

## Get to Know The Arc



### WHAT WE DO

**INSPIRE** people with I/DD to achieve their full potential.

**PROTECT** the human rights of all people with I/DD

**ADVOCATE** both on a personal level for the individual with I/DD, and on a local, state and national level for legislation that improves their lives

**SUPPORT** individuals with I/DD and their families to access services related to early intervention, inclusive education, life skills training, employment, independent living and future planning.

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### Who Is The Arc?

You may know The Arc best by our donation trucks often seen driving through neighborhoods throughout the country, or by visiting one of our local thrift stores which brings in revenue that helps to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). But did you know that The Arc does so much more? If you ever have a child, family member or other loved one diagnosed with any type of I/DD, you will quickly come to realize just how invaluable The Arc is, and come to appreciate in a new way all that The Arc does.

The Arc is the largest national organization of and for people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families, promoting and protecting their human rights and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. We foster respect and access, giving people with I/DD the power to achieve a full and satisfying life through a strong grassroots network of 140,000 members affiliated through more than 700 state and local chapters across the nation. At the national level, a 22 member national board of directors and a delegate body of representatives from each chapter guide The Arc's work. National headquarters staff located in Washington, D.C. carry out their decisions and directives.

### When Was The Arc Founded?

The Arc was founded in 1950 by a small group of parents and other concerned individuals. At that time, little was known about the condition of intellectual disabilities (then referred to as mental retardation) or its causes; there were virtually no programs and activities in communities to assist in the development and care of children and adults with intellectual disabilities and or to help support families. In

the early days the organization worked to change the public's perception of children with intellectual disabilities and to educate parents and others regarding the potential of people with intellectual disabilities. The Arc also worked to obtain services for children and adults who were denied day care, preschool, education and work programs. In 2010, The Arc celebrated its 60th anniversary.

### **Why Is The Arc Needed?**

The Arc works to ensure that the estimated 4.6 million Americans with intellectual and related developmental disabilities have the services and supports they need to grow, develop and live in communities across the nation. These services include, but are not necessarily limited to, early intervention, health care, a free and appropriate public education, and supports for their families. For adults, services and supports may include preparation for employment, help in finding a job, independent living skill training, leisure and recreation activities and any other supports needed across the lifespan.

### **How Does The Arc Carry Out Its Vision?**

The Arc is recognized as the foremost partner for families and

people with intellectual disabilities to support and enhance the quality of their lives. The Arc does this through advocacy on behalf of individuals and families at all levels of The Arc and in the legislative, systems and individual advocacy arenas. Providing information and technical support to individuals, families and organizations assists them in fulfilling their dreams. Advocacy takes place at the personal, local, state and national levels. Locally, individual advocacy is available through every local chapter of The Arc. At the state level, advocacy occurs with the executive and legislative branches of government, administrative agencies, school districts and other providers. At the national level, advocacy opportunities exist with regard to influencing federal agencies, policies and funding for disability programs and services.

The Arc also educates policymakers, people with intellectual disabilities, service providers, families and the greater community on best practices and issues that impact people with intellectual disabilities and their families. The Arc's is a national force that creates the environment and the opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities and their families to have choices as they

live their lives in the community.

### **How Do I Join The Arc?**

Individuals become members of The Arc at any level—local or state chapter, or at the national level. You join The Arc through a local chapter or on a national level as an individual member. You will then become a member of the local and state chapter and of The Arc of the United States. You can find your local chapter of The Arc by visiting our web site or looking in your phone book. Chapters differ in their services and programs, offering a diverse array of activities and opportunities for becoming involved with the lives of children and adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. Local chapters may engage volunteers in their citizen advocacy and self-advocacy programs, recreational activities and employment programs. Chapter volunteers educate the public about intellectual disabilities and prevention strategies.

### **How Can I Get More Information?**

Current, up-to-date information about The Arc and its activities is available on our web site at [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

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*Achieve with us.*