

Achieve

A publication of The Arc of Atlantic County, serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities since 1961



Coming of Age: A Young Woman's Journey to The Arc

Sofia Foschi, 23, is a lot like most young women coming out of school. She no longer lives with her parents, but she still calls them often from her cell phone when she needs them. She has housemates - and she clicks with some more than others. She has tons of energy, loves going to the gym and taking Zumba classes. She doesn't cook much, but she's learning. And she's a party girl - if cake and ice cream are involved, she's there.

Sofia is the youngest and newest member of The Arc of Atlantic County's residential program. She moved to the Hummel House, one of our new Galloway homes, in March of 2013 nearly one year after graduating from the Benedictine School in Maryland, a residential school for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities where Sofia thrived for six years. She is the only child of Rudy and Cheryl Foschi of Linwood, NJ, who are thrilled to have their daughter so close to them after many years away.

The Foschis are no strangers to The Arc. They became involved with the agency when Sofia was about

six years old, when they first applied for services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Cheryl remembers what a big help The Arc was to them back then. The paperwork process for DDD was overwhelming. Cheryl had heard that The Arc could help them with their application. So she scheduled an appointment with Kathi Lentz, Operations Director of Family Support, who guided them through the process.

Later, The Arc provided respite staff for the Foschis so they could raise their daughter and continue to operate their successful photography business. Sofia also attended The Arc's Summer Camp program at the JCC in Margate. The Foschis host an annual fundraiser for The Arc through their photography studio, and have raised thousands of dollars for the agency over the years.

Things were going fairly well for the Foschis. Sofia attended a regular public school and got along well enough with her classmates. But like many children with developmental disabilities, things changed dramatically in 6th grade, when students really noticed Sofia's differences and became less interested in being her friend.



Sofia with her parents, Cheryl and Rudy.

Cheryl and Rudy made the decision to pull Sofia out of the local school system and placed her in Y.A.L.E. School in Cherry Hill - a 90-minute commute each way. Three years later, they decided to send her to a highly regarded residential school in Maryland called Benedictine. It was difficult for them to send their only child three hours away, but the new school soon paid off. Sofia worked three days a week, made friends and enjoyed countless activities. She learned how to initiate a conversation for the first time while at Benedictine, a huge accomplishment for a girl who didn't speak until the age of seven.

(continued on page 2)



This photo of Sofia from The Arc's summer camp program is featured on the donor wall at the entrance of The Arc.

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Transitioning Out of School

With graduation looming, Rudy and Cheryl were worried about what would happen to their daughter when she aged out. She was doing so well, and they knew that moving back into their home would reverse much of what she achieved at Benedictine. In October 2011, when Sofia was 20, the Foschis were featured in an article in the *Ladies Home Journal* about raising children with special needs. The article quotes Cheryl, "We're hoping we can find a group home for her somewhere nearby but the odds are against it; there are about 6,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities on the waiting list for residential placement in New Jersey. Now that Sofia has developed her own life, coming back home would be a real tragedy for her. Rudy and I are afraid she'll shut down and regress."

A Crisis

When Sofia enrolled in Benedictine years ago, people with I/DD who moved from one state to another

automatically qualified for residential placement in the new state, which reassured the Foschis that Sofia would have a place to go in New Jersey when she graduated. Unfortunately, the rules changed by the time Sofia finished and the Foschis were stuck. "The state told us they weren't going to place her and that we should choose Self Directed services, where Sofia would live with us and participate in day programs or other services in the community. Not only was this not going to work for our family, I also became severely ill and over the course of 18 months spent 47 days in the hospital. Our case became an emergency. After nearly a year of trying other placements in the state at community care providers, there was an opening at The Arc of Atlantic County when a resident passed away."

Settling In

At the Galloway home, Sofia has her own bedroom, living area, bathroom and kitchenette - and so does each of her three roommates. The home is set up much like a college dormi-

tory suite with a common kitchen and living area for community dinners and socializing. Sofia's unit is furnished with Ikea shelves, a small table and chairs, and a sofa, with bright green accents. When you walk into her room, you see her daily schedule and prompts on the wall: gym, day program, and family time. These schedules help keep Sofia active and on track.

Sofia gets along with her roommates - especially Sharon, whom she hugs whenever she arrives home or leaves for the day. Sharon always initiates conversation with Sofia, asking about her day or telling her she likes her outfit. Sharon played a big role in helping Sofia feel comfortable when she first moved in. She's also close with her next door neighbor, Alison. They knew each other be-



Carmen Van Meter, a behaviorist with The Arc, shows some photos of her family to Sofia during a visit this summer.

fore Sofia moved to The Arc through their work.

Sofia is very active. She's a member of a local gym and loves to swim. She swam three times a week while she was in school and won gold medals in Special Olympics, which are proudly hung in her room.

Cheryl says, "Nancy Higgins and the staff at the Hummel House have really made the home special for Sofia. Nancy thinks eventually Sofia will be able to live more independently in an Arc supervised apartment. I'm not sure at this point if that's possible, but I would love to be proved wrong!"

Looking Ahead: Legacy Giving

The need for affordable and accessible housing for people with disabilities will not be resolved overnight. The Arc of Atlantic County will remain at the leading edge in addressing this problem by providing housing, services and support. **But we can't do that without your help**—now and in the future.

Remembering The Arc in your Will, in a life insurance policy or through another planned giving mechanism

may offer significant tax benefits while insuring that the important work we do continues.

Check with your estate planning professional for more information or call Patrick J. Manion, MBA, Director of Philanthropy at The Arc at 609-485-0800, ext. 135. You will need The Arc's EIN#, which is 221779284. If you have named The Arc as a beneficiary of your planned giving, please let us know.



Please enjoy the first installment of our Donor Spotlight column, which features the individuals and corporations who make our work possible.

Donor Spotlight

The Biscieglias: Paving the Way for a Brighter Future

The Arc is able to help people like the Foschis achieve their dreams of having a safe and supportive home for their daughter thanks in part to the generosity of donors like Charlie and Susan Biscieglija. The Biscieglias were one of the first contributors to The Arc of Atlantic County's *Building The Arc Together* campaign to expand affordable and accessible housing. They made a large gift to The Arc, half in cash and half in a planned gift through a life insurance policy. The Biscieglias were kind enough to let us share their personal giving story and why they made a gift to The Arc. We hope you will be inspired to include The Arc of Atlantic County in your future financial planning as well.

A Lifetime of Giving

When Charlie Biscieglija was hired as a management cadet at South Jersey Industries in 1968 at the age of 24, one of his very first lessons was not about the utilities business - it was about the importance of giving back. "The president and CEO at the time Bill Gemmel called me into his office and explained that I was expected to personally give to the charities the company supported. Philanthropy was a part of our company's culture, so it became a priority for my wife and I as well," Charlie said.

The Arc of Atlantic County was one of those charities that South Jersey Industries supported. "Several of our executives over the years served on The Arc of Atlantic County's board of directors. We gave through monetary donations and in-kind as well. I remember dropping off a gas grill at an Arc group home years ago, in fact."

Charlie retired from South Jersey Industries in 2004, but his philanthropy didn't end there. Charlie and Susan were just finishing up a large multi-year gift to another organization when they were approached by The Arc's leadership in 2010.

"When it was time for Susan and I to make some changes on where we make contributions, The Arc was first on my mind. We knew The Arc did great work, but

then we took a tour of The Arc to learn more about services. We were so impressed by the staff and clients. We felt really good about making a commitment to ensure The Arc can keep on doing this great work for people and their families," Charlie said.

Making a Plan for Planned Giving

The Biscieglias feel that planned giving is one of the most effective but least used methods of giving to charity. "Organizations need money now, but they also can easily secure their future by promoting planned giving. Individuals can plan gifts to charities through investments, wills, life insurance policies, and estates. You don't have to be wealthy. There are also financial and tax advantages to making planned gifts. It doesn't take anything out of your pocket now, and really doesn't take anything out of your estate. It just means a little less money to your heirs.

We included our two sons in our estate planning process. They'll inherit most of what we have, but we told them certain organizations will receive a portion of our estate. They know that we're committed to our community, and they respect our decisions. It's really important to include your family in this process to ensure there are no problems when the time comes to handle the

estate."

Charlie and Susan are thrilled to be a part of the difference The Arc of Atlantic County is making in the community. Susan says, "It's wonderful to hear about people like Sofia and her family, who are directly impacted by our support. We have been extremely fortunate in our lives, and it's really important to us to give back. It's a way of life for us. We wouldn't know what to do if we weren't involved in some organization. We've been married more than 45 years, and our charity work has been a very rewarding part of our marriage."



Charlie and Susan Biscieglija have made a generous commitment to The Arc through planned giving.

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Golf Tournament and Step Up for The Arc Walk Raise \$84,000



I. Rice & Company's president and CEO Steve Kuhl, top left, and chief operating officer Joe DiMedio, bottom left, with members of The Arc's Special Olympics Golf program. Back: Danny Philippi, and John Moore. Front: Shawn McHale, Michael Kmiec and Sara Misal.

The I. Rice & Company Golfing for Good Tournament benefiting The Arc's recreation program celebrated its fifth year this past September and raised \$54,000, the most successful tournament to date. One hundred golfers from all over the South Jersey and Philadelphia region, including athletes and volunteers in The Arc's golf program, came out for a beautiful day at Harbor Pines Golf Course in Egg Harbor Township. During the luncheon, Debbie Beck, a long time volunteer in The Arc's golf program and a major Arc donor, was recognized for her commitment to people we serve. Sue Kinsell, who runs The Arc's Recreation Program, was also recognized for her efforts to provide a diverse array of social activities and athletic programs.

Our annual walk-a-thon, **Step Up for The Arc**, was held on an unseasonably warm day in November and raised nearly \$30,000 to benefit programs like Family Support and Recreation. More than 200 people enjoyed walking the Ventnor boardwalk and a fun party afterward featuring dancing, a complimentary lunch and photo booth. Thanks to everyone who walked and supported the event! We'd like to especially acknowledge our top fundraising team, **Team Dina**, which raised almost \$3,000, and our top individual fundraiser, **Lisa Damiano**, who raised \$2,000.

The Arc of Atlantic County proudly introduces...

The **MonArc** Awards

Celebrating Those Who Give Our Mission Wings

Presented by Cape Bank Charitable Foundation

Wednesday, March 12, 2014 ~ 6PM to 10PM
The Carriage House in Galloway, NJ

The MonArc Awards is an elegant new twist on our annual tribute dinner. We hope you will join us this year - and every year - as we honor individual and corporate citizens who give our mission wings. We will also honor a person we support with the 'MonArc Butterfly Award' for transforming, emerging and achieving their full potential thanks to The Arc, its staff and the donors and volunteers who help make our work possible.

Join us for a celebratory evening as we honor:

Annie Damiano, MonArc Butterfly Award

Irv Singer, MonArc Citizenship Award

**I. Rice & Company, MonArc Corporate
Citizenship Award**

For tickets, ads, sponsorships and info visit:

www.arcatlantic.org/events/TributeDinner.asp

Or, contact Patrick Manion, Director of Philanthropy,
at 609-485-0800 ext. 135 or pmanion@arcatlantic.org.

Creativity Corner

Jorge Thomas is an 18-year old young man with mild autism who participates in The Arc's after school, Saturday and Friday Night Teen programs, which are part of our Family Support services. Jorge has many interests, including poetry. One of his poems, *A Song for Autism*, was featured in the December 2013 issue of *Pentimento Magazine*, a creative arts magazine for people with disabilities and their families. Jorge was kind enough to share another special poem he wrote about The Arc and his staff.



The Arc *By Jorge Thomas*

I love The Arc; we have fun, so much fun. We make friends, we keep those friends. We have wonderful staff, staff that couldn't get any better. We have games, lots of laughs, and many more but most of all. I love that I can come to anyone, anyone to talk to, to feel my pain when I'm feeling down. They are people I can trust, who I can count on to listen to me, who understand me. They are people I can open my heart to so thank-you all for being who you are. To all my fellow staff and friends, none of you can change. I love you just the way you are. That goes for all of you.

To me, Arc means

A for Adventure
R for Respect
C for Confidence because we all have it in us.

Thank You

Thank You for Your Support

Donors are an essential part of our mission and provide the funding we need to serve people with developmental disabilities and their families. Those listed made their gift between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013. We have made every effort to ensure accuracy of this list. If you notice an error, please contact Patrick Manion at 609-485-0800 ext. 135.

Legacy Society

Those listed have made a planned gift commitment to The Arc of Atlantic County
Charles and Susan Bisciegli
Michael J. David-Wilson
Herbert G. Hummel, III
Patrick J. Manion

Chairperson's Society

\$10,000+

Gene and Cindy Arnone
Peter and Debbie Beck
Borgata Heart and Soul Foundation
Cape Bank Charitable Foundation
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Herbert G. Hummel
Monica Buckley Memorial Foundation
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United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

Director's Society

\$5000 to \$9,999

Atlantic County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs
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Ocean City Home Charitable Foundation
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CEO's Society

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\$1,000-\$2,499

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