



# Community for All

Winter 2019

## LARC News Winter Edition [www.litchfieldarc.org](http://www.litchfieldarc.org)

What's inside?

Letter from Executive Director, Pg. 2

LARC's Residential Program, Pg. 2

A brief history of independent housing, Pg. 3

Staff Spotlight, Pg. 3

Vocational Services Program — *Year in Review*, Pgs. 4-6

Festival of Trees—Thank you to our donors, sponsors and guests, Pg. 7

### The changing landscape of LARC's Residential Program

LARC's Residential Program has grown substantially in the 35 years the organization has provided housing and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. LARC now owns and operates 5 homes and leases/operates one more. In all, 30 individuals call one of LARC's residences home.



Dee Vetrano, Director, Residential Services

Dee Vetrano, Director of the Residential Program, has been with LARC for 17 years. She has been at the helm of the Residential Program since 2011. In those years, Dee has seen the needs of the residents change in many ways and very quickly. The most significant change has been the increased medical needs of many of the residents as well as dementia, two conditions requiring new training to prepare staff to better understand the needs and to provide the care and attention needed by the individuals. "We are continually adapting to better serve our residents. This is home for them and we do everything possible to make sure they will remain in their home throughout their lives," Dee confirmed.

Changes in how the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) funds private providers like LARC is also necessitating changes to the residential program. The referrals LARC is receiving now from DDS are predominately individuals with autism. This is a very different population than that which LARC has been serving. The associated behaviors are not compatible with individuals currently residing in LARC group homes who may be medically-frail, have dementia, or severe intellectual disabilities. These changes are requiring a shift in direction to meet the current and future needs.

"We have to be extremely conscientious when placing people in homes," Dee explained. "It has to be a good fit for those already living in the home as well as for new individuals."

"We are now in the process of creating a home for two individuals with autism," Dee explained. "We have hired a manager for the home who has extensive experience working with individuals with autism." New technology will be implemented and the home will be retrofitted to accommodate the new residents. Staff are undergoing training specific to autism and recruitment is targeting candidates with experience working with this population. "We are expanding our expertise by working with behaviorists and speech pathologists to help us better communicate with individuals with autism," Dee explained. "LARC is becoming more of a wrap-around provider for this population. All of LARC's current services including day, residential and vocational options will be enhanced to better serve individuals with autism." The new home will be occupied in early 2019.



**SAVE the DATE!**  
**LARC'S ANNUAL SPRING WINE TASTING**

Friday, April 5, 6-9 p.m.

*Chatterley's Banquet Hall*

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Thank you in advance for taking time to read this Newsletter. For the past year or so, there has been a concerted effort to expand LARC programs, and to become a more current and even entrepreneurial agency—holding true to our core mission to provide much needed services, while acknowledging the changing landscape and identifying areas where we could transform and expand offerings. In the articles included here, you will read about some very exciting initiatives: LARC's role as a Provider Transformation Network grant recipient (through the ARC National, and the Institute for Community Inclusion); and the beginning of our efforts to build residential programs for individuals on the Autism spectrum. Each of these projects has taken the hard work, dedication, and skill of many individuals here at LARC—and each of these projects is helping to move our agency forward, both in terms of expanded offerings as well as in enhanced reputation beyond our community.

Thanks to all of those whose efforts have made these programs possible. And thanks to all of you who make LARC such an extraordinary place each and every day.

Michael Menard, PhD, LARC Executive Director

### LARC's Residential Services

Being part of the community and living as independently as possible are among the most important goals shared by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. LARC supports individuals by offering a variety of living arrangements:

**Community Living Arrangements (CLAs)** - LARC owns and manages 5 CLAs where 5-6 individuals reside in each home

**Individualized Home Supports (IHS)** - Include In-Family Home Support and In-Own Home Support

**Continuous Residential Supports** - 3-person, 24-hour staff supported homes

**LARC's residential program provides the following services:**  
 Up to 24-hour staff supervision

**Financial supports:**

Representative Payee  
 Budgeting  
 Financial skill building  
 Department of Developmental Services and  
 Social Security entitlements

**Clinical Supports:**

Nursing consultation services  
 Speech language Pathology  
 Health Care coordination, PT, OT, Behavioral Services,  
 Psychologist, Psychology

**Community Integration:**

Independent skill building at home and in the  
 community

### Funding received for renovations at LARC Group Home

LARC recently received funding from two grants:

Lena Benas Memorial Fund, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee awarded \$10,000.

The Edwin M. Stone and Edith H. Stone Fund and the Marion Wm. & Alice Edwards Fund, funds of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, Inc. awarded \$1,200.

Both grants are for home improvements to one of LARC's group homes where six individuals reside.

LARC receives no governmental support for maintaining the homes owned and operated by the organization and relies on private funding through grants and donations.



## Independent Housing Through the Years

Independent Housing, also known as supportive housing, has changed over the years. Residential services that have been provided in the community for more than 40 years “have been the preferred residential option rather than living within institutional settings.” The trends have increasingly supported “smaller and more personalized settings” that allow individuals to live as independently as possible with assistance.\*

In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that “people could not be required to live in institutional settings if a less restrictive alternative could meet their needs.”\*\*

There are many different types of models in operation under the umbrella of Independent Housing. The majority of LARC’s group homes are known as Community Living Arrangements, or CLAs, and they receive reimbursement through the Medicaid Waiver Program. Under this category, LARC provides in-home supports to individuals requiring such services.

Another model is the Continuous Residential Support (CRS), which is a shared living arrangement for three or fewer individuals who receive DDS (Department of Developmental Services) funding. It is not licensed as a CLA but can provide 24-hour staff support.

LARC is also looking at integrated housing which offers the opportunity to live in typical settings with opportunities to interact with individuals who do not have disabilities.

\**The Journey to Community Housing with Supports (CT Arc)*,

\*\**Olmstead v. L.C. decision (under the Americans with Disabilities Act)*



## Staff Spotlight

Morgan Tullock, Residential Counselor, has been at LARC for one year. She assists individuals with activities of daily living and works to create and maintain a healthy and safe home environment. Morgan finds her work very rewarding and especially enjoys helping individuals complete their goals and seeing “the pride they get from it.”

Morgan’s co-workers inspire her by opening up her eyes to different ways and strategies to handle situations. “The individuals inspire me by overcoming obstacles in their lives and becoming successful in their goals and aspirations, such as working full time jobs. “

Morgan would like the greater LARC community to know how important the Residential Program is to the individuals served. “We do a lot of behind the scenes work. We are essentially their 2nd family and we all trust and rely on each other.”



A group of residential and clinical staff members gather for a meeting at one of LARC’s group homes (l to r): Destiny Cables, Christina Doyon, Debra Erikson, Jill Sahlin, Rachael Long, and Dee Vetrano.

## VOCATIONAL SERVICES PROGRAM

### LARC's Participation in PTN Project: *A Year in Review*

**“The end result is that more individuals from LARC are employed in the community, and more individuals are expressing interest in working in the community.”**

– David Hoff, Program Director, Institute for Community Inclusion/UMass

TORRINGTON -- During 2018 The Arc of Litchfield County, Inc. (LARC) made significant strides in its commitment to providing competitive integrated employment to the individuals it serves. In addition to helping a dozen individuals land direct-hire jobs at competitive wages, the agency's vocational department also forged exciting new partnerships with a variety of employers, large and small, throughout the region.

Local businesses which have added workers from LARC's vocational program to their payrolls during 2018 include: Nardelli's Grinder Shoppe in Torrington; Camp Jewell YMCA in Colebrook; Dymax Corporation in Torrington; Stop & Shop in Winsted; Wisdom House Retreat and Conference Center in Litchfield; Sterling Sintered Technologies in Winsted and the Seitz Corporation in Torrington. Talks are also underway with several Litchfield County employers interested in exploring hiring options in 2019.

By way of background, LARC applied for and was accepted to participate in the Provider Transformation Network (PTN) led by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) in partnership with The Arc of the U.S. ICI, in partnership with the national Arc, is working with LARC through February 2019 to support the agency's transformation away from sheltered workshops and sub-minimum wage and towards competitive integrated employment.

Competitive integrated employment is defined as full-time or part-time work at minimum wage or higher, with wages and benefits similar to those without disabilities performing the same work, and fully integrated with co-workers of all abilities.

LARC is one of ten Arc chapters nationally participating in the PTN, which is testing a technical assistance approach to support provider transformation that includes an onsite needs assessment, remote technical assistance, access to a provider transformation toolkit and participation in a “Community of Practice” webinar.

“Our participation in this project is another step in the agency's mission of ‘Community for All’,” said Tom Stanton, Director of Vocational and Day Services.

“LARC continues to be committed to providing integrated employment and community opportunities to all the individuals in our programs.”

Although LARC's involvement in the PTN is nearing its conclusion, its commitment to helping individuals find competitive jobs will continue to flourish. Researchers at ICI have pledged to continue providing informal support, including a follow-up visit.

According to David Hoff, ICI Program Director, LARC has made “significant progress” as a member of the PTN. “LARC is operating in probably the most challenging fiscal environment. However, this has not stopped (the agency) from making significant changes in its service model and the services it provides.” In addition, said Hoff, LARC used the flooding of its facility last summer as a “crisis to be capitalized on, and a catalyst for change in terms of revamping of services.”

The agency's path toward transitioning individuals to jobs in the community has been met with both rewards and challenges.

The challenges include extensive planning for person-centered job placement; strong communication with family/caregivers/state case workers about the commitments and requirements of independent placement; readying individuals for enhanced social interaction and independence; reinforcing the importance of strict adherence to employer HR policies regarding attendance/absences and identifying public transportation options to and from work.

The rewards are plentiful. In addition to the opportunity for individuals to be paid at least minimum wage, they attain independence and job satisfaction, career growth, enhanced confidence, new friendships and increased community inclusion. The employers reap the benefits of supplementing their work force with loyal, enthusiastic, talented and productive employees. **(Continued on pg. 5)**



Owen Reidy was hired by Nardelli's in early 2018

## Sterling Sintered Technologies, Inc. partners with LARC

On Monday, Oct. 8, 2018 John Bredickas became a new employee at Sterling Sintered Technologies, Inc. (SST) of Winsted. On hand to welcome John on the first day of his new position of Secondary Sorting for the family-owned company, were Paul D. Parent, C.I. Coordinator, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, and Leona Wabrek, Secondaries Setup Person, as well as LARC representatives David Chamberlain, Community Worksite Coordinator and employment specialist Jena West.

“John has the skills we need,” said Parent. “He is very task-focused, he is efficient, and his co-workers appreciate that.” Parent noted that prior to hiring John, SST had contacted LARC’s vocational department to inquire about temporary help for a rush inspection job. “They jumped through hoops to help us out,” said Parent. John, who had been employed through LARC Industries as a member of its Quality Control Department, answered the call for help, and his talents earned him a permanent spot with the company.

Parent praised the support from LARC staff throughout the process. “They stayed in touch more than adequately to support us as we gradually transitioned” from John’s role as a temporary worker to his new direct-hire, permanent position.

John, who previously worked as a parts assembler, material handler and scooter machinist in the quality control division of the GSE department at LARC, said he was excited to be hired by Sterling Sintered and looks forward to growing with the company.

David Chamberlain, who offered a congratulatory handshake to John on his new job, said the occasion was bittersweet. While John has worked very hard and is extremely deserving of his new role, “we felt the loss when he left. To find a replacement for him with his skill level and production is difficult,” said Chamberlain, who noted that John had been working “at about 140 percent of the norm” on the scooter machine.

Since 1955, privately-owned Sterling Sintered Technologies has specialized in custom fabrication of powdered metal parts from the simple miniature components and self-lubricated bearings to the complex structurals. Sterling

serves a wide range of P/M applications with its expertise in metal alloys, toolmaking, secondary operations and a wide range of customer-oriented services.



John Bredickas on his first day on the job shown here with Paul D. Parent and Leona Wabrek of Sterling Sintered Technologies, Inc. in Winsted.

## (PTN, Continued from pg. 4)

According to Hoff, data show that staff are spending more time supporting individuals in community employment related activities vs. other activities, with reduced reliance on sheltered work.

“LARC is placing strong emphasis on connecting with the business community and being responsive to the needs of local businesses,” he said. “The end result is that more individuals from LARC are employed in the community, and more individuals are expressing interest in working in the community.”

The work of the PTN is organized around 10 key elements that have been developed through project research: (1) clear and consistent goals; (2) an agency culture that values inclusion; (3) an active, person-centered job placement process; (4) a strong internal and external communications plan; (5) reallocated and restructured resources; (6) an ongoing investment in staff professional development; (7) a focus on customer engagement; (8) effective employment performance measurement, quality assurance and program oversight; (9) a holistic approach, and (10) multiple and diverse community partnerships.

**(Continued on pg. 6)**



Ashley Williams was hired by Stop Shop in Winsted in July 2018.

## Transportation: For Many, a Roadblock to Employment

At nearly 20 percent of the population, people with disabilities are one of the nation's largest minority groups. They are also more likely to be unemployed. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers show that only 18 percent of people with disabilities are working, compared to 64 percent of people without disabilities.

Transportation is a hot issue. According to the National Council on Disability, although transportation accessibility has advanced over the past decade, problems persist. People who were not working reported a lack of transportation as their biggest barrier to employment. Individuals with disabilities who rely on public transit often find it challenging to navigate the distance from their homes and workplaces to transit stops, and where public transit isn't available, other transportation options are often in short supply.

For more information, contact Tom Stanton, LARC's Director of Vocational and Day Services, at (860) 482-9364, ext. 41.

### (PTN, Continued from pg. 5)

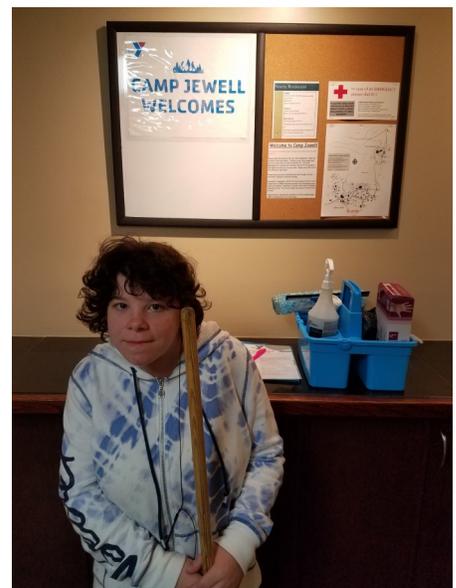
LARC's vocational department has also created a Transportation Task Force to explore public transportation resources and travel training for individuals working independently. In the coming months, members of that committee will be meeting with various local and regional transportation providers, nonprofit agencies, state and town officials and local employers to increase and improve access to reliable transportation for people living in rural areas. Talks are currently underway to revive a discontinued Transit District bus route servicing the Torrington Industrial Park.

Driven by a strong belief in moving towards community inclusion as the right thing for individuals, "LARC has a good basis to build on in terms of expanding community employment," said Hoff.

"From ICI's perspective, LARC has allowed us to gain a greater understanding of both the opportunities and challenges that service providers face in transformation efforts, particularly in the context of a rural environment, and operating within a state fiscal environment that is not highly positive. LARC is also an example of an organization that is making a strong effort to take advantage of the technical assistance and peer-to-peer supports that are available."

*The PTN is funded by the National Institute on Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research in the Administration on Community Living, at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is part of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Advancing Employment based at the ICI. Details on the overall project can be found at: [www.thinkwork.org/rrtc](http://www.thinkwork.org/rrtc).*

Ashlee Gagnon started her new position at Camp Jewell YMCA in Colebrook in February 2018.



# 17th Annual Festival of Trees

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Members of LARC Board of Directors, helping tend bar, (1 to r): Michelle Frankland, Tim Waldron, Sarah Dziedzic, George Craig, Jon Sheaffer, and Dorothy Beckley



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### FESTIVAL BASH Celebration!

Michael Menard (far right), Executive Director, LARC, enjoying the Festival of Trees closing Bash, with friends from Torrington Savings Bank: (1 to r) Jeff Geddes, Eric Erdtmann, Melissa Manolitsis, John Janco, and Cheryl Flanagan.

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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**