

# Athelas Institute, Inc.

SPRING 2020

## ATHELAS ADVOCATE



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Cover Page	1
About Athelas Institute, Inc.	2
Letters from Leadership	3-5
“A Mile In My Shoes” Recap	6-8
Caregiver Corner	8
What We’ve Been Up To	9-10
Supported Employment Ad	11



Participants in our FIRST Annual 5K & 1 mile walk fundraising event!!

Athelas Institute  
9104 Red Branch Road  
Columbia, MD 21045

410.964.1241  
[www.athelasinstitute.org](http://www.athelasinstitute.org)  
[www.facebook.com/AthelasInstitute](https://www.facebook.com/AthelasInstitute)

## Who We Are and What We Do: Athelas Institute, Inc.

Since 1976, Athelas has been the premier organization for serving individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. We continually strive to help both individuals and their caregivers. Currently we have services in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County and Howard County. Limited services may also be available in Anne Arundel County.

Our mission has always been to provide opportunities for growth and personal accomplishment to individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities complemented by quality services and meaningful community engagement.

For over 40 years, Athelas has pioneered specialized programs in residential services, individual services, and specialized day programs for disabled seniors, dually diagnosed individuals and for individuals with autism.

This quarterly newsletter is intended to be a resource for the community. Inside these pages, you will find information about our organization, useful tools and supportive information for caregivers, health tips, highlights of the outstanding works that our individuals do in their everyday life, feature stories, and updates on events such as Special Olympics and the Athelas Institute Annual Campaign.

Our hope is to be a beacon of help, hope and light to the community. We have fantastic individuals who are working, volunteering and having fulfilling days at our programs and in the community. Their journey and that of their caregivers deserves to be shared; thus opening the conversation on how to further support each other, and how to make a difference in the lives of others.

For more information on our organization, or to make a donation, please visit our website: [www.athelasinstitute.org](http://www.athelasinstitute.org) or call 410.964.1241.

*“There is no more important or noble work than to have the opportunity to have a positive impact on someone’s life.”*  
— Ray Jordan,  
Founder,  
Athelas Institute  
Inc.

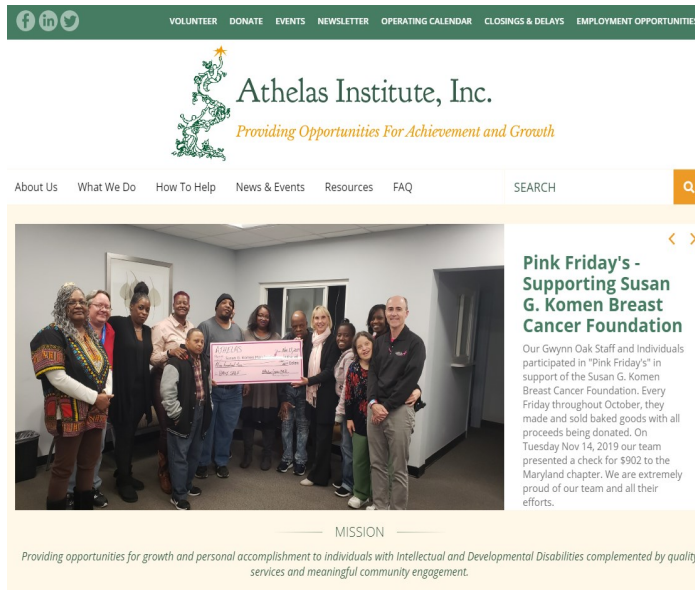
## Check Out Our Website & Facebook

We are happy and excited to announce that Athelas Institute has a new website! Same [www.athelasinstitute.org](http://www.athelasinstitute.org) address but it has a whole new look & feel!

Click on the images and take a look! We have updated information, amazing content and registration pages for upcoming events and fundraisers.

This new website will showcase our individuals and “What We Do” in a much more dynamic fashion. In addition, this new website is social media savvy and “mobile friendly,” so take a look from your smartphone!

We also have stories, pictures, videos, and updates on our Facebook page, so make sure to “like” us to see awesome content.



## Staying Strong in Safety & Services



To Athelas families, caregivers, friends and staff,

As you can tell, much of the content for this edition of The Advocate was planned well before the current COVID-19 outbreak. I just want to take a moment to thank Athelas families and caregivers for being so understanding when we had to close Day Services. At that time, we had no way to really understand the impact of this situation. We are still closed and cannot say when we will be able to reopen. We are grateful for your patience and understanding. In no way do we want to rush to re-open and put anyone in harms' way.

Athelas Residential Services are continuing to provide supports for individuals in our homes. Both Day and Residential staff have been working 24/7 to take great care of everyone, while keeping them safe, healthy and active. There have been some really great activities and friendly competition between houses. Please be assured that all precautions are being taken to, hopefully, keep the virus away.

Since both Day and Residential staff are working in the houses, we have been fortunate in not having to furlough or lay-off staff. This is being done in the hope to be fully staffed when we are able to re-open. Athelas is so proud to have dedicated staff who want to continue to work. Please don't forget to thank them for this selfless, humanitarian effort they are providing.

If you are wondering what you might do to assist during these times, we are always looking for more latex gloves and masks for our staff. Some staff and volunteers are making masks for each other, but we will always need more. Also, any unused craft supplies would be greatly appreciated. Should you have something to donate, please contact me at [dlasov@athelasinstitute.org](mailto:dlasov@athelasinstitute.org) and I will arrange a drop-off point.

Again, thank you for your support during these challenging times.

Best Regards,

Diane S. LaSov, Executive Director



## 2019: Year in Review



It's been a very busy and productive year at Athelas. I'd like to take this opportunity to share the many great things that have been happening.

- All day programs have been focused on Maryland's Employment First initiatives. Program participants have been involved in volunteer opportunities and are having many new experiences. Athelas has currently placed 50 individuals in competitive employment. The variety of jobs are as unique as the people themselves. (doggie day care, food service, children's day care, maintenance, cashier who trains other staff, cart attendants, receptionist, floor assistant/customer service and many more! )
- DDA (the Developmental Disability Administration of the State of Maryland), in conjunction with CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ), established a Community Integration initiative. As a result, both day and residential program participants are exploring their communities with greater frequency. This has led to volunteer opportunities, new friends

and new experiences. These new experiences will be coupled with the opportunity to learn to become more independent in the community.

- Athelas completed the application for and has been licensed for new services under both the Community Pathways and Community Supports waivers. This allows Athelas to provide 15 different services including a full array of employment services, clinical and nursing services that are now billable as well as residential and personal supports options.
- A three-year Strategic Plan was developed for the organization in 2017. Goals have been met addressing program services, expanding community interaction and better organization within Athelas to provide the best services for our individuals. We are now addressing the last goal of three-year plan which focuses on changing the culture at Athelas. All staff will be involved in developing a more positive culture towards the individuals and our co-workers. We very much want Athelas to be a great place to work!
- Renovations have been completed to all programs and offices; house renovations are almost complete. ReBuildIt Maryland has participated in helping with renovations, painting and some landscaping. Their voluntary assistance has been excellent on several occasions.
- One wheelchair van, three 15 passenger vans and four mini-vans were purchased. We were also able to sell some of the older vehicles.
- New computers with up to date software have been installed at all programs and are in the process of being installed in the houses.
- Athelas has engaged the help of the Hartman Group to assist with transitions into better IT practices, IT security and to streamline business practices to further reduce any duplication of tasks and free up time to all jobs very well.
- New Board of Directors members are actively learning about Athelas and the services provided. The Board now has two family members and an individual participating in making important decisions for the company.
- Staff News: In conjunction with the Board of Directors, education reimbursement, short/long term disability, referral incentives and life insurance have all been added to the benefits package for current staff and those newly hired. Salary increases and holiday bonuses have also been added to provide more competitive wages. Athelas is focused on maintaining great staff and attracting more of the same.
- During the year, staff participated in local (MACS) and national conferences, as well as many training seminars. Chantelle Taylor, Deputy Director, is currently a participant of Leadership Howard County. Andrea Callahan, Director of Day Services, and Victoria Jordan, Director of Residential Services, have completed this training.
- Specialized training for staff is ongoing. Coach Approach and MANDT will be agency-wide initiatives.
- The first Celebrate Athelas day was held in June. All of the program participants, staff and many family members were treated to a beautiful day of great activities, food and fun at the Circle D Farm. Swimming, bingo, dancing, swirl art, volleyball and a hay ride were a few of the events. It was such a great day, that we are planning the event again. **Mark your calendars for June 19, 2020.**

## 2019: Year in Review

- Community dances continue to be held. All are welcome!
- Individuals and staff attended Developmental Disability day in Annapolis. Meetings were held with representatives to advocate for better program supports and staff salaries. This has become an annual event for Athelas.
- The first Annual Walk/Run event was held in October. A volunteer Advisory board made up of representatives from the community worked together to make this event a success. It is hoped that attendance will double each year! Mark your calendars for **October 10, 2020 at Fairway Hills Golf Course.**

Athelas is so proud of the many staff and Board members who have worked so hard throughout the past year to help Athelas **go from good to great!** We can't thank everyone enough for their dedication and contributions towards the betterment of Athelas. There is still work to do but we are definitely on our way!

Respectfully submitted,



Diane LaSov, Executive Director

## YOUR SUPPORT HELPS TO PROMOTE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

Click on the link to donate:  
[www.athelasinstitute.org/how-to-help/donate.html](http://www.athelasinstitute.org/how-to-help/donate.html)



Serving over 300  
individuals in a  
variety of programs  
and  
locations



*“Athelas has helped me to live a more independent life. I have a job, I know how to budget and I always feel welcomed. I have also learned how to be a good leader. Without everybody, I would not be where I am now.”*

— James Powell

# “A Mile in My Shoes!” - A Community Event

~ A 5K run & 1 mile walk fundraising event supporting  
 People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities ~  
 Sponsored by Athelas Institute and our community partners



*Thanks for  
 Attending!*

On behalf of all of us here at Athelas, I want to express a sincere and heartfelt “Thank You” for everyone’s participation, sponsorships, donations and support in celebration of our 1<sup>st</sup> Athelas Run/Walk Community Event held on Saturday, October 5, 2019 at the Fairway Hills Golf Club.

We had a beautiful fall day, which encouraged our many participants, including some of the individuals we serve, their families and several of our sponsors, to come out and thoroughly enjoy the day, the run (for some brave people) and the walk (for those of us less adventurous), the food, and especially the camaraderie of our individuals, their families, our sponsors and some community leaders all mingling together having a great time!

We appreciate you, all our loyal friends and supporters. Special Thanks go to Don Van Deusen and Fairway Hills Golf Club for hosting us, to Lance Cook and Tino’s Italian Bistro for all the GREAT food and to our special guests Howard County Councilman Dr. Opel Jones and Maryland State Senator Guy Guzzone!

We look forward to seeing you all in 2020 to make our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Run/Walk Community Event an even bigger and better event for everyone to enjoy!

Sincerely,

Jeff Callahan, Director of Business Development and IT





We made it!!!



Papailiou Family – Participants, supporters and very happy multiple winners!



The Koonce Family – Participants, Winners and great supporters of Athelas!



Veronica and Tony enjoying the day!



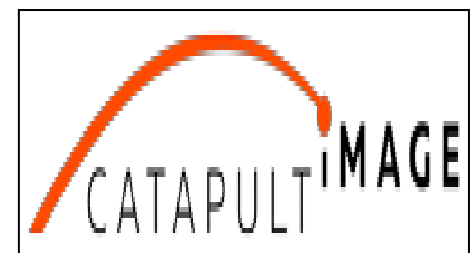
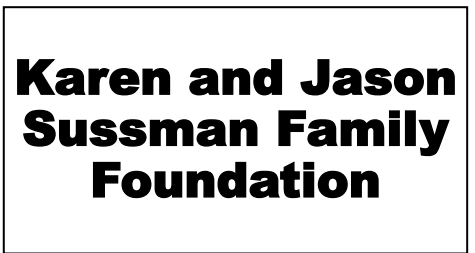
Awesome Supports of Athelas – (l to r) Theodore, David and Ian



Special thanks to our group of Volunteers and their leader, our own Pat Owens!



We greatly appreciate the support from our State and County representatives – pictured l to r – Councilman Dr. Opel Jones, Athelas Exec Director Diane LaSov, Jeff Callahan (Athelas), MD State Senator Guy Guzzone, and Scherazde Agurto (Athelas)





## BRAVE In The Attempts Talks



Pictured: Kimberly McKay, Director of Communication & Outreach of MD Department of Disabilities  
Christy Scott, 2020 BRAVE Speaker

Eunice Kennedy Shriver created the Special Olympics motto —“Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.” Since 1968, the Special Olympics has been a highlight for athletic sportsmanship within the community. From this venture, BRAVE in the Attempts Talks has been created. BRAVE in the Attempt Talks uses the "TED Talk" personal story-telling platform style to encourage those with disabilities to serve as mentors and role models for others.

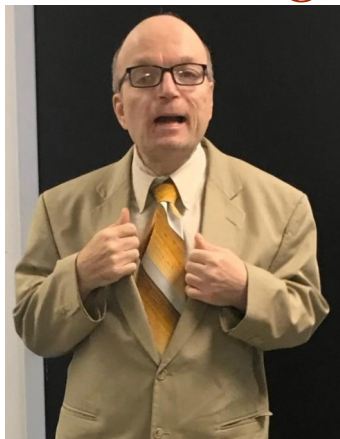
We are so excited and proud that Christy Scott has been chosen as one of the speakers for this years' event at Towson University. We cannot wait to hear her story regarding this years' topic: Vision.



*“In ancient Rome,  
the gladiators went  
into the arena with  
these words on  
their lips: let me  
win, but if I cannot  
win, let me be  
brave in the  
attempt.”*

*— Eunice Kennedy  
Shriver, Found of  
Special Olympics  
& Philanthropist*

## The Legacy of Bryan Zapotosky



Seven years ago, Bryan Zapotosky decided to help those in need during the holidays, so he galvanized staff, friends, and family to help him with an Adopt-a-Family project.

Sadly, Bryan passed away, but we want the memory of how kind and giving he was to live on through this project.

In honor of Bryan, we continued his endeavor and found a family to help.

The Brooks family is a blended family as the result of tragedy. In May, Tiffany did not hesitate to take in her sister's four children when her sister was murdered. This left her as a parent to six children including her own two. She is the sole care provider these children. Thanks to an outpour of help, we were able to supply them with toys, coats, gift cards and a few weeks worth of groceries.

Please know that it's never too early or too late to help us continue Bryan's Legacy! For more information, please contact:

Christina Korenstra,  
GO Program Manager

[ckorenstra@athelasinstitute.org](mailto:ckorenstra@athelasinstitute.org)



# Activities and Volunteerism

Throughout the year, we like to keep our creative juices flowing by participating in Arts & Craft and culinary delights to celebrate the seasons/holidays. Here are a few pics of our activities for the fall, winter and spring seasons.

We also like to give back to our community through volunteerism. A group from CRC had been volunteering at The Community Bible Church for 2 years. After a bit of cleaning and re-organizing, the pastors wife also helps them to complete arts & crafts!



# Activities and Volunteerism

Speaking of giving back, we also want to give a BIG THANK YOU to the students from Atholton High School, Marriotts Ridge High School, and Mt. Hebron High School Key Clubs. They helped us work on our Angel Project. This projects helps those in need of gifts. The volunteers collect and wrap gifts for the holiday season, and then deliver the gifts to families. We also had a great time with Santa!!





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