

Arlington Rotary cooks for Abilities First

Arlington Rotary Club held their annual picnic meeting at Abilities First (formerly ReHab Programs, Inc.) school and clinic on North Road, Thursday, Aug. 5. The picnic is an annual event where the club members do the cooking and serve the full noon meal to the students and staff. After everyone was fed, Rotary held their meeting in a large classroom where Occupational Therapists Kim Bowles, and Lief Miller, along with one of their very willing students, demonstrated the "Drum Circle" training device.

"This unique device can track the student's movements and turn them into 'music', said Miller. "It allows our students to create sounds like drums, piano, bells, and even a dog's bark, just by moving a part of the body. For some of our students, it is a challenge to even make a movement with the head, and in one instance, the only body part that could move was the tongue. However, even that movement could be translated into a sound."

The software was developed in a joint effort of Abilities First and an engineering team from RPI (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) of Troy, NY.

Presently, Abilities First works with an approximately \$20 million budget and is able to assist more than 2,000 individuals in the local area year-round. It takes five staff members to train and/or assist each classroom of 12 students, some of which would never be able to function without this help.

"We are able to work with close to 100 percent of those in Dutchess County who really need our help," said Bob Kelleher, director at Abilities First. "It is wonderful to

have Rotary interact with these people. It gives our students confidence and really makes a difference."

The Arlington Rotary has been active with the Abilities programs for more than 40 years, and have donated, built and installed playground equipment, a gazebo, a van, a storage shed and teaching equipment over those years. It is their way of living up to the motto, "Service Above Self."

Arlington Rotary is made up of business and professional men and women whose aim is to address the needs of the local and international community. They meet Thursdays at noon at Christo's Restaurant, Wilbur Boulevard, Poughkeepsie. For infor-

mation, call the secretary at (845) 486-4605.