

M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS

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Virginia Urology

Prostate Cancer Is a Growing Concern in this Country ... VA Urology Helps Put the Patient's Mind at Ease

With Greater Richmond ARC, the Difference Is Family

By Lynn Kirk

For more than 50 years, the Greater Richmond ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens) has remained true to its original mission: To create life-fulfilling opportunities for individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities, in partnership with

their families.

“We want physicians and the community to know that ARC is here to provide services for children with autism, cerebral palsy and other intellectual and physical disabilities,” says Doug Payne, Director of Communications for the

Greater Richmond ARC.

“It’s also important to note that we’re family-focused. Disabilities affect entire families, not just the individual. So daily, we look at ways to not only help the disabled child, but also provide his or her family with guidance and support.”

I’m a maxillofacial surgeon with a practice limited to cosmetic facial surgery, and I’ve practiced in Richmond since finishing my residency at MVC in 1983. Like most men, I always dreamed of having a son and wanted to do all those things that fathers and sons do — like hunt, fish and throw a football. It took me about a half of a century to find the girl of my dreams, and at age 50, I was thrilled when my namesake, Joey, was born.

At three months of age, Joey started having seizures and missing normal milestones. He wasn’t making eye contact and seemed unaware of his surroundings. He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy — his included severe mental and physical disabilities. Although devastating, my wife, April, and I realized that all we could do was to provide love and affection and give Joey the most normal life possible. Wanting to have another child and also wanting to have a sibling to look after Joey after I was gone, we decided to have a second child.

For two years we went through genetic counseling, a full spectrum of high-intensity neonatal care and image testing, and everything looked fine. But unfortunately and unexpectedly, our second son, Evan, developed the same disorder.

It was a huge setback that sometimes life deals you. One of the biggest problems was how to deal with the multitude of special problems associated with special children. We didn’t know where to turn; we had no idea what to do.

Joe & April Niamtu, Spokesman for ARC



This is where ARC (Greater Richmond Association for Retarded Citizens) came into play. With a single phone call, they provided infant intervention. They helped with everything from physical therapy, visual therapy, occupational therapy and handicap devices to later accommodating our sons in the Richmond public schools system. They also gave April and me the opportunity to interact and share support with other families in similar situations.

To this day, seven years since that first call, ARC still provides our family and hundreds of other families in the Richmond area with a wide array of services. As our kids grow up, we’re comforted knowing that this organization provides lifelong assistance.



I am honored to have become the official spokesperson for the Greater Richmond ARC, and I encourage any physician that deals with infants or families with disabilities to point those people immediately to ARC. This would include pediatricians that diagnose disabilities, as well as all other medical practitioners that may come across children, adolescents or adults with mental or physical disabilities. Becoming involved with ARC can make unbelievable differences in the lives of our citizens with special needs. In addition, children with disabilities touch the hearts of all of us on a personal level.

Unfortunately, local state and federal funding has been cut back for many of these worthy organizations. Donating and supporting Greater Richmond ARC can bring so much love and sunshine into the lives of special needs individuals. I would encourage all Richmond-area physicians to consider supporting this local and unbelievably dynamic charity. It is said that a society is judged by how it treats those less fortunate. By giving to ARC, you can personally change the lives of people in your hometown.

Our city is so lucky to have such a caring and active organization right here in River City.

— Dr. Joe Niamtu, III, D.M.D., Medical Director,
Cosmetic Facial Surgery Center, Drs. Niamtu, Alexander, Keeney,
Harris, Metzger, Dymon & Associates, P.C.



SERVICES LIFELONG IN SCOPE

The Greater Richmond ARC assists more than 1,200 individuals and their families each year through a variety of programs and services. From preparation of young children,



teens and adults for independent living and job skill development, to recreational opportunities for individuals of all ages, ARC's services range the lifecycle of its clients.

The organization's four core areas include:

1. Infant and child development services
2. Day support and after school services
3. Civitan vocational services
4. Camp Baker, a full-service respite and camp facility

COMMUNITY SUPPORT WELCOMED AND NEEDED

Though ARC is a nonprofit organization, "it runs itself like a for-profit business," says Payne. "We always try to be fiscally responsible." Eighty-five percent of the organization's income is generated by fees-for-services.

"We also have an annual fundraiser, the Ladybug Event, which provides a 'gap fund' for working families," explains Payne. "Infant and child therapy can cost up to \$130 per hour, so this fund helps bridge the gap between what insurance and Medicaid will cover, and what a

7th Annual Ladybug Winetasting & Silent Auction

Saturday, April 28, 2007, 5-8 p.m. at Plant Zero

Featuring fine wines from around the world, musical serenade and food prepared by Richmond's finest restaurants, including Hondo's, Old Original Bookbinders' and more

Proceeds provide therapy services for ARC's infant intervention program

Contact Yvonne Verno, (804) 358-1874 or e-mail Ladybug@RichmondARC.org.

child actually needs.

"Even if you don't have a loved one with a disability, the support you provide ARC helps the entire community. It may mean a family doesn't have to quit their job to care for their child.

"It also will help those with mental retardation and developmental disabilities to live happy, meaningful and successful lives."

For more information on ARC, visit their website at www.RichmondARC.org. ■

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