

# Every Challenge is an Opportunity: Donna Brown's Enduring Legacy at The Arc of Bristol County



For over 45 years, Donna Brown has been a steadfast advocate for individuals with disabilities and their families. As a Vice President at The Arc of Bristol County, she has led with extraordinary compassion, integrity, and unwavering commitment. This Fall, Donna received The Arc's National Conference of Executives (NCE) Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award, honoring her decades of dedication to improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Donna began her social work career at Children's Protective Services before joining The Arc. Over the years, she has served in roles spanning direct support, volunteer coordination, and family case management, eventually becoming Director of Child and Family Services. Today, as Vice President, she oversees Adult Family Care, Autism Services, and Family Support. She holds a B.S. in Education with a concentration in Human Development from the University of Massachusetts and is a Licensed Social Worker (LSW).

Donna stands out for her genuine connection with those we serve and her belief in listening first. Throughout

her tenure, she developed family-centered programs like the Memory Café, Project Kids Connect, Saturday Program, and Vacation Club to address the evolving challenges our families face. Working closely with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and our team, she has focused on ensuring families have access to person-centered care.

As a leader, Donna is hands-on. She never hesitates to roll up her sleeves, work alongside staff, and help build trust with families. Donna has met with hundreds of individuals and families to broaden access to resources for dignity and independence. Her guidance and advocacy have empowered individuals to live fulfilling, independent lives in their communities.

Beyond her work at The Arc, Donna serves on the board of the Massachusetts Council for Adult Foster Care, where she continues to champion a team-oriented approach to care and advocacy.

As Donna prepares to retire, her impact will remain deeply embedded in The Arc of Bristol County's culture. Her belief that "each challenge is an opportunity" has inspired a generation of professionals and families alike. Her legacy is one of transformation—measured not only in programs created, but in lives uplifted, families strengthened, and a community forever shaped by her dedication.

Comments from those who have worked alongside Donna:

*"Donna embodies what it truly means to serve one's community—leading with empathy, integrity, and dedication. This award is so fitting and honors Donna's lifetime of service, her leadership, and her profound contribution to creating a more inclusive and supportive world for individuals with developmental disabilities and Autism."*

— Kerrie

*"Donna Brown's dedication over the past 45 years has shaped not only the success of our agency, but also the supportive culture we all value today. She leads with kindness, thoughtfulness, and an unwavering commitment to helping others. She is the heart of our agency and a true example of leadership through service."*

— Angela

*"Donna understands supporting people—whether individual or staff—requires compassion, patience, and genuine respect. Donna is the kind of leader that listens deeply, values every team member's voice, and creates a culture of trust and collaboration. Donna models empathy in every decision, she provides guidance during challenging moments without judgment. Donna's passion for helping others inspires everyone around her to do their best work, not because they have to, but because they want to."*

— Kelly

*"Working beside her through times of uncertainty and stress, she provides genuine, level-headed assurance about the path ahead that can only come from her lived experience."*

— Joelle

*"Her open-door policy, willingness to take any call, to listen to staff, families, and people we support truly exemplify our mission at The Arc."*

— Kathy

