

In This Issue

[Executive Director Corner](#)

[Ruby Anniversary Sponsors](#)

[A Smashing Success](#)

[Gem Spotlight - Girish and Datta Shah](#)

[Gem Honor Roll](#)

[ARCC Events!](#)

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Executive Director Corner

by Patricia Chiapellone, ARCC Executive Director

There is much to celebrate this month!

Our annual fundraising luncheon - "Unmasking the Potential of Today's Youth" - on January 30th was a tremendous success. Eighteen students from Ocala Middle School greeted guests with a firm handshake or a high five, a direct gaze and a smile.



What a way to start the day! As this was the start of our Ruby Anniversary



celebration calendar, the room sparkled with ruby red trimmings and gorgeous floral arrangements from Green Design on The Alameda.

In addressing our 225+ guests, I drew inspiration from a familiar Margaret Mead quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has!" And so it was with ARCC ...



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George Doub, together with a few like-minded community leaders, founded ARCC in 1974. While George is no longer with us having passed away three years ago, his wife Emily (pictured to the left) joined us at the luncheon and took a bow on George's behalf. George was truly an inspirational leader; a pioneer in developing a new form of mental health therapy in poor Latino communities where traditional counseling failed to take hold. His counseling focused on building up the strength of the child and family, and to his credit, what was once cutting edge, is now mainstream and continues as our practice in all our programs at ARCC today.

When I think about our continued growth over the past ten years from a staff of sixteen and a budget of \$1.5M to a staff of 99 and a budget of \$7.5M today, I think of our "angels" in the community who provide the resources necessary for us to do our work for they too are the thoughtful, committed citizens who do change our world.



I was pleased to announce a recent visit from one such angel, **Girish Shah** (pictured with his daughter and ARCC former Development Director **Nivisha Mehta**), who together with his wife Datta, have supported our **Middle School Mentoring & Support Program at Ocala**. Believing in the potential of these students, they have made a five year pledge to provide incentives rewarding students for significant academic achievement.

In the past year:

- 60% of students enrolled in the program are on the honor roll,
- 80% have a GPA of 2.5 or higher with the greatest rise in GPA coming in their 8th grade year.

And of students and their families receiving counseling services in our largest program, Mobile Crisis Response & Counseling (MCRC), survey respondents reported over **95% client satisfaction in each of the following areas:**

- Staff cultural and ethnic sensitivity,
- Crisis support,
- Improved school attendance and participation, and

- Decreased disciplinary actions at school.

What lies ahead for ARCC is equally as exciting as our past. It is simple, yet complicated. The simple? Do what we have always done - respond to the needs of our families and their community in a respectful, culturally competent manner. The complicated? Preparing for the new world of health care reform and living the mantra - Better Care, Better Health, Lower Cost. To do this, ARCC will need to explore forming new and expanded strategic partnerships with County departments, hospitals, clinics and health plans.

As I looked around the room, I knew that our success is owed to our partners, our school/district communities, the Probation Department, our judges, Department of Mental Health and SSA and to our CBO partners - Bill Wilson Center, Community Solutions, Grail Family Solutions, Catholic Charities, EMQ Families First, Somos Mayfair, our Staff, our Boards, our volunteers, students, donors including the generous sponsors for the Ruby Anniversary events.

Please continue to partner with us as we continue our work - we need you to invest in us, in our students and in their families.

Happy 40th Anniversary, ARCC!

Patricia Chapellone

Program Spotlight - Thank you!

A huge THANK YOU! to our honor roll of Ruby Anniversary Sponsors!

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Stephanie Demos, epc IT Solutions (Steve Guerrero),
Maben Hammon Family,
Tangence (Manish & Nivisha Mehta), Andrea Urton

A Smashing Success

by Stephanie Demos, ARCC Director of Development & Communications

Our annual fundraising luncheon was a smash! Without a doubt the highlight and the reason for its success were the three featured student speakers who touched the hearts of everyone in the room. The connection each of these young ladies made was clear from the misty eyes and enthusiastic standing ovation. And there was no missing the triumph and infectious smiles on each of the girl's faces as they were greeted with thunderous applause.



L
L, 13, said, "**Before I started this Program, I was always getting bullied**, but I would never say anything about it. I was often scared. Kids would say that I had a big head, I couldn't run, I was slow, ugly or fat. I would just cry and keep it to myself." She talked about being taunted on line as well with cyber bullying.

No one listening could describe L as feeling sorry for herself. "What I want you to know is that I am

proud to have a big, loving family. I live with my Mom, my Dad, my two aunts, my two uncles, my Grandpa, my two brothers and my baby sister - all in one house." She thanked her family for their support, Mentoring Program Supervisor Daniel Gutierrez for being someone she "could always count on to help me out" and Volunteer Coordinator for matching her to her mentor.

In triumph, L declared that without the Program, **"I wouldn't be the person I am now. I have self-confidence, I'm sociable, and I'm not afraid of being bullied because I have become stronger.** I've learned to face my fears and speak up. It's going to be hard in high school, but I'm strong and I know how to make the right decisions."

J

J, 13, shared her story. "I was in the third grade when my Dad retired and my Mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. With this I had to do the things my Mom used to do - cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and more. Sometimes I was so afraid of burning the house down when I was using the stove. I had to pile books on a chair to reach the pan and once I hit my head on the oven door when I fell down."



"Times then were hard and confusing because I was still bullied at school by a lot of kids. **Every day I had to walk my brother to and from school. Every day we were both being bullied.**"

"Most of the time I felt alone, like I could never make any friends and that no one would ever stand up for me. **But now that I joined the ARCC program, I have met the nicest people that always try to help me and my family and I really want to thank you for that.**"

She proclaimed her mentor Kiwi, the best mentor ever, "She's helped me through pretty hard times. I'm glad that I have people to talk to and when I think of my future I think of helping people because I never got help as a child."

J wants to be a lawyer when she grows up because, **"I don't know exactly what they do, but they help people and that's what I want to do."**



C

C, 13, has been in the Program for about two years. Her story began very differently ... "If I have to be honest, my childhood was pretty awesome! I had pretty cool toys to play with. I had a wonderful family to look up to. You could call me a spoiled brat. **I had things most**

kids have - except for two things, a mother and a father."

She said, "Growing up, my Mom and Dad didn't make the smartest choices" including smoking, drinking and using drugs. C was born when her mother was only seventeen and as a little girl she thought she was "a mistake."

"Now I know what you're probably wondering - Well, who do you live with then?"

"I live with my amazing aunt who is really my mom's cousin. When I was a kid I thought living with aunties and uncles was normal."

"My Mom had two other kids. Their dad abused my Mom so there's a restraining order out on him, and my little brother and sister are currently living at the Shelter."

The room - already quiet - became even more still as she told about the confusing reappearance of her father when she was ten. "Getting in his car felt like I was being kidnapped." When he casually asked if she wanted to come and live with him on the East Coast, C impulsively answered, "Sure."

But later, as she thought about it she decided, "Why would I live with someone that doesn't even know my birthday versus somebody that does so much for me." She thought about all the sacrifices her aunt had made and knew she was where she wanted to be. Her father once again disappeared.

C said, **"One of the things I've learned from the Program is that life isn't easy and I have decision to make. It may be good and may be bad, but learning everything that I can from ARCC can help me make good decisions - even when it's hard."**

The girls thanked Daniel and Jose for being there to listen and provide guidance, Courtney for matching them to their mentors - Stephanie, Kiwi and Sasha - each declared in turn as 'The Best!'



I don't know about you, but if I'd been asked, at 13, to speak to a crowd of this size and to tell my very personal story, I'd have likely crumbled. Don't forget that also in the audience were fifteen of their fellow students - and what is more intimidating than an audience of peers. **It wasn't just the adults in**

the room who were moved by their stories. Several of the students needed a shoulder to cry on, as parts of these stories resonated with their own lives.

When I was a child, school was always a safe place and though we moved frequently because my dad was in the Navy, I always looked forward to school. Today, for so many of our kids, school is not a refuge and simply walking to and from school can be especially hazardous.

This Program provides the tools for coping and reliable, caring adult role models. These girls represent the 93 students currently in the program and you can be sure there are 93 compelling stories of challenge that could have been told.



The Middle School Mentoring & Support Program is especially dependent upon private fundraising, and because of the generosity of our sponsors in anticipation of the event, and the incredibly responsive donors at the luncheon, we raised nearly **\$70,000** to support all the programs and services of ARCC. Gifts continue to arrive - on line and in the mail - in tribute to the work we do and we are immensely grateful, so we won't have a final tally until mid-March! It's not too late to give toward this event, perhaps even to give a gift in honor of one of our Gems ...

DONATE NOW

Profile: ARCC Gems

Girish and Datta Shah

Girish and Datta Shah were first introduced to ARCC in 2009 by their daughter Nivisha Mehta. They were generous and faithful donors from the start. **In fact, to date the Shahs are among our top three lifetime donors.** Enthusiastic ambassadors of the agency, the Shahs have invited many among their extensive circle of influence to learn more about ARCC, and those friends have been generous as well! With a strong commitment to youth and to education as a pathway to opportunity, Girish and Datta formed a deep attachment to the ARCC Middle School Mentoring & Support Program debuted at Ocala Middle School in 2010.



Girish, a member of our Advisory Board, recently said, *"I consider ARCC to do a very valuable job in our community because even in Silicon Valley which is flush with money and success, there are still a lot of people who are not having the same opportunity or same growth as they should have. The ARCC is really helping those who do not have the opportunity to actually have a vision, actually have hope and actually develop a goal so that they will succeed along with everyone else. So I think that ARCC does a very, very important job."*

There is a program especially dear to Girish's heart, *"I particularly like the Ocala Middle School program that we started because it really starts early in the middle school to give the children a vision that they can succeed if they try and they can have the role models that they will see that there is possibility of success so that they will try then rather than go to the path which might lead them in a different direction."*

Girish and Datta attended the celebration last year when the first class of eighth graders graduated from the program to begin high school. At that time, 60% of the 95 students in the program achieved honor roll and 80% carried a GPA of 2.5+. (As these students were identified as most likely to fail and/or drop out,

these are tremendously encouraging statistics.)

"That's when I feel that we are really giving back - when we see the children being successful, when they no longer want to waste their life. They have a goal, they have an objective and the success is what makes me feel very, very good about the program and want to do more."

True to their word, Girish and Datta are doing more. First, Girish is leading the charge in creating plans to expand the program - to enroll more students in the Program at Ocala and eventually to *"expand to different schools because there are other schools in the area that have the need for such kind of mentoring and guidance program."*

The second, truly pragmatic and innovative step is an incentive program for the students to encourage their continued success into high school. Girish is working with staff to develop a rewards program for academic success and leadership. The intention is to fund and support a five-year incentive plan that recognizes leadership and academic honors at each of the grade levels - sixth, seventh and eighth - and also to provide specific prizes for freshmen who have completed the Ocala program and then gone on to sustain academic excellence during their first year of high school. (More to follow in future editions ...)

While celebrating the Shah's dedication to ARCC, we also honor their commitment to the greater community. Girish sits on the Boards of Silicon Valley Interreligious Council (SiVIC) and Carry the Vision of Silicon Valley. He is Executive Committee Chair of the South Asian Heart Center and past Technology Committee Chair of the Federation of Jain Association in North America as well as past Coordinator of the Jain Aagam Mission. A key element of the future for ARCC is health care reform and Girish's past posts as Community Advisory Board Member - Genomic Medicine Institute at El Camino Hospital and Board Member & Treasure of El Camino Hospital Foundation - add to the value he brings to our Advisory Board.

It is this level of involvement, commitment to results, personal stewardship and outreach that has made the Shahs exemplary supporters of ARCC. **We were delighted to honor Girish & Datta Shah as Ruby Anniversary ARCC Gems!**

- by Stephanie Demos

ARCC Gems Honor Roll



visit our website



 Forward to a Friend



Julia Alloggiamento
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Elias Chamorro
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Carlos Quezada
David Sandate
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ARCC Events!

Please mark your calendars for the next 2 events!

May 29, 2014 - Ocala Middle School Mentoring Program Graduation *(Please note this is a change)*

June 21, 2014 - Fiesta de la Familia at San Jose History Park



ARCC Areas of Impact

1. Decrease at-risk and violent behaviors in youth and in the community.
2. Decrease system-dependent youth.
3. Sustain youth through elementary, middle and high school graduation and beyond.
4. Ensure all kids are kindergarten ready.