

# PROMISES

**PAST**



**FUTURE**

Celebrating 75 Years  
of Service



**ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023**



# Celebrating Our

# 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Empowering children and adults with intellectual  
and developmental disabilities since 1948.



  
**The Arc**  
of Essex County



# WELCOME

## A LETTER FROM THE CEO & BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Members of The Arc Family,

In 1948, a group of parents banded together on behalf of their children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, making a promise to their loved ones that they would fight for a more welcoming world where people with IDD could live their best lives. Seventy-five years later, we at The Arc of Essex County continue to carry that noble promise made by our founders.

Whether we are welcoming a new family into our Early Intervention programs or investing in adaptive equipment for our elderly group home residents, and at every stage in between, we make a promise to each of the more than 1,500 individuals we serve. We pledge that we will maintain their safety, comfort, and dignity through our services, and that we will fight for a more inclusive community.

These promises, past and future, are how we center ourselves through busy and changing times.

Throughout FY 2022-23, we made changes to our Arc programs that reflect that deep commitment to those we serve. Within our Children's Services, we expanded the options available for families, adding new programs and increasing the frequency of longtime favorites. We looked at our Adult Services with fresh eyes, adding new opportunities for engaging and creative programming. Within our Residential Services, we enhanced training and adapted homes, going above and beyond to ensure our elderly residents can age in place.

In 2023 The Arc of Essex County also celebrated our 75th anniversary. In marking the milestone, we reflected on the initiative of our founders, the dedication of our staff, the generosity of our donors, and, most of all, the connections with generations of families through the decades.

Thank you for your commitment to the individuals and families we serve; we could not have made it 75 years without such support and are truly grateful. Together we have made a difference for children and adults with IDD in ways big and small. But our work is not done, and we pledge to keep delivering on our promises for the next 75 years, and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Linda C. Lucas'.

Linda C. Lucas  
Chief Executive Officer



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Stephen Falanga'.

Stephen Falanga, Esq.  
Board President



# OPENING NEW WORLDS

## *Expanding Children's Programming*

Always determined to provide a spectrum of possibilities for families, The Arc of Essex County set out to expand its Children's Services in a way that would open doors and provide a variety of enriching, engaging, and fun opportunities for our youngest participants. During FY 2022-23, this effort came together in exciting ways, delivering unique experiences to children in our programs.

The newest offering has been the addition of Communi-Play sessions, which started in 2023. These "communication parties" are offered to children ages 2.5 to 5 on Saturday mornings, and combine singing, dancing, and play with speech-language therapies. "There's an exhilarating energy in every class," says Jaquetta Perry-Boyd, who has more than 20 years of experience with speech-



language instruction and founded the Communi-Play program 15 years ago. "It feels so good to be able to align this program with The Arc and to see families come back again and again."

The classes allow The Arc to connect with an age group that is younger than the majority of the children's programs offered, and to bring children and parents together consistently, with classes offered every other week. The Communi-Play sessions are provided at no cost to families thanks to a generous grant from the Blue Foundry Foundation.

Although the program is play-based, education is still at its heart: Perry-Boyd models activities that build expressive and receptive language, and equips parents with strategies to bring those lessons home. Also a Zumba instructor who works





with older children, teens, and adults in other Arc programs, she knows how to keep things moving and the families engaged. "It's a great blend of music and language," she says, "and parents don't just get a lesson, they also get a workout."

For children and teens ages 5 to 21, the Parents' Night Out events have always been popular among our participants. Parents and caregivers have long valued having a Friday night to themselves, knowing that their loved one with IDD is safely enjoying fun activities with peers. The program was on hold during the COVID pandemic, but resumed in 2022, returning to quarterly sessions and then expanding, eventually building to a monthly cadence. Parents' Night Out evenings now take place at Studio Arc, which can accommodate more enhanced activities and fine art instruction. "We're able to offer so much more, and we're always looking at new and creative activities we can bring to our participants," says Angela LoSapio, Director of Creative Day Programming.

That mindset extends to the Children's Saturday Respite Program, which also features new activities such as Zumba and specialized art classes. These additions bring a new dimension of creativity and innovation to the already busy schedule of on-site activities and off-site day trips, and provide the foundation for even more technical classes in the future.

All of these expanded offerings followed a restructuring of Arc staff, which established new positions that focus on creative programming, both amongst agency leadership and within the Studio Arc space. These new roles have brought innovative instruction to Studio Arc and throughout The Arc of Essex County's network of programs. As a result, The Arc is able to keep creative development at the forefront and provide more meaningful opportunities to our families. Which means parents of toddlers, children, and teens with IDD can look at their calendar and see it fill up with a variety of activities that are accessible... and, of course, a lot of fun, too!



## Jace's Story

When Jace's mom, Stacy, first reached out to The Arc of Essex County, she didn't know about the Parents' Night Out program. As soon as she learned about it, she signed her eight-year-old up to attend the next one. "I knew it would be a good fit," Stacy says. "Jace is very social, he loves to be out and interacting and doing fun things." Mother's intuition was right: Jace had a fantastic time, and has returned again and again. "He especially loves doing the arts and crafts, and the Studio Arc facility is just beautiful. He has one-to-one support, and the staff are always so amazing with him. It's been such a great addition to our lives."

# HOME IS WHERE THE ARC IS

## *A Promise to our Residents*

"Aging in place" is considered the gold standard for senior care, and our seniors deserve nothing less. As The Arc of Essex County has developed its own gold standard, a top priority is allowing seniors to enjoy the comforts of home even as physical abilities wane and memory fades.

In the case of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the reasoning for aging in place is strong, but statistics show those with IDD are disproportionately more likely to end up in a nursing home during their elderly years. In response, The Arc has stepped up efforts to give our residents the best possible chance of staying in their homes for as long as possible, taking the lead on a number of initiatives in concert with a statewide push to help aging individuals with IDD live in their residences safely and comfortably.



Specifically, there are three areas of home life that, due to their high correlation with transition to nursing homes, are the focus of The Arc's efforts:

- Mealtime Safety
- Fall Prevention
- Dementia Screening and Management

Residents' care needs have required investment by The Arc in areas such as specialized trainings and home remodeling. Collectively, these expanded efforts and adaptations help extend residents' ability to live comfortably at home.

The mealtime safety efforts are predominantly focused on choking prevention. Best practices have been established when it comes to food preparation, and staff are required to be in the room and attentive at mealtime, regardless of whether the residents' plans necessitate it. With the help of a speech pathologist who specializes in food preparation for people with IDD, we conduct enhanced trainings for diets that are adapted to our residents' needs and go above and beyond the N.J. Division of Developmental Disabilities trainings. All supervisors go through the instruction





annually, whether or not the residents in their care have special food requirements. In addition, The Arc engaged a nutritionist to work with our group home staff on creative meal planning for our residents.

Fall prevention involves surveying trends and zeroing in on the areas where the highest risks seem to be, responding with accommodations such as adding sturdy platforms with handrails to help with getting on and off vehicles, or upgrading to zero-entry shower stalls. Our property management team regularly conducts environmental scans to check the status of stairs, lighting, treads, and reinforcements throughout the group homes and makes adjustments, such as modifying ramps, as needed. The addition of generators to our homes has helped ensure that light and heat are maintained so that residents don't have to relocate, and that adaptive equipment continues to be powered, even in inclement weather. Enhanced training for staff in lifting and transferring our residents has helped ensure individuals are moved in safe and supported ways. A mobility specialist evaluates residents throughout the year and makes recommendations for each individual: for example, the purchase of ambulatory adaptive equipment such as a particular walker, ground bar, or railing, or guidance toward specific therapies. Together with physical and occupational therapists, the specialist is looking at the overall picture for each resident and identifying solutions that keep them safe.

Dementia management starts with baseline screenings, and staff receives specialized training in dementia care. Our clinical team develops individualized plans for our residents, focusing on maintaining skills through memory loss. Together, they determine which technologies and strategies will support a resident with dementia and related symptoms to continue to live safely at home for as long as possible.

Altogether, these efforts help ensure our Arc residents can age in place safely and with comfort and dignity. "We look at each person when we are making placements and making adaptations," says Rebecca Lorusso, Senior Director of Residential Services. "We see them now, and we see their future."



## Annie's Story

Annie is one of three residents in The Arc of Essex County group homes who are in their 80s. She lives in the Green Avenue residence in Roseland, and continues to participate in her day program at the Opportunity Zone. Annie's time with The Arc dates back decades, and although she is blind, in a wheelchair, and requires 1:1 feeding of pureed foods, she is able to remain comfortably at home because of a series of modifications that have been made over the years. The Green Avenue staff call her the matriarch, and say that her fellow residents pay close attention to her, always willing to get up and help if she needs something. "They're my friends and I love them all," Annie says. "I love everything about my home."

# BACK AND BETTER THAN EVER

## *Reimagining Adult Services*

Rainstorms bring rainbows, crisis brings opportunity, and rest brings renewal. So when it came time to restart the adult day programming that had been on pause during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Arc of Essex County resolved to make the most of the moment by taking a fresh look and reimagining the possibilities that could be offered when programming resumed.

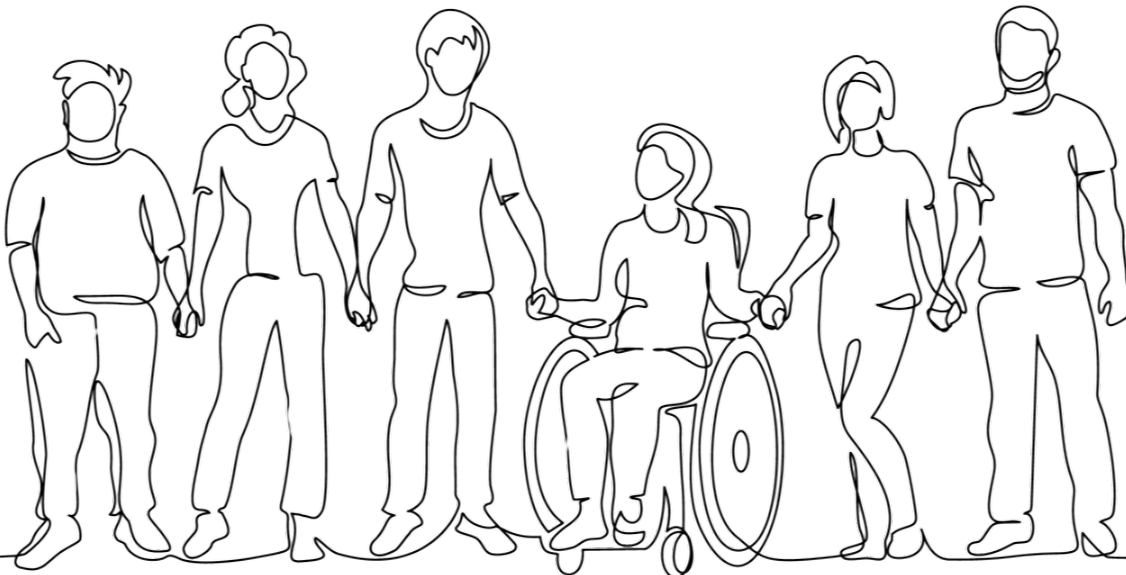
"We wanted to ensure that while we're restarting, we're not being stale," says Senior Director of Children and Adult Day Services Laurie Best. "We were determined to take advantage of the community we live in, to update our activities to be more engaging, and to fill our catalog with enticing options for our consumers."



Using feedback from participants and families, The Arc made adjustments to the Hotel Respite and Saturday Respite programs—both of which restarted in 2022—to include more community inclusion trips and to incorporate the creative opportunities available at Studio Arc. This refocus mirrored a comparable effort within the Adult Recreation programs when they restarted the year before. "We're always trying to go to new places while keeping the destinations that our participants love," says Best. The After-Work Program, which also resumed in 2022, was similarly updated to include more engaging on-site activities.

Studio Arc has provided many opportunities to Arc Day Programs throughout the week as well, with a variety of art techniques and media filling the schedule. Day Program consumers can choose to participate

in classes such as fine art, self-care crafting, photography, yoga, tai chi, and Zumba. Each of the four Day Programs have two to four classes that they can join every week, and each project is adjusted and adapted based on preferences and skills. The Studio Arc staff also send activities to the Day





Programs with detailed instructions, so that those who don't want to travel to the studio in Fairfield can complete vibrant and innovative projects at their program site.

The self-care crafting group from Opportunity Zone took their Studio Arc experience to a new level, creating an entrepreneurship program within their class time. After crafting self-care products such as scented soaps, linen sprays, and sugar scrubs, the group packaged their items and hosted pop-up shops to sell them. The first such shops were located at The Arc of Essex County main office in Livingston during the 2022 holiday season, and at the Building Tomorrows 5K Run and Family Walk event in the spring of 2023, with more to come in the months and years ahead. The budding entrepreneurs have learned marketing and sales techniques alongside their crafting skills, and the money raised goes directly back into purchasing supplies for their next project.

For residents in our group homes, Studio Arc has also offered new and exciting opportunities. "Man Cave Mondays" bring together male residents from 14 group homes, with upwards of 20 participants taking part in activities such as inflatable bowling and basketball, table-top games, and magnetic darts. They enjoy pizza and non-alcoholic beer, and usually finish the night watching some kind of sporting event together. Similarly, "Girls' Nights In" bring female residents together for an evening of activities such as a paint and sip, seasonal crafts, and cooking lessons, along with dinner and dancing. These programs are geared toward the more independent residents in Arc group homes and apartments, which allow for more socializing with minimal staff intervention, and they give participants a chance to form independent friendships with peers at different group homes.

Together, these efforts paint a picture of newly energized Adult Programming for participants throughout our Arc community. "We are always trying to make sure we meet the needs of our individuals and families and their schedules," says Best, "and in a way that feels fresh and exciting."



## Rashad's Story

Rashad was so hesitant to attend his first Hotel Respite weekend that his mom, Twanda, initially ached with worry. But before long, she was receiving photos of a smiling Rashad having a great time, and when she picked him up that Sunday, he instantly asked when he would return. Rashad has not missed a single one since. He loves every part of his Hotel Respite weekends, and Twanda says she could not be more grateful. "It's such a warm sense of security. The love that the staff shows, you can see it when he walks through the door and they welcome him with open arms. It's genuine. I feel like I'm dropping him off with my parents. I know he's going to have so much fun, and I can rest easy knowing he's safe and secure."

# PROMISES PAST & FUTURE

The Arc of Essex County has seen many changes through the years since its founding in 1948. But one thing that has remained constant has been a deep commitment to the people in our care. As we reflect on the last 75 years, we share stories of just a few of the individuals who make up our vibrant Arc community.



## *Carmela:* DECADES OF SMILES

Shortly after arriving in the United States at the age of 17, Carmela started attending the SYA Day Program. She settled into her new country, learned English, and 50 years later she is still happily enjoying her daily activities alongside her many friends at SYA. Carmela also recently moved into the Ashwood Group Home in Livingston and is now participating in more of the weekend Community Inclusion trips and Group Respite events.

**"I know that from day one, our family couldn't have given her the opportunities that The Arc has given her,"** says Carmela's sister-in-law, Jackie. "SYA is her second family. She loves participating in everything, and the opportunities have only gotten better."

As for her new home, Carmela says she is so happy there and loves her room with all her things. Jackie says the staff makes sure she's comfortable and healthy. **"We couldn't ask for a better support system."**

## *Clinton & Anabela:* STARTING NEW CHAPTERS

For Clinton and Anabela, 2023 was the year they each moved into their own apartments in The Arc of Essex County's Park Place program, where they enjoy a balance of independence and support. Clinton loves shopping for his own food and has recently signed up to join a new basketball league. Anabela works as a sales associate at Home Depot and enjoys hanging out with her neighbor across the hall, a fellow Arc resident named Patty. Both Clinton and Anabela use public transit and

ride-sharing services to get where they need to go, whether to appointments or to visit with nearby family. **"I have more independence than I used to have,"** says Anabela. "I can schedule stuff by myself, but if I do need help, I can call the staff to help me."

On-site staff members are ready to assist with financial guidance, scheduling support, or other needs, but Anabela and Clinton—like the residents in all of The Arc of Essex County's Independent Living programs—have autonomy. **"I love it here,"** Clinton says. **"It's my first time living on my own and it's been great."**





# Seventy-five Years of Stories



Billy:

## GROWING UP WITH THE ARC

Billy's first connection to The Arc of Essex County was as an infant in the Early Intervention program at Stepping Stones School, and he has remained a beloved part of The Arc family throughout his 38 years. He joined the SYA Day Program when he was 22 and moved into the Oakwood Group Home when he was 31. His sister, Meredith, says The Arc has truly been an extension of their family. **"We have been able to rely on The Arc for loving and attentive care at each stage of Billy's life."** The community at Stepping Stones played an important role when Billy was first born. "Now that I'm a mother myself, I can't imagine what it was like to have a child with special needs in an age where you couldn't just Google for support groups," Meredith says. "The teachers and families at Stepping Stones were crucial." Meredith notes that although Billy is nonverbal and a bit of a lone wolf, "the SYA team never overlooks him." His love for music has been incorporated at all stages: musical speech therapy at Stepping Stones, playing his preferred tunes at SYA, and relaxing in his room with music at Oakwood. "Sometimes while chatting with staff they mention his favorites and it makes me smile that they know him so well. **It really takes a village to raise any child, but especially those with special needs. We are so grateful to have The Arc's support.**"

Quinnlin:

## A HAPPY CAMPER

For Quinnlin's mom, Stefani, The Arc of Essex County's Camp Hope could not be more aptly named. **"Finding The Arc has given me hope,"** she says. From the moment she first visited camp, she knew it would be a perfect fit for her daughter, who started attending in 2021. The pool and splash pad were particularly eye-catching, but what has stood out the most over the years has been the personal connections. "Quinn is very social, she loves chatting with everyone: the van driver, all the adults at camp, everyone. And everybody clearly knows her and cares about her. It just feels so welcoming." Quinn is always excited to attend camp, as well as her Saturday Children's Respite Program, where Stefani says the careful attention from staff means so much to her family. "Quinn is all independent and happy when she's there, and everybody I've interacted with there has genuinely cared about my child." Together these experiences have given Stefani hope and comfort. "To see an organization that is there for the lifetime of your child's journey, that brings you peace of mind as a parent. It gives me hope to know that my child is not going to be alone, that our family is not going to be alone, and that there are people walking alongside us, and Quinn, every step of the way. **I'll never have a crystal ball to know what the future will hold for Quinn. But I know with The Arc of Essex there will be possibilities for her.**"







# 75th ANNIVERSARY GALA

## June 15, 2023 Cedar Grove, NJ



The Arc of Essex County's "A Million Dreams" 75th Anniversary Gala was a night to remember, with cirque performances, live music, and warm reflections on decades of service. Held on June 15, 2023 at The Grove, the event was attended by Arc friends old and new, and recognized the following honorees:

*Legacy of Philanthropy*  
**PSEG**

*Legacy of Leadership*  
**Board Presidents, The Arc of Essex County**

*Legacy of Advocacy*  
**Thomas Baffuto, The Arc of New Jersey**

The Arc extends its gratitude to everyone who made this celebration a wonderful success, including our event sponsors, attendees, and Development Committee.

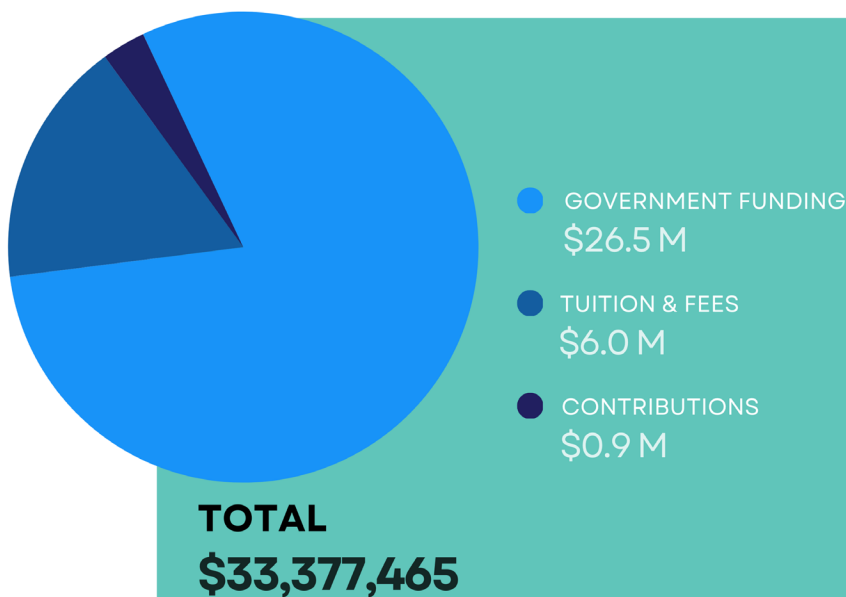




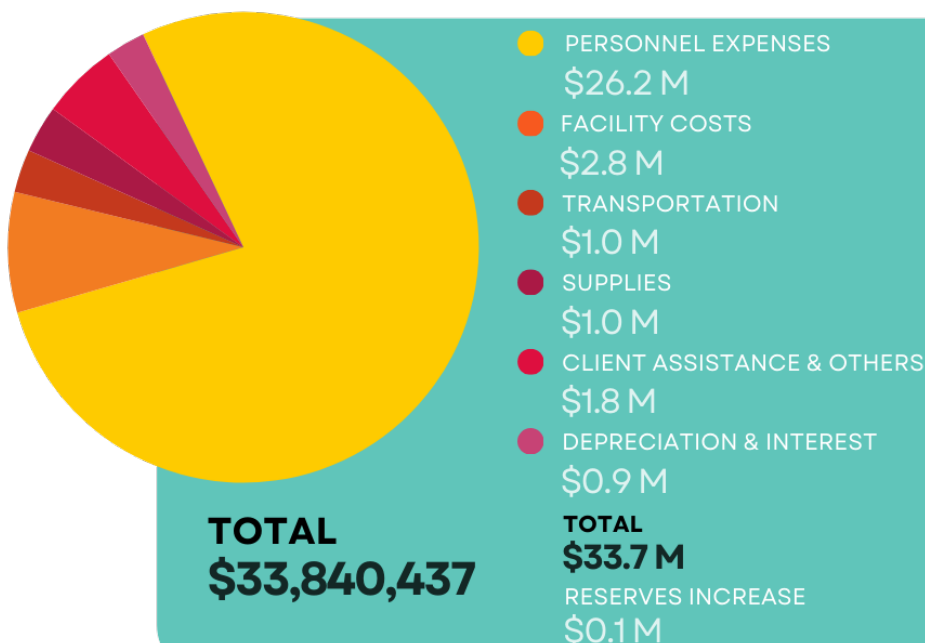
# FINANCIALS

2022-2023

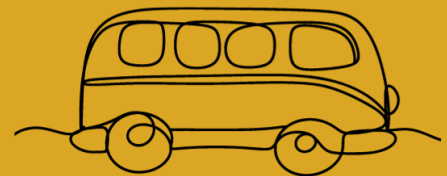
## OPERATING REVENUE



## EXPENSES & RESERVES



## 2024 PROJECTED RESERVE APPROPRIATIONS



**\$150K**  
Fleet Attrition



**\$325K**  
Residential Improvements



**\$600K**  
Property Aquisition

2022-2023

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## VISIONARY CIRCLE

These donors are distinctive supporters of The Arc's mission and objectives. Gifts, grants, and in-kind contributions of \$50,000 or more in any one fiscal year show an abiding belief and confidence in The Arc of Essex County.

The Candle Lighters  
Essex County Division of Housing & Community Development  
Partnership for Children of Essex through Children's System of Care  
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The following donors demonstrate a profound commitment to The Arc of Essex County, to its present and its future. Gifts and grants of \$10,000 to \$49,999 in any one fiscal year are the bedrock of the agency's foundation and enable The Arc to remain a strong and innovative source of strength for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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These gifts and grants of \$5,000 to \$9,999 ensure the continued fulfillment of The Arc of Essex County's mission. We thank these donors for helping us provide the very best quality of service to our consumers.

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We recognize these donors who have contributed between \$1,000 and \$4,999 in tribute to the more than 40 programs that The Arc of Essex County runs, so that the lives of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in Essex County and the surrounding areas will be enhanced.

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These members of The Arc of Essex County family contributed \$500 to \$999 in a single fiscal year. These funds allow us to build on our present successes and meet the needs of the future.

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The donors whose gifts and grants range from \$200 to \$499 help us sustain and enrich our programs while providing a nurturing atmosphere to all we serve.

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## EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

Linda C. Lucas	Chief Executive Officer
Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen	Chief Operating Officer
Robert Purcell	Chief Financial Officer
Megan Beebe	Senior Director, Financial Operations/Controller
Laurie Best	Senior Director, Children & Adult Day Services
Frank Cinque	Senior Director, Asset Management
Heather Comstock	Senior Director, Development & Communication
Rebecca Lorusso	Senior Director, Residential Services
Courtney Molinari	Senior Director, Quality Management & Compliance
Martin Noah	Senior Director, Creative Technology
Sarah Riker	Senior Director, Human Resources



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