As yoga students gather and settle into their chairs, Damon greets the class with “Thank you all for coming today. Now let’s all sit up tall and take a deep breath in.” Everyone follows the first movement, which includes a deep breath in with arms floating overhead followed by the cue “now…snow down gently with an exhale”… and individuals sequentially move their arms down to the ground while flittering their fingers like falling snow. The sense of community in the yoga practice comes alive with Damon. Damon demonstrates Tree pose.

Damon asks, “Who inspired us to be loved? It could be friends, family or even a pet.” The answers from each participant are individual and thoughtfull. The sense of community in the yoga practice comes alive with Damon.

Damon completed a 60-hour yoga teacher training course with Alison Bologna, owner of Shri Studio in Pawtucket. Over the course of three weekends, Alison led devoted yoga students through the principles and techniques of instructing yoga outreach classes. Through the process, Damon had to learn the philosophy of Karma Yoga and service-based outreach programs, practice yoga asanas (poses), complete field work and develop an “outreach project” for a presentation to the class. Damon developed an outreach project devoted to members of his church.

In 2012, Alison started the non-profit Shri Service Corps to bring yoga to shelters, schools, recovery centers, hospitals, veterans and social service agencies. Each Shri project is provided with a curriculum developed by Alison to accommodate students both on and off the mat. Shri stands for Support, Honor, Respect, and Inspire. Damon brings this philosophy to each and every class he teaches. His accomplishment is an inspiration to all of us at The Arc!
Letter from the CEO

One of the things that make The Arc of Blackstone Valley such a special place is the philanthropic commitment of our Board, family members and friends. Last year we raised over $9,000 during our membership campaign in March, a testament to the enthusiasm of over 100 donors. Membership contributions are critical, because they fund social and recreational activities that are not supported by State dollars. We hope we can count on you this March, to surpass our 2018 goal of $10,000!

This fall we celebrated the opening of a new computer center at one of our housing complexes, Veterans For Tomorrow (VFT). We are grateful to Jason Martins of Phoenix Property Management for his efforts in bringing this project to the attention of the Institute for Real Estate Management, Greater Rhode Island, Chapter 68 (IREM-RI). Thanks to IREM, funds were raised to support the creation of a computer center to help residents pursue job opportunities and online applications. We are especially grateful to Secure Future Tech, Inc., which generously donated three desktop computers which were unveiled on Thursday, November 9th before a crowd of supporters.

In addition, we acknowledged Art Connections-RI for the donation and installation of twelve new works of art that adorn the walls of the community room and the computer center.

As we move into 2018, we need to shift our focus towards looking strategically to the future. Times have changed for The Arc and many other agencies in our field. We need new models, new ideas and new ways of securing employment opportunities for our consumers. This is what the US Department of Justice’s Consent Decree is all about. I hope you will take time to read our feature article about a local business, Out of Eden, which recently hired two of our consumers for paid work in the landscaping field. We would so appreciate any help connecting The Arc to any businesses that might open their doors to our participants for either volunteer placements or paid work.

Thank you again for your support and belief in The Arc of Blackstone Valley!

Sincerely,
John J. Palec III
Chief Executive Officer

We here at Out of Eden Landscaping pledge to treat you, our customer, with respect and individual attention.

When a company publicizes a pledge to the community like this, you can be confident that it is also a reflection of how it values and respects its employees. And this couldn’t be truer for two members of The Arc family, Eric Major and Kris Richards who now work for Out of Eden Landscaping.

For Owner, Joshua Pereira, it began with an honest commitment to individuals with disabilities in part because of his previous position at an agency similar to The Arc. “I was a psychologist and very active writing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for children ages 3-9 years of age. Later, I became familiarized with transition services for students ages 18-21. What I learned over time is that these young adults never get a fair chance. Society is quick to put a label on them, but identifying skills and interests and moving them beyond their disability just doesn’t seem to happen.”

But Joshua is sure about his commitment to these two employees and is excited that The Arc has taken a leadership role in its approach to community-based employment. Just in the last few months, seven individuals have either started new jobs or are interning for several months with the hope of future employment and six others have been in long term positions with area companies.

According to Arc Program Director Jon Robillard, both men were well prepared for a paying job in the community, from years of training and contract work with Valley Landscaping. Both Eric and Kris have Safety and Compliance certifications from Beacon Mutual which was very appealing to Joshua and his Operations Manager Florian Pereira.

“It’s truer for two members of The Arc family, Eric Major and Kris Richards who now work for Out of Eden Landscaping.

The Arc of Eden Team: Joshua Pereira, Eric Major and Floriano Pereira with Arc Program Director Jon Robillard.”

March is Membership Month

Your vision…our Work. Members are critical to the success of The Arc. Every dollar raised supports new and ongoing recreational and educational programs that are not typically funded by the State. You will receive a membership letter in February, but just in case, a membership envelope is enclosed with this newsletter in case you are eager to contribute now! And don’t forget, you can donate through our website and secure Paypal portal at www.byvierarc.org.