

AMSTERDAM

Liberty ARC celebrates community at annual meeting

For the first time since 2019, Liberty ARC held their annual meeting in person this month at River Stone Manor in Glenville, recognizing contributions and commitments to the community. Liberty ARC recognized Montgomery County Sheriff Jeffery Smith and the Sheriff’s Office as this year’s Community Partner, and the Liberty ARC Pink Out Committee received the 2023 Community Commitment Award.

In the fall of 2022, participants in Liberty ARC’s day hab program accepted an invitation by Smith to visit and tour the Sheriff’s Office. Smith and his staff made everyone feel welcome as they toured the offices, saw the different police and rescue vehicles, and visited with Corrections Officer Erik Krug and K-9 Sam, according to a statement. Those who took part in the tour all said how wonderful the experience was. Smith and the sheriff’s department have supported Liberty ARC for years. Smith has also made it known during his communications with the agency that Liberty ARC can always count on him and his office in times of need or emergencies to keep the people who receive supports and staff safe.

“The Community Partner Award is presented to a deserving community organization or individual that has shown outstanding support and commitment to people with disabilities in Liberty ARC’s programs, and it is my pleasure to honor Sheriff Smith and the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office,” said Liberty ARC CEO Jennifer Saunders in a statement. “Sheriff Smith has been extremely welcoming to our staff and the people we support, which allows for a relationship between law enforcement and Liberty to be built.”

“The members of the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office and I are extremely honored to collaborate with Liberty and be the 2023 recipient of the Community Partner Award,” Smith said in a statement. “Liberty’s staff and the people they support are the example and standard of what our society should be. Working with



Left: Liberty ARC CEO Jennifer Saunders, left, with incoming Liberty ARC Board of Directors President Kim Brumley at Liberty ARC’s annual meeting. **Right:** Montgomery County Sheriff Jeffery Smith, third from right, with the Community Partner Award plaque, which was given out to the Sheriff’s Office during Liberty ARC’s annual meeting.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

them, supporting them, and being accessible for them is essential for our community. Providing tours, answering questions, and opening our doors has provided some of the most rewarding moments in recent memory. When Liberty toured our office, the equipment, the experience and of course K-9 Sam were big hits. Thank you so much for the work you do, the friendships you provide, and the people you are. We are very thankful and a proud partner.”

The Pink Out Committee was established nine years ago and in that time has raised around \$10,000 in donations for the New York Oncology Hematology (NYOH) Community Cancer Foundation, which provides supports to people in the local community who are battling cancer. The committee is comprised of a cross-functional group that includes both Liberty ARC staff and people who receive supports. In the fall of 2022, the Pink Out Committee held their annual Pink Out Day to raise funds and to support breast cancer awareness. Over \$1,300 was raised through apparel and bake sales, which is a

new record amount raised during the annual fundraiser. The money is then used by NYOH to purchase gift cards that are used for breast care treatment-related needs.

“We are honored to receive this award for all the work the Pink Out Committee has done over the years to support local people undergoing breast cancer treatments,” said Liberty ARC staff and Pink Out Committee member Wendy Moore, in a statement. “This is a cause that is very near and dear to our hearts. Annually, we have so much support from the people we support and staff at Liberty, as well as community businesses to help us raise money for such a great cause. Each year, we are reminded of how special and important this cause is, not just to us as a committee, but to the entire Liberty ARC family. Over the years, the Pink Out Committee has grown along with our annual October event. Liberty ARC’s Pink Out Day started as a simple T-shirt sale back in 2014 and now includes bake sales, basket raffles and breast cancer awareness merchandise sales. We take a lot of pride in the fact that our proceeds

go to help local people right here in our community.”

“The good and thoughtful work of the Pink Out Committee truly exemplifies the true spirit of this award,” said Liberty ARC Chief Operating Officer Candace Opalka, in a statement. “This group’s commitment to raising awareness of breast cancer and holding an annual event to raise funds is inspiring and a model of goodness for us all. We, at Liberty, are so proud of their achievements and growing successes over the years, helping others in their times of need.”

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

- ◆ Program Employee of the Year: Paula Szabo, Direct Support Professional
- ◆ Support Employee of the Year: Wendy Moore, Incident Review Coordinator
- ◆ Manager of the Year: Diana Mack, Human Resources Manager
- ◆ Assistant Director/Director of the Year: Erin Abele, Director of Employment Services and Industrial Operations

Special recognition was given to 10 people who receive supports and services from Liberty ARC for being with the agency for 35 to 40 years.

The following board members were honored for their milestone years of service: Brett Harris (five years), Paul DiCaprio (10 years) and Carl Pucci (25 years) for their service to the Liberty ARC Board of Directors and John Rose and Ben Ziskin for 15 years of service to the Choices for Community Living Board of Directors, .

Sworn in as Liberty Board officers for the 2023-2024 term were: Kim Brumley, president; Deborah Slezak, vice president; Carl Pucci, secretary and Michael Bucciferro, treasurer. The following directors were sworn in for the 2023-2025 term: Brumley, Bucciferro, Slezak, David Fariello, Karreen O’Neil, and Sally Romano. They join current standing directors (2022-2024 term): DiCaprio, Pucci, Ken Adamowski, Donna Canestraro, Brett Harris and Rev. Dr. Lisa Vander Wal.