved in his local community. He is involved with the Special Olympics and is currently playing football. This past summer, he joined the Special Olympics summer games and had a great time! He also attends many Arc recreation activities including movie nights, bowling, and monthly dances. In his spare time, he meets up with friends to visit museums and parks. As a way to give back to the community Demitri has recently started volunteering at a local food pantry.



In effort to further increase his independence, Demitri took a train ride alone to Boston and met a family member at North Station. This past spring, he also started riding the miniMEVA to work, the gym, Arc activities, and to spend time with friends.

At home, Demitri is a great older brother to TJ, his 4-year-old brother. He teaches him good manners and plays with him often to help his mom. Demitri's family has helped him increase independence with his ADLs at home. His long-term goal is to one day live independently and maybe work at a car dealership. We all look forward to seeing what Demitri accomplishes next!



# DDS Programs Connects

## Direct Care Staff Recognition - Candida Demorla

Congratulations to Candida Demorla for receiving this quarters "Appreciation Award"! Candida helps support an individual of ours named Christina and has provided such great care for her. Christina absolutely loves working with Candy, she's always smiling when she talks about things they do together.

Candy recently took a couple of the people she supports (on separate occasions) to the Topsfield Fair this year which they all really enjoyed! She's great at making our individuals feel comfortable and valued and really helps boost their confidence and self-esteem. Christina's face lights up when talking about Candy and that means the world to us! Thank you, Candy, for all that you do!



WE  
appreciate  
YOU

## Joel Vargas & Ariel Martinez further their skills - Guitar Lessons



Recently two people that we support, Joel Vargas and Ariel Martinez, decided they would like to learn a new skill to help enhance their lives. They chose to learn how to play the guitar! We have noticed an improvement in their happiness and lifestyle, so we wanted to follow up. When asked questions about this new venture this is how they responded:

- *How has learning the guitar improved your life?*  
*Ariel:* It has been great I have improved! I am learning the different numbers in between strings.  
*Joel:* The guitar lessons have been helpful to me because it helps me develop my sensory skills. Most people don't realize I am deaf. But I can follow the tone of music by utilizing the vibration on the floor.
- *What do you like about playing the guitar?*  
*Ariel:* Playing the guitar is great. It makes me happy. I get to speak to my teacher about life and guitar stuff.  
*Joel:* I love everything about my lessons. If I could go twice a week for an hour each day that would be amazing!
- *Are there any other instruments or skills you would like to learn next?*  
*Ariel:* Maybe playing the piano would be cool. I used to go to art class. I would like to start doing that again.  
*Joel:* I already play the harmonica. I would like to perfect that and be able to play both the guitar and harmonica nearly perfectly.
- *Do you want to play guitar for fun or go on stage one day and perform?*  
*Ariel:* I would like to go on stage and perform for other people and hang out with people who like guitars like me.  
*Joel:* Once I become better, I would love to perform along with the church band. I'd love to accomplish this goal soon.

# Thank you to Leo Sarkissian!

## *Celebrating Leo and his Legacy*

As you may or may not know, Leo Sarkissian, former Executive Director at The Arc of Massachusetts has officially retired this year. As we look back on the past 33 years of Leo's work with The Arc we are inspired, grateful, and hopeful that the foundation he has created will continue with the new leadership in place.

Fun fact! Leo was once part of our Board of Directors at The Arc of GHN and we have had the honor to learn from him and also give our feedback to him to push for more change at the higher level for advocacy at The Arc of Massachusetts.

Leo's passion and commitment to this field of work is truly remarkable and worth celebrating! On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 The Arc of Mass held a reception in his honor to recap all of the amazing achievements he has accomplished over the past 33 years in his role.

We look forward to welcoming Maura Sullivan, current Executive Director of The Arc Mass, with open arms as we know her heart lies within the mission of The Arc too. Thank you Leo for everything you have done to support our agency and the people of Massachusetts.



## Great Success for our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual "Tee Off for The Arc" Golf Tourney!

Thank you to all of our loyal Sponsors and Golfers for your support and for joining us for another great year and celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Tee Off for The Arc! 🏌️

Special shout out to our Main Event Sponsor Haverhill Bank! We look forward to our next tournament on August 18, 2025!



## The Arc Appreciation Celebration - September 22, 2024

Our Arc Appreciation Celebration was a great day and despite the weather, we all embraced the day and instead of waiting for the storm to pass, we learned to dance in the rain!

This celebration was meant to honor everyone in The Arc. We recognized our AFC Caregivers, Shared Living Caregivers, and Support Staff for their compassion, hard work, and commitment. They are a vital part of The Arc Team, and the truth is without them we could not accomplish our mission! Together is Better! Thank you for joining us!



# United at The 2024 Arc National Convention

*November 1<sup>st</sup>-November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024*

Hundreds of advocates and representatives from The Arcs all across the United States gathered for the annual Arc National Convention hosted in Columbus Ohio on Nov 1<sup>st</sup>-Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>.

We were fortunate to send a small group of staff and a self advocate from our Arc chapter to join this year's convention and bring back information and knowledge to share with staff and the community.

The Arc National Convention is an unmatched opportunity to connect and learn from advocates, professionals, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their families. There were multiple sessions and presentations on employment, education, advocacy, housing, criminal justice, and more. These sessions proved to *challenge, inspire, and motivate!*

We also enjoyed dinner with some of the Arc's in Massachusetts – Networking, connecting, and sharing info and resources. Looking forward to next year!

## How to Take ACTION!

Call your Representative or go to [www.thearcofmass.org](http://www.thearcofmass.org) and then:

1. Click on Advocacy,
2. Click "Take Action"
3. Click on green "Take Action".



**Hablamos Español, contacte a Rowan DeAza [rdeaza@thearcofghn.org](mailto:rdeaza@thearcofghn.org) o 978-373-0552 x216**