A Place Where Everybody Knows Her Name

By Shea Godwin, Executive Director

I have a story for you. Donna—there to the right—is part of a statewide Peer Mentor pilot project that takes people with intellectual disabilities who live in their communities and pairs them with people who are being discharged from the large state training centers. The goal is to assist people in making the transition from institutional to community life. Each Peer Mentor, like Donna, has a Peer Mentor Partner, like me, whose job is mostly to stay out of the way and provide support to the Peer Mentor.

Donna and I have a tradition. Before each trip to Richmond for training, we go out to breakfast. Donna likes IHOP and so do I, so that’s usually where we go.

In December, the training was changed to a conference call, so Donna and I decided to go out anyway. What has happened in the past is that Donna would follow me in, stand behind me while the hostess asked if we wanted a booth or a table, drink what I drank, refuse to order until I ordered, follow me to the bathroom, and follow me out. When we first started going to IHOP, the waitresses would talk to me, not to Donna, and I’d redirect them by asking their questions to Donna. Over time, they got to know us and would speak directly to Donna.

On this day in December, however, Donna walked into IHOP before me, went to the hostess desk, and asked for a booth. After we were seated, the waitress came to take our drink order. Before I said anything, Donna said, “Coffee, decaf.” The waitress didn’t look twice at me until I said, “Unsweetened tea, no ice”.

When the waitress came back with our drinks she asked if we were ready to order our meal. She turned to Donna first. “What would you like, ma’am?” she asked. Donna pointed to a picture on the menu and said, “The breakfast combo. And how would you like your eggs?” Donna pointed to another place on the menu and said, “Like that.” “Up,” said the waitress. “Up,” repeated Donna.

Throughout the meal—through the “How are you doing?” and the “Can I get you anything else?” - Donna was asked and answered for herself. At the end, the waitress brought one check, but Donna was having none of it. “Apart,” she said. The waitress looked at her for a moment and then figured it out. “You want separate checks?” she asked. Donna replied that she did, so the check was split and we walked up to the cashier (actually, Donna swaggered). She pulled out her wallet, counted out the right number of bills, and only needed a little help counting the change. Then she said, “I’m going to the bathroom. Do you want to come?” This time, I was the one who followed. I took her lead. From the moment we walked in until the moment we left, Donna took charge of both of us and of the whole experience. And the IHOP staff responded accordingly.

So what made the difference? Donna and I have been to IHOP a number of times, not as part of a big group on an outing, or in a van marked “The Op Shop”, or in any way that set us apart from anyone else. We’ve gone in my car, just the two of us. They know her there. When she comes in, they greet her. They talk to her directly. They call her “ma’am”. They take time to listen and try to understand what she’s saying when they don’t get it the first time. Some of them even know her name.

This, friends, is what community inclusion is. It is the difference between going on an outing in the community and genuinely being part of the community. And that makes all the difference in the world. Just ask Donna.
Op Shop Volunteers Honored by Asbury United Methodist Church

Every week, participants from The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham’s Op Shop program visit Harrisonburg’s Asbury United Methodist Church. They fold bulletins and newsletters. They set the table for meals. They interact with those who come and go, and generally make themselves available to help.

During the Christmas Season, the staff at Asbury acknowledged the volunteers with an enormous red poinsettia in thanks for all the work they do to help the church. It was the highlight of the day for both the givers and the receivers.

Meghan enjoys going to Asbury because she likes the idea of people eating at tables she has helped set. She also knows that when people read bulletins on Sunday mornings, she has helped fold them.

Heather is another participant who enjoys her time at Asbury. “I like to go there because I feel like I’m helping the community,” she says. “I know people eat at the tables that we set, and that’s important. When we fold bulletins, I feel like I’m helping the church. I love what I do there!”

The leader of this endeavor is Gayle Peterman, a Direct Support Professional at The Arc. She is also a member of Asbury United Methodist Church, and saw the potential for volunteer service there.

One of the participants in whom Gayle has seen the greatest growth is Larry. When the group began, Gayle noticed that Larry was taking over and sometimes not letting others help. So she put him in charge of particular tasks and discovered that he was a good organizer and leader. Now she depends on him for those skills each time the volunteers set up for the weekly meal.

Kaitlyn, another volunteer, has also found a niche for herself. She enjoys folding newsletters and bulletins. With the help of a jig, she is able to make the fold in the right place. “I push it down hard so there’s a good fold,” she says. She likes it to be straight and crisp, and she sees no reason why her blindness should get in the way of that. “What I do is important,” she says.

The volunteers know that they bring value to Asbury, and that the church appreciates what they do. That is part of what makes the experience so special to each individual who participates. Like everyone else, they want to feel like they make a difference. And they do!
JMU and The Arc: Beautiful Music Together

The JMU School of Music and The Arc are collaborating on an exciting project to work with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in iPad-based community inclusion musical activities. The project will introduce the individuals to age-appropriate applications that allow them to make music with the use of that technology. Traditional instruments, including drums and other percussion instruments, will also be used.

The project will be lead by Dr. Paul Ackerman and Dr. David Stringfield, both of JMU, and Board-certified Music Therapist Brianna Priestly. Two JMU student interns will be an integral part of the team.

For JMU and their faculty colleagues at Virginia Tech, the project offers the opportunity to develop measures of music achievement, examine person-technology match, and study students’ development as future music educators. For individuals from The Arc, this is a chance to engage in an enjoyable activity, learn musical skills, develop the ability to work within a group, an interact with the larger community through performances and other activities.

The Arc/JMU partnership began last year when JMU taught a group of individuals from the Op Shop to perform using chimes. The Chimers gave concerts at Asbury United Methodist Church and at group of individuals from the Op Shop to perform using chimes. The project will be led by Dr. Paul Ackerman and Dr. David Stringfield, both of JMU, and Board-certified Music Therapist Brianna Priestly. Two JMU student interns will be an integral part of the team.

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The Arc/JMU partnership began last year when JMU taught a group of individuals from the Op Shop to perform using chimes. The Chimers gave concerts at Asbury United Methodist Church and at Very Special Arts events. “We’re very excited to be working with Paul, Brianna, and David,” says Terri Gibbs, Director of Day Support Programs for The Arc. “We hope this will turn into a very long partnership.”

Five Easy Ways to Help The Arc!

Help us keep the shelves stocked.
We always need snacks, paper napkins, towels, and plates; plastic utensils; baby wipes; and 55 gallon and 13 gallon garbage bags.

Buy from Amazon using Amazon Smile.
Go to www.smile.amazon.com and choose The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham. After that, we will receive a donation whenever you shop on Amazon.

Shop with us. Our gift shop features crafts handmade by Op Shop participants as well as all kinds of greeting cards. We’re open 9-5, Monday through Friday.

Become a Member or renew your Membership.
The handy form is on our website at www.hrarc.org.

Make a recurring donation. Set it up through your bank so that it comes to us every month. It’s as easy as that!

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NEW MEMBERS & RECENT RENEWALS


MEMBERSHIPS THAT HAVE RECENTLY EXPIRED

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MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRING IN JANUARY

Rick & Cherie Bowen, Althea Crawford, Lawrence Hoover, Jr., Drexel & Barbara Judd

MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRING IN FEBRUARY

Mr. & Mrs. William Louderback, Mr. & Mr. Challace McMillin, Katherine & Alan Neckowitz, Patrice M and Stephan Oliver, Bob & Mary Sease
The Great Arc Art Event

Visual Arts
Painting • Drawing
Sculpture • Mixed Media

Awards
Age Group • Artistic Medium • People’s Choice

Music
The Arc Op Shop Band

March 6th, 5:30—7:00 p.m.
Emmanuel Episcopal Church
660 S. Main St.
Harrisonburg

5:30 Art Viewing
6:00 Performance by
The Arc Op Shop Band
6:30 Awards

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month!
Show off your talents at The Great Arc Art Event (formerly The Arc Art Contest)

How It Works
1. Each entrant must have an intellectual or developmental disability.
2. Each person may submit one entry.
3. The entry may be a painting, drawing, sculpture, or mixed media piece.
4. Paintings and drawings must be on paper at least 8 1/2 x 11 and no more than 9 x 12.
5. Artwork may be created at school or at home.
6. Membership in The Arc is not required.

What To Do Now
1. Have fun creating your fantastic art!
2. Submit your entry and entry form no later than February 13 to The Arc, 620 Simms Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22802. We’re open 9-5, Monday-Friday.
3. Come to the reception, awards ceremony, and performance by The Arc Op Shop Band on March 6th at Emmanuel Episcopal Church!

The Great Arc Art Event 2015—Entry Form

Entry level: ☐ preschool ☐ elementary ☐ middle ☐ high school ☐ out of school

Artist’s Name: ____________________________________________ Age: _______ Home Phone: ____________________________
Address: ________________________________________________ City/Zip: ______________________________
School/Program Name: ____________________________________
Instructor’s First/Last Name: _________________________________ Work Phone: ______________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________
Title of entry: ___________________________________________

I give permission to have my artwork displayed by The Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham and agree to have my name and image used in connection with publicity for the contest.

_________________________________________________________ Date ______________________________
Signature of artist (parent/guardian if under 18)

Return this form and your artistic creation by February 13 to: The Arc, 620 Simms Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Thank you!