



ARC BROWARD

For All Seasons



ARC Broward
*Achievement and
Rehabilitation Centers, Inc.*



ARC BROWARD

A Special Needs Campus for All Seasons

By Reva Weinlaub

What is it like for a mother to find out that her child has Autism, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy or another physical or mental disability? Where can she turn for help? What can be done to build a life-long liaison between parent and child?



Out west on a sprawling campus in the community of Sunrise, ARC Broward, Achievement and Rehabilitation Centers, Inc. works to provide solutions to these challenges for such parents in Broward County. The private, not-for-profit organization has served individuals with developmental disabilities since 1956.

Even so, ARC Broward ranked as one of the county's best kept secrets—until other social service agencies began seeking it out for services and training. Like Broward County itself, ARC Broward has boomed with demand for all it offers.

“When we first moved here 12 years ago, we were in an isolated, undeveloped area. Since then, the business and residential communities have grown up around us,” says Dennis Haas, president and CEO. “The community has been very receptive and appreciative of the work that we do. And, I believe, they are more aware of people with disabilities, realizing that these individuals have a lot to contribute, both in the work force and as citizens.”

From the beginning, ARC Broward has been intent on providing quality services to help individuals with developmental disabilities gain skills and confidence they need to maximize their potential.

To stay on target and raise the bar on goals, ARC Broward has assembled a remarkably skilled, caring team of professionals.

Cradle to Grave

Even so, Haas isn't satisfied. “For the big picture, we believe that there is still a tremendous job to do for individuals with developmental disabilities. We will continue to develop cutting-edge programs and services that are highly creative and specialized. We are a one-stop-shop from birth to death, providing a full continuum of residential, educational, vocational, mental health and rehabilitative services for children and adults.” Currently, the Centers offer rehabilitative services including parent training, therapeutic services, preschool and infant stimulation, residential services, vocational training and employment. Yet, when it



AN ARC BROWARD TIMELINE: 1956-1989

May, 1956: Establishment of ARC Broward with charter of the Broward Training Center Foundation, Inc. after about two dozen founding parents seek a school for their children because mandatory public education doesn't exist.

Oct., 1956: School board provides one teacher in a rent-free Las Olas Boulevard storefront. Four children enroll. By March, 1957, 15 children were enrolled.

1961: School moves to donated Federal Highway building to serve 35 children. Pilot "workshop" begins with 3 adults.

1965: School name changes to Broward Association for Retarded Children.

1970s: State legislators provide for mandatory education of children with mental retardation. ARC grows rapidly, with double sessions serving Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood and Pompano Beach. Gradually, elementary schools and exceptional centers meet compulsory education mandates. This leaves the adult "sheltered workshop" as the organization's sole program.

1976: Excalibur Developmental Center merges with Broward Association for Retarded Children.

1979: ARC forms a subsidiary corporation, BARC Housing Inc., planning for its first residential program.

1981: BARC Housing Intermediate Care Facility opens. Sheltered workshop reorganizes into a comprehensive Employment and Training Center.

1984: Parent Training Program establishes "Project Touch," a countywide support group.

1986: ARC Broward initiates Capital Fundraising Campaign, pledging to raise \$6 million-plus for a centralized, regional center in west Broward. ARC establishes Corporate Guardianship Program for 15 individuals.

1987: ARC opens its first community-based group home, Lakes House, helping 8 young adults prepare for independent living.

1989: Pre-school expands for birth to 3 years. Both a joint "Genetic Research and Evaluation" project with the University of Miami and the Supported Employment Program are established.

1990-1999

1991: Opening of ARC Broward Regional Center in Sunrise, relocating administrative offices and vocational program from Fort Lauderdale and the children's program from Hallandale.

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comes to the human condition, the sum is greater than the parts.

Labor of Love

Logging 18 years on ARC Broward's board and now chairman is attorney Carl William (Bill) Laystrom. "To me, it's a labor of love. The first time I was introduced to ARC, they were in a condemned school in Hallandale. I went to see their preschool programs, and I walked from classroom to classroom," Laystrom recalls, adding the first class he saw was for the youngest kids without good muscular motor control. "By the time we got to the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten kids, they were singing 'Mickey Mouse,' and it broke my heart. I've been with them ever since."

Life expectancy of ARC Broward's clientele has "probably increased by 10 or 15 years in the time I've served," Laystrom says. "Our clients are getting older and more of them can benefit from the excellent family life provided through Group Home or supported independent living."



Nov., 1991: Establishment of Supported Living Program, helping 2 women to live in a Hollywood apartment. Lakes House transitions toward a group home for developmentally disabled seniors.

1992: Organization receives its first coveted 3-year accreditation from CARF in the Adult Services Program. In December, Venice House opens for 6 residents transitioning from BARC Housing.

1994: Organization's name changes to Achievement and Rehabilitation Centers Inc., reflecting more progressive, diverse mission and goals.

1996: Riviera House opens in January, Capri House opens in June. Supported Living expands, serving 25 adults in 14 apartments throughout Broward.

1997: Preschool develops specialized program for children with autism and diversifies to provide integrated preschool services for children without disabilities.

June 16, 1997: A tornado striking the Sunrise campus, causes severe damage, which suspends center programs for 8 days.

Oct., 1998: The Alternative Behavioral Learning Environment (ABLE) after-school program opens for ages 6 through 18 with severe behavioral disorders.

Nov., 1998: Establishment of Outpatient Mental Health Program individual, group and family counseling.

1999: Adult programs move to a "Team" structure. Santa Fe House opens, serving 6 men. ARC Broward opens its first group home for severe behavior problems, serving 6 boys ages 9 through 15.

2000 TO PRESENT

March, 2000: Opening of Carousel House, a transitional home for ages 6-10 with autism and severely challenging behaviors.

May, 2000: Establishment of Health Care Division providing speech, occupational and physical therapy services to all ARC participants.

June, 2000: Opening of Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP) and ARC's newest division, the Behavioral Health Team.

July, 2000: Renovations on Building 3 enable restructuring of the adult Intensive Behavioral Services (IBS) program into Pre-Vocational Adjustment and Personal and Social Adjustment.

Oct., 2000: Older adult day program is established.

December, 2000: ARC Broward establishes its own courses in Applied Behavior Analysis, which are approved for Continuing Education Units.

Feb., 2001: ARC Broward opens Malibu House, a group home for young adults in Coral Springs. Preschool receives national NAEYC accreditation.

March, 2001: Bingo! ARC Broward establishes Tuesday Bingo Nights at its main campus as an on-going fundraising project.

2001: The year also brings relocation of the Autism Society of Broward and the Gold Coast Down Syndrome Organization to ARC Broward's main campus.

October, 2001: ARC Broward establishes Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, the first time this national best practices model is applied to children with special needs.

January, 2002: ARC Broward initiates Electronics Recycling/Asset Recovery Services in partnership with Broward County providing new employment and vocational training opportunities.

We depend on State funds for our Group Home program, and although we are grateful for the appropriations, there is never enough funding."

Vice Chair Jacob C. Richter, a CPA with Hinkle & Richter, has served on ARC Broward's board for more than 15 years, witnessing tremendous growth. "Although our charge has remained the same—to take care of people with disabilities—our growth has been spectacular," he says. "Our facility has grown from a small unit to a nine-acre campus in Sunrise with a \$10-million plus annual budget."

Richter credits Haas and his creative staff for the job being done. "It's a very difficult industry, but they are not afraid to take a few chances. I've seen the results, both in the improvement in our physical plant, and in the progress of the individuals who participate in these programs, and I've been impressed," he says.

This year, apart from adding Direct Support Training courses for continuing health career training, ARC Broward blazed trails, starting an ambitious Electronics Recycling Service to benefit both businesses and individual consumers seeking to properly dispose of castoffs.

A Changed Life

Before being tapped as president and CEO, Haas had served on ARC Broward's board for 13 years. "We were searching for a new president, and then I missed a board meeting where somebody suggested that I could fill the position," Haas recalls. That bit of absentia changed his life.

"I had enjoyed practicing law for 18 years in Broward, but I concluded that it was time for me to do something that I could be more passionate about... This has been the hardest thing I have ever done, but working with absolutely incredible people, both staff and the people we serve, is so fulfilling."

Now, with such significant growth in the services menu, Haas finds it increasingly important to

“raise awareness of what we do, so the community will continue to support our efforts.”

Heartfelt Appreciation

One woman already well aware of all ARC Broward has to offer is Gumersinda Perez, 95, whose daughter Jeanette has Down Syndrome. So grateful is she for ARC Broward’s assistance in improving her daughter’s life, Perez has donated her home to the organization. “She’s got no one but me,” Perez said of her daughter after the gift of the three-bedroom house was announced in 1999. When born in 1950, physicians felt Jeanette had life expectations of less than a decade. “My love made her live,” says Perez, a retired dressmaker with no other children, who is now confined to a wheelchair. Ven Sequenzia, president of the Autism Society of Florida observes: “During a time when many parents were greatly concerned as



to where they were going to receive help for their Autistic child and they had no answers, ARC Broward provided the answers.”

Seeking Independence

Jody Ellis, director of Adult Services, oversees a variety of adult programs, including supported living, residential, and supported vocational programs. “We provide services for about 300 people on a daily basis helping them achieve more independence,” she says.

ARC Broward has several residential programs for adults with developmental disabilities. ICE, an intermediate care facility (also called BARC Housing) has three separate homes, with 12 residents in each house. Group Homes, for four to six, are single-family dwellings in residential neighborhoods. Two of seven group homes are strictly for seniors. One senior home, Eden House, serves people with developmental difficulties along with dementia and early stages of Alzheimer’s.

“Our Supported Living Program is geared toward adults with disabilities who live in their own home,” says Ellis. “These individuals do not need 24-hour supervision, but need some support.” A supported independent living coach goes to the home to provide whatever help is needed—from budgeting to paying bills, grocery shopping, or managing doctor’s appointments.

Most adults living in the group homes—about 30 individuals—attend day programs



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providing opportunity for employment, community participation, recreation and socialization. "People enrolled in our personal and social supports program focus on skill training, as well as participate in various recreational activities," says Ellis. "For those who need constant individual supervision, there is an individual support program where one staff member



is assigned to help one individual perform a wide range of vocational or recreational activities, on our campus or out in the community."

Most of the adults have a primary diagnosis of a developmental disability. They typically join the program when they leave high school, at around 18-21. "We provide continuous care from that age all the way into their senior years. We also have 18 individuals who are dually diagnosed with another type of disorder, such as mental illness, Alzheimer's, etc.," says Ellis.

Learn & Work

ARC Broward also provides employment services for individuals with disabilities who want to enter the workforce, develop their job skills and earn a competitive wage. "We have four different types of vocational programs," Ellis says. One is a pre-vocational program working with individuals needing behavior support. They are paid for work they perform while participating in treatment programs focusing on socially appropriate behavior geared toward employment. ARC Broward's 20,000 sq. ft. Production Center is structured to provide assorted specialized skills for companies throughout South Florida. About 130 workers participate in a job-training program to develop skills and use specialized equipment. "They work on a variety of tasks, such as product assembly and disassembly, packaging, mailing, and special order fulfillment for companies that we contract with to provide these services," says Ellis.

ARC Broward also has a supported employment program where adults are

employed in the community. An employment specialist provides the support and assistance that the individual needs to find and maintain employment in a community setting.

"Initially, a person with developmental disabilities may need a little additional support in their job setting. ... We may go into the work site with the employee, to make sure the individual knows his responsibilities and can complete the tasks, and introduce him to his coworkers. We stay with him until his employer, the worker, and his coach all agree that the worker is stabilized in that job setting." ARC Broward also supplies information on tax benefits that employers may be eligible for by employing the developmentally dis-



ARC Broward's Dennis Haas, shows off product assembled by ARC Broward workers.

abled. Many businesses find workers with disabilities extremely loyal and capable. Mary Ann Clark, manager of Red Lobster in Coral Springs, says, "Our employee from ARC [Broward], Mary Paul, does an excellent job and is very conscientious about getting here on time. We are happy to have her as part of our crew. Employing persons with disabilities is good for us as well as for the crew member. They feel so good about being able to work and make money, and I feel good about it, too. It's a win-win situation." Of her work, Mary Paul says, "I love it. I'm good at my job. At first, I had a coach to help me, but now I know what to do. It makes me feel really good."

Addressing Infants

Infant Mental Health was recently added to the Mental Health Program. "Early intervention, with physical and speech therapy, has always been a big focus with our preschool children, but in the last six months Florida has become particularly interested in training individuals to work in the field of infant mental health," says Stephanie Morse, LCSW, coordinator of Mental Health Services.

"Our new Infant Mental Health initiative provides early intervention for the birth to five population who have been identified and diagnosed with mental health disorders. We are at the forefront of this endeavor, and it's an exciting time for us."

A good case scenario, Morse says, would be getting a referral for a baby from a hospital neonatal intensive care unit, and a year later know that the infant is thriving because of correct early infant diagnosis and treat-

ment. "We live for good case scenarios," Morse says.

The youngest in the Mental Health Program is a 14-month-old boy with psychiatric illnesses and a seizure disorder, born to a teen parent. He will be the youngest child seen by ARC Broward's psychiatrist. "It's an intense situation, because we need to focus on both the teen parent and the child," Morse says.

"It's a challenge to get professionals who will work with our individuals, and can properly assess mental retardation as well as mental illness. Dr. C. Allen Musil, psychiatrist and pediatrician, consults with the Mental Health Program, and we are most appreciative of his commitment," says Morse. The goal is to have the right professionals involved for the best treatment. "We have full time therapists who work with the siblings of children who have Autism, as well as parental support groups, for children with mental illness. We also do psychological and IQ testing for individuals with mental illness who are referred to us from the community, as well as to individuals who live in our residential programs."

ARC Broward has the county's only comprehensive mental health program that serves the mentally retarded/dual diagnosis population. "About two-thirds of the individuals we



serve are involved in another program here, and another third are individuals from the community. We provide individual, group, and family therapy, psychiatry, as well as psychological testing for individuals of all ages," says Morse. Services are provided on-site, as well as in the home or elsewhere.

Infants to Seniors

Trained therapists tailor their services to individual needs, from infants to seniors. Tammy A. Capuozzo, Therapy Supervisor, notes that a staff of nine has been trained "in a vast amount of treatment modalities, plus some have additional training" in specialized therapies.

"We regularly do outpatient therapies for preschoolers and children with special needs ... For our Group Home clients, we do screenings and evaluations every year... We treat an average of 80 individuals weekly."

Four therapists provide language and occupational speech therapy for children. "We hope to serve adults soon," says Capuozzo. "I especially enjoy working with the children, because I get to see them make progress in little things that they've never been able to do; sit for the first time, roll over, crawl," Capuozzo says. "The parents are elated, and the children are so happy with each little milestone that they reach."

Tiny Steps, Big Leaps

Dr. Wendy Roth, BCBA, director of Behavioral Health Services and Autism Research, says, "It's rewarding to see just how much progress a child can make." Recently, she says, a mother of a child with Autism visited the school and was surprised to learn her child could say his name. "That's a huge step...Those little steps are tremendous leaps and gains for these children. We cherish these moments," Dr. Roth says.



Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP) is an elementary and after-school behavior based program for children with Autism, ages 5 to 12. "These children follow an intense schedule of a six-hour school day, plus a three-hour after school component. It's a long day, but they need that level of intensive intervention," says Roth.

The TIP program has two major goals, to increase children's ability to communicate and display adaptive behavior, and to reduce maladaptive behaviors. "These children don't have any functional ability to communicate, so our first challenge is to give them a means, or the skills, to communicate," Roth says. "One of the approaches we teach is to pair sign language with other ways to communicate. A recent success story is an 11-year-old boy who learned to sign in sentences in just one year. It was an amazing turnaround for a child who had been non-vocal, and used an augmentative communication device to make one-word commands. Now, he can sign, 'I want to go for a walk,' 'I want a drink of water,' and more. His behavior has also improved dramatically, and he can now attend middle school."

Roth also oversees the community-based behavioral services team, which provides in-home behavioral services. "We teach the family members how to collect data so that we can write behavior plans. ...Most parents want that type of assistance, because they want to keep the family member in the home," she says. Referrals come primarily from the Department of Children and Families and Children's Diagnostic and Treatment Center for children under age three.

Behavioral Respite service provides relief for families. A person trained in behavior therapy goes into the home to help caregivers de-stress. "These families live under tremendous pressure. The demands of a disabled child are very intense, especially when the child also has behavior problems. It's hard to find babysitters," says Roth.

"No Place Like Home"

Parents as Teachers (PAT), ARC Broward's newest children's program, is based on philosophy that parents are their children's first, most influential teachers. It's apt motto: "There is no place like home."

"We go into the children's homes and give their parents the tools that will help them to educate and nourish their children," says Debbie Rudnicki, PAT coordinator. "Our children have Autism, Down's Syndrome, etc., so we must adapt the universal PAT program to them." Parents learn that their children can learn how to interact. PAT has proven that children with challenges, such as speech and cognitive delays, do much better at school after they complete the 3-year PAT program, she says. At ARC Broward, PAT is funded by a grant from the Children's Services Council.

Grants & Funding

Julie Price, vp of program services, supervises coordinators and directors, while coordinating grant writing, strategic planning and quality assurance. ARC Broward seeks county, state and federal grants, and help from private foundations, corporations and individuals. "We've been very fortunate to raise money for some of our new programs, such as ABLE, the after-school program, Kamp Krayola, the summer camp, and PAT, through the efforts of the Children's Services Council," she says. ARC Broward also has received grants from the Broward County Cultural Arts Division for arts/music activities. Once, she recalls, a drummer managed to get children who typically could barely sit still to participate, playing drums, and having a great time.

ARC BROWARD MISSION STATEMENT

To help people achieve their fullest potential by providing educational, employment, behavioral, health care, social and residential supports and services.

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Funding adult programs is a challenge, Price says. "Everybody is excited about giving money to children and families, but we are constantly looking for dollars to help provide non traditional services and supports for adults." Medicare and Medicaid can be accessed for therapy and mental health programs, but not for day care, residential or employment programs. "So, we have to be more creative," she says. "For many years, we have been looking for business opportunities that will not only provide employment and

training for our young adults, but offset some of the expenses for the adult programs. Our Electronics Recycling Program in partnership with Broward County is an exciting opportunity in this regard. We are thankful for the support of many businesses."

***Ask ARC Broward
about its Electronics
Recycling Service***

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