



THE FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER OF THE ARC OF THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

Funding Crisis for Developmental Disabilities Services

By Chris Cadwallader

In March 2020, COVID hit every part of our society, devastating the already struggling and under-funded system that supports people with Developmental Disabilities to live their lives in their own communities. As Governor Northam's Administration worked to provide relief to the economy, previously funded investments in rate increases were withdrawn, just as service providing agencies were either forced to shut down, or continue to deliver care while absorbing soaring costs in order to keep people safe.

In August, the Governor and General Assembly convened a special session to decide how to distribute 3.1 billion dollars of CARES Act funding to save businesses devastated by COVID.

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Anita: Journey to Independence

By Nancy Camajani

Anita's journey began on a hot summer day in Houston, Texas when she was born a beautiful tiny little girl with big brown "Bette Davis eyes" and disabilities not immediately diagnosed. In the coming days, months and years, many doctors and specialists evaluated

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Self-Advocates Unite!

The "A Life Like Yours" Self-Advocacy Alliance is a newly formed group that is made up of people with disabilities and advocates who are members of almost 20 self-advocacy groups across the state. It was created in 2019 by The Arc of Virginia after they won a one-year, \$50,000 grant from the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.

"We want to empower people with disabilities to share their voice and share their stories because the people who experience the system should be the ones driving the system and having an influence on how services and supports are provided in the state," says Tonya Milling, the Arc of VA executive

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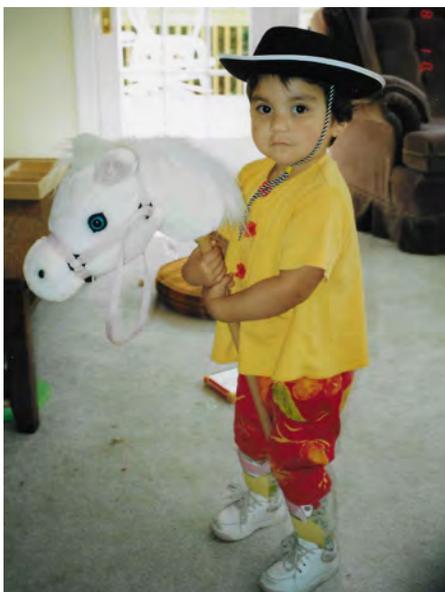
ANITA'S JOURNEY *(cont. from pg. 1)*

and diagnosed her with mild cerebral palsy, ADD, and sensory integration issues. They said she would never walk, speak, read or learn.

But even at the young age of 18 months, Anita had other plans. Through a regimen of hours of daily, rigorous therapies, Anita persisted through exercises, neoprene suits, leg braces, walkers etc. She took her first steps at 42 months old. Her spirit was indomitable!

Her first years of school began her second set of life challenges. Although some of her instructors understood her need for processing time and word formation, sensitivity to light and noise, and the need for extra time to keep up, some did not, and punished her. Anita was eventually prone to fits of outrage and melt downs but was always willing to try to help her parents explain and help her teachers understand better ways to help her.

Although shy, Anita's self-advocacy talents continued to grow during her school years. She became more verbal and decisive in her IEP meetings. In spite of bullying from her peers, and some school policies she found unfair (for example, SOL's), she was never aggressive, but instead assertive and almost always polite.



ANITA TOOK HER FIRST STEPS AT 42 MONTHS.

In high school, Anita was accepted into an Independent Living course through DARS. She learned job skills such as food prep, child care, housekeeping and customer service as well as resume writing, interview skills and application submission. Anita lived in a dormitory setting with a roommate, attended work trainings on time, managed her own meds and social life. This program proved to be invaluable especially to her self esteem.

Anita graduated from Auburn High School with an Applied Studies Diploma and enrolled in the On-Campus Transition Program at Radford University where she audited classes and secured a job at Starbucks! She got a glimpse of campus life and made some great friends.

Receiving a Community Living Waiver in October 2018 was a life changer. The Waiver really helped Anita start preparing for living independently. After being on the waiver wait list for almost 13 years, she was able to verbalize her wants and expectations, dreams and future plans and goals.

Anita now lives in an apartment with two roommates and a dog, works for the Montgomery County School Systems, volunteers at MCEAP Thrift Store and participates in Special Olympics. She continues to build her independent living and social skills and follow her dreams.

Nancy Camajani joined The Arc of the NRV board in 2019. She is a recently retired Medical Technologist and proud mother to Anita.

Meet Our New Board Members

BRAD POWERS

Brad joined the board in 2020 and is currently a Special Education Coordinator for Pulaski County Public Schools. He previously taught special education for 8 years at Christiansburg Middle School. Brad is passionate about inclusive schools and communities. He is an avid golfer and



BRAD POWERS

spends the majority of his time chasing his two rambunctious boys around. He brings another strong voice for inclusive schools to our board.

FRANKLIN LAWSON

Franklin is an alumni of the On Campus Transition Program at Radford University. After graduation, he was selected for a Project Search internship at Carillion NRV Medical Center which led to a permanent job there. He is an experienced advocate for

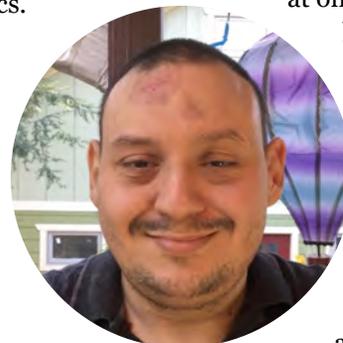


FRANKLIN LAWSON

issues of concern to people with disabilities, currently serving as a liaison to the newly formed Self-Advocates Alliance. Franklin is in the process of finding and buying his first house.

MATTHEW HUDGINS

Matthew loves living in the New River Valley and has lived here all of his life. He is a graduate of Blacksburg High School and of the On Campus Transition Program at Virginia Tech. He currently works as a dishwasher at one of the Virginia Tech dining



MATTHEW HUDGINS

halls. Matthew has recently relocated from Blacksburg to a townhouse in Christiansburg which he says that he likes much better. In his spare time, Matthew enjoys playing video games, and playing with his dogs. He has been a haunted house actor for the past nine years!



The Arc of the NRV's president, Chris Cadwallader introduced the live Zoom webinar on October 8.

Going Virtual in 2020!

This fall the Arc of the NRV hosted two webinar presentations on Medicaid Waivers. The first was “An Introduction to DD and CCC Plus Medicaid Waivers.” One hundred viewers registered for this webinar! The second was called “What to do while you wait for a Medicaid Waiver” for which we had 71 people registered.

Each webinar consisted of a 35-minute prerecorded presentation of the waiver materials, followed by a live Q & A afterwards. Lucy Cantrell, a wellspring of knowledge related to all disabilities issues, was the main presenter for both events. Lucy is the Director of Information and Referral at The Arc of VA. She answered many questions.

This was the first time the Arc of the NRV had attempted an online format, and we learned so much about hosting Zoom webinar events. We are excited to host future webinars on a wide range of topics relevant to our disability community. **The presentations are available to watch anytime on our website at thearcnrv.org/educate/.**

Is there a topic you want to learn more about? Please email us at arcnrv@gmail.com and let us know what is most important to you!



SELF-ADVOCATES ALLIANCE

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director. Some of the Alliance's future goals include ensuring that people with disabilities and their families know what services are out there and how to access them. The Alliance is also working to coach people with disabilities on how to advocate for themselves. Lastly, they plan to train provider agencies, specifically those that are facility-based, on how to change their business model to provide new services that give people with disabilities maximum control and autonomy over their own lives.

George Rogers, Franklin Lawson and Anita Ehrhardt represent the New River Valley on the state Advocacy Alliance. They plan to help local self-advocates participate in the state Alliance efforts to create policy changes that allow people with disabilities to live lives of their choosing in the community.



The Self-Advocates Alliance meets over Zoom. We're so proud of our NRV representatives!

FUNDING CRISIS

(cont. from pg. 1)

Without an infusion of funding from the CARES Act funding, countless providers will close permanently, leaving people with disabilities without the support they need.

On September 25th, both bodies, the House and Senate, presented their versions of a budget for State and CARES Act funding. Both House and Senate budgets woefully underfund the Developmental Disabilities System. Out of the 3.1 billion CARES funding, the General Assembly allocated just 1% of that money to Developmental Disability Services. That allocation is not nearly enough to sustain services to people with disabilities.

The Arc of Virginia immediately began to mobilize the disability community to lobby for a more equitable allocation of CARES funding, flooding the Governor and General Assembly members with objections and requests to reconsider the budget allocation for Developmental Disability Services.

At this writing, the General Assembly has not presented a final budget. Check our FaceBook page and the Arc of VA website for updates. In the meantime contact your legislators to support adequate funding for Developmental Disabilities services.

Chris Cadwallader, president of The Arc of the NRV, has served on the board since 2005. She was a teacher of special education in Montgomery County public schools for more than four decades. She is an ardent advocate for disability rights and integrated schooling.



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**SAVE THE DATE
DECEMBER 13!**



Annual Cookie Party Decorating Contest!

*Live Zoom Event
December 13, 2020 at 5pm!
Join at <https://zoom.us/join>
Meeting ID: 868 9552 9715 Passcode: 035509*



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