



The Guardian

Serving the IDD community since 1948

December 2021

Donate Today

HOLIDAY EXPRESS RETURNS FOR IN-PERSON FUN

On November 30, more than 50 people from The Arc of Essex County's group homes gathered to once again be treated to a festive Holiday Express celebration. With live music from the Holiday Express nine-piece band, seasonal decorations, character meet-and-greets (including Santa!), gifts, and lunch, the day was a welcome return to a favorite in-person activity after having to go virtual in 2020.

The mission of Holiday Express is to deliver music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year. The Arc of Essex County is one of 100 shelters, soup kitchens, and special-needs programs the group visits from November to December 24 every year, and each of The Arc's participants received a customized Holiday Express bag filled with essential items.

This year marks the fourth year of a partnership between Holiday Express and The Arc of Essex County, and we are hoping we can expand to include even more of our consumers again in 2022.



WEST CALDWELL HUB LAUNCHES VENDING MACHINE PROGRAM

In November, consumers from the West Caldwell Hub launched a new vending machine venture at the Durkin Building on Bloomfield Avenue in West Caldwell. The day program participants will maintain the stocking of the vending machine on a daily basis. They will also shop for new inventory, make weekly deposits to their account at TD bank, and ensure the patrons throughout the building are happy with the variety of options. This new program enhancement will assist with learning new skills such as money management, tracking inventory, sorting, stocking, customer service, problem solving, budgeting, and creating shopping lists.

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 aalosapio@arcsex.org.

TOGETHER WE MAKE THINGS POSSIBLE: GIVING TUESDAY SUCCESS!

On November 30, The Arc of Essex County celebrated Giving Tuesday, a global movement that unleashes the power of people and organizations to transform their communities. Thanks to the generous donations from so many of our supporters, we rocketed past our goal of \$10,000 and surpassed \$15,000 in contributions, which will support our newly established Community Recreation Fund.



Nearly two years into the Covid-19 pandemic, the world is reopening for many, but barriers continue to prevent those we serve from being able to fully participate in the recovery. Our community inclusion, recreation, and respite programs have always been vital to individuals and families, providing social interactions and learning opportunities for those with IDD, as well as crucial relief for caregivers. But skyrocketing costs for these programs—due to rising expenses, business closures, and added safety precautions—are putting these experiences out of reach for many of our consumers at a time when they are most needed.

Donations to our annual appeal, including the surge of contributions on Giving Tuesday, will immediately go into our Community Recreation Fund. Through this new fund, we can offset program costs and offer scholarships to our program attendees, giving them access to the in-person activities they have missed for so long.

Families of individuals with IDD carried some of the heaviest challenges during the pandemic; we thank our donors for making the load a little lighter for those who need it. We still have more fundraising work to do to meet the need. You can give to our annual appeal today by visiting <https://arcsex.org/get-involved/2021-annual-appeal/>. You can also call us at (973) 535-1181 ext. 1245, or mail a check made payable to The Arc of Essex County to 123 Naylor Avenue, Livingston, NJ 07039.

Thank you for your support, and for making this year's Giving Tuesday a success for The Arc of Essex County.

STEPPING STONES STUDENTS CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING

A delicious meal, feathery crafts, gratitude games, and even a visit from a giant dancing turkey were all part of Stepping Stones School's festive Thanksgiving celebration.

Throughout November, a variety of classroom activities centered on Thanksgiving, with themes of harvest and gratitude running through the school days. Students in the primary class made their own butter to eat with crackers; transitional kindergarteners created colander turkeys and enjoyed a sensory bin of corn kernels, farm animals, leaves, and acorns; and preschoolers practiced eating their Thanksgiving feast on their own. All Stepping Stones students



discussed things they are thankful for during this season of gratitude.

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.

CASINO TRIP AND FRIENDSGIVINGS KEEP CONSUMERS BUSY THIS FALL

Two different Friendsgiving celebrations and a trip to Mount Airy Casino provided fun in-person social activities for The Arc of Essex County's community inclusion, recreation, and respite consumers this fall.

On November 7, a group of 10 adults traveled to Mt. Airy Casino, where they tried their luck at game machines (with some coming home with winnings!) and enjoyed a buffet lunch.

On November 20, children gathered at The Arc's Opportunity Zone program center in Maplewood for music, games, arts and crafts, a Thanksgiving feast, and more for their Friendsgiving celebration. And on November 21, our adult respite program met at the Orange Hub for a Friendsgiving that included crafts, puzzles, games with prizes. All partygoers socialized with each other and shared a Boston Market meal with their peers while discussing what they were most thankful for this year.

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.

REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS ARE BACK FOR 2021

In 2020, the CARES Act waived Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) for retirement accounts. However, if you are 70 ½ or older and have an IRA, you will be required to take RMDs in 2021, or suffer significant penalties.

To use your RMD to make a gift to The Arc of Essex County directly from your IRA as a qualified charitable distribution, all it takes is three easy steps:

1. Before December 31, 2021, advise your broker/ financial institution to gift your IRA qualified charitable distribution to The Arc of Essex County.
2. Your broker or financial institution contacts The Arc of Essex County.
3. You receive a heartfelt THANK YOU.



It's that simple! For more information, contact Heather Comstock at 973-535-1181 x1224 or hcomstock@arcessex.org.

THE ARC OF ESSEX COUNTY RESIDENTIAL CORNER

December Openings

For individuals seeking a community living placement, The Arc of Essex County has the following December 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



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 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@arcsex.org or by calling (973) 535-1181 ext. 1270.

Donate Today



Our Contact Information

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