



February 2009



Making Affordable and Inclusive Housing a Reality

When The Arc of North Carolina opened four scattered-site condominiums in January 2008, Terry was one of the first in line to get housing. Terry works part time in a restaurant and receives Social Security, but he couldn't afford to rent his own home. His inability to find affordable and accessible housing that would accommodate his wheelchair meant he was still living at home with his parents at age 36.

Now, thanks to The Arc of North Carolina and The Arc of High Point, Terry has his own apartment and a life skills coach who helps him with budgeting and general support.

Terry is just one of more than 1,300 people with disabilities who live in housing provided by The Arc of North Carolina. Since 1978, in an effort to provide alternatives to large institutions, The Arc of North Carolina has developed more than 225 residences that are operated in partnership with local organizations.

Of these residences, 211 are group homes with five to six residents, and 15 are small, supervised apartment buildings. The Arc continues to develop innovative self-controlled housing options that facilitate

inclusiveness including scattered-site duplexes and condominiums that opened in 2007 and 2008. A new five-plex in Charlotte and two quadrplexes in Salisbury are scheduled to open this spring, and development of several other projects will begin in a few months.

The Arc of North Carolina has housing opportunities in almost every county of the state. "We want to make sure that people with disabilities have housing options to choose from. If a community only offers group homes, then there's not really a choice," said Nicole Kiefer, central region housing resource coordinator and team leader.

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Mardi Gras on Marshall Street

When it comes to fundraising, The Enrichment Center does it New Orleans style!

For the second year, The Enrichment Center in Winston-Salem is hosting Mardi Gras on Marshall Street to raise funds for its endowment with the Winston-Salem Foundation. The event, being held Saturday, Feb. 21 at 5:30 p.m. at the Center, has all the trappings of a traditional Mardi Gras celebration.

The "Jambalaya Crew," which includes the reigning world jambalaya champion, is making the drive from Louisiana to donate its time and the food to serve up hearty New Orleans cuisine. Dessert features king cakes from the famous New Orleans bakery, Haydel's.

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Community Partnerships Critical to Chapter's Success

Each summer, many parents struggle to find activities for their children during the break from school. For parents of kids with disabilities, there aren't many options. But Craven County has changed that! With support from community partners, The Arc of Craven County established a three-week summer camp five years ago, expanding it to six weeks for up to 40 campers ages 6 to 22 in 2008.



Each week at camp features a different theme with lots of structured activities and field trips. Last summer, the kids enjoyed activities including attending a Kinston Indians baseball game, a trip to the beach, fishing, bowling, putt putt, movies, swimming at the YMCA and July 4th activities with a cookout. The last week was community appreciation week with recognition and awards banquets.

"Summer camp enriches a child's life experiences in many positive ways by developing skills and abilities. Our camp gives kids with disabilities the opportunity to experience camp in a safe environment with professional supervision," said Jeannie Smith, president of The Arc of Craven County's board. "Our structured program also helps with the transition process from school to vacation and back to school, which is very important for children we support."

This year's camp will be held **June 22 through July 31**. The camp is free for members of The Arc of Craven County. For nonmembers, the cost is \$45 per week. (Annual family membership in The Arc of Craven County is \$35.) For more information about the summer camp, contact Leslie Therrien at 252-636-3441 ext. 110.

Critical to the success of The Arc of Craven County's summer camp and other activities are community partnerships. The camp was initially established with a grant from the Harold H. Bate Foundation. Additional supports from the East Carolina Behavioral Health LME made it possible to expand the length of the camp and the number of campers that could participate. Other important partnerships include Craven County schools, Craven County Parks and Recreation and New Bern Parks and Recreation.



With support from the ECBH LME and the help of more than 20 community volunteers, The Arc of Craven County was able to provide two respite days for the community in 2008. Its Mother's Day Camp was held the Saturday of Mother's Day weekend at Creekside Park with interactive games, fishing, making cards for soldiers in Iraq and flowers for moms, and ending with a cookout. The Arc of Craven County's Christmas respite day was hosted by RHA/Howells in their gym. The participants played interactive games, made Christmas ornaments, and enjoyed visits from Santa and Moo Ella, the cow from Maola.

Community partnerships also play a key role in The Arc of Craven County's ongoing monthly socials. Private providers, churches and community organizations host events including bingo, skating and a prom. These socials are open to all people with developmental disabilities and usually draw between 50 and 80 attendees.

The community also came together to raise money for The Arc of Craven County. In January, Courts Plus sponsored the 23rd Annual Racquetball Tournament "Building the Arc" fundraiser. One hundred players from North Carolina and Virginia came to support this chapter. Courts Plus staff organizes and plans the event and volunteers its time and many hours of hard work to make this such a success.

The Arc of Craven County serves people with developmental disabilities and their families in Craven, Jones and Pamlico Counties along North Carolina's east coast. Its new Web site, www.arccravennc.org, will be launched in late March.

📄 *Mardi Gras continued from page 1*

Entertainment at Mardi Gras on Marshall Street includes live jazz performed by The Enrichment Center Percussion Ensemble and line dances led by Center students. There will also be silent and live auctions.

And what would a Mardi Gras party be without beads, floats and decorations! Real Mardi Gras beads have been donated from New Orleans for the event, and umbrellas decorated by the students will be featured in the line dances. There will be three floats created by Center students—one for the Mardi Gras king and queen and two others to reflect their cultural exchange program this past year with New York City. Mardi Gras masks designed by local artists and students, currently on display at DADA Community Center in downtown Winston-Salem, will be auctioned.

“One of the highlights for The Enrichment Center students is the selection of the Mardi Gras king and queen,” said Valerie Vizena, executive director of The Enrichment Center. “Students begin campaigning weeks before the event—passing out business cards, posting flyers, and giving stickers to others to wear—for these coveted roles. And the community loves—as we say in Louisiana—to pass a good time! And they do that with this fundraiser.”

Tickets for Mardi Gras on Marshall Street are \$35 in advance and \$40 at the door and include all food and beverages. For ticket information, call (336) 777-0076, extension 204. Last year’s event attracted more than 300 people and raised approximately \$20,000.

The Enrichment Center, an affiliated chapter of The Arc of North Carolina, is nationally acclaimed for its work in developing artistic talent and careers in the arts for adults with disabilities. The Enrichment Center’s art-based programs include professional



instruction and studio time in ceramics, painting, music, multi-media, dance/theater and poetry. The Center is the home of the Gateway Gallery and Studios which features rotating art collections by local artists and students.

The Center also teaches daily living skills. It offers classes in computer skills, basic math, independent living, job readiness, women’s health, self-advocacy, exercise, social health, meal preparation and more. Students also have the opportunity to perform meaningful volunteer work and learn valuable vocational skills in a variety of community settings.

Career Connections, The Enrichment Center’s supported employment program, helps adults with disabilities secure and maintain employment. The Enrichment Center also serves as the representative payee for people with mental health issues. The Center assists them by either teaching them how to budget and pay their own bills or by paying the bills on their behalf.

For more information about The Enrichment Center, go to www.enrichmentcenter.org.

Calendar of Events

February 28

**The Arc of Durham
Dining & Dancing
919-493-8141
www.thearcofdurhamcounty.org**

April 20

**The Arc of Durham
Golf Tournament
919-493-8141
www.thearcofdurhamcounty.org**

April 24

**The Arc of Stanly
MONARCH - FORE
Helping Dreams Take Flight Inaugural
Golf Tournament
Dana Story, 704-986-1543
www.MonarchNC.org**

April 26

**The Arc of Wake
Bowl-A-Thon
Meredith, 919-832-2660 Ext.100
www.arcwake.org**

May 8 & 9

**The Arc of Moore
6th Annual BBQ Cook Off
910-692-8272 or 800-909-9272
www.thearcofmoore.org**

May 21

**The Arc of Durham
The Great Human Race
919-493-8141
www.thearcofdurhamcounty.org**



📄 *Housing continued from page 1*

“Also, by keeping rents at no more than about 30 percent of a person’s income, we are making housing affordable.”

Kiefer is one of five regional housing resource coordinators with The Arc of North Carolina. The housing resource coordinators give housing presentations and provide one-on-one technical assistance to self-advocates, family members and professionals to create awareness and to assist people in accessing the various housing options available in their communities. They are also responsible for community outreach and partnership building to promote the expansion of housing choices and the development of new housing inventory.

The Arc of North Carolina has also created *A Closer Look at Housing Choices*, a handbook to help people with developmental disabilities move from housing that is more restrictive to homes where they can achieve greater independence and have more opportunities.

A Closer Look at Housing Choices includes information about conducting a rental search, subsidized housing options, home ownership, group living, fair housing, resources and tools (such as budget worksheets), lists of housing agencies and a glossary of housing terms. The guide can be downloaded from The Arc of North Carolina’s Web site, www.arcnc.org.

Becoming an Exceptional Organization

The Arc of North Carolina has embarked on changing the scope and presence of our organization. Changing times and more complex issues demand that we become better at reaching our mission.

It is no longer enough to be a good disability rights organization. We need to be an exceptional organization! An organization that through our quality service, extensive advocacy and expanding network changes the landscape for people with developmental disabilities and their families throughout North Carolina.

We are changing the culture of The Arc. Our goal is to become a high-impact organization that is recognized as exceptional when compared to all organizations and businesses in North Carolina, not just disability-related organizations. One area of change is expanding our scope in the public policy arena. By working on issues such as transportation, education, tax policy and housing that affect the general population, we begin to change communities for all people including individuals with disabilities.

We are also changing on our service side. Though our services and supports are designed to support individuals with developmental disabilities, we recognize that we must change. One area that is clearly seen is in our housing initiatives. The Arc of North Carolina is a major provider of specialized community housing stock. Through a little-used HUD refinancing mechanism we refinanced the mortgages on 179 group homes in 2005 which has allowed us to develop and encourage the development of more generic housing options for people with developmental disabilities. As

a developer, we have the opportunity to change communities.

Throughout the coming months and year we will continuously evaluate our other direct services to enhance the impact we have in North Carolina. In each area we can point to innovation and quality but recognize our obligation to excel in these areas if we are to have the impact we desire. In each community we provide services we have the opportunity to open doors and influence community standards. It goes beyond just providing a quality support!

With this change in culture, The Arc of North Carolina is addressing issues with renewed energy, innovation, broader perspectives and, quite honestly, with some trepidation. Change isn’t always easy, but it’s necessary to ensure that North Carolina will be a high quality place to live for all citizens.

In coming issues of this newsletter we will highlight the best of what The Arc has to offer and the challenges we all face in becoming an exceptional organization. We will succeed because we must ... and because we have an extraordinary history and mission that demands it!

Dave Richard
Executive Director



Chris Egan: Passionate Board Leadership

When Chris Egan joined the LIFEguardianship Council in the early 1990s, he didn't know how personal his relationship with The Arc of North Carolina would become.

Working with the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services at the time, Egan brought a professional perspective to the LIFEguardianship Council as the board was expanding its role in working with individuals with a dual diagnosis of developmental disability and mental illness. When Egan became chair of the Council in 2000, he automatically became a member of The Arc of North Carolina's board of directors.

In 2001, Egan and his wife had twins. His daughter was born with VATER association. Egan's role immediately changed from being a DD professional to also being a parent of a child with disabilities.

"I have always sincerely cared about what happens to people with disabilities—about inclusion and providing people with opportunities in the community. Professionals, like myself, are very often well meaning. But what I now understand is, you really don't know what it's like until you're a parent," said Egan. "The emotional burdens and energy it takes can't be truly understood by someone not living it. It's very stressful for the entire family. We need to continue to find ways to support families."



As president of The Arc of North Carolina's board of directors, Egan has made sure The Arc maintains its focus on advocacy for people with disabilities and their families. "Advocacy and people first. We need to keep our focus on our primary mission of advocacy," said Egan. "We need to treat our service role as providing opportunities to enhance our advocacy efforts. By being more involved in the lives of people with disabilities and their families through our support services, we can be more effective advocates."

During Egan's tenure as president, The Arc of North Carolina's accomplishments include:

- Effectively legislating for more flexibility and options in the **CAP MR/DD** waiver and helping the General Assembly manage the cost of the waiver.
- Earning a **four-year accreditation** from the **Council on**

Quality Leadership, whose focus is on individual personal outcomes.

- Maintaining strong partnerships with the **Developmental Disabilities Consortium and Coalition 2001** to help the overall mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services system.
- **Helping local affiliates** move forward as the system changes around them.
- Providing more **mixed-setting housing** through federal, state and local partnerships.
- Serving as an **active voice and partner with The Arc of the United States** to help support the federal agenda.

"I've been fortunate to be surrounded with great people. We have a very committed, dynamic and vocal board—by no means a 'rubber stamp' process," said Egan. "And the board could not carry out the mission of The Arc of North Carolina without the commitment and skill of the staff. A great many of the staff have dedicated themselves to our mission—it is much more than a job to most of them."

Looking ahead, Egan sees The Arc of North Carolina continuing its current initiatives and addressing the ongoing issue of ensuring the state provides the appropriate resources for people with developmental disabilities and their families. "Lately, the focus and attention has been leaning heavily toward mental health and substance abuse services. We need to continue to educate policy makers on the importance of DD services and to advocate for more supports," said Egan.

Other challenges include strengthening The Arc of North Carolina's ability to provide support brokerage services, continuing the work to downsize institutions and move people with disabilities into the community, and supporting families that are aging as their children with developmental disabilities age.

This year marks the end of Egan's two-year term as president of The Arc of North Carolina board of directors. He has also served as treasurer and as vice president. But it's not the end of his involvement with The Arc of North Carolina. When he rotates off the board of directors, he hopes to continue working with The Arc on the Housing Development Services board and by resuming service on the Life Guardianship Council.

Egan is currently the coordinator of the Developmental Disabilities Training Institute with the UNC School of Social Work in Chapel Hill. He is married and has two children, age 7.

Speaking Out About Public Education

Why aren't more N.C. students with disabilities exiting school with positive outcomes? That is the question The Arc of North Carolina is posing at 15 public forums across the state.

Many parents of children with disabilities feel that the public school system is not preparing their kids for the next step when they leave high school, whether that's employment or postsecondary education. This issue came to the forefront last year with the introduction of House Bill 388 which would provide tax credits for families of kids with disabilities who want to home school their children or send them to private school instead of public school. While HB 388 didn't pass last session, it had quite a bit of support and similar legislation is likely to be reintroduced.

The forums, attended by parents, teachers, principals, legislators, transition coordinators, case managers, community college instructors and development disability service providers, offer the community the opportunity to provide feedback on what is working and what is not in the public schools. Issues discussed include teacher training and retention, paperwork, transition services, education in the least restrictive environment, testing, IEPs and vocational opportunities.

"The Arc of North Carolina wants to identify the issues that contribute to student's poor outcomes. Those issues will become part of The Arc of North Carolina's legislative and advocacy agenda," said Ellen Russell, director of Advocacy and Chapter Support for The Arc of North Carolina. "We want to develop a comprehensive state-level plan to advocate for improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities."

The remaining forums will be:

February 18 – Haywood (Contact: **Holly Lemieux**, 828-452-1980)

March 5 – Pitt (Contact: **Sandra Warren**, 252-258-9819)

March 18 – Moore (Contact: **The Arc of Moore**, 910-692-8272)

February 19 – Stanly (Contact: **Brittney Gibson**, 704-986-1519)

March 10 – Forsyth (Contact: **Val Vizena**, 336-777-0076)

March 24 – Craven (Contact: **Jeannie Smith**, 252-638-6519, ext. 128)

"High drop-out rates, poor post-school outcomes, the inability to earn diplomas are but a few of the system indicators that lead our organization to question the state of special education... Our goal is to prepare recommendations for state leaders including the General Assembly, the governor and the state Board of Education on the issues that can truly impact the quality of public education for students with disabilities..."

The Arc of North Carolina board of directors

Advocacy Efforts Expand, Go Online

This year, The Arc of North Carolina has adopted a very robust political agenda. The Arc of North Carolina continues to address issues specifically affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities but the area of focus has greatly expanded from health care and education to voting, transportation, housing and social justice. With its shifting focus, The Arc of North Carolina is being called upon to examine bills and offer suggestions on legislation that impacts the larger community of people with disabilities and the general public.

The Arc of North Carolina is working with policy makers to get important legislation passed on a variety of issues including:

- More money for **CAP MR/DD** slots
- Fully funding the **START crisis model**
- **Amending our voter assistance statute** to bring us in line with the federal law. This will allow any voter to ask for assistance at voting, not just people with physical disabilities, visual impairment or who are illiterate
- Broad housing policy from supporting more funding for the **Housing 400 Initiative and the Housing Finance Agency**

- Working to encourage leaders to support more affordable and **accessible transportation options** in our state
- Advocating for passage of the **School Violence Prevention Act**, better known as the Bullying Bill

The Arc of North Carolina is also providing several online forums for sharing information about legislative activities. The Arc of North Carolina Policy Blog, www.thearcnc.blogspot.com, offers "Monday quick hits" with information about the bills and committees, a Friday wrap up of legislative activity, and periodic reports during the week of events at the N.C. legislature and Capitol Hill.

"The blog draws a very diverse audience including media, chapter executives, elected officials and other developmental disability organizations," said Policy Coordinator Julia Leggett. "The blog is one of the best tools we have to help educate and inform people on how important legislation is moving through the legislature."

The Arc of North Carolina also has a Facebook group page and a Twitter account (<http://twitter.com/thearcnc>). They provide information about legislative activities as well as action alerts.