

The Arc Southeastern Minnesota 2014-2015 Annual Report

Mission

The Arc Southeastern Minnesota builds fully inclusive communities by protecting human rights through advocacy, support, and education for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Vision

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families will live full and complete lives as valued and engaged members of their communities.

Guiding Principles

The Arc improves the quality of life for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and assists them in obtaining the full range of civil rights, including the right to equal education, housing, and employment.

The Arc supports and advocates to secure and enhance opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to choose how they live, learn, work and play in their communities.

The Arc addresses the needs of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in a holistic way by looking at the total person.

The Arc is the gateway through which persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families pass as they search for support from others who have shared their same experience.

The Arc identifies gaps in the service system and leads collaborative efforts with other agencies and elected officials to find ways to close those gaps. The Arc promotes the development of or provides new services so that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can live full and productive lives in their communities.

Advocacy

Individual and Family Advocacy

Individual and Family Advocacy is one of the most important core services provided by The Arc Southeastern Minnesota. We have two staff who work a total of 32 hours per week in this program area. In spite of limited hours we have been able to continue providing advocacy in all 8 of our counties. During the past year we have provided individual and family advocacy to over 100 different persons with

disabilities and their families. Advocating for persons with school issues continues to be our largest area but in the past year we have also been involved with issues related to employment, residential, health care, case management, government benefits, and corrections.

Self-Advocates Minnesota Southeast Region (SAM)

Self-advocacy is another core service of The Arc Southeastern Minnesota. For the last several years we have received a grant from Advocating Change Together (ACT) to host Self-Advocates Minnesota Southeast Region (SAM). This group is very busy each year. The Advisory Council (16 self-advocates, 3 support staff, 2 allies, and 1 community organizer) works on learning skills to become stronger self-advocates as well as to plan events they will be sponsoring. Each year the group takes part in Disability Day at the Capitol. They also host a regional self-advocacy conference each June. This year it was held in Rochester. The theme was Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory—complete with someone winning the golden ticket! This is a fun and educational day where 65 people had a chance to attend workshops on Person Centered Planning, Hot Cooking with No Stove, Social Boundaries/Healthy Lifestyles, Job Development, Olmstead 101, and Money Management. It was a great opportunity to learn new self-advocacy skills, enjoy friendship, and end the evening with a dance. Planning for next year's conference has already begun!

In late 2014 SAM received a grant from ACT that allowed them to send a team to The Olmstead Academy. This week-long training in St. Paul taught the group about Minnesota's Olmstead Plan. At the end of the training the group designed a community project to implement in our region. The project was designed to provide peer support and assist other self-advocates with the implementation of their person centered plans. The project was completed in the summer of 2015 and was well received by the individuals who worked with the SAM members.

The SAM group also actively participated in the state Self-Advocacy Conference in March 2015 as well as attended state leadership meetings at various times throughout the year.

SAM SE extends beyond our 8 counties and includes active members from Mower and Freeborn Counties. The Arc Southeastern Minnesota is pleased to be their sponsoring agency and is proud of all of the work they do to promote self-advocacy in southeastern Minnesota and beyond.

Public Policy/Systems Advocacy

We continue to be very active in systems advocacy/public policy efforts working collaboratively with The Arc Minnesota and organizations in

southeastern Minnesota. Each year we are well represented at Disability Day at the Capitol as well as Tuesdays at the Capitol. These provide an opportunity for us to advocate for services and supports for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We meet with Representatives and Senators from our 8 counties, attend committee hearings and rallies, and share information about the issues of concern to The Arc and Region 10 Quality Assurance.

We are part of The Arc Minnesota's Civic Engagement and Public Policy Committees. Over 100 persons from southeastern Minnesota are signed up on CapWiz to receive updates and action alerts from The Arc Minnesota on issues critical to the lives of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Each year The Arc co-hosts with other area agencies, Candidate Nights or Town Hall Forums which provide an opportunity for elected officials and/or candidates to hear from constituents about the issues that impact the lives of persons with disabilities, their families, and providers of service. The candidates or elected officials also have an opportunity to share their views on legislative issues important to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

As usual, the 2015 legislature ended with some good news as well as some disappointments. After several years of work, partial funding (about 40%) was approved for the State Quality Council including some money for the development of three regional councils. This has been a priority area for The Arc Minnesota, The Arc Southeastern Minnesota and Region 10 Quality Assurance for a number of years. We are hopeful that this will be a positive start to implementing a statewide person-centered process to evaluate the quality of services and supports for persons with disabilities.

Language was included in the human services omnibus bill that would lower the reserve amounts counties can set aside for waived services. This should help address some of the issues related to the extensive waiting list throughout the state. Parental fees were lowered by 10% which will be a big help to families who have children under the age of 18. Limited funding and authorizing legislation passed to allow the establishment of ABLE accounts which are similar to 529 accounts but are designed for persons with disabilities. There was also money appropriated to begin implementing some of the items in the Olmstead Plan.

While the approval of the 5% campaign was a huge success in the 2014 session, it did not pass in 2015. This was a big disappointment. There will be efforts in 2016 to address this with a "new and improved" design. We also advocated to expand Group Residential Housing (GRH) for individuals with disabilities seeking to live more independently. This also was not included in the budget bill.

The 2016 legislative session is not a major funding year so our public policy agenda will be somewhat shorter than usual but it continues to be important for people to stay in touch with their elected officials. We are available to help people share their stories and make their legislative connections.

Housing Access Services

Throughout the state the Housing Access Services Program has assisted nearly 1500 people with disabilities move into homes of their own since the program began in late 2009. The success of the program has resulted in the Minnesota Department of Human Services renewing and expanding its contract with The Arc Minnesota for this service. The Housing Access Services Program is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and The Arc Minnesota who subcontracts with regional chapters of The Arc to provide the service. Our contract, which had covered 18 hours per week of staff time, was recently expanded to include an additional 6 hours of support staff time.

The Housing Access Services Program helps eligible Minnesota adults with disabilities seek and locate suitable, affordable, accessible housing. Adult Minnesotans of all ages who have been assessed and determined to be eligible for Minnesota Medicaid home care or waiver services and who want to move to homes of their own could qualify for this service. The service has exceeded expectations.

During our first 4 years, we averaged just under 10 completed moves per year. Since 2014 we are averaging 16 moves per year! People are really beginning to know about this service and the success we have had in assisting people with their housing needs. It is not uncommon for our Housing Access Services Coordinator to be working with 15-20 people at any given time. That is quite an accomplishment for so few hours of staff time.

Because of the success of Housing Access Services, The Arc Minnesota has decided to look at expanding its housing advocacy services. The Arc Southeastern Minnesota is the first regional chapter to begin implementing a pilot project by providing Relocation Services and Moving Home Minnesota services. These programs assist persons with disabilities who are moving from institutions and nursing homes into lesser restrictive settings which will better meet the individual's needs. The persons served typically have higher needs or more complex issues than those we see in Housing Access Services. Because of this intensity, they are Medical Assistance billable services. This is our first experience with billable services. We have a nice partnership with The Arc Minnesota where they do the billing and we do the work! We have extended this pilot project and expect next spring that we will determine whether or not this is a service that we will continue.

Region 10 Quality Assurance

The Arc Southeastern Minnesota continues as the fiscal host for Region 10 Quality Assurance (QA). In the 2011 legislative session, a bill was passed to create a State Quality Council. This Council's design is similar to the Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission with representatives from various stakeholder groups including three representatives from the Region 10 Stakeholders in addition to two from The Arc Minnesota. The Council's charge is to develop a Statewide Quality Assurance, Improvement and Management System that utilizes Regional Quality Councils. These community councils will oversee a community-based, person centered evaluation based on new outcome standards. We are hopeful that the experiences gained over the last 15 years in Region 10 will be a driving influence for this state plan. In each legislative session since 2013, bills were introduced to not only continue the State Quality Council, but to fund the first three Regional Councils of which Region 10 would be one. While the authorizing legislation passed, funding was not secured until partial funding was approved in the 2015 session. We are excited about the potential opportunities that can be a result of this funding.

In 2008 the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) was cited by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for not implementing the Medicaid waiver consistently statewide. In anticipation of the corrective action plan being approved, DHS developed a new licensing rule (245D) that went into effect in January 2014. As a result, in July 2014, Region 10 Quality Assurance was notified that the state would no longer allow our alternative licensing process to continue. Until the new statewide system is funded or an amendment to the corrective action plan is filed, Region 10 QA and its VOICE review process is now voluntary and not part of the licensing process. While we continue to be disappointed with this action and feel that it has been a considerable setback, we have continued to work with DHS and legislators to build a statewide quality assurance and improvement system that is consistent with our principles and beliefs, and are very pleased that the State Quality Council now has some funding and should be able to move forward with the development of Regional Councils soon.

Support

Family Support is one of the core services of The Arc. Unfortunately, most of the funding for our support programs is no longer available. For many years, we had many services in this area including the Family Liaison Project, Parent-to-Parent, and a variety of support groups. We continue to offer parent-to-parent matches upon request and we help facilitate support groups as interest occurs. We are looking at new ways of providing support that will better meet the needs of families as our society changes.

The ArcPlan/Master Pooled Trust

The ArcPlan is designed to assist families with planning for their family member with a disability after their parents or other family members are unable to provide support to them. There are currently over 50 people in The ArcPlan program. Thirteen of those have Personal Support Plans for future services and four are currently using enhanced services totaling nine enhanced visits per month.

The Arc Master Pooled Trust is one way to provide long term financial services to families who have a member with a disability. It is a program of The Arc Minnesota. Our chapter has worked closely with them in establishing trusts for a number of families in our area. We believe it is a great complement to the services we provide through The ArcPlan.

Scholarships

With an annual contribution from the Rochester Civitan Club and some small community groups, we are able to provide very limited (\$50/year) financial support to 10-20 persons with disabilities each year to meet needs where there is no other funding source.

In addition, in 2011 the Pack family from Hayfield, MN established a scholarship fund with proceeds from the Seth Pack Golf Tournament. They have partnered with The Arc Southeastern Minnesota to assist families (up to \$200/year) who have children with Down Syndrome. In its 5 years the tournament has raised \$24,380 for this fund. Because of the success of the fund and in order to serve a larger number of people, the Pack family has opened the scholarship program to schools and agencies who are supporting people with Down Syndrome.

Education

The Arc SEntiments Newsletter/Communications

The Arc Southeastern Minnesota distributes a newsletter three or four times each year by mail or email to over 2500 individuals, families, and agencies. It is also available on our website. We also keep people current about activities of The Arc on our Facebook page, website, and through mass emails.

Training

Each year The Arc Southeastern Minnesota provides a variety of educational opportunities for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, families, and professionals throughout our eight counties. Some of our workshop topics are guardianship, healthy relationships, self-advocacy empowerment, housing, life planning, and special education issues.

Membership

Our Membership Committee continues to work to increase renewals and identify new members. Membership is an integral part of our organization. Our chapter is known for having the most effective membership process in the state. We currently have 530 memberships which represents over 800 people.

MNsured Outreach Grant

During the last year we implemented a grant with The Arc Greater Twin Cities and The Arc Midstate to provide outreach activities related to MNsure. We targeted our outreach activities and the distribution of materials to reach uninsured and underinsured persons with disabilities and their families. Unfortunately, this was a one-time grant which ended in the summer of 2015.

Other

Since the fall of 2012 The Arc Southeastern Minnesota Board of Directors has been working on long term sustainability and succession planning for the agency. In January 2013 The Arc Southeastern Minnesota Board of Directors approved a plan to address long range sustainability by making the Executive Director position part-time and hiring a part-time Development Coordinator. That position was filled in September 2013. While gains were made with that new position, the person in the position moved out of state after a year. Rather than re-fill the position, the Board chose to work on a different strategy. This past summer The Arc was a recipient of a service grant from the Rochester Area Foundation. One of their staff led our staff and some Board members through a lengthy strategic planning process which will help us determine our strategic directions for the future. Since the fall of 2014, our Executive Director has been a part of a statewide task force of Executive Directors of chapters of The Arc, who have been charged with drafting a proposal that will go to all chapters in the state to address statewide re-structuring, succession planning, and improved efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources in order to

strengthen regions while making a strong Arc accessible to people no matter where you live in Minnesota.

We continue to have staff who are passionate about the mission of The Arc Southeastern Minnesota and dedicated to improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities. We are fortunate to have such dedicated people working to fulfill our mission.

We held our 11th Annual Golf Tournament in July, and it was very successful. We continue to have a strong base of sponsors. This year we had two new people join our golf committee. They helped us design a new name and brand for the tournament---The Arc Southeastern Minnesota's Golfers' Choice Tournament. The theme is intended to build on The Arc's belief that all of us should have choices in our lives. We expect to expand that theme in the coming years. This is our largest fundraiser. We are grateful for the support we receive from our sponsors and volunteers.

In March of this year we were fortunate to be one of the area's non-profits chosen to participate in the Bremer Foundation's March Millions. Bremer Banks are new to the area and one of their introductions to the community was to offer non-profits the chance to have donated dollars matched up to a total of \$1,000,000 region wide. Non-profits in southeastern Minnesota were so excited to take part that the million matching dollars were gone in less than 4 days. They continued with other incentives during the month. We were fortunate to have donors contribute nearly \$13,000 of which \$10,000 was matched. What a fun time that was!

We also experienced some sadness this year when we lost three long-time active members and leaders in the last couple of months. Lavona Meiners passed away in July. She was a member from Houston County who was a very strong advocate—especially for her daughter, Lisa, who currently serves on our Board of Directors, but also for many others with intellectual and developmental disabilities. There was never a question about what was on Lavona's mind and the people of Houston County truly benefited from her advocacy. She and her husband, Don, were also active with The Arc Minnesota and its Foundation Board.

In August Stewart Shaw passed away. Stewart and his wife, Kay, became involved with The Arc because of their son, David, who had developmental disabilities. They were active with The Arc when they lived in St. Paul and then became even more active when living in Winona. Stewart was a President of The Arc Minnesota Board when deinstitutionalization was occurring. He was deeply involved in public policy issues and was passionate about the human and civil rights of all persons. He was a gentle, yet very persuasive man, who helped to improve the lives of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He was held in high regard by all who knew him.

Jeff O'Toole passed away in October. Jeff was a special education teacher in Rochester for 34 years. He was a member of The Arc Southeastern Minnesota during his entire teaching career. He served on our Board of Directors in the 1980's. He and some friends started a fund raiser for us---the Zumbro Zig Zag triathlon. He sold poinsettias; he sold sweet corn; he worked at rummage sales. He did whatever needed to be done. He was loved as a teacher and believed in his students without fail. He ended his career teaching transition aged students how to be prepared to enter the adult world, how to be good citizens of their communities, and how to treat others with respect.

The Arc Southeastern Minnesota and the people we support have benefited from all of their involvement with us. They will be missed.

On December 11, 2015 Mickey Prince will be honored as one of The Arc Minnesota's Heroes. Mickey is a long-time member of The Arc Southeastern Minnesota. She served on The Arc Minnesota Board of Directors in the 1980's and was President when the agreement was reached to close all of the state hospitals. What a change that has made in the lives of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Mickey has been a strong public policy advocate, but she has also provided support to numerous individuals and families. She has chaired our Membership Committee for several years and continues to handwrite letters to some members. She has worked on many fund raisers and special events, and most importantly, she has advocated for a great life for her daughter, Judy. We are proud that she will be recognized as a Hero of The Arc.

As you can tell, volunteers are very important to The Arc Southeastern Minnesota. Thank you to each and every one of you who help make The Arc Southeastern Minnesota the organization it is. We appreciate you!