

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair and a purple headband, smiling and holding a bunch of red radishes and green leafy vegetables. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

Building Healthy Habits Through HealthMeet®

In 2012 The Arc of the United States created [HealthMeet®](#), a program designed to reduce health disparities and increase the longevity and quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities (ID). Funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 29 chapters of The Arc provided 2,553 health assessments at no cost to people with ID in the states of California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. In addition to obtaining information about their health and referrals for follow-up services, individuals and their families and health care professionals received information about health disparities and strategies to address them through the over 160 resources developed by the HealthMeet team. These resources include webinars, videos, online courses, training curriculums, checklists, reports, fact sheets, blog posts, and newsletters. All HealthMeet resources are available on The Arc's website at thearc.org/healthmeet. Learn more about HealthMeet [here](#).

These stories were developed by The Arc of Alameda County in San Leandro, California to illustrate the impact that HealthMeet has had on individuals that they serve.

Creating a Culture of Health

AT THE ARC OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

HAYN SLOCUM is one of The Arc of Alameda County's dynamic instructors that is helping to create a culture of health awareness at the chapter. Hayn came to The Arc as a volunteer to work with people with mobility issues in the Alternative Ventures Program. His background in physical fitness and nutrition made him a natural choice to participate and complete the [HealthMatters™](#) Train-the-Trainer course, offered by the University of Illinois at Chicago. Following the training Hayn was selected to lead the HealthMeet project activities at The Arc's Hayward, California location.

THE ARC HAS WORKED TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING THROUGH THE HEALTHMEET PROGRAM AND THE HEALTHMATTERS CURRICULUM.

Staff and participants are more aware of high blood pressure and diabetes and how they relate to diet and fitness. An emphasis is placed on prevention and "healthy aging", especially as so many baby boomers age.

As a result of The Arc's health initiatives, Hayn has noticed less junk food in individuals' snacks and lunches. Participants talk more about what they eat and drink and the types of exercises they like. These positive attitudes are translating to encouraging results, and Hayn is pleased that everyone is "having fun being healthy"!

The staff is also making an effort to be more conscious about their health habits by watching what they eat, exercising, and not smoking. Like the participants, staff are mindful of the amount of sodium they consume in food and drinks, which raises blood pressure. Soft drinks are being replaced with organic drinks, bottled water, or low-sugar juice.

HAYN WORKS TO ENSURE THAT THE ARC'S HEALTH PROGRAMS ARE INCLUSIVE by providing modifications for all participants. Some of the ways that Hayn has worked to accommodate everyone include:

- ▶ Offering instruction in sign language for participants who are deaf;
- ▶ Partnering participants who are blind with a sighted person to play basketball; and
- ▶ Providing adapted yoga for wheelchair users.

Hayn also infuses excitement in the health programs by occasionally inviting special guests to visit the chapter. In Alameda County, which is home to World Champion Golden State Warriors, basketball is a favorite activity of many people that are served by The Arc. NBA Hall of Famer Gary Payton, formerly with the Seattle SuperSonics, made time to join Hayn and those served by The Arc to shoot some three pointers!

Leading a healthy lifestyle can be difficult, but Hayn has certainly helped The Arc of Alameda County become a healthier environment while also having fun.



HAYN SLOCUM
ONE OF THE ARC OF ALAMEDA COUNTY'S
DYNAMIC INSTRUCTORS



STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS ARE MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES LIKE REPLACING SOFT DRINKS WITH WATER AND LOW-SUGAR JUICE.

HAYN IS CAREFUL TO ENSURE THAT THE ARC'S PROGRAMS ARE INCLUSIVE BY PROVIDING MODIFICATIONS SUCH AS PAIRING PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE BLIND WITH A SIGHTED PARTNER TO PLAY BASKETBALL.



Hayn is pleased that everyone is "having fun being healthy"!

Be Happy and Healthy

DANA HALE is a self-advocate with developmental disabilities who has been blind since birth. He relies on his senses of hearing, taste, smell, and feel to navigate his community. Dana has lived in a community-based residence for the past 22 years. He and his girlfriend of 15 years, Katie, are inseparable. They both participated in The Arc’s HealthMeet activities.

Before joining the HealthMeet program, Dana always felt overwhelmed by other health and exercise programs which he felt focused on the number on the scale and created stress for him. Dana’s goal is to be healthy and happy without the stress.

HEALTHMEET SHOWED DANA HOW HEALTHY LIVING CAN BE MORE SIMPLE AND FUN. At one of the HealthMeet beach-themed events, he learned how to create healthy snacks such as sugar-free gelatin and pudding topped with fresh strawberries and a dollop of fat-free whipped cream. Dana noted, “I never had a dessert that good!” At this event, Dana especially liked the exercises. He really enjoyed dancing to music from the Beach Boys; however, his favorite part of the event was practicing range of motion exercises on the yoga mats which imitated swimming in the ocean.

HealthMeet has also introduced Dana to other types of exercise. Aside from playing basketball and walking, he now uses the stationary bike, completes chair exercises like chair sit-ups, and enjoys dancing. He also loves to dance with Katie.

One of Dana’s most important dietary changes has been drinking more water and cutting down on soda. **PARTICIPATING IN THE HEALTHMEET ACTIVITIES HAS TAUGHT DANA TO MAKE BETTER FOOD AND DRINK CHOICES.** Dana avoids unhealthy foods such as baloney, hot dogs, fried food, salt, and alcohol. Dana has added healthier options to his diet such as rice, chicken, lean-cut baked pork, mashed potatoes, cabbage and squash.

Introducing different foods and activities in Dana’s life has improved his digestion and he has fewer colds. “I no longer have problems with digesting my food. I check my temperature when I’m sick and have fewer colds.” says Dana.

THE ARC HAS HELPED DANA BE A HEALTHIER PERSON. Being healthy is important to Dana because it makes him keep track of his blood pressure, sugar level, and cholesterol. As a result of the HealthMeet activities, Dana has even lost weight—“I’ve lost 11 pounds and am really proud of myself!” His motto is to “be healthy, but be happy doing it!”



DANA HALE
SELF-ADVOCATE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES



DANA ENJOYS EXERCISE,
ESPECIALLY DANCING WITH HIS
GIRLFRIEND KATIE.

DANA HAS
ADDED
HEALTHIER
OPTIONS
TO HIS DIET
SUCH AS RICE,
CHICKEN, LEAN-
CUT BAKED PORK,
MASHED POTATOES,
CABBAGE AND
SQUASH.



“Be healthy, but
be happy doing it!”

A Parent's Perspective on HealthMeet

ERMA VIRGILIO is a retired Registered Nurse and the proud mother of **ROBERT**, who has an intellectual disability. She is also a member of the board of directors for The Arc of Alameda County, where Robert receives services. Both Robert and his brother Anthony, who has autism, live independently in the community.

Robert works on the grounds crew at The Arc of Alameda County's location in Hayward, California and participated in the HealthMeet and HealthMatters programs offered by the chapter. Prior to Robert's involvement in these health programs, he was overweight (struggling with portion control and healthy eating) and exercise was not part of his daily routine.

At home, Erma emphasizes healthy food and exercise to her sons and she is pleased that The Arc is now reinforcing these healthy habits too. Not only are the programs teaching healthy habits, but junk food is no longer available at The Arc's program locations. Instead The Arc is offering more fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods.

Now, **ROBERT IS MAKING HEALTHIER FOOD CHOICES** and eats less sugar and processed foods. He shops at the farmer's market for fresh food, and incorporates more vegetables in his meals when he eats at restaurants. Robert also participates in healthy cooking classes, which have taught him to make healthier snacks and lunches. More importantly, Robert has learned portion control and now has the proper portions of food on his plate, which helps with his weight loss.

Robert is also incorporating **MORE EXERCISE INTO HIS DAILY ROUTINE** and enjoys walking. He walks to and from the bus station every day, and will get off the bus at the bottom of the hill near work so he can walk up the very steep hill for more exercise.

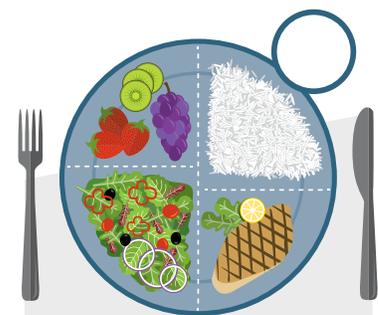
His walking combined with the healthy cooking classes has resulted in better health. Erma says, **"I CAN TELL BY LOOKING AT HIS SMALLER CLOTHES AND SLIMMER BODY THAT HE IS HEALTHIER!"** She had to take him to the store twice to buy smaller pants.

Erma notes that, "We can't just teach The Arc's staff and clients to be healthy. We need to educate family members and care providers too." She suggested inviting families and care providers to healthy lunches and nutritional education classes at The Arc to learn more about healthy living.

Erma is convinced that the combined efforts of The Arc staff, caregivers, and families will help to create a supportive environment for Robert and others like him at The Arc to lead healthier lives.



ERMA VIRGILIO
AND HER SON **ROBERT**



ROBERT HAS LEARNED ABOUT
PORTION CONTROL AND NOW
INCORPORATES MORE
VEGETABLES IN HIS MEALS.

*"We can't just teach
The Arc's staff and
clients to be healthy.
We need to educate
family members and
care providers too."*

