The Power of Learning to Read

It is hard to imagine sitting down at a restaurant, being handed a menu, and not being able to read it. However, that is reality for many older adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Tom’s love for McDonalds, and his curiosity in the menu and ordering, is what sparked his interest in learning how to read at 56 years old.

As summer comes to an end and students head back to school, we find ourselves at The Arc preparing for the beginning of a new year. This will be the 62nd year of operation for the agency and many changes have occurred over that span of time.

With the coming of the new year, the agency faces many new challenges. These challenges come in the form of stagnant funding paired with new regulations and unfunded mandates by the state of Pennsylvania. One of these unfunded mandates is the necessity to create two new positions to assist with the required monitoring of our agency by the county and the state. One of these new positions is a supports liaison that works with The Butler County Human Services Agency to ensure that our individuals receive all of their needed services. The second position that we had to create was in the area of compliance. This position works with the state and county to ensure that the agency is compliant in our services and documentation. These positions are all unfunded by the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP).

Another challenge that many agencies are facing across the country, is hiring enough qualified staff to care for the individuals that we serve. Across the country, caregivers are in great demand and there is a big shortage. The Arc of Butler County has averaged 15 open positions that we have not been able to fill. To combat these open positions, staff have worked a high amount of overtime and we have contracted with staffing agencies. Filling these staffing vacancies will be The Arc’s biggest challenge. The Arc of The United States is asking the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help address this growing issue. The Arc is advocating for more funding to increase direct care staff wages.

The Community Participation Service (CPS) requirement is another significant mandate by the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP). The CPS is a new regulation developed by ODP that requires providers of day programs to take individuals into the community at least 25% of the time that they attend programming.

The newest challenge comes from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and employment services for individuals with disabilities. In 2017, OVR expanded services to include further training and employment opportunities for transition-aged youth. These services were met with high demand and great excitement; however, the funding structure can no longer sustain the system. In July 2019, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation implemented a Closed Order of Selection for employment services, essentially creating a waiting list for individuals with disabilities to receive employment services. This change will significantly impact our A.E.R.O. after school program, plans to expand this program may have to be placed on hold or delayed until funding is available.

All these significant events are major challenges for our Agency and the individuals that we serve. Staff and the Arc Board of Directors look forward to the challenge and will work hard to meet and develop solutions that will meet our individual’s needs.

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**LEARNING TO READ**
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Thomas Bunnell moved into The Arc’s residential homes back in 2016. After being adopted at a very early age, he lived his childhood, and most of his adulthood, with his adoptive parents. After his father passed away, and due to his mother’s continuous aging, new care was needed for Thomas. In 2017, Tom received a special recognition award at The Arc of Butler County’s 60th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Dinner. He received this award because of his easy transition into new care. Since 2016, Tom has really thrived living in his new home.

Tom has showed interest many times in learning how to read. Program Coordinator, Bonnie Fontaine was able to make contact with the Adult Literacy Program at Butler Community College and enroll him after an assessment. They were able to match him with a tutor, Joan Poutous, who has a background in Special Education. For the past month, Tom has been attending the program twice a week. Nancy, Direct Support Professional for The Arc, communicates collaboratively with Joan in working through the Adult Literacy Curriculum. Together, they have figured out what learning tactics Tom likes and is able to retain. Thomas looks forward to ‘going to school’ and learning. In this short amount of time, Tom is showing success through this program. He is great at associating letters with words, sounding out multi-syllable words, and putting words together to create small phrases.

Tom is grateful for this opportunity and in addition to being able to read the McDonalds menu, he looks forward to one day reading the newspaper and Bible in church.

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**ATF ACTION IN FULL SWING!**

The Arc’s Adult Training Facility (ATF) is officially in action! Individuals in the photos can be seen working on a painting project during one of their ATF Activities. The paintings will be displayed in the ATF Area of PARC Productions.

Individuals enrolled in ATF will attend programs that center around art, music, light exercise, and crafts. This new service is creating exciting opportunities for the individuals to further explore their interests and hobbies.
MEET DOTTIE

Being a lobby attendant at Wendy’s is Dorothy Bowen’s first job since the 80’s. She has always had the desire to work and after a referral from OVR (Office of Vocational Rehabilitation), The Arc was able to help her land a job within one year!

While getting started through The Arc’s Supportive Employment program, Dottie completed work assessments, which allowed Job Coaching staff to determine her strengths and interests. Dottie said, “The Arc has a team of Job Coaches who have helped me at my job.” She has been working at Wendy’s since April 2019.

Some of her duties include keeping the lobby clean, wiping down tables and chairs, sweeping the floor, collecting trays, and restocking the condiment station. She has been trying to improve her work speed since she started, and she is definitely achieving that goal!

Dottie enjoys meeting the customers and staff at Wendy’s and says she enjoys helping others. She takes the city bus to and from work and always makes sure she is on time to start! “Through Dottie’s involvement with The Arc of Butler County, she has shown a positive attitude and perseverance,” said Clinton Anthony, Supported Employment Specialist.

THANK YOU

NexTier Bank

Local NexTier branches completed their Annual Candle Sale in JUNE!

Candles are made by individuals at PARC Productions & sold at local branches of NexTier Bank.

We would like to thank NexTier Bank for this continued partnership.

The total raised was $1,190.50

** MONEY RAISED WILL BENEFIT INDIVIDUALS AT PARC PRODUCTIONS **
Volunteering Through Community Participation Supports Program (CPS)

The Arc of Butler County’s CPS Program is continuing to make progress integrating individuals into the community. Volunteering is especially important to the individuals we serve. It’s something they find true fulfillment out of. For the past year, Katie Dunlap (CPS Program Specialist) has been working to make connections in the community to find more opportunities for the individuals enrolled in CPS.

Meet Lenny.

We asked Lenny how long he has worked at PARC. He said, “a long time - the Bart Bus always brings me in.” Lenny is one individual who has been transitioning into CPS time from the workshop.

Lenny has had the opportunity to volunteer at many places around Butler. He has spent some time this summer volunteering at St. Vincent De Paul Food Cupboard. Lenny has really developed a relationship with the other volunteers at the food cupboard. Volunteering at Community Alliance Church is another one of Lenny’s favorites. His usual responsibility is to clean off the toys there. However, he really liked helping sort through all the stuff from Vacation Bible School this summer. He likes to organize!

Felicia Walters, Direct Support Professional, said her favorite outing with Lenny so far has been when they went to the YMCA for the Adaptive Dance Class and Lenny was busting out all the Michael Jackson moves… Michael Jackson is one of his favorite singers! Felicia said, “He just enjoys life and it shows!”

We would like to thank all of our Direct Support Professionals for all of their hard work and dedication to the individuals we serve.
MEET CONNIE.
TRAINING COORDINATOR

Connie Donovan has a long history of working with individuals with disabilities. She said it goes back to her high school days, working as a camp counselor at the ARC of Alleghany (Achieva). Connie moved throughout Achieva’s organization and landed roles such as residential staff, job coach, production supervisor, and lastly the Co-Manager of Achieva’s RAMS Mailing Service.

After having her two children, Connie and her family moved to the Butler County area. She worked as a supervisor with Lifesteps for 6 years. Connie is now the Training Coordinator for The Arc of Butler County. Understanding the importance of training and having a long history of working with individuals with disabilities, this position is perfect for her!

“Assisting staff with trainings to help individuals in the best way possible to live to the fullest potential is definitely a passion of mine,” said Connie. Well trained staff who work together are key to any successful outcome.

Connie schedules all staff trainings. For licensing requirements, all staff need to complete a specific amount of training per year. Working around the staffs already busy schedule and coordinating training days can be quite the task.

The Arc recently installed computers in the Residential Homes and is planning to integrate a new training software, Relias Learning. Connie is excited to introduce this program in the next few months and believes it will be a positive outcome for residential staff.

In addition to her responsibilities as Training Coordinator, she also assists HR with the hiring process, taking applications, and setting up interviews with the supervisors. She gets to welcome all the new faces to The Arc during orientation – she says each week is so different from the next, keeping everything so fresh!

FUN FACT:
“I love the theatre! I do everything you can think of besides going on stage… I’m a bit too shy for that.” Connie has been a board member of the Butler Little Theatre for 6 years, she and her husband owned a guitar store on Route 8 for many years, her son is a fantastic musician, and her daughter just graduated from Point Park University last year for acting! She says her whole family is one way, or another involved in the community of Performing Arts.

A FOND FAREWELL!
CHELSEA CARRABBIA

Chelsea had been with The Arc of Butler County since March 2015. She started out as a Residential Program Worker, however, ended her time here as a Program Coordinator.

“I chose the Arc simply because of their mission – to empower individuals with differing abilities to live, work, and thrive in our communities.” She said her favorite part about working with The Arc was being able to build relationships with each individual.

Chelsea took a position as a Residential Program Manager in Aberdeen, Maryland at The Arc of Northern Chesapeake Region. When she decided to relocate it was important to her to stay employed with The Arc. She is excited to get involved with another chapter and meet new individuals; however, she said “The Arc of Butler County will forever leave an embedded mark on my heart.”

CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD LUCK!
SUMMER RECAP

ANNUAL CORN ROAST 2019 - THANK YOU RICH-MAR ROTARY!
AUGUST 7, 2019

INDIVIDUALS FROM PARC PRODUCTIONS WERE INVITED TO MEMORIAL PARK IN BUTLER FOR A PICNIC HOSTED BY RICH MAR ROTARY

BANTAM JEEP FEST
JUNE 7, 2019

SUMMER PARTY FUN!
AUGUST 1, 2019
The Arc of Butler County is committed to reducing the incidence and limiting the consequence of intellectual and developmental disabilities through:

- **Advocacy**
- **Education**
- **Support**
- **Service Provision**

The Arc of Butler County is committed to securing for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to choose and realize their goals of where and how they learn, live, work, and play. The Arc of Butler County will work toward securing, consistent with the individual’s need, maximum personal independence, choices, inclusion, equal rights, and adequate supports, which are all necessary to guarantee a real quality of life to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Arc of Butler County will provide leadership in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities and develop the necessary human and financial resources to attain its goal.
This quarterly newsletter is produced by The Arc of Butler County. It highlights the many ways our dedicated staff, volunteers, and generous donors come together to support and empower individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live, work, and participate in their communities.

ADVOCACY

The Arc of Butler County is a chapter of the largest advocacy organization in the United States for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our advocacy services are free of charge to families and individuals in Butler County. Our advocacy efforts focus on helping families with children maneuver the special education process to ensure a positive, quality education. We help parents understand their child’s rights to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, as guaranteed by law.

Our education advocate helps guide parents through the special education process, from how to determine eligibility for special services to how to prepare for Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to how to file a due process complaint to how to find an attorney for legal representation. Our goal is to ensure that the school adheres to a child’s IEP and makes a good effort to help the student achieve his or her defined goals. Parents are the most effective participants in developing and managing their child’s education goals. Sometimes, however, they may find issues or instances when other resources are helpful. The Arc of Butler County’s advocacy program serves as their leading resource for information and support.

WHAT OUR EDUCATION ADVOCATE CAN DO FOR YOU:

- Provide resources and information about your rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and applicable state regulations, including Early Intervention, and about how to effectively advocate for your child to resolve issues.
- Provide resources to school districts and Early Intervention providers to help design and deliver supports and services that guarantee students with disabilities the opportunity to make progress on their education goals.
- Provide resources and information about IEP meets and refer families to education law attorneys for mediation or due process hearings.

For more information about our advocacy efforts and how we can help you, contact our Education Advocate, Philip Rosenbauer at 724-679-1955

STAY INFORMED • STAY CONNECTED

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Like Us on Facebook. Stay up-to-date with our latest news, view photos, and hear about upcoming events. You can also share your stories and give us feedback.

Tell Us What You Think. Did you enjoy this newsletter? Have a story you’d like to share for our next edition? Send us an email at mkrewduk@arcbutler.org.