



LinkingLives

NortheastArc
Changing lives. Discovering abilities.



Supporting the Center for Linking Lives

To embrace inclusion and accelerate innovation

What's life like *today*, in this country—the most privileged society in the history of the world—for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities?

For all too many of those individuals, the answers to that question can be painful:

More than

80%

of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not included in the workforce.

A majority will live at home for most of their lives.

They are at high risk of significant health problems: the result of sedentary lifestyles and poor nutritional awareness.

More than

50%

of individuals with disabilities suffer from chronic loneliness, compared to a rate of 22.5 percent among their larger peer groups.

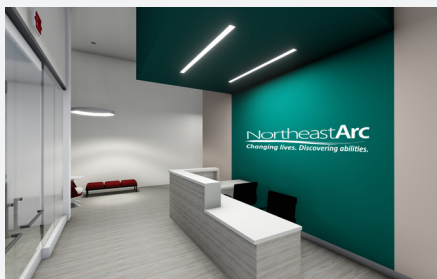
Some see these challenges as impossible to solve. At Northeast Arc, we don't. We are a 66-year-old nonprofit dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities become full participants in their communities. We discover abilities and change lives. We embrace challenges and invent new solutions. We've been at it for decades, and we're good at it.

Our latest initiative embodies this spirit of bold invention. We are creating a new resource—the **Center for Linking Lives**—in 26,000 square feet of highly visible retail space in the heart of the Liberty Tree Mall in Danvers, Mass. When completed, the Center will serve as a vibrant gathering place, where individuals with disabilities can reach their full potential, and learn to lead fulfilling lives alongside their peers.

This is an exciting turning point for the communities we serve. And we believe the Center represents a scalable idea—with powerful implications far beyond Danvers and Boston's North Shore.

To reach our ambitious goals, **we seek \$3 million in philanthropic support.**

We hope you will join us.



The Liberty Tree Mall—a major shopping destination on Boston's North Shore—comprises 66 stores and services in 854,000 square feet of retail floor area.



Northeast Arc: discovering abilities, changing lives

At Northeast Arc, we know where we've come from and, more important, we know where we're going.

The "Arc" was founded in 1954 by families of children with developmental disabilities—families who wanted to raise their sons and daughters as full members of their communities, mostly in cities and towns north of Boston.

Those families were truly pioneers. They, and their successors over the decades, challenged the conventional wisdom that said that their children could not be educated, would not live to become adults, could not lead satisfying lives. Working together, these families created support systems—from nursery schools to employment programs—that enabled their children to attend public schools, develop friendships, live where they wanted to live, and earn a paycheck.

Gradually, those support systems expanded to include a broader range of disabilities. Today, with an operating budget of **\$290 million**—and through the joint efforts of a skilled professional staff and a large volunteer corps—we serve individuals in almost **200** Massachusetts communities. We offer a wide variety of programs, including autism services, deaf services, early intervention, day and employment services, family support, personal care assistance, and recreation, residential, and transition services. For example:

We support **15,000** individuals annually, providing more than 300,000 hours of direct nursing support so that people can live independently in their homes.

We support **8,000** people living independently or in a house supported with staff.

We sponsor both an Autism Support Center and a Family Resource Center, aimed at supporting families in need of these kinds of help.

We sponsor thousands of hours of recreational opportunities annually, and provide specialized adaptive technologies—including tools that have enabled scores of children to communicate with their families for the first time.

What does it add up to? A far-ranging and effective system for **discovering abilities and changing lives**. We don't simply deliver solutions. We help the people we serve choose for themselves how to live, learn, work, socialize, and play.

And by so doing, we help them become full participants in their communities.



The Center for Linking Lives: inventing the new face of inclusion

Today, many facilities that seek to support individuals with disabilities instead foster physical and social isolation.

Perhaps they're at the far end of an industrial park, in a building with few windows, where rents are lower. Maybe they're not on public transportation routes. Most likely, there are few retail outlets nearby, and therefore few opportunities for creating connections, exploring job possibilities, and—ultimately—landing a job.

All of this is *exactly backward*. Resources aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities should be all about opportunity, and *inclusion*.

Several years ago, Northeast Arc began envisioning a new solution for our community-facing programs. Could we create a setting that would provide significant opportunities for people in those programs to acquire new skills, become more active, gain confidence, and emerge as more active participants in their communities?

Could we create a new face of inclusion?

Could we create it in a mall?

After extensive consultation with our board, client population, local government leaders, and private-sector representatives, we decided that the answer was a resounding **yes**. We explored our options, and ultimately entered into an agreement with the Simon Property Group—the largest shopping-mall operator in the U.S.—to lease 26,000 square feet within its Liberty Tree Mall property in Danvers.



We are now in the process of building out this new resource. We call it the **Center for Linking Lives**. We could not be more excited about the Center, and its potential for helping us discover abilities and change lives. When completed, the Center will be:

A **centralized convening space**, which—thanks to its location on public transportation routes and ample free parking—will make in-house programming and training more accessible than ever before to the communities we serve, and increase the number of those communities

An **amenity-rich location**, including recreation facilities, restaurants, banking, community and retail spaces, and even a house of worship—all resources to which our client population deserves access, and from which they will benefit greatly

The home to a **1,000-square-foot retail storefront**, which will exclusively offer products developed by people with disabilities

A **place where our client population can learn and practice skills** that will make them valuable in the workplace, and move them many steps closer to real independence and inclusion

A **family support center**, where families can gather, attend groups, and get the information and other resources and assistance they need

A **place where the public can meet, interact with, and get to know people with disabilities**—and welcome them into the broader community

We believe that this innovation has implications far beyond our own walls, and communities.

How so? First, the demand for the kinds of essential services and programs that Northeast Arc provides is growing steadily. In recent decades, advances in medicine have enabled people with intellectual disabilities to live longer, necessitating the kind of ongoing support that the Northeast Arc provides to live healthy and productive lives. Meanwhile, the detection and reporting of certain disabilities, such as autism, have increased significantly. The incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorder has increased 300 percent since 2004. According to estimates by the Centers for Disease Control, one in six children today has a developmental disability.

As a society, therefore, we face growing challenges. We need to offer more and better services, and find the right places to offer those services. We need more and better answers.

One such answer may well come from an unexpected quarter: the *commercial real estate* sector. Vacancy rates in malls across the country have been increasing over the past half-decade, especially in regional malls anchored by department stores. The shift to e-commerce and the decline of traditional retailers such as Sears and J.C. Penney has led mall owners to experiment with new kinds of tenants—including doctor's offices, housing, state motor vehicle branches, and churches. And it's likely that we'll see accelerating changes in mall-based retailing, in light of the hardships imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. Mall vacancies were at a 20-year high *before* the virus struck in the U.S.; almost certainly, they are going to go up.

Here's how those two trends—societal need and the unfolding retail revolution—come together.

What works at the Liberty Tree Mall should work elsewhere in America. We will bring hundreds of people into the mall every day. Retail outlets and restaurants will benefit accordingly. Already, we're receiving calls from real estate entrepreneurs—as well as nonprofits—from across the country, asking for more information.

In short, we have hit upon an important idea that we believe is scalable. Now we need philanthropic investors to help us test this idea, and make it work.

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Accelerating and scaling innovation

Who are we to be thinking so big?

Well, we're *inventors*, determined to find ways to improve the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

That process of invention is fueled in part by our Changing Lives Fund, established in 2017 through a \$1 million grant from real estate entrepreneur and philanthropist Steven P. Rosenthal, and supplemented annually by gifts from other generous donors.

How do we invent? First, **we seek out and back new ideas**. For example, with support from the Changing Lives Fund and other foundations and individuals, we run an annual innovation competition called the Arc Tank. Each fall, entrants compete for generous grants to support their ideas for improving the lives of people with disabilities. To date, we have received 296 entries from people in 30 states and four countries.

These competitors propose **real solutions** to real problems. Our winners have included a program to offer specialized training to first responders to increase their ability to interact effectively with individuals with autism; a second program that uses virtual-reality communication tools to improve the quality of life for individuals along the autism spectrum; and a ridesharing app that provides both on-demand and scheduled transportation for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

When we can shed a light on a progressive practice or program, we do so energetically.

We also make innovative investments in community infrastructure. In 2016, we opened our first **Breaking Grounds Café** on Boston's North Shore, offering paid job training to people with disabilities who want to work in the hospitality industry. The next year, we raised \$600,000 to create

a 238-seat **Black Box Theater** in downtown Peabody, providing educational and recreational opportunities for as many as 7,800 young people annually. In 2019, working with the Greater Beverly YMCA, we launched the second Breaking Grounds Café. Next year, in partnership with the Lynn YMCA, we will open a third café.



We make these investments carefully and collaboratively. We don't go to a community and say, "Here's what we need you to do for us." Instead we say, "How can we work together to make this community stronger, healthier, and more inclusive?"

In short, we know how to invest selectively, for **impact**. The Center for Linking Lives continues this tradition, and—we believe—opens the door to innovation on a national scale.



Three compelling reasons to give

Why does the Center for Linking Lives deserve your support?

Here are three compelling reasons.

1 The Center overcomes isolation. One of the most powerful lessons to emerge from the recent global pandemic is that *isolation hurts*. Many of the people who use our services have been isolated their entire lives. Let's do what we can to fix this.

2 The Center fosters inclusion. People with disabilities deserve the opportunity to live and work with the rest of us, as part of our communities. In traditional support systems, people with disabilities only see people who are *paid* to see them. That also hurts—but it can also be fixed.

3 The Center points toward larger solutions. Yes, our society has come a long way. As recently as the 1970s, many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities were institutionalized—and thereby made invisible. Fortunately, those days are far behind us. We no longer believe that people who are “different” need “different” places. But there is still much more work, and much more inventing, to be done. We want to do our part.

Please join us in making the **Center for Linking Lives** a reality, and in realizing its larger potential.



PRIVATE COMMUNICATION SPACES



RECEPTION



OPEN OFFICE



BREAK ROOM

ARTIST RENDERINGS:
PHASE ZERO DESIGN

LinkingLives

NortheastArc
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