



GREAT NEWS!!! We have been awarded the new Family Support Center for the Merrimack Valley!

We are honored and grateful to announce that we have been chosen by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) as the new **Family Support Center** in the Merrimack Valley! We will be available to service families in the Merrimack Valley and Seacoast communities- with a special focus on the Greater Newburyport area. The locations are:

57 Wingate St, Suite 301, Haverhill MA 01832

4D Winter St, Newburyport MA 01950

Our Family Support Navigators are available to guide you and provide information and referral to services that match your family's needs. Let us help you smooth the path to getting the right support!

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INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Assistance navigating topics such as MassHealth, educational advocacy, financial planning, and transition.

WEBINARS & WORKSHOPS

Collaborating with community partners in sharing information both virtually and in person.

SUPPORT & NETWORKING GROUPS

Bringing families together to share experiences and facilitate connection.

SOCIAL & RECREATION

Offering weekly social activities and help people find community recreational opportunities.



"The thing we need most is each other"



Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass.
It's about learning how to dance in the rain! *-Vivian Greene*



MISSION

“To Advocate, Educate, and Explore Opportunities for Personal Growth and Fulfillment”

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Luis Bachman CEO

Lisa Aiello CFOO

Abigail Eaves CPO

Katelyn Auclair CHRO

PROGRAM DIRECTORS AND MANAGERS

*Heather Hess
Director of AFC*

*Grimaldy Rios
Director of DDS Programs*

*Andrea Morris
Director of Family Supports*

*Barbara Pandolfi
Peer Support Manager*

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Kim Bachman Community Connector

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Welcome Letter from CEO



We would like to take this opportunity on our first newsletter in many years to honor Judi Zacek who recently passed away. Among her many roles and accomplishments, Judi was the Editor of The Arc of Massachusetts' newsletter, **Advocate**. The time, effort, and keen eye for detail Judi put into her work was truly impressive and something to look up to.

Thank you Judi for blazing the trail for us to follow!

It is with great honor that I have been leading one of The Arcs in Massachusetts for the past 22 years. I am committed to the empowering and customizing approaches to serving individuals and families one person at a time. As a passionate advocate dedicated to listening and assisting others to realize their dreams, I am very enthusiastic to have developed such a dedicated team as well as the new Family Support Center in our area to further this mission.

Family support occurs withing families caring for a loved one- this may include a child, an adult or even the parent in the family. In Massachusetts, family support includes "unpaid" or "informal" support by neighbors, families and friends, as well as "paid services" or "formal supports". Through specialist agencies like ours who provide an array of services full stop. These are termed "family support services" and include information and referrals, support and networking, and sometimes financial subsidies.

We eagerly look forward to these new journeys, the new Family Support Center & our Newsletter **The Arc Connects**. We also value the new relationships, partnerships, and collaborations we are forming which will be needed to create the sense of community. It takes a village to support a child or anyone of us who may be in need!

With gratitude, Luis Bachman, CEO

Letter from our Board President

I hope that this newsletter finds you all well. The pandemic has been an incredibly tough time for everyone and especially so for many of the folks that The Arc provides services for. Hats off and thanks to the staff at The Arc for their hard work and determination in finding ways to keep operating through a difficult time.

Today marks the first issue of The Arc or Greater Haverhill – Newburyport newsletter. I am glad to be part of its revival. I feel it is a great way to keep folks in our area informed on issues and available opportunities as well as a showcasing the services The Arc offers.

I am also thrilled with the start of the Greater Newburyport Family Support Center. It is a great expansion of services available for Newburyport and the surrounding communities, assisting families and individuals to live the fullest and most independent lives possible. It will reach a wider level of ages and needs through outreach to the school systems and assisting in access to services and recreation for the adults served. I can tell you that The Arc has been invaluable in improving the quality of life for my son and family for many years and I am happy to see this new program that will help so many people in our home community.

The Arc continues to grow and change to adapt to the needs of the population it serves and I am proud to be a member of the board.

Sincerely, Steve Kapp, Board President

Family Support Connects

We believe in supporting one person and one family at a time!



This year marks an important milestone for The Arc of Greater Haverhill-Newburyport. We have been selected by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to be a new Family Support Center in the Merrimack Valley. As long-time advocates for the voice of families, this opportunity is near and dear to our heart! With offices in both Haverhill and Newburyport, we look forward to connecting more deeply with our local communities.

The spirit of family support runs throughout all of our programs and services, so it seems only fitting to have embarked upon this new chapter in our story. *Without the voice and energy of families, the network of support and services available to people with disabilities would not exist.*

We have been honored to be part of such profound changes to our system, and humbled by the strength, determination, and fearlessness of the families within our communities. Through the creation of our Family Support Advisory Council, we will be relying on the voice of families once again to help chart our path toward a new future - one rooted in equity, access, and empowerment.

To compliment the voice of families, we've developed a great team – beginning with hiring a Director of Family Supports! This role was quickly filled by our very own **Andrea Morris** who has worked with The Arc since 2015.

Her Outreach & Education workshops, trainings, and coffee hours have been critical in sharing information and resources with families navigating a complex system of care.

To expand on this foundation, we also hired a Bilingual Family Support Navigator, **Elizabeth Beltran**, who will assist with workshops and 1:1 support. We are very excited to increase our existing Bilingual supports to the Latino families in the Merrimack Valley! Please join me in congratulating Andrea and Elizabeth on their new roles!

– Abigail Eaves, Chief Program Officer



Better Together: The Power of Family

When I started at The Arc of Greater Haverhill-Newburyport over 6 years ago, I had one thing in mind. How can I help? Immersing myself in the lives of families and the individuals they supported as they were navigating the transition planning process, was complex and frustrating at times. As a professional, I realized there was so much information out there, but often wondered how families could access all these wonderful programs and resources. There was no easy answer.

I started to connect and collaborate in the local community, regionally and statewide to find the best practices and resources to share with families and professionals. I have built a comprehensive list of contacts and resources that not only help families with transition-aged students, but through the entire lifespan.

When we received the DDS Family Support contract, I was honored and humbled to accept the position of Director of Family Supports. Families are powerful. Families are resilient. Families support each other. Whether your family is biological or carefully chosen, we will continue to band together and support each other, and our loved ones, by making authentic connections and opportunities. For more information on the Family Support Center please visit us at www.thearcofghn.org

– Andrea Morris, Director of Family Support

AFTER Program Connects



“Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass. It’s about learning to dance in the rain!”

The AFTER Program provides Activities, Fun, Training, Enrichment & Recreation for teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Greater Haverhill and Newburyport communities. We are committed to promoting fun, relaxation, personal growth, and fulfillment!

Some of our activities will take place in person but the majority will temporarily remain online at Zoom.

Activities include the following:

- **Arts & Crafts**
- **Cooking Classes & Dinner Club**
- **Live Music & Dances**
- **Gametime, Storytelling Session**
- **Morning & Evening Chats**

For more info or to join contact Neala Mercier, AFTER Coordinator, at after@thearcofghn.org or 978 373 0552 x233.



Peer Support & Self Advocacy Connects

“There is a certain power created when people of similar life experiences come together around shared issues & are able to support each other”

So many people with intellectual disabilities have people that believe in them and want them to have the best life possible. However, at times, we can forget to include them in the planning. It can be as simple as asking, “What do you think?”

When we do not actively seek out their opinions, we inadvertently communicate a lack of confidence. Peer Support and Self advocacy is a lot about teaching people to believe in themselves; that it’s okay to express your ideas even when they don’t agree with others. Self advocacy is about how to express your opinions and how to compromise.

When you think about it, none of us became comfortable having more control over our lives without gradual opportunities to try things on our own. Self advocacy provides safe opportunities to practice those skills. In order to understand the importance of self advocacy, we need to shift our thinking about people with disabilities from having limitations to being valuable citizens with talents and abilities to share with their community.

Experience has shown that people with disabilities want the same things as everyone else does: happiness, meaningful relationships, to feel needed, and appreciated.

To help these hopes become a reality, we need to amplify their voice and build confidence. By meeting regularly to develop skills of self awareness and self advocacy we find members have opportunities to explore possibilities for themselves. They then can transfer their new vision of themselves to their everyday lives.

- Barbara Pandolfi, Peer Support Manager



The voice of self-advocates grow stronger and louder every day. They are the new movers and shakers!

AFC Connects

Thoughts on Resilience

This past year, the families we support in our Adult Family Care Program (AFC) have faced additional challenges during this global pandemic. Great stress, social isolation, financial hardships, uncertainty, and loneliness were just a few of the experiences that were being shared with us.

Our families' pre-Covid ways of coping with stress and maintaining balance were severely restricted, yet, what we witnessed was not despair and defeatism but adaptation, flexibility, and resilience. Resilience entails more than managing stressful conditions, shouldering a burden, or surviving an ordeal. **It involves the potential for personal and relational transformation and positive growth that can be forged out of adversity.**

The families we support, often through suffering and struggle, are emerging stronger, more loving, and more resourceful than ever. Although some families have been more vulnerable and have faced more hardships than



others, they have all had to be resilient. A family resilience perspective is grounded in a deep conviction that families can strengthen their resilience in overcoming their challenges

At the Arc, we have been inspired by the positive energy of the families we support and are encouraged to overcome the obstacles we, as an agency, have encountered. We have adapted to new ways of service delivery and learned that our agency is not the building on Wingate Street - we are a community created in partnership through a commitment to our mission and the spirit of our team.

- Heather Hess, Director of Adult Family Care

DDS Programs Connects

“The Domino Effect”



A domino effect/chain reaction is the cumulative effect produced when one event sets off a chain of similar events. Here is our current domino effect:

It all started with Cory in search for a new life journey and becoming more independent. He knew that moving out on his own was exactly what he needed and desired. With a leap of faith, he decided to take the next step and move into an apartment by himself, shortly after getting his own car, and a full-time job at Home Depot as a lot attendant.



This new sense of independence was radiating from Cory and he was feeling proud and excited to share his story with another person we support, Nick, who works with him at Home Depot. This newfound confidence from Cory sparked something in Nick to follow his wish of becoming independent too.

“If you can DREAM it, you can DO it”

Nick started by purchasing his own car, giving him more motivation to pursue living independently. While we supported Nick in moving into his own place, another individual named Arthur, saw what was taking place and he also got sparked to see what this independent journey was about. Witnessing it firsthand, Arthur began to advocate for himself to start the transition of living independently in the community just like Cory and Nick. What was once thought impossible, was now reality for all of them.

– Grimaldy Rios, Director of DDS Programs

Cummings Grant Update

A Moment of Gratitude



They say that in every cloud, there is a silver lining. But for us, during the cloud of COVID-19, we experienced two silver linings.

The first was the support provided by the Cummings Foundation. As the virus began to sweep the globe, organizations everywhere had to learn the 'pandemic pivot'. Our pilot employment program was no different. **The COMET** was designed to support people in the community in developing their work ethic, self-leadership skills, understanding of group dynamics, and professional skills. All of it was to be done through small groups and community-based employment placements. It was so hard to accept that our original vision was suddenly not viable. However, the Cummings Foundation was not deterred from offering support. Through their generosity and flexibilities, we were still able to directly support families while redefining the scope of our COMET program.

The second silver lining came in the form of self-created opportunity. As we considered the challenges faced by our project team, we accepted that finding community-based

employment would be more difficult than ever for people with disabilities. After hearing about the challenges of other employment programs around us, we realized that we need to rethink how we define work. Why wait for the community to provide opportunities? So, as we re-configured the scope of COMET, we are now focusing on Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment. Many of those we support have unique talents and interests that are of value to others. As we work with them on leveraging these talents, we are unlocking a deeper sense of independence and self-determination.

We are very grateful for the support we have received from the Cummings Foundation throughout this time and we look forward to future endeavors to promote entrepreneurship amongst people with disabilities.



The Health Connection

As we forge ahead to the "new normal", let us not forget to check in on ourselves and those around us. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in some way or another and has been a tough adjustment. In facing the many challenges that have arisen, it is no surprise to have felt strong emotions - stressed, overwhelmed, anxiety and fear. Social distancing, although important, can make us feel isolated, lonely and increase these uncertain feelings. Learning to cope with stress is crucial.

According to the CDC, stress can cause the following:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health/mental problems
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, and other substances

Here are some helpful ways to manage stress:

- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
- Exercise regularly & get plenty of sleep
- Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use
- Make time to unwind and engage in activities you enjoy
- Connect with others & express your feelings
- Connect with community or faith-based organizations.



It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, or worry during these times and you are not alone. These symptoms have increased in adults across the nation since the pandemic. If you or someone you know is struggling, there is help available now, begin talking with your healthcare provider. If you are in need of immediate help or are having thoughts of suicide call 911 or National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish.

– Jen Corso, Adult Family Care Lead Nurse

Staff Recognition

To All of Our Dedicated Field Staff, Caregivers & Shared Living Providers

It seems that now, more than ever, we need to take a moment to stop and think about the tremendous work and sacrifices you have made over the past year or so to keep the people we support safe and healthy.

Many of you were asked to step aside from your jobs for a while, which undoubtedly brought a sense of uncertainty. Others were asked to keep showing up for those who needed our physical support more than ever. All of you carried your own needs & those of your family at the same time. What we have all had in common, is the commitment to our mission. We have all been forced to confront a change that we never asked for & in doing so we are stronger than ever.

Your sacrifices, large & small, are recognized and honored by the entire team at The Arc! Please do not underestimate the impact your actions & words have had on those we support.

*-From all of us here at the The Arc,
We thank you!* 🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡



Legislative Action Needed!

We are asking for your help to support three priority bills of The Arc that have recently been heard at Joint Committee hearings. We want to ensure these bills are voted out of committee favorably.

- 1. Higher Education Opportunities Bill (H1331/ S846, Joint Committee on Higher Education)**
This bill allows persons with IDD and autism to access state colleges and universities to gain skills necessary to work and live independently in the community as adults and implements key recommendations of the legislative Task Force on College Inclusion.
- 2. Accessory Dwelling Units Bill (H1370/ S908, Joint Committee on Housing)** This bill would allow for the creation of an accessory apartment (an in-law apartment) that would be added to a single-family home for the benefit of a person with a disability, or an elderly person.
- 3. Disability Commission on History of State Institutions (H2090/S1257, Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery)** This bill establishes a disability-majority state commission

Please Contact Your Legislators ASAP!



of 18 people that will be represented by state agencies and disability advocacy groups. It will investigate and report on things like the status of former institutional residents living independently today, the location of all documents from the former state institutions, the availability of such records to former residents, descendants, and the public, the location of burials for all residents who died in the care of the Commonwealth, and the potential for unmarked graves at former state institutions.

For electronic action go to The Arc of Massachusetts website and look under the GET INVOLVED section and click the "TAKE ACTION" button.

Upcoming Event

17th Annual Tee Off for The Arc!



Monday, August 16, 2021

Haverhill Country Club

Registration & Lunch 11 am

Auction & Cocktails 5 pm

\$200 per golfer, \$60 Cocktails, Auction & Dinner

Register by calling Bianca at 1 978-373-0552.x 204!

If you cannot attend this year please consider making a donation online at our website www.thearcofghn.org

Thank you for your support!



Community Connections

Haverhill Farmer's Market

Saturdays 9am-1pm June 26-Oct 30

51 Merrimack Street, Haverhill, MA



In addition to the farm-fresh products, this family-friendly market also includes food demonstrations, local music and children's activities.

Easily accessible by car, bike, walk, or public transportation, and has plenty of free parking. Contact organizer for any questions at 978 872-7535.

DID YOU KNOW WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING SERVICES?

- **Adult Family Care (AFC)**
- **Shared Living Placements**
- **Individualized Home Supports (IHS)**
- **Agency With Choice (AWC)**
 - Individualized Home & Day Supports
- **Greater Haverhill/Newb. Family Resource Center**
- **Peer Support & Self-Advocacy Groups**
- **Information & Referrals**
- **Family Support Center**
- **Recreational Fun Events**
- **Transition & Educational Trainings**



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