



# Community for All

Fall 2018

## LARC News Fall Edition Vocational Services [www.litchfieldarc.org](http://www.litchfieldarc.org)

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Robin Goewey at work at  
BD Corporation

### Partnering with Wisdom By Debra Aleksinas

With a punch of her timecard at 9:05 a.m. on Monday, Sept. 10, Natasha Cole officially became one of Wisdom House Retreat and Conference Center's newest employees.

The moment was monumental for several reasons: this is the first time Natasha has punched a timeclock, and the first time she has been hired independently at a competitive wage. It also marked the end of a successful, two-week "working interview" arranged by LARC's Independent Placement Support (IPS) team, during which time Natasha took a trial run at her new job as the third team member in the housekeeping department to ensure that the job would be a good fit for both employee and employer.

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Natasha Cole proudly displays her timecard after she clocked in after being hired competitively by Wisdom House.

### Sterling Engineering -- A Long-time Partner of LARC's Vocational Program

When asked why he decided to provide space to LARC's Vocational Services Program at Sterling Engineering more than 10 years ago, John Lavieri, President of Sterling, responded "why wouldn't we?"

At the time, Mr. Lavieri didn't know a lot about LARC, but he knew Larry Cassella, LARC's then executive director. When the request was made for space to set up a vocational worksite at Sterling, John was more than willing to help LARC by providing an integrated workplace setting. "Sterling had the space LARC needed, so we were glad to participate," John explained. (continued on page 6)



John Lavieri right with Everett Tew, job coach at LARC's Sterling Engineering (Air Industries Group) site.

### LARC Board of Directors

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Tom Stanton, Director of Vocational Services & Community Day Programs with Michael Menard, LARC Executive Director recently visited the Northwestern Connecticut Community Television station to record a segment of "Town Crier" to share news about LARC's programs and services, with a focus on Vocational news. The recording is available on LARC's website and at [nwctcommunitytv@charter.com](mailto:nwctcommunitytv@charter.com)>

### Project Search

LARC will participate in Project SEARCH, an employment training model that is successfully integrating individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities into competitive wage jobs. LARC is one of three recipients of a grant from the Connecticut Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDS) and Project SEARCH/Cincinnati Children's Hospital, which will cover the cost of program development, initial training and licensing fee for Project SEARCH.

Over the course of the next year, LARC will be working with Charlotte Hungerford Hospital and other partners to develop a model for the new program, which will begin next fall. With a focus on individuals from its *School to Work* Transition Program as well as current program participants in LARC's Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and Department of Social Services (DSS) vocational programs, LARC will also work with local school systems to ensure that individuals transitioning from school to work are aware of the opportunity. The Project SEARCH program is designed to be a one-year program and is based on a school year. Participating individuals, primarily aged 21 and older, will work in internships at Charlotte Hungerford and other area businesses with the goal of securing employment at the end of the year.

"This is an exciting opportunity for LARC," according to Michael Menard, executive director at LARC. "The agency, with leadership from our vocational and day service director Tom Stanton, has been aggressively working to transform our Vocational Services Program to align with changing requirements and community needs. Individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities are capable of working competitively and deserve to be paid a competitive wage," Mr. Menard explained.

The goal is to begin the new program in August 2019.

The Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is collaborating with national Project SEARCH as part of its commitment to helping people with intellectual disabilities find, get and keep community-based, competitive wage jobs, a commitment LARC shares. In early 2018, LARC was chosen to be one of ten agencies nationwide to participate in the National ARC's pilot grant program with Boston University's Institute for Community Inclusion's Provider Transition Network. The purpose of the program is to assist in the process of provider transformation towards competitive integrated employment. LARC's goal is to educate staff on the processes needed to provide competitive integrated employment to individuals in the agency's current group supported employment programs.

(Wisdom House, continued from page 1)

“We just love having you here, Natasha,” said Carol Gould, who oversees bookings for conferences and events at the Litchfield-based spiritual retreat center. Gould offered a “high five” and warm welcome to Natasha upon completion of her first timecard punch. Reflecting on the positive impact Natasha has had on the center’s staff in only a few weeks, Gould noted “It has made a difference in our lives.”

Initially, Natasha is working part time, with possible hours to be added as the retreat center heads into one of its busiest seasons. Her current housekeeping duties include dusting, vacuuming, assisting with preparation of visitor rooms, and in the future she may also assist the kitchen staff one day per week. Prior to joining Wisdom House, Natasha had worked 18 years as an assistant at the Torrington Child Care Center under the guidance of LARC’s IPS team.

Deborah Kelly, Executive Director, who was instrumental in forging a working relationship with LARC’s vocational department, praised her new hire. “Natasha Cole has been a great addition to the Wisdom House staff. She brings joy and happiness with her each day and gives 110 percent to her duties here at Wisdom House. Natasha always greets everyone with a beautiful smile and is excited every day to begin her job. She is a true delight to have on our team! We are excited to see her grow in her position at Wisdom House.”

“LARC’s new alliance with Wisdom House has deepened the meaning to our vision of Community for All. This partnership is a new venture for Wisdom House and the staff have enthusiastically embraced Natasha as a member of their team and a part of their family,” said Laura Brown, Coordinator of Vocational Supports (BRS+ABI). “The commitment demonstrated of working together for the success of all, she added, “has allowed Natasha the opportunity to experience full inclusion in an environment that is devoted to personal growth, peace and tranquility.”

“My boss (Executive Director Deborah Kelly) and my co-workers are wonderful,” said Natasha, beaming from ear to ear. “I love my job and I like it here very much.”

Wisdom House is an interfaith retreat and conference center presenting programs in spirituality, education and the arts and offering hospitality for organizations whose mission is consistent with that of Wisdom House. The Litchfield-based center’s mission is rooted in the Judeo-Christian Wisdom tradition which supports its commitment to sustainability and concern for contemporary issues.

## DYMAX CORPORATION by Deb Aleksinas

Bruce Tracy and Scott Grupe were recently hired directly by Dymax Corporation to work in its Processing & Filling department. Their start date at the Torrington-based manufacturing company was Monday, June 18.

In their new positions, Bruce, of Winsted, and Scott, of Goshen, are responsible “for assisting operations on the manufacturing floor with assigned tasks to help the output of adhesives to our customers,” according to Dymax, which employs more than 270 employees globally and has been named one of Inc. 5000’s fastest growing companies eight years in a row.

The direct hire of Bruce and Scott by Dymax Corporation represents the latest example of mutual collaboration between a local business and The Arc of Litchfield County’s (LARC) Vocational Services Program, which is committed to helping individuals it serves find competitive jobs in the community. Competitive jobs are defined as those in which workers are hired directly by the company, at or above minimum wage, in integrated settings.

“It is a pleasure to have Scott and Bruce join the Dymax teams. They have been awesome contributors in their two weeks and have helped us gain in output,” said Ron Hoinsky, production manager. “They have fit right in with the team and we are happy to add them to our family

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Scott Grupe, left, and Bruce Tracy at their first day of orientation at Dymax Corporation in Torrington. (Photo by Deb Aleksinas)

## **LARC's Vocational Services Department —**

### **A few members of the team share here some of what they do!**



#### **Tom Stanton, Director, Vocational and DSO Community Day Programs**

Tom has been managing LARC's Vocational Services Programs since 1981. He is currently the director of the Vocational and DSO Community Day Programs.

According to Tom, the Vocational Services Program has grown over the years, from a large Sheltered Workshop to seven Group Supported Employment sites at local businesses in the community providing work opportunities to 89 individuals with disabilities. The vocational program also supports 32 individuals employed by local businesses.

"The success of the vocational program," explained Tom, "is due in large part to the dedication of the staff who support the individuals in our program on a daily basis. The Vocational Program would not continue to be successful without the support from the local business community in partnering with LARC to provide employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities."

The whole team is excited about LARC's involvement with the Provider Transformation Network (PTN). Earlier this year, LARC applied for and was accepted to participate in the PTN led by The Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston in partnership with The Arc of the U.S. The organizations are working with LARC through early next year to support the agency's efforts to provide competitive integrated employment for everyone receiving vocational services. The team is off to an impressive start with the progress made growing partnerships with existing and new employers. LARC's Vocational team is committed to the agency's mission of community for all by developing and supporting new competitive employment opportunities. "We face some challenges," Tom stated, "but I am confident we have the staff with the skills and talents and the support of the local business required to move the program into the future."



#### **Celeste Turner, Employment Specialist, Competitive Placement**

Celeste Turner joined LARC, for the first time, in 1987 while finishing studies at Central Connecticut State University. She stayed with LARC for eleven years, ending that first phase of her career here as the QMRP for Vocational Services. During the following eight years Celest worked at the Mental Health Association of Connecticut, first as a Residential Counselor then as a program coordinator for an apartment complex that housed twelve adult individuals with severe mental illness. She was in charge of hiring and supervising eight staff members. (continued on following page)

### Laura Brown, Coordinator of Vocational Supports

Laura has been with LARC since 1986, when she started as a camp counselor. She has held several positions throughout the years, including as a certified employment specialist, Transition and Assessment employment specialist, School-to-Work job coach and a per diem residential counselor. Currently, as coordinator for the Independent Placement Support (IPS) team, Laura assists in the intake, planning, job developing, assessment, training and maintaining of community employment for individuals that include BRS, ABI, DDS and Summer Youth. She also is responsible for documentation and billing for the individuals supported by LARC. Laura is also involved with the Provider Transformation Network (PTN) and the transition of individuals from supported employment to community based employment.



**One of the rewarding aspects of the job for Laura is the growth in the numbers of individuals supported by LARC.** Also fulfilling is the community education of working with LARC individuals and seeing the success of employers as they implement LARC's training tools. "I'm a strong believer in our mission statement and take pride in providing community for all," Laura confirmed. "Most importantly, the greatest reward has been my ability to continue the goals that my mother-in-law started in 1964 as a parent involved in the creation of LARC and the rights for education for the population that we serve."

(Celeste Turner, continued from previous page)

Her experiences in these positions were life changing.

LARC was always on her mind and finally she decided it was time to come back "home". Celeste noted that when she returned to LARC, she brought with her "more knowledge" than she had the first time (at LARC) and it has "certainly proven to be useful."

Celeste likes many aspects of her current position, including "watching the excitement on the faces of the individuals with whom she works as they grow and become more confident in their jobs in the community; and working with thoughtful and caring people who are proud of LARC and advocating strongly for individuals served. She especially appreciates "hearing people thank one another genuinely for their help" and the "ability to laugh with our individuals and co-workers."

### Marianne Sedgwick, Vocational Community Support Coordinator

Marianne Sedgwick has been at LARC for 24 years and in her current role since September 1997. She was hired in October 1994 as the QMRP for the Vocational Services department. From April 2004 until this year, she was also the Training Coordinator.

Prior to working at LARC, Marianne was a State School Instructor at the Northwest Regional Center for 10 years. Many of the people LARC has served since 1983, Marianne helped transition them from the state vocational program to the LARC workshop.



As Coordinator in the Vocational Department, Marianne supervises the employment specialists who work with individuals either independently or in groups in community worksites as well as in-house. She also case manages all of the people LARC supports.

Marianne's favorite reward is an unsolicited hug from one of LARC's individuals and seeing happy faces around worksites. According to Marianne, she likes to "hear great ideas from co-workers and to help make those happen. I enjoy whenever our employers include our folks in company activities without giving a second thought," Marianne notes. "The folks we support are as normal as the next person – they just need a little help along the way. They want to be treated fairly and the same as others and there is no reason why they shouldn't be.

"I have a great support system here at LARC and I appreciate all who support me at my job!!"

**(Lavieri, continued from page 1)**

In the early years, LARC individuals assembled shower curtain rods under contract with Keeney Engineering. Since the beginning, “it’s been a seamless partnership,” John confirmed. And to this day, it continues to be beneficial to both partners. Sterling employees are exposed to a condition of life they otherwise might not have experienced without their daily interactions with LARC individuals. Consequently, they have developed a better understanding of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The social interaction has been great for all concerned. “It’s been a very positive experience,” John noted. “LARC and Sterling workers congregate during breaks, talk baseball, share weekend plans, and enjoy each other’s company.”

Prospective customers who tour the Sterling facility always respond favorably about the partnership and are impressed by the focus and diligence of the LARC individuals. “Our customers think our relationship with LARC, and the workshops, are wonderful,” John noted.

John explained that the biggest change over the years has been the type of work which the individuals are engaged in. For many years, the main type of work was the assembly of shower curtain rods. The individuals became very adept at assembling the rods and even became competitive with each other about who could assemble them faster.

“It feels good to help,” John said. “Everyone benefits!”

Sterling Engineering was founded in 1941 by John’s grandfather, and the company remained in the family until 2015 when it was acquired by Air Industries Group, an aerospace manufacturer based in Long Island and Connecticut. Mr. Lavieri, who stayed on in a consulting role after the merger, has resumed the presidency at Sterling for the foreseeable future.

## **BD Corporation and LARC — A great success!** By Leslie S. Munson, Quality Manufacturing Representative, Quality Control

In January of 2016, we were extremely fortunate to partner with The Arc of Litchfield County, Inc., welcoming a group of their clients into our facility to assist us in our Quality Dept., performing some rework operations for us. Their primary function is to inspect and prepare syringes, already produced, for our machine operators to repackage. Due to the nature of our product, it is a critical and highly important process. Since their arrival here at the facility, we have been thoroughly impressed with their dedication and attention to detail. Their progress has indeed helped us to satisfy product delivery to many of our customers. In the time that they have been here, the Crew has, to date, reworked over 4.4 million parts for us!! An amazing performance!! We are happy and proud of their contributions to our business, and since that time they have become welcomed members of our BD family.



Here at BD Canaan, we look forward to many rewarding years ahead partnering with The Arc of Litchfield County, Inc.

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Les Munson, BD Corporation, is joined by LARC crew, Cathy Pena, Stephen Woltansky, Peter Bate and Robin Goewey, along with David Chamberlain, LARC Vocational Services Manager (back row).

(Dymax Corporation continued from page 3)

“Bruce and Scott have worked in the LARC vocational program for many years. Though they will be missed for all their hard work and enjoyable interactions with all of us, they are well deserved of this opportunity,”

said David Chamberlain, Community Worksite Coordinator. “Dymax Corporation is very fortunate to have hired two individuals who not only perform good quality work, but are eager to go there every day and do it. Good luck, Scott and Bruce,” he added.

Dymax North America, based in Torrington, is a leading manufacturer of specialty oligomers, coatings, adhesives, dispensing equipment and light-curing systems. The company serves the needs of medical device, electronic, aerospace and industrial manufacturers worldwide, with locations in the U.S., Germany, Ireland, China, Singapore and Korea.

Prior to landing their new positions, Bruce was employed as a quality control inspector at LARC’s Putter Lane satellite facility, and Scott was a member of a group-supported employment team at RBC Aircraft in Torrington, where he performed a variety of packaging and assembly duties.

### **Zeller Tire Saves the Day!**

When LARC’s space at Industrial Lane in Torrington was damaged due to a water main break, the team needed temporary space to continue working until other arrangements could be made. Jim Zeller stepped in and offered the team unused space he had up the road from Industrial Lane. “Jim really saved the day,” said David Chamberlain, LARC Vocational manager. “We were really stuck and needed alternative arrangements fast.” Jim came to the rescue and in short time, the team was set up at Zeller Tire’s former corporate offices in Torrington. Thank you, Jim for your generosity and quick assistance!

BD (continued from page 6)



Finished work waiting to be repackaged

Founded in 1897, BD (Becton Dickinson and Company) is a global medical technology company that is focused on improving drug therapy, enhancing the diagnosis of infectious diseases and advancing drug discovery. BD manufactures and sells medical supplies, devices, laboratory instruments, antibodies, reagents and diagnostic

products through its three segments: BD Medical, BD Diagnostics, and BD Biosciences. The company serves healthcare institutions, life science researchers, clinical laboratories, industry and the general public. In 1961, BD began manufacturing in Canaan the first wave of disposable plastic syringes, an innovation that would soon transform BD by replacing traditional glass syringes to ensure more sterile conditions. BD is the largest employer and taxpayer in the Northwest Corner of CT. The facility is the largest manufacturer of disposable syringes in the world, producing billions of syringes annually.



Peter Bate, LARC crew member, at BD Corporation

## LARC Seeks Work Space in Litchfield County

In an effort to enhance its efforts toward integrated employment for the individuals it serves, The Arc of Litchfield County (LARC) is seeking a business owner with unused or underutilized manufacturing or warehouse space who wants to demonstrate their care for the community and social responsibility by partnering with a program that enriches the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

LARC, a non-profit agency, is seeking community-based work space a few hundred square feet in size, either as an in-kind donation or at a lease price to be negotiated. The space would be utilized for up to 6 hours a day by a small group of workers, under the guidance and transportation of a job coach, where they would perform light assembly work supplied by LARC.

LARC makes it easy for businesses to participate:

\*LARC is insured.

\*Job coaches ensure that the space is maintained in terms of cleanliness and organization.

\*Companies often see improved company morale, and employees take pride in providing a benefit to the community, and may seek volunteer opportunities with the nonprofit.

*Note: If you need help with work at your site, LARC can assist with that as well. Please contact David Chamberlain, [Dchamberlain@litchfieldarc.org](mailto:Dchamberlain@litchfieldarc.org) or Debra Aleksinas, [Daleksinas@litchfieldarc.org](mailto:Daleksinas@litchfieldarc.org) at LARC.*

## LARC

Mary Ellen Kunz  
 Director of Development & Marketing  
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Our vision, **Community for All**, strives to achieve inclusion for all individuals.

The principles which have guided LARC in its delivery of programs since 1964 are individual empowerment, choice, respect and dignity.

**COMMUNITY FOR ALL**