



# Congratulations to the Awardees

President's Award

Nisivoccia LLP

**Legacy of Service Award** 

Frank Pirrello, President, NJ Camp Jaycee

Legislator of the Year

Senator Nicholas P. Scutari (D-22)

Professional of the Year

Heather Comstock, The Arc of Essex County

Volunteer of the Year

Mollie Giamanco, The Arc of Monmouth

**Self-Advocacy Leadership Award** 

Doris Annunziata, The Arc of Union

**Distinguished Community Service** 

Valerie Sellers, CEO, NJACP

**Executive Excellence Award** 

Steven P. Cook, The Arc Mercer

Legacy of Volunteerism Award

Joanne Bergin

Professional of the Year

Patricia Bernabe, DCF CSOC

Martin Papish Award

Joann Colucci, The Arc of Hunterdon

### A Message from the Executive Director



It is almost impossible in these brief words, or in the short introductions that follow, to fully describe the incredible work of tonight's honorees. Their commitment to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, support of the mission of The Arc, and tireless

work for our community cannot be adequately captured in just a few pages.

These awards and award winners sum up the very essence of The Arc – working together as a community, advocating against all odds for what is just and making a commitment to stand by the cause in good times and bad. Tonight's honorees have been instrumental to our success and are role models for future generations of advocates, volunteers and leaders.

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations who supported tonight's event and to all the attendees helping us to honor the 2025 award recipients. Thank you for your support of The Arc of New Jersey and the individuals with disabilities and families we serve.

-Thomas Baffuto

### A Message from the President

One of the greatest rewards of being President of The Arc of New Jersey is having the opportunity to meet and recognize our annual award recipients. It is truly an honor to introduce you to this extraordinary groups of individuals, organizations and corporations who have gone above and beyond to support and



promote people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and The Arc.

The impact of the dedication, hard work and generosity of this year's awardees is beyond measure. Their efforts have made a world of difference in the lives of New Jerseyans with disabilities and their families, and I know that the entire Family of The Arc joins me in thanking them for their contributions.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this event and for everyone joining us tonight as we celebrate and pay tribute to our outstanding 2025 Award Recipients.

- Levin Sturges

### President's Award



The Arc of New Jersey is pleased to present the 2025 President's Award to a firm that has gone above and beyond the traditional business relationship to provide outstanding service and support. With 50 years of experience, the Nisivoccia accounting firm works with more than 350 non-profits, including Local County Chapters of The Arc and The Arc of New Jersey.

Nisivoccia and their dedicated employees have made a tremendous commitment to ensuring that non-profit organizations not only meet financial compliance but that they actualize their full potential. With the assistance of the firm's talented partners and staff, The Arc of New Jersey and its Local Chapters have identified key areas critical to their success, and identified ways to operate and sustain their organizations more effectively through increased efficiencies and social sustainability.

In addition to providing excellent financial services and advice, the firm strongly supports their non-profit clients through volunteerism and financial support. For their outstanding commitment to the non-profit community in New Jersey, The Arc of New Jersey is pleased to present the 2025 President's Award to Nisivoccia LLP.

# Legislator of the Year

Since becoming Senate President, Senator Scutari has ensured Senate support of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families in each annual State Budget, including millions of dollars in new and annualized funding that enable the service delivery system to grow and meet the needs of those we care about.



Senate President Nicholas P. Scutari

During his tenure, the Budget has included

legislative add-ons to increase the fee-for-service rates, and funds to increase the camp rates in the Department of Children and Families for children with IDD. This was the first time the camp rate was increased in more than ten years. Senate President Scutari has also sponsored a number of bills that will positively impact our community. This includes a recent piece of legislation that would have the state evaluate the health care provided through NJ FamilyCare and identify underutilized funds, ensuring any available resources are used to address priority healthcare services for individuals from low income families and those with disabilities. He is also the sponsor of legislation that supports affordable housing, an important issue to people with IDD.

This year, the Senate President was, and continues to be, instrumental as we work to push back on two pieces of legislation that would fundamentally alter the service delivery system. With his help, we had more time to advocate on the issues we were concerned about and connect with lawmakers on the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee. Senate President Scutari also recognized The Arc of NJ, on the floor of the Senate, in honor of our 75th anniversary, an incredible honor and spotlight of the work we do.

For his incredible support of people with IDD and their families, The Arc of New Jersey is pleased to honor Senate President Nicholas Scutari as our 2025 Legislator of the Year.

# Legacy of Sowice Award



Frank Pirrello

Frank Pirrello became involved with NJ Camp Jaycee more than 35 years ago through his local Jaycee Chapter in Lincoln Park. As President of his Local Jaycee Chapter, he made a commitment to providing leadership and resources to ensure that NJ Camp Jaycee would have a long and positive impact on its campers with disabilities for many years to come.

Now, after serving 35 years on the Board of Directors of NJ Camp Jaycee, with 30 years

as President, Frank will be leaving the Board in 2025 and he will be truly missed.

Under his leadership, NJ Camp Jaycee has grown and strengthened. The Camp has undergone several major renovations during Frank's tenure, including a floating dock for the lake, upgrades to cabins and the pavilion, and a major renovation for the infirmary. One of the milestones Frank spearheaded was the new recreation hall which opened last year, providing an open, airy, sheltered space for campers to participate in activities.

Despite the closure of Camp Jaycee during the COVID-19 pandemic, NJ Camp Jaycee continued its mission and is now stronger than ever. Frank has never looked for credit or called attention to his efforts. he simply believes wholeheartedly in the mission of Camp Jaycee and the joy it brings so many people with disabilities.

NJ Camp Jaycee – and the thousands of campers that have enjoyed the camp during Frank's years of service – thank and congratulate him for his outstanding legacy of service.

# Professional of the Year

Heather Comstock is the Senior Director of Development and Communications at The Arc of Essex County, where she has created and executed the agency's annual fundraising plans for more than 11 years. Her efforts include fundraising appeals, grant procurement, and marketing strategy, as well as managing events, which Heather has shown a unique ability to both reimagine (in the case of the Building Tomorrows 5K Run, Walk and Fun Fest) and



**Heather Comstock** 

conceptualize and launch (in the case of the Uncorked and Uncapped tasting event and the Craft Beer Open golf tournament). Her dedication and ingenuity has led to a steady growth in sponsorships, participants, and overall revenue. Heather also secures hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant funding annually for The Arc Essex County's programs, and manages the agency's merchandise, including the new consumercreated Studio Arc items sold online and in local stores.

In addition to serving as a staff liaison to The Arc of Essex County's Board of Trustees, Heather co-chairs The Arc of New Jersey's Development Committee and manages the annual Wings for All event at Newark Liberty International Airport, coordinating with various partners including United Airlines and the Port Authority of NY/NJ. Her efforts have garnered major media coverage for The Arc's programs, including a CBS feature on Studio Arc and an upcoming PBS "Empowered" documentary.

Beyond The Arc, Heather was selected to serve on Charity Navigator's National Consultive Council of Nonprofit Leaders, representing human service nonprofits.

With her hard work, commitment to The Arc mission, and extensive creativity, Heather is an outstanding leader in The Arc community and a fitting recipient of the The Arc of New Jersey's 2025 Professional of the Year Award.

# Volunteer of the Year

Through her volunteer work at The Arc of Monmouth, Mollie has dedicated more than 35 years to supporting our mission and has had an immeasurable impact on the individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) we serve. Mollie's unwavering commitment was most recently highlighted by her leadership in chairing The Arc of Monmouth's Winter Glow Gala and 75th Anniversary Celebration this past December. Under her stewardship, the event exceeded



Mollie Giamanco

its fundraising goal, which directly benefits programs and services provided to individuals with IDD. Mollie's talent for organizing and rallying support is a testament to her deep dedication to our cause.

What is even more remarkable is that Mollie accomplished this achievement while managing health issues of her own, demonstrating incredible resilience, strength, and selflessness. Despite her personal challenges, Mollie remained focused on the success of the Gala and on ensuring that our community could continue to thrive. Her ability to go above and beyond, even under difficult circumstances, serves as an inspiration to all of us who have had the privilege of working alongside her.

Mollie's contributions to The Arc of Monmouth are not just measured by fundraising dollars but by the heart and passion she brings to everything she does. Her kindness and her leadership have made a lasting difference in our organization and in the lives of the individuals we support.

For her outstanding dedication, tireless work ethic, and positive impact on The Arc of Monmouth and the broader community, we can think of no one more deserving of recognition than Mollie Giamanco. She truly exemplifies the spirit of service, advocacy, and leadership that The Arc of New Jersey seeks to honor.

# Self-Advocacy Leadership Award

Doris Annunziata is a shining example of advocacy, compassion, and leadership within The Arc of Union County's Adult Day Habilitation Program. She has been a part of The Arc of Union County family since 2019. Her dedication to fairness and her unwavering commitment to speaking up for both herself, and others, make her an exceptional candidate for The Arc of New Jersey's 2025 Self-Advocacy Leadership Award.



Doris Annunziata

As a vocal advocate, Doris consistently ensures that everyone's voice is heard, especially those who may struggle to express themselves. She has an innate sense of justice and is never afraid to question situations that seem unfair or inequitable. Whether doing what is right, ensuring fair treatment of her peers, or simply by offering encouragement, Doris embodies the spirit of self-advocacy and inclusion. Beyond her advocacy, Doris is a warm and compassionate individual who fosters a supportive environment among her peers. Her ability to articulate concerns has made a lasting impact on both participants and staff. Doris's leadership extends beyond words-she leads by example. She participates in activities with enthusiasm, encourages others to join, and demonstrates resilience in the face of challenges. Her presence is uplifting to those around her, making her not only a valued program participant but also an inspiration to all who know her.

The long-term impact of Doris's advocacy efforts is undeniable. Her influence has inspired others to become self-advocates. Doris's commitment to fairness has created ripple effects that will continue to shape the lives of individuals in our care with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For her unwavering advocacy, leadership, and dedication to fostering a fair and inclusive environment, Doris Annunziata is more than deserving of recognition at The Arc of New Jersey's 2025 Annual Awards. She embodies the very mission of The Arc of Union County, making her a true champion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

### Executive Excellence Award



**Steve Cook** 

The Arc of New Jersey is pleased to present the 2025 Executive Excellence Award to Steven Cook, Executive Director, The Arc Mercer. His unwavering commitment to his role over the last 15 years has uniquely empowered the lives of the many consumers with special needs that are served by The Arc Mercer.

Steve has demonstrated exceptional leadership and a commitment to innovation, significantly enhancing services and opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Under Steve's guidance, The Arc Mercer has expanded its services, including transportation, day programs, group homes, supervised apartments, recreational activities, and occupational training. His focus on excellence extends to The Arc Mercer's staff. He has led a comprehensive reorganization of the Human Resources department, integrating modern technology and training to improve efficiency, as well as streamlining performance reviews. He has also fostered a culture of recognition by rewarding outstanding employees and establishing clear career paths to retain top talent as well as celebrating the diversity of his staff with the establishment of cultural connection groups.

One of the most important initiatives developed under Steve's leadership is The Arc Mercer Healthcare Center. This facility provides high-quality healthcare, including mental health counseling, to individuals supported by The Arc Mercer. Staff training in behavioral management techniques has also led to a significant reduction in incidents.

Steve works tirelessly to overcome the many obstacles faced by individuals with IDD. He consistently finds unique and innovative solutions, which under his leadership have been successfully implemented by his team.

## Legacy of Volunteerism Award

Volunteers are the very foundation of The Arc. It was the dreams, dedication and hard work of volunteers that gave birth to the organization and has helped to guide it through the past 75 years. Joanne Bergin has truly lived up to the legacy of The Arc's founding members with her more than 25 years of distinguished service at the Local and State levels.



Joanne Bergin

She joined the Board of Directors for The Arc Ocean in 2000, served as President from 2006 to 2013, and is currently the Vice President. She also chaired and served on numerous committees, lending her valuable insight to the leadership of the Chapter. Recognizing the importance of community connections, Joanne has helped to facilitate many meaningful relationships for The Arc with businesses and community leaders.

Joanne joined The Arc of New Jersey Executive Committee in 2011 as a Member-at-Large. She served as President from 2017 to 2021 and is finishing her term as Immediate Past President in June 2025. Joanne's strong leadership helped guide the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities and their families were at the forefront of every decision made.

Joanne's dedication to The Arc comes from her heart, where her compassion is evident in her advocacy for people with IDD and their families. She can always be counted on no matter what is asked of her and has agreed to continue on with The Arc of New Jersey as a Member-at-Large for the next term.

In honor of Joanne's outstanding support of The Arc and the people and families we serve, The Arc of New Jersey is honored to recognize her with the 2025 Legacy of Volunteerism Award.

# Professional of the Year

We are honored to recognize Patricia Bernabe for her outstanding dedication and service as the Family Support and Leadership Specialist at the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF). Since the transition of children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) from the Division of Developmental Disabilities to DCF in 2013, Pat has become an essential lifeline for families navigating this monumental change.



Patricia Bernabe

With tireless commitment, Pat has served as a primary resource for families seeking support, working diligently to resolve issues, connect children with services and offer guidance through every challenge. Her deep knowledge, persistence and compassion have made her an invaluable advocate for the IDD community. Many of the families Pat has helped have had very challenging issues and yet she never gives up to find a solution for even the most complex cases.

Pat's warm and approachable nature shines through in every interaction, whether over Zoom or in person. She is always ready to answer the call—literally and figuratively—no matter the time of day. Her steadfast support, resourcefulness and genuine care have made a lasting impact on countless families across New Jersey.

A true team player and a steadfast ally, Pat is not only a vital partner to The Arc of New Jersey, but also a cherished friend to our entire community of advocates. We are grateful for her extraordinary service and are proud to celebrate her with this well-deserved recognition.

## Martin Papish Award

Joann Colucci is deeply admired and respected for her unwavering commitment to the mission and values of The Arc of Hunterdon County. She is a leader of exceptional character and demonstrates tremendous dedication to the individuals we support, the teams she supervises, and the agency as a whole. She is both passionate and caring, and not only a pillar of strength but a source of inspiration.



Joann Colucci

Joann is incredibly knowledgeable, and despite having a full schedule, she consistently offers her insights and is willing to teach others. Her great sense of humor lightens tough situations, reminding us that sometimes it's important to take a step back, laugh, and then return to our work. She has shown those of us who truly care about our mission that it's okay to be human, to feel emotions, and to embrace our imperfections—after all, these qualities make us well-suited for this work. There are countless examples, both big and small, of how she positively impacts the teams she leads and the individuals we serve.

Many of her contributions go unnoticed and unacknowledged, but she is simply always there. She has acted as a coach for long-time employees and a role model for newcomers entering the field. Joann is a driving force that guides her teams and supervisors in the right direction, even when they are feeling exhausted.

Joann started as a DSP 35 years ago and today is the Associate Executive Director of Residential Services. For her many years of outstanding service and leadership, we are pleased to present Joann Colucci with the 2025 Martin Papish Award.

# Distinguished Community Service

Valerie Sellers joined the New Jersey
Association of Community Providers (NJACP)
as the Chief Executive Officer in 2013,
responsible for all management facets of the
Association, which represents more than
sixty-five member agencies that provide an
array of home and community-based services
and supports to individuals with intellectual,
developmental, and other disabilities. She
represents the Association and its members at
State Assembly and Senate Hearings, meetings
with NJ Congressional representatives in



Valerie Sellers

Washington DC, and State government department and legislative representatives throughout the state.

Val was appointed by Governor Murphy to the Independent Developmental Disability Fee-for-Service Transition Oversight Board and Governor Murphy's Healthcare Transition Team. She served as a RWJ Barnabas-Hamilton Board of Directors Trustee (2017-2020). For several years, Val also served as the chair of the NJ Coalition for a DSP Living Wage, which successfully advocated for wage increases in the NJ state budgets for Direct Support Professionals.

Prior to joining NJACP, Val was a principal in AMK Healthcare Consulting focusing on community health needs assessments, strategic planning, and mergers and acquisitions. She also spent 17 years as a senior executive with the NJ Hospital Association (NJHA) where she headed multiple departments and areas of oversight including regulatory, managed care, HIPAA, community health, and research. During her tenure at NJHA, she established the Institute for Quality & Patient Safety to support hospital initiatives across New Jersey. Her experience with the healthcare community was extremely valuable during NJACP members' transition to Fee-for-Service, and will help prepare providers with future changes.

As a consultant, Val worked with a variety of clients, including hospitals, in assessing community health status and assisting with mergers and acquisitions of community organizations.

# Thank You to our Generous Sponsors

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Congratulations to Tom Baffuto on a lifetime of tireless advocacy and an extraordinary career—and to all honorees for your unwavering commitment to New Jersey's disability community.

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# Congratulations

Heather Comstock and Joanne Bergin and all of tonight's award winners!



**Gold Sponsor** 

# Congratulations

To all of tonight's award winners!

-The Corrigan Family



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Thank you to Frank Pirrello for his many years of dedicated service to NJ Camp Jaycee.

Congratulations on receiving the Legacy of Service Award, a well deserved recognition.

Silver Sponsor

# Congratulations

We are so happy to celebrate all the amazing award winners and all their success and achievements!

### We support our clients!

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Nichole Washburn nichole.washburn@therapservices.net (475) 291-5752 www.TherapServices.net



Connect with Nichole

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Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to The Arc and the individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families who we serve.

The Executive Committee of The Arc of New Jersey

Kevin Sturges

Lauren Zalepka

Karen Santiago

Pamela Corrigan

Andy Sharick

S. Paul Prior

Robert Hage

Ruby Goyal-Carkeek

Marnie McNany

Charles Pinto

Joanne Bergin

# Congratulations!

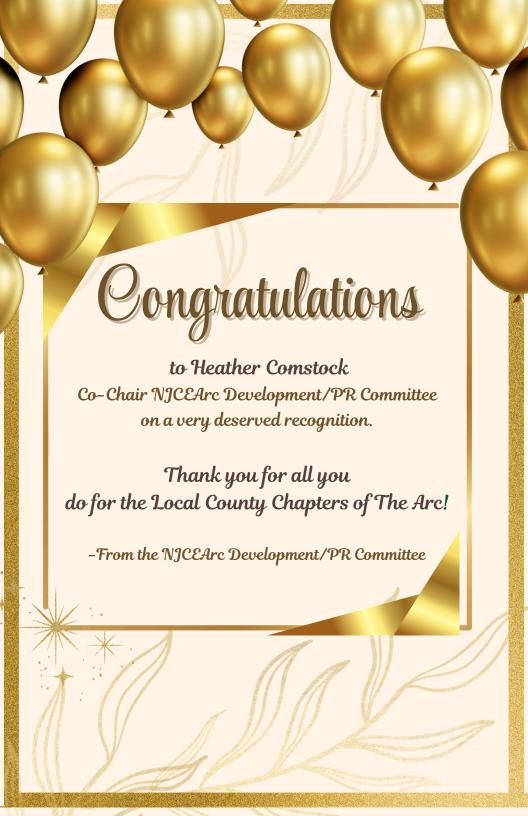
The Arc of Essex County is proud to honor Professional of the Year

### **Heather Comstock**

and celebrates all of tonight's award winners for their contributions and commitment to The Arc's mission.









25 Martin Papish Award





# Valerie Sellers

NJACP will forever be grateful for your dedication and commitment as our Chief Executive Officer, 2013-2025. Your steadfast advocacy and leadership enhanced the lives of individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities throughout New Jersey.



As the recipient of the 2025 Arc of New Jersey's Distinguished Community Service Award. No one is more deserving. We could not be more proud of you.

-- Your NJACP family



The Arc of Monmouth proudly congratulates

# Mollie Giamanco

The Arc of New Jersey's 2025

Volunteer of the Year Award Honoree



Thank you for over 35 years of outstanding dedicated service. Your kindness and leadership have forever made a lasting difference in our organization and in the lives of the individuals we support.

Congratulations to all of the 2025 Honorees!

# Congratulations! from MCC MORRI

### ArcMorris congratulates all of The Arc of New Jersey's 2025 honorees!

To all the honorees being recognized at The Arc of New Jersey's 2025 Annual Awards:

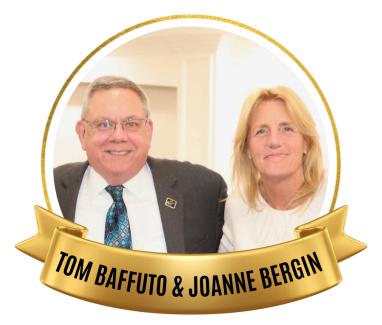
Congratulations and thank you for your dedication, leadership, and advocacy on behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the state.

Your passion and commitment uplift communities, strengthen families, and create a more inclusive New Jersey for all.

ArcMorris proudly stands with you in this shared mission.

With admiration and appreciation, Your friends at ArcMorris Congratulations to Joanne Bergin on the

# LEGACY OF VOLUNTEERISM AWARD & A HAPPY RETIREMENT to Tom Baffuto



The Arc, Ocean County Chapter is thrilled to honor our Board of Directors'
Vice President for receiving this prestigious award, as well as
The Arc of New Jersey's Executive Director for his years of commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities.



CONGRATULATIONS · DORIS ANNUNZIATA!

RECIPIENT OF THE ARC OF NEW JERSEY'S 2025 SELF-ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Doris, your voice, determination, and leadership inspire us all. As a shining example of advocacy and empowerment, you continue to break barriers and pave the way for others in the I/DD community.

We are honored to support your journey and witness the difference YOU make every day.







### **Building Excellence Together**

Proud to partner with The Arc Mercer in creating ideal residential programs.

Congratulations to
Steve Cook on your
Executive Excellence Award.

- A.W. Martin



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Congratulations, Steve Cook, on Achieving Executive Excellence.

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From every staff member, every program, every individual we serve—

Thank you for leading with heart.

— The Arc Mercer Family





# Congratulations Steve Cook!

Thank you for leading with heart, honoring culture, and inspiring excellence.

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# Proud to keep the wheels turning for the special needs community

# Congratulations, Steve Cook!

///////

— Bob Hope's Auto Repair

///////

## The SCARC Family of Services







#### Congratulates and Applauds

Nisivoccia, LLP Sen. Nicholas Scutari Mollie Giamanco Valerie Sellers Joanne Bergin Joann Colucci Frank Pirrello Heather Comstock Doris Annunziata Steve Cook Patricia Bernabe

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do." – Edward Everett Hale

Thank you to all of our Honorees for your years of service and support of all Arc services.





Congratulates The Arc of New Jersey's 2025 award recipients. -

Our sincere appreciation for your inspirational and important work.







ANNUAL AWARDS GALA TICKETS SPONSORSHIPS ADS & DONATIONS



MAY28 5:00

Birchwood Manor Whippany, NJ

Join us for an inspiring evening celebrating the people, partners, and progress that define ArcMorris. Highlights include powerful stories, award-winning moments, and a keynote by Tom Baffuto, Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey. We thank him for his service and





wish him well in retirement!

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THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS
WITH INTELLECTUAL AND
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
AND THEIR FAMILIES!







Congratulations to all of tonight's .Honorees!



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The Arc of Bergen and Passaic

#### CONGRATULATES

all the 2025 honorees!





**CONGRATULATES** 

# The Arc of New Jersey's 2025 Annual Award Honorees

Administrative Office:
185 Valley Street, South Orange, NJ 07079
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www.chlp.org



to all of our award winners this year!

Céline Fortin and Bernard Viggiani





"You have improved so many lives and touched so many hearts.

Traci and her family are grateful for your passion and dedication.

Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do.

We are proud of you and happy to be a part of the Arc Mercer Family."

- Traci, Matthew, Maria, Paul, and the Fischer Family

# Thank you to all the 2025 Honorees for your support of The Arc of New Jersey and congratulations! Michael and Deborah Prendergast

# Congratulations to the 2025 honorees!

Nisivoccia LLP
Frank Pirrello
Senator Nicholas P. Scutari
Heather Comstock
Mollie Giamanco
Doris Annunziata
Valerie Sellers
Steve Cook
Joanne Bergin
Patricia Bernabe
Joann Colucci



Congratulations to the 2025 Award Winners and Thank you for all you do!

Despina and Nina Samaras

**HAPPY RETIREMENT!** 

# Thomas Baffuto

JUNE | WED 2025

The Imperia 1714 Easton Ave, Somerset, NJ 08873 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Please join us as we celebrate Tom's 40 wonderful years at The Arc of New Jersey and wish him well as he heads into retirement.

RSVP by June 15, 2025 at https://bit.ly/TomBaffuto, by scanning the QR Code below, or by returning the enclosed card.

Tickets: \$100 per person
In addition, donations will be accepted towards a retirement gift for Tom.

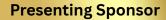
Messages are being collected for a
Book of Memories for Tom.

Please submit your letters or cards to Céline Fortin
at The Arc of New Jersey
985 Livingston Ave
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or by email to cfortinearcnj.org.

Deadline for messages is June 20th.



For more information cfortinearcnj.org or 732-733-6013



# \*Congratulations

# The Arc of New Jersey 2025 Award Recipients

# And Deepest Thanks

### Thomas Baffuto

\* For decades
of distinguished leadership
and unwavering advocacy
even in
the most challenging of times



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Congratulations to

# **Steve Cook,**

#### Joanne Bergin, Nisivoccia LLP,

and all The Arc of New Jersey 2025 Annual Award Honorees

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