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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*11 Individuals Honored by The Arc, Ocean County Chapter at the 2019 Catalyst Awards.*

*2019 Catalyst Awards Recognize the Individuals Who Go Above and Beyond to Make Life Better  
For Those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

Toms River, NJ- The Arc, Ocean County Chapter honored 11 individuals at the 2019 Catalyst Awards held at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center on June 5th. The Catalyst Awards recognized local area residents for their work in making a difference for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Ocean County. The 160 guests celebrated the night socializing during the cocktail hour, and gave standing ovation after standing ovation to the award recipients. Among the six Arc employees being honored, community partners such as the Brick Township Public Works, The MAX Challenge and Aquatherm Industries joined in the celebrations.

The night began with Laura Williams, Executive Director of The Arc, Ocean County, welcoming everyone to one of her favorite nights of the year. Ruth Churchill, President of the Arc, Ocean County Board, spoke about how honored she was to attend such an incredible night. Tom Buffuto, Executive Director of The Arc, New Jersey exclaimed his excitement as the Ocean County chapter is growing to be the second largest chapter in New Jersey. The Arc, Ocean County would like to congratulate the award recipients, and thank them for their drive and passion.



## About the Honorees

### Employer of the Year: Ken Mathis, Brick Township

Ken Mathis has been employed by Brick Township for 17 years as a Parks Department Supervisor. He became involved with the Arc when Patty Nolan approached him while sourcing suitable jobs for the Arc Employment Center team. Ken moved on to hire the Arc Employment Center team to clean and maintain the bike trails throughout Brick.

Ken would like to thank the men and women who work at the Arc Employment Center. They are an exceptional group of individuals who work very hard. Ken is very proud of their accomplishments within the community, and Brick Township is honored that they chose to work with them.

### Healthcare Professional of the Year: Dr. Erik Rudorfer

Dr. Erik Rudorfer began his undergraduate degree at the University of Miami where he majored in biology with a minor in chemistry then transferred to Montclair State University to finish his bachelor's degree. Dr. Erik Rudorfer then continued his education at the New York College of Podiatric Medicine where he completed his doctorate degree, and attended a 3 year surgical residency program focusing on forefoot, and rearfoot surgery as well as Podiatric medicine as a whole.

Dr. Erik Rudorfer has been in private practice for the last 6 years where he works for the Community Foot and Ankle center in Toms River. Like most other practices Dr. Erik Rudorfer sees patients in the office, but also spends a great deal of time doing house calls. Dr. Erik Rudorfer goes to approximately 15 group homes per week treating and healing patients in the office on a daily basis. Dr. Erik Rudorfer believes it is truly a gratifying experience being able to put a smile on the Arc's residents after treating and interacting with them- it is a priceless experience.

### Distinguished Community Partner: The Max Challenge

5 years ago, Denise Medford left her 25+ year career in the Financial Markets, and dreamed of opening The MAX Challenge of Brick as a place that was so welcoming, so inspiring, and such an amazing place for everyone in the community, that it was all she could think about. When the doors opened, people came in and immediately felt the difference- this was no ordinary gym. People here quickly became supportive friends of each other- in fact, they were more like family!

The MAX Challenge of Brick has a reputation for hosting many charity fundraisers, for many different causes; food drives, clothing drives, Stockings for Soldiers, toys for children in Domestic Violence shelters, organ donation, cancer drives, and of course, the one most near and dear to her- The ARC of Ocean Chapter. Every year the members of this welcoming place band together to raise funds for the annual Bowl-A-Thon, and in the past has donated their facility for The ARC to use for their classes when there was a renovation going on. Anytime there's a call to action in our community, Denise and her amazing people at The MAX of Brick, are always there to answer! Their doors, and their hearts, are always open.

### Distinguished Community Service: Patricia Cubero, General Manager at Aquatherm Industries

Aquatherm Industries manufactures Thermal Solar Collectors mainly used for heating swimming pools. The company's goal is to deliver a quality product to their customers, along with making a difference in the communities they live in. Partnering with The Arc of Ocean County helps Aquatherm accomplish both of their goals. Aquatherm has been working with the Arc since 2010, where Arc participants have been able to assemble, bag and box kits in a timely manner. Their products are shipped worldwide, and believe that the quality of the contribution The Arc helps maintain their goal to deliver a quality product. It is an honor to be able to work with such a great group of individuals!

Bill Sackter Citizenship Award: Kathryn Plentus

Kathryn has been a participant with the Arc since 2010, when she was referred by her DDD case manager to apply. Kathryn enjoys spending her time at Journeys going out into the community, where she really enjoys visiting the hospital and Home Goods. Kathryn's mom, Louise, notices Kathryn is really focused and happy when she has a job to do, and that is all thanks to the Arc's employment assistance. When Kathryn is not working, she also enjoys participating in Saturday recreation and going on Smile Trips.

Newcomer of The Year: Helen Centrella

Helen exhibits a great enthusiasm for her work. She is a caring and compassionate individual who has built excellent working relationships with both her peers and participants in the Recreation program. Helen is very organized and has mastered the fee for service rollover, and has been instrumental in assisting parents and Support coordinators with a smooth transition. Helen has added Recreation activities in the community to help the participants experience the true meaning of community inclusion. Helen is a phenomenal staff and we are blessed to have her here at the Arc of Ocean County.

Employee of The Year (Part-Time): Elizabeth Hand

Elizabeth, nicknamed Betsy, bursts with enthusiasm; spreading sheer joy is her passion. Along the way Betsy facilitates positive expression while fostering friendly relationships among the clients. Whether at Club Night South Cooking, Barnegat dances, or Southern bowling, she strategically boosts individual's self-esteem while engaged in recreational activities. Active participation is encouraged from scooting under the limbo pole to creating Lickety Split Coco Cake. High fives are a must at bowling. Betsy serves as a liaison between the Arc and individual's families.

Employee of The Year (Part-Time): Jennifer Kogut

Jennifer began her career with the Arc, Ocean County Chapter in March of 2009 as a full time Assistant Director in Residential Services, where she was responsible for the oversight of five group homes. In April of 2013, after the birth of her daughter, Jennifer returned part-time where she became responsible for locating and placing new potential residents. In October of 2015, Jennifer assisted in starting Support Coordination at the Arc, where she transitioned into her current position as Assistant Director of Family Support Services. Jennifer is now the supervisor of seven Support Coordinators and 230 cases.

Some of Jennifer's favorite memories at the Arc include seeing the children of the Maple Crest Group graduate high school and grow into young adults. She would like to thank Nancy Cadigan and Laura Williams for being supportive of both

her department and of her as a person. She would also like to thank all of the excellent Residential Managers and Support Coordinators that have worked with her over the past ten years and have made it a pleasure to come to work. She is truly appreciative of all of them and of all the other supportive and dedicated Arc employees she has the opportunity to interact with on a daily basis.

Employee of The Year: Lisa Anderson-Oliver

Lisa has been a hardworking, compassionate and sassy Certified Nursing Assistant for 22 years now. She started working for the Arc of Ocean County back in April of 2008 apart of the 11 to 9 staff; since then Lisa has been working apart of the 7-3 staff caring for her residents at a medical group home. Lisa loves the atmosphere in the medical group home since it is always changing, and challenges her to care for her clients in new ways. She would like to thank all of the people from the Pier Ave. group homes who have always been there for her, and who are always willing to help each other out.

Employee of The Year: John McKeon

John has worked for the Arc in the Arc Cleaning Services department for 5 years! John's favorite part of the job is watching the skill development in the custodians that he works with. He also enjoys witnessing customer appreciation of the work completed by the custodians. John's goal as a leader and mentor for the janitorial crew is to achieve successful community integration and instill a sense of pride in each member of the team.

Employee of the Year: Julie Polizzi

Seven years ago Julie attended a job fair at the Arc of Ocean County and was then hired as a program Assistant. She very quickly embraced that position, and within a short amount of time was promoted. Several of the employees that have worked under Julie as manager have now been promoted within the Agency. She loves to educate people and will spend time working with anyone who wishes to learn. Julie believes that one person does not make the program work. Teamwork is the key to success.

Julie believes that this is the most rewarding job she has had. Assisting individuals in order for them to gain the most out of life is an amazing experience. She has been known to say that she collects smiles. Seeing an individual smile because they accomplished something new or had an amazing experience means we are making a difference.

About The Arc, Ocean County Chapter

The Arc, Ocean County Chapter was established in 1955 as part of a national movement by parents of children with developmental disabilities. At this time, little was known about the condition and causes of intellectual disability and there were virtually no programs in communities to support families. Parents and other concerned citizens joined together to act as a voice for change and so began The Arc's journey

Today, The Arc, Ocean County Chapter is a thriving organization which continues to provide strong advocacy and extensive programs and services for people with disabilities to fully participate as active members of the local community. To learn more about visit [www.arcocean.org/](http://www.arcocean.org/) and follow us on Facebook at "The Arc, Ocean County Chapter".







