

FEATURED

BARC unveils new downtown space

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Bristol Mayor Jeff Caggiano, Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation and Mary Etter, executive director of the Bristol Adult Resource Center (BARC) celebrate the grand opening of BARC’s new office and program space.

Brian Johnson

BRISTOL – Civic, business & nonprofit leaders joined the Bristol Adult Resource Center in celebrating its expansion into a new building downtown Thursday.

Dozens gathered for a ribbon cutting celebration on the fifth floor of the office building at 225 N. Main St.

In addition to Bristol's "movers and shakers," family members of the people BARC serves were also in attendance.

Among them was Paula Bonin, who said her 61-year-old sister Cynthia has been helped by BARC for 40 years.

Mary Etter, executive director of BARC, led guests on a tour of the new, 10,800 square foot program and office space. BARC moved their offices over to this location on Jan. 28 and then moved programs over a few weeks later.

BARC, founded in 1957, helps individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities "maximize their independence" and "achieve enrichment and growth."

Etter thanked city leaders, businesses owners and nonprofits for their continued support of BARC over the years. She also thanked Mayor Jeff Caggiano, the Bristol City Council, the Bristol ARPA Task Force and the Task Force's nonprofit subcommittee which is headed by Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation.

The ARPA Task Force created a system for businesses and nonprofits to apply for portions of the \$28 million in America Rescue Plan Act federal funding that the city was allocated to use for “transformative projects,” Etter said.

BARC received \$1.5 million in ARPA funds toward acquiring their new space, which covered 98% of their costs.

It was one of the largest ARPA money allocations for a nonprofit in Bristol.

Etter thanked Sadecki for her “tireless advocacy” to get BARC’s funding request approved by the task force. She also thanked ACG North America, the construction manager for the project, and the other local companies and vendors who helped to transform the fifth floor space.

“I’d like to think that the families who founded BARC 70 years ago would love this great new facility,” Etter said. “Having it right here downtown is the ultimate symbol of community inclusion.”

Sadecki said that it was a “great idea” to fund the space with ARPA funds. Not every community considered giving money to nonprofits with their portion of the funding, she said.

“This was always meant to be,” Sadecki said, of the new BARC space. “There is no other executive director that I’ve worked with quite like Mary Etter. She never gave up on her advocacy.”

Sadecki said it was great that the local ARPA money helped to support an organization like BARC, which helps to improve mental health, coming out of the pandemic. The funding, she said, was awarded to help communities recover from the impact of COVID-19.

Caggiano said that, while the city focuses on public education, safety and infrastructure, it is great to have nonprofit service organizations like BARC in Bristol. He said it “takes an entire village” to make a community. He thanked all of those who made the new space possible.

Caggiano added that the city planned to create a video which will highlight the 15 main projects which benefited from the city’s \$28 million in ARPA funds over the course of two years.

Charlotte Audet, BARC’s board president, also thanked everyone who helped to provide the new space. She said it would give the people BARC serves a new place to “learn, grow and create.”

She added that it would be an amazing office space for staff as well.

BARC supports 140 individuals in their day programs and 42 people living in 12 houses throughout Bristol.

The nonprofit provides work opportunities and art programs and also operates “The Hidden Cafe” at 621 Jerome Ave. E

ter said on Thursday that BARC will soon begin serving grab and go lunches on the first floor of the building at 225 N. Main St.

For more information, visit bristolarc.org or call 860-582-9102.

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