A TRUE thank you to our 2019 Annual Event Sponsors!

true connections     true friendships     true inclusion     true living
Our Team

Welcome to our newest Community Skills Advisors!

Leah Ortiz
Executive Director—LSW Clinical

Daneil Johnston
Executive Assistant

Kathy Moore
Office Assistant

Welcome to our newest Community Skills Advisors!

A TRUE thank you to our 2018 Members and Donors!

Adient
Atlas Sales
Battle Creek Community Foundation
CTI Mechanical
Janet Bautista
Kara Beer
Kathleen Brutsche
Buffalo Wild Wings
CHS Group
Tim Culver
Niaomi Curtis
Lynn & Michael Darling
Rob Downs
Joshua Dunn
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William & Deb Evans
Finley’s Restaurant
Zach Flora
Mary Fortney
Kathryn Franklin
Freddie’s Food Truck
Norma & Gary Galloway
Tracy Gogan
Jim Haadsma
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Jerry Tobias
Sarah Townsend
United Way of Battle Creek
Brian Wensauer
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Tina YostJohnson

NOT JUST IN THE COMMUNITY. PART OF IT.
Our Mission

The Mission of The Arc of Calhoun County is to ensure that people with developmental disabilities are valued and respected in order that they and their families can participate fully in and contribute to their community.
A letter from our Board President...

It’s been another extraordinary year at The Arc of Calhoun County, and it is a privilege for me to share this year’s annual report with you.

Since its founding in 1954, The Arc of Calhoun County has relied on members to fuel efforts to promote, protect and advocate for the rights and self-determination of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. And thanks to you, we have never been stronger. Every person in this organization – and its allies across the community – have strengthened our tradition of advocacy and action.

Our team, under the leadership of Executive Director, Leah Ortiz, has continued to stand on the front lines of both local and state efforts to protect civil rights, to fight for inclusive public and private accommodations and to expand opportunities for learning and employment.

Our progress over the past six-plus decades is undeniable, and in the pages of this report you’ll see how we’ve built on that legacy. Yet as we celebrate, we also acknowledge the difficult work that remains.

Uncertainty in health care and the continued assault on funding for vital services such as transportation, education and job training threatens the progress we celebrate today.

While attitudes have changed and social stigmas lessened, we’re nowhere near achieving the equity that every human deserves. Abuse and exploitation remain constant dangers for people with developmental disabilities, who are 4 to 10 times more likely to be abused than their peers without disabilities.

Equal protection under the law is nonexistent. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are over-represented in the criminal justice system. Because of inadequate training in law-enforcement, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are far more vulnerable to police use of force than the general population. The Ruderman Family Foundation reported in 2016 that at least 25% — and as many as 40% — of people killed by police had a disability.

The unnecessary use of court-appointed guardianship, stripping people of their basic rights, is far too common in our nation, our state and our community. In Michigan, it’s estimated that 76% of people with developmental disabilities have a court-appointed guardian, compared to 53% nationally.

The simple truth is that while discrimination directed at minorities is widely accepted as intolerable, it is a daily reality for people with disabilities.

That’s why The Arc’s advocacy work, and your support, is as vital as ever, ensuring that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are heard, respected, and treated with dignity. Together, we can ensure that work continues.

Michael “Mac” McCullough
Board President
Some of the needs funded in 2018

- Walker for public use at Lakeview Square Mall
- Sponsor of the When We’re Gone event
- Ramp for a child with cerebral palsy
- Hippotherapy for a child with cerebral palsy
- Orthopedic shoes for individuals with disabilities in need
- Chromebook for working with a student with a disability
- Bicycle stability wheels for a child with a disability

Board of Directors

Board President – Mac McCullough
Board Vice-President – J.R. Reynolds
Board Secretary – Lynn Eberhard
Board Treasurer – Debbie Evans
Board Trustee – David Sunnock
Board Trustee – Sarah Townsend
Board Trustee – Wendy Heppe
Board Trustee – Frank Straub

I have always had a passion for helping those with learning disabilities, but I never knew how to. After attending the Annual Event and hearing the mission and the vision of The Arc, I realized that value and respect were the keys to helping bring about real change. —David Sunnock

For me, it’s gratifying to be actively involved with an agency dedicated to supporting the cause of individuals who in so many cases are silenced because they look and/or behave different than mainstream culture. Supporting The Arc nourishes me. —J.R. Reynolds

It is a privilege to serve on this board and help move forward the very important work The Arc is doing. —Frank Straub
Colten’s mom, Sarah, was connected with The Arc’s Educational Advocacy program, which helped her navigate the process of getting more support for him by requesting an Individualized Education Program, commonly known as an IEP.

“Having the advocate in the room with me so I did not feel outnumbered by the district or cornered into a solution that I didn’t want is probably what I value the most,” said Sarah.

The Arc’s Educational Advocacy program is built to come alongside parents, families, and educators to unpack all the options and then to empower them to seek the necessary services and supports for their students.

“As a parent, you are the best advocate your child has—but with The Arc, you don’t have to do it alone. Currently my son is getting the services we requested and is showing huge strides in the work that he is producing. Although like most other 4th grade boys, homework and writing assignments are the last thing he wants to do, we have the solutions in place to make him successful now and they are setting him up to be successful in the future.”
Educational Advocacy
Helping families by guiding and supporting them through the Special Education process, as a bridge between educational staff and families

166 Students Reached
16 School Districts
233 In-Person Meetings

The Arc’s Educational Advocates

Low Income Individuals Served

Caucasian 63%
African American 17%
Hispanic or Latino 5%
Native American 1%
Unknown 3%
Two or more races 9%

Educational Advocacy
30% Volunteer Program 100%

30% Female
70% Male
Rachel

Rachel, sometimes shy and a bit nervous to try new things, began at The Arc last June. Rachel had the hope of being more involved in her community. Since that time, she has stepped up as a natural leader, learning new skills in the community that enhances her life. She particularly enjoys Sweetwater’s Donut Mill because in her words, “I love donuts.” Other than her love for donuts, Rachel has developed skills at other sites, such as Fairfield Inn and Sprout; where she enjoys volunteering among individuals without disabilities. Rachel’s confidence is enhanced and she is looking forward to her new found independence.