



Harc

60 YEARS of Changing lives and Changing minds

Prejudice and segregation are two of the cruelest words in the English language. Yet prejudice and segregation are the only way to sum up the treatment of persons with intellectual disability up until just a few decades ago. As soon as a child was diagnosed with the disability, he or she was usually sent off to an institution, to live out their days with “their own kind.” Conditions at some institutions were better than others, but separation from the community remained a constant.

It took a while for things to change. But when many different people in many different places all begin pushing in the same direction, change becomes irresistible. And today, two of most comforting words in the English language, acceptance and inclusion, are now the hallmarks of treatment of those with intellectual disability.

It probably would have come as a great surprise to the parents who started HARC 60 years ago had they seen the full impact of the revolutionary work they started. They were just trying to get society to see the same value and worth in their children that they themselves saw.

HARC’s founders were not the only people to start thinking along those lines. Other parents in other towns, healthcare professionals, government officials were all starting to push for bringing those with intellectual disability into the community. It took a lot of pushing, a lot of protest, a lot of news reports and a lot of court cases. But it worked. Today, community-based care has all but replaced institutionalization. The dire forecast of those who clung to institutionalization has not panned out. Care for those with intellectual disability is far better than it was when HARC was founded.

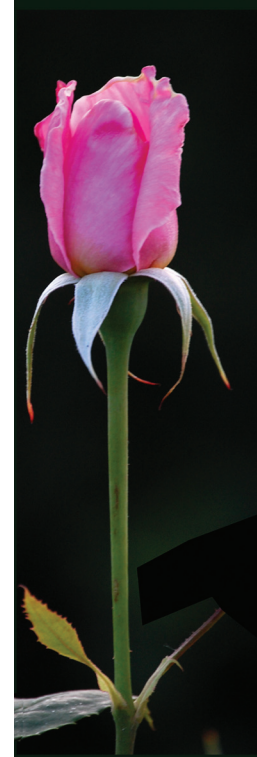
But there is still much to be done. HARC President and CEO Stephen Becker said one of the key trends in

the field is to describe persons with intellectual disability not by their level of intelligence but by the amount of support they need to function successfully in the community.

Another trend in the field of intellectual disability is less encouraging: decreased funding. “Government assistance makes up approximately 80 percent of our funding,” said Becker. “Because we depend on government so much and because we live today in an environment where there is so much anger over the high cost of government, it is our staff who suffers. They are underpaid. Their salaries and benefits have not kept up with inflation.”

Finding the funding necessary to maintain its level of services will be an uphill battle for HARC, but the organization has never shied away from a tough fight. In the meantime, a dedicated staff has proved invaluable in helping the organization through the current economic downturn, and in keeping the services to HARC’s consumers top notch.

HARC provides a wide variety of programs and services to people with intellectual disability. The organization serves approximately 1,500 people annually, from birth through old age. HARC’s headquarters is located at 900 Asylum Avenue in Hartford’s Asylum Hill neighborhood. HARC’s residential and employment programs are scattered throughout Greater Hartford. For more information on the organization and how you can help it fulfill its mission, call 860-218-6048 or go to the website: www.harc-ct.org.



*Our Neighborhoods West
2010 – 2011*