

# **Arc Executive Director Announces Retirement**

## **FOR RELEASE: April 30, 2021**



Retirement is on the horizon for Arc of Genesee Orleans Executive Director Donna Saskowski. The Darien resident's summer retirement will cap off a successful 32-year career at the local nonprofit that serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Donna's first position at Arc of Genesee Orleans was part-time Residential Training Instructor, working in the Supportive Apartment program 23 hours/week. Donna didn't have a lot of experience working with people with disabilities and admits she didn't know what to expect. "It only took a day or two to realize this was going to be my life's work," the Executive Director shared.

Over the years, Donna has held several positions at Arc including Rehab Counselor, Residential Coordinator, Social Worker and Day Habilitation Program Coordinator. She became Executive Director in April 2004 and has overseen substantial growth in the residential and day habilitation programs, the privatization of Arc Collection Services and the successful merger with the Orleans Chapter in 2016.

One of Donna's career highlights was the purchase and remodeling of the former St. Mary's School, transforming it into the Arc of Genesee Orleans Community Center. "The successful capital campaign to fund the project really hit home the

generosity and love people have for our community, agency and especially, the people we support and their families,” she said.

In addition to her work at Arc of Genesee Orleans, Donna is very active in the community as a member of the Batavia Rotary Club and is Assistant Governor for Rotary District 7090. She is a member of the United Way Board of Directors, Collaborative of the Finger Lakes, Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York and the Executive Directors Association of The Arc New York.

Donna received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work from the University of Buffalo. She is a member of the Leadership Genesee Class of 2005, was named a 2006 Leadership Fellow of the Community Health Foundation of Western New York and was awarded Social Worker of the Year in 2010 by the Western Division NYS Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. In 2011 she was named Geneseean of the Year by the Genesee County Chamber of Commerce.

When asked what’s next, Donna thoughtfully replied, “tending my gardens and canning fruits and vegetables – two things I love to do.” She added, “I will also continue my community involvement through volunteering.”

Donna and her husband Paul live in Darien, just down the road from the family farm where Donna grew up. They have two daughters, Tracey and Karen.

In response to the retirement announcement, Arc of Genesee Orleans Board President Debbie Fischer said Donna has been a strong advocate for Arc of Genesee Orleans, its programs, people

served, employees, and the community. “She has positioned this agency for the future and we will continue to deliver excellent services to individuals and their families,” she said. “On behalf of the board of directors, we wish Donna all the best in her upcoming retirement and look forward to working with her as a community volunteer,” the Board President said.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

It was announced earlier this week that following several months of meeting, negotiating, and work with The Arc New York, “conditional approval” has been granted for the Genesee Orleans and Livingston-Wyoming Chapters to merge. This is the first step to move more formally to a fully integrated organization.

Although this process may take several more months, the end product will be a 4-county wide organization. The new agency will use consolidated resources to ensure quality services to all people with I/DD and their families from the GLOW region.

**###**