

Arc Southeastern Minnesota 2007 Annual Report

Mission Statement

Arc Southeastern Minnesota's mission is to build inclusive communities for all by providing support, education, and advocacy to persons with developmental disabilities and their families. Arc improves the quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities and assists them in obtaining the full range of civil rights, including the right to equal education, housing, and employment. Arc supports and advocates to secure and enhance opportunities for people with developmental disabilities and their families to choose how they live, learn, work and play in their communities.

At our 2006 Annual Meeting our membership voted to merge with Arc Rice County. This merger became effective in early 2007 which expanded our service area to now include 8 counties.

Advocacy

Arc Southeastern Minnesota provided individual and family advocacy in all 8 counties. Advocacy issues included education, residential, employment, case management, and medical among others. We worked collaboratively with The Arc of Minnesota by participating in a statewide dispute resolution grant funded by the Minnesota Department of Education.

We also were very active in systems advocacy working collaboratively with The Arc of Minnesota and the Region 10 Stakeholders. We participated in town hall meetings, legislative forums, and The Arc of Minnesota Day at the Capitol. We kept area legislators informed about issues pertinent to persons with developmental disabilities and their families. We expanded our Action Alert network which now includes approximately 100 people.

We continue our role as fiscal host and employer for Region 10 Quality Assurance. This quality assurance system continues to serve 5 counties in Region 10 and has expanded to include 3 pilot projects in areas of Minnesota outside of Region 10. We are actively working with The Arc of Minnesota to expand quality assurance to the entire state.

We recently became the fiscal host for a SAM (Self-Advocacy Minnesota) grant to improve self-advocacy efforts throughout all of southeastern Minnesota. We have formed a Regional Self-Advocacy Advisory Council made up of representatives from existing self-advocacy groups in the region and hope to expand that membership to include persons from every county in the region.

Support

Arc Southeastern Minnesota provides support to persons with developmental disabilities and their families in a variety of ways. Our Family Liaison Project and Parent-to-Parent Program have a goal of providing emotional support to families using a peer model of support. Parents and families are matched with others who have a child with the same diagnosis or are experiencing a similar life situation. We also host a support group for families who have a young child with Down Syndrome. This group is facilitated by parents who have children with Down Syndrome. Arc staff assist the facilitators as needed.

Our PLAN (Planned Lifetime Assistance Network) program assists families with planning for their family member with a disability after their parents or other family members are unable to provide support to them. This program has only been operating for a few years, but already the mailing list is over 200 people and we expect much more growth in the future. We recently received a Venture Grant from the United Way of Winona to increase PLAN services in Winona County. We are working collaboratively with The Arc of Minnesota to explore the feasibility of establishing a pooled trust in Minnesota modeled after The Master Trust of Indiana. We believe this would complement the services we provide through PLAN.

We also provide small financial scholarships to approximately 40 persons with developmental disabilities to assist with special needs that have no other funding source.

Education

In 2007 Arc Southeastern Minnesota provided a variety of educational opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities, families, and professionals. These workshops are held in various locations throughout our 8 counties. Some of the workshop topics are guardianship, healthy relationships, Life Planning for Persons with Disabilities, and GetSet training. We have developed a six week series for families who have a child with a new diagnosis within the autism spectrum that we now offer two or three times a year. This series has been supported financially by the Rochester Interagency Early Intervention Committee. We presented information about this program at The Arc of Minnesota's State Convention in 2006, and now several other chapters have replicated this training opportunity for families in their geographic area.

The SAM grant will allow us to host 8 trainings throughout the next year for self-advocates on topics such as personal empowerment, voter participation, and systems change.

Arc distributes a quarterly newsletter, ArcSEntiments, to over 2500 individuals, families, and agencies.

In the summer of 2006, we hosted focus groups to get input from Arc members as well as non-members about our services and unmet needs. The most consistent message we received was that we are not well enough known, both to families and to the community as a whole. In the Spring of 2007, the Board responded by approving a new position, Marketing and Special Events Coordinator. The goal of this position is to market Arc so families know about us sooner and so we develop long-time supporters from a broader community.

We recently completed the Charities Review Council Accountability Wizard. This process evaluates how accountable we are as a Board and staff in our performance related to four critical areas: Public Disclosure, Governance, Financial Activity, and Fundraising. We have met all of their standards and have earned the Council's "Meets All Standards" Seal. By participating in the Accountability Wizard, we demonstrate responsibility, integrity, and transparency to our constituents. We are now an approved charity listed in the Charity Review Council's Smart Giving Guide.

Our Membership Committee is actively working to increase renewals and identify new members. Membership has never been more important than it is now. The larger our membership, the louder our voices. There are many critical issues facing persons with developmental disabilities and their families. The waiting list for persons to receive waived services in Minnesota now exceeds 5000 people. We need your membership to help us convince legislators that we need their support.