The Arc of Blackstone Valley
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FALL 2026

NEWSLETTER

A Letter from the CEO

What a wonderful and eventful summer it has been! Over the past few months, we've enjoyed so many opportunities to celebrate the individuals we support, our dedicated staff, and the community that makes The Arc of Blackstone Valley so special. From exciting adventures and excursions across the state to meaningful moments spent together, the individuals we support made the most of everything the beautiful summer season had to offer.

In September, we celebrated Direct Support Professional Recognition Week with a special day dedicated to honoring our incredible staff and recognizing the difference they make every day. Our leadership, management, and administrative teams rolled up their sleeves to wash cars for everyone who stopped by, while Matilda's Catering Truck and Palagi Ice Cream provided delicious food and sweet treats. With music, laughter, and plenty of fun, it was a wonderful day of appreciation and celebration. A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who helped organize such a memorable event and show our appreciation for the dedicated professionals who make a difference in the lives of the individuals we support every day!

Continuing our celebration of outstanding staff, I am delighted to congratulate Heather Garris, Assistant Program Manager at Tim Healey Way, on being named our Direct Support Professional of the Year! A valued member of The Arc of Blackstone Valley team since 1997, Heather exemplifies compassion, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to the individuals she supports. Heather, thank you for your many years of service, the encouragement you provide to your fellow staff members, and the respect, compassion, and exceptional care you bring to your work each day. Your dedication reflects the very best of the agency, and we are fortunate to have you on our team. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!

Our annual cookout at Twelve Acres was another great success! Staff, board members, and the individuals we support came together to enjoy food, music, and dancing as we celebrated the end of summer. It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect, share laughter, and strengthen the relationships that make our Arc community so special. Events like these remind us how meaningful it is to come together, celebrate one another, and enjoy the sense of belonging that makes The Arc of Blackstone Valley such a special place.

We are also incredibly proud of the talented artists and staff at Flying Shuttles Art and Weaving Studio, whose creativity was celebrated through an exciting community collaboration. Hired by Alison Bologna to create an outdoor work of art for the Shri campus, our artists John and Brenda developed a design inspired by their Valentine's Day artwork, which beautifully reflected the values of the Shri community. Throughout the summer, they worked diligently to bring their vision to life on a large canvas. The finished piece is now proudly displayed outside the building for the entire community to enjoy—a wonderful showcase of our artists' creativity, talent, and contributions to the community! Please be sure to drive by and check it out!

Exciting progress continues on The Paddock, our new housing initiative, as funding and design plans move forward. With support from the City of Pawtucket and RI Housing, we anticipate breaking ground in early 2027. This project represents an important step toward expanding housing opportunities in our community, and we look forward to sharing more updates in the months ahead.

Looking ahead, keep an eye out for our 12 Weeks of Giving flyers and mailers, arriving soon! This special annual campaign offers meaningful opportunities to support The Arc of Blackstone Valley and help create more opportunities for the individuals we support to live fulfilling, connected, and meaningful lives. We are deeply grateful for the generosity of our donors, families, and community partners, whose continued support makes our work possible.

As we welcome the coming season, I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who makes The Arc of Blackstone Valley such a vibrant and caring community. To our staff, thank you for your dedication and compassion. To our families, donors, volunteers, and community partners, thank you for your trust, generosity, and continued partnership. And to the individuals we support, thank you for sharing your talents, experiences, and lives with us.

Together, we continue to build a community where everyone is valued, included, and given the opportunity to thrive. Wishing you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and safe season ahead. Thank you for being part of The Arc of Blackstone Valley family!

John J. Padien, III
Chief Executive Officer, The Arc of Blackstone Valley

Building Independence Through Inclusive Employment Services

Employment opportunities help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) lead meaningful, inclusive lives in their communities. Building skills and earning an income increases autonomy, independence, and quality of life. That is why The Arc of Blackstone Valley helps individuals find and maintain jobs in their community through our employment services. Employment services are meant to support individuals through every step of the process, including exploring options, applying for jobs, maintaining a job, and long-term career planning. These services include person-centered career planning, job exploration and development, soft skills and workplace readiness training, computer access, short-term vocational experiences, job coaching and retention support, and referrals for benefits planning.

Steven, one of the individuals our program supports, has been a maintenance worker at 212 Health and Performance for almost two years. He says that working makes him feel good. He likes meeting people and making friends at work, and he also enjoys earning money. He has a great relationship with his boss, Kerry Taylor, who says that Steven is a great independent worker and would encourage other employers to hire people with disabilities.





Citizens With Power is Ready to Vote

Citizens With Power is a self-advocacy group for people with developmental disabilities who live in the Blackstone Valley area. Our self-advocates recognize the importance of voting and making informed decisions. At their most recent meeting, participants reviewed the ballot questions and referendum, with the facilitators (Service Coordinators) helping to make sure everyone understood what their votes would mean. The group empowers people to make decisions based on what matters most to them. During the election, the individuals we support voted in ways that were most accessible to them. Some filled out a traditional ballot, others brought someone they trusted for support, and some used technology that read the ballot aloud. Understanding and exercising your right to vote is important, and everyone deserves the opportunity to make their voice heard!

Annual Cookout Fun

The Arc of Blackstone Valley enjoyed a lively fall cookout at Twelve Acres in Smithfield, RI on September 24th, featuring lunch, socializing, and dancing in a warm, festive, and relaxed atmosphere. The event brought together more than 200 people — including agency staff, board members and individuals supported by the organization — for a day of camaraderie and celebration. The cookout at Twelve Acres combines the hospitality and amenities of the venue with the spirit of community that the agency values.





A Spooky Spin on Poetry Night

Poetry is a great way for people to express themselves and connect with others. That is why Flying Shuttles Art and Weaving Studio hosts Poetry Nights! Started by Sadey Fournier, the Assistant Director for Community Programming at The Arc of Blackstone Valley, Poetry Nights encourage creativity and community. Poetry Nights are often themed, and participants create corresponding poems. Everyone has a blast performing their poems and listening to others. October's Poetry Night, held on Thursday the 22nd, had a spooky twist! Instead of being read by their authors, poems were shuffled and read by others. The group had a great time guessing who wrote each piece!

Celebrating Direct Support Professionals Week

September's Direct Support Professional (DSP) Recognition Week gave us an opportunity to celebrate our DSPs with our annual car wash and food truck event. Our office staff washed the DSPs cars and vans, while they got to enjoy lunch from Matilda's Empanadas and ice cream from Palagi Brothers. Everyone had a blast, appreciating the nice weather and great company. We are so grateful for our DSPs, and we appreciate their hard work every day.

