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Collaboration takes root between Mayfield Hydroponic Center, LARC's vocational program

by Debra Aleksinas

A new collaboration between The Arc of Litchfield County's (LARC) Vocational Department and the Torrington-based Patricia H. Mayfield Hydroponic Center has resulted in a job placement for one of the interns who recently completed an 8-month job readiness internship through LARC's Project SEARCH.

Reid Gargiulo of New Hartford was hired by the Patricia H. Mayfield Hydroponic Center at Technology Park Drive in Torrington on June 12 as a part-time Operational Worker, less than two weeks after completing his internship at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital.

His primary duties include packaging lettuce into plastic clamshell containers and labeling the products, assembling shipping boxes, washing equipment used in the growing of lettuce plants and other greenhouse tasks as needed. (continued on page 4)



Reid Gargiulo, center, with general manager Brandon Schroen, at right and Jon Jensen, lead consultant for the hydroponics operation



Bill and Brian at March Farms in Bethlehem. More photos featuring DSO outings and activities on page 6.

Culture Celebration at LARC

The Culture Celebration is a new initiative at The Arc of Litchfield County (LARC), providing opportunities to celebrate the many diverse cultures that comprise our community. The events celebrate long-held traditions that have been passed down by Latin Americans, Native American Indians, African Americans, and Asian Americans. The events take place at LARC's Main Street building and are enjoyed by the individuals in LARC's programs, their families, and staff. (continued on pg. 3)

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Dear friend,

Fall has arrived and with it the vibrant colors that make a New England autumnal season so spectacular. Days are busy at LARC in all departments with a considerable amount of time dedicated to training on many fronts. Staff are learning how best to recognize and treat trauma; new technology is helping with the required daily record-keeping by staff; and annual training is ongoing to ensure high quality support of the individuals in our care. We hope you enjoy this latest edition of LARC's Community Newsletter. As always, please reach out to me if you have questions about the important work we do at LARC.

Michael Menard, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Save the Date

*Special Wine Tasting &
 LARC's 60th Anniversary Celebration*

**Friday, April 5, 5-8 p.m.
 Crystal Peak**

Tastings of Fine Wines & Spirits

Hearty hors d'oeuvres

Groovy activities

Live music

Tablescapes Raffle



**Sponsors make a huge
 difference in LARC's fundraising events. Please
 visit our website for more information on how
 you can be part of this special occasion.**

<https://www.litchfieldarc.org/larcs-spring-wine-tasting-2024.html>



22nd Annual Wreath Sale

Orders Due: 11/10/23

Print an order form or

Order online at:

www.litchfieldarc.org/wreath-sale

Questions:

Contact Meg -

mmcginn@litchfieldarc.org

Thank you!

(continued from page 1)

Each of the participating organizations share aspects of their cultures and traditions in the form of dance, costumes, music, art, stories, and artifacts.

On Friday, September 29, Youth Opportunities Dance Group, a program of New Opportunities, Inc., performed lively and professionally choreographed dances in celebration of Latin Culture. At the end of the performance, the dancers invited LARC staff and individuals to join them on the dance floor and most all in the audience obliged. The goals of the Youth Opportunities program is to promote completion of high school and higher education among Hispanic youth, to provide after school educational assistance/tutoring, to discuss current social issues facing the youth, and to provide Hispanic youth an opportunity to learn folk dance associated with their culture. The dancers who performed at LARC's event are very talented and professional.

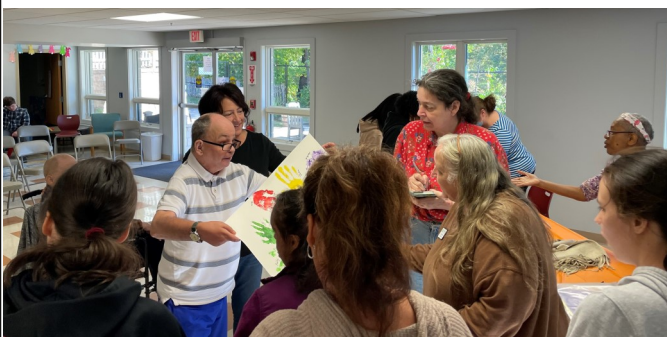


On Thursday, October 12, Darlene Kascak, educator and storyteller from the Institute for American Indian Studies (IAIS) presented *Hands on*



History—a lively look at the culture, traditions, and rich stories of Native Americans. The tactile and informative presentation was enlightening and very entertaining, eliciting questions and answers from the crowd in

response to what Ms. Kascak was sharing. She passed around animal



pelts, tools fashioned from animal bone, traditional clothing, drums, and other artifacts.



IAIS preserves and educates through discovery and creativity the diverse traditions, vitality and knowledge of Native American Cultures.

The series is funded by Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation.

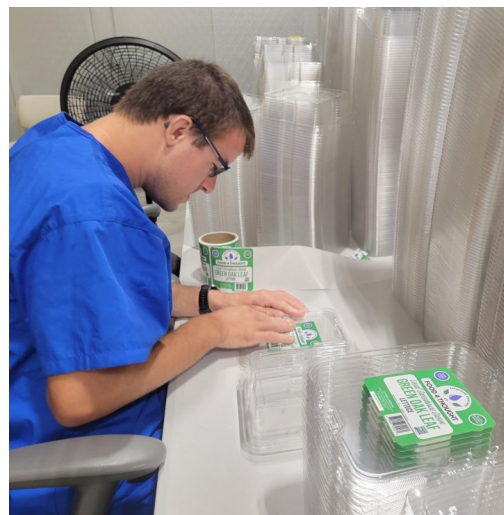
Collaboration takes root (continued from page 1)

Reid said he enjoys working with his new colleagues, including his supervisor, Brandon Schroen, who is the hydroponic operation's general manager.

"I am really liking my new job...it's great," Reid explained. In addition to the clean and bright greenhouse environment, Reid said he enjoys the variety of tasks, working with "very wonderful people," and the fact that he isn't required to work weekends.

He said he can "absolutely" see himself employed at the hydroponic farm long-term. "This has been a life-changing experience for me. I love how it's so close to home. It's the best job that I've had." Both Schroen and Jon Jensen, lead consultant for the hydroponics operation, praised Reid's enthusiasm, ability to learn the job quickly and strong work ethic.

"We are glad to hear that Reid is as happy with his job as we are with him," said Jensen.



Reid Gargiulo at work placing product labels on plastic clamshell containers.



A package of lettuce harvested by hand at the hydroponics farm.

In the summer of 2020, New Opportunities, Inc., a Waterbury-based social service and community action agency with offices in Torrington and Meriden, broke ground on the hydroponic greenhouse project at the Torrington Industrial Park.

The agency is working in collaboration with CT Food 4 Thought, a food production facility focused on increasing the availability of locally grown produce, providing training and employment opportunities in an agricultural environment and increasing the revenue to support social service programming by New Opportunities. It brings fresh, pesticide-free food to local food banks, shelters, soup kitchens and schools to communities throughout Connecticut.

The farm's mission is to provide entry-level, safe, clean, green jobs to community members, including those with developmental disabilities and the unemployed, while providing a path to higher-level employment opportunities in both this industry and others, said officials.

The initial greenhouse, which provides jobs to about a dozen workers, grows several varieties of lettuce using a hydroponic system where they grow in nutrient-rich water as the growing medium.

The facility, which is currently producing 8,500, 4-oz. containers of lettuce weekly, operates year-round due to the greenhouse's environmental controls which can simulate perfect growing conditions for plants even in the dead of winter.

Officials said the initial goal is to construct a total of three greenhouses at the Torrington location and have them up and running and providing jobs. Construction on a second, connected greenhouse has a targeted fall completion date.

Photos by Debra Aleksinas

Employee Anniversary Celebration

On Wednesday, September 20, LARC honored 17 employees who have been with the organization for 25 years or more.

LARC staff and members of the agency's Board of Directors joined in the celebration to show their appreciation. The honorees were presented with gifts and a festive cake.



Jason Combes and Lois Knight



Robin Pedone, Julie Stachowiak, Donna Reilly, and Megan Popovich



Front row: Mary Fisher, Robin Pedone, Julie Stachowiak, Lois Knight, Donna Reilly Back row: Michael Menard, Norman Robinson, Jason Combes, Marianne Sedgwick, Janet Morrill, David Chamberlain



Michael Menard and Mary Fischer

Recent Program and Event support from our generous community partners

Rotary of Torrington & Winsted—\$1,690 for Dance and Movement Class at The Warner Theatre

Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation—\$1,725 for Culture Celebration at LARC

Hartford Healthcare/Charlotte Hungerford Hospital—\$1,110 for Music Therapy Class

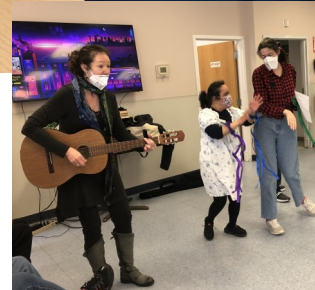
If you would prefer to receive our quarterly community newsletter by email, please contact

Mary Ellen Kunz at mkunz@litchfieldarc.org.



From apple picking, to baking, to dancing, and socializing, the individuals participating in LARC's Day Support Option (DSO), find joy and satisfaction on a daily basis.

Thanks to LARC's dedicated, kind, and supportive staff, there are many smiles shared in DSO and throughout the agency.



Your donation has real impact!

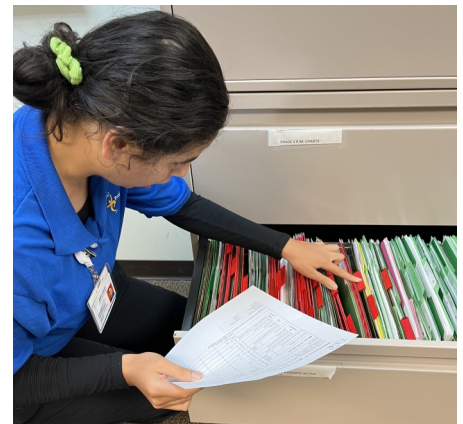
Your support helps LARC provide many of the programs and activities that help make life better for the hundreds of people served by the agency on a daily basis. Monthly donations can be set up on LARC's website www.litchfieldarc.org. Many employers match donations. Questions? Call Mary Ellen Kunz at 860-482-9364, ext. 390.



Thank you to a generous donor who purchased items used in LARC's Money Management Skills Training.

Project SEARCH News

Project SEARCH interns are having a busy fall at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital. In September they completed Orientation, learning employability skills and preparing to work in various departments at the hospital. The team met with LARC Steering Committee, including Michael Menard, Julie Stachowiak, and Marianne Sedgwick. CHH liaisons, Brian Mattiello, Pam Tino, and Shelli Rhoads worked with the team on interview tips and updating resumes. Sarah Toomey, from Greenwood's Counseling Referrals, provided an important lesson on CPR Basics. Brian is excited to be interning in the Cafeteria and Emma is learning skills in the Gift Shop and Storeroom. Congratulations!





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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