



The Arc[®]
of Essex County

Ready to

SOAR

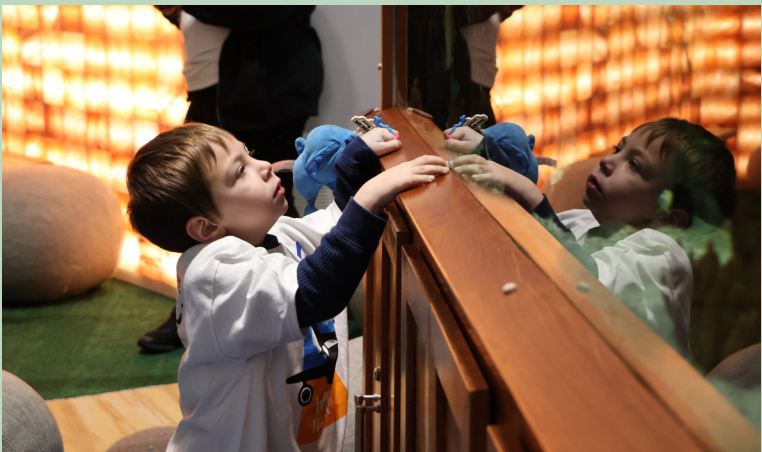
Impact Report 2023-2024





More than 150 people registered for The Arc of Essex County and The Arc of New Jersey's first "Wings for All" event at Newark Liberty International Airport on Saturday, December 2, 2023, where families had an opportunity to go through a low-stakes trip to the airport, including a visit to Terminal A's sensory room. The event was supported by United Airlines, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the Transportation Security Administration, and Munich Terminal A.

"It was a very realistic experience," one parent shared in a post-event survey, in which 100% of respondents said they would recommend the program to other families of children with IDD. "Everyone provided support, patience, and kindness."



Welcome



A letter from our CEO and Board President

Dear Friends and Members of The Arc Family,

When children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities soar to their fullest potential, we at The Arc of Essex County don't just feel hopeful, we also feel inspired. Throughout FY2023-24, we were privileged with opportunities to witness the individuals in our programs reach new heights in a multitude of ways.

The first Wings for All event, which we hosted with The Arc of New Jersey and other partners at Newark Liberty International Airport, is a memory that shines brightly. *(See details and photos on the opposite page.)* It was an emotional and meaningful day for participating families and staff alike, and left a lasting impression for all. Parents told us that the experience "opened the world" for them, and through joyful tears shared their dreams for travel that became closer to reality. As an organization that has always been committed to lifting up our families and helping children and adults with IDD push beyond boundaries, the symbolism of the day was not lost on us.

With that in mind, we are pleased to present our 2023-2024 Impact Report to you, under the theme "Ready to Soar." This year has been transformative for our organization, and we are eager to share the incredible journeys of those in our programs.

Highlights of the year, which you can read about in these pages, include a new and expanded location for Stepping Stones School; clubs for day programs that provide opportunities for entrepreneurship and job skills; expanded creative programming at Studio Arc for toddlers, children, and teens; and an investment in The Arc's staff that benefits both our employees and our program participants.

In addition to these stories, you will also have the opportunity to review our financial report for the fiscal year, as well as a list of our recurring and top donors, showcasing the support and stewardship that makes so much of our work possible.

We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering generosity of our donors, partners, and volunteers. Your belief in our mission fuels our commitment to creating a world where individuals with IDD are empowered to soar to new heights and where each person can live his or her best life.

Thank you for helping us open new worlds every day.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Linda C. Lucas in cursive.

Linda C. Lucas
Chief Executive Officer



Handwritten signature of Stephen Falanga in cursive.

Stephen Falanga, Esq.
Board President



Learning to Fly

New Stepping Stones School Opens in Fairfield and Expands Offerings to Families



After more than a dozen years at its Roseland site, The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School embarked on an exciting new chapter by relocating to a brand-new building in Fairfield during the winter of 2024. This move not only brings a fresh look to the school, but also offers more space and enhanced facilities for the students in The Arc's care.

The expansive new facility encompasses 23 rooms, covering a total of 12,333 square feet, all on a single ground level in the Kingsbridge Office Park. The custom renovations to the new building lasted about six months. To introduce the students and staff to their new school,

a special field trip was organized on Friday, February 16, 2024. This visit allowed everyone to familiarize themselves with the new environment before the final move was made over the Presidents' Day weekend. Stepping Stones School officially opened its new doors for instruction on Wednesday, February 21, 2024. Stepping Stones Early Intervention programs started in the new space the following week.

As the school transitioned to its new location, the staff, teachers, and therapists quickly adapted to their usual routines while supporting the students as they learned their way around the new facility.



One of the most notable enhancements at the new location is the increase in therapy room and classroom capacity. The school now has four distinct classrooms, which provides the space to accommodate 10-to-12-year-olds in the "Primary Plus" class. This new space not only allows for increases in overall enrollment but also enables students to remain part of the Stepping Stones family for a longer period, fostering a deeper sense of continuity and connection.

The layout of the new building is designed to bring classrooms together and offer more opportunities for student connection across the grades. With the all-purpose room now centrally located, children of different grades interact more frequently, promoting a sense of unity and inclusiveness. Additionally, the new design provides more access to sensory spaces, which are essential for many students, without interfering with therapy sessions.

All therapists now benefit from having their own individual rooms instead of sharing spaces, allowing for more focused and effective sessions. The school also features a student kitchen for cooking lessons and a small library for reading and quiet time, enriching the educational experience with practical life skills and opportunities for relaxation. A staff lounge has been incorporated into the new

design, providing teachers and staff with a dedicated space to take breaks and socialize.

The school's new location also places it a short stroll to Studio Arc, with all the accompanying possibilities for collaboration and creation. One such synergy between Stepping Stones School and Studio Arc involved collecting used crayons from the school, with adults in Arc Day Programs melting them down and creating new crayons at Studio Arc. The adults then brought the new crayons to the school on Earth Day, where children and adults in Arc programs colored together. The event was a highlight for all ages, and the beginning of a long partnership between the two programs.

The move to the new Fairfield location marks a significant milestone for Stepping Stones School, enhancing its ability to serve and support its students and staff in a welcoming, modern, and well-equipped environment. Our students are preparing to soar, but we are happy to keep them in the nest for a few more years before they take flight out into the wider world. →

“ The children adjusted faster than anyone. They love seeing their friends from different classrooms, and the therapy rooms have been outstanding. It's been a great transition for the Stepping Stones community and an exciting new chapter for our students. ”

—Robin Moses
Director, Stepping Stones School

The Sky's the Limit

Entrepreneurship and Jobs Clubs Open New Opportunities for Day Program Participants



The Arc of Essex County has always aimed to provide the adults with IDD in our community with opportunities to reach new heights and pursue their dreams, including efforts to work in the community or become entrepreneurs. With that guiding goal, The Arc revitalized Day Programs in FY23-24 with meaningful initiatives that aimed to empower participants to gain valuable life skills and explore their passions. Among these initiatives, the inauguration of the Entrepreneurship Club and the restart of the Jobs Club stand out as transformative experiences for our adult Day Program attendees.

Although an online artisan shop was always part of the vision for Studio Arc, the Entrepreneurship Club grew out of the efforts from an enthusiastic group of six women from the Opportunity Zone Day Program who created self-care products on their visits to the studio. What started with creating boxes of self-care items (including handmade lip balms, soaps, and room sprays) expanded to pop-up shops at The Arc's main office for Arc staff and the Building Tomorrows 5K fundraising event for the wider

community. In both cases, the women not only hand-crafted the items for sale, but also practiced customer service and marketing.

“
**Collaborating with
The Arc of Essex County
Jobs Club has been an
immensely rewarding
experience for our entire
team at Office Tavern
Grill. This mutually
beneficial program has
proven to be a
resounding success
for all involved.**”

—Kendra Mohon
District Manager, 40North Restaurants

In the months following the success of those sales, the effort expanded in both the number of participants—as the SYA Day Program also launched an Entrepreneurship Club—and the types of items for sale, which now include hand-crafted greeting cards, gel-printed tote bags, painted seashell trinket dishes, and more.

Arc items are for sale at two brick-and-mortar locations (The General Store in Montclair and Just Jersey in Morristown), and the Studio Arc online store is regularly updated to include the newest creations. No matter the venue—a pop-up shop, a neighborhood store, or online—all participants have been given the chance to explore their artistic skills while also earning proceeds from

the sales of their works.

For those more interested in traditional job opportunities, The Arc's Jobs Club returned after pausing during the



pandemic, offering a structured environment where participants can learn essential skills that prepare them for employment in restaurants, retail, or other industries. The club started with assembling a small group of West Caldwell Hub Day Program participants who had expressed interest in working. For the first three or four weeks, the group would meet for learning sessions, discussing the differences between going to work and going to a day program (what to wear, whether you could use your cell phone, etc.) and role-playing interactions with staff and customers. Thanks to a partnership with 40North Restaurants, club participants then visited The Office Tavern Grill in East Hanover, where over several weeks they learned on-the-job skills such as bussing tables, rolling silverware, folding pizza boxes, and greeting diners at the host station.

The real-life work settings provided more than just job skills; they helped increase confidence and foster social

interactions, building a bridge to greater independence. They also created a connection to the next group of participants: as the WCHUB group completed their training at The Office, they spoke to the SYA group slated to attend next, describing their experiences and easing worries. Looking forward, The Arc is exploring other industries to partner with, widening the scope of experiences and opportunities available to those in Day Programs.

Both the Jobs Club and the Entrepreneurship Club reflect The Arc's commitment to providing opportunities that align with the interests and aspirations of its participants. These programs are not just about gaining skills; they are about opening doors to new possibilities, fostering independence, and creating a community where everyone's talents are recognized and celebrated. They are the runway to greater independence and self-discovery for adults with IDD. →

Finding Their Wings

PCE Grant Launches Studio Arc Children and Teen STEAM Classes



Through FY2023-24, The Arc of Essex County's Studio Arc creative space experienced a transformative period of growth and innovation in programming for our youngest participants, thanks to a generous grant of more than \$50,000 from the Partnership for Children of Essex. This funding enabled the introduction of a diverse array of new and exciting programming that catered to toddlers, children, and teens, fostering creativity and skill development across various art forms and movement-based activities.

"By being able to offer so many different classes, it was like a creative think tank for the agency," says Angela LoSapio, Director of Creative Programming. "We got to see what worked and what didn't, and it gave us an understanding of how to move forward with the space in a way that meets the needs of our families."

During the year, Studio Arc hosted 143 children and teens ages 2 to 20 for PCE-funded programs, which featured fine arts, performing arts, STEAM, music, and more.

"We really had the opportunity to try a little of everything," says Deb McGauley-Eichhorn, Studio Arc's Creative Arts Manager. "We were keeping our eyes on early trends in the art world, and then figuring out how to adapt those concepts into classes that are age- and ability-appropriate. We wanted to make sure everything was exciting and innovative."

For the youngest participants, children ages 2 to 5 were able to attend bimonthly Communi-Play classes, which focused on enhancing communication skills through interactive play and activities. These sessions kicked off in FY22-23 with a Blue Foundry grant, but continued to



be offered at no charge thanks to the PCE grant. Each gathering focused on enhancing communication skills through interactive play and activities. The PCE support also allowed The Arc to fulfill parent requests for an “Art and Play” creative activity following some of the Communi-Play sessions.

For children ages 6 to 12, classes included opportunities for adaptive self-regulation with both movement and art offerings. Tumble Ninjas combined elements of gymnastics and martial arts, providing a fun and challenging way for children to develop their physical strength, coordination, and confidence. Animal yoga blended traditional yoga practices with playful animal poses, as children enjoyed mimicking the movements of their favorite creatures. Block printing and painting parties were also popular.

“One of the favorite programs for this age group was a puppet-making class series,” says McGauley-Eichhorn. “That was very special. Every week it was a different type of puppet, so the children learned all different ways to put on a show. It culminated in a performance for families, which allowed the kids to see a broader purpose for their artwork.”

The PCE grant also generated a variety of new classes for ages 13 to 20. Art journaling was introduced as a way for teens to express thoughts and emotions on the page. This form of creative self-expression proved to be therapeutic and empowering—and was extremely popular among families. Jam Band sessions were another

crowd pleaser, offering a unique opportunity for musically inclined children and teens to come together and create music as a group. STEAM classes featured lessons such as heart circulation and the elements of flight. Jewelry making, mosaics, block printing, and painting parties all gave teens the chance to learn new skills and create new masterpieces. “We were able to explore different

types of programming that let kids be expressive in a variety of different ways,” says McGauley-Eichhorn. “And offering multi-session classes helped our artists do more involved projects and learn skills over time.”

The grant also allowed The Arc of Essex County to offer a longtime favorite program—Parents’ Night Out—free of charge to families. These monthly events provide parents and guardians with a much-

needed respite while their children engage in creative art projects as well as interactive games and activities.

Overall, the new programming at Studio Arc not only provided toddlers, children, and teens with the chance to try new things and develop new skills, but also allowed The Arc of Essex County to evaluate and refine offerings to best serve the community. “We’ve been able to use surveys and talk to families to collect feedback about the programs offered through the PCE funding, and also learn what new offerings might be well-received by our community,” LoSapio says. “This grant really allowed us to put Studio Arc on the map for our younger participants, with innovative and enriching experiences for all ages.” →

“
I love making music,
I love guitar, I love
rocking out with my
friends. It’s always
a fun time.”

—Jasper
Teen Jam Band Participant

Cleared for Takeoff

Staff Trainings Build Skills and Open New Opportunities



Spend time talking to staff at The Arc of Essex County, and one recurring detail becomes clear: many of the people in leadership positions have worked their way up through the organization over years and even decades, and the connections with consumers and fellow staff members run deep.

At The Arc, there has always been a focus on retaining talented staff, offering opportunities for promotion within the agency, and bringing out the best in our people through education, connection, and investment. That effort was taken to a new level in FY2023-24 as The Arc concluded a series of focus groups with direct-support staff and kicked off a similar set of focus groups for supervisors. Feedback from participants helped inform a collection of changes and new initiatives within The Arc's operations.

Those revisions included easier access to open positions within the agency and an increase in staff engagement and appreciation efforts. Notably, the Quality Management and Compliance Department also debuted a new approach to the training program that all Arc staff complete, from core trainings to those focused on agency-specific processes and procedures, and introduced more on-site training

opportunities. With so many managers and directors promoted from within, those giving the lessons often draw from their own experiences in the field when they are presenting. These sessions help deepen the knowledge among Arc staff and build confidence and comfort among our DSPs as they work with consumers in all Arc programs.

“ At The Arc we are proudly committed to investing in our employees. This training initiative results in strong relationships, enhanced opportunities, and quality services to our staff, participants, and community. It's a win-win. ”

—Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen
Chief Operating Officer

Courtney Molinari, Senior Director of Quality Management and Compliance, says the goal has been to formalize both the structure and the timeliness of the training sessions, with the basic suite of trainings offered twice a month.

In addition to training sessions taking place during a wider span of hours, which added flexibility, staff members now also have the opportunity to learn more management-based skills in monthly trainings, which help set them up for success as they move up into leadership roles. “They already have the hands-on skills, this is building administrative skills, such as organization, financial, and documentation

management, and learning department-specific procedures,” says Molinari.

The training department is also working on a direct-support professional “advancement track” for DSPs



who show an interest in moving into management positions.

"There's been a really widespread development and empowerment of our employees," says Laurie Best, Senior Director of Children and Adult Day Services.

Best, along with Senior Director of Residential Services Rebecca Lorusso, also benefited from this employee investment through their work with The Arc of New Jersey's Leadership Institute Program, which started in the spring of 2024 and featured sessions that focused on different aspects of leadership, as well as a capstone project. "It speaks volumes of The Arc of New Jersey and The Arc of Essex County in cultivating their next generation of leaders," Best says.

That dedication to employees at all levels of the organization has helped keep The Arc of Essex County's staff-retention rate and internal-

promotion rates high, as more than 111 staff members have been with The Arc for more than five years, 55 for more than ten years, and 49 for more than twenty years. On average, 24 internal promotions are made each year.

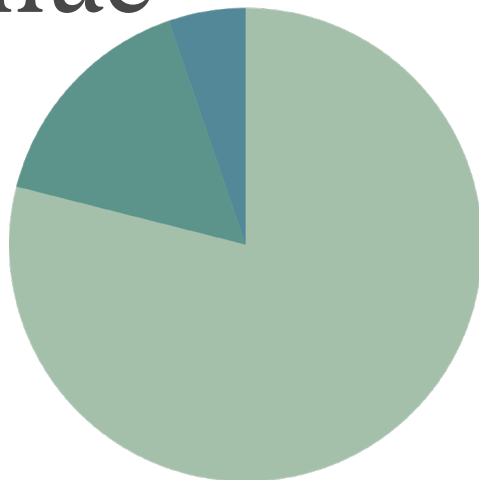
All of which translates to a deeper commitment by staff to the organization, strengthened relationships between staff and the consumers they serve, a tighter team of employees working together, higher quality services, and the reduction of costs associated with staff turnover.

"From the very beginning of employment with The Arc of Essex County, we are laying the groundwork for an employee to have both a strong training foundation and an opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge to move up and grow," says Molinari. "That commitment makes our entire agency stronger." →

Financials

2023-2024

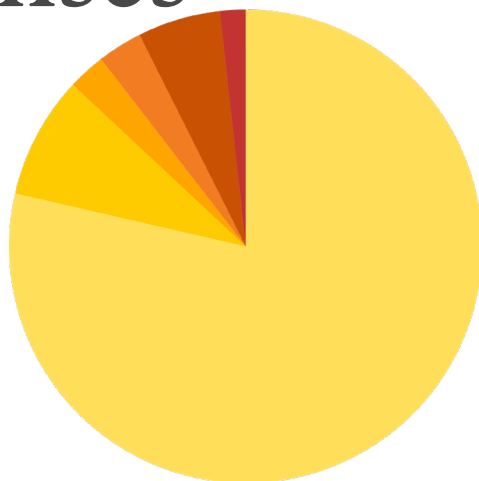
Revenue



State Funding	\$30.0M
Tuition & Fees	\$6.0M
Contributions	\$2.0M

Operating Revenue \$37,935,630

Expenses



Personnel Expenses	\$28.8M
Facility Costs	\$3.1M
Transportation	\$0.9M
Supplies	\$1.1M
Client Assistance & Other	\$2.1M
Depreciation & Interest	\$0.6M

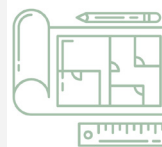
Total Expenses \$36.6M
Reserve Increase \$0.8M
Total Expenses & Reserve \$37,357,204

Properties: Acquisition & Improvements



45 BEECHTREE
GROUP HOME

\$1.1M



SYA DAY
PROGRAM

\$300K



ORANGE
GROUP HOME

\$200K



OTHER
GROUP
HOME
IMPROVEMENTS

\$100K

TOTAL

\$1.7M

Donor Recognition

2023-2024

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.

ANGELS

These 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 IDD.

BENEFACTORS

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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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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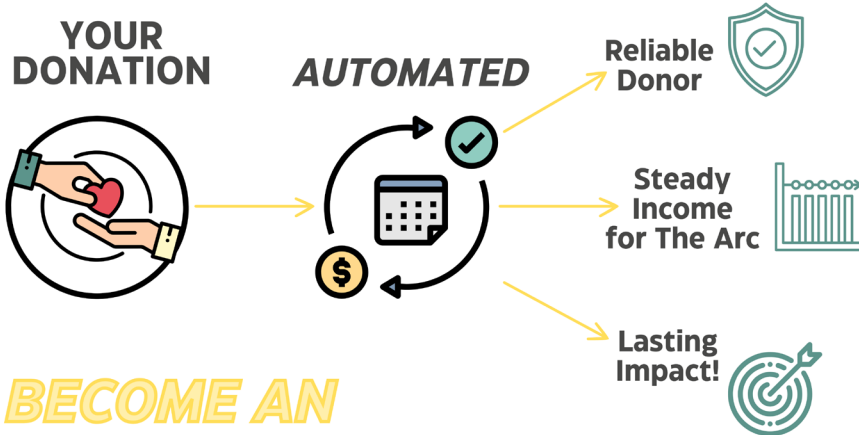
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By setting up your recurring donation to The Arc of Essex County, you become an Arc Champion, making a lasting difference for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities!



**BECOME AN
ARC CHAMPION TODAY!**

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The Arc of Essex County's "Arc Champion" Sustaining Donor Program allows you to make regular, automated donations, giving us the financial stability to plan for our community's changing needs. There's no risk and no long-term commitment; you can give at your preferred frequency and at an amount of your choosing, and can modify or cancel your donation anytime.

1 Visit <https://bit.ly/ArcRecurring> (or use QR code)

2 Select your gift frequency:

- > Monthly
- > Quarterly
- > Annually



3 Choose your donation amount and click the **GIVE** button

Once you complete the transaction, you officially become an Arc Champion, which comes with special perks like monthly impact updates and recognition opportunities. Thank you for your ongoing support!

Questions? Contact Senior Director of Development and Communications Heather Comstock at 973-535-1181 ext. 1224 or hcomstock@arcessex.org.



Many thanks to our 2023-24 Arc Champions!

These donors have set up recurring contributions to The Arc of Essex County, as of June 30, 2024.

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Finance and Budget	Benjamin J. Proce, CPA
Investment	Bradford Huntington
Nominating	Margaret V. McNany

Advisory Board

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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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