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## Man bikes cross country to help Flanders facility for disabled people

By PHIL GARBER Managing Editor Aug 31, 2019



Matthew Dinday has completed a cross country bicycle ride from California to Flanders. He rode to help the Arc Morris center in Flanders. From left, are Dinday; Katherine Cascioli of Montville, president of The Arc/Morris; and Jim Gallagher of Rockaway Township, past president and member of the board of directors.

**MOUNT OLIVE TWP.** – James Krauklis had Down Syndrome and holes in his heart and he spent much of his adult life at the Arc Morris facilities in Flanders, Morristown and Parsippany.

Krauklis was 50 when he died in 2004 and his two brothers and two sisters were so grateful for the care their brother had received that they donated \$250,000 toward a renovation to the Arc day training center at 26 Main St., in Flanders.

The Krauklis family, Mary in California, Andrew in Chicago, Kevin in Alaska and Dorothy in London, made the donation in the name of their parents, Julius and Loretta Krauklis, of Morristown. The addition was subsequently named in honor of Julius and Loretta Krauklis, who were frequent volunteers at the center and founding members of the Arc Morris in 1953.

The Arc Morris formed in 1953 and serves more than 1,000 county residents and their families. The day training centers in Flanders, Hanover, Dover and Morris Township serve 175 people with disabilities.

The non-profit Arc Morris had leased space at the old Flanders School since the early 1980s. But the Mount Olive Board of Education wanted to sell the 80-year-old building and the Arc bought it at an auction.

The donations from the Krauklis family went a long way toward the \$2.5 million needed to renovate the center.

### *Institutional Life*

The 1950s were a time when people with developmental disabilities were simply known as mentally retarded and many were housed in institutions, some facilities better than others.

“There were no other options for families,” said the Arc Morris longtime director, Bill Testa. “It was an era where people were placed in institutions.”

Krauklis was placed in the North Princeton Developmental Center in Montgomery Township, formerly known as the N.J. State Village for Epileptics. The original facility was built in 1898 but it eventually became sorely understaffed and overcrowded.

With the advent of epilepsy medication, in 1953, the North Princeton facility was converted into the N.J. Neuro-Psychiatric Institute, focusing on treatment and research of alcoholics, drug-addicts, people with cerebral palsy, and emotionally disturbed children.

The state closed the facility in 1995 and representatives of the Arc Morris approached Krauklis' parents and offered him housing at a new group home in Lake Parsippany. Krauklis became one of the first residents at the Arc group home and he began getting involved in the agency's sheltered workshop programs. At the same time, his parents got more involved with the programs.

“They were very, very smart and very, ve4ry committed,” Testa said of Mr. and Mrs. Krauklis.

## *Bike Ride*

James Krauklis' nephew, Matthew Dinday, 39, was a research associate at the University of California, San Francisco. For 16 years, Dinday has been involved with studying seizure resistance and epilepsy in zebrafish.

But in April he gave up his studies and hopped on his bicycle for a lifelong dream and to give back to the Arc. Dinday arrived in Flanders on Friday, in the final leg of a journey that started on April 23 in San Francisco. He brought about \$1,600 in cash and on-line contributions he had raised and was met at the Arc center by Testa and Katherine Cascioli of Towaco, president of The Arc/Morris and Jim Gallagher of Rockaway Township, past president and member of the Arc Morris board of directors.

"This is a trip I've daydreamed about for more than a decade," said Dinday who was raised in Marin County, Calif., and now says his residence is his bicycle. "Associating the trip with a cause that I genuinely care about is all the better. Now, I'm an unemployed homeless guy on a bike."

He wanted to see the country, up close, and not from the window of a bus, a car or a train.

The journey took Dinday north along the Pacific coastline to Portland, Ore.

"The first three weeks were a painful learning curve with all the hills and the wind," said Dinday who had never even taken an overnight bike ride before. "It has not been disappointing in the slightest."

The journey took him to Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Tetons, Mount Rushmore, the Badlands, Wall Drug Store in South Dakota, the field from "Field of Dreams," Chicago, Indianapolis, parts of Ohio, Pittsburgh, the home designed in 1935 by Frank Lloyd Wright in Mill Run, Pa., New York city, the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., and Boston, Mass.

Dinday said he plans to bike to Portland, Maine, where he will board a flight to San Francisco to help celebrate the 70th birthday of his mother, Mary Dinday.

Arriving in Flanders and seeing the center where his uncle spent so many years was the culmination of his trip.

"It has been humbling to put it mildly," Dinday said.

Dinday wrote on his blog that he has long been concerned with providing proper support for

people living with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

“One of my uncles lived with Down Syndrome and while I only met him a handful of times in his life, what he faced left a strong impression with me of how much our understanding of these challenges has changed since his youth and of the importance of the programs and support that can now improve not only a life like his, but also what that life can do,” Dinday wrote.

“Our family has been proud to support the chapter of my uncle’s hometown for several years and it would be great if this trip could send any additional awareness and support their way,” Dinday wrote.

His trip is chronicled on Instagram. To get there, search for “nogodnothimagain.” It also will link to the fundraising site at [crowdwise.com/o/en/campaign/us-bikeride-for-arc](https://crowdwise.com/o/en/campaign/us-bikeride-for-arc).