

Yes, I CAN!

Advocating, learning, reaching and exceeding goals, and enjoying the simple things in life are important steps toward independence and happiness. ARI is proud to share some recent accomplishments made by three of our clients that reflect these values. These stories illustrate our work of providing the right tools needed for success.



“The Self-Advocacy group allows us to learn more about our community and teaches us to speak up and make change,” says **Latoya**, a member and leader of the Self-Advocacy Group. Not only an advocate for herself and other clients at ARI, but Latoya is an artist and a member of the Life Skills group at ARI. She

has learned myriad skills that have allowed her to speak up for herself. Latoya works with Darlene Caviness, Manager of Day Service Options in developing meetings for the Self-Advocacy Group. Her leadership has facilitated trips to the State Capital and other places to learn more about the community. She also helped create the “Self-Advocacy Staff Award” that was voted on by clients at ARI and given to a staff member that best helps clients reach their goals and assists in allowing them to become more independent. Latoya continues to work on goals that will allow her to become more independent.



“**Ashley** has grown a lot since beginning at ARI. At first it was difficult to get her involved in activities. She is no longer shy and participates in many classes and events,” says a staff member who works with her. Simply put, she has blossomed! Today she participates in computer class, current events class, and is an active member of her life skills group. She is meeting new friends and attends after-hour parties. Ashley has become a social butterfly.



“I am happy in my own apartment. I am cooking, cleaning and taking the bus on my own. Staff helps me, but not all the time,” says **Nefi**. He is the perfect example of how independence can be achieved with the right skills and tools. Over 5 years ago Nefi expressed his desire to work in the community and live in his own apartment. Nefi is a diligent, hard worker at a local market. He takes the bus to and from work and, with hard work, has seen his hours increase. This past year, Nefi moved out of his 24-hour-staffed group home and into a less restrictive staff-supported apartment with two close friends. He is learning responsibility and self-reliance. As a result, Nefi is living a much more independent and fulfilling life.

“Yes, I CAN” is a phrase we love to hear. Despite decreasing funding from the State, ARI clients CAN and ARE achieving their goals and becoming a greater part of our community. They are advocating for change, giving back to their city, and learning skills that improve their lives. As we venture forth, their futures are optimistic and their own expectations are expanding.

We have included a form for donor opportunities inside. We hope that you will consider making an investment in us by supporting this important fundraising effort. These stories are the results of *your* support. Aside from assuring that we continue to deliver the highest level of service, your investment can help fund, for example, a new handicap-accessible van which will be used to transport clients to classes and events within community. ARI’s clients’ goals include independence and involvement in our society. Our goal is to make sure they CAN achieve them.

Enriching the lives of people with disabilities and their families by enabling them to achieve their fullest potential at home, at work and in the community.

From the CEO



After a difficult winter, ARI welcomes this spring with its promise of growth, adventure and progress.

Despite the change in weather, our challenges will continue, especially with the impact of attendance-based services for day programs. Our payment structure is now based on who attends what program and when. So, we encourage our clients and families to participate and receive quality services on a regular basis. Clearly, the training we offer helps them achieve their employment (and other) short- and long-term goals. If they are not here, they do not grow and we do not get funded. In addition, we are asked by our state legislators and government partners to provide high-quantity and quality services without cost-of-living increases. This continues to affect our ability to manage our fiscal resources without the increased revenue. While we understand the struggles within the ever-present state deficit, we also have to maintain our commitments to our clients, staff, and business partners in lower Fairfield County. While flat funding is now being seen as a positive rather than negative, it is not an acceptable means of keeping our “guys” moving ahead on their life’s journey towards independence.

The ARI Board of Directors, along with Friends of ARI, is deeply committed to providing mission-driven giving opportunities. In this newsletter, you will notice our upcoming events; The 5th Walk for Independence on May 1, the 16th Lotstein/Martin Golf Tournament on August 18 and the 3rd Annual ARI Comedy Night on October 22. By attending one or all you can help us overcome the reality of our funding gaps.

Another way to help is to contact your legislators in support of the Connecticut Safety Net Program, whereby families receive case management services through a network of existing community resources and service providers, including ARI. Aside from job and life-skills training, vulnerable individuals or families may receive vouchers to pay for its basic needs, such as food, rent, utilities and clothing.

Meanwhile, we continue to make steady strides in the renovation of our Richmond Hill facility. Phase I of the renovation has been completed and we have received many wonderful comments from families, clients, staff, and our state partners. The building looks great and the windows have already had a dramatic effect on energy efficiency. Some of Phase II has been deferred due to the budget but estimates are still being reviewed with the hope of commencing in December, 2011. Part of Phase II includes a proposal with the City of Stamford via a Federal Housing and Urban Development Community Block Grant. This grant, however, has not yet been approved so we may be looking for other resources. Phases III, IV and V have been put on hold until a capital campaign can be established to garner the much needed support to complete the plans. We’ll keep you posted.

ARI continues to be the beneficiary of the good work provided by community agencies such as HomeFronts, Inc. and Rebuilding Together Fairfield County. This month Rebuilding Together Fairfield County will paint the main floor of the Richmond Hill Facility as well as clean up the grounds at Palermo House. An application has been sent to HomeFronts, Inc. asking them to paint the exterior of the Fairfield Avenue Administration facility. We truly appreciate this wonderful expression of giving back to our community and its citizens.

Let me take this opportunity to offer heartfelt thanks to the ARI staff. It has been a long winter and I appreciate all that they continue to do to benefit ARI and the clients that we are here to serve. Many thanks to the Board of Directors for their guidance and support. Their governance and commitment is truly spectacular.

Lastly I thank you, the donors and benefactors, who make our jobs easier with your commitment and dedication to our agency. We thank you for all of your continued support and advocacy as we fulfill our most important mission of “always reaching for independence” for all of our clients.

– Matthew P. Reyher

Join us for the
**5th annual
ari walk for
independence**

Sunday, May 1, 2011

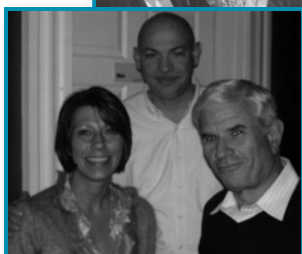
11 am at Cove Island Park, Stamford

Register online at

www.active.com/donate/5thariwalk



2nd Annual ARI Comedy Night



Above, top left; Above, Kitty Bartram (past ARI Board Member), Gail Malloy (ARI Board Member), Jane Arestia (ARI Board Member) and Daniel Arestia. Bottom left; Lisa Musilli with Mario Musilli and Allan Sussman, both past chairs of ARI. Bottom right; Peter Bales, Host Comedian.

Over 100 people gathered for the 2nd Annual ARI Comedy Night on Saturday, October 23rd, at the Hibernian Hall in Stamford, to raise funds for ARI programs. The event included a silent and live auction and showcased a three-comedian show, produced by Treehouse Comedy Productions. Nationally recognized comedians Peter Bales, Sandy Marks and Goumba Johnny filled the room with laughter.

ARI thanks the following sponsors: Benefit Planning Services; Lee Combrinck-Graham, M.D.; The Norgren Family; Constellation Health Services; Donald Axleroad; GA Fleet and Associates; The Umbrella Club; RFF and Associates; Mario Musilli, Esq., and all the individuals and businesses that participated.

Join us for the 3rd Annual Comedy Night Saturday, October 22nd at the Hibernian Hall in Stamford. For more information please contact Gerard Gasparino, Manager of Development and Recreation at gasparinog@arict.org or visit www.arict.org.

SAVE THE DATE

**16th Annual Lotstein/Martin
Golf Tournament**
Thursday, August 18, 2011
Sterling Farms Golf Course
Afternoon Start • Awards Dinner



Support ARI of Connecticut!!

Just fill out and mail this form to
ARI of CT,
174 Richmond Hill Avenue, Stamford CT 06902.
Thank you!

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- Please let me know about your endowment and other giving opportunities.
- Enclosed is a completed form from my employer's matching gift program.

For more information, please call 203 324-9258, ext. 3023

First Annual Self-Advocacy Award



On Wednesday, December 22, 2010, clients of ARI awarded the First Annual Self-Advocacy Staff award to Hector Torres, Skills Instructor-Day Service Options. The award was designed to honor a staff member in the ARI Day Program who advocates for clients needs and goes above and beyond to help them achieve independence. The Award was voted upon by all 70 clients in the Day Program.

The Self-Advocacy Group meets every other month and is member-initiated under the supervision of Darlene Caviness, Manager of Day Service Option. They meet to discuss issues that affect their lives and work together to make change. Currently the group is made up of eight members, all voicing issues that affect their lives.

Staff News

New Staff Members

Kendra Williams, *Skills Instructor, Medical Department*

Nicole Green, *Residential Counselor, Palermo Residence*

Abilis' 15th Annual Parent and Community Conference BUILDING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

at UCONN,

Thursday, April 28, 2011

8:30 AM to 4:30 PM

ARI joins Abilis in presenting this full-day, interactive workshop for parents and professionals, bringing together people and ideas to create a more just and caring society

Featuring Jack Pearpoint and Lynda Kahn, who consult with and learn from people with disabilities, their families, and organizations engaging in positive change, through planning events and workshops throughout the world. They are passionate about leadership, change and personal engagement to realize a more just world where everyone's voice and gifts are welcome.

For more information call 203 324-9528, ext 3023

Grants and Donations

IBM Donation

This past November ARI was the recipient of a new server from IBM. This donation will help us to become more efficient and responsive to our staff and clients. The donation was supplemented by a Social Media workshop that IBM conducted, in partnership with the United Way of Western Connecticut, for the non-profit community. IBM's generosity is helping us become smarter and more efficient in dealing with technical challenges and opportunities.

North Stamford Exchange Project

The North Stamford Exchange Club created a new patio at ARI's group home, Palermo House, this fall. The patio was built at no cost to ARI and will serve as a place for residents to enjoy their backyard. ARI has been a beneficiary of the NSEC for decades. They've sponsored a picnic and softball game, and built a new wheelchair ramp for an ARI facility. "It is gratifying to know that our donations help to improve the daily lives of individuals at ARI," says Kevin Roones, President of NSEC. A special thanks to members Lou Aita, Mike Lamont, Mike Tomasello and Andy Tomasello who, with the help of a licensed contractor, coordinated and completed the patio project.

United Way Day of Caring Project



On Friday, October 1st a group of 23 employees from Ernst & Young painted the hallways and cleaned up the front yard at ARI's group home, Palermo House. This project was coordinated through the United Way Day of Caring program. Thanks to the 23 volunteers who braved the rainy weather, much of the overgrown areas were cut back and the hallways were given a fresh coat of paint. ARI thanks the employees of Ernst & Young and the United Way for choosing us for this project.

Recreation and Volunteer Events

- In September, the ARI Artists' Initiative classes started up again with close to 20 members. Under the leadership of Charles Wieseahn and Donald Axleroad, artists produced a beautiful, new 2011 calendar. They are looking forward to the possibility of a major show in the Spring.



- Thanks to the Darien YMCA, ARI clients started another year of Aqua-Aerobics on Wednesday evenings.
- Thanks to the Knights of Columbus and Michael Powers

Catering over 80 clients dressed in their best costumes enjoyed the annual Halloween Party in October. Clients dressed as Ironman, Batman, Witches, Ghosts, and many others, partied at the Knights of Columbus to celebrate Halloween in style.

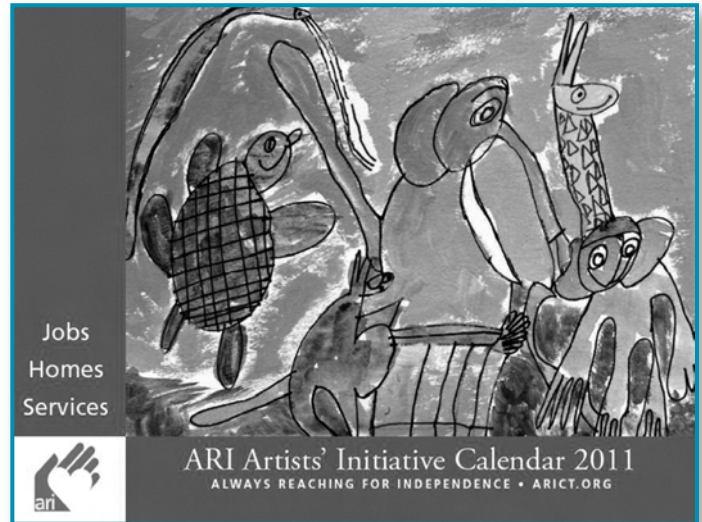
- Clients continued to attend the weekly Saturday bowling at Rip Van Winkle. In November, Thomson Reuters sponsored their popular annual bowling party for 30 clients who enjoyed pizza and bowling for 2 hours. Special thanks to Ed Napolitano, Kristine Kultzow, and the other Thomson Reuters employees for supporting this great event.

- For the 55th year, The Stamford Police Association donated funds to purchase presents for every ARI client at the annual holiday party. Several Stamford Police Officers came to distribute the gifts and celebrate the season with us. ARI would like to specially thank Joseph Kennedy, President of the Stamford Police Association, and officers Chris Gioielli, John Buehler, and Dave Deleo for their assistance. For the 4th year in a row, Thomson Reuters provided a special holiday lunch for the ARI clients. And on December 20th the clients of ARI were treated to another fun party sponsored by Michael Powers and the Knights of Columbus. Over 90 clients were in attendance at the KOC, where singing and dancing continued all night.

Besides the groups and individuals mentioned above, ARI was fortunate to have the help of the ARI Youth Corp volunteers to help purchase and wrap over 100 client's holiday gifts. Erica Morris, an intern from Norwalk Community College, helped provide support to the Recreation Program. For the past five months, she has worked with the art class, created the monthly calendar and much more.

We thank each volunteer for the support they provide the clients of ARI. If you are interested in volunteering, or would like to learn more about the ARI Recreation Program, please contact Gerard Gasparino, Manager of Development and Recreation at gasparinog@arict.org.

2011 ARI Artists' Initiative Calendar



The 4th ARI Artists' Initiative Calendar is for sale, featuring artwork produced by 13 ARI artists.

Currently over twenty students attend weekly classes at ARI. Artwork from the class has been exhibited at the Stamford Palace Theater, the Fairfield Arts Council, Norwalk Community College, and the New Haven Free Library. Board member and local artist Donald Axleroad founded the program over six years ago, starting as a class for a handful of students at his home. Four years ago the class moved to ARI so that more clients could participate. Charles Wieseahn continues as the head teacher of the class and works individually with each student to aid in their creative expression.

Calendars are available for \$10. All proceeds from the calendar will help fund the program. For more information about the Artists' Initiative or to purchase a calendar call (203) 324-9258 ext. 3023 or gasparinog@arict.org.

IN MEMORY OF SHERYL LOTSTEIN



In January, 2011, the ARI community was saddened by the passing of Sheryl Lotstein. Sheryl will be remembered for her love of traveling, visiting libraries, and dining out.

She was a member of the ARI bocce team, enjoyed bowling, and enjoyed dancing at the ARI parties. Sheryl will be truly missed.

Donations September 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011

Thanks to the following individuals, businesses and organizations for their kind generosity. Please call us at (203) 324-9258, ext. 3023 or visit arict.org to find out how you can help by making a donation to ARI or volunteering your time for those we serve.

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Third Annual Men's Wearhouse Suit Drive



For the third consecutive year, ARI of CT received over 100 men's suits, sports jackets, and other accessories from the The Men's Wearhouse Suit Drive. The clothing will be used by ARI clients and other at-risk Stamford men transitioning into the workforce. Liberation Programs and CTE also received suits from this drive. We are truly thankful for being part of this wonderful initiative.

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