



# The Guardian

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**November 2021**

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## STEPPING STONES SCHOOL CELEBRATES THE FALL SEASON

With pumpkin crafts, football games, Halloween costumes, and more, the students at Stepping Stones School have been immersed in autumn activities.

The annual Fall Festival, held on October 15, was not as expansive as during non-Covid times, but the students still had a day packed with fun. They picked pumpkins, gave a jack-o-lantern some "hair," danced in falling leaves, read autumn stories together, had a football relay outdoors, and more, on what turned out to be a summer-like day of sunshine. The giggles and smiles lasted throughout the activities.

The Halloween Party on October 29 was also full of great times, as the students dressed in their Halloween costumes and paraded through the school, collected snacks and prizes while trick-or-treating to staff members, and enjoyed spooky Halloween activities in their classrooms.

In between, the children have completed a variety of fall activities, such as examining the parts of pumpkins and apples, pumpkin painting, and participating in Halloween-themed sensory and fine-motor activities. They even wrapped themselves up as mummies and created a spooky potion in a witch's cauldron.

For Down Syndrome Awareness Month, the students in Transitional Kindergarten made special gifts for their parents, using blue and yellow paint on their feet to make butterfly prints on canvas.

It's been a season of fun and learning for our Stepping Stones students!

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School is a Department of Education approved private school for students with disabilities serving children ages 3-10. Located in Roseland, NJ, the school is designed to meet the developmental and educational needs of children with cognitive impairments such as Down syndrome and other students with similar educational and developmental needs. For more information, or to request a virtual tour and assistance with an out-of-district placement, contact Sue Brand, Director of Early Childhood and Education at (862) 210-8781 or [sbrand@arcessex.org](mailto:sbrand@arcessex.org).



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## DAY PROGRAMS EXPLORE CULTURES OF THE WORLD IN NEW CURRICULUM

The Arc of Essex County's Day Programs have been traveling the globe through a new curriculum that focuses on different cultures by exploring the traditions of art, music, cuisine, and holidays celebrated around the world. The discoveries and activities are now part of their daily schedule.

On October 20th, the SYA program in Nutley explored the traditional Mexican art form of Hojalata. This Mexican Folk Art which translates into "tin art" is a decorative tradition that has been a part of the culture for many years. Individuals recreated and customized their own Hojalata designs. The project prompted questions and conversations about the Mexican culture leaving the individuals wanting more. This month, the program will celebrate The Day of Dead or "Día de los Muertos". The lesson will explore the traditions of this holiday while partaking in a craft project to create their own Sugar Skull.

Meanwhile, the Opportunity Zone program in Maplewood just began exploring cultural traditions in China. We can't wait to see what they create, and which countries the day program participants will choose to "visit" in the weeks ahead!

The Arc of Essex County Day Services are provided in a variety of community-based settings with wide-ranging activities. Community Resource Center activities such as volunteering, community trips, and skill-building classes help consumers develop essential interpersonal skills. Vocational Centers encourage consumers to learn and enhance employment-related skills, while Specialized Centers assist those with extra physical, medical, or behavioral needs. All participants choose from an evolving menu of activities held either in the center or in the community. For more information, contact Director of Day Services Angela LoSapio at (973) 535-1181 x1231 or [alosapio@arcessex.org](mailto:alosapio@arcessex.org).



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## RECREATION PROGRAM ATTENDEES ENJOY A LUNCH CRUISE AND HALLOWEEN BASH

It's been a bustling fall for our community inclusion, recreation, and respite consumers and staff.

A last-minute closure of the Bear Mountain Inn didn't stop our friends from enjoying a special event on October 17. The Arc staff quickly adapted and were able to book the 10 attendees onto a lunch cruise on Cornucopia Cruise Line out of Perth

Amboy, where they enjoyed a beautiful day on the Raritan River and north toward New York City. In addition to delicious food and lovely views, the group took in the gorgeous fall weather and spent the time happily socializing while on the water.

The Arc's Halloween Bash was held on October 24 at The Arc's Creative Visions location in the Orange Hub. Partygoers had a great time decorating pumpkins, creating artistic Halloween scenes, coloring masks, playing bones Jenga, and showing off their fun Halloween costumes.

Other fall activities have included the recurring Saturday bowling games, as well as a trip to Terhune Orchards in Princeton, where the group picked pumpkins, explored hay and corn mazes and a nature trail, and enjoyed outdoor music.

If your loved one with intellectual or developmental disabilities is interested in educational programming, community experiences, seasonally themed events, or weekend group respite programs, the offerings for individuals 18 and older can be viewed in our Community Inclusion, Recreation, & Respite Fall Calendar. For any questions, contact Manager of Community Supports Services Dacia King-Sarkodie at (973) 535-1181 ext 1272 or [dking@arcessex.org](mailto:dking@arcessex.org).



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## HELP FAMILIES IN NEED WITH THE ARC'S WINTER COAT DRIVE

Each year, throughout the month of November, The Arc of Essex County strives to improve the lives of low-income children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as their families by collecting new (tags included) winter coats. We need your help! Please consider signing up to donate a new winter coat for a child or adult in need. To sign up, visit:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040F44A9A92CA2FD0-hapcoat1>

All of the collected items will go to The Arc of Essex County's Home Assistance Program (HAP) families. HAP provides services to low income families whose child and/or parent has an intellectual or development disability. The program provides support in the areas of transportation, community resources, housing, navigating school systems, recreation, and skill trainings. The overall goal of HAP is to assist parents and families in becoming more self-sufficient, both economically and personally, in order to maintain the family unit and attain independence.

Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, we strongly encourage all donations to be shipped directly to The Arc of Essex County's Main Office at 123 Naylor Avenue, Livingston, NJ 07039. If shipping is not possible, drop offs can be done in person on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

All donations must be received by Friday, December 3.

Please direct any questions to Erica Zupkus at [ezupkus@arcessex.org](mailto:ezupkus@arcessex.org) or (973) 535-1181 ext. 1275. Thank you in advance for helping us make the holiday season cozier for so many families!



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## EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED FOR MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

Each fall, The Arc of Essex County hosts a recognition luncheon to honor the employees whose long-standing commitment and dedication have helped shape the agency into what it is today. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic once again required us to forgo an in-person luncheon, the contributions made to the The Arc and milestone achievements are valued and celebrated, now more than ever. The Arc would like to recognize the following individuals for their tremendous service to children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities:

**35 Years:**

Minerva Delgado

**30 Years:**

Meleta Stewart

Cecilia Jackson

**20 Years:**

Adeline Michel Clesca

Mary Harris

Barbara Griffin

Marie Veix

Sharline Griffin

Peggy Harrop

Shabana Khan

Sebrina Staton

**15 Years:**

Glenga Mayorga

Tameka James

Rebecca Lorusso

Venus Meadows

Manuel Burse

Kiana Roulette

Shanay Strothers

Olguita George

**10 Years:**

Nakita Conley

Manno Barthelemy

Christine Kessler-Fillimon

Dianne Bonner

Al-Leesha Veney

Ernest Lindsay

Aleshaw Barratt

Joseph Rullis

Nicole Leach

**5 Years:**

Erica Zupkus

Teedra Thomas

Camille Hampton

Susan Lenczyk

Lakisha Alston

Kawana Johnson

Courtney Molinari

Casey Dickson

Areatha Paige

Onica Clarke

Sandra Pease

Ebane Masango

Tamika Gray

Jerry Battle III

Richard Ogunbote

Lisa Harrington

Sandra King-Amoak

Joanne Douze

Shauntae Anthony

Congratulations to all employees celebrating a milestone year with The Arc of Essex County, and thank you for your exceptional dedication and commitment to our agency, consumers, and mission! If you are interested in joining the team at The Arc of Essex County, visit our careers page at [arcessex.org/careers](https://arcessex.org/careers).



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## NOVARTIS PROVIDES GRANT FOR TELEMEDICINE SERVICES

The Novartis US Foundation has awarded a grant of \$4,000 to The Arc of Essex County to continue physician telemedicine service agreements for The Arc's group homes.

Telemedicine services brings both the health community and The Arc's group home community of residents and staff effectively together in a supportive, familiar, and relaxed setting. Telemedicine doctors are immediately available when a medical issue arises. A secure video-conferencing system allows doctors to perform thorough exams and evaluations using sophisticated diagnostic tools.

We thank the Novartis US Foundation for their support, and look forward to continuing this vital program, which allows our residents to receive more comfortable and convenient medical care through these services.



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## IMPORTANT RESOURCES FROM THE ARC OF NJ

The Disabled Adult Child flyer, which was developed several years ago by the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), has just been revised, and it is posted on the Division's website: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/assets/documents/individuals/dac-flyer.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/assets/documents/individuals/dac-flyer.pdf).

The newly revised DAC flyer contains important information for families and staff (including support coordinators) to keep in mind, when individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The DAC flyer explains the process to be followed when a parent is planning to retire and collect Social Security; or if a parent becomes disabled; or a parent passes away.

In addition, The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute has a Special Education Webinar Series running through the coming months. Topics include:

- Social Emotional Learning and the COVID Pandemic: Tuesday, November 16th, 2021, 6 to 7 p.m.
- Supporting Students with ADHD: Thursday, January 13th, 2022, 6 to 7 p.m.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) in School; Thursday, February 10th, 2022, 6 to 7 p.m.

To learn more, visit [The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute : What We Offer : Webinars : Special Education Webinar Series \(thearcfamilyinstitute.org\)](https://thearcfamilyinstitute.org)



## THE ARC OF ESSEX COUNTY RESIDENTIAL CORNER

### November Openings

For individuals seeking a community living placement, The Arc of Essex County has the following November 2021 openings:



#### Belmont Group Home (1 male vacancy)

- 1 bedroom available in this single-family style group home in a great Livingston neighborhood.
- 24/7 staff supervision
- Can accommodate residents with additional medical supports and aging needs
- The residents have tight personal relationships and prefer quieter activities, but remain an active and fun-loving group





### **Marmon Group Home (1 Male OR Female vacancy) – New!**

- 1 bedroom available in this 6-bedroom co-ed group home (3 bedrooms in each apartment)
- 24/7 staff supervision
- Two-family home in West Orange with spacious living room and dining room, an eat-in kitchen, and large backyard with patio
- The residents of this group enjoy socializing, hosting parties, and going on local trips to restaurants, movies, bowling, festivals, and concerts together (pre-COVID)



### **Terrace Group Home (1 Male Vacancy)**

- 1 Bedroom Available in 4-Bedroom Group Home
- 24/7 Staff Supervision
- Recently Renovated, Single Family, Ranch-Style Home on a Quiet, Residential Street in West Orange
- Minutes from Eagle Rock Reservation, Shopping, and Recreation
- The residents of this all-male group home enjoy picnics at Liberty State Park, bowling, going to the mall to shop, and weekly restaurant nights (pre-COVID)



**South Orange 2 Bedroom / 2 Bathroom  
Supportive Living Apartment**

### **South Orange Supportive Living Apartment (1 Female Vacancy)**

- 1 Bedroom Available in a 2-Bedroom Apartment
- Minimal Community Living Support Needs
- Access to an Emergency On-Call System for Added Safety 24 Hours a Day
- Apartment-style Living in 5-Floor Building with Elevator
- Located Steps from Public Transportation and South Orange's Vibrant Downtown

For additional information about The Arc of Essex County's residential services, [click here](#). If you are interested in pursuing independent living at one of the above properties, please contact The Arc's Senior Director of Residential Services Rebecca Lorusso via email at [rlorusso@arcessex.org](mailto:rlorusso@arcessex.org) or by calling (973) 535-1181 ext. 1270.

## THE ARC OF ESSEX COUNTY REMEMBERS FRED MCGRAW

Fred McGraw, an Essex County native, moved into the Branchbrook group home in 2015 and subsequently to the Belmont group home before his passing in October.

Fred was a very sweet man. He was lucky to have his mom and aunt's support into his later years, as they adored him and would gush over his charming smile. Fred had a very special companion, "Choppy" a very realistic stuffed dog whom he took amazing care of. Choppy is still safe and happy, now being cared for by Fred's mom. Fred enjoyed talking and making jokes with staff and housemates, as well as watching movies and shows about cars. He also was a regular participant in the Opportunity Zone and After Work day programs. He will be greatly missed by the entire Arc family.

If you'd like to make a donation to The Arc of Essex County in Fred's memory, please visit [www.arcessex.org/donate](http://www.arcessex.org/donate). Please note that your donation is in memory of Fred McGraw; an acknowledgement of your tribute will be sent to her family members.



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### Our Contact Information

\*{{Organization Name}}\*

\*{{Organization Address}}\*

\*{{Organization Phone}}\*

\*{{Organization Website}}\*

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