

VISIONS

For the friends of BCARC

Berkshire County Arc &
Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts
host Brain Injury Commission

Survivors, Families & Providers share their stories

See Story Page 2



A few of the members who sat on the Brain Injury Commission Panel. From left: Ken Singer, Executive Director of BCARC, State Representative Paul Mark, State Representative Thomas Conroy, State Senator Harriette Chandler and State Senator Benjamin Downing



Self-Advocate Gene Foisy shares his story with the Commission



*"Supporting People,
Enriching Lives"*

Look inside for:

Brain Injury Advisory Board Article.....	P. 2
From the Executive Director.....	P. 3
17th Annual Berkshire County Arc Golf Classic.....	P. 4
Legislative Breakfast/Berkshire Disability Pride Day	P. 5
Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers Conference..	P. 6
Sprout Film Festival.....	P. 7
Eventful Events.....	P. 8 & 9
Family Support Center Spring Break Camp.....	P. 10
Employees of the Quarter/Adult Family Care.....	P. 11
Stepping Stones/Betsy & Cathy's Corner.....	P. 12
West Region Self-Advocacy Conference/Center for Development Renovations.....	P. 13
Friends Remembered.....	P. 14
Soldier On.....	P. 15

Winter/
Spring
2011

Brain Injury Advisory Board

On April 4, 2011, Ken Singer, Executive Director of Berkshire County Arc and Suzanne Doswell, Manager of the Western Regional Office of the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts co-hosted the members of the Brain Injury Commission on their first visit to Western Massachusetts. The Brain Injury Commission was approved by Governor Patrick on June 30, 2010. The Commission, whose members are appointed by the Governor, is co-chaired by State Senator Harriette Chandler, and Representative Thomas Conroy. The Commission brings legislators and state policy makers together with key community members to study rehabilitative, residential and integrated community-based support services for people with brain injuries. The Commission is scheduled to report back to the legislature in the fall of 2011.

Members of the Commission started their fact finding day with a visit and tour of a Berkshire County Arc community residence. This home which opened in August 2010 is located at Gamwell Avenue in Pittsfield and provides services to six individuals with brain injuries. Members were able to meet with some of the individuals and share in their success stories. After a brief review of the program model and an opportunity for questions, the committee traveled to the BC Arc Training Room at the Social Development Center in Dalton where an open meeting was held with survivors, family members and providers.

For the next two hours, survivors, family members and providers told the all too familiar life stories of successes and difficulties of working through the system in obtaining necessary services. Their powerful voices recounted stories that displayed their hope and courage. Over 80 people were in attendance. The issues discussed were diagnosis being given in a timely manner, difficulties in finding physicians and therapists with a solid understanding of brain injury, insufficient choices for day programming for individuals whose injury occurred after the age of 22, the needs of lifetime family support, funding for transportation disproportionately weighted to the Boston area vs. rural regions, appropriate housing options which are limited and often require long waits and relocation, and assistance to schools as they educate students with brain injuries.

The Commission members thanked the attendees and restated that their mission is to enhance the lives of the citizens with brain injuries. Senator Chandler commented that the stories shared by the attendees would guide the Commission in supporting lives of meaning, independence and inclusion for all citizens. The meeting ended with a catered lunch and a tour of the BC Arc Brain Injury Day Program.



(Left) Michael Turner assists Self-Advocate Kevin Gallagher with his story

(Right) Suzanne Doswell, Manager of the Western Regional Office of the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts listens intently to the story of Self-Advocate Michelle Goodman



From the Executive Director

Kenneth W. Singer



During the past month, I had the opportunity to visit almost all of our programs and attend their staff meetings. During this time, I spoke with hundreds of staff and shared ideas, thoughts and concerns about Berkshire County Arc. As I looked back on all of the meetings I attended, I was filled with pride for the unbelievable job our staff are doing in providing the best-quality services for the individuals we serve. Our staff are filled with enthusiasm, compassion and great ideas for how we can best serve people. Their energies were so directed towards those that we serve that it was a clear reminder to me that the heart of our quality programming is the dedication of our employees.

There is no way to properly thank staff and let them know how much they are appreciated. Clearly, they are doing this job for many other reasons than a pay check as it takes so much physical and mental commitment to be successful.

I know that the happiness we see on the faces of the individuals we serve every day are a clear reminder to our staff of why they do what they do. The accolades that we receive from families help in their motivation, but most of all it's their heart that leads them to be so caring and makes their jobs so meaningful. On behalf of our Board of Directors and our Administration, we want to say a big thank you to our staff for all the work they do each and every day. You are truly the best!

Ken



**Singer "Shout Out" Radio Show
With Ken and Christine Singer
Wednesdays and Fridays
at 4:00 p.m.
FM 104.3**



This show focuses on **Advocating** and **Supporting** Human Service Agencies in Berkshire County. Guest speakers are spotlighted and there is useful information to be shared with our listeners. "Shout Outs" periodically recognize outstanding individuals in our community who have done something exciting that we want to recognize. If you have someone you would like us to do a "Shout Out" for, please contact:
Ken Singer, 499-4241, ext. 239.

17th Annual BC Arc Golf Classic Raises \$41,000

Berkshire County Arc held its 17th Annual Golf Classic tournament on May 26, 2011 at the Berkshire Hills Country Club in Pittsfield, raising \$41,000 to support unfunded needs of people with disabilities. As of 2011, a total of \$481,000 has been raised from this tournament.

Two hundred golfers participated in the event, with approximately fifty volunteers and over eighty sponsoring organizations. The tournament once again featured donated raffle prizes and popular silent auction items. All proceeds from the event are deposited into the BC Arc Allocation Fund which is designed to support those needs of people with disabilities that are not covered by state or other private resources. The BC Arc Golf Classic also provides scholarships to graduating high school seniors with plans to continue their education in the field of human services. To date a total of \$52,500 has been given out in scholarships to deserving students.

Berkshire County Arc is thankful to all of the agencies, businesses and volunteers who helped to make the tournament a huge success.



(Right)
Corporate Sponsor
Health New England



(Left)
Corporate Sponsor
Greylock Insurance
Agency



(Left) Chris & Jasmine helped with the food preparation and kept things running smoothly

(Bottom) Dennis our BC Arc photographer pauses from his duties while he waits for another team to arrive



(Left) Ashley, Bernard and Bill lend a hand in the food tent

Corporate Sponsors
Health New England
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Bronze Sponsors
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Saloomy Construction, Inc.

Legislative Breakfast

The Berkshire Disability Pride Day Committee sponsored the eleventh annual Legislative Breakfast on Friday, March 11th at the ITAM Lodge in Pittsfield. Senator Benjamin Downing and State Representatives Christopher Speranzo, Paul Mark and Gailanne Cariddi were in attendance to address the concerns of children and adults with disabilities and their families. Various speakers shared their personal stories and discussed topics such as Natalie's Law, Family Support & Respite, Staff Salaries, Adult Day Health Adult Family Care, Independent Living Centers and Day Habilitation Services.



(Right): Ken Singer, Executive Director of BCARC and the Legislators: State Senator Benjamin Downing, State Representatives Christopher Speranzo, Gailanne Cariddi and Paul Mark



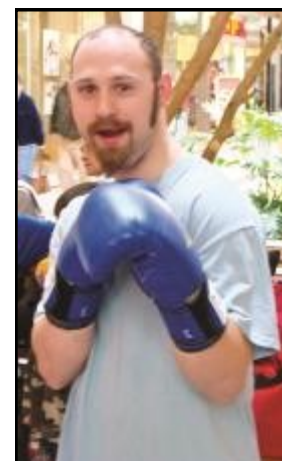
(Left): Christine Singer, Executive Director of United Cerebral Palsy was one of the moderators of the Legislative Breakfast

Berkshire Disability Pride Day

The 14th Annual Berkshire Disability Pride Day was held on Saturday, March 19th at the Berkshire Mall in Lanesboro, MA. The event was a day of celebration and education to increase community awareness of the accomplishments of children and adults with diverse abilities. Entertainment for the entire family was held throughout the day, agency and business booths provided helpful service and product information, and there was an art show by area artists with disabilities. The Lions Eye Mobile outside the mall provided a vital service by facilitating the detection of eye disease while Berkshire Health Systems had a health care awareness booth and offered blood pressure screenings. The Berkshire Disability Pride Day Committee held a poster contest in which area middle and high school students depicted positive images of individuals with disabilities enjoying life. Merle Ferber and Irene Morrison were the Honorary Co-Chairs of this event due to their leadership and advocacy and Molly Murphy was named Youth Ambassador for all of her hard work and involvement.



(Left): Community Advocate Nancy Willey manning the BCARC booth



(Right): Jason Crandall poses with his boxing gloves. Later he showed some of his kick boxing moves with his kickboxing instructor at Chin Bo Jok on the center stage in the mall

Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers Conference

“Knowledge exists to be imparted!” ~Ralph Waldo Emerson~

In the wee early hours of March 18, 2011 a caravan of cars from Berkshire County headed to the turnpike for the drive to Worcester to attend the annual conference sponsored by the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers. Twenty professional BCARC staff from many departments took advantage of the amazing opportunities for learning, sharing and networking with over 700 other professionals from across the state. This year’s keynote speaker was acclaimed journalist Judy Woodruff, who is a parent of an adult child with disabilities.

In addition to the keynote address, the conference offered a series of morning and afternoon workshops filled with information and ideas worth spreading and bringing back home for implementation. BCARC was honored to have presenters at two workshops. Rick Hawes, Coordinator of Vocational Services, participated in a panel discussion devoted to the topic of “Employment Collaboration.” Rick and two other presenters discussed innovation in employment collaboration as a means for strengthening self-advocacy and community integration. Panelists shared best practices for employment collaboration within their employment programs.

Mike Turner, Coordinator of Brain Injury Services, and Self-Advocates Gene Foisy and Michelle Goodman presented a power point presentation and an opportunity for Q&A on “Best Practices in Brain Injury Services.” The Circle of Courage Model, PALS Program and Community Connections were presented to the participants as state of the art models, which have benefited the individuals receiving services from BCARC’s Brain Injury Programs. Overall, it was a great day to be in Worcester at the DCU Center. Learning is always more productive when talking and interacting with others than simply reading the book!



(Above) Mike Turner poses with Self-Advocates Michelle Goodman and Gene Foisy



(Above) Presenters at the ADDP Conference (From left) Rick Hawes, Coordinator of Vocational Services and Michael Turner Coordinator of Brain Injury Services

Visions



Sprout Film Festival



On Sunday, April 10th, 2011, Berkshire County Arc's Down Syndrome Family Group hosted the 4th Annual Sprout Touring Film Festival. The festival was held at the Beacon Cinema on North Street in Pittsfield. The festival featured 10 films, all with themes relating to people with developmental disabilities. The films included ranged from the sentimental to the uplifting, and many highlighted the accomplishments of individuals with disabilities. The 2011 featured films were:

- *Go For It*
- *Be My Brother*
- *Be Good To Eddie Lee*
- *Now't As Queer As Folk*
- *The Other Child*
- *Ups Not Downs*
- *Deedah*
- *Dancing With Downs*
- *Rudely Interrupted*
- *Close My Eyes*

Over 100 people attended the film festival, and many participants joined the Down Syndrome Family Group at Brulee's Restaurant on North Street in Pittsfield for a reception after the film screenings. On display at the reception was an art/photography exhibit featuring the work of local artists.

For those of you who may have missed the Sprout Film Festival, you can still see the films. Visit www.sproutflix.org for online access to Sprout's library of films. There you can purchase streaming video or downloadable media. By using the fundraising code # 1104D when purchasing from Sproutflix, 10% of your purchase will be donated to BCARC Down Syndrome Family Group.

Special thanks goes out to the following people for making this event such a success:

John Valenti and staff at the Beacon Cinemas for hosting this event

Anthony Di Salvo, Founder and Executive Director of Sprout for making this film festival possible and for narrating the event

Aaron Robb, President of the Down Syndrome Family Group and Ken Singer, Executive Director of BCARC for speaking at the event

Ken & Cara Peckham of Brulee's Restaurant for the catered food reception

Kelly Wright at Chapters Bookstore for donating the art stands for the photography exhibit



(Left): Ken Singer, Anthony Di Salvo and Aaron Robb in the lobby of The Beacon before the show

(Right): Amy Robandt and Jessica Dennis are all smiles at this event

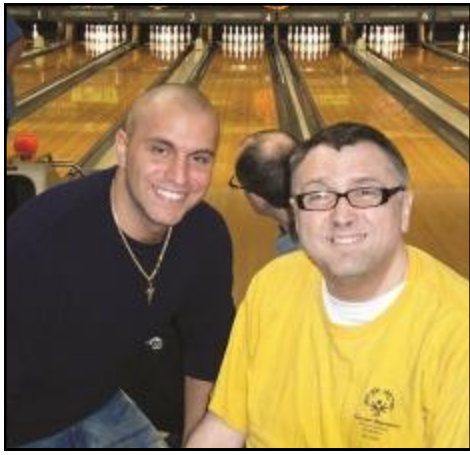


Visions

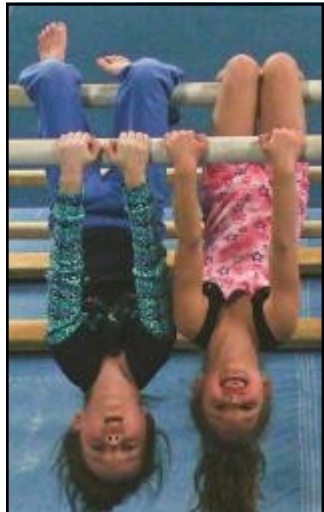
Valentine's Dance



Special Olympic Winter Games-Worcester



Down Syndrome Family Group Events



Visions

Hancock Shaker Village



Eleanor Sonsini Pet Drive



Spring Dinner Dance



Family Support Center Spring Break Camp at Berkshire South April 2011

Berkshire County Arc was thrilled to host their first Spring Break Camp in April for kids with disabilities. The camp was an initiative through BCARC's Family Support Center with funding from the Department of Developmental Services. Fourteen kids from area schools participated, ranging in ages from 7 to 19 years old. The Berkshire South Regional Community Center generously provided space for the week. The kids had access to the Center's facilities almost every day. Throughout the week, the kids completed arts and crafts projects, such as making self-portraits, decorating mugs to take home, and making jewelry for themselves or their moms.



Everyone had a great time learning about local wildlife with presenters from Solid Rock Farm and Berkshire Botanical Gardens. The children especially loved dancing with Barbara Pastie, a certified Shake Your Soul dance instructor, who used music from around the world to help our kids with a range of physical abilities dance their hearts out. The kids watched a special showing of "Hop" at the Beacon Cinema in Pittsfield, which was arranged by Community Resources for People with Autism and specifically modified to be sensitive to kids with sensory needs. We visited the Berkshire Humane Society's cat adoption center, Purradise, and celebrated our last afternoon with a pizza party and bowling at the Cove Lanes. We had a wonderful mix of kids, and we were grateful for the assistance of the one-to-one aides who attended with some of the children. We look forward to seeing familiar and new faces at our Summer Social Skills Camp coming up in August. For more information about future camps, please contact Maryann Hyatt (413) 499-4241, Ext. 227 or Amy Robandt (413) 499-4241, Ext. 280.



Employees of the Quarter



Jason Wells
Developmental Specialist
Social Development Center



Way To Go!

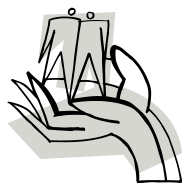


Laurie Anne DeFino
Residential Support
Thomas F. Flynn Community Apartments

Adult Family Care

The Adult Family Care program is doing well with over 50 families enrolled with additional families applying to participate. The AFC program is composed of a multi-disciplinary team. Maryann Hyatt serves as the Program Director. We have three Case Managers: Jessica Dennis, Amy Robandt, and Hannah Bushway, and we are also pleased to have two Registered Nurses: Deborah Frazer and Victoria Vaughan-Carra. AFC is a Masshealth funded program designed for families & caregivers who support an individual with a disability in a private home setting. If you are interested in finding out more information about the Adult Family Care program, please feel free to contact Maryann Hyatt 413-499-4241, Ext. 227.

Our Adult Family Care staff (from left): Case Manager Amy Robandt, Case Manager Jessica Dennis, Registered Nurse Deborah Frazer, Case Manager Hannah Bushway and Registered Nurse Victoria Vaughan-Carra





Stepping Stones



Lynyrd Skynyrd

~Freebird~

~Gimme Three Steps~

~Simple Man~



Staff Bob & Julie brought Gene, Jeff, Kade and James to the Lynyrd Skynyrd & ZZ Top concert.

When we asked James how the concert was he replied, "Awesome!"

ZZ Top

~Sharp Dressed Man~

~La Grange~

~Tube Snake Boogie~

BCArc would like to congratulate Marie McMarrow who graduated with a Masters Degree in Education from the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts on May 21, 2011. She has also been accepted as a doctoral candidate at Union Institute & University in Ohio.

Marie has been employed by BCARC since 2006 and currently works as an overnight staff at Greylock, which is one of our Brain Injury programs.

Congratulations Marie!



Betsy and Cathy's Corner



Amanda Buffi was a great friend to everyone at the Center for Development. It was very hard for our Director to tell us that she passed away. Amanda had many friends at her day program. She also had a very loving family. She was close to all of her staff at Laurel Street, as well as her housemates Cathy, Christy, Judy and Vicky.

Amanda's favorite movie was the Wizard of Oz. She also always looked forward to Special Olympics. Amanda loved all animals and loved to go shopping.

Amanda and I had a very special relationship. She was funny, loveable and sometimes got mad.

She will be greatly missed by everybody. Amanda will always have a special place in my heart.

Written by: Betsy Carlotto



(Above) Cathy Crofut's passion is photography. Here is a picture of Cathy using her tripod on the Ashuwilliticook Rail Trail

8th Annual West Region Self Advocacy Conference

On Saturday, May 7, 2011 the 8th Annual West Region Self-Advocacy Conference took place at Holyoke Community College. The conference was hosted by Leadership Through Advocacy and The Self Advocacy Network. It was sponsored by The Consortium, Mass Advocates Standing Strong and Kittredge Center at Holyoke Community College.

Irene Morrison was very proud to be a part of this year's conference as she was one of the speakers in her morning workshop, "Making a Difference My Way".

Congratulations Irene for a wonderful job.



Irene Morrison getting ready for her morning workshop

Center For Development Renovation

CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT STRETCHES

Berkshire Omega Corporation is Berkshire County Arc's landlord. It owns and leases most of BCARC's programs. With the purchase of the Center for Development building, the Corporation now owns all of BCARC's day facilities. The closing took place in January of this year.

By the time Visions goes to press, BCARC's Center for Development in Lee will be following the advice it gives so many of its individuals. It will be stretching. In fact, it will be adding over 2,800 square feet of high quality program space. The "building-out" of the adjoining bay has been going on for months. The Center will be adding a large activity room, a new stimulation room, a computer room/office, a brain injury activity space, a fully accessible, teaching kitchen, two bathrooms, a changing room and an office for the Family Support Center for family meetings, etc.

The pressure has been on for CFD to expand, as there has been a growing waiting list for its day services. In addition, BCARC wanted to offer individuals with brain injury their own program space.

The CFD individuals have watched the work progress with curiosity and appreciation. They have graciously invited the contractor to lunch!



A fully accessible kitchen for the Center for Development



The outside view of the expanded Center for Development

Friends Remembered



*Karen Smith
November 28, 1960
February 15, 2011*



*Amanda Buffi
December 23, 1980
March 9, 2011*



*Guy Warrington
October 16, 1953
March 18, 2011*



*Connie Hubbel
September 13, 1958
March 19, 2011*

In Our Hearts

We thought of you with love today, but that is nothing new.
We thought about you yesterday, and days before that too.
We think of you in silence. We often speak your name.
Now all we have is memories, and your picture in a frame.
Your memory is our keepsake, with which we'll never part.
God has you in his keeping , we have you in our heart.

~Rose De Leon~



*Claire Stack
August 6, 1941
June 11, 2011*



*Helen Taft
September 7, 1919
March 31, 2011*



*Bernice La Forest
July 6, 1951
March 24, 2011*

*Walter Burkett
July 30, 1935
June 16, 2011*



SOLDIER ON

THE FIGHT DOESN'T END WHEN THEY GET HOME



On Memorial Day, the individuals of BCARC had the privilege and honor to do a "Give Back" for the veterans living at *Soldier On* home in Pittsfield. They proudly made thank you cards of many colors displaying their heartfelt gratitude for "the vets" service to our country. They baked homemade goods from their homes and together they brought this joyful package to the veterans residing at *Soldier On*. Hand shakes, words of thanks and appreciation were exchanged. On such a day of reflection, gratitude and celebration with the veterans and their families, BCARC individuals proudly gave back and simultaneously were rewarded with genuine appreciation.



(Left) Tom browsing the craft table deciding what else to add to his card



(Right) Doug proudly shows off his finished work



(Left) Carol poses with the red, white and blue cupcakes she helped bake for our veterans



(Right) Staff assist Ron and Aaron in delivering the baked goods at *Soldier On*

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING TEAM

On June 7, 2011, The Western Mass Regional Planning Team had their elections. Here are the results:

- Kim Scace - Chair (Berkshire Advocates)
- Mary Fernseberger - Vice Chair (Pioneer Club)
- Mark Nasjleti - Vice Chair (Self-Advocacy Network)
- Claudia Holton - Secretary (Pioneer Club)
- Holly Elmer - Co-Treasurer (Pioneer Club)
- Irene Morrison- Co-Treasurer (Berkshire Advocates)



Congratulations!



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**Berkshire County Arc
Down Syndrome
Family Group**

5th Annual Buddy Walk October 1, 2011

**Craneville School to Pinegrove Park
in Dalton**

Registration is free! Go to:

**[www.bcarc.org/Down Syndrome
Family Group/Buddy Walk](http://www.bcarc.org/Down%20Syndrome%20Family%20Group/Buddy%20Walk) for more
information and printable forms**