Central Connecticut Arc
Fiftieth Anniversary

Retarded Children Can Be Helped

Making Dreams Happen
CCArc Board of Directors

President, John Visnauskas
1st Vice President, James McNair
2nd Vice President, Norman Martinelli
Secretary, Faith Ondrick
Treasurer, Mary Jean Agostini
Immediate Past President, Lucinda Abshire

Directors at Large
Albert Carrier
Michael Carrier
Anthony Legnani
Jason Lukens
Jim Mahoney
Frank Marrocco
Eric McKernan
Denise Mora
Hilda Pacinda
Jean Plocharczyk
Marion Sangelozy
Margaret Symolon
Michael Wiernasz
Marti Witt

Directors Emeritus
Samuel “Sy” Birnbaum
John P. “Doc” McIntosh

Making Dreams Happen Campaign 2002
Steering Committee

Samuel Birnbaum, Honorary Co-Chair
John P. McIntosh, Honorary Co-Chair
Stephen Anderson, Esq., Co-Chair
Michael Carrier, Esq., Co-Chair
Mary Jean Agostini
Fritz Conway
John Eveleth
Susan Gates
Theresa B. Gerratana
Marie Gustin, Ph. D.
Richard L. Judd, Ph. D.
Frank D. Marrocco
Norman Martinelli
Jim McNair
Justine Moriarty, CPA
Sheri C. Pasqualoni
Rev. Hugh Penney
Georgianne D. Pollowitz
Anne L. Ruwet
John W. Visnauskas, MD
Marti Witt
Introduction

During this, our Fiftieth Anniversary year, we at Central Connecticut Arc stand on the threshold of a new life in a new home.

We face a number of new challenges as well, not the least of which is a vitally important capital fund drive just getting up to speed.

But we are filled with hope for the future. We face that future with confidence, knowing that during our half-century of life thus far, our staff, our families, our many volunteers, and our friends throughout the community... all have remained energetic, focused and dedicated to making dreams happen for individuals of all ages with mental retardation and other disabilities.

Much more than a simple trip down memory lane, the words and pictures found on the pages that follow reflect a glimpse of our beginnings and our growth through the years. Perhaps, too, they provide some indication of who we are, how we got to this anniversary year and why we look to the future with confidence and joy.
It all began in 1952...

That was the year a small group of concerned parents, relatives, friends, and professionals organized to further their advocacy of a cause. They wanted to provide more help for children with mental retardation. The group incorporated the name Central Connecticut Association for Retarded Children.

The first Board meeting was held at Mrs. Phillip Scapaletti's house on North Stanley Street in New Britain. Richard Hess was elected the first president.

The organization's financial records were kept in a shoebox. The first financial statement showed an income and expense of $126.57.

A public school program for children with mental retardation began at Smalley School under the direction of Dr. Ruth Kimball. Parents were responsible for providing their children's transportation.

Frank DiLoreto, President of the New Britain School Board and Dr. Ernest Forbes, Superintendent of New Britain schools, announced that for the school year beginning in September, three classes for children with mental retardation would be included in their curriculum.

1954...

Central Connecticut Association for Retarded Children had its telephone number published in the area Directory. And in December of that year, CCArc began publishing a quarterly newsletter.
1955...

The Kiwanis Club sponsored a summer recreation program for young children with mental retardation at the Chamberlain School. Town & Country and New Britain Transportation transported the children to camp.

1956...

To assist with educating the public on the subject of mental retardation, CC Arc donated one thousand dollars worth of books to school libraries in New Britain, Berlin, and Bristol, and to the library at the New Britain Teachers College, now known as Central Connecticut State University.

1957...

CC Arc began facilitating a daycare service for young children at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in New Britain. Catherine Yale facilitated this program and Bertha Teklinski was hired as the program's first teacher. Her class focused on nursery school activities and social skills. The class began with six students. Pre-school aged children who were not ready for public school and other older children who were not permitted to participate in a regular school because of the severity of their disability took part.

The Berlin public school system incorporated its first class for children with mental retardation.

The whole movement got a big boost that year when Martha Raye was featured in a nationally-broadcast Telethon with proceeds benefiting children who were mentally retarded in New York, Connecticut and New Jersey. Ida Martinelli was the local chairperson.
1958...

The Berlin Board of Education bought a station wagon to transport children with mental retardation to programs. Up until this time parents had been responsible for transportation.

1960...

CCArc began a program geared towards adults with mental retardation. Mrs. Russell Walsh was hired to instruct these adults. Students learned woodworking, crafts, housework and social skills. Classes were held at New Britain Memorial Hospital until November 1963, then they were moved to Klingberg Children's Home now known as the Klingberg Family Center.

1962...

Hilda Pacinda started a Girl Scout troop that included girls both with and without disabilities at the Nathan Hale School in New Britain on Friday evenings.

1965...

CCArc purchased its first vehicle — a big, 25-passenger van. Mrs. Irene Sherwill had saved $2,000 worth of S&H Green Stamps and persuaded the stamp company to contribute another thousand dollars for the purchase of this vehicle.

1966...

Boys who had mental retardation joined their non-disabled peers and became members of the Boy Scout troops at the Lincoln School in New Britain.
1969...

In September, CCArc moved from Percival School in Kensington to Our Lady of Rosehill Home in New Britain. The staff of the Meriden Regional Center assisted with the move. The program included providing services for more than 30 pre-school children with mental retardation.

1970...

CCArc relocated its childcare and adult training programs under one roof at 111 Franklin Square.

The United Way and CCARC began holding a charity Golf Tournament. This became an annual event. The proceeds from the tournaments were used to support CCARC programs and services.

1973...

To complement its Annual Meeting, the group held its first dinner and awards celebration. It was a potluck supper.

CCArc's Food Service training program was operating at the New Britain Senior Center on Myrtle Street. Adults with mental retardation learned to cook and serve meals, to manage money and to conduct oneself in that kind of setting. Customers paid $1.35 a meal. Additional contributions came from private citizens. And, through the Connecticut Big Bands Society, other funds were donated in the name of Guy Lombardo and his Orchestra. Michael LaRose and Dominic DeMarco were instrumental in all the operations of this program.
1974...

A "Retarded Children Can Be Helped" postage stamp was issued after approval of the United States Senate. This, quite understandably, was considered a milestone for people with mental retardation.

1975...

CCArc hired its first Executive Director, Roger Nelson. He began exploring opportunities for people with mental retardation to live independently in the community. He developed an arrangement in downtown New Britain. Three apartments were rented to five men with mental retardation. They were supervised by a CCArc staff person. The men cooked, cleaned and did laundry.

CCArc expanded its services to include making handcrafted materials to sell, planting marigolds for special education classes in public schools, offering behavior management programs for public elementary children, and, conducting community outings for adults utilizing a satellite program with Constructive Workshop.

1976...

Two local students, Joanne Heckman and George Johnson from the Temple School in New Britain, were among the winners in the International Special Olympics held that year in Michigan. Approximately 3,200 athletes competed in the games.

A “Bike Hike” was held with proceeds donated to CCArc. John Jagiello, a 12-year-old Israel Putnam School student, collected the most pledges. He was rewarded with a bicycle for his efforts.
1977...

CCArc celebrated its 25th Anniversary as an association dedicated to providing education for children with mental retardation in the public schools.

CCArc received a $2,000 check from the Knights of Columbus, the proceeds from its first ever Tootsie Roll Drive. The Tootsie Roll Drive is an on-going fundraiser for the Knights of Columbus to support people with mental retardation.

1980...

In June, after 5 years of negotiations, the Old Courthouse building on Franklin Square was made handicapped accessible with the installation of an elevator. These offices also became home to the New Britain Commission for the Handicapped. The Reverend George Krauss of St. Matthew Church opened ceremonies with an invocation. A dedication ceremony with about 100 people in attendance followed.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare approved construction of a group home for people with mental retardation to be built at 150 Rocky Hill Avenue in New Britain. This federal land grant was the FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE NATION and was deeded in September. In 2010 the land will belong to CCARC outright.

Also in 1980, Central Connecticut Association for Retarded Children officially became Central Connecticut Association for Retarded Citizens.
1982...

March featured a groundbreaking ceremony for the Rocky Hill group home. Among the many honored guests were former New Britain Mayor William McNamara, State Senator Nancy Johnson, and State Representative Joe Harper. An open house and dedication ceremony was held in June. The home, consisting of nine rooms and two baths, accommodated seven residents.

In December, CCArc developed an after school program on Tuesday afternoons for students of all ages. The program consisted of supervised playtime, with emphasis on recreational activities.

1983...

In March, James McCann was appointed Executive Director.

In October, CCArc opened its second group home, at Simms Road, Kensington, known as the Bess McIntosh Home. This home was named in honor of the late wife of Dr. John McIntosh, currently Director Emeritus for CCArc.
1984...

In February, Day Services was reorganized into two service areas: Functional Activities and Vocational Services.

Functional activities included educational training in arts and crafts, academics, bench work, community skills, cooking, domestics, horticulture, leisure skills, recreation and self-help skills.

Vocational services included job training in building maintenance, food service, housekeeping for hire - vocational training, sewing, woodshop and workshop skills. Other areas of emphasis were work habits, attitudes, improving job skills and quality control.

In May, CCArc opened its third community residence, the "Sy" Birnbaum Home at Barbour Road, New Britain. This home was dedicated and named after Samuel "Sy" Birnbaum, a former CCArc Director Emeritus. Mr. Birnbaum has long been a very generous contributor to this organization. Among his many donations: a 15-passenger van used extensively for field trips and recreational activities.

CCArc started its first Community Experience program at the South Congregational Church. This began as an elderly enrichment program, providing opportunities for seniors with mental retardation to enjoy bus trips and outings in the community. It also gave them the opportunity to be volunteer arts and crafts teachers for children.
1986...

May brought us our first Bowl-A-Thon fundraiser, held at New Britain Bowl. The Bowl-A-Thon became an annual event.

In November, the John P. McIntosh Work Services Center at 903 Farmington Avenue, Kensington held an open house dedicated to individuals at CCARC. The center provided light industrial work, clerical, maintenance, lawn care, and housekeeping services for local businesses.

1987...

Up until this time children with disabilities attended Camp Kiwanee which was operated by the Kiwanis Club of New Britain. However, in 1987 Camp Sloper in Southington opened its doors to children with developmental disabilities and worked alongside Camp Kiwanee to provide an integrated camping experience for children. Ruth Kimball coordinated this group with individuals from CCARC.

Our 35th Anniversary was celebrated at the New Britain Senior Center.

Also, CCARC, in conjunction with CCSU and the New Britain Parks and Recreation Department, offered a summer program for young people. Physical education skills, games, swimming, art, music, trips to museums and bowling were some of the activities. The Council of Exceptional Children Club at CCSU and New Britain's Department of Parks and Recreation provided staff.
1988...

CCArc provided job opportunities for individuals with mental retardation in mainstream positions through a State approved Supported Employment Program. The first sites were Heartland Food Warehouse in Newington, Stop and Shop in New Britain, the Veterans Administration Hospital in Newington and the Whole Donut in Berlin. Larry Floyd and Margaret Symolon were among the first individuals to be placed in this kind of community employment.

1989...

The UNICO Club began organizing dinner-dances for individuals at CC Arc. Twenty volunteers from the UNICO club assisted with set-up, serving food, and clean-up. This event continues today with more than 100 people participating.

1990...

The Supported Employment Advisory Committee (now the Business Advisory Committee) was established to aid in the development of new employment opportunities and job sites. The committee was comprised of representatives of local business and industry who met regularly. At that time, 15 individuals were working at eight companies in the community.
1991...

An additional Community Experience program was started. This included opportunities for individuals to be involved in their community by volunteering or participating in recreational activities.

The Opportunities for Older Adults (OOA) program at the New Britain YWCA provided a welcome chance for seniors with mental retardation to visit other seniors at Ledgecrest Convalescent Home in Kensington. They engaged in conversation, sang with a karaoke machine, served refreshments, played bingo and read about current events. They even made “room calls” to say hello to seniors unable to join the group.

Also the United Way’s Day of Caring got its start. With the assistance of many volunteers from Fleet Bank, AtoHaas North America, IBM, Bauer Aerospace, Hallmark, Heublein and Aetna, our Work Services Center was cleaned up and painted. Every year since then, volunteers from area businesses participate in this event, helping CCArc with many special projects.

1992...

The Jones Drive Home opened in New Britain.
Central Connecticut Association for Retarded Citizens officially changed its name to CCARC. This was a positive step aimed at emphasizing the person, not the disability. The new motto accompanying the name change was “Advocates for people with mental retardation.”

In April, we opened our first Supported Living Arrangement (SLA) on Jubilee Street in New Britain. Ann Putala and Donna Cummings were the first to reside in the apartment. Independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning, doing laundry and shopping were key points for learning.

In October, the Oakwood Drive Home opened in New Britain supporting five people.
1994...

In April, the Yes, I Can! self-advocacy group planned a "Random Acts of Kindness Day." The members provided juice and coffee at local bus stops, as well as to the homeless in the community.

In November we welcomed Anne Ruwet as CCARC's new Executive Director and moved one month later from 111 Franklin Square to One Hartford Square in New Britain. Our Open House was celebrated with Linda Bogaslawski Mayor of New Britain and Loretta Martinelli, CCARC President.

1995...

In March, CCARC teamed up with "Kids On The Block," a puppet program aimed at teaching children in kindergarten through third grade about people with disabilities.

In April, a second Supported Living Arrangement (SLA) opened on Harrison Street in New Britain.

In December, CCARC hosted a forum to provide information on recreational opportunities for people with disabilities.

1996...

Tim Shriver of the Connecticut Special Olympics was the guest speaker at our Annual Meeting and Dinner.

CCARC began an Endowment Fund, and met its initial goal of establishing a Founding Members of the Endowment Society, with each member contributing at least $1,000 to the Endowment Fund.
1997...

CCARC changed its name to Central Connecticut Arc and adopted a new mission “to make dreams happen.” Those words do, indeed, sum up what this organization strives for, day in and day out.

In this same year Person Centered Planning was embraced by the agency as an approach to providing services. Through person centered planning services are designed to address each individual’s needs.

1998...

At the New Britain YWCA, Eddie Duran, preschool theater director, had 12 children and several individuals from the Community Experience Program working together once a week making murals, singing, making holiday props and socializing.

The After School Project began for teens with disabilities. The goal was to integrate and provide stimulation for teenagers with disabilities by encouraging them to participate in existing after school activities with their non-disabled peers. In addition to their volunteer and recreational activities the After School Project participants presented Junior Achievement workshops to children in kindergarten through third grade.

An Ad Hoc Committee of the Board of Directors was formed to determine the future facility needs of the organization. As an outcome of their research the Building Committee was formed.

Susan Saint James and Bo Doherty, Special Olympics executive director visited the CC Arc “Sun Catchers” garden at the Ledgecrest Convalescent Home in the first ever Special Olympics Unified Gardening Project. The Sun Catchers were awarded the “Most Creative” plaque at the Special Olympic Games.
2000...

The High Road Home, in Kensington and the Osgood Avenue Home, in New Britain were opened, and supported eight people.

The CCArc Singers group was formed and scheduled a number of performances in the area. Singing at the State Capitol in August as part of the “Living Out Loud” Art Show was among their most memorable.

In October, the South Burritt Street, New Britain apartment was opened.

2001...

At our 49th Annual Meeting and Dinner we unveiled plans for our new home. And in July purchased 4.25 acres of land on Slater Road in New Britain on which to build the proposed 21,000 square foot facility.

The Annual Report showed that the agency’s annual budget had exceeded $4,000,000.

2002...

But, by far, the most significant event was the kickoff of our Capital Campaign to make dreams happen for more than 170 individuals with mental retardation and other needs in the central Connecticut area. Governor John G. Rowland and other dignitaries along with the American Savings Foundation Board of Directors and Staff participated in the celebration.

This booklet is dedicated to the success of that campaign... and the future of CCArc.
We acknowledge our Past Presidents for helping us make dreams happen through the years...

1952-1953 Richard Hess
1954 John McIntosh
1955 William Carnow
1956 Catherine Yale
1957 Ida Martinelli
1958 Edward Bolles
1959 Paul Phanuef
1960 Fenwick Winslow
1961 Audrey Winslow
1962-1963 John Walonski
1964-1965 Richard Hess
1965 Edward Bolles
1966-1967 Dominic DeMarco
1968-1969 Bernice Varhol
1970-1971 Robert Smith
1972-1973 Dominic DeMarco
1974-1975 Richard Hess
1976 Edward Bolles
1977-1978 Jean Steinberg
1979-80 Eileen Pesenti
1981-82 Anthony Pappalardo
1982 Richard Boyle
1983-86 Phyllis Visnauskas
1986-90 Hilda Pacinda
1990-1994 Denise Mora
1994-1996 Loretta Martinelli
1996 Frank Marrocco
1996-2000 Lucinda Abshire
2000-present John Visnauskas

We express our sincere gratitude for the members of the 50th Anniversary Planning Committee and Sub-Committees for their time and efforts in researching and coordinating this booklet, and planning the Anniversary Celebration.

Lucinda Abshire
Albert Carrier
Julia Carrier
Dawn Cyr, Chair
Julie Erickson
Gabriele Godlewski, Chair

Barbara Miller
Wanda Olszewski
Faith Ondrick
Hilda Pacinda, Chair
Jean Plocharsczyk
Anne Ruwet

Marion Sangelo
Debra Seeger
Jean Steinberg
John Visnauskas
Phyllis Visnauskas
Ernestine Weaver
These hands can color
They can play games
They help me to communicate
These hands have served me well