

# Message from our CEO

*The Governor announced his proposed budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year in February. His budget made a statement - making the most vulnerable his top priority with funding. With this upcoming budget he has added an additional \$483 million to the Intellectual Disability & Autism (ID/A) system. This money is specifically designed to address reimbursement rates for community service providers. His budget is also actively addressing the waiting list by adding slots to both community living and consolidated waiver funding streams. These added slots will hopefully provide the services that individuals across the state of Pennsylvania desperately need. Thank you, Governor Shapiro!*

*The attention to the ID/A system with Governor Shapiro's budget did not come without ongoing advocacy by both provider organizations, families, and advocates. The next step with Governor Shapiro's budget is to gain legislative approval. With continued advocacy to our legislators, we can assist with getting the much-needed funds in the system. This rate increase will be the first since 2017, therefore, these funds are desperately needed!*

*Although we are grateful for the proposed \$483 million, this rate increase should not make our system stagnant for the next 3 years. Rates should be properly reviewed to consider annual inflation. If past practice tells us anything, it is that there will not be a rate increase for the ID/A system for another 3+ years. To continue to provide quality supports, that simply cannot happen! We will continue to advocate to the Shapiro Administration that annual increases are critical for community service providers throughout Pennsylvania. I urge each one of you to reach out to your Legislators to let them know your struggles for supports. Your personal story will have an impact in the decisions made by both our Legislators and by ODP.*

*Keeping lines of communication between individuals, families and MCAR remains a top priority. We remain committed to collaborating with individuals and families to provide the support that meets each person's needs. Our Membership meetings are a fantastic opportunity to voice your needs and concerns. We will once again be holding our Annual Breakfast Meeting on March 26, 2024, at The Avalon, Sharon, PA. Patrick DeMico, the President of The Providers Alliance, will be speaking on Governor Shapiro's budget, the work he has done to advocate for the ID/A increases in the 2024-2025 budget, and ODP future initiatives with Performance Based Contracting. Please join us for this informative meeting. You can call Sheila Orelli at (724-981-2950 x. 245) for more information and reservations.*

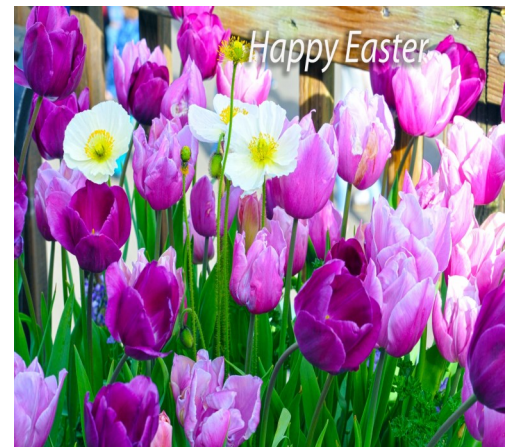
*I'd like to end again with a thank-you to Governor Shapiro and his Administration for the increases he has proposed in the ID/A system!*

*Thank you for this opportunity to serve you,*

*Lyndsey Vogan, CEO*

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

The Arc of Mercer County Annual Arc Membership Meeting  
Tuesday, March 26—Avalon Country Club in Hermitage  
7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.—Breakfast Buffet  
RSVP by calling Sheila Orelli @ 724-981-2950 X 245 or by email  
sorelli@mercerarc.org by March 14, 2023



**AUTISM AWARENESS  
CRAFT/VENDOR EVENT**

**SATURDAY MAY 4TH 12-4 P.M.**

**HELD @ JAMESTOWN FIREMEN'S CLUB  
501 DENVER ST.  
JAMESTOWN, P.A. 16134**

**FREE ENTRY. OPEN TO PUBLIC.  
KITCHEN OPEN. ATM ON SITE.**

**HUGE BASKET RAFFLE!**

**FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:  
STEPHANIE BROWNING 440-536-2402  
MAY THE 4TH BE WITH YOU!**



**THE ARC OF MERCER COUNTY  
FOUNDATION'S 41ST  
ANNUAL GOLF SCRAMBLE**

**Avalon Country Club at Buhl Park  
Friday, June 7, 2024**

**To Benefit The Arc of Mercer County and  
Individuals With Intellectual Disabilities and Autism**

**We would like to thank the following donors for their  
contributions to the Arc Foundation:**



**MEMORY OF ROBERT GOODRICK**  
Bozzone Family Foundation  
Peggy Raymond

**MEMORY OF PATT KAULEN**  
David Kaulen

## **OTHER DONATIONS RECEIVED:**

Michael & Nancy Barr  
William Clair  
Department of Corrections—SCI—Mercer  
James Epstein & Mary Anne Phillips  
Tom & Shirley Libeg  
Marian Martuccio  
Ruth Meeker-Emerson  
Dr. & Mrs. Ernest Swanson

*Thank  
you* 

# HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

*Please Join MCAR in Welcoming the Newest Members to Our Team!*

## JANUARY, 2024

Samantha Craig- Residential Program Supervisor  
Heriberto Munoz – Residential Program Supervisor  
Zackery Schoolfield – Residential Program Worker

Zackary Zuppe—Residential Program Worker  
Erin Bollman—Residential Program Worker  
Deanna Kellar-Zawacki—Hab. Aide

## FEBRUARY, 2024

Jason Hilton – Residential Program Supervisor  
Khalilah Hassan – Hab Aide  
Shena Fitzgerald – Hab Aide

Cameron Williams—Hab. Aide  
Jazlynn Wilson—Community Employment  
Makayla Weaver—Residential Program Worker

Thank you all for joining the team!

*Brian Engelmores, Human Resource Director*

# NURSING DEPARTMENT

*Springtime is just around the corner. This is the perfect time to add some new, healthy habits to our daily routines. Here are some tips that would benefit anyone:*



**MOVE MORE, SIT LESS** – walk just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Walking can lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of chronic diseases to making your brain sharper and your heart happier.

**EAT HEALTHY FOODS** - like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products. A healthy diet is essential for good health and nutrition. It protects you against many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer.



**DRINK MORE WATER** - Substitute water for sugary drinks like soda, juice, sports drinks. Drinking water increases energy, improves brain function, aids in weight loss, prevents dehydration, helps prevent constipation.

**GET ENOUGH SLEEP** - Adults need at least 7 hours of sleep per night. Good sleep improves your brain performance, mood, and health. Not getting enough quality sleep regularly raises the risk of many diseases and disorders. These range from heart disease and stroke to obesity and dementia



**BE SUN SAFE** - Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses and use broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15



*Colleen Engelmores—Nursing Supervisor—RN*

# COMPLIANCE CONNECTION



The Arc of Mercer/MCAR Inc. is excited to introduce you to our newest compliance team member. John Blazer started with MCAR 5 years ago in the Residential department as a House Manager. He then moved into a Program Specialist role and now will take on the role of Compliance Specialist. John, also known to some as Doug, is looking forward to meeting the challenges presented in his new position. Outside of work, John and his wife of 12 years Tammie enjoy going out in the community and you may see them at one of the many local restaurants in town. John's 4 children are all grown and reside throughout the Northeast including Rhode Island, Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

MCAR, Inc. is dedicated to the delivery of services in an environment characterized by strict conformance with the highest standards of accountability regarding business practices, contractual relationships, service delivery, professional responsibilities, human resources, and financial management. The Compliance Department is fully committed to the need to prevent and detect fraud, fiscal mismanagement, and misappropriation of funds. The Compliance Department is also responsible for assuring the successful day-to-day operation of all aspects of the MCAR programs within the regulations of ODP as well as completing our Incident Management Quarterly Reports and Quality Management Plan.

At Arc of Mercer County/MCAR, all individuals seeking or receiving services have an expectation that all information about them, both verbal and written, will be treated with respect & confidentiality. To provide service and supports, we rely heavily on extremely sensitive information resources. Because we are committed to protecting these vital resources, the Compliance Department has trained employees on our Information Security & Privacy Employee Handbook to help us all maintain the privacy and security of this extremely sensitive information.

*Brian Engelmores—HR Director*

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

## One World, Many Cultures

### Cultural Diversity Training

#### Barriers to Cultural Diversity



Cultural Diversity refers to the variety of ethnic and cultural groups that exist in our community and organization. The term "cultural diversity" includes a wide variety of groups or categories. These include race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, language, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, and more. At MCAR, cultural diversity involves employees and individuals from different backgrounds working together in an inclusive environment. MCAR wants employees to understand these differences and embrace different or new ideas and work together to make us a success. MCAR is excited to announce that we have invited the Shenango Valley Urban League Director Dr. Erin Houston to our April in-service days to discuss diversity, inclusion, and equity and help employees understand what cultural diversity truly means.

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT



Dreyland S. interviewed and was hired to work for Buhl Park last year. Drey was hired to maintain the Buhl Park pool area, cleaning, and any other tasks needed during the summer months with the support of a MCAR Job Coach. Drey enjoyed his work and did well. Buhl Park offered him a new position maintaining restroom facilities and various tasks when needed, allowing him to continue his employment year round. Drey is very proud of his accomplishments and being able to earn a paycheck. His Job Coach said he does a wonderful job and has made an impression throughout his employment. We appreciate Buhl Park and Markee Juranovich for giving Drey and MCAR this opportunity. Drey was featured in the February, 2024 issue of Buhl Park's newsletter Feb 2024 in the employee spotlight section.

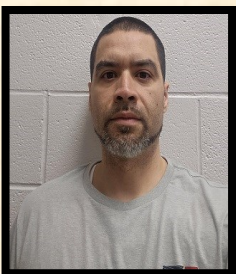
## NEW RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM SUPERVISORS



I am Samantha Craig. I have my bachelors degree in psychology. I have 2 kids. I previously worked for Sharon Regional Psychiatric unit and worked as a preschool teacher. I am looking forward to working with everyone and getting to know everyone



Hello. My name is Jason Hilton and I'm very excited to be joining the team here at MCAR as a Residential Program Specialist. I previously worked at Youth Advocate Program as a Behavioral Health Technician for 15 years. I look forward to servicing all our individuals as needed; and happy to make new beginnings with the MCAR team.



Please welcome Heriberto (Eddie) Munoz to our new team. Eddie has been working with individuals for over 15 years. He is one of our new R.P.S. and started his career as a Direct support staff working in the homes. He developed his experience through Family Living and then as a Residential Program Supervisor.

# CLINICAL DEPARTMENT

How would you communicate your needs if you did not have the words to describe what you wanted or what you were feeling?

*Typical responses might be tapping on someone's arm to get their attention, pushing someone away, or running towards what you want. But what if an individual cannot use "typical" responses to communicate need? Often our individuals exhibit different forms of behaviors, but often they are not understood as trying to communicate something. These behaviors are perceived as annoying, disruptive, or even dangerous. They may cause safety concerns such as tantrums, running away or leaving without permission, fidgeting, or repeating words. In addition, some individuals may resort to injuring themselves, referred to as self-injurious behavior (SIB), by hitting, biting, or scratching a body part. This behavior may not be an attempt to harm themselves, but an inappropriate form of communicating their feelings. The task can be overwhelming, it can be possible to identify and replace these behaviors with appropriate and understood communication.*

*Behaviors often are attempts at communication or the result of failed communication when the communication partner fails to respond communicatively. Planning and problem-solving can play an important part in identifying the function of maladaptive behavior. Indeed, many 'challenging behaviors' serve a communicative function. Identifying the purpose or function of the behavior and teaching an appropriate response that achieves the same purpose as the challenging behavior often results in an increase in appropriate communication and a decrease in the behavior.*

*Behavior IS often an attempt to communicate. Behaviors that are challenging often result from communication failure. Reframing what is viewed as an interfering behavior to be an individual's attempt to communicate provides positive options for teaching the individual more effective means to communicate their wants and needs.*

*Referenced article at <https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/communicative-competence-tips/behavior-is-communication>*

*Allysen Byers, Clinical Director*

**Social Group for People with**  
**High Functioning Autism**  
**and Asperger's Syndrome**



**DATES—2024**

March 13—April 10—May 8—June 12—July 10—August 14—September 11—October 9

Group meets the second Wednesday of every month!!

**Time:** 6:00pm to 7:30pm—Age 15 and older

**Location:** MCAR—850 N. Hermitage Rd., Hermitage

**Contact:** Allysen Byers, 724-981-2950, Ext. 238

# CPS PROGRAM



*My name is Nikkia C. Miller and I am excited to join the MCAR CPS day program team. I was born locally, and after some time in New Mexico, have lived in the area for 30. I graduated class of '97 from Farrell Area High School. And continued on to Edinboro University followed by Kaplan where I earned a degree in Early Childhood Education. I am also the recently married mother of three beautiful girls, two of whom have grown up and left the nest, and one 10-year-old princess.*

*In the last 25 years I have done almost every job. I started at Ponderosa Restaurant (now El Vallarta), moved on to Wheatland Tube as an office assistant in the Quality Control Department, then worked as a waitress for Perkins while attending Edinboro. I worked for Midwestern Intermediate Unit for 8 years and while I began working with individuals with multi-handicaps, I quickly focused on those with Autism. After some time off I followed that up with a job at ABDD, and Youth Advocate Programs where I again had a focus on individuals with Autism. At the completion of my degree, I was a preschool and Kindergarten teacher in Ohio and most recently a 1:1 RBT at the Knapp Center in Boardman.*

*In my household we value the ability to never stop learning and to help another person whenever you can. "Do unto others" is not just a saying but a motto. It is not meant for just those who one would be friends with, or those who are like us but for everyone. Because of that our children have watched as my Husband and I help anyone we can. We have done everything from home repairs to financial counseling, and auto repair to feeding. We have fostered children, donated items, and encouraged neighborhood activities. We have passed these traits on to our children in the hopes that they will use them well and pass them on where they can.*

*It has been a long journey, but I have watched as individuals that I have worked with have progressed from children to adults, gained employment, learned appropriate socialization and even learned to live on their own. I am so proud to be a part of their community.*

*I am thrilled to be at MCAR, where all the skills I have developed are useful in a fashion that allows me to still see individuals flourish. I work with some amazing people who are in this field on purpose. I wake up feeling like I'm not heading to work, but to a place where I belong and get to participate in the activities I am best at as a career.*

*When I explain what I do to new friends and acquaintances they say "Thank you, it takes a special kind of person. . ." It has been my privilege as well as pleasure to be a part of the community that people with special needs call their own. To know that I help make them feel included and successful makes me proud. Now it is an honor to tell people where I work and how I put my lifetime of learning to good use.*

*Darin Vadala—CPS Program Director*

## MCAR SHUT DOWN DAYS & HOLIDAY SCHEDULE 2024

### STAFF IN-SERVICE AND SHUT DOWN DAYS

**Friday—March 22 and July 19**

### HOLIDAY CLOSINGS:

**Friday, March 29—Good Friday**

**Monday, May 27—Memorial Day**

**Thursday, July 4—Independence Day**

**Monday, September 2—Labor Day**

**Thursday & Friday, Nov. 28 & 29—**

**Thanksgiving Day & Day After**

**December 24, - January 1—Christmas**

**Holiday & New Year's Day**



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The Arc of Mercer County/MCAR is affiliated with the United Way of Mercer County, The Arc of the United States, and The Arc of Pennsylvania.

### Mission Statement

“To provide advocacy and comprehensive support to persons with disabilities that empower them in all aspects of life”.

# Advocacy

The Arc of Mercer County is a chapter of the largest advocacy organization in the United States for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Working at the local level, we are the leading resource for individual advocacy services. Our advocacy services are free of charge to families and individuals in Mercer County. Since 2004, our advocacy efforts have focused on helping families with children maneuver the special education process to ensure a positive, quality education. We help parents understand their child's rights to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, as guaranteed by law.

Our education advocates guide parents through the special education process, from how to determine eligibility for special services to how to prepare for Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to how to file a due process complaint to how to find an attorney for legal representation. Our goal is to ensure that the school adheres to a child's IEP and makes a good faith effort to help the student achieve his defined goals. Parents are the most effective participants in developing and managing their child's education goals. Sometimes, however, they may find issues or instances when other resources are helpful. The Arc of Mercer County's advocacy program serves as their leading resource for information and support.

### What our Education Advocate can do for you:

- Provide resources and information about your rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and applicable state regulations, including Early Intervention, and about how to effectively advocate for your child to resolve issues
- Provide resources to school districts and Early Intervention providers to help design and deliver supports and services that guarantee students with disabilities the opportunity to make progress on their educational goals

For more information about our advocacy efforts and how we can help you, contact Brian Engelmores at 724-981-2950, Ext. 219.