



Merica House Moments

“Always be on the lookout for the presence of wonder.” — E.B. White

Remembering APD Board Member Arthur E. Shields Jr.



Long-time APD board member Arthur E. Shields Jr., passed away on December 17, 2023.

(Continued on Page 2)

Spring 2024

.....

Our Mission

The Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc. (APD) is a non-profit organization committed to creating accessible and affordable housing opportunities with full-time personal assistance services for adults with severe physical disabilities.

Inside this issue:

Tribute to Art Shields (cont'd)	2
Welcome to Jafar Hussaini	2
The Many Roles of Roxane	3
My Sister Miki (Matt Renfro)	3
Family & Friends (Dee Shields)	3
Update on Aide Frank Conteh	4
Huge Thanks to Our Donors	4

Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc. (APD)
3705 S. George Mason Drive, Apartments 105 and 106 South
Falls Church, Virginia 22041
Office Phone: (703) 671-7991

Resident Services Coordinator: Roxane Burkhart / rsc@theapd.org
Executive Board — Board of Directors:
John Renfro *president* Sonja Jarvis *co-secretary*
Fred Day *vice president* Christine Metz *co-secretary*
Jafar Hussaini *treasurer*

Our website:
www.theapd.org

Facebook:
independencewithdignity

United Way:
#8245

APD is a recipient of funds from the Fairfax County Consolidated Community Funding Pool.

.....

Arthur Edwin Shields Jr. (1944 - 2023)

Art passed away peacefully on December 17, 2023. Born on June 22, 1944, Art grew up in Sparrowbush, New York, where he was known as “Skip” among family and friends. In 1963, Art graduated from Port Jervis High School in Port Jervis, New York. Motivated by the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in November 1963, Art enlisted in the United States Marines. Trained as a radio operator, Art deployed to Vietnam in 1964 where, in spare moments, he entertained members of his unit with spontaneous guitar medleys. Art was injured in action on the outskirts of the Imperial City of Hue in central Vietnam, for which he was awarded the Purple Heart Medal. Art spent 13 months in Vietnam, then returned stateside and was honorably discharged from the Marines in 1968.

After his discharge, Art landed a job with IBM, where he specialized in database architecture. On October 4, 1969, Art married the love of his life, the former Kathleen Corcoran. Kathy and Art would give birth to four children. Art spent a total of 31 years in the employ of IBM, traveling to all corners of the United States and across four continents.

By nature, Art was a fixer. If something was broken, whether golf clubs, watches, radios, computers, wheelchairs or television sets, you could call on Skip. And on so many occasions, during times of need, Merica House and the APD did exactly that. Art reveled in fixing things, for two reasons: first, he was energized by the challenge of restoring a device or equipment to working order and, second, fixing things allowed him to fulfill his passion for taking care of those around him. The world would come to know Art primarily for his competitive spirit, his protective nature, his love for his country and his deep faith in the Almighty.

Art was preceded in death by his daughter, Maureen, a long time resident of Merica House. He is survived by his wife, Kathy; daughter Deirdre, a Merica House resident; daughter Jennifer; son Andrew; and four grandchildren, Major, Kiera, Wesley and Olivia. Art’s loving and caring attitude, his dedication to Merica House and its residents, and his concern for others in all walks of life will be deeply missed.

A Hearty Welcome to Our New Treasurer, Jafar Hussaini

After 15 years in the position of Treasurer for the Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Mitch Opalski has resigned his position in order to allow more time for other pursuits, including the operation of his home care agency, Synergy HomeCare of Arlington, Virginia. Mitch will continue to serve as a member of the APD Board of Directors.

The APD is fortunate to have identified an extremely capable replacement for Mitch in Jafar Hussaini. Jafar received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Hunter College in New York City in 2014. He then earned his MBA (Master of Business Administration) degree, with Honors, from the George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Jafar began his professional career as a Finance and Contracts Officer for Deloitte Consulting LLP. Thereafter, Jafar served as a Business Analyst for two years with Anthem Inc. (Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield) in New York before assuming the position of Director of Financial Analysis for Common Point Queens in New York City. He has also served as Comptroller for CommonPoint Queens. From April 2022 to May 2023, Jafar held the position of Senior Manager, Finance and Operations for Tent Partnerships for Refugees. He ascended to his current position as Accounting Officer for the District of Columbia Office of Chief Financial Officer in May 2023.



Newly Elected APD Treasurer,
Jafar Hussaini

Jafar brings with him a life-long commitment to public service that was embued and reinforced by his family. Jafar explains, “I was fortunate to benefit early in life from the care and nurturing of others, especially my immediate family. I believe it is incumbent on me to pay back to others for the help that I received along the way.” Reflecting on his 15 years as Treasurer, Mitch comments, “It has been a labor of love to serve APD as Treasurer and Board Member. I really admire and support this model of community living for young and middle-aged disabled adults. It allows for maximum independence, and the shared cost arrangement brings affordability to the care solutions. I’m so glad that Jafar has found us. He brings a lot of talent and experience to the organization. Congratulations to him!

Resident Services Coordinator, Roxane Burkhart: Urban Planner And So Much More

Our Resident Service Coordinator, Roxane Burkhart, began her tenure at Merica House in May 2013. Surely when she began her employment, Roxane could not have anticipated all of the roles that the job would entail. On frequent occasions since 2013, Roxane has had to serve as building engineer and custodian, accounting assistant, confidante and counselor to the residents, Metro Access coordinator, short order cook, squirrel and wild bird whisperer, travel agent, historian, interior decorator and so much more. No matter the task, Roxane does her work efficiently and with a purpose, always professional, always with the best interests of the residents in mind.

Not too long ago, Roxane willingly assumed another responsibility--as an urban planner of sorts. In casual conversation with resident Cathy Parr, Roxane learned that Cathy was born in Memphis, Tennessee. Cathy did not live in Memphis for long; when she was three years old, Cathy moved with her family to Atlanta. Even so, Cathy has an affinity for Memphis that has endured for more than 50 years.

Looking to celebrate Cathy's ties to Memphis, Roxane went on eBay to search for "a touch of Memphis." To her delight, Roxane found a series of miniature replica buildings that were based on structures found in Memphis in the 1970s. Together, Roxane and Cathy purchased all of the buildings they could find. They have recreated downtown Memphis right inside Merica House. The buildings are on display in a showcase that hangs just inside the front door to our premises. So, if you are a fan of Memphis--or even if you have no ties to the city--you are welcome to take a tour of Cathy's birthplace.



My Sister Miki

by Matthew Renfro

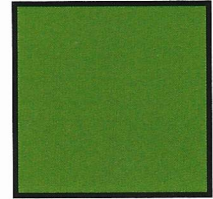
When I was a small child, there was a joyful and kind Catholic nun who helped to take care of me at Children's World Daycare Center in Manassas, Virginia. Sister Miki was a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Virginia, a local religious order in Manassas, and she worked at Children's World. I was at an age, around five or six years old, when I hadn't yet figured out that there could be different meanings for the word "sister." All my friends had only brothers. The only "sister" I knew was Sister Miki. People would ask me if I had any sisters or brothers. In response, I would tell them about my sister named Miki. Later, of course, people would learn from my parents that I was an only child. Even so, I would insist that I had a sister Miki. It is surely true that one can be an only child and still have a sister. I am living proof of that fact. To this day, I have fond memories of my Sister Miki.

Family Members and Friends Whom I Have Loved and Lost

by Deirdre Shields

The last few years have been difficult for me. My father died last December. His passing came almost a year after the death of Maureen, my sister, roommate and best friend. I miss them both dearly. Years ago, I had a close friend named Sean. We were buddies. People would say that it was almost like Sean and I were married. Sean was not able to articulate words. When he wanted to say something, he would key his thoughts into his computer, which was attached to a voice synthesizer. One day Sean became quite upset with me. Normally, he was imperturbable. This day, however, he was livid. He furiously keyed a bunch of words into his computer. The sentence he tried to enter was, "I want a divorce." However, when Sean pressed the button that would broadcast his words to me and others in the room, the words that came out were, "I want a de-horse." Technology had failed him. Everyone laughed, Sean most of all. The laughter fixed it all. Once again, Sean and I were buddies. We remained close until the day he died.

Merica House
Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc.
3705 S. George Mason Drive
Apartments 105 and 106 South
Falls Church, VA 22041



Update on Merica House Aide Frank Conteh

Our Winter 2023 newsletter provided an introduction to Frank Conteh. At that time, Frank was hopeful that his wife, Kadiatu, a native of Cyprus, would receive approval to come to the United States as a permanent resident. Kadiatu had her immigration interview last November and has now joined Frank in the U.S. Congratulations to Kadiatu and Frank!

Thank You to Our Donors

The Alliance for the Physically Disabled truly appreciates the continuing generosity of all members of the Merica House community. We wish to acknowledge the donations received recently from the following individuals and organizations:

Jane Banfield
Betsy Briggs
Michael Corcoran
Gail D'Agostino
William Emmitt
Jason Fleshman
Joan A. Golliday
Penny Gross
John Haverstick
Peter Jarvis
Sonja Jarvis
The Colin & Rosemary Jellish Fund
Hugh & Martha Johnston
Jane & Ron Karpick

Amelia M. Kettelhodt
Martha M. Larkin
Roger C. Lindberg
Manassas St. Thomas United
Methodist Women
Linda McLaughlin
Mary Catherine McMahon
Carol & Charlie Moser
Catherine & Sean Mullaney
Network for Good
Maria Nuzzolillo
Mitch Opalski
Our Lady Queen of Peace
Catholic Church
Sean & Michelle Parr

Al Perotti
Kathy & Jamie Reynolds
Rachel Rifkind
Elizabeth & David Rollert
Pamela & Manny Sanchez
Margaret Singletary
Janice Smith
Louise & John Stuckey
Evelyn M. Swart
Bill Teale
Margaret A. Wesbecher
Kelly Wilson
Lois A. Wright
John E. Zamarra
Mary Jean & David Zook

Note: A Donor Advised Fund is an efficient way to donate to charitable causes. A Donor Advised Fund can offer significant tax advantages. For readers who participate in a Donor Advised Fund, please consider naming the APD as a recipient of donated funds.

MERICA HOUSE

Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc.

YES! Please accept my donation for Merica House and its mission of providing independence with dignity.

Please make checks payable to **The Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc.** and mail with this form to The Alliance for the Physically Disabled, 3705 S. George Mason Drive, Apt. # 105 & 106 South, Falls Church, VA 22041.

Credit card donations can be made through our secure link found at <http://www.theapd.org>.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

The Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc. (APD) is a non-profit organization committed to creating accessible and affordable housing opportunities with full-time personal assistance services for adults with severe physical disabilities. APD's core mission is to operate and maintain Merica House. APD is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Email: rsc@theapd.org • Phone: (703) 671-7991