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The Challenge

Fall 2025



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Images from Special Olympics Track & Field competition in Monmouth, Illinois.



Michael's Message

Seeing the smiling faces of the people The Arc serves is something our staff and I never tire of. Each smile and every achievement is a powerful reminder of why we do what we do. It reflects our mission “to empower people with disabilities to believe in their own unique abilities and achieve their full potential”—a mission that comes to life every time we witness their joy and determination in the many actions, we take each and every day.

We know our community shares in this mission, which is why we created the Catalyst Awards to shine a spotlight on the people and organizations who embody inclusion and ignite that passion in others. (See page 4) We are also grateful for the generous gift from the **BVM Sisters**, whose support will transform the outdoor experience at two of The Arc’s Community Day Services sites—encouraging connection to nature and growth. We are truly blessed by their philanthropic spirit.

We are re-imagining ways to deliver quality Residential Services by figuring out how to make individually controlled apartments with 24/7 staffing work. Although this sounds easy, it has been more difficult than imagined navigating the complex system of support that exists within the Illinois CILA program while ensuring The Arc stays committed to person-centered practices that encourage autonomy and expands choices for the individuals we serve. Seeking out innovation and collaboration both

strengthens our mission and deepens our commitment to the community.

These are just some of the ways The Arc is working to build a brighter future for people with disabilities. Yet, there are also threats to a future rooted in dignity, inclusion, and opportunity. Changes to the Medicaid system create uncertainty for the system so many people with disabilities rely upon. This uncertainty leads to questions that we do not yet have the answers to.

It’s easy to feel overwhelmed by these questions and challenges, but hope grows stronger when we educate ourselves and take action. Every advocacy action we take creates momentum. Every voice raised makes our community stronger. Members of our Speak Out group of self-advocates are doing just that—gaining a voice. Their actions so far have resulted in presenting a proclamation for Disability Pride Month to city council and writing to their elected officials to ensure they understand the importance of Medicaid in their daily lives.

We don’t yet know how all the upcoming policy changes will be implemented or what the effects will be on our services. But we do know this: with your help, we can create a community where every person is valued, supported, and free to live the life they dream of.

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Our Mission

The Arc mission’s is to empower people with disabilities to believe in their own unique abilities and achieve their full potential by providing quality, innovative services that focus on inclusion, advocacy, independence, employment, meaningful community life and personal happiness.

Contact

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Trivia Night

Saturday, November 8
 Holiday Inn, Rock Island
 5:30 Doors | 6:30 Game
 \$10 per person \$80 per table

Get ready to gather your team, put on your Santa hats, and test your knowledge at The Arc’s “Oh What Fun” Trivia Night! This festive evening combines the joy of the holiday season with friendly competition—all while supporting a great cause.

Teams will compete in rounds of holiday-themed and general trivia, with prizes for the sharpest minds (and the ugliest Christmas sweaters!). Enjoy delicious snacks, a cheerful atmosphere, and the chance to make memories while giving back.

Your participation helps The Arc continue its mission of supporting people with disabilities in living fully included, independent lives. Register at <https://arcqca.org/events/trivia-night/>



The Arc Recognizes 2025 Catalyst Awardees

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area is driven by a deep passion for inclusion, and we are thrilled to honor those who share this commitment. These tireless champions have dedicated themselves to ensuring that all people with disabilities experience the dignity, independence, and full participation in society that they deserve. The Arc has created the Catalyst Awards to celebrate the remarkable contributions of individuals and organizations who ignite this passion for inclusion. The event took place on Thursday, August 7th at the Quad Cities Botanical Center.

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area was proud to recognize **Liberty Packaging** as its 2025 Business Partner of the Year. Since acquiring Miller Container in 2017, Liberty Packaging has gone beyond a vendor relationship to become a true partner in advancing The Arc’s social enterprise, QC Flex. What began as a modest supply relationship has grown into a thriving collaboration.

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area was proud to recognize **Dr. Trevor Craig** as its 2025 Community Partner of the Year. For the past two years, Dr. Craig has partnered with The Arc to provide essential dental screening services for individuals with disabilities, addressing a critical gap in care for a population often underinsured or uninsured. Beyond screenings, he has welcomed several individuals into his practice, ensuring ongoing access to compassionate dental care.

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area was proud to honor **Representative Gregg Johnson** with the 2025 Catalyst Award for Legislative Advocate of the Year. Representative Johnson has been a steadfast champion for people with disabilities and the Direct Support Professionals who serve them. From the beginning of his tenure, he made disability services and DSP wages one of his top legislative priorities—and he has delivered on that promise. Johnson played a key

role in passing the Dignity in Pay Act, a landmark legislation that phases out the subminimum wage in Illinois and affirms that every person deserves fair pay for their work.

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area was proud to present the 2025 Lifetime Service Award to **Sheila Guse**, a passionate educator, advocate, and community leader whose decades of dedication have shaped a more inclusive world for people with disabilities.

As a special education teacher in the Quad Cities, Sheila built her students’ confidence “brick by brick, heart by heart, and student by student,” ensuring that every individual she taught felt valued and capable.

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area proudly recognizes Quad City Bank & Trust as the Title Sponsor of the 2025 Catalyst Awards.



Leaving A Legacy

Building a quality system of supports for people who have a wide variety of needs doesn't happen overnight. It is laid down, layer by layer over generations of determined parents, good-hearted staff, well meaning volunteers, and individual advocates who collaborate on making an impact on improving the lives of people with disabilities.

This incremental change is powered by people who have learned, grown, and move forward together for once common cause and that is what makes it sustainable and durable.

Did you know you can make a gift through your estate plan or will that will last way beyond your lifetime providing sustainable support that will help determine the future of our movement? We all have a part to play in creating an inclusive future. Align your legacy by giving in a way that stands the test of time.

If you'd like to learn more or have already designed a planned gift, please reach out to Sarah Wright at wrights@arcqca.org or 309-786-6474. Leaving a legacy comes at no up-front costs to you but can have rippling effects that impact the lives of people who need a solid foundation in order to thrive.

Together, we have the power to ensure that the foundation built by generations before us continues to grow stronger for those who come next. By making a planned gift, you are not only honoring the legacy of inclusion and advocacy but also investing in a future where every person with disabilities has the opportunity to live with dignity, independence, and purpose.

DOVE LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBERS

- Mike & Michele Montford
- Marie DeWispelaere
- Rick & Marcia Voltz
- Jan & Todd Haugen
- Doug & Kyle Rick
- Dennis & Sharon Baraks
- Cindy Ferguson
- Tom & Kathy Conrad
- David Conrad
- Matt Puck
- Lizette Desseyen
- Jim & Twilla Mitchell
- John & Helen Kerscheiter
- Richard & Ruth Marie Motz
- Jim & Carol Horstmann
- Barb Goettig
- Mary VandeVoorde
- John Donald O'Shea
- Sue Gadiant

Dove Legacy members have made a commitment to leaving a legacy through their will or estate plan. Their legacy will live on into perpetuity.

Original artwork by Vivian Wright

Did you know The Arc will be celebrating 75 years of service in 2027? Want to be a part of the planning of this celebration? Please contact Sarah Wright at wrights@arcqca.org to express your interest.

Meet Cindy Walker



Pictured: Cindy Walker, Direct Support Professional (DSP) for The Arc of the Quad Cities Area

For 22 years, Cindy has been an essential part of The Arc as a Lead DSP at our Opportunity Center, bringing dedication, compassion, and joy to every person she supports. When asked what keeps her motivated, Cindy said:

"I absolutely love my job—if I didn't, I wouldn't have stayed here for the past 22 years. I love everything about it—helping people, making them smile, being a friend, watching them accomplish something, and having fun and laughing with them. It truly is one of the most rewarding jobs, and I'm so glad that I chose this as my career!"

Cindy's commitment and positivity have left a lasting impact on our community, and her presence is felt every day. Her work reminds us of the incredible power of compassion, patience, and joy in making a difference in people's lives.

This year we celebrated Cindy by honoring her with the **2025 DSP of the Year Award**, we also honor the heart she brings to her work each day. Her dedication is a shining example of the difference one person can make, and we are proud to have her as part of The Arc family. Thank you, Cindy, for all you've done, and continue to do, to make life brighter for the people we support.

BVM Sisiters Give Growth & Connection to Nature

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area is honored to receive a remarkable \$60,000 gift from the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM). This generous support is expanding opportunities for people with disabilities to connect with the natural world, build confidence, and experience the joy of inclusive recreation.

Thanks to the BVM Sisters, an under-utilized greenhouse at The Arc's Opportunity Center will soon be revitalized into a vibrant hub for horticultural therapy. Through gardening, nature-based activities, and hands-on learning, more than 150 individuals served daily will cultivate skills, improve their mental and behavioral health, and discover the healing power of nature. Students from Black Hawk College's Highway Construction

opportunities for inclusive physical activities, including Special Olympics training, while enhancing safety and accessibility for families, staff, and visitors.

In addition, new outdoor furnishings will provide comfortable seating for 16–20 individuals, encouraging greater use of The Arc's vegetable garden and walking path while promoting

"IT IS AN HONOR TO HELP CHANNEL THE BVM SISTERS ENERGY, GENEROSITY, AND ENTHUSIASM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES INTO ACTION AS THEY GENEROUSLY SUPPORT OUR OUTDOOR INITIATIVES" ~Sarah Wright

to empower marginalized, oppressed, and underserved individuals and support projects that foster systemic change. The Arc's initiatives, rooted in inclusion and empowerment, align deeply with these values.

Say's Chief Development & Strategy Officer of the gift, "It is an honor to help channel the BVM Sisters energy, generosity, and enthusiasm for people with disabilities into action as the generously support our outdoor initiatives." The outdoors spaces encourage an active lifestyle and connection to nature.

The Arc's mission has always been to empower people with disabilities to achieve their fullest potential—and now,



An individual enjoys the walking path which is near the vegetable garden.



Greenhouse prepped for revitalization is located at the Opportunity Center.



Visualization of re-purposed greenhouse for horticultural therapy and programming.

Careers Training Program (HCCTP) are also lending their talents to the project, gaining valuable vocational experience while giving back to their community.

The BVM Sisters' generosity also helps bring to life an innovative dual-purpose outdoor space adjacent to The Arc's administrative building. This area will serve as both overflow parking and an accessible recreational area equipped with basketball hoops and open play spaces. It will give more than 90 individuals

wellness, community, and an active lifestyle.

The Arc's mission has always been to empower people with disabilities to achieve their fullest potential—and now, with the support of the BVM Sisters, we are creating welcoming outdoor spaces that encourage healing, connection, and inclusion. The intent behind this gift reflects the BVM Ministry Partnership Grants' core purpose: to fund not-for-profit programs that embody the values of charity, justice, education, and freedom. These grants aim

with a \$60,000 gift from the BVM Sisters, we are creating welcoming outdoor spaces that encourage healing, connection, and inclusion. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary for this extraordinary gift and for "seeking out and attending to those in need". Their generosity ensures that people with disabilities will continue to thrive in environments that honor their abilities, celebrate their growth, and nurture their connection to nature.

Waterfront Apartments Gives Choice of Residence

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area is proud to announce the expansion of our residential services with the opening of Waterfront Apartments, a new model of providing supportive services that promotes independence, inclusion, and choice.

Waterfront Apartments offers individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to live in modern, comfortable housing while receiving the level of support they need to thrive. This innovative approach combines the safety and reliability of The Arc's trusted residential services with the flexibility of apartment living, creating an environment that fosters self-reliance and community connections.

"Waterfront Apartments represents the expansion of

choice in residential services options," said Susan Smith, Chief Residential Officer. "It's about empowering people with disabilities to make their own decisions, participate fully in their community, and live with dignity and independence."

Residents will benefit from on-site support staff, access to community resources, and individualized services designed to meet their unique goals. The model prioritizes integration within the broader community, allowing individuals to enjoy the same opportunities as their neighbours while maintaining a strong support network through The Arc.

This expansion reflects The Arc's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality, person-centered supports that adapt to the changing needs of the people we



"IT'S ABOUT EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS"
~Susan Smith



serve. By re-imagining residential services, Waterfront Apartments opens the door to a new chapter of independence and inclusion.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

The Arc participates in National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) every October to raise awareness that different abilities and perspectives can be a positive factor in any workforce's success. The Arc is committed to the success of people with disabilities in the workforce. We know that a workforce that empowers all is good for everyone.

The purpose of National Disability Employment Awareness Month is to bring attention to disability employment and celebrate the many and varied contributions of America's workers with

disabilities. This year's theme is "Celebrating Value and Talent."

The Arc of the Quad Cities Area is proud to take part in NDEAM," said Jenny Miller, Director of Community Employment Services. "We want to spread the

important message that we value all perspectives, including employers and people with disabilities.



Self Advocates "Speak Out"

The Arc's "Speak Out" is a self-led group for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The group empowers one another to speak up for their rights and needs, and to make their own decisions.

Speak Out is self-directed by elected leadership and supported by a staff liaison. We would like to introduce you to Speak Out Leadership and share some of the initiative they care about.

Speak Out members took an active role in introducing Disability Pride Month which takes place during the month of July to the community by presenting a proclamation at the Rock Island City Council meeting and special presentation to Mayor Rayapati of Moline. Members of Speak Out used their voice to express concerns over looming Medicaid cuts. Their involvement puts

a face to an issue that will affect people throughout our region.

Speak Out is led by:

Tony Hickman, President
Felicia Dixon, Vice-President
Ashley Wheeler, Secretary



Pictured: Michael Glanz, Felicia Dixon, Ashley Wheeler, Sarah Wright, Mayor Ashley Harris, at Present Proclamation at Rock Island City Council Chambers



Pictured: Tony Dixon, President



Pictured: Felicia Dixon, Vice-President



Pictured: Ashley Wheeler, Secretary

Parent Learning Series

THURSDAY, NOV 13TH
BLACK HAWK COLLEGE
BUILDING ONE
4:30 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M.

The Arc's Parent Learning Series is designed to support and uplift families with disabilities. Intended for parents of children or adults with disabilities the series offers a wide range of informative session and meaningful discussions while providing valuable resources, expert insight, and a welcoming space for parents and caregivers to grow.

Each session covers important topics tailored to the unique

needs of special needs families, from identifying key childhood milestones, utilizing de-escalation strategies, guardianship, and securing your child's financial future. All sessions are designed to give parents and caregivers the tools they need to confidently tackle challenges, celebrate successes, and advocate effectively for their loved ones.

By bringing families together in a collaborative and supportive environment, the Parent Learning Series fosters a strong network of understanding and encouragement. Parents leave



each session better equipped with knowledge, strategies, and connections that empower them on their journey.

To register for FREE visit <https://arcqca.org/parent-learning-series/>, a meal will be provided. The Parent Learning Series is generously supported by the United Way of the Quad Cities.