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Spring/Summer 2014



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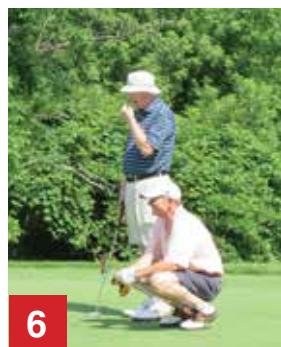
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**About the Cover:** Anthony Falzone has two homes—his parents' home which he visits regularly and his ARC of Rockland home where he lives with housemates who are his friends. Mr. Falzone's story appears on page 22. Inset from left: Sergio Mobili, Mitchell Fletcher, Anthony Falzone, Maurice Jackson, Joshua Eber and Gregory Wilson.



**8**  
Autism - Cracking the Code



**6**  
ARC Golf Classic



**12**  
Nico and his mom

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## From the President



**Richard S. Sirota**

The slogan, 'Nothing about us without us,' has never been more apt than it is today. Many of the people who receive services through ARC have come of age in an era of inclusion and self-advocacy. Educated and community-minded, these men and women are eager to make their voices heard in all matters that affect their lives.

ARC staff members are meeting with every adult to learn about their personal aspirations in order to assist them in achieving their life goals. Members of the ARC Board of Directors have been working with self-advocates to introduce them to the corporate structure and governance aspects of ARC of Rockland. Our intent is to encourage people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities to serve on Board Committees to better understand the roles that the Committees and the Board of Directors play in shaping policies of ARC of Rockland. The eventual goal is to have representation of the people we support on the Board of Directors.

The field of developmental disabilities has come a long way from the era of institutionalization. ARC of Rockland and similar agencies were founded by parents who wanted more for their children in terms of education, housing, recreation and employment. Much has been accomplished, but many challenges still lie ahead to maintain the supports for which they fought so long and hard. And now, we have reached a time in which the people for whom these agencies were created are speaking up for themselves and letting everyone know what THEY want.

Economic and logistical challenges may limit ARC's ability to provide all of the services and opportunities that are desired. But we understand full well our responsibility to give the people we support as much control over their destinies as possible. We look forward to ongoing discussions as together, we open new doors towards the greatest possible self-determination for people of all abilities.

## From the Executive Director



**Carmine G.  
Marchionda**

Collaboration—with other NYSARC chapters, with sister agencies here in Rockland, with for-profit businesses and industries—this is the direction in which ARC of Rockland is headed.

The field of developmental disabilities is changing. As we move towards a managed care environment, the people in need of supports and their families will be instrumental in determining which services best fulfill their specific needs and goals and how, when and where these services will be accessed. A greater emphasis will be placed on involving people with developmental disabilities in community life. And the community, in turn, will have greater involvement with ARC.

Where employment is concerned, ARC of Rockland will intensify its efforts to help people find full-or part-time positions in the private sector. We encourage corporate entities to step forward and join us in this mutually beneficial endeavor.

ARC will continue to champion the participation of people with developmental disabilities in campus life at area colleges and universities. And, ARC will work with local public high schools to foster greater interaction with the students in our Prime Time Upper School. ARC graduates of SANYS U, an intensive self-advocacy training program, are working with Jordan Jankus, Hudson Valley Regional Coordinator of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York, in the hopes of providing similar training to area high school students with developmental disabilities.

Most importantly, ARC will strengthen partnerships with families. Parents and siblings will be called upon to contribute ideas towards greater inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream of society.

Please take seriously my invitation to become involved in ARC's journey forward by joining a Board Committee, attending a fundraiser or volunteering your time and talents. Contact me at cmarchionda@arcofrockland.org or call 845.267.2500. I look forward to meeting with you.



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**ARC of Rockland – Creating a lifetime of abilities for people with disabilities.**  
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# Happy Anniversary!



ARC of Rockland celebrated its 60th anniversary during the Annual Membership Meeting, Wednesday, May 14. Hon. Thomas Zugibe officiated at the swearing-in ceremony of the ARC Board of Directors and The ARC Foundation of Rockland Board of Directors. Special Olympians sang *God Bless America*. Guest speakers included Jordan Jankus, Hudson Valley Self-Advocacy Association; Jacqueline Phillips, ARC Director of Staff Development and Training and Annette Grady, ARC Community Director of Residential Life. Collages of historic ARC photos were on display as were paintings by artist William Britt.



# ARC Family Picnic

Celebrating 60 years with a picnic followed by a Boulders Game at Provident Bank Park, Sunday, July 13.



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#### Closest to the Pin

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**B**lue skies, a refreshing breeze and manicured greens were the perfect fit for ARC of Rockland's 29th annual Golf Classic on June 18. The event, in celebration of ARC's 60th anniversary, drew an enthusiastic crowd of golfers to the Philip J. Rotella Memorial Golf Course in Thiells, NY. Highlights included a continental breakfast, a round of golf and a lobster tail and steak luncheon at the Sonoma Grille on the golf course grounds. All proceeds go towards ARC supports and services for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Please see page 31 for a complete list of Golf Classic sponsors. Save the Date: 2015 ARC Golf Classic,

Wednesday, June 17, Paramount Country Club, New City, NY ■



# Autism— Cracking the Code



*The past decade has seen significant advances in the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders. More recently, innovations in biotechnology have enhanced the ability to search for genetic clues.*

“A needle in a haystack.” That is how Eric Banks, PhD, describes the process by which “statistically relevant mutations” are extracted from the reams of data generated through the study of the human genome.

Dr. Banks is a computational biologist and Senior Group Leader in the Genome Sequencing and Analysis Program of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard University. This biomedical research institution brings together undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, professional scientists and academic faculty in collaboration with others throughout the world to confront some of today’s most difficult biomedical challenges.

Dr. Banks and his team of 13 people are creating the software to efficiently search for mutations across thousands of samples. This software has been used in many high profile projects, one of which is the 1000 Genomes Project, a global endeavor that sequenced the genomes of 2500 humans representing 26 widely ranging ethnic populations across the world. The predecessor of that project, The Human Genome Project, gave

rise to a standardized human reference genome against which mutations are measured and analyzed.

Dr. Banks is quick to note that all humans possess millions of mutations relative to the reference genome, but most are harmless. “One, maybe two percent of the genome is actually in genes. The rest,” says Dr. Banks “is known as junk DNA. We write the software that finds all of the mutations in both the two percent and in the junk DNA. It is our job to filter out the non-statistically relevant mutations and show those mutations with statistical significance.”

By way of explanation, Dr. Banks states, “A relevant mutation would occur when a single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) present in the human reference genome is absent or has been replaced by a different nucleotide in the genome being sequenced.” SNPs are the most common type of genetic variation with each SNP (pronounced snip) representing a difference in a single DNA building block known as a nucleotide. A second type of mutation is the indel (insertion or deletion) and refers to instances in which the nucleotide has been deleted or an extra nucleotide is present as compared with the human reference.

“These mutations might affect the way in which genes code for the production of a protein, and that, in turn, could result in a condition, a disability or a disease,” explains Dr. Banks. “Imagine that protein number one is designed to interact with proteins number two and three in a linear fashion with the last of the proteins in the line activating something else. If proteins one or two are malfunctioning, then protein three cannot do its intended job.”

By studying a broad spectrum of genomes, Dr. Banks says, the hope is that one day researchers will find the underlying cause or causes for conditions such as autism, and that biotech and pharmaceutical companies will study the pathology and produce a drug to ameliorate the problem.

The software created by Dr. Banks and his group may be used to analyze the DNA sequence of a group of people known to have a particular condition (autism for example) and a control group of people who do not have

that condition. “We would find statistically important mutations in the people and hand that information to a computational analyst with expertise in the area (see Dr. Neale below). He or she would examine the results and try to find an association between the mutations found in the cases of people with the condition, but not in the control group.

Sequencing technology has vastly increased the speed by which information is gathered. “And there are always newer models,” says Dr. Banks. “We have to keep scaling up by designing algorithms that are able to handle more data. There aren’t too many people doing what we do.” Dr. Banks calls his involvement with the Broad Institute, “Pretty selfish. I like solving puzzles. It feels good to know that I am furthering the field of medicine, and I didn’t have to go to medical school to do that.”

Dr. Banks earned a Master’s Degree in computer science engineering from MIT and a PhD in computer science with the focus on computational biology from Princeton University.

Dr. Benjamin Neale is an Assistant Professor of the Analytic and Translational Genetics Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, instructor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School and an Associated Researcher at the Broad Institute. He has worked extensively in seeking the genetic links to autism.

“Our unit, Analytic and Translational Genetics has two core missions,” says Dr. Neale. “One is to aid in understanding the genetic basis of diseases both common and rare, and the second is to facilitate the incorporation of genetic information into clinical practice.”

He notes that “a great many human diseases and disorders have some kind of genetic basis. There are the Mendelian or monogenic diseases we studied in high school which can typically be boiled down to one specific gene or mutation such as cystic fibrosis or Huntington’s disease. Then, we have what is known as an oligogenic disease in which a handful of mutations conspire together to create disease. Finally there are polygenic diseases that involve many different variants. These conditions are also called complex traits, where genetic and environmental factors influence the presentation and risk to disease in the



**Eric Banks, PhD**



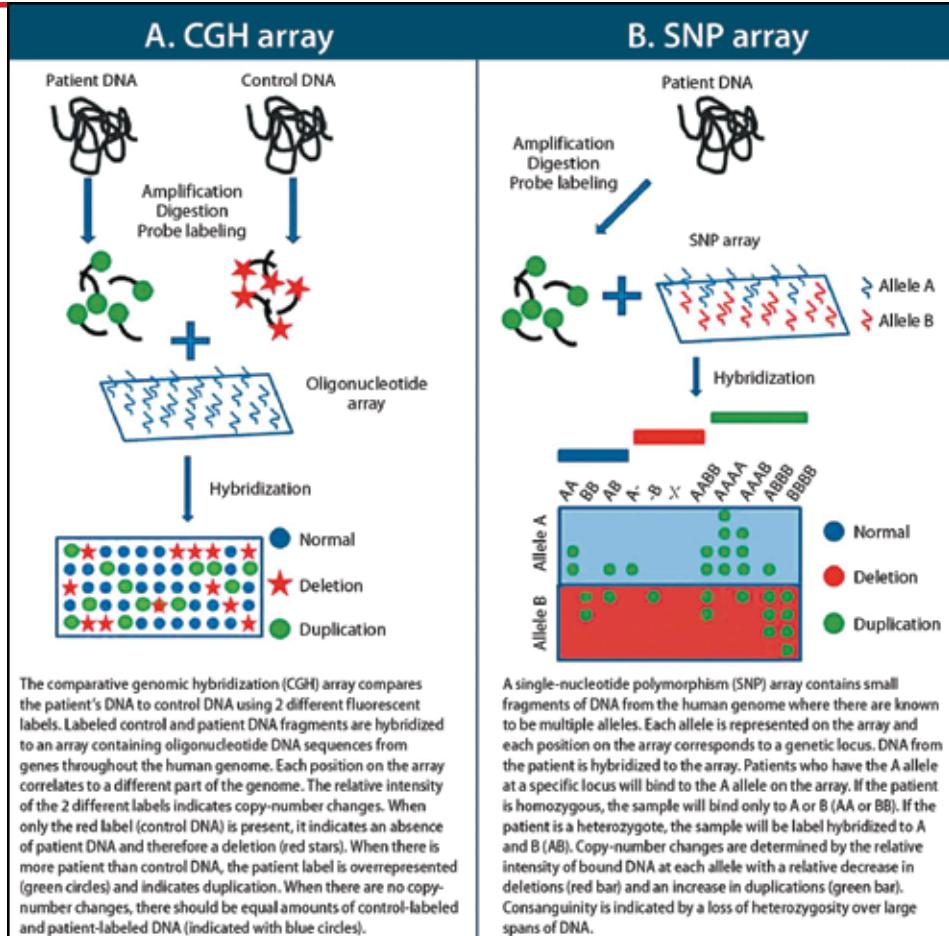
**Benjamin Neale, PhD**

# Autism- Cont'd from page 9

population. When we talk about schizophrenia, type 2 Diabetes, heart attack or autism, this is what we mean. These conditions are complex traits."

Dr. Neale explains that autism spectrum disorders are particularly difficult to describe because they can be Mendelian as in the case of Rett syndrome (an autism spectrum disorder primarily affecting girls and caused by a mutation on a specific gene on the X chromosome). At the same time there is a more complex phenotype in the population. "The complex traits are influenced by many things—genetic variations that predispose to disease and environmental factors that have an impact."

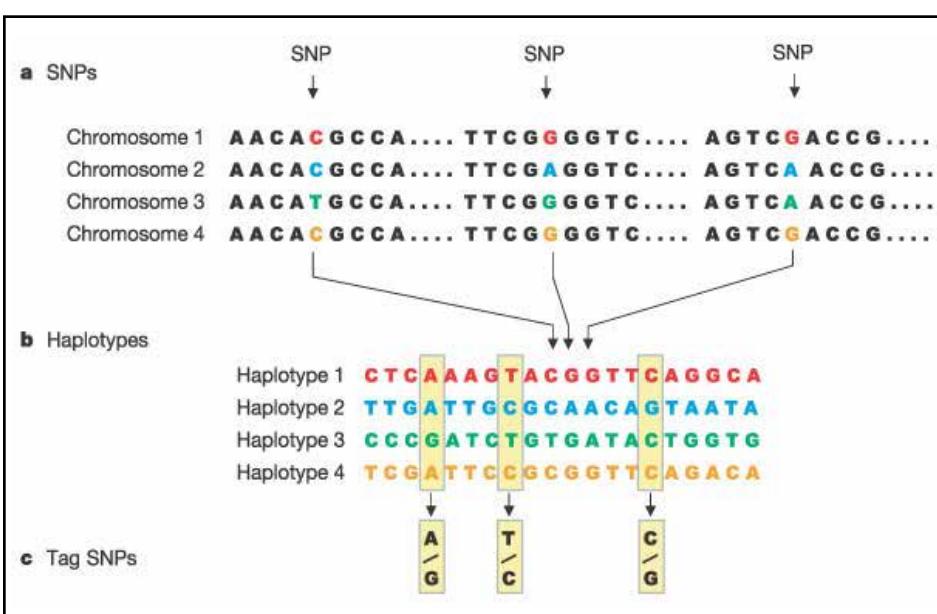
While locating the culprits that give rise to autism within the genome is still extraordinarily difficult, "We now have the ability to capture almost all of the genetic variation," notes Dr. Neale. "Basically, when we do sequencing, we chop up the DNA, sequence the fragments and align that to the reference genome to identify the places



that are different in the sample compared to that reference. Modern genetics is a partnership between molecular biologists who are developing the technology to generate the sequence data and computational biologists, like Dr. Banks, who are working to synthesize the data to identify genetic variation."

"Part of the promise of genetics is that we gain insights into the biological causes of diseases or conditions," remarks Dr. Neale. "Genetics has a lot of advantages as a starting point. It is with us at birth and stays with us throughout our life, and a genetic risk factor has a strong potential to be causal. I would say we are at the beginning of what will probably be termed the golden age of genetics."

Dr. Neale holds a PhD in human genetics from King's College in London, UK and completed postdoctoral training at Massachusetts General Hospital. ■



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# Nico on the Go

*Prime Time  
Upper School  
Readies Students  
for Adulthood*



Nico Boffoli with teacher Jennifer DiCrosta

Nicolas (Nico) Boffoli is 16 years old. From the time he was five, his mother Susan has been transporting him every weekday from their home in Wappingers Falls to the Prime Time Upper School in New City. She takes the hour-long drive in stride. "I do it lovingly and gladly," she says. "The Upper School program is fantastic."

Nico has autism. Finding the right educational setting for him was a priority. "He had a traumatic birth, and then he spent a few days in the ICU before he came home," says Ms. Boffoli. Although he is a healthy young man today, "He was a sickly baby. In his first year of life, he had bronchitis and pneumonia. To this day, I'm petrified of high fevers."

Nico's older brother Alex was barely four-years-old when Nico was diagnosed with autism. Younger brother Chris was a newborn. With three young children and an array of Early Intervention therapists in and out of her home, Ms. Boffoli remembers that year as somewhat of a blur. In the ensuing years, Nico received speech, occupational and physical therapies, plus Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). The positive reinforcement which is the hallmark of ABA enhances communication skills and aids in socialization.

When it was time for Nico to enter kindergarten, he was enrolled in a self-contained classroom for children deemed communication impaired. "It was in a

lovely public school, but the students ran the gamut of disabilities. Most of them were quite social, actually," says Ms. Boffoli. "The teachers were not using ABA in the classroom, and they had difficulty engaging Nico; he just didn't get into the mix. We arranged with the school district for a couple of his home ABA teachers to go to school with Nico. But there came a time when we knew it wasn't the right placement. A neuropsychologist told us about this fantastic program in Rockland, and I've been driving him to Prime Time ever since."

Some days, Ms. Boffoli stays in Rockland from the time she drops Nico off at school until she picks him up for the return trip home. Other days, she makes the round trip twice. "It is worth it," she says, so much so, that she has put her own career on hold. In 2008, she earned a Master's Degree through Cornell's weekend Executive MBA program. For several years, she sat on the Board of Autism Directory Service/Parents of Autistic Children-Hudson Valley. This organization raises autism awareness and assists individuals, families and autism-related programs throughout the Hudson Valley. At the moment, however, she is focusing her efforts on her sons' education. Alex is a recent graduate of Roy C. Ketcham High School and Chris is a recent graduate of Wappingers Junior High School. Nico will graduate from Prime Time Upper School in 2019.

"Since attending the Upper School, Nico has gained critical academic skills, and he is beginning to gain some vocational skills," Ms. Boffoli notes. Accompanied by a Prime Time staff member, Nico spends several hours each week at Pakula's Pizza in New City where he makes pizza boxes and interacts with the other employees. The experience will help Nico when he enters the job market some years down the road.

"We make a concerted effort to provide our older students with work opportunities at various sites throughout the County. Some children spend time in offices, others work in the cafeteria of a local high school and still others spend time gaining work skills at restaurants. During the course of their high school years, the students will have the chance to try their hand at several jobs," says Dr. Janet Masotti, Director of ARC Children's Services. "But it isn't the work itself that matters. It is learning how to take direction from an employer, learning how to work alongside peers. For people with autism, communication is a challenge. Facing that challenge can be daunting. Nico is doing beautifully."

Immediately following his weekly work stint, Nico gets practice in being a customer of Pakula's. He decides what to order, places the order and pays for his meal. For most teenagers, this type of interaction is a commonplace occurrence. For children with autism spectrum disorders, casual social interactions must be learned, and once learned, may be carried over into other aspects of life. Says Ms. Boffoli, "Being out there in a community is a big piece of what Nico has gained through the Upper School."

In the classroom setting, Nico

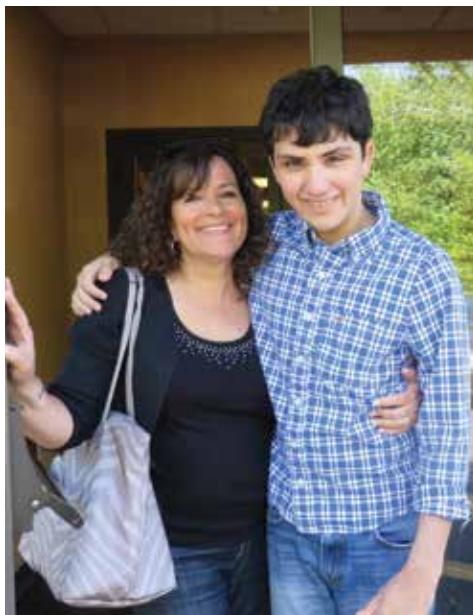
and his fellow students are following the New York State core curriculum which includes units in social studies, science, math and English. In addition, Upper School students take part in field trips to sites of educational and historic interest. "Museums, zoos, shows — these are all aspects of our emphasis on community involvement," explains Dr. Masotti. "It is important that people with autism spectrum disorders be able to negotiate the broader world." The information gained on educational forays is important. But for Upper School students there are further benefits. "Knowing how to behave in a crowd, knowing appropriate etiquette when dining in a coffee shop or restaurant, making eye contact with people—these are learned skills—skills best attained through firsthand experience," says Dr. Masotti.

For Nico and other Upper School students, education is an all-encompassing prospect. "We want the students to be engaged in whatever activity we present," Dr. Masotti states. Because the potential for engagement differs with each child, the work and the expectations are individualized. "ABA instills confidence in students by rewarding them for even small successes. But, what might be considered a reward (and thereby an incentive) for one child would not be so for another. In Nico's case, classroom time on the computer is the charm.

"When Nico first started using the computer I was stunned," says Ms. Boffoli, "But then, children with autism possess hidden treasures. Those treasures present themselves when we least expect it. There's a wow factor to everything Nico accomplishes."

The positive aspects of life with Nico notwithstanding, Ms. Boffoli remembers some darker days. "I went through many of the stages of grief – denial, anger ... it was almost as though I was grieving for the loss of a person I would never know. Even now, sometimes I will look at Nico and think, 'What would it be like to sit and chat with him?' Then, I think, 'He is exactly the way he is meant to be.'"

Ms. Boffoli is proud of Nico's progress to date. "I love the Upper School," she says. "Every afternoon when I pick him up from school, Nico lets me know that he's had a good day." She looks to the future with confidence and hope. "I want Nico to tap into his full potential, to be a contributing member of society, to have a happy and meaningful life — a life of purpose." ■



Nico with his mom



# ABA for Adults at ARC

"The tremendous success of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) with students in ARC's Prime Time Upper School was a factor in our decision to incorporate ABA into our curriculum for adults," says Justine Christakos, ARC Associate Executive Director for Day Habilitation Services.

ABA utilizes positive reinforcement to enhance communication and socialization skills. "Just as is the case with youngsters, the emphasis of ABA for adults is on individualization," continues Ms. Christakos. "No two people respond to the same means of encouragement or reinforcement. For one adult, a pat on the back is enough. For another, a cup of coffee might be the means to an end."

"While individualization is important, group activities are essential," states Ms. Christakos. "Socialization cannot be learned in a vacuum. We make it a point to work with two or three adults simultaneously. We foster as much interaction as possible in a way that mirrors interaction among adults in the broader context of society."

An influx of recent high school students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), many of whom are graduates of BOCES (see story page 15), attests to the growing need for a method of treatment with a proven track record.

"ABA is that method," remarks Ms. Christakos. "This fall, we will be partnering with the Carbone Clinic to provide ABA training to ARC staff members towards their individual certifications as Registered Behavior



**Justine Christakos, ARC Associate Executive Director for Day Habilitation Services, left, Alam Khan and Annie Culianos, Assistant Coordinator, Transition Services**

Technicians. The Carbone Clinic, located in Stony Point, NY, provides outreach and consultation services for individuals and agencies helping people with ASD.

"There is no hit or miss with ABA," notes Ms. Christakos. "The process is based upon the continuous collection of relevant data marking each person's progress. Behavior analysts determine a course of action by evaluating data."

Ms. Christakos offers an example. "One individual might respond to a brief walk after working on sign language skills. If, after a period of time, the data shows that the walks did indeed improve the person's concentration, we will continue the walks. But, if the person is not responding, or responding in a negative manner, we will redesign the plan—hence, the term behavior analyst. ABA requires that we view the person in a holistic manner—we get to know the individual so that we can understand his or her specific likes and dislikes, dreams, goals and aspirations. The minutiae matter when we are trying to mold behavior in a positive way."

"We launched the ABA program for Adults in October, 2013, and in these few short months, we have witnessed marked success," remarks Ms. Christakos. "One of the most gratifying results to date,

was the day that one of our participants—a person who had always had great difficulty making his wishes known—was able to ask for what he wanted. That is remarkable, meaningful progress." ■

## Prime Time Upper School Welcomes Curriculum Coordinator

Gianluca Di Muccio of Tarrytown, NY, has been named Curriculum Coordinator for the Prime Time Upper School. He earned an undergraduate degree in theater from SUNY Buffalo, a Master's Degree in Special Education from the City College of New York, an Advanced Certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) from Hunter College and an Advanced Certificate in School Building Leadership from SUNY New Paltz.

Prior to his position with the Prime Time Upper School, Mr. Di Muccio was a Program Supervisor for the Behavioral Learning Center in California. Before that, he was with Rockland BOCES for 12 years, first as a teaching assistant, then a teacher and finally assistant principal.

Of the Prime Time Upper School, he says, "I walked



**Gianluca Di Muccio**

into a program that is extremely effective. I see my role as helping the school continue to succeed and grow."

In upcoming months, a pre-vocational center will be established in the Upper School with the goal of giving students experience in work-related skills necessary for future employment.

Mr. Di Muccio is a proponent of field trips as a means of real-world opportunities for the students to enhance their social and academic abilities.

The importance of carry over into the home is another vital aspect of ABA," states Mr. Di Muccio. "The Upper School will be offering a series of parent-training sessions to ensure that what the students learn during the school day is reinforced at home. Adhering to the principals of ABA will make both the students' lives and the lives of their families better." ■



Mary Jean Marsico, EdD, pictured at left, is District Superintendent and CEO of the Rockland County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and a member of ARC of Rockland's Business Advisory Council.

Established more than 50 years ago, Rockland BOCES delivers an array of quality educational programs for students with special needs, teens interested in career and technical training, adult learners preparing for new job opportunities and teachers seeking to upgrade their professional skills.

The Jesse J. Kaplan School, a Rockland BOCES center-based program in West Nyack, NY, serves children ages 5-21 with cognitive, physical and medical disabilities. With these students in mind, Dr. Marsico sees a growing need for a partnership between BOCES and local agencies providing transitional services to adults with developmental disabilities. "My role as an educator is to give my students as many skills as possible that will align with opportunities being created by the adult providers," she says. "I think there is a way in which we can blend our resources."

ARC of Rockland Executive Director Carmine Marchionda concurs. "A successful transition from high school to the world of employment is becoming increasingly important," he states. "The academic, social and employment skills gained during this period are essential to success in the job market."

Towards that end, in September of this year, several Jesse Kaplan high school students will begin internships at *eWorks*, ARC's electronic recycling division situated at ARC headquarters in Congers. "The students will learn to dismantle computers, servers and other electronic items by working side-by-side with *eWorks* employees," explains ARC Director of Job Placement Services Kathy Canter. "The hope is that once the students graduate from high school, they will enroll in

## BOCES and ARC *Creating Pathways to Employment*

Mary Jean Marsico, EdD, pictured at left, is District Superintendent and CEO of the Rockland County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and a member of ARC of Rockland's Business Advisory Council.

a transitional program at an agency such as ARC, where they will pursue internship opportunities. Ultimately, these internships should translate into gainful employment.

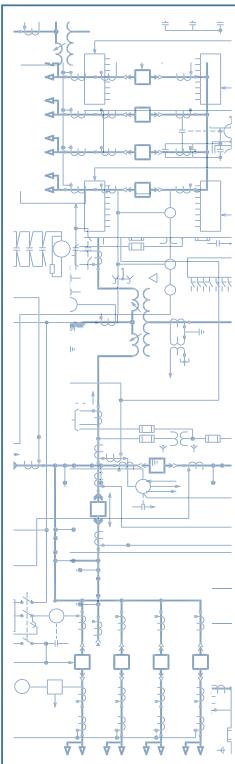
We currently train people for employment in the restaurant and hotel industries, at state parks and in other businesses aligned with tourism and hospitality," says Ms. Canter. "We intend to develop apprenticeships in these fields for high school students with the goal of establishing a continuum of training that will segue into paid positions."

"If Kaplan students acquire training and internships that can meet the needs of our business community, we will all benefit," states Dr. Marsico. "Our goal is to make sure that every child has access to what he or she needs to succeed to his or her fullest potential." Where it concerns special education, Dr. Marsico remarks, "Parents are worried about where their children will land in the future. We need to partner with business and industry leaders to create paths for students with developmental disabilities to transition successfully from school to work. It's the model of the future." ■

### BOCES in BRIEF

The Jesse J. Kaplan School is part of Rockland BOCES' Student Services division that, through an array of center- and district-based programs, serves more than 800 students with special needs. Student Services is one segment of the educational programming provided by Rockland BOCES. High school students across the County may earn college credits, along with state and national industry certifications and licenses, through the Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC). The CTEC offers more than 20 programs, including automotive technology, cosmetology, criminal justice, culinary arts, digital design and medical careers. More than 5,000 county residents are enrolled in Rockland BOCES' adult and continuing education courses to obtain degrees or certifications as phlebotomists, licensed practical nurses and more. The Professional Development Center trains teachers and administrators on topics including the Common Core State Standards.

Rockland BOCES was among the winners of a statewide competition to form public-private partnerships designed to prepare high school students for high-skill jobs in technology, engineering and healthcare, through the creation of P-TECHs (Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools). Hudson Valley P-TECH is slated to launch in autumn, 2014. This integrated, six-year program will provide high school, college and career training, enabling students to graduate with an Associate's Degree in a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) discipline. It is anticipated that graduates of this educational program will become future innovators of Rockland businesses. ■



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Michael and Kelly Joseph with Prime Time teacher Catherine (Molly) Purvis and Jewel

# The Joy of Jewel

*Aptly named, Jewel Joseph is nothing less than a precious gem*

Born with Down syndrome and a heart problem requiring surgery, the tiny girl came into the world two months ahead of schedule. “I had had the appropriate blood tests during my pregnancy and everything came back normal,” recalls Jewel’s mother Kelly Joseph. “Towards the end of my pregnancy, I had a sonogram. The radiologist mentioned the bridge of the fetus’ nose could indicate Down syndrome, but there was no definitive diagnosis until her birth. That’s when the doctor told me.”

The parents of three sons Jamarr, 17, Jaaron, 12, and Jahmir, 7, the Josephs were seasoned parents. Yet the prospect of rearing a child with a developmental disability was worrisome. Jewel was born on March 17, 2010. “But she didn’t leave the hospital until May 5,” says Ms. Joseph.

During her childhood, Ms. Joseph had known a boy with Down syndrome, the son of family friends. And early in her career, she had worked as a Direct Support Professional with several agencies helping people with disabilities. (Today she is a Medical Billing Specialist with ARC of Rockland). Still, the question of how she and



**Dr. Mahmoud Ibrahim**

Dr. Ibrahim is affiliated with Nyack Hospital, White Plains Hospital and the North Shore LIU Health System. "When doctors talk to parents who have children with some developmental problems or mental challenges, it is important that we are supportive," he says. "The initial conversation is critical. If we give parents the impression that we care, if we explain things in a simple way, it will make a difference. Whether it is the neurologist, the orthopedist, the pediatrician or another health care professional, it is important that someone be involved with the family. The parents have to develop trust in the professional, and the professional has to listen."

Of agencies such as ARC of Rockland, he says, "You are really the champions. We see the families of children with disabilities for a couple of weeks. We try to answer their questions honestly, and we reassure them. You are involved with the families for the long term."

The Joseph family began fostering relationships with professionals early on. Jewel received Early Intervention Services at home and at a preschool in Nyack until the age of three, when she began attending ARC of Rockland's Prime Time for Kids Early Learning Center. "I had heard good things about Prime Time from many people," says Ms. Joseph. I checked out the school and I liked what I saw."

"Jewel, (now age four) is doing really

husband Michael would help Jewel thrive loomed large.

Before leaving the hospital with their fragile newborn, the Josephs met with neonatologist Mahmoud Ibrahim. Ms. Joseph remembers that meeting as being enormously significant. "My first question was, 'How am I going to raise her?'" And Dr. Ibrahim said, "You will raise her just like you are raising your other kids."

well," continues her mother. "I like how comfortable the staff is with the children. The teachers are grounded, down to earth and friendly. Communication with the staff has been great. Our daughter is happy. If she is happy, we are happy."

"It is always beneficial to work in partnership with the family," says Dr. Janet Masotti, ARC Director of Children's Services. "Every child is different and every child learns at a different pace or in a different way. The idea is to find out what motivates the student to learn and then use that to teach. I think what sets Prime Time apart is the fact that the child, the family, the educational staff and the medical professionals are all on the same team."

In addition to her regular classroom activities, including pre-reading, writing and arithmetic skills, Jewel receives occupational, physical and speech therapies at Prime Time. The family reinforces at home what Jewel is being taught during the school day. The Josephs continue to learn all they can about Down syndrome. They are members of the National Down Syndrome Society and participate in that organization's annual Buddy Walk in Central Park.

Michael and Kelly Joseph credit their extended family, including aunts, uncles and grandparents, for the loving and supportive environment which has helped Jewel to succeed. "And faith helps ... definitely," states Ms. Joseph. "If you believe everything happens for a reason, then you take it and roll with it, and it will be alright." ■



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## ***Life in an ARC Residence***



"I am Anthony Giles Falzone, Jr. I like to use my full name."

So says Mr. Falzone, a determined young man with indomitable spirit and a disarming smile. He explains his decision to move from his family home in Nanuet, NY to an ARC residence in Monsey, NY. "I needed my own space. My cousin Richie had moved out of his parents' house. My cousins Julie and Natalie had moved. I was ready for it."

The transition for Mr. Falzone has been smooth—smoother in some ways for him than it was for his parents, Isabel and Anthony Falzone, Sr. "We always talked about Anthony's future, about what he would like as far as living arrangements were concerned. But then I would get scared. I would think, 'I can't let him go,'" says Mrs. Falzone.

Slowly, Mr. and Mrs. Falzone adjusted to the idea of a community residence for their son. They looked at houses available through several local agencies. "But for one reason or another, we came up against a wall every time. Finally, when Anthony was 23, we said, 'We're done. We're going to take a break from looking for a residence,'" says Mrs. Falzone. "We painted Anthony's room, bought him new furniture and settled into the idea that he was here with us until the right thing came along."

Three months after they had made the decision to halt the quest for a residence, "We got a call from Theresa Moore, ARC of Rockland's Associate Executive Director of Residential Services," says Mrs. Falzone. "It was 7:30 in the evening. Theresa said, 'I have a great

opportunity for Anthony if you are interested. There is a beautiful home with space available. We're bringing in a group of younger guys to live there.' So we agreed to look."

Mr. and Mrs. Falzone made the initial visit. "It was a great house with a huge living room and a newly renovated kitchen," remarks Mrs. Falzone. "The deal breaker was that Anthony would not have a room of his own. I remember thinking, 'This is not a college situation where Anthony would be living there temporarily. This would be his home—his life.' We thought he should have the privacy of his own room." Still, she notes, "It was hard to say no. This really was a great house." But the Falzones stood firm. "And then, about a week later, Theresa called me again and said, 'We might be able to accommodate your request.'" The families of the other potential residents had had similar hopes for private rooms for their sons. With the guidance of an experienced architect, ARC of Rockland determined that two relatively large rooms could be divided into four smaller rooms.

The next step was an invitation to all of the families to visit the house. "My whole family came—my husband, my daughter Nicole, and younger son Jesse, my niece Danielle and Anthony. We walked in and it was like a reunion," says Mrs. Falzone. "Theresa had handpicked four guys who know one another from ARC recreation programs, camp or school. There was an overwhelming feeling of excitement and hope. We saw now that this was actually happening. Life for Anthony was moving forward."

The young men moved into their new quarters in July of 2013. The transition was relatively easy. "But for parents, sometimes there is the burden of guilt. You think that you are the only ones who know how to take care of this person with special needs," says Mrs. Falzone. "You worry," adds the senior Mr. Falzone. "You have been protective of this person for his whole life, and



now he will not be under you wing anymore.”

Until the move to the ARC residence, Mrs. Falzone remarks, “I had made all of the decisions for Anthony—what he was going to eat, where he was going and how he would get there.”

While it took some getting used to, the Falzones are proud of their son’s new-found independence. “I have to say the staff has been amazing,” states Mrs. Falzone. “They really do give one hundred percent. They understand Anthony, and they have been instrumental in helping me to adjust.”

Mr. Falzone, Jr., admits to having been slightly nervous the first time he visited the house. But when he realized that “Mitchell, Sergio and Josh” would be housemates, he knew he was among friends.

Today, Mr. Falzone takes pride in the shared responsibilities, including setting and clearing the table, recycling and other similar chores. He has gained new skills. “I love to cook eggs in the morning. The staff assists me,” he explains. He appreciates the communal aspect of home life and the privacy afforded by his room. “I like listening to gospel music and singing in my room,” he says. “Sometimes I watch *Wheel of Fortune* or *Family Feud*—I love *Family Feud*, with other residents of the house.” He plays games on the Xbox with his housemates. And, he participates in regular forays into the

community. “We go to *Dave & Buster’s* for birthdays. On Wednesdays I play bingo at ARC. I love to swim. I’m good,” he adds, “I swim like a shark.” He attends ARC dances. “And I bowl with ARC.”

Anthony Giles Falzone, Jr. appreciates the house meetings during which time he and his friends discuss plans for upcoming weeks and issues related to the running of the home. Says Mr. Falzone, “I like the staff in the house, and I love my friends.”

“When Anthony finally moved into his new residence, I was anxious about how he and I would adjust,” remembers Mrs. Falzone. “My prayer was that I would get a phone call from my son saying he was so busy with the day’s events in his new life that he wouldn’t have time to come home on a particular day. Two months into his move, there came that Saturday when I was expecting him to come home. Instead, I got a phone call from Anthony saying he wasn’t coming home, but that he was going to spend the day with his housemates. I obviously agreed and hung up the phone. And at that moment, I realized that my prayer had been answered.” ■

**Clockwise from left**

**Anthony with Joshua Eber**

**Singing in his room**

**Setting the table with Assistant Residence Manager Megan Cruz**

**Anthony with his parents and siblings Nicole and Jesse**

# Why Work Works

Polite and cheerful, Daniel Curtiss makes a good impression. “I always tell the customers to have a nice day,” he says. Wearing the signature green smock with the company logo, a broad smile on his face, the young man clearly enjoys his job packing groceries at Fairway in the Shops at Nanuet. He secured the part-time position through ARC of Rockland’s Career Services Division. “I make sure the customers have everything in the bags. Some customers bring their own bags, so that they don’t have to use plastic,” he explains.

Mr. Curtiss, 21, has autism. He lives with his parents Jackie and Kenny Curtiss and siblings Ryan, 23 and Kelly, 19 in Pearl River, NY.

“I knew something was up when Danny was about two-years old, but the doctor assured us that it was not autism,” says Ms. Curtiss. For several years, Daniel attended a preschool program where he received therapeutic services. At the age of 5 he was enrolled in a special education kindergarten class in his home community. “But, he was not progressing,” says Ms. Curtiss. Ultimately, when Daniel was entering the third grade, the Curtiss’ found a more suitable program for their son in Ardsley, NY. He remained in the Ardsley school system until 2013 when he graduated from Ardsley High School. Shortly thereafter, he enrolled in Franklin Square, ARC of Rockland’s post high-school campus in Pearl River. His parents were concerned that their son might have some difficulty transitioning into a new setting, but he handled the change with panache, reuniting with some friends he had made through his participation in Special Olympics.

While still in high school, Daniel gained work experience at a number of different sites including Barnes and Noble, Toys R Us and Morton Williams supermarket. Recently he told his mother that working at Fairway is ‘the best job ever.’ Being employed makes him feel good about himself,” says Ms. Curtiss. “He is so proud that he works and gets a paycheck. I think the biggest thing is that he works side-by-side with people who don’t have disabilities. He loves talking to his co-workers about the Rangers.” Having her son in their midst, “gives people



Daniel Curtiss  
with Ed Burke,  
General Manager,  
Fairway

## Economic Growth in Rockland

### *Tourism and Hospitality on the Move*

Al Samuels is President and CEO of the Rockland Business Association and co-chair of ARC of Rockland’s Business Advisory Council. A resident of the County for 49 years, Mr. Samuels has witnessed first-hand the growth that took Rockland from a collection of rural towns and villages to the vibrant community that now exists. How to foster the County’s continued growth, particularly in the business sector is a priority for Mr. Samuels and the RBA.

“Based upon the Regional Economic Development Council guidelines established in 2011 under Governor Cuomo, the Hudson Valley region has crafted a strategic plan for the next five years,” says Mr. Samuels. “Bio-technology firms, pharmaceutical companies, advanced manufacturing, financial services and health-care related institutions are major industries that we want to attract to Rockland. Ideally, we would want to

the opportunity to see that people with disabilities are people who have interests very similar to their own. I see Danny learning, growing and maturing every day,” says his mother. “I think that the most important thing I’ve learned over the years is that as long as people with developmental disabilities are with people who care about them, they can do unbelievable things.” As a word of advice to the parents of young children, Ms. Curtiss remarks, “It is important to be involved from early on. Join the PTA, volunteer for school committees. For programs to be successful, parents need to be involved.”

Through Franklin Square, Daniel Curtiss spends time honing his skills in social interaction and money management, utilizing the Franklin Square fitness equipment and participating in a range of community-based activities. He continues to be involved in Special Olympics where he competes in basketball, floor hockey, soccer and track and field events.



**Daniel Curtiss with Theresa Dos Santos, ARC Assistant Director of Supported Employment, left, and ARC Job Coach Diana Estrella**

Ed Burke is General Manager of Fairway in Nanuet and a member of ARC of Rockland’s Business Advisory Council. He is pleased that Mr. Curtiss is finding satisfaction on the job, and equally pleased that Fairway has found a loyal and capable employee in Mr. Curtiss. “Fairway has a long history of participating fully in the community in which we are located,” he states. “When people with developmental disabilities apply for work at Fairway, we focus on their abilities—on what they are able to bring to the table. Competency on the job and a friendly disposition fit well with our mission of providing good customer service. All of the Fairway employees have to meet the same standards and there is pay parity for everybody.”

Among the benefits of hiring through ARC is the support provided by ARC job coaches and other ARC staff members. Says Mr. Burke, “ARC of Rockland has been fabulous. It’s a nice two-way street.” ■



**Al Samuels, CEO RBA**

in suburban Rockland and surrounding areas.

Despite the challenges ahead, Mr. Samuels is optimistic about opportunities for the County’s growth in the business arena, particularly in the area of hospitality and tourism. To that end, Mr. Samuels notes, that in conjunction with the new County Administration, “The RBA Hospitality and Tourism Alliance is planning to launch a very aggressive campaign to bring tour group operations into Rockland.”

Says Mr. Samuels, “Historically, Rockland has

positioned itself as a day-trip destination for people in the tri-state area, but there are reasons to make this a vacation spot with tourists staying overnight in our hotels and dining in our restaurants.” He points to the extensive Revolutionary War History with sites of interest throughout the County and the Hudson Valley, the numerous biking and hiking trails, art galleries and museums, riverfront communities, parks and theatres. Another major draw, says Mr. Samuels, is the area’s shopping venues. “We have the Palisades Center, one of the largest malls in the country; close proximity to Woodbury Commons, one of New York’s top tourist destinations, and now the exciting new Shops at Nanuet.

“I think it behooves us to come up with a tourism and hospitality package, and as the industry grows, we will need more people to work in our restaurants, hotels, theatres, parks, supermarkets and malls. We know that many of our citizens with developmental disabilities are well suited to these jobs because they are filling those positions right now. There is great potential here,” states Mr. Samuels. “The more we can grow, the more opportunities we have for an increased work force. Together, the business community and a workforce hired through agencies such as ARC can help to make tourism and hospitality a thriving industry into Rockland.” ■

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# Highlights & HAPPENINGS



## In the News

*Journal News* reporter Cara Matthews interviews Justin Morales on the job in the cafeteria of North Rockland High School in Thiells. Mr. Morales found his job through ARC Career Services. He has been working there for six years and says he loves his job. His fellow employees speak highly of his positive attitude and his great work ethic. Beginning January 1, 2015, through a tax credit program, *Inspire New York*, employers will be eligible for tax credits of up to \$5,000 when they hire full-time workers with developmental disabilities and up to \$2,500 when they hire part-time workers. To learn more about ARC Career Services, please contact Kathy Canter, ARC Director of Job Placement Services at 845.267.2500 ext. 3062.



Howard Ehrman, Stock Assistant, Beckerle Lumber, Congers, NY

## Working Together

ARC of Rockland has created a brief video highlighting the advantage of hiring people through ARC's Career Services Division. Please take a look at the one-minute video clip on our web page or request the three-minute version by contacting ARC Director of Job Placement Services Kathy Canter at 845.267.2500 ext. 3062. Representatives of ARC are available to meet with leaders of business and industry to discuss the capabilities of people with developmental disabilities. Learn about tax incentives, job coaching, transportation and other aspects of ARC Career Services.

*Video by Video Dynamics Productions, New City, NY.*



Pat Battle with Theresa Blossom

## On Air

Award-winning NBC newscaster Pat Battle visited *eWorks* at ARC of Rockland for a segment that aired June 19 and June 22. *eWorks* is ARC's corporate and household electronic recycling center located at 25 Hemlock Drive in Congers, NY. The zero-landfill project is operated in compliance with stringent, 'green' local, state and federal regulations. To learn more, please call *eWorks* at 845.450.5900.

## ARC's *eWorks* Receives Award for Electronics Recycling

*eWorks*, ARC of Rockland's commercial and residential electronics recycling operation, was the proud recipient of a *2014 Rockland Recycles Award* from the Rockland County Solid Waste Management Authority during Environmental Day on June 1.



Pictured from left: Kerri Scales, Education Coordinator, Solid Waste Management Authority; Steven J. Rubinsky, PhD, ARC Deputy Executive Director; Christopher St. Lawrence, Ramapo Town Supervisor; Theresa Blossom and Chaim Indorsky, *eWorks* employees; Kathy Canter, ARC Director of Job Placement Services; Alice Ennis, Sales Manager, ARC Career Services; Dominic Deramo, *eWorks* Operations Manager and Anna Roppolo, Executive Director Rockland Solid Waste Management Authority.

## Celebrating Abilities

Representatives from the ARCs of Rockland, Putnam, Westchester and Orange Counties celebrated the 65th anniversary of NYSARC, the state-wide umbrella organization serving people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. The group met on Bear Mountain Bridge, July 3. Participants affixed the chapter names to the NYSARC flag in a symbolic gesture marking NYSARC's broad and ongoing journey in support of people with developmental disabilities and their families. ARC Executive Director Carmine Marchionda, second from left. Richard Sirota, president, ARC of Rockland Board of Directors, far right.



## Neither Rain nor Sleet...

Burgers, hot dogs, salads and all of the fixings were part of a terrific barbecue, Thursday, May 15, at ARC headquarters in Congers. The event was one of the daily activities celebrating Staff Recognition Week. Despite the weather, ARC Executive Director Carmine Marchionda, foreground; President, ARC Board of Directors Richard Sirota in red apron and ARC Deputy Executive Director Steven J. Rubinsky, PhD, manned the grills with panache.



## The Graduates

Forty preschoolers were graduated from ARC of Rockland's Prime Time for Kids Early Learning Center during a June 27, ceremony. There were tears and cheers as parents, grandparents, siblings and friends photographed and videotaped the momentous event. Pictured: Matthew Chillemi, left and Joshua Alvarez.

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## At the Pinnacle

Members of the ARC of Rockland Board of Directors and ARC Foundation Board were on hand to receive the RBA Pinnacle Award for Outstanding Non-Profit Organization of the Year. Pictured above from left: President, ARC Foundation Board of Directors Harold Peterson; President, ARC Board of Directors Richard Sirota; First Vice President, ARC Board of Directors Karen Feinstein; and ARC Foundation Board members Dr. John Durney, Hon. Thomas Zugibe, Inna Needelman and Paul Piperato; and ARC Executive Director Carmine Marchionda. Present but not pictured, ARC Foundation Board member Don Riley.

## Debbie Addis



Debbie Addis, a longtime member of the ARC of Rockland Senior Center and a beloved resident of an ARC home, died on December 14, 2014 at age 85.

For the past 17 years, NYSARC Inc., the statewide ARC umbrella organization, has

served as Ms. Addis' legal guardian. Throughout that time, members of ARC of Rockland's Guardianship Committee made decisions regarding Ms. Addis' health and wellbeing, celebrated birthdays and holidays with her, assisted in managing her funds and cared for her with warmth and affection.

"I began working with the Guardianship Committee in 2009," says Alyson Brenner, ARC of Rockland Guardianship Coordinator. "I would sometimes visit with Debbie in the ARC Seniors program where, with knitting needles in hand, she would be surrounded by her friends. At home, she liked to knit while sitting in her comfortable lounge chair in the living room. Debbie enjoyed watching old movies, going to the theatre and dining in restaurants—she loved food, especially hamburgers. As she grew older, Debbie faced many medial challenges without a complaint. She met each day with dignity and strength."

"Debbie was a polite and well-mannered woman with a contagious laugh," says Miraline Rivera, ARC Residence Manager. "She was affectionate and appreciative of the staff, always referring to us as 'Dear'. She had a special relationship with ARC nurse Melissa Rodriguez with whom she often shared stories of her childhood. Debbie spoke fondly about her early years, recalling that her mother taught her to be polite and thoughtful, and that it is important to have good manners. She was generous in voicing her appreciation to others. The words *please* and *thank you* were always genuinely expressed. We should keep these memories of Debbie in our hearts and think of her whenever we are given a chance to express gratitude." ■



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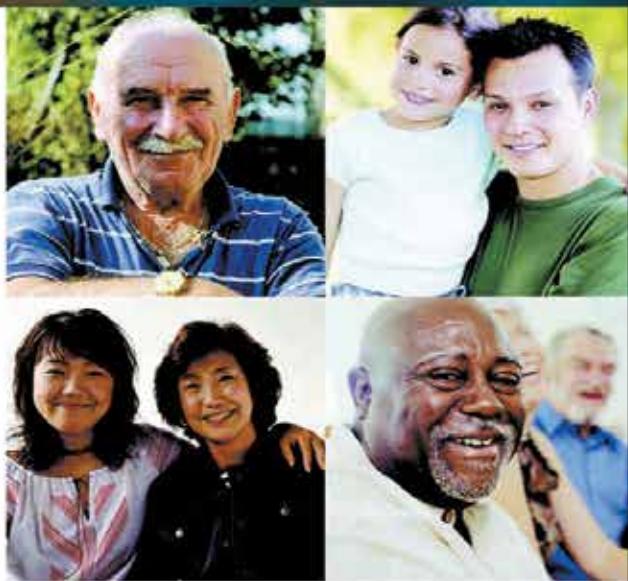
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