

Important announcement from the president and quarterly updates on the latest news from CLASS ~

“We support people with disabilities, their families and their caregivers by building pathways to the community and ensuring individuals live lives fully realized, so they can thrive through engagement in the community where they work and live.”

## Letter from the President

This is my final letter as president of CLASS and the Arc of Greater Lawrence. I am retiring at the end of June after 37 years working for CLASS, 27 years as president.

I began working for CLASS in 1980 as director of programs, serving 14 sons and daughters. Community referrals and recognition for specializing in serving individuals with disabilities, once restricted to state institutions, helped us grow.

During my tenure I've worked with many dedicated staff members, Board of Directors members and community supporters - all a major part of our success - committed to making the lives of the individuals we serve as meaningful and as enriching as possible.

During our 41 years CLASS has grown beyond Greater Lawrence to serve most of the communities in northeastern Massachusetts. We are a proud chapter of the Arc of Massachusetts, as an advocate for those we serve and their families, and we liaise with both local and state governments to advocate for services critical to agencies across Massachusetts.

Today CLASS serves almost 500 individuals and families in programs. It has been personally rewarding to be part of CLASS's growth and to see the benefit our agency has brought to so many people.

However, state and federal funding is not keeping pace with the needs of those we serve. At no time in my 37 years at CLASS have I witnessed the financial pressure state agencies are facing to maintain quality services. This is a major concern, something we must all face and address in the months and years ahead.

Together, we have successfully supported the closing of many state institutions. Neighborhoods where individuals live and work have accepted them as part of their community life; corporations increasingly support their employment. We have created opportunities for individuals to be valued and respected.

Join with us as we celebrate and continue the good work started years ago by parents with vision. The continued advocacy on behalf of families and their sons and daughters is something I will always stay committed to.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Harris  
CLASS President & CEO



## Partnership Highlight – Essex Art Center

Art teacher Thea Shapiro, at the Essex Art Center, encourages Linda to experiment with color and how, "It's not about drawing something exactly as it is." As she worked on her flamingo, Linda said, "I'm frustrated because Monday is a holiday and I won't be able to come to CLASS." Art classes and community inclusion activities allow individuals like Linda to flourish and participate fully in the community.



Thea Shapiro, right, teaches Linda how to express herself through art.

**Essex Art Center** is a nonprofit art organization with a mission to inspire and nurture the diverse artistic potential of the Greater Lawrence community, making the creation and enjoyment of art accessible to all. *Thank you, Thea.*

Come in for a tour!

Visit our website at [www.CLASSinc.org](http://www.CLASSinc.org) to fill out a contact form or call us at 978-975-8587

We are located at 1 Parker St. Lawrence, MA 01843

## Facilities Updates

On a bright day in November, the CLASS staff and several individuals posed for photos with the renovation project team of architects JD LaGrasse & Associates, the Trident Building and Properties Group, Build-It Construction Services and TD Bank. CLASS staff and individuals were delighted to sign the beam that was later installed in the brand new entrance canopy.

This project is made possible thanks to financing from TD Bank and MassDevelopment.



The work continues on our new lobby, with fresh paint on every wall in CLASS logo colors and wood paneling behind the new receptionist desk, being installed today!



Email [atorres@classinc.org](mailto:atorres@classinc.org) or call 978-975-8587 to come for a tour!