



The Arc
Baltimore

Achieve with us.®

For people with intellectual and
developmental disabilities

FALL 2013

Advocate

Unique Residence Meets a Wealth of Needs



In June, The Arc Baltimore began supporting three recent graduates of the Maryland School for the Blind in a unique living situation that is, quite possibly, the only one of its kind in the country.

Two of the individuals—Kate Kolm and Kendall May—have CHARGE syndrome, a genetic pattern of birth defects that occurs in about one in every 9-10,000 births worldwide. It is an extremely complex syndrome that involves significant vision and hearing loss and other medical and physical difficulties that vary from person to person.

The third resident, Max Gretschel, has cerebral palsy and visual impairment.

Judy Ramsey, coordinator of Terrapin House—named for the street on which the home is

located—worked with Kate, Kendall and Max at the Maryland School for the Blind. She received training through the University of Utah to become an intervener for deaf/blind individuals. That skill-set enables Ramsey to take a proactive approach to communicating with the residents. Doing so is important, she says, because 90% of learning is done through sight or hearing.

“There are two ways to communicate with people who are deaf/blind,” Ramsey explains, “tactilely and coactively. When I want to

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Top: **Judy Ramsey** helps **Kate Kolm** with a puzzle.

At right: Terrapin House residents and staff.

KEEP IN TOUCH!

It's a breeze to stay up-to-date with The Arc Baltimore via social media and our recently revamped website, www.thearcbaltimore.org.



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Terrapin House Parents Speak Out

During the weeks before Kate moved into Terrapin House, she and her mom, Peg Kolm, spent a lot of time at the house. They decorated Kate's room, brought over a plant for the front porch, spread mulch, bonded with staff, and generally got Kate acclimated to the surroundings. Finally, move-in day arrived and, when there was a break in all the activity, everyone gathered in the dining room to celebrate and share some cake. "That moment when we were all sitting down and getting to know one another better was the moment I first felt a sense that this was another 'home' for Kate," says Kolm.

Kate, her mother says, is used to building communities. She explains, "This happens on two levels. One, Kate has significant needs. Her mix of physical, sensory and medical needs requires a team of people to help her. Two, she has this charming way about her that draws others to her. People enjoy being with her."

Kolm says The Arc Baltimore has lived its mission to "achieve with us." The agency, she says, "has achieved by creating not just a home with trained staff, but a fully engaged community for Kate and for us, her family."

Cathy McManus, Max Gretschel's mother, calls her son Mr. Social and Mr. Independent. "He is a charmer and sweetheart and is determined to do everything for himself. Max gets frustrated when someone doesn't have the patience to let him try. He will chat with you all day long and enjoys listening to music, dancing, taking things apart and putting them back together. He is a trouper. Max has been dealt a hard hand in life but keeps on going, taking everything in stride."

She says move-in day felt bittersweet. "I was happy Max had a lovely place to live and sad that this was the life he was given. I was relieved he was in a program and that he would be taken care of in the event something happened to me. The Arc staff has been great, and I can't say enough about Judy Ramsey. I know my son is in good hands, which is not an easy task."

McManus shares some advice for parents of children with disabilities: "Never stop advocating for your child. I didn't take no for an answer and continued to follow-up on everything to get Max to where he is. Don't depend on others to do what needs to be done. The process of getting Max transitioned was a long, extremely stressful road. Start early and don't give up." ●



Cathy McManus and son Max Gretschel

Unique Residence Meets a Wealth of Needs

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communicate tactilely, I'll put my hand under the individual's hand and then I'll use American Sign Language. They'll feel the sign and it's as though I am inviting them to participate in a conversation. In coactive communication, the individual can sign to me or I can sign to them."

Ramsey does something those who meet Kate, Kendall and Max typically rarely do with them: She assumes intelligence. "Even when people like our three residents have apparent physical disabilities and neurologic impairments, they may not be cognitively impaired. You just can't make assumptions."

The coordinator is assisted by CNAs (certified nurse assistants), who provide 1:1 staffing. They trained for one year to work with Terrapin House



Judy Ramsey and Kendall May

residents. It took almost that long to outfit the ranch house with special accommodations.

Doorways were widened and carpets were pulled up to make the home wheelchair accessible. Auditory alarms were installed to alert residents when someone enters or leaves the house. Dual auditory/visual smoke detectors were installed in each room.

A variety of accommodations were made for the individuals' visual impairments. Each bedroom doorframe was painted a different bright color. The rest of the home was painted grey, white and black for high contrast. Beach balls and paper lanterns adorn the walls and move up and down with the natural flow of air, which enhances visual focus.

The environment is changed slightly on a regular basis to encourage visual interest and enable Kate, Kendall and Max to use the home's generous floor plan as fully as possible.

Ramsey admits she has her hands full, but it is clear she's up to the challenge. Weekdays, Max goes to the Woodlawn Center; Ramsey is exploring a volunteer opportunity that would complement his social nature. Kate and Kendall are learning about daily living activities; Ramsey's emphasis is on assisting them instead of doing the activities for them. Kate and Kendall help grocery shop and are involved in meal preparation and clean-up.

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Food Pantry Caters to Community Needs

The food pantry at The Arc Baltimore center in Dundalk began two years ago when staff made and delivered holiday baskets for families of children with disabilities who were receiving supports from The Arc. But when it became apparent that many other families couldn't afford food, the project quickly grew.

Debbie Staigerwald, The Arc Baltimore's director of volunteers, helped staff from the center form partnerships with local elementary schools and churches. Today, those partners continue to conduct food drives and/or raise funds for the pantry. Sandy Shifflett, manager of the center in Dundalk, says, "That's not only a benefit for the food pantry and its recipients, but also for the partners, which don't have to buy, store or deliver food themselves." She calls the arrangement a win-win for the community.

The amount of food that can be given to a family is based on the number of people in the household. Arc staff and individuals deliver food anywhere and don't turn down any requests. Ironically, it is not uncommon for an individual who works with the food pantry to be a beneficiary of it.

Shifflett explains that one staff member is in charge of the pantry; people receiving supports may choose to work with her. Usually two at a time opt to lend a hand. "They absolutely love doing it," Shifflett says, "and it's a great esteem-builder."

"Generally, the individuals are the ones receiving help; in this instance they are the ones helping others, and it makes them feel great about themselves. They seem to enjoy meeting new people, and they really get to know the regulars. More than one individual has told me, 'I'm glad we can help that person.'"

Shifflett and The Arc Baltimore extend thanks to the following community partners: the Maryland Food Bank, Inverness Presbyterian Church, the



Eastern Assembly of God, Grange Elementary, Sandy Plains Elementary and the Battle Monument School which, like The Arc's center in Dundalk, provides supports to individuals with disabilities. ●

Top: Don Watkins and Richard Coleman

Bottom: Keith Bochniak

The food pantry is always in need of donations. If you or your company would like to donate or organize a food drive, please call The Arc Baltimore center in Dundalk at 410-282-3876.

Unique Residence Meets a Wealth of Needs

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Residents of Terrapin House keep busy in the community, thanks to the help of staff. In less than two months, they have bowled and visited the local firehouse, the library, parks, farmers' markets and the Irvine Nature Center. On the Fourth of July they enjoyed a fireworks display. The roommates participate in Accessible Sailing and like going to the Inner Harbor. They have made cookies for the neighbors and received some in return.

You can hear Ramsey's affection for Kendall, Max and Kate in the way she describes them.

"Kendall has a very sweet disposition. He is one of the funniest people I know. He loves slapstick comedy and watching sports. I hope to get him involved in Special Olympics."

"Max likes to be on the go in the community all the time. He loves to interact with people, and at a recent IronBirds game he attended with Kate, she was into the game and he was focused on the crowd."

"Kate has taught me never to underestimate her. She is one of the most tenacious spirits I have ever met. She doesn't quit, and I really respect that about her."

Ramsey says Kate, Kendall and Max are what drive her. "They have faced more adversity than I have ever faced. Max says, 'I can do that myself;' Kate and Kendall sign it. Even though they have major challenges, they also have something to teach me. In fact, they have a lot to teach all of us if we are willing students."

"Their parents carved out new territory for their children. They weren't resigned to the situations their kids faced; they forged ahead. That is why Kate, Max and Kendall don't quit. And it is why Terrapin House is going to be successful." ●

Bay Buddies have Bundles of Fun!

Many children with disabilities are unable to attend traditional camps, but thanks to Bay Buddies, sponsored by The Arc Baltimore and Baltimore City and County public schools, many lucky youngsters have an opportunity for a sensational summer experience. The camp is hosted by the Living Classrooms Foundation.

This year, 80 children from the Battle Monument, Maiden Choice, W.S. Baer and George W.F. McMechen schools attended Bay Buddies. Staff members identified the specific goals each child had worked on during the school year, and the camp's fun, enriching activities were tailored to complement them.

Campers sailed on the Lady Maryland, visited the Science Center and went swimming, horseback riding and bowling. Other popular activities were crafts, drum circles and hands-on activities involving living things from the Chesapeake Bay. ●



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Scan QR code to view more Bay Buddies photos from *The Baltimore Sun's* blog.

Volunteers Clown Around

Steve Carder says that when he was 15, he got sick and tired of being made fun of for having a learning disability and being called the "r-word." So he decided to learn to juggle to show his detractors what he could do.

"The more I tried, the more they made fun of me, but today juggling is my specialty," says Carder, who is a member of Clowns of America. "I can juggle three pins, four or five balls or three basketballs.

"I can also ride a unicycle. It took me two weeks to learn how to do it but I was determined to show the world that people with disabilities can do a lot."

Each Friday, Carder volunteers at The Arc center in Dundalk, teaching a group of 12 people magic tricks. They are honing their skills in preparation for a performance in the fall.

"One act we're working on has a diner theme," Carder says. "In part of it, we use an empty bottle of water with a spring inserted into it. When the bottle is dropped on the ground, it bounces, so we tell the audience it is spring water."

Carder maintains that the group is not about him. "I'm just a guide to help the troupe."



Sandy Shifflett, manager of The Arc center in Dundalk, says the performers love practicing. "You can see the smiles on their faces as they get ready. And folks at the center love watching. Five minutes into a performance and there is a huge audience."

Shifflett says she has been surprised by some of the people who decided to participate in the clown troupe. "This has really been a great opportunity for shy individuals to bring out their personalities."

She adds that she feels blessed to have Carder sharing his skills at the center. "Steve has a kindness about him and, if someone makes a mistake, he does something to make it seem like the error was part of the act."

Debbie Staigerwald, director of volunteers, is looking for places for the troupe to perform. Nursing homes and schools are likely possibilities.

Carder, who recently received a volunteer service award from The Arc, is a member of Free State Clown Alley 30 and an actor in Sky's the Limit theater productions. ●

Girls Just Want to Have Fun

Sandy Wilkerson, nurse case manager, says one of the issues mentioned frequently in many women’s individual planning meetings was the lack of resources for making friends and connections. “They told us they talk to their friends on the phone but had few opportunities for face-to-face contact,” Wilkerson explains.

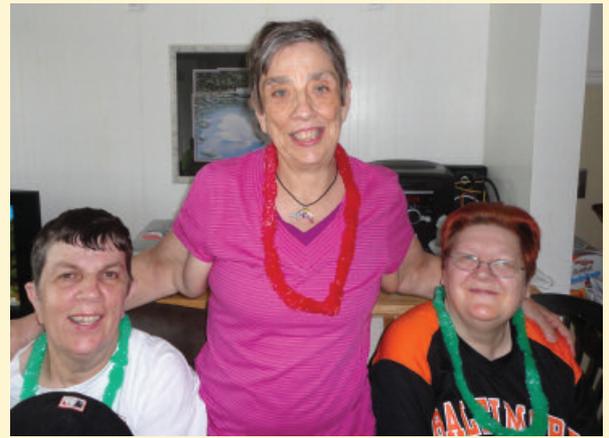
Staff responded by starting a monthly Girls Night Out, which is attended by approximately 25 of the women, ages 40 to 70, and members of the community living staff. The group meets in individuals’ homes, and everyone brings refreshments.

Some evenings have a theme; Mexican Night and Super Bowl Night were favorites. At last year’s holiday party, the ladies organized a fashion show and had a blast walking the runway. It should be noted, however, that special occasions aren’t required in order for the women to have fun. They readily enjoy simple pleasures such as watching movies, doing each other’s nails, celebrating birthdays, dancing and talking about boyfriends.

Whatever the activity, laughter abounds, and the women have truly bonded. Several smaller groups even meet a few times a month.

Feedback from the ladies and the staff has been very positive. Wilkerson says the women frequently ask her when the next social event is going to be held.

She adds, “The best part of it for me is watching the ladies dancing and enjoying themselves. And it’s great to see staff give and receive support.” ●



Cheryl Prato, Joan Rosensteel and Joanne Schueler



Katherine Williams and Catherine Hamlin



Fun Trumps Heat!

It was a brutally hot and humid July day, but that didn’t stop more than 100 people from turning out for our Family Networking Picnic.

Families from The Arc’s Foster Care department and Family & Children’s Services division look forward to this annual event. It affords parents a rare chance to network—and provides tons of fun for their kids with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Not surprisingly, the water squirt guns were a huge hit. Children also enjoyed getting their faces painted and playing basketball. Family Specialist Becky Hartnett reports that the piñata was broken in record time.

Everyone enjoyed Rita’s delicious Italian ice, which was generously donated for the fifth consecutive year by Tom Morgan, who owns the Rita’s across the street from The Arc. Thanks, Tom!

We also appreciate the many Arc staff members who braved the heat to play with the children and give parents a well-deserved break from their caretaking responsibilities. ●



Crew Celebrates Employment Milestone

Ten years ago, Chatsworth Elementary School first employed a team of three women—**Nakeya Shipley, Julia Jones** and **Katrina Wyche**—to work in the cafeteria.

The employees open milk cartons and food packages, clean tables between lunch shifts and encourage the children to behave in an orderly fashion.

Erica Vince, an employment support specialist with The Arc Baltimore, has been with the women since the day they started.

The crew loves their work. “When the kids raise their hands, I help them open their milk and get supplies,” says Wyche. “When the kids need to be quiet, I clap my hands. And I invite them up when it is time to buy their snacks,” says Jones.

Shipley says she feels like an important part of the Chatsworth Elementary family. “I like it that Ms. Rose invites us to the Christmas parties and gets us presents every year.” ●



Nakeya Shipley, Katrina Wyche, Julia Jones and Erica Vince

Thank you!

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Elaine Gosciniak

New Directors Elected to the Board

Three new directors—**Gregory J. Hogan**, **Jeanne Kennedy** and **William H. Oliver**—have been elected to the board of The Arc Baltimore.

Hogan is a senior vice president and leader of the Employee Stock Ownership Plans advisory and valuation practice at SC&H Capital, LLC. He has more than 10 years of experience providing business valuation and transaction advisory services to middle market clients.

Kennedy has been vice president and corporate treasurer for CareFirst, Inc. since 2004. The Villanova University graduate is responsible for strategic initiatives, investment management, enterprise risk management, broker compensation and financial planning and analysis.

Oliver, president of The Arc Baltimore from 2000–2002, is a partner with CliftonLarsonAllen, a national accounting and consulting firm with 90 offices across the country. He is a member of several community and church organizations.

“We are thrilled to add the enthusiasm and expertise of these three individuals to our already dynamic board of directors,” says The Arc Baltimore’s executive director, Stephen H. Morgan. “The coming year will present new opportunities and challenges, but I am very confident that, with the leadership of this board, we are up to the task.” ●

Fall 2013 Family Education Series Workshops

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Special Education Rights

What are your rights when it comes to the IEP process and how do you assert them?

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22

Futures Planning

What plans do you need to put into place for your child when you can no longer be here to take care of them?

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Exploring the Autism Spectrum

Explore some of the issues for individuals and families living with autism spectrum disorder.

Each workshop will be held from 6-9 PM

The Arc Baltimore Employment Center

6151 Metro Drive, Baltimore, MD 21215

A light dinner will be provided as will child care, with pre-registration, if needed.

**RSVP to Becky Hartnett, 410-296-2272 ext. 5308 or
bhartnett@thearcbaltimore.org**

Register Now for The Arc’s Convention of Maryland Chapters

Friday, October 18 is shaping up to be an exciting and educational day for people from around the state who will attend The Arc’s Convention of Maryland Chapters. This year’s event will take place at the BWI Airport Marriot Hotel from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. It is being hosted by Maryland’s 11 Arc chapters.

Four breakout session tracks are planned:

- self-advocates
- families
- boards of directors
- professional staff

There will also be an awards luncheon, a president’s reception, and a buffet dinner and dance. Other highlights include:

- assistive technology presentations
- special needs trusts discussion
- an exhibit hall with local vendors
- sibling support activities

To register or get additional information, go to
www.thearcbaltimore.org/MDArcsConvention. ●

Carla N. Murphy Named President of The Arc Baltimore

Carla N. Murphy, a principal in Ober|Kaler’s employment and litigation groups, has been elected president of The Arc Baltimore board of directors.

Murphy joined The Arc board in 2008 and has served as vice president since 2011. She succeeds James A. List, founding partner of The Law Offices of James A. List, LLC, who will continue to serve on The Arc’s board.

“We are privileged to have Carla assume the reins as president of The Arc Baltimore,” says Stephen H. Morgan, executive director. “I



have witnessed Carla’s growing knowledge of this organization and have no question that she is going to be an outstanding, committed leader.”

As a principal at Ober|Kaler, Murphy represents employers in discrimination, harassment, and retaliation claims, wage/hour claims, benefit and contract disputes, defamation and invasion of privacy claims as well as other business-related tort claims.

A graduate of Lafayette College and the University of Maryland School of Law, Murphy is a member of the Chesapeake Human Resources Association and several bar associations. In 2011, she was selected to serve as a hearing officer for the Baltimore City Civil Service Commission. ●

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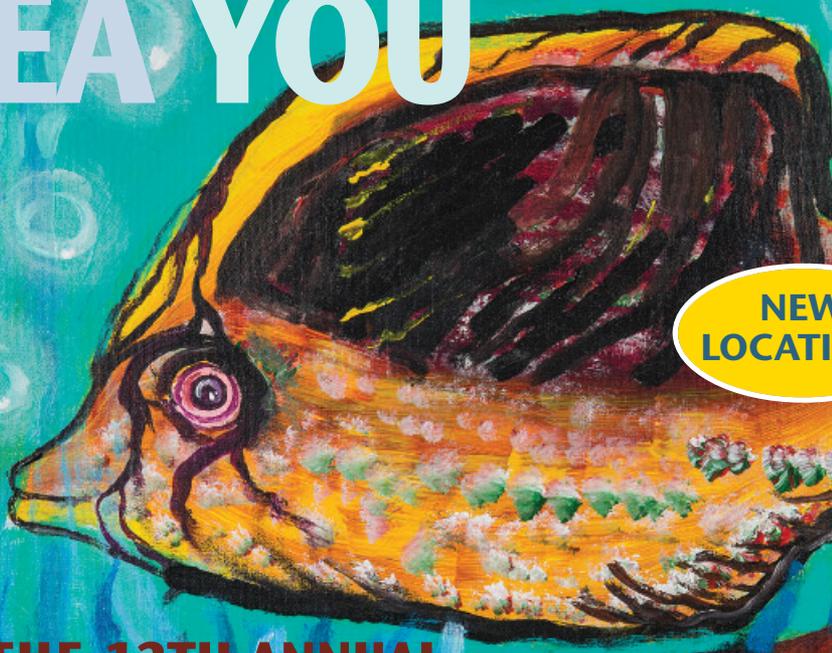
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NEW LOCATION!

*an exhibit and silent auction
featuring art created by people with
developmental disabilities*

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2013
7–10:30 p.m.**

Scottish Rite Masonic Center

3800 N. Charles Street,
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Beer & wine • Hors d'oeuvres • Live music

Tickets: \$50 (advance sales only)
Online at www.thearcbaltimore.org

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