



LIBERTY
ARC

A chapter of **The Arc**
New York

News Release: May 7, 2021

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Liberty ARC Honors Community Collaborations at Annual Meeting Organizations Recognized for Their Supportive Efforts During COVID-19 Pandemic

AMSTERDAM – Liberty ARC announced the recipients of the agency’s 2021 Community Partner and Community Commitment awards during its Annual Meeting, held virtually on May 3. The organization recognized Sara Boerenko & Team – the Montgomery County Public Health Department (MCPH) as this year’s Community Partner, and Liberty Enterprises received the 2021 Community Commitment Award.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Boerenko, director of MCPH, and her team have been a tremendous support to the agency. Liberty ARC was able to navigate this public health crisis with Boerenko and her team’s leadership and an open and on-going line of communication in order to best protect our most vulnerable population that we support, our staff, and the community. Boerenko met with managers, nurses, and administration to discuss COVID-19, as well as their role in the crisis as the public health department. They continued to be an asset to Liberty ARC as the COVID-19 vaccination became available and updated the agency on upcoming clinics for both staff and the people we support.

“Sara and her team have been just a phone call or email away for our clinical team, always taking the time to answer questions with a friendly attitude,” said Liberty ARC CEO Jennifer Saunders. “The support Sara and her team have provided to Liberty and to our community is deeply appreciated, and without a doubt impacted the lives of the people we serve. We are honored to give them this award for their community partnership.”

“We are honored and humbled to be recognized by our partners from Liberty ARC,” said Boerenko. “Even before the pandemic, we had a great working relationship with the administration, staff, and residents. The pandemic has certainly brought our work much closer and helped us develop and strengthen those bonds. We don’t do this work for recognition so getting this award brings such joy to us all. Liberty has been with us from start to now as we close in on the finish line. In some cases a pandemic can divide relations and with MCPH and Liberty, it has made us a closer community partner

and bonded us together. There are situations that we worked through that showcased the strength of our staff and Liberty ARC employees.”

Montgomery County United Way reached out to Liberty ARC’s manufacturing division, Liberty Enterprises, in the early summer looking for help with a mass food distribution event at the Fonda Fairgrounds. Erin Abele, Liberty ARC Director of Employment Services and Industrial Operations and a Montgomery County United Way Board Member, acted as the point of contact for Liberty Enterprises to prepare and donate several pallets of recycled boxes for Amen Place Food Pantry to use to pack food. Liberty Enterprises continued to support Amen Place Food Pantry and connected them with Beech-Nut Foods, Inc. to supply boxes for their increased food distribution.

“The giving spirit of Liberty Enterprises truly exemplifies what this award stands for,” said Candace Opalka, Chief Operating Officer, Liberty ARC. “Their commitment to their community is truly inspiring and demonstrates outstanding service to those in need. It is also incredible Liberty Enterprises took the time to help the Amen Place Food Pantry as they dealt with and successfully handled an increase in sales for products to combat the COVID-19 virus.”

“To be able to find a way to give back through our Liberty Enterprises manufacturing division, during a time when all of our communities are challenged by COVID 19, is special,” said Abele. “In 2020, Liberty Enterprises saw a surge in demand for our essential sanitizers and disinfectant products. Being able to donate our recycled boxes from our packaging operations to support the hard work of the Amen Place Food Pantry to pack meals for those with food insecurities is a simple, yet perfect opportunity to give back to the community. Though our communities saw an unprecedented need in 2020, we know food insecurities are an ongoing challenge and we look forward to continuing this support.”

Liberty ARC also recognized their Employees of the Year during the meeting. The following outstanding employees were honored:

Program Employee of the Year – Dayne Peck

Support Employee of the Year – Lisa Klim

Manager of the Year – Nora Pavlak

Associate Director/Director of the Year – Catherine Mowrey

Special recognition was given to Liberty ARC individuals who have been with the agency for 36 or 35 years.

Following board members were honored for their milestone years of service: Donna Canestraro for five years of services on the Liberty ARC Board of Directors, Elizabeth Smith for five years of service on the Choices for Community Living Board of Directors, Brett Harris for five years of service on the Liberty Foundation Board, Michael Bucciferro for 10 years of service on the Liberty ARC Board of Directors, Cornelius Catena for 10 years of service on the Choices for Community Living Board of Directors, Kenneth Adamowski for 15 years of service on the Liberty ARC Board of Directors, Rev. Dr. Lisa Vander

Wal for 15 years of service on the Liberty ARC Board of Directors, and Sally Romano for 20 years of service on the Liberty ARC Board of Directors.

Sworn in as Liberty Board officers for the 2021-2022 term were: Brett Harris, president; Kim Brumley, vice-president; Michael Bucciferro, secretary; and Carl Pucci; treasurer. The following directors were sworn in for the 2021-2023 term: Kim Brumley, Michael Bucciferro, David Fariello, Karreene O'Neil, Sally Romano, John Rose, and Deborah Slezak. They join current standing directors (2020-2022 term): Kenneth Adamowski, Donna Canestraro, Paul DiCaprio, Brett Harris, Carl Pucci, Kelly Swart, Psy. D., and Rev. Dr. Lisa Vander Wal.

About Liberty ARC

Liberty ARC, the Montgomery County Chapter of The ARC New York, is a not-for-profit agency that provides top-quality supports and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are proud of our six decades of bringing these innovative and valuable programs to those most vulnerable in our community. While staying committed to our framework the agency has grown our employment, residential, day supports, family support and health-related programming throughout the years. Our mission- *Together we support people with disabilities to achieve a quality of life each person values* - together with our *Values* make up the foundation on which our culture is framed. We are extremely proud to be a pioneering agency, which coupled with a dynamic workforce and our person-centered mission makes Liberty ARC a stand-out in our field.

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