

The Arc of Warren County Spring 2024 Newsletter



Letter from the CEO of The Arc of Warren County, John Whitehead

I love the arrival of spring because of the transformation that occurs outside. Buds emerge from trees, flowers begin to rise and bloom, and birds are busy early in the morning singing and beginning to build their nests. I see growth and renewal. Here at The Arc of Warren County, we are also experiencing growth and renewal.

We have just completed construction on two large projects: the renovation of a group home on Jonestown Road in Washington Township, and the relocation and remodeling of our expanded day program, The Hive, on Route 31 in Washington Township.

Both projects have been more than a year in the making, and even longer in the planning process. I am grateful to all the Arc staff and contractors who have been involved in these ventures. We encountered some problems along the way, but we all worked together to get them resolved. I am pleased to say that in both cases, the result has exceeded our expectations! Soon we will be having open houses so that we can highlight these wonderful sites that will enhance the lives of many of the people that we serve.

The Arc of Warren County is constantly evolving to address the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are celebrating our 70th year of service and look forward to more growth in the future. We are currently brainstorming on new ways that we can expand our services. As we do so, we would like to invite our service recipients, supporters, and friends to join in on this conversation. Share your ideas with us. Let us know what other services we can provide to our community. As the world changes, so do the needs of those we serve, and The Arc of Warren County is committed to do our best to meet those needs.



CEO of The Arc of Warren County
John Whitehead



Letter from Chief Development & Communications Officer, Annamaria Lalevee

There are so many things to be thankful for as we end the first quarter of 2024. We had a very successful Annual Appeal. As John Whitehead mentioned, plans are underway to open The Hive by The Arc of Warren County and the Jonestown Road Home Renovation is complete.

At press time, we are close to the final countdown of Radiothon 2024 and are working full steam ahead for our summer events – Food Truck Fest with Donaldson Farms and the TRI Mountain Lake Sprint Triathlon with DASH Multisport. Our Golf Classic has gained in popularity over the last couple of years and we look forward to hosting again this year.

As a result of the fact that we are celebrating 70 years of service, we developed a 70th anniversary logo

that we will use in our communication throughout the year. Instead of a Community Excellence Awards, we will be holding a Gala to commemorate our 70th anniversary at 6 p.m. on November 21, 2024, just in time to launch the holiday season.

I would like to extend a special thank you to The Post Foundation for their grant to cover the cost of a generator at one of our residences. Over the past several years, The Post Foundation has funded many generators for our residence homes. It has made an enormous impact on the effective flow of business during a power outage and the comfort and happiness of the people who we serve. That is just one example of an organization that we are so thankful for their support. Read more in this issue regarding the people



Chief Development & Communications Officer, Annamaria Lalevee

and organizations who support the organization.

I hope you enjoy the Spring newsletter. The Agency has so many accomplishments to celebrate!

The Hive by The Arc of Warren County is Opening Soon

Thank you to everyone who donated to The Hive by The Arc of Warren County through our 2023 Annual Appeal.

Keep an eye out for more information regarding our grand opening. **Anyone who donated to this initiative will receive an invitation to the event.** Funds raised through The Annual Appeal this year were earmarked for The Arc of Warren County's new Day Program location on Route 31 in Washington Township.

This gift helped fund a fully loaded sensory room, which includes multiple seating options, bubble towers, gel



floor tiles, a sensory path, fiber optic lighting, a sensory path and more. In addition, this space will be able to accommodate indoor sports activities, such as indoor basketball.

"More room allows for better sounds (acoustics) to enjoy," says Burnie M., regarding music therapy activities.

Donaldson Farms Donates Toward The Annual Appeal through Corn Maze Fundraiser

Last fall, Donaldson Farms created their new maze design in the shape of The Arc logo. For each ticket sold during the Halloween season, \$1 was donated back to The Arc Foundation. In addition, The Arc of Warren County donation boxes were also located at the register area of the farm market. Donaldson Farms raised \$2,154.62 for the organization. These funds are earmarked to benefit The Hive by The Arc of Warren County.



This is not the first time that a Donaldson Farms event has benefited The Arc of Warren County. On June 1, 2024, The Arc of Warren County Food Truck Fest will take place at Donaldson Farms from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. This is the sixth consecutive year that this partnership has taken place. It is a family-friendly event that features premiere food trucks, music, games and more! There will be many sponsorship opportunities and ticket information will be forthcoming.

“The Arc of Warren County is an organization that is near

and dear to me as I sit on The Arc Foundation Board,” says Katie Donaldson.

“I cannot imagine a world without an Arc and the important services that The Arc of Warren County provides. That is why I continue to support this organization.”

Donor to Be Honored at The Arc of Warren County’s Gala/Community Excellence Awards on November 21, 2024

Mr. Thomas Seiple will be honored at The Arc of Warren County’s Gala/Community Excellence Awards at Panther Valley Golf Club on November 21, 2024. For the last two years, the Community Excellence Awards were held at Bello Giorno Estate. This year in observance of our 70th anniversary, we will be holding a Gala, so please save the date.

More details to come, however, if you are interested in nominating someone to be honored, please use the enclosed nomination form.



It's the 70th Anniversary of The Arc of Warren County

The Arc of Warren County will be celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. The Chapter was started in 1954 and it has grown to serve 1,100 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families through various programs.

As part of the 70th anniversary, the Chapter is launching a special anniversary logo to be used on social media, The Arc of Warren County website, letterhead and on other collateral materials for the entire year. The new logo was designed by graphic design freelancer Corinne Pilote.

You may have received the special Save The Date magnet that was created as a hand out to our donors and friends, and which highlights our



upcoming events. This includes a special event to celebrate our 70th anniversary. It is our 70th Anniversary Gala and Community Excellence Awards to be held at 6 p.m. on November 21, 2024. If you have a nomination for an individual or business that has supported

The Arc of Warren County in a significant manner or has made a significant impact helping individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in general, please reach out to Annamaria Lavee at alavee@arcwarren.org for more information.

The Arc of Warren County Radiothon with WRNJ 2024

As mentioned above, it is the 70th anniversary of The Arc of Warren County. What does that mean for The Arc of Warren County Radiothon with WRNJ? To continue with the recent tradition of connecting the goal with the Agency's anniversary, the fundraising goal this year is \$70,000. At press time, we are gearing up for Radiothon Day on WRNJ from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 25, 2024 where donors, consumers, members of the community, staff and dignitaries all share their stories about their positive experiences with The Arc of Warren County.

A special thanks to WRNJ for donating a full day of airtime to The Arc of Warren County for the 34th

consecutive year. Words cannot express how grateful The Arc of Warren County community is that Norman Worth and Jim Travis are serving as co-chairs again this year.

Business sponsorships are \$575.

Did you know that –

- \$400 is the average cost of a week's worth of groceries for a group home.
- \$575 will purchase one camper-ship for Camp Warren.
- The property at Camp Warren needs generators, a roof and pool improvements.
- Four residential properties need commercial washer and dryers to accommodate heavy washing needs.

Please consider supporting The Arc of Warren County Radiothon with WRNJ this year as this project is still ongoing! Visit arcwarren.org for more information and stay tuned for updates.



Tim Rohrer: A Rise from Isolation

The Arc of Warren County and Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. joined forces again to bring speaker Tim Rohrer to Warren Hills High School for Autism Acceptance Month at 6:30 p.m. on April 18, 2024. A special thank you goes to Greenwich Autism Alliance Foundation for sponsoring this event.

Tim Rohrer is a young adult with autism who is an author, speaker, self-advocate and educator on disability inclusion. He is the author of a teaching guide, "How to be a Good Influence to People with Disabilities," and two children's books "Timmy's Story: A Story about Autism and Friendship" and "Timmy's Story: A Sensory Friendly Birthday."

Tim has spoken at schools, workshops, conferences, and the NJ Department of Education. Tim has received a commendation from the NJ State Senate and Assembly and is also a managing partner of a non-profit, 5Help Foundation.

Opening remarks were made by John Whitehead, CEO of The Arc of Warren County, Cindy Wildermuth, CEO of Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc. and Kelly Milazzo, President of The Greenwich Autism Alliance Foundation. Mary Louise Rowlin of Warren Hills Regional High School emceed the event.



The Arc of Warren County recently participated in An Easter Eggstravaganza with the Hackettstown High School Key Club, the Hackettstown BID and The Centenary University Alumni Association. It was a fun event for all!

Become a Member of The Arc of Warren County

Consider becoming a member of The Arc of Warren County in 2024!

This is the first year that The Arc of Warren County membership runs from July to June, so if you are a current member you have several extra months on your membership.

The membership is reasonably priced at \$25 per person or \$50 per family.

Members of The Arc of Warren County enjoy year-round perks, including:

- A 20% Discount at Serendipity, The Arc of Warren County Giftshop
- Informational events and newsletters
- Voting rights at the Annual Election of the Board of Directors in June

Sign up today for your 2024-2025 Arc of Warren County membership by visiting arcwarren.org

Triathlon Sign Up!



Hackettstown Rotary Club and Rotary International Support Camp Warren for Essential Project

Hackettstown Rotary Club and Rotary International supported The Arc of Warren County for a much-needed project at Camp Warren recently. The need was to replace the toilets in all 16 cabins before the beginning of the summer camp season. Both organizations covered the cost of much of the project with The Arc Foundation financially supplementing a minority of the cost. Valley Plumbing, Heating, Cooling and Lawn

Sprinklers, LLC was the contractor which was responsible for the installation of the toilets, which were purchased at Lowe's in Hackettstown.

The grant proposal and oversight of this project was spearheaded by Hackettstown Rotary member, Robyn Jensen, CFP®, Financial Advisor with Edward Jones in Hackettstown. "We are extremely grateful that Hackettstown Rotary Club decided

to support this project," says John Whitehead, CEO of The Arc of Warren County. "It was a needed upgrade that would have taken longer to do without the financial support. The fact that we can replace all 16 toilets, because of this grant, is extremely helpful for us as they will not need to be changed for many years."



Pictured from left to right are as follows:

Mark Bahnuk, Treasurer for Hackettstown Rotary Club

Robyn Gardella, Assistant Director of the Recreation Department at The Arc of Warren County

Marci Gubich, Director of Recreation Services at The Arc of Warren County

Robyn Jensen, Hackettstown Rotary Club Member (Robyn oversaw this project.)

Catherine Rust, President of Hackettstown Rotary Club

Annamaria Lalevee, Chief Development and Communications Officer at The Arc of Warren County and President-Elect of Hackettstown Rotary Club

Elaine Drazek, Co-Owner Valley Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Lawn Sprinklers, LLC.

John Whitehead, CEO of The Arc of Warren County

The Arc of Warren County Membership Highlight – Meet Geraldine Urgovitch



Robert and Geraldine Urgovitch

Geraldine Urgovitch has been involved with The Arc of Warren County for many years. In June 2001, her son Robert moved to one of our residences in Hackettstown from his home near the Jersey Shore.

“My experience with The Arc of Warren County has been wonderful,” says Geraldine. “I am so blessed to have him there. He is so happy and the staff is extremely caring. Robert being part of The Arc of Warren County community has made a big difference in our lives.”

Robert has positive things to say about his time living in Hackettstown, especially the different activities that he is involved in. He likes going shopping in general and talks about trips to the Lehigh Valley Mall, Rockaway Mall, various creameries and farms. He especially likes his twice a week experience going to Dunkin’

Donuts to get his favorite drink – a Mocha Latte.

“I also like being involved in different crafts, such as working on latch hook rugs,” says Robert.

Geraldine moved to Florida a couple of years ago to be close to her son Anthony, but before she moved Robert would frequently visit for the weekends or the holidays. Geraldine was often impressed how the staff would offer to drive him halfway. It was just one more example of The Arc of Warren County staff going above and beyond in their care of residents. Geraldine also speaks fondly of the Recreation Department.

“They do such a great job at what they do,” she says.

She fondly remembers how much Robert enjoyed being involved in

Special Olympics in the past.

“He loved it,” she says. “He doesn’t do as many Recreation activities as he used to as he is turning 57 this year, but we all have fond memories of his involvement.”

Jessica Chamberlin, Group Home Manager at The Arc of Warren County, loves to see the close relationship between Geraldine and Robert first-hand.

“He loves his mom so much,” says Jess. “They are very interconnected even though there is a physical distance between them. They speak all the time, and he always wants his mom to be pleased with him.”

Robert visits his mom in Florida periodically and says he enjoys visiting with his mother.

Jess appreciates Geraldine’s involvement from afar.

“She always asks about all of the staff members,” says Jess. “She is very complimentary of staff and how committed everyone is.”

As a result, Geraldine continues to be an active member of The Arc of Warren County. Even though she cannot attend events or visit Serendipity, she enjoys reading our Newsletter and being engaged.

“Distance cannot diminish my affinity to The Arc of Warren County,” says Geraldine. “The organization and all of the people involved have been so good to myself, Robert and my entire family.”

Meet Shaqwanna Lewis: Recruitment and Retention Specialist

"I make it a point to be with new employees on their first day in a group home, so they do not feel alone trying to navigate their new role. It makes it easier," says Shaqwanna Lewis, Recruitment and Retention Specialist at The Arc of Warren County. "I want our staff to know that I'm here for them."

Shaqwanna has been employed with The Arc of Warren County since 2021. She began as an Overnight Awake Direct Support Professional (DSP) and was promoted to the newly created Recruitment and Retention Specialist role in June 2023, the first of its kind for The Arc of Warren County.

For nearly a year and a half, Shaqwanna balanced two full-time jobs, working from home full-time during the day and by night at The Arc of Warren County group homes. When the Recruitment and Retention Specialist position became available, Shaqwanna was faced with a decision. She

recognized that this was a position that was needed in the organization. When she was offered the role, Shaqwanna decided to let go of her career of 20 years and embark on a new journey.

"If I can make someone's day by assisting them in their day-to-day living, that is why I made the decision," Shaqwanna says. "I'm a people person and I like to see people smile."

Finding her footing in this new role has come naturally to Shaqwanna. In her words, "I see it like 'You were meant for this. This is something you were doing already on a day-to-day basis.'" Shaqwanna is often the go-to person for advice and support from her friends and family.

In her new role, Shaqwanna puts a strong emphasis on building self-confidence in every newly hired staff member. She has integrated the new Recruitment and Retention



Specialist position with the mindset of a mentor. Shaqwanna understands that starting a new job can be daunting for anyone, with or without professional experience in the field, and enjoys being a resource for new staff.

"It can be overwhelming when you are responsible for helping someone with their day-to-day living. Some people may have experience caring for family members, for example, others may not," Shaqwanna says.

Since June, Shaqwanna has welcomed many new faces into the Agency. She makes it a point to make people feel comfortable, even before they are officially hired. The opportunity to work with new hires and watch them flourish has made a great impact on her. Being a familiar face to someone beginning their career with The Arc of Warren County helps foster better communication and stronger working relationships, which leads to a higher level of care for our individuals and greater job satisfaction for staff.



Pictured is Shaqwanna Lewis, Recruitment & Retention Specialist

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Cont. Meet Shaqwanna Lewis: Recruitment and Retention Specialist

“As a DSP, you need to give our consumers the best care – the same way you would give someone in your family the best care. That perspective usually clicks with them and helps new staff really understand what this job is all about.”

An important part of her role at The Arc of Warren County is fostering relationships with each of the Agency’s group home’s consumers and staff. This helps her gain valuable insight to share with new hires about the specific program they will be working at.

“Getting to know your coworkers and

the individuals you are caring for has to come together at the same time.” Shaqwanna says. “You must get to know the consumers, but we also must be on a great working level with our coworkers so we can have a better living environment for the consumers. We need to be able to communicate and come together.”

In addition to serving as a mentor for new staff, Shaqwanna makes it a point to continue building relationships with longer-term staff. She wants them to know they have someone advocating for them and to know that their voice is heard.

“The Arc is so much bigger than the one group home you are working in. Being involved with the Agency beyond your team is important to build positive professional relationships and discover new opportunities and experiences,” Shaqwanna says. “The Arc is work, but it’s good work. That’s how I like it.”

The Arc of Warren County has already seen Shaqwanna’s impact, as staff retention rates and involvement have continued to grow over the past year.

Meet The Go-Getters: A Snapshot into What Inspires The Arc of Warren County’s Self-Advocates

The Arc of Warren County’s Self-Advocates, also known as Go-Getters, gather on a regular basis to achieve many goals. All the self-advocates live in one of the 17 Arc of Warren County residences. They live independently as possible and credit the help of The Arc of Warren County direct support staff to assist them with different activities, such as cooking, accompanying them to doctors’ appointments, household chores, administration of medication and more.

Some weigh in at their monthly meeting regarding the types of issues that they like to discuss and their goals. See what they had to say below:

“One of my goals is making sure that we are working toward a positive

future,” says Arthur K.

“We discuss standing up for your rights and talking to the government,” says Steve Y.

“Getting together with my friends is important to me, as well as working together,” says Mary M.

Arthur, who is the President of The Arc of Warren County’s Self-Advocates Chapter, explains how he is very motivated on making a difference in the community-at-large.

“I would like to work with Governors to cut down on the high prices in the United States,” says Arthur. “I also like to advocate regarding all issues related to rights of people with disabilities at a higher level.”

Arthur also serves on The Arc of Warren County’s Board of Directors.

Joe K. would like to advocate for the right to come out of retirement and go back to work even though he is in his 80s. He would like to keep busy and continue working.

Carol C. discusses how she cares more about being out in the community more than politics per se, but loves being with friends in person. She likes it a lot more than when they had to have meetings on Zoom during Covid.

Some examples of Go-Getters being out in the community include participating in the upcoming Green Music Fest, which is sponsored by the Washington BID on June 15, 2024. They will be there to talk about the

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Cont. Meet The Go-Getters: A Snapshot into What Inspires The Arc of Warren County's Self-Advocates

Agency and hand out merchandise.

The Go-Getters also serve as representatives for The Arc of Warren County at National Night Out in Washington. In addition, they were involved in the Love, Easton campaign in support of the City of Easton by decorating hearts around town.

The Self-Advocates will be engaged in a viewing party for the virtual conference for New Jersey Self-Advocates this spring. The Arc of Warren County Chapter was the first to engage in a conference viewing party since the conference became virtual after 2020. Now other chapters have followed suit.

Some past topics that have been covered in this conference include having the right to vote, a campaign to not use the R word and effective ways to advocate for yourself.

Other past activities include learning CPR skills from Carinne Buzzuto, The Arc of Warren County's Training Coordinator and Self-Advocates Advisor.

As Advisor for the Go-Getters, Carinne makes sure each meeting ends with a "Show and Tell" opportunity on the agenda. This is a great opportunity for every attendee to participate. They can share whatever they would like to talk about or show off something they are proud of.

The attendees appreciate the addition.

"It gets us used to public speaking," says Kristen E.

"It makes you feel more like family when you get to share," says Judy A.

Go-Getter members have showed off their artwork, crafts, photos of family and treasured gifts from their loved ones. They have talked about what is current in their lives and what they are looking forward to including vacations, work recognitions, achievements from Special Olympics and other accomplishments.

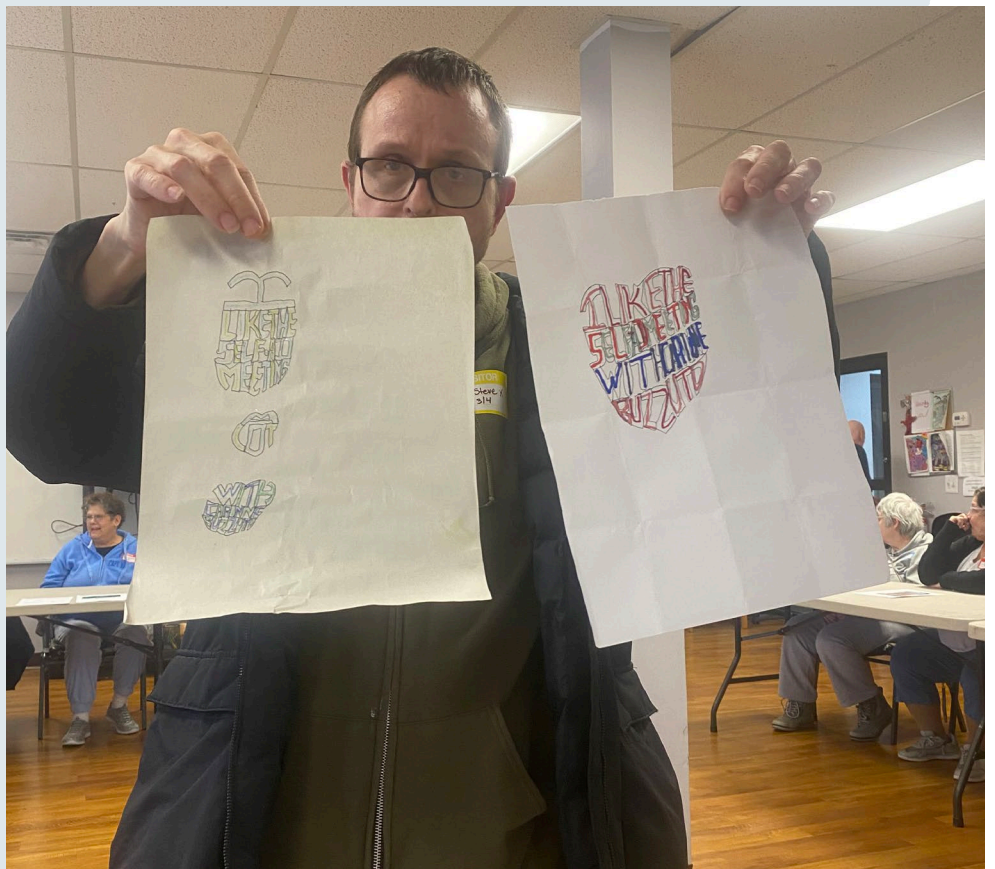
Carinne says, "I love that each member has a moment to express their confidence, pride, and joy, with all the attention on them. Each advocate deserves recognition. I am even proud when a member says, 'nothing today,' advocating their right to be private or not share."

The Self-Advocates vote on which activities they would like to participate in, the terms of their officers and who their officers are. Current officers are as follows:

- President – Arthur K.
- Vice-President – Suzanne D.
- Treasurer – Carol C.
- Sargent of Arms – Ralph F.
(absent at recent meeting)
- Proxy – Steve Y.

They have also voted on their term limits, which are four years.

Stay tuned for future updates on the wonderful accomplishments of The Arc of Warren County's Self-Advocates in additional Newsletters!



Steve Y. creates art at each of the Self Advocate meetings. He shares his recent creations at a meeting.


Take a Look at Some of our Photos from Recreation's St. Patrick's Day Celebration




Insight from The Arc of Warren County Employees

RaeAnn Rowlin, Development and Communications Associate at The Arc of Warren County, surveyed our employees to ask them questions about a variety of different topics from life advice to self-care tips.

What is the best life or career advice you have given and/or received? Here are our results:




“Live life to the fullest because I want to live life for the memories I make – not the money. The result will always be equal to the amount of effort put in. Keep striving to go further and better than the day before with being in work or oneself.” – Patrick M.




“Embrace the moments.”
– Christina C.

“Like the old saying goes, “If you love what you are working at, it will not even feel like work. Life is too short to spend your talents on something in which you hate just doing it for the money. Money will follow your satisfaction.” – D. Malcolm




“You learn something new every day. Just be patient. You got this.” – Arc Staff




“Do what you say and say what you do! My college professor in Social Work said this and it stuck with me. Always follow through on your commitments and take credit for the good work you do.” – Marci G.

“You interview for your next job every day. Do your best in your current position, show respect to others and be honest. Character is key.” – Greg B.

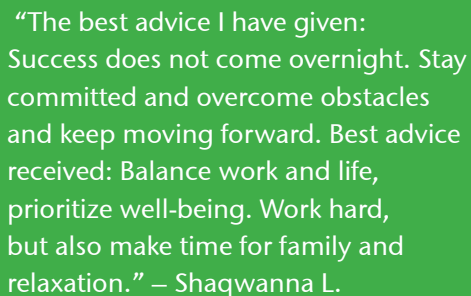


“You can learn something from everyone, no matter who they are or what their station is in life.” – Charlotte G.



“From my Grandpop, “Don’t over-work yourself. In 90 years, I never once heard someone complain ‘gee, I wish I hadn’t spent so much time with my family.’” – Lucas D.


“Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t – you’re right. – Henry Ford” - Phil G.



“The best advice I have given: Success does not come overnight. Stay committed and overcome obstacles and keep moving forward. Best advice received: Balance work and life, prioritize well-being. Work hard, but also make time for family and relaxation.” – Shaqwanna L.



“You can’t pour from an empty pitcher.” – Jess L.



“Treat your employees as people first and employees second. Happy employees are good employees. This may be your job, but it’s their (individuals we support) home. We should always be making sure to create a safe, happy, and supportive environment for them.” – Liz M.