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FACING CHALLENGES

A LETTER TO YOU FROM OUR CEO, JOHN LINK.

As summer comes to an end and we begin to see the changing of the seasons, The Arc of Butler County faces many challenges with the new fiscal year.

The first challenge that we face, is again, keeping individuals and staff safe from Covid-19. The Fall of 2021 has seen a significant increase in the number of positive cases in Butler County. The primary reason is due to schools going back in session and the high number of unvaccinated individuals in the community. With the increase in the number of cases we must remind staff, families, and the individuals we serve, the importance of continued mask wearing and social distancing. Additionally, with the changing of the seasons, many of the outdoor activities are now being moved indoors where these efforts are even more important.

On a positive note, it does seem that individuals that have received the vaccine and have contracted Covid-19 have had lessor symptoms, with their cases being less severe and with no hospitalizations. Precautions put in place by the agency, will remain in effect for the distant future.

The second challenge that we face, as well as many other providers, is finding enough qualified staff to care for the individuals that we serve.



Individuals from CPS program exploring Living Treasures

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION SUPPORTS

The Arc of Butler County's CPS Program has been finding new opportunities to keep individuals safe and engaged on community outings.



[MORE PHOTOS AND STORIES ON PAGE 6](#)

Numbers coming out of Harrisburg show that agencies across the state have a staff vacancy rate of over twenty-three percent (23%). Compounding the staff vacancy rate, is the very high turnover rate, once staff are hired, trained, and working with individuals, very few stay in the field past the first year. Currently, the turnover rate for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) is thirty-seven (37%).

One of the main reasons for this issue is the low wages paid to Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). The average wage for a DSPs in Pennsylvania is \$14.38, far below what the State Center pay their DSP's. Direct Support Professionals in the state centers are paid a wage of \$18.56 This wage disparity makes recruitment and retention even more difficult, coupled with increased regulation and training requirements, it becomes more dire. Not to mention other industries are paying upwards of \$18.00/hour to start.

Providers across the state are dealing with this same staffing crisis, with funding to help address this crisis tied up in the Legislature. Currently, there is a plan in Harrisburg (Equal Pay for Equal work) that will take money from the American Rescue Plan and infuse it into our current fee schedule rates and will permit agencies to increase their DSP wages to \$15.00 per hour. This plan is dependent upon both sides of the aisle coming together on an agreement that would help stabilize our industry.

The current system is in crisis mode and without a solution very soon, agencies across the state will be faced with difficult decisions. In order to attract qualified staff to provide these critical services and supports, agencies need this funding to be released.

SUMMER



AERO TRANSITION PROGRAM, FIRST EVER, SUMMER CAMP, JUNE 14TH, 16TH, AND 17TH

As you know, the past year and a half has forced not only us, but everyone, to make changes and be innovative. The AERO After School Transition Program (which has been around for close to 5 years now) had to decide to convert the program to a virtual option for students for the 20-21 School Year.

Although the program was a success, we felt that the students were still missing out on the extra support they needed and deserved.

In June, we held a 3-day Summer Camp at Alameda Park. Students were provided Breakfast and Lunch and participated in games and activities centered around Transition Skills. Some of the activities included: Tie-Dye, Laundry Relay, Price is Right Grocery Game, and many others!

We would like to give a special thank you to the GFWC Junior Women's Club of Butler for providing volunteers to help with the camp. We plan to make this an annual opportunity for transition-age students.

"I had a wonderful time volunteering at The Arc of Butler County's Summer Camp. Mary and Marissa did a fantastic job organizing different activities to do throughout the day. My favorite was when we helped the students tie-dye T-shirts. It was fun to see everyone's creativity!"

Caroline Kyne, GFWC Junior Women's Club of Butler - President



RICH MAR ROTARY ANNUAL CORN ROAST, AUGUST 11TH

The Rich-Mar Rotary Club has hosted a picnic for individuals of The Arc of Butler County/ PARC Productions, once a year for the past few decades.

This was a great social event for the individuals, with delicious food, BINGO, and prizes. Thank you again, for always hosting this event, Rich-Mar Rotary!



RECAP



Diane (PARC) and Erin (Management)



Kay (Community Integration Specialist) and Jennifer, Joan and Terry (Supported Housing)



Tammy (Supervisor) and Michelle (Residential)



Jeff and Tom (PARC and Life Sharing)



Scott Harding (Board President) and Allen (Management)



Ashley Anne (Residential)

SUMMER PARTY, AUGUST 5TH

For the first time in over a year we were able to get together for an end of summer party. The evening was filled with good food, friendship, games, music, and a magic show by Weird Eric! Thank you to those who helped organize and those who volunteered at the party - We hope to be able to have another party soon!



The Arc of Butler County's
5th Annual Mum Sale in August was a great success!

We sold over 300 mums and raised money for programs
that benefit individuals with intellectual and
developmental disabilities.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE ARC OF BUTLER COUNTY!



• • •
SEPT 12-18, 2021

As a thank you to ALL our DSPs and to acknowledge their efforts and dedication to The Arc of Butler County's mission and to the individuals we serve, we drew names for prize baskets for each of the Agency's departments!

Congratulations to Todd Woods, Tina Thompson, Sarah Parent, Vince Rodgers, Joanne Ristity, Madalyn Guthrie, Barb Craig, Riley Burdine, Alice Watterson, Joyce Wise (Residential), Kamron Guthrie (Supported Employment), and Kayla Covert (Vocational Workshop)

• • •



Sarah Parent, DSP



Alice Watterson, DSP

American Rescue Plan

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

INCREASE DSP WAGES FOR COMMUNITY INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND AUTISM (ID/A) SERVICES

Pennsylvania Pays its own workers in the State Centers providing ID/A services **\$4.28/hour** or **30% MORE THAN** Community DSPs.

Workforce Comparisons from Current Data	Residential Services Aides, PA State Centers (June 2021)	Community Direct Support Professionals (July 2021)	Variance
Average Hourly Wage	\$18.66	\$14.38	\$(4.28)
Vacancy Factor	16.8%	23.3%	1.4X Higher
Turnover Rate	13.9%	37.8%	2.7X Higher

- 6,500 Pennsylvanians with ID/A have lost Day Services during the pandemic and have not returned due to the current staffing crisis.
- This represents a 30% Decrease in service capacity.
- The community ID/A system is collapsing, and investment is needed immediately to compensate community DSPs at the same level as their state-worker counterparts.
- \$541 million is needed to close this gap.
- Funds are available NOW from the American Rescue Plan.

PLEASE ACT TODAY!

Contact **Your Legislator** and Governor Tom Wolf at (717) 787-2500 or by email at govcorrespcrm@pa.gov



The Provider Alliance

SHARING IDEAS, RESOURCES, AND PURPOSE

WWW.PROVIDERALLIANCE.ORG

“I rely on staff for pretty much my total care, because I can't dress myself, I can't get myself up, I use a Hoyer lift and all that stuff...And without my DSPs, I wouldn't be able to go out like everyone else...I even have to plan my daily bathroom needs around when staff are available, which of course doesn't make my medical professionals happy, because it makes me sick, and I can't do what I need to do to live...”

— Person Served with an ID

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT: WORKING TOGETHER TO GET THE JOB DONE

The Arc's Supported Employment Program (formally referred to as COD) was founded in 1988 and works to provide support obtain and maintain competitive employment with many participants at job sites in the Butler County Area.

One of the unique job opportunities available for individuals in this program is cleaning at the Moraine State Park Cabins. This is a job that has been around for many years and is a very unique work opportunity for individuals.

When visiting this site on a Friday morning, 5 crew members were already hard at work on the job. This day they were assigned to clean every cabin.

'I like getting out... having a job, and doing a good job.' said Amber. Her Job Coach said she keeps everyone in the crew getting along and holds the others accountable for appropriate work standards.

Troy Rhodaberger, Job Coach, said the individuals even keep him in check. They have learned how things should be done. He said it really is a team effort and this job teaches everyone how to work together, all while incorporating their own personalities.

"I believe that our Arc customers/clients that are involved in the Moraine State Park cabin cleaning crew benefit in numerous ways from this program. Besides building essential work skills including: dependability, consistency, efficiency & thoroughness at their job tasks- they are practicing critical social skills as well. There were five individuals I worked with throughout the summer, and it was amazing to see a group that was so diverse in their skills, abilities, and backgrounds come together on a weekly basis to get the job done as a team, while at the same time learning to manage their different work styles and opinions. I personally enjoyed seeing one of the crew members learn to take on more of a leadership role this summer, and it was great to see him grow in respectful demeanor to both his coworkers and his Supported Employment Specialists, as well as to observe how well his coworkers respected and accepted his new position. Another crew member "moved on" to more gainful employment elsewhere, but that is the aim for our customers/clients to be as competitive in the workforce as possible, so this was very satisfying to see materialize!"

Ann Spellman, Supported Employment - Job Coach



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION SUPPORTS



Exploring Living Treasures and Keystone Safari Park



Picking Blueberries at Bowser's Blueberry Farm



Visiting The Mars Area History & Landmarks Society Train Station Museum



Volunteering for United Way's Week of Caring

INDIVIDUAL SPOTLIGHT

Tom Ealy, Vocational Workshop

Tom Ealy resides in the agency Family Living Program and works at Parc Productions. Over the last 18 months, Tom has continued to work every day. He has been an essential part of meeting the needs of Cleveland Cliffs.

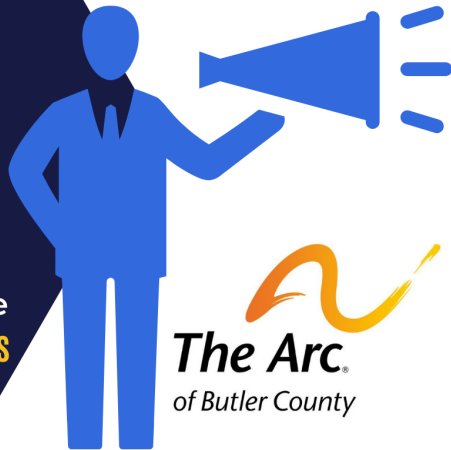
Tom showed up every day to complete the work and does so with a positive attitude and tremendous work ethic.



NEWS AND OTHER ACTION ITEMS

WE ARE HIRING

Full-Time and Part-Time
Direct Support Professionals



Why Join Our Team?



\$2,500 FT Signing Bonus
\$1,250 PT Signing Bonus



Earn a living, while making a difference in the lives of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Great Benefits

About The Arc of Butler County

The Arc of Butler County is a non-profit Agency dedicated to providing services and supports to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the Butler County Area.

What's a DSP?

DSPs play a crucial role in fulfilling the The Arc of Butler County's mission by providing assistance with daily activities to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To be successful in this role, you must be **compassionate, motivated** to help others, and **dedicated** to providing quality support.

To apply, visit: <http://arcbutler.org/employment-opportunities/>



arcbutler.org



Kristen Fuhrer, HR Director
kfuhrer@arcbutler.org



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THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

The Arc of Butler County is extremely grateful to have gracious community members and foundations who help make our mission possible each and every day. This past year The Arc of Butler County has received financial support, not only from our loyal donors, but also from many local Foundations including:

**United Way, DSF Foundation,
Edith L Trees Foundation, and
Neal Martin Christensen Foundation**



Current and Past Board Members and General Membership!

We are still working on a Record Collection Book to honor those who have served on The Arc of Butler County's Board. We need your help. Please be on the lookout for a letter and questionnaire in the mail sometime in the next few weeks - if you know someone who has served on the board, please share the information with them.

Questions? Email Mary at
mkrewduk@arcbutler.org

ANNUAL HOLIDAY FRUIT BASKET AND CANDLE SALE

THE ANNUAL FRUIT BASKET SALE AND CANDLE SALE IS PLANNED FOR DECEMBER 2021

WE MAY HAVE TO MAKE CHANGES TO OUR ANNUAL SALE DUE TO THE PRICE INCREASES IN APPLES AND THE AVAILABILITY OF FRUIT. THE AGENCY WILL CONTINUE TO DO THE CHRISTMAS CANDLES. PLEASE CONTINUE TO FOLLOW OUR WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION.

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.



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United Way
of Southwestern Pennsylvania

The Arc of Butler County is affiliated with the United Way of Southwestern PA, The Arc of the United States, and The Arc of Pennsylvania.

Achieve With Us.
For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

HELP US ACHIEVE OUR MISSION

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.

STAY INFORMED • STAY CONNECTED



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events. You can also share your stories
and give us feedback.



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