

North Shore Arc needs support to help others

By **Jerry McCarthy/Sitting In**
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Danvers —

I can't believe the festive holiday season is upon us once again. As I reflect on the busy year coming to a close, I want to take a moment to thank all of the wonderful volunteers, corporations, staff, families and businesses that continue to support the North Shore Arc. Quite honestly, we could not provide our broad array of programs and services for children and adults living with developmental disabilities without strong community support.

One of the things we wanted to accomplish this year was to increase community awareness about the North Shore Arc so that all families could fully comprehend the vast umbrella of services that we provide. We have made great strides, through such notable events as our Annual Walk at Plains Park, part of the Danvers Family Festival, our Annual Wine Tasting and Auction hosted by Kim Carrigan, Fox 25 News, our annual Commodore Invitational Golf Tournament, sponsored by Boston Private Bank & Trust, the Spotlight Comedy Night, to benefit our drama-based program for teens on the autism spectrum, and the 50th Anniversary celebration of Heritage Industries, our vocational training program. We are proud of our progress and the many lives that have been enriched through our services.

The North Shore Arc provides services and programs for children and adults living with developmental disabilities from birth to end-of-life, and we have been doing so for more than 50 years. Many people come to know the North Shore Arc originally via their children. At any given time, we have more than 500 children in our Early Intervention programs. Some children are evaluated and receive services in their homes, others in school and some in our Early Intervention centers in Beverly and Danvers and at our Day Care Center in Danvers. Some children go on to be involved in one of our socialization programs, like OnQ and Spotlight, our innovative social skills development program for young adults on the autism spectrum.

Some families come to us seeking advocacy support to learn how to navigate the Public Education system and find out what services are available to help their children to become successful young learners. These are just some of our programs, but the umbrella of services beneath it is expansive. From infancy and the toddler years through grammar school, teens and adulthood, the North Shore Arc is there, providing advocacy, training, support groups and more.

Individuals and families also come to the North Shore Arc for our Recreation programs...and we offer all kinds of fun! We have a bowling league, cooking classes, basketball, dances, trips to the theatre, movie nights — even shopping excursions. Our ArcWorks! program, which has been applauded for introducing many talented local artists to the larger community, offers art classes with guest art instructors, and we are happy to sponsor art shows in our gallery in Danvers.

Our Heritage Industries Division was recently awarded a Congressional Citation for: "outstanding service to the community and for providing job training for people with disabilities and high quality subcontracting services for local companies." At Heritage, people learn work skills and have opportunities for paid employment. Adults learn new skills and perform work on subcontract jobs such as large mailings, packaging, assembly, shredding, and copying. Our job training program has enabled many individuals with disabilities to be out in the world at their own paid job.

Our van transportation program takes people to work, to medical appointments and to and from day services programs. The Day Services Division operates several "Day Hab" programs for people with disabilities where their medical needs are monitored and where they have opportunities to socialize.

The North Shore Arc operates 38 residential homes throughout Northeast Massachusetts. Our residents are a real part of their communities...going to church, shopping, and participating in community events. Three homes are solely for individuals who are deaf and have other disabilities, and we offer a specialized Alzheimer's home and a home for the very medically fragile...and we are planning more.

We are there for every life stage offering services, programs, support and hope. There are so many ways the North Shore Arc reaches out to help families with children and adults living with disabilities. Perhaps you have a friend, neighbor or family member who could benefit from our programs. I hope I have given you more reasons to support the work that we do which helps so many. I wish a truly joyous Holiday Season to you and yours from all of us at the North Shore Arc!

Jerry McCarthy is the executive director of North Shore Arc. Donations can be made to the North Shore Arc, 64 Holten St., Danvers, MA 01923 or by visiting: www.n sarc.org.

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