



## The Arc of Loudoun County

P.O. Box 243 \* Leesburg, VA 20178-0243

Voice: (703) 777-1939 • Fax: (703) 779-2708 • [larclady@aol.com](mailto:larclady@aol.com) • [www.thearcofloudoun.org](http://www.thearcofloudoun.org)

*For more information contact: Jennifer Lassiter 540-751-1414*

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the Arc of Loudoun (Larc) announced that it has agreed to a long-term lease of the well-known Paxton property in northeast Leesburg. The 10 year lease (with subsequent option periods) provides a new home and great expansion potential for The Aurora School, currently located in Purcellville.

This announcement is the culmination of lengthy, discreet and meticulous negotiations between Larc and the Board of Trustees of the Margaret Paxton Memorial for Convalescent Children. Thanks to the diligence of both the Trustees and Mark Herring, acting as the pro-bono attorney for the Larc organization, the lease comes with very generous terms. Herring noted, "This will be a great use for the property and help many children in our area. It was a team effort and I'm proud to have been a part of it." The Executive Director for Larc, Eleanor Voldish, shared recently, "it wasn't easy but we are thrilled with the result." Ms. Voldish went on to say "this represents a quantum leap for both Larc and Aurora but only continued parent, citizen and contributor support will assure long-term success." Among the community partners past and present have been Centex Homes and the Loudoun Restoration and Preservation Society (LRPS).

The Paxton Board of Trustees administers the funds and property left by Mrs. Rachel Paxton upon her death. Most notable among these is the nearly 140 year old Paxton mansion, known more formally as Carlheim, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. In accordance with Mrs. Paxton's final wishes, the Trustees are advised by a Board of Visitors which consists of the Rector and three female members of St. James Episcopal Church of Leesburg. Mrs. Paxton was a congregant of St. James until her death. The Rev. John Ohmer, Rector of St. James', said, "The signing of this lease is a huge step toward honoring... Mrs. Paxton's last wishes."

The mansion is situated near the center of the 16 acre Paxton property which is bounded on two sides by Catocin Circle and Oakcrest Manor Drive. Until 2004, a day-care operation was housed in the bungalows that are arrayed in a semi-circle around the mansion. Larc will upgrade and use those buildings for its programs serving children with disabilities as well as complementary programs for other children.

The mansion itself will be used for administration and special events. While in sound condition for its age, Carlheim will require extensive renovation and modernization, which will improve utility while preserving the building's historic integrity. An initial preservation survey of the mansion has already been completed by Tidewater Preservation, Inc. Larc will be aided in this effort by LRPS, which has ambitious fundraising goals. Like the school operation, the restoration and modernization efforts will require enthusiastic and generous public support. Interested persons may contact LRPS through its website at [preserveloudoun.org](http://preserveloudoun.org).

Larc is a non-profit organization recognized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and was founded 40 years ago by a small group of parents seeking supports and services for their children with

disabilities. It is Loudoun County's only non-profit advocacy organization devoted to people with intellectual disabilities and related developmental disorders. Larc's Mission is to advocate for persons with disabilities by promoting individual support and equitable participation with their non-disabled peers in all aspects of community life, including education, residence, vocation and health care. For more information visit [thearcofloudoun.org](http://thearcofloudoun.org)

In 2003, Larc founded The Aurora School to serve children with disabilities who did not succeed in traditional classroom settings. Beginning with three students, Aurora has now grown to serve 24 students in its current Purcellville location. Aurora is licensed by the Virginia Department of Education to serve students ages 2-22 with autism and other developmental and intellectual disabilities. Aurora serves students from across Northern Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland, many placed by their public school systems. The majority of Aurora's students are children with autism, and the teachers and therapists use Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) as the primary teaching methodology as it is the only scientifically proven method to help children with autism gain and maintain academic and life skills. Aurora focuses primarily on teaching students communication skills, but also emphasizes individuality and the arts. Aurora has a Music Therapist and Occupational therapist on staff to enhance student skills and creativity. The educational programs at Aurora primarily use a 1:1 staff-to-student ratio to provide each student the individual attention and curriculum adjustments required for each child to succeed. Jennifer Lassiter, Director for The Aurora School, notes that "We change lives every day. It is amazing to see a child who comes to our program with no way to communicate, no language skills, and to see that child begin talking. We have one student who said his first words at age 10. One of the first sentences he said was 'I love Mom.' It is amazing to be part of that."

With Aurora's move to Paxton, it will be able to double its current enrollment and expand the programs offered to its students and the community. Aurora is excited to expand and offer after-school care for children with all types of disabilities, as well as enrichment opportunities such as art, music, or sporting activities. Aurora is actively seeking opportunities to collaborate with other non-profits so that the new Paxton campus could become a resource for the disability community unlike anything Loudoun currently offers. Ms. Lassiter, envisions a "one-stop shopping" resource campus where children can receive services and their families can receive information, help, and support. For more information about Aurora and its current programs at its location in Purcellville, visit its website at [www.aurora-school.org](http://www.aurora-school.org).



*"Working towards a positive future for people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities"*

United Way # 8139  
CFC #33755

**The  
Arc**