

Message from our CEO

We begin this Holiday Season cautiously but also optimistically. The past two years has taught us to remain confident, open minded, and creative. We at MCAR employ professionals at all levels that are enthusiastic and dedicated to supporting all individuals and families with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism. Working through the struggles and challenges of the COVID Pandemic has made us stronger and we will continue to strive to support you with any challenges that you continue to face.

The Intellectual Disability/Autism system not only in Pennsylvania but Nationwide has also been struggling for many years in staffing qualified Direct Support Professionals. As we all know, relationships are the most crucial factor in the quality supports that The Arc of Mercer County/MCAR provides. The challenges of the Pandemic amplified this staffing issue. Today staffing for these critical and most important positions are at a crisis level and the community ID/A system is collapsing. Service capacity in the State has decreased due to the lack of qualified DSPs, including the supports we at MCAR provide. We currently have individuals and families waiting for services in all the Community Programs and we have reduced the number of homes from 17 to 16, due to staffing issues. The current pay gap between Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) providing care in the community system and workers at the PA owned and operated ID/A State Centers is \$4.28 per hour. Many Pennsylvania advocacy groups, are now participating in an advocacy campaign titled “Equal Pay for Equal Work.” We have joined with two of the advocacy groups, The Arc of PA, and The Provider Alliance to get the message out specifically to our legislators that the time to act is now. I would like to reach out to each of you and ask that you contact our legislators and encourage them to work with us in increasing the pay of the community DSPs.

I am grateful for the dedication of all MCAR staff, especially the Direct Support Professionals. We know that our individuals and families rely on our support to continue with their everyday lives. We overcame many of the challenges that COVID presented by working together. I believe that if we continue working together, we can also move the current collapsing community ID/A system back into an expanding supportive environment. Thank you for all you do.

**From all of us at MCAR Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, and
Happy New Year!**

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you,

Diane M. O’Rourke, CEO

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2021 STEAK FRY

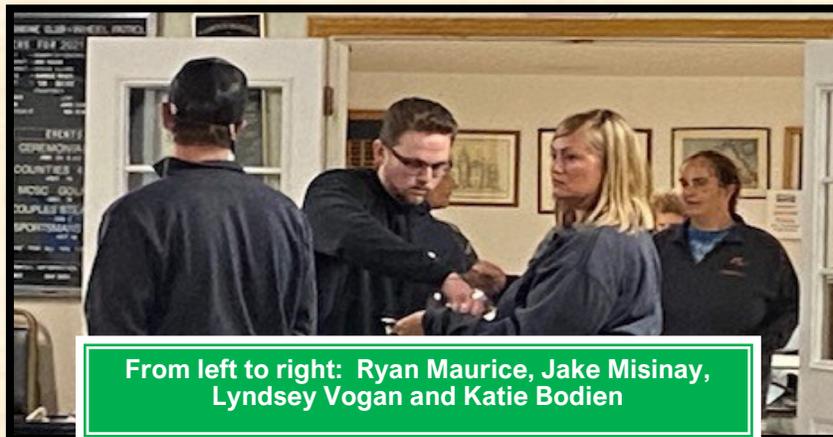
The Steak Fry fund raiser was held on September 23 at the Shrine Club. This year we did very well even though our costs doubled. We sold 159 tickets and our net profit was \$4,500. In 2019 our net profit was approximately \$4,000 and in 2018 our net profit was \$4,800. Thank you to everyone who attended the event and making it a successful fund raiser!



From left to right: Diane O'Rourke, CEO; Darin Vadala (front left); Dave Bodien (back); Susan Farrand and an attendee



From left to right: Dave Bodien, Lyndsey Vogan and Kamala Sham



From left to right: Ryan Maurice, Jake Misinay, Lyndsey Vogan and Katie Bodien

2021 STEAK FRY



Josh Mosley



From left to right: Laci Matthews, Liz Palumbo, Darin Vadala, Erin Palazzo



Shirley Riffle Ryan Maurice



Angela McMath



UPCOMING EVENT



2nd ANNUAL NIGHT AT THE RACES FUNDRAISER

Saturday, February 12, 2022
Doors open at 6pm—races to begin at 7pm
Mercer Co. Shrine Club—4201 Lamor Rd., Hermitage

Tickets: \$15

(Ticket includes food—beer—mixers)

BYOB

It will cost \$10 to purchase a horse and \$50 to sponsor a race. A race sponsor will have his or her name printed on the race sheet and will be announced at the event. A horse owner will have the opportunity to name a horse and to win a cash prize.

**RIP OFF
TICKETS**

**50/50
RAFFLE**

To purchase tickets/horses/races:

**The Arc of Mercer Co./MCAR
Administrative Building
850 N. Hermitage Rd., Hermitage**

**Any questions, please contact Darin Vadala
724-981-2950, Ext. 207.**

COMPLIANCE CONNECTION

PLANNING FOR THE OSHA MANDATE

On November 4, 2021, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) published an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) that establishes minimum COVID-19 vaccination and testing requirements for private employers with 100 or more employees throughout the United States starting January 4, 2022. This ETS requires employers with more than 100 employees to mandate COVID-19 vaccines or require weekly testing for unvaccinated employees. MCAR employs more than 100 employees; therefore, this mandate would apply to us and we want to keep everyone updated. Currently this mandate has been suspended pending further litigation.

In keeping with our commitment to providing a safe and hazard-free work environment for our individuals served, employees and their families, MCAR has begun preparing to comply with the OSHA regulations. Surveys have been sent out to employees as well as a memorandum outlining MCAR's plan to be compliant with OSHA's regulations. These are unprecedented times, and MCAR is taking the appropriate steps to ensure the safety and health of our workforce. MCAR strongly recommends that all staff that are not vaccinated, become vaccinated as soon as possible. Becoming vaccinated is great for the people we are supporting as well as for the safety of those around us. OSHA is expected to issue further guidance in the coming weeks, though the exact timeline is unclear.

Brian Engelmores—Chief Compliance Officer

CULTURAL DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

ONE WORLD, MANY CULTURES

Celebrating the Diversity in December

December includes important holidays and events among religions and among other traditions and social issues.

11/28-12/6 - Hanukkah (Jewish): celebrates the Jews triumphing over the Syrian Greeks for their independence

12/1 - World AIDS Day - increase education and awareness of AIDS

12/3 - United Nations: International Day of Persons with Disabilities - promotes the dignity, rights, and well-being of people with disabilities

12/10 - United Nations - International Human Rights Day

12/16-12/24 - Mexico: Las Posadas - commemorates events associated with the birth of Jesus

12/21 - Winter Solstice/Yule - the Pagan and Wiccan winter sabbat

12/25 - Christian: Christmas - celebrates the birth of Jesus, the Christian messiah

12/26 - African American: Kwanzaa (12/26-1/1) - inspired by African harvest celebrations

HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

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

Keyshawn Barnett—RPW
Gabriella Blazer—CPS
Sheila Brakeman—HA
Laylon Bridges—Smith—RPW
Alize Brodie—RPW
Edward Byers—RPW
Vidalia Colon—RPW
Terence Evans—RPW

Alysia Grayson—RPW
Kimberly Harrison—RPW
Corvette Hilton—RPW
John Joyce—HA
Tyquan Mays—RPW
Shawn McConnell—HA
Nicely McQueen—RPW

Charles Moss—HA
Ahmaree Odem—RPW
Kayla Parker—RPW
Alexandria Rand—RPW
Airyuane Samuels—RPW
Tracy Stahl—HA
Michelle Walter—RPW
Freda White—RPW

Thank you all for joining the team!

Brian Engelmores, Interim Human Resource Director

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



In Memory of Dr. William R. Allli— Ms. Hessina Alli-Dolvin

In Memory of Mike Morford "Tiger Mike"—Keith & Margi Rypczyk

OTHER DONATIONS RECEIVED

Robert Beach
Black, Bashor & Porsch
Stephanie Browning
Bill Clair
Frangakis Family Charitable Foundation
Fringe Benefit Services
Diane Gardner
Gentile Family
Keith Godfrey
Graham Stamping—Terri M.
Marsha Griffiths
Daniel & Matthew Halansky

Nancy Herrick
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Hinkson
Robert Jazwinski
Bill Kerins
Mr. and Mrs. Mac McClure
Carl & Kathryn Meyer
Angela Palumbo
PHN Charitable Foundation
Dr. Albert Scott
Robert Seibold
Angela Wolford



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



DATES—2021-2022

Jan. 12—Feb. 9—March 9—April 13—May 11—June 8
Group meets the second Wednesday of every month!!

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

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

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

CLINICAL DEPARTMENT

All of us have experienced loss. It is an unfortunate part of life and even though we all know it is inevitable, it never gets any easier. It can be overwhelming to think about how the holidays may be affected; especially if the loss is recent. However, there are healthy ways to cope with grief and loss during the holiday season. The following tips are provided by an article by Dr. Tali Berliner.

***Set boundaries with holiday events.** Do not feel obligated to go everywhere and do everything. If it feels right, do it; if not, be honest with yourself and others. **Allow yourself to celebrate at your own pace.** If that means leaving early or not attending that party, be honest with yourself and the host. Be mindful of your needs and wants because these will directly affect how ready you are to get out and participate. **Tune in to your emotions.** Our emotions can get the best of us at anytime and it is important to let them. It is also necessary to remember feelings can coexist. There is nothing abnormal about missing a loved one and still enjoying the company of those you still have. **Plan ahead to fill empty holiday roles.** Whatever role may have been vacated, fill it or plan to have it filled. This helps with consistency and continues to flow of special events. **Create new traditions.** It is possible to create new memories without forgetting the way the old memories make us feel. This is where guilt may play a role, but understand this, too, is normal. **Identify grief coping skills.** Prepare yourself for how you will respond to unexpected and often overwhelming feelings. Healthy coping skills like listening to music, deep breathing, or taking a walk will be easier to utilize with some preparation.*

Whether the loss is that of a beloved client, a close friend, or a member of your family; celebrate them. Celebrate the times had and memories made, but most of all, remember you are not alone. There are people and agencies who are there to help you through what may feel like it is too much to deal with. Reach out.

"Information for this article was taken from How to Cope with Grief During the Holidays

Berliner, Tali; 2021, How to Cope with Grief During the Holidays, The Psychology Group, retrieved November, 24, 2021, <https://thepsychologygroup.com/how-to-cope-with-grief-during-the-holidays/>

Allysen Byers, Clinical Director

CPS PROGRAM

The Community Participation Supports department at MCAR continues to operate with all required COVID-19 precautions in place for the health and safety of our individuals and staff. CPS is experiencing a rise in new referrals and individuals requesting facility tours of our day program. We have enrolled six new individuals this quarter in our prevocational licensed area and are in the process of adding more staff to the day program.

CPS is gradually rebounding to our pre-pandemic daily operations. Our volunteer partners are beginning to open the doors once again for our individuals and we are getting back to the facility activities that are so important at the day program. CPS continues to collaborate with our Community Employment department, helping to identify individuals that are interested in supportive employment and becoming independent in the work force.

We are extremely excited for 2022! There will be many new facility and community activities starting with the new year!

CPS HALLOWEEN PARTY



Darin Vadala, CPS Program Director

NURSING DEPARTMENT

We are growing here in the MCAR Nursing Department. We are excited to announce two new members to our Nursing Team. We have recently added Certified Medical Assistants—Monica Trabert and Kim Hogue to our nursing group. They will be assisting the nurses with various office tasks, reports, medication checks, vital signs, appointments, and other tasks as appropriate.



MEET OUR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

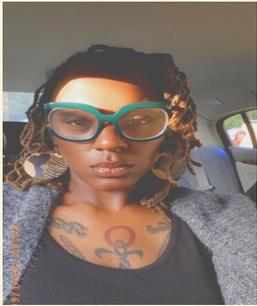
Monica Trabert—*I live in Mercer. I have a daughter who is 22 years old. I have a brother and uncle who have Down's Syndrome. They have taught me patience and it's the simple things in life that mean the most. In the office I reorder medication, send faxes to the doctors, file the documents and anything that is done in the office setting. Outside of office work I do vitals, pill counts and anything else that involves a Medical Assistant. I joined the nursing department a few months ago. I am excited to be working with the individuals and staff at MCAR. Every day has been different. I enjoy our clients and their outlook on everything. Our individuals are what makes my job worth doing!*

Kim Hogue—*I have a 15-year-old son and a 12-year-old daughter. Being in the medical field is my passion and I could not imagine doing anything else. I have been in the medical field since I was 16 starting out doing Home Health care. I began being a Certified Nursing Assistant after my son was born. I did that for roughly 17 years. In 2019 I decided to further my education and became a CMA. I did my internship and was hired upon graduation at Sharon Cardiology Specialists. After that I transitioned to Dr. Morgan's office in Mercer where I spent 2 years. I was able to do a variety of tasks there from rooming patients to drawing blood and most everything in between. I saw an opportunity to become employed at MCAR in October and decided to join the team. I am very happy with my decision. I enjoy the people I work with and the individuals I work for! Every day is a new day and I am excited to grow with everyone!*

Erin Palazzo—RN Nursing Supervisor

RESIDENTIAL DEPARTMENT

What's Shaking in Residential? The story has not changed much. We are still in the midst of a pandemic and one of the lasting effects of the pandemic – a never-ending staffing crisis. Although we feel as though we are working extra hard to pull ourselves out and are doing all we can to alleviate the pressure our staff has been experiencing over the past year and a half, we know it just does not seem like enough. In order to provide additional support to our staff who as of late working in homes that are not familiar to them or that they have not worked in some time, we have increased our management team. Our hope in doing this is that there will be extra hands-on deck to assist staff in completing their duties, support staff through crisis situations and train staff to understand the individuals that they may not have an understanding of. Where previously we only had one HM on duty each shift, we now have three (3) HMs for each dayshift and one (1) for each pm shift. This gives us a total of eight (8) House Managers. You should already be familiar with our veteran HMs, Laura Heather, Safwan Matthews, Kelly Richardson and Julia Hall. I would like to give you a brief introduction to our new HMs.



Wenci Ford- She is a 38-year-old, dedicated mother of one 6year old son!!! She loves to laugh, read, and listen to music... She is coming from 13 years in the juvenile correctional field... "Change is a necessity, and I am huge on challenging myself to improve on my skills in life and what better way than to care and nurture people who are in need... This is a new field for me, but I am more than willing to learn, grow, help, and motivate everyone around me to make our positions better for the greater good of the individuals WE care for."



Jada Keller- Jada is from Sharon Pa. In her free time, she manages her own business where she creates and sells decorative trays, coasters, key chains and other trinkets. Before she became a business owner, she worked with juvenile delinquents. She enjoys crocheting, painting, and doing arts and craft. She was interested in working in this field because she wanted to help others and make a difference in their lives. "This is such a rewarding field to be in. It brings joy to my heart to come in and see that someone is actually happy to see my face."



Joshua Rodgers- Josh started at MCAR 4/1/19 as an RPW before joining the management team. Josh is from Sharon and he grew up in West Middlesex. He likes basketball, football, baseball, and bocce. He has loved his time at MCAR. "I've always wanted to work with people with intellectual and development disabilities."

Due to the fact that we lost a HM we will be hiring a new HM to join the team in the next couple of weeks and are excited about having all of them on board to help our department be more successful.

Atlasia Matthews—Operations Manager

MCAR SHUT DOWN DAYS & HOLIDAY SCHEDULE 2021

SHUT DOWN DAYS:

Friday, January 21, 2022

Friday, March, 18, 2022

Friday, July 22, 2022

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS:

Friday, December 24, 2021 thru Monday, January 3, 2022—Christmas Holiday & New Year's Day

Friday, April 15, 2022—Good Friday

Monday, May 30, 2022—Memorial Day

Monday, July 4, 2022—Independence Day

Monday, September 5, 2022—Labor Day

Thursday and Friday, November 24 & 25, 2022—Thanksgiving Day & day after

Friday, December 23 thru Monday, January 2, 2023—Christmas Holiday and New Years Day

RECIPE CORNER

Pepperoni Pizza Rolls

Ingredients:

1 ball refrigerated pizza dough (about 14 oz) at room temperature

All-purpose flour—for sprinkling

1/2 Cup Marinara Sauce, plus more for dipping

1/2 Cup Grated Parmesan Cheese

1/2 Teaspoon Dried Oregano

1/2 Teaspoon Kosher Salt

10 Slices Mozzarella Cheese

2 oz. Sliced Pepperoni—Halved

4 Sticks Mozzarella String Cheese



Directions:

Preheat oven to 400°. Roll out the pizza dough on a floured surface until it's a very flat, large rectangle, about 11 by 18 inches. Spread with the marinara sauce, leaving a 1-inch border all around, then sprinkle with parmesan, oregano and salt. Evenly top with mozzarella slices and half of the pepperoni.

Unwrap the string cheese and arrange it in a line on one long edge of the dough. Starting from that long edge, roll up the dough as tightly as possible so that the string cheese winds up in the middle of the roll. Pinch the seam of the dough to seal, then flip seam-side down. Slice into 1-inch pieces with a serrate knife and place the rolls cut-side up in a 12-inch round baking dish or cast-iron skillet. Tuck the remaining pepperoni into the folds of the pizza rolls, leaving just a little sticking out. Allow the rolls to rise at room temperature for 20 minutes.

Bake the rolls until the crust is golden and filling is bubbly, 20-25 minutes. Serve with extra marinara sauce for dipping.

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Hermitage, PA 16148

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F 724-981-1877
www.mercerarc.org



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”.

Merry
Christmas

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.