

THE ARC OF LITCHFIELD COUNTY, INC.

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT - MAY 2020



This year's version of an annual meeting reflects the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on how we are best able to conduct business while maintaining social distancing. Instead of inviting the community to a celebratory annual meeting similar to last year's event, we are sharing with you highlights of some of the amazing and inspiring ways that LARC staff are providing support to the individuals in our care as well as to their co-workers during this pandemic.

In place of a meeting, the following agency annual update celebrates and highlights the heroic efforts of LARC staff to keep individuals engaged and supported during these unprecedented times.

Residential

Residential staff have been through a lot over the last two months trying to keep safe the residents in LARC's group homes as well as supporting co-workers. Maintaining regular routines is key for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and staff continue to make heroic efforts to maintain routines whenever possible during this pandemic. Equally challenging is keeping residents busy. The typical activities that provide social interaction have been cancelled or severely limited. Day programs are closed and many community activities postponed. Thanks to many creative and inspired employees, group homes are now connecting with other program areas, creating ways to interact and share expertise, all towards keeping individuals engaged and entertained. This was no easy task but staff stayed focused, learned new technologies, and continue to make sure individuals are able to take advantage of the various activities that are shared. As staff were shifted around to fill vacancies, co-workers supported each other in ways that kept order and achieved the ultimate goal of keeping everyone safe. The effort continues as everyone anticipates the day when life can return to normal!



Clinical

The Clinical Team has been very busy and creative on many fronts. While staff continue to do the work typically required such as compiling data, completing reports, training, and preparing for monthly clinics with specialists, they are also implementing effective ways of communicating with group home managers via Zoom video conferencing. Additionally, they are keeping in contact with individuals on a regular basis through Zoom, FaceTime, and phone calls. Staff continue to meet electronically with the students in LARC's Transition program presenting material virtually, incorporating visuals and videos, and making lessons as interactive and engaging as possible.



Staff from several program areas have been making face masks, obtaining material as well as completed mask donations from local retailers such as JoAnn Fabrics and Lakeville Interiors. At a time when personal protective equipment is in great demand, these additional masks are greatly appreciated and certainly contributing to LARC's stockpile.



Day Program

Dedicated day support staff have either been implementing DSO services in residence or working on connecting with our individuals via wellness calls or virtual programming. These programs maintain a regular and consistent time of engagement, socialization, and enrichment options for our individuals. The same day support staff have been working in our residential clients' homes to maintain consistency and bring both fun and engaging programs during day hours. Wellness checks are done by staff who have a connection with other DSO individuals that are not in our LARC residential programs. This was our first line of communication with our individuals and we will continue to do them for those who are unable to join the Virtual Services. Fun projects normally held in day programs are now taking place residentially or virtually through a Bublup & Google site. This LARC virtual site includes a range of activities and links like: Stories, Arts & Crafts, Exercise & Mobility, Virtual Field Trips, Soft skills & Cooking and will now include our Live Daily Scheduled programs. Some favorites found on our site are story time and arts & crafts with videos of staff reading favorite books or sharing creative art activities. From the beginning of the pandemic, a few staff have been putting together daily arts and crafts bags for each of the group homes to enjoy. Painted rocks containing inspirational messages are one favorite art project, along with making Mother's Day gifts, and hearts in windows and doors to show our support to all essential workers. Many of these projects are shared with LARC's community of supporters through Facebook as well as in daily communications with the entire agency. Check us out on Facebook and our link to LARC Virtual Services Program: <https://sites.google.com/view/larctivitycenter/home>



Vocational

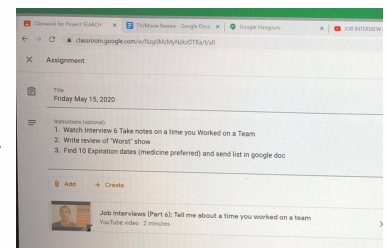
Many employees in the Vocational program are out on the front lines supporting individuals who continue to work at their jobs. Some are factory workers doing the work for essential products all of us need. The majority of the people have jobs in grocery stores around the area. They are truly heroes, working on the front lines, dealing with significant changes in routines and workplace expectations, including a lot more cleaning. Staff are there to support individuals and help them to understand the true importance of maintaining a safe distance from customers and co-workers, more frequent hand washing, and learning to navigate their jobs while wearing a mask. Staff also continue to maintain worksites, whenever possible, of individuals in the Vocational program who are not currently working. The hope is that the job site will still be available for workers when they are able to resume working.

*Members of
the Job
Coaching
Team*



Project Search

Project Search officially started at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in January and was proceeding with great success until the pandemic hit. Begun in the fall of 2019, LARC worked with partner, Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, developing the model for this new program. Project Search provides classes in employability skills, independent living skills, and internship experience to individuals with disabilities who are between the ages of 18 and 35. Charlotte Hungerford Hospital was providing internships to two students in various departments such as cardiovascular medicine and nutritional services. The students were working onsite at the hospital amidst daily accolades from hospital staff who were thrilled with the level of work and attention to detail exhibited by the students. Kathy Riberdy, Project Search coordinator and special educator, has been working with the students throughout the pandemic, via online training, keeping them engaged and progressing forward with additional skills training. Plans are in the works for the resumption of the onsite program in the fall.



School to Community Transition Program

The Transitions team has kept the program going virtually with the students ever since the school closed down. The students were provided with packets to complete at home with the goals being to stay busy and maintain skills learned before the pandemic. Daily videos on yoga and other physical exercises are not as fun as going to Planet Fitness but are reminding the students of what they were learning about the importance of physical fitness. Videos on hygiene and educational exercises and games on mathematics, money skills, budgeting and shopping are helping students remember all they learned in the classroom. Students are also tasked with trying out some of the recipes they cooked or baked in class to share with their families. Part of the assignment is to take photos of the meals they prepared and submit to the Transitions team along with the recipes.

School to Community Transition Program (continued)

Zoom meetings were set up for the social skills group, which meets once a week with the Behavior specialists. Teletherapy groups for Speech Services and Occupational Services meet via Zoom once a week per student. The ongoing requirements of the program continue to be met including regular interaction with and reporting to the Department of Developmental Services and Directors of Student Support services from area schools -- not always easily done remotely.



Camp MOE

In light of the pandemic, all previously arranged planning for Summer 2020 had to be revised. Things like job fairs, postcard handouts for campers, in person interviews and a new STEM initiative were no longer on the agenda. A greater social media presence was pursued, which includes the posting on Camp MOE's Facebook page on a daily basis of crafts and experiments for campers to do. Regular communication with registered parents continues to keep them as informed as possible about a 2020 season. Preparation continues for the potential of a limited camp season, and frequent meetings occur with counselors (virtually) to discuss games and different solutions for our very different-looking camp day. A virtual open house took place on Saturday, May 16th, and the video is on Facebook and the Camp MOE website for all our new families to check out! Additionally, a virtual meeting link was provided for them to log on and get their questions and concerns answered by Stephanie Renzullo, Camp MOE director! We are waiting for more guidelines from the state and Camp MOE's official 2020 season will be determined by the end of May.



Finance Team

The finance team keeps the agency strong and on track for a sustainable future. During the pandemic, they are keeping the bills paid, processing mail, completing reports, finding PPE, and maintaining all of LARC's physical structures. The agency would not be able to function without this great team.

Human Resources

Finding, processing and training new employees is not easy during a pandemic. The Human Resources staff has continued keeping the agency informed about all matters of insurance, benefits, new regulations and laws, openings and new hires! They keep us updated on all issues affecting us and have been supported throughout this difficult time.