



Message From the Board

By Edward McDonnell



A couple of months ago I was watching on TV the annual induction ceremony for the National Football League Hall of Fame. One after another, great champions and team owners were presented with beautiful bright gold jackets, symbolizing their special contributions that have made the NFL one of the most successful enterprises ever. So grateful is the NFL to these individuals, that a bronze bust of each of them was unveiled—and will forever line the hallways at the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

With Larc's 50th Anniversary on my mind, I couldn't help thinking as I watched the induction ceremony, that there ought to be a Hall of Fame for Larc—a place to honor all the champions who took Larc from its humble beginnings to what it is today. After all, changing the lives of literally hundreds of children with disabilities and their families is at least as noteworthy as catching a football 2,000 times, or making a team worth millions of dollars more than when you bought it.

In the Larc Hall of Fame, there would be an award category called "Amazing Vision." Gold jackets would go to those young parents who, so many years ago, first envisioned the whole idea of a place like Larc.

Back then, there were a few programs able and willing to help children with disabilities, but only a few—the more severe the disability, the fewer the options. And the idea of a program for children who couldn't even walk was almost unheard of. Sadly, many profoundly disabled children grew into adulthood without ever leaving their homes. It was a time when parents grew older and wearier as they struggled, all alone, to cope with the exhausting demands of caring for a child they loved,

but could not help. I think often about those families, and wish they could have had Larc. How different their lives would have been.

It was in that environment that the "League to Aid Retarded Children" (L.A.R.C.) began. It was conceived by parents who would not accept that what had always been, must forever be. Through some amazing combination of courage and desperation, those intrepid Moms and Dads confronted the heartbreaking reality of their children, and decided that, whatever it took, they had to make their lives better.

“ No one would have believed in 1968, least of all those pioneering parents, that what they started would eventually become the amazing place we now call Larc. ”

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Gold jackets to all of them!

If Larc had a Hall of Fame honoring its greatest champions, it would include people like Judy Aiken, Ross Angilella, Reggie Beckett, Bellmawr Boro, Mayor, & Council, Wayne Bryant, Carol Parker-Elbert, Barbara Furstein, Jim Gale, Lou Greenwald, Rick Hardenbergh, Chas Higgins, Patricia Egan Jones, Jim Madden,

Tom McDonnell, Barbara Neidermayer, George Norcross, Pepe PiPerno, Paul Porado, Walter Rand, Jim Rhodes, Joe Roberts, Sammy Ross, Frank Spencer, Geri Spencer, Dick Vermeil, Susan Weiner, and so many others whose names we do not even know.

These are the legends of Larc. Champions, every one. Gold jackets to all of them!

And then there are all those generous benefactors who, over all these years, have golfed for the kids, walked or ran the Ben Franklin Bridge for the kids, or volunteered, or donated money to make sure these events were beyond successful. They are champions too. Because of all of them, our families sleep well at night, knowing this glorious, life-changing place called Larc will still be there tomorrow.

Gold jackets to each of them!

In the category of "There Would Be No Larc Without Them," bright gold Larc Hall of Fame jackets surely would go to every teacher, therapist, and classroom aide who, every day, dedicates heart, soul, and loving hands, not to scoring touchdowns, but to touching the lives of all those precious children who so need that touch.

No signing bonuses, no multi-year, multi-million dollar contracts, no endorsement deals—just modest compensation and the gratitude of every parent, guardian, and student who ever called Larc home.

We probably should celebrate this 50th Anniversary by lining the hallways of Larc with bronze busts of all those humble teachers, therapists, and aides. But if we were to suggest that, I know what they all would say: "But where would the wheelchairs go?"

Happy Anniversary to Larc! ■

Redesigned Secondary Suite Boosts Daily Living And Work Readiness Curriculum



Who knew that learning to fold laundry or make a bed could be so much fun! If you watched our students in Larc's new Secondary Suite, you would see these everyday tasks in a new light. Our Secondary students are learning about Daily Living and Work Readiness in our newly updated four-room suite, which includes an apartment setting, adaptive kitchen, laundry room, and work readiness room. Students can move between rooms much like they would at home, allowing for a real life experience in the middle of their school day.

educational curriculum is important for all children, equally important to their children are the skills needed to gain independence and have meaningful social experiences. Teachers, with input from parents and therapists, create goals and teach students about hygiene, laundry, cleaning, cooking, staying on task, social skills, and so much more.

"We've been working on these types of skills for ... well 50 years—we are celebrating our anniversary this school year," says Executive Director Susan Weiner. "This is important to our students

“Parents of children with special needs understand that while a strong educational curriculum is important for all children, equally important to their children are the skills needed to gain independence and having meaningful social experiences.”

"This Suite is so exciting!" says Occupational Therapist Lacey Brinser. "Having the ability to work on Daily Living Skills like folding laundry or setting a table in a realistic environment makes a big difference."

Physical Therapist Maddie Storms adds, "PT is excited too! When working on skills like transferring a student from a bed to a wheelchair, it is so much more meaningful to be in a real life setting. Some students can't make that connection if the movement is just from mat to mat."

Larc's focus is not on task completion, it's about what is meaningful, relevant, and functional. The Secondary Suite expands the learning experience and takes students outside the educational setting, bringing everyone together in a more realistic daily living environment.

Parents of children with special needs understand that while a strong

and their families. With our redesigned suite, students will get to learn in a home-based setting, working on skills that can immediately be applied to their lives outside of school."

The Secondary Program is expanding and the Suite is just one component. This summer Larc had a Grand Re-Opening of their student-run School Store now serving beverages as well as healthy snacks. The Secondary curriculum this year also includes increased community outings.

"We will continue to look for opportunities for our students to grow, stretch, and reach their unique levels of independence," explains Ms. Weiner. "Our staff is invigorated and passionate about what we do. You don't make it 50 years in special education if you don't have an unwavering belief in what our students can accomplish. We have a very special team of people." ■

From top to bottom: Michael H. with support from OT Lacey cleans up after himself in the Adaptive Kitchen. James R. works on making the bed in the Apartment. Michael W. does a load of wash in the Laundry Room. Our newly updated School Store is Open! Stop in for coffee & a snack!



Graduation at Larc School... Wishful and Wistful

On Friday, June 9, two Larc Preschool students and seven Secondary students brought tears to everyone's eyes as they took the next step in their young lives—graduation!

Speaking of the preschool graduates, Executive Director Susan Weiner said, "It was only a few short years ago that two new families walked into Larc School and, with a tug at their hearts, brought us the gift of their children. Alex and Fayth, we watched you each day with great pride as you worked so very hard. You learned so much in so few years. Today your journey is just beginning, because today you are becoming kindergarteners."

And to the Secondary graduates, Ms. Weiner said, "You have shown us your strength, your drive to learn, your acceptance of new people in your lives, how to start each day anew, and how to be the best you can be. Yes, change is hard. Just like your first visit here so many years ago, you had to get to know us, to trust us, and you did."

"And now, our graduates and you, their parents, will again go through this passage to a new phase of life," she said to all. "On behalf of all of our Larc Family, thank you for letting us share in the lives of your children—we are the better for it."

Congratulations to our 2017 Graduates! ■



Clockwise, a joyous gathering of the Savidge family around Secondary Graduate Ada S. Secondary Graduates Kyle R. (far left) and Darnail T. (center right) pose proudly with Executive Director Susan Weiner (center left), and Assemblywoman and Larc Board Member Patricia Egan-Jones (far right). Pure joy is captured in the faces of Graduate Alex I. and Classroom Assistant Danielle as they await graduation.



Heart of Larc Award

Each year at the **End-of-Year Dinner**, The Heart of Larc Award is presented to one staff member to recognize his or her extraordinary contribution to Larc School and its students. This year's Heart of Larc Award was presented to Larc Bookkeeper **Shirley Wacker** (right) by Larc Executive Director Susan Weiner (left) for consistently going above and beyond the scope of her position.

Above, celebrating at Larc's annual End-Of-Year Dinner with Executive Director Susan Weiner (far right) are (left to right) Kathy Ventura-Davis, Connie Cocciolone, Dawn Taylor, Cynthia Farrell, Shirley Wacker, Michele Steriti, and Leslie Finerfrock. Celebrating, but not pictured, are Dianne Bentliff, Cathy Cannon, Mark Cheeseman, and Cherie Lynch.

Larc Thanks Staff for Years of Dedication

Kudos to those who celebrate special anniversaries of their many years with Larc!

- Dianne Bentliff, Activities of Daily Living/Work Readiness Instructor** – 35 years
- Cynthia Farrell, Classroom Assistant** – 30 years
- Shirley Wacker, Bookkeeper** – 25 years
- Dawn Taylor, Adult Program Assistant** – 20 years
- Cathy Cannon, Adult Program Assistant** – 15 years
- Mark Cheeseman, Maintenance** – 15 years
- Connie Cocciolone, Classroom Assistant** – 15 years
- Leslie Finerfrock, Classroom Assistant** – 15 years
- Cherie Lynch, Adult Program Assistant** – 15 years
- Kathy Ventura-Davis, Adult Program Assistant** – 10 years
- Michele Steriti, Teacher** – 10 years



8th Annual Lobster Bake

The 8th Annual Lobster Bake was a delicious success—gorgeous weather, great food, good friends! Thanks and congratulations to the Young Lawyers Committee for another amazing event all to benefit Larc School!



friends

OF LARC SCHOOL

Larc School gratefully acknowledges these gifts from our caring friends—individuals, foundations, corporations—whose generosity makes it possible for Larc School to provide the very best for its students and their families. We extend our deepest gratitude to every donor.

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Listed above are contributions from January 1, 2017 through June 30, 2017 Please let us know if a name was omitted, and we'll be sure to print it in our next issue.

When remembering those you love, remember Larc



Make a donation to Larc School—the perfect remembrance for all occasions: birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, congratulations, and condolences.

Contributions may be sent to: Larc School, 1089 Creek Road, Bellmawr, NJ 08031

(Envelope enclosed) or donate online at www.larcschool.org



Record Numbers Tee Up for the 26th Annual “Help the Kids” Golf Tournament

The “Help The Kids” Golf Tournament, held on June 2nd, was a big win for Larc School with shotgun starts in both the am and pm. The popular Pennsauken County Club course was filled with Larc friends and supporters! Perfect weather paired with enthusiastic golfers made for a beautiful day! As the sun went down guests went upstairs to the banquet room for a lovely sit down dinner surrounded by fabulous raffles just waiting to be won. The room was buzzing with excitement. Everyone knew why they were there as Executive Director Susan Weiner thanked everyone for coming and for believing in Larc School.

“Everything we do at Larc is done with belief,” explained Ms. Weiner. “Belief that every student can achieve can grow, can learn ... belief that this special piece of equipment can make a difference ... belief that this new medication will help the seizures ... belief that this new day will show us a new skill,” she said.

Ms. Weiner then showed this photograph of **Kyle**, who is a 2017 Larc Graduate, and read the accompanying note from Kyle and his parents, John and Sandy:

At Larc,” said Ms. Weiner, “We never stop believing!” ■



“ When we left the hospital 21 years ago, we were told that they didn't know what Kyle's future would be like, but they did say that they thought he would never walk, never talk, never feed himself and he was blind. Thanks for all your effort making the prognosis wrong.



John, Sandy & Kyle

Golfers enjoying the blue, sunny skies at the Pennsauken Country Club. (Below, l to r:) Excited auction prize winners, our first place golfers, and fun times with friends.



thank you

6.2.17
help the kids
26TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT
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Larc School Sincerely Thanks the Sponsors of the 26th Annual "Help the Kids" Golf Tournament

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Celebrating 50 Years with Families & Friends

Larc held its Family Fun Fest on September 23rd. Over 200 family and friends joined us to celebrate our 50th anniversary with live music, games, face painting, bubbles, cupcakes, water ice, kettle corn, and more! ■



calendar

Thursday, November 16, 2017
Thanksgiving Luncheon

Sunday, April 29, 2018
50th Anniversary Brunch

facebook.com/larcschool



50TH LARC FAMILY FUN FEST

