

Timelines

JULY/AUGUST 2006

in this issue...

- 1 Cultural Ambassadors
- 2 Message from the Executive Director
Parade of Progress
Board of Directors
- 3 Neville Pottinger Profile
- 4 Donations
- 5 Wakefield High Prom
Upcoming Events
- 6 Membership Application
Car Donation Program



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Youth Workers Support Programs, Share Jamaican History & Culture

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is the second in a series of profiles of staff the Arc of East Middlesex has recruited from around the globe through the American Youth Work Center. In addition to being well educated and experienced in the human services field, these visiting employees are generous in sharing their cultural heritage with us. — SRB*

For many Americans, our knowledge of Jamaica is limited to Bob Marley and the Walt Disney movie “Cool Runnings,” about the Jamaican Bob Sled Team. Fortunately, The Arc of East Middlesex has a group of enthusiastic young ambassadors to broaden our understanding of Jamaican history and culture. Interviews with these seven women made me want to learn more, so I followed my mother’s decades old advice to “look it up.”

Here is a very brief & condensed history of the Caribbean island from the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia. The Taino (also known as Arawak) people of South America, settled in Jamaica in around the year 1000. Spain claimed the land and began occupying it in 1509 and the Taino were virtually wiped out by disease, slavery and war. In 1517, the Spanish brought the first African slaves to Jamaica. The English seized the island in 1655. In 1834 slavery was abolished. A century later, local political parties began to form and the first universal elections were held in 1944. The island joined the Federation of the West Indies in 1958 but withdrew when voters rejected membership in 1961. Jamaica finally gained independence in 1962.

“Our motto is out of many, one people,” said Sherrian Garcia, a new Haven Street residential manager from St. Catherine, Jamaica.

Sherrian and her colleagues Stacia Copeland, Tracy-Ann Hutchinson and Alecia Bennett arrived in Boston from Jamaica in the middle of this spring’s worst rain storms. They followed Nickesha Thomas, Denesia Daley and Orlease



Rays of Light—Four new employees from Jamaica arrived in the middle of this spring’s torrential rain. They are (l to r) Sherrian Garcia, Tracy-Ann Hutchinson, Alecia Bennett and Stacia Copeland.

Flemmings, who joined us from the island last year. While Jamaica is better known for its sunny shores, Stacia pointed out that in her hometown of Manchester, it rains a lot, so she wasn’t phased by the inclement weather that greeted her here. A teacher whose students in Jamaica included several children with Autism, Stacia is a natural educator. She was anxious to dispel a misconception about her country.

“Crime is not all of Jamaica, only about 1% of the country. 99% of places are safe... I would like to sell Jamaica as Jamaica, not the reggae, not the crime,” said Stacia. “The culture is so rich.”

“I’m into dance, drama, creative folk forms. I’m never sitting down,” she added.

She noted that Caribbean and African musical forms and performing arts deal with life’s important events such as a death in the family, weddings and babies. Each event has its own music, dance, food and spirits.

continued on page 2

The Arc of East Middlesex Board of Directors

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Parade of Progress



Looking at the photos from the Wakefield High School Prom *Grand March* on page 5, I couldn't help but think that Norma Howland must be smiling. Norma, a long-term board member who passed away last year, served as a volunteer and advocate for The Arc of East Middlesex for half a century. She fought for her daughter Janice, and subsequently other children with developmental disabilities, to be included in the public schools. When school personnel told her that Janice was uneducable, Norma, determined that her daughter would have that skill, taught her herself. Fast forward 50 years and inclusion is the norm. This is not to say that parents don't still have to advocate for appropriate educational services for their kids, because they do. But inclusion is the norm.

While we can legislate educational inclusion, social inclusion is another story. I am proud of the role our Recreation Department has played in helping to foster the latter through our inclusive high school dances and other programs. The Wakefield High School students with disabilities attended their prom on their own, not as part of an Arc program. Chenine Johnson, our Recreation Director, attended the Grand March for the same reason the students' families and friends did—to see the teens looking proud and beautiful in their gowns and tuxedos as they participated in an important rite of passage. It's such a gift for us to be able to share their joy through Chenine's great photos. You're right Norma, we've come a long way!

Jamaican History & Culture

Continued from page 1

"Don't forget the white rum," she said with a laugh.

Sherrian and Stacia would like Louise Bennett, Jamaican poet and cultural icon, to be as well known as the country's reggae stars. Sherrian also pointed out that Jamaica has its own fashion labels, including Cooyah (Look here) and Yuzimi (You see me) brands which promote Jamaican culture and history.

The women are also avid athletes. Sherrian and Denesia, a manager at our Albion Street residence, were at university together and were on the same cricket and dance teams. Alecia, a manager at our new Water Street residence, was a volunteer for Special Olympics at home in Kingston, assisting athletes with personal hygiene and sports.

"I enjoy helping people be as independent as we are," Alecia said of her work with people with disabilities.

Orlease, a manager at Cliffside Commons who is also from the Kingston area, volunteered to support people with disabilities in Jamaica as well. In an ironic twist, the rehabilitation center where she donated her services assisting the nursing staff assisted her father after a serious accident left him temporarily paralyzed. He has made great progress with treatment and she is looking forward to seeing him upon her return.

Tracy-Ann, a new manager at our Newcomb residence, another Kingston area resident, volunteered at a literacy project and served as a mentor at a rehabilitation facility for people

continued on page 4

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Neville Pottinger, Employment Specialist

The Arc of East Middlesex's Most Senior Employee

You never know what path may lead someone to the Human Services field. For some employees it's having a family member with a disability; for others it's a love of teaching or maybe an opportunity to utilize a skill from another industry in a new way.

In the early 1980s, Neville Pottinger was working as what he describes as an "industrial handyman" in his native Jamaica. He had trained as an electrician and pipe fitter and worked primarily in the aluminum industry. As the plastics industry created competition for the aluminum industry, layoffs occurred and Neville began to explore other career options. He accepted his mother's offer to sponsor him in relocating to the United States.

In January of 1983, Neville moved to Stoneham, not far from the Arc's new vocational program, East Middlesex Industries (EMI). On April 4th of that year, he was hired as a job coach.

"They hired me because I was good with tools. They had a drill press and a sanding machine that they used to make games like ticktacktoe and Chinese Checkers for a local toy maker," Neville recalled.

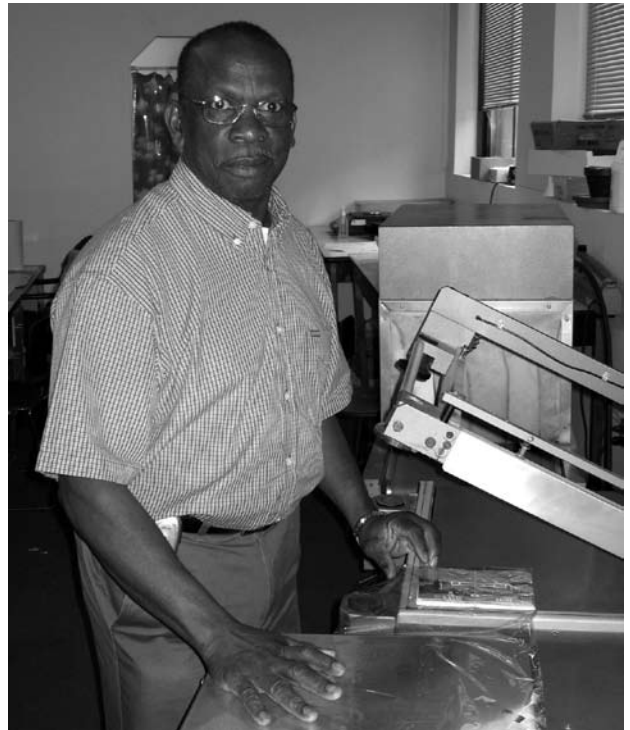
Neville wore a number of hats in his early days with the Arc, driving consumers to the workshop and then teaching them how to complete assembly jobs.

"EMI was the first organization in East Middlesex County to start their own transportation company. There was no bus, so we had to take them ourselves," he said.

As a 23 year employee of the Arc, Neville has had the opportunity to watch the careers of the individuals he trained and to follow the growth of the vocational program itself. A number of that first group of individuals Neville coached have found great success in community employment. Cheryl Riley has been with 3M (Microtouch) for 18 years. Stephen LeBlanc has held a drill press job in Wilmington for 15 years and Martha Billington is working with the MWRA. Rich Gambone recently retired from a career with Friendly's and now participates on EMI's cleaning crew.

EMI has evolved into the Arc's Day Services Division. It has grown from serving 30 to 80 people per day; moved from Stoneham to Walker Brook Drive in Reading to its current Gould Street location and expanded to include School to Work Transition Services, the Center for Emerging Artists and a computer lab. Kim Putney, another member of the first group of adults to join EMI, has found her passion as a painter in the Center. The shrink wrap machine that Neville installed 23 years ago is still in use, packaging note cards designed by our artists as well as jobs for local businesses.

"I love the consumers. I have the patience to discover everyone's style and to set up their work station to fit their style, but



Talent for Teaching—Neville Pottinger demonstrates the shrink wrap machine he installed for the Arc. The machine is one of several on which he has trained vocational program participants.

still get the job done right," said Neville.

The "early shift" schedule of the workshop has enabled Neville to support the development of another group of individuals: his children.

"The flexibility of this job has allowed me to spend time with my children. I have a daughter who was a track star and another who played basketball and sons who enjoyed soccer and football. I told them that education was the most important thing," said Neville who was able to get to their games and to supervise homework.

Neville and Elaine, his wife of 38 years, raised their children in Medford, where they moved after a year in Stoneham in order to have access to public transportation. Their three sons and three daughters are grown now, working in the health care, automotive and armed services fields. One daughter is a 16 year Navy veteran stationed on the Kitty Hawk in Japan. One of their sons is in his 12th year of service with the Navy, now stationed in San Diego after several long tours of duty in Japan, where he met his wife. Neville and Elaine have eight grandchildren and are looking forward to visiting the San Diego branch of the family this summer.

The Arc of East Middlesex is Pleased to Acknowledge Gifts from the Following Donors...

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Tribute Gifts

Use the pledge form on the fundraising page of our website (www.thearc.org) to remember a loved one or honor a friend or relative for a special occasion. Remember graduations & Father's Day are coming up! We are pleased to acknowledge the following tribute gifts.

In Honor of David Crystal's 16th Birthday For expansion of Recreation Services for individuals with multiple disabilities:

Consolidated Brick
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Memorials

In Memory of Peter Bombaci

Concord High School Faculty and Staff
Costantino, Richards, Rizzo, LLP
Paul Costantino, David Richards, John Rizzo

Michael J. Buonsanto
Cynthia and Kevin Burke
Deborah and Brett Houston
John Howard
In Loving Memory of my great uncle
Peter Bombaci

Vincent and Nancy Izzi
Marilyn C. and Kevin E. Harris
Ruth L. Melia
Virginia Sasso

In Memory of Emil Brajewski

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Inkind Gifts

Donna and David Snover
pair of Loge box Red Box tickets
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ongoing coffee and pastry donations

New Members

Welcome to:

Ann Bowman
Pam Bybell
Maral and Levon Keikian
Terry and John Kingery
Doris SanGiovanni

Gifts received through June 15, 2006

Jamaican History & Culture

Continued from page 2

with disabilities in Jamaica. This is her second stay in the United States. As a student, she visited Ohio for a summer and worked as a cook. She recently introduced the women at Newcomb to Jamaican cuisine.

"(One of the ladies said) 'I'm not going to like it.' She had it all," Tracy-Ann recalled with a laugh.

Just as some of the residents have been surprised to find that they like Jamaican food, the Jamaican staff have also had surprises, ranging from the humorous to the serious.

On the less serious side, Nickesha, who works at our Hopkins Street residence, was surprised to see people jogging in the snow this winter. New Englanders are less likely than Jamaicans to say hello to strangers they pass in the street, Orlease has found. Perhaps the cold makes us

more reserved? On a programmatic note, Denesia has been taken aback watching the changes is a resident who was full of fun when she met him a year ago, and is now in failing health due to Alzheimer's disease.

"I did not expect it. That really touched home," said Denesia.

As their time here draws to a close, Denesia and Orlease are each planning to continue their education. Denesia is considering a masters program in Social Work, Public Administration or Human Resources and Orlease is thinking of going to law school. We have been enriched by having Denesia, Orlease and Nickesha with us and wish them well with whatever road they travel next. If you have the opportunity to meet them or Sherrian, Tracy-Ann, Alecia or Stacia, take the time to ask them about their culture. As Stacia will tell you, there's so much more than reggae!

Students Shine at Annual Promenade

Chenine Johnson, Recreation Director for The Arc of East Middlesex, found many familiar faces at Wakefield High School's *Grand March* at Lake Quannapowitt last month before the prom at Danversport Yacht Club. The March is a tradition which gives family and friends the opportunity see all of the students in their formal wear and to take photographs. Several of the students shared their thoughts on the prom at a recent Wakefield High After School Club meeting at the Arc.

Julie Morabito attended the prom with "My Steve" Scaparotti of Medford, with whom she golfs in the Special Olympics program at Mt. Hood. What did she enjoy most about the evening?

"The Dance," said Julie. "She's a great dancer," chimed in Recreation staffer Samantha Stark, who attended the prom with her friend Brendan Kenney.

Kristin Yasi attended with another golfer, Merrill Krane of Melrose. Her favorite thing about the prom? "Merrill," said Kristin.

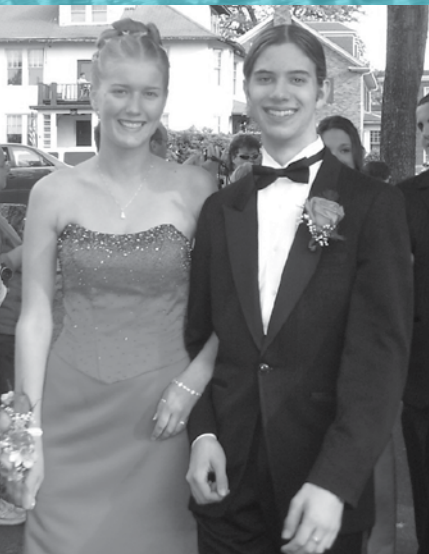
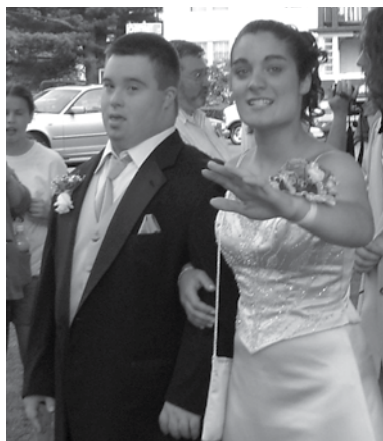
Club members Daniel Noonan and Kathryn Ng also participated.

"It was fun," said Daniel. "I had a pink dress and socks and pink shoes," added Kathryn.

Special thanks to Chenine for capturing these great photos and to the students for sharing them with us.



Kathryn Ng & Daniel Noonan



Samantha Stark & Brendan Kenney



Stephen Scaparotti & Julie Morabito

Merrill Krane & Kristin Yasi

Upcoming Workshops, Exhibits and Events

Support for Siblings, trainings for professionals and parents

Speaker: Kate Strohm, Author of *Being the Other One: Growing up with a Brother or Sister who has Special Needs* and Director, Siblings Australia, Inc.

Wednesday, July 26, 2006 North Shore Medical Center's Highland Hall Auditorium, 55 Highland Avenue, Salem, 01970. Workshop for professionals (CEUs/PDPs), 1 to 4 p.m., \$25. Workshop for parents, 7 to 9 p.m., \$10. Advanced Registra-

tion required. Co-sponsored by NSMC, the Arc of East Middlesex, the National Alliance on Mental Illness and the North Shore Autism Support Center. Log on to www.nsmcfamilyresourcecenter.org. for more information.

Run/Walk for The Arc of East Middlesex

Sunday, September 17, 2006. Starts next to Melrose Family YMCA at 401 Main Street. Kids 1/2 mile Fun Run, 10:15 a.m. 5K for runners and walkers at 10:30 a.m. Register by September 1st to receive

your 100% coolmax running shirt. Download the registration form from www.thearmac.org. A & A Taxi, Inc., Grand Sponsor. This event opens the Melrose Chamber of Commerce Victorian Fair.

Save the Date for The Richard Tucker Memorial Dinner & Auction

Monday evening, November 13, 2006 at the Marriott Hotel, 8A Centennial Drive, Peabody.

The Arc of East Middlesex

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Cover Art—

Denesia Daley, a manager at our Albion Street residence, sent us the photo in the masthead on page one of the waterfall in her hometown of Westmoreland, three hours away from Kingston, Jamaica. Denesia explained that the area received its current name after Christopher Columbus arrived in Jamaica in 1494 and said, "to the west is more land."

The Arc of East Middlesex Membership Application

Membership includes 10 issues of our *Timelines* newsletter; the Arc US newsletter; the Arc MA newsletter, *The Advocate*; access to our Recreation and Advocacy programs; invitations to Arc of East Middlesex events and an opportunity to nominate honorees for our Annual Spring Awards Ceremony.

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No Yes Email _____

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Teen Club