

A Look Inside

ARC FAMILIES: The Thomsons



The Thomsons have been involved with ARC since Matthew's baby years.

Jane, a school teacher in Saranac, is a long-time Board Member. Her husband Mark, an orthodontist, serves on the Board of The ARC Foundation. Mark's office is filled with pictures of Matthew and his younger brothers, Evan and Connor.

TOP: The Thomson family; Matthew at his high school graduation in 2004 with brothers Evan and Connor

BELOW: The Thomson brothers at Fenway Park, Boston, 2007; Matthew with the Plattsburgh State men's hockey team, the Cardinals



Starting in grade 10, Matthew spent half the day in high school classes and the other half in a career-based BOCES program. At age 21 he returned to ARC, where he received job coaching through the Workforce Network program and was named 2006 "Employee of the Year." He now works on a Champlain Valley Industries janitorial crew.

Sports, especially the Special Olympics, are a big part of the Thomsons' lives. Matthew competes in basketball, and Evan and Connor have coached their brother and other special athletes. Matthew is also the honorary equipment manager of the Plattsburgh State University hockey team. "They just love him," Jane beams. "He can't skate. But he helps with the equipment and uniforms. The guys pick him up every day and he goes to practice. They treat him just as if he's on the team."

One of Jane and Mark's goals for Matthew is that he eventually live at an ARC-supported residence. "I never want to leave home," he insists, at which his dad chuckles: "Of course you don't. We treat you like a king!" The family believes that when the time comes, however, Matthew will be ready and ARC will be there to support him: "ARC is a vital part of our lives and it will be forever."



Clinton County ARC: Past & Present

Families are at the heart of Clinton County ARC, an agency in upstate New York that serves individuals with developmental disabilities. ARC was founded by local families in 1954. Family participation remains vital to its work.

To honor ARC families, we highlighted a different one in each chapter. Some, like the Thomsons, were traditional families. Others were single-parent, adoptive, or divorced-parent situations.

All tell their stories candidly in their own words—a hallmark of our work. For example, Jane Thomson spoke on an issue faced by many families. "It was my pride that kept Matthew mainstreamed," she admitted. "The other kids were tolerant and accepting, but he grew frustrated . . . he flourished again when we got him into self-contained special education."



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