FALL 2026

The Archive

THE Arc OF THE Ozarks

SERVING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SINCE 1964



Letter from The President



Have you ever heard the saying, “Time flies when you’re having fun?” The fall season has flown by quickly and the winter months are already upon us. During the month of August, The Arc celebrated its annual Employee Appreciation Night events (EAN) in the Springfield, Kansas City, and St. Charles divisions. It’s always enjoyable to celebrate our successes and recognize the contributions that our staff achieve at The Arc of the Ozarks.

In the month of September, we celebrated National Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Recognition Week, September 13th-19th. This is a nationally recognized celebration. I’m glad we have a time set aside each year to show special appreciation to our DSPs for the extraordinary work they do in providing supports to the individuals and families that we serve in Missouri!

During the fall season, we rolled out the new Accessible Restroom and Sensory trucks that will begin serving the needs of individuals at future community events. We also celebrated a new milestone at The Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center reaching over 1,000 diagnostic evaluations in the first three years of operation. And finally, there were several trunk or treat and Halloween celebrations that our staff and individuals enjoyed as we rounded out the end of October.

In this newsletter, you will read stories about DSP week, EAN celebrations, our Day in the Life campaign, the launch of the trucks, and reaching 1,000 evaluations at the Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center. Thanks for being a part of The Arc of the Ozarks and we hope all of you have a safe and enjoyable holiday season!

Mike Powers, President/CEO



FULL DETAIL - $40
Monday-Thursday | 9 AM - 4:30 PM

Contact Vicki Webb at (417) 210-7388 to schedule, or Amanda Whited at awhited@thearcoftheozarks.org for more information.

- **A conference room may be available to reserve during time of your detail. Must be reserved at time of booking the detail.**
- **Closed for most traditional holidays. Call for availability.**
- **Average time for detail is 3 hours per vehicle.**



BOOK THE TRUCK
for your event!

The Arc of the Ozarks

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ABOUT US

Established in 2021, the A.M. Donuts & Coffee Truck is staffed by people with disabilities who cook and serve delicious coffee and donuts to the community.

SERVICES OFFERED

We travel to various locations across the Ozarks every month to serve up fresh donuts and drinks. Contact us before spots fill up!

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Meet Sarah Gremminger



Sarah has served on The Arc of the Ozarks Board of Directors for six years, continuing a relationship with the organization that began during her time as Assistant Director of Human Resources. When she decided to leave her staff position to become a stay-at-home mom, she wasn't ready to leave The Arc entirely. Serving on the board gave her the opportunity to remain connected to an organization and mission she deeply values.

Outside of her board service, Sarah enjoys being actively involved in her son's life and celebrating his accomplishments. She serves on his school's PTA Board and enjoys supporting him in his extracurricular activities and everyday adventures. She also loves spending time with family, attending concerts, and traveling whenever time allows, especially to the beach!

For Sarah, The Arc's mission is about creating a community where every person, regardless of ability or challenges, is treated with dignity, respect, and compassion. She believes everyone deserves the opportunity to feel valued, supported, and included.

"I wish people understood more that The Arc doesn't just provide services, it creates opportunities for individuals with disabilities to live more independently, build relationships, develop skills, and be active members of their communities."

Sarah shared that one of the most rewarding aspects of serving on the board, is seeing firsthand the positive impact The Arc has on the individuals and families it serves. She values the opportunity to contribute to decisions that make a lasting difference in the lives of both the people receiving services and the staff who make those services possible.

Sarah takes her board responsibilities seriously and is proud to contribute her time, perspective, and support to help strengthen The Arc and expand opportunities for the people it serves.

Sarah's commitment reminds us that building a more inclusive community takes all of us. Whether through advocacy, raising awareness, volunteering, or supporting The Arc's work, each of us can help create more opportunities for individuals with disabilities to experience independence, connection, and a true sense of belonging.

Welcoming New Board Member, Jim Carr



We are pleased to welcome Jim Carr to The Arc of the Ozarks Board of Directors. As an entrepreneur, co-founder of Hearo Technologies, and passionate mentor and problem solver, Jim brings valuable business experience and a commitment to strengthening our community.

His work at Hearo has deepened his understanding of independence and how it means something different to everyone. He hopes every individual served by The Arc has the opportunity to pursue a fulfilling life and find what makes them smile. We look forward to Jim's leadership and insight as we advance our mission.

Honoring Nick's Legacy

Gil and Mary Kay Hostler created the Nick Hostler Foundation in memory of their son, Nick, to honor his dedication to supporting people with developmental disabilities in our community. Through the foundation, they continue Nick's legacy of kindness, inclusion, and service.

Nick was a special education teacher at McBride Elementary School and devoted his time to volunteering with numerous organizations throughout the community. His passion for helping others and ensuring everyone had the opportunity to be included left a lasting impact on those who knew him.

Nine years ago, the Hostlers established the Nick Hostler Memorial Pickleball Tournament to celebrate Nick's life and continue the work he cared so deeply about. Each year, the tournament brings the community together for fun, fellowship, and a meaningful cause. Proceeds from the tournament benefit several local organizations, including educational programming at The Arc of the Ozarks, helping provide opportunities and resources that support individuals with developmental disabilities. "We, as Nick's family, consider it an honor to keep his visions and passions in the forefront of what we do. He encouraged us to see beyond the immediate, and to celebrate the accomplishments. Through the Nick Hostler Foundation, the opportunity to help children and adults with developmental disabilities remains our heartfelt mission," said Mary Kay Hostler.

Through their generosity and commitment, Gil and Mary Kay keep Nick's spirit of service alive and inspiring others to follow his example. His legacy reminds us that each of us can make a difference, and that when we come together, we can create a more inclusive community for everyone.

All Abilities, All Together! #BeLikeNick



A Day in the Life: Advocacy Through Personal Experience

What does a typical day look like for someone with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD)? The best way to understand is to listen to the people living it.

This summer, The Arc of the Ozarks partnered with Abilities First to bring A Day in Life through a series of in-district visits with Missouri legislators. These experiences created opportunities for elected officials to connect directly with individuals with disabilities, hear their stories, and gain a firsthand understanding of the supports that help them live, work, and participate in their communities.

Throughout the visits, individuals welcomed legislators into their homes and workplaces, sharing their daily experiences, personal accomplishments, and goals for the future.

Representative Bill Owen spent time with Logan at The Arc's Pythian office, learning about his work and what employment means to him. Craig connected with Representative Betsy Fogle to discuss his experiences, the supports that help him live the life he chooses, and what he wants others to understand about the disability community. Rhonda welcomed Representative Melanie Stinnett into her home to share what a typical morning in her life is like, while Jennie, who recently represented Missouri at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games, welcomed Representative Stephanie Hein to learn more about her life and the support she receives.

Each visit offered a different perspective, but the message was consistent: people with disabilities deserve the opportunity to direct their own lives, pursue their goals, and be valued members of their communities.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) play an essential role in supporting individuals served by The Arc. Through individualized support, DSPs help people build independence, pursue meaningful employment, participate in their communities, and make choices about their own lives. These visits also gave legislators a closer look at the professionalism, quality standards, and commitment that define this essential workforce.

By creating space for individuals to share their experiences in their own words, A Day in the Life builds understanding and strengthens the connection between the people we support and the policymakers whose decisions affect their lives. The Arc of the Ozarks is grateful to Abilities First for its partnership, to the legislators who took time to listen and learn, and, most importantly, to Logan, Craig, Rhonda, and Jennie for sharing their lives and perspectives. Their voices are essential to shaping a future where people with disabilities have the support, opportunities, and resources to live their best lives.







Real Voices, Real Choices: The Power of Self-Advocacy



At the end of August, 17 of our self-advocates representing The Arc attended the 2026 Real Voices, Real Choices Conference at the Lake of the Ozarks. This annual conference brings together individuals and families living with mental illness and developmental and intellectual disabilities from across Missouri with a shared goal of uniting, informing, and empowering people to have a stronger voice in their own lives and communities.

Over the course of two days, our self-advocates had the opportunity to connect with others from across the state, share experiences, build relationships, and learn about topics that directly impact their everyday lives. Participants attended a wide variety of sessions, ranging from "Know Your Rights" to "Digital Accessibility: Removing Barriers & Making Content Available to Everyone." These sessions provided valuable information while encouraging participants to ask questions, speak up for themselves, and better understand the resources and rights available to them.



One of the highlights of the conference was seeing one of our own clients, Anastasia, take the stage as a presenter. Anastasia has learned what it means to be a self-advocate and has put those skills into practice in her own life. She wanted to share this perspective at the conference through her presentation, titled "The Person Behind the Plan".

This presentation focused on the importance of individuals receiving support to share about themselves and what matters to them with their team directly, not solely through support plans or other documentation methods. Anastasia shared her own experience of creating an "About Me Video" to introduce herself to her team. This allows the individual to make the decision about what is important to share, and it also gives staff a look at the unique qualities, interests, preferences, and personality of the person they support.

A powerful message that Anastasia's presentation drove home was that when it comes to a person's life and the support they receive, the one voice that should never be silenced is the voice of the person receiving support. We are so proud of Anastasia for being an incredible example of what it means to be a self-advocate and for sharing her message with others.

We look forward to next year's Real Voices, Real Choices Conference and continuing to learn, connect, and empower our self-advocates to use their voices and make a difference in their communities.

1,000 Evaluations, 1,000 Stories: Celebrating a Milestone



The Autism & Neurodevelopmental Center has reached an exciting milestone: 1,000 evaluations completed since opening in 2024! This number represents much more than a count. Nathan Wood, M.S., CCC-SLP, explained, “It represents 1,000 real families and/or patients our team provided with answers, resources, care, and a path forward that they didn’t have before. It represents an immense amount of work that our team is very proud to have accomplished together.”

Since opening in 2024, the center has more than doubled its diagnostic team and expanded its staffing to better meet the growing need for autism diagnostic services in our community. They’ve also created opportunities for doctoral practicum students and interns, helping prepare future providers while increasing access to diagnostic services.

Through this growth, one goal has remained the same: making sure individuals and families feel welcomed, supported, and cared for throughout the evaluation process. Each evaluation brings together specialists who work collaboratively to provide a better understanding of an individual’s strengths, needs, and development.

For families, an evaluation can be an important step in understanding their child and identifying helpful resources and next steps. Jamie McGranahan, Autism Resource Specialist, explained, “An evaluation provides an individual snapshot of a person at that point in their life, but the information in that report can become a resource and support for the future. It can help families better understand their child, identify areas of support, and make informed decisions moving forward.”

For the clinical team, some of the most rewarding moments come from seeing individuals connect with services and resources following their evaluations. Whether helping a child access functional communication or connecting families with much-needed support, the team gets to be part of a much larger journey.



Reaching 1,000 evaluations is both a celebration of how far the center has come and a reminder of the work still ahead. With many individuals needing additional services and access to those services continuing to be limited in our community, the center remains committed to expanding support and helping train the next generation of providers.

“What a humbling honor it is that we’ve already been able to serve 1,000 individuals. I know this number is representative of only the beginning of the number of families we hope we get to serve,” shared Avery Brooks, M.S., CCC-SLP.

Beyond the Game: Creating Opportunites for Inclusion

The excitement of college basketball is about more than the game. It’s about being part of the crowd, connecting with others, and experiencing the energy of a live sporting event. The Beautiful Lives project invited the Kansas City Division of The Arc of the Ozarks to participate in a special event with the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) women’s basketball program, creating an opportunity for individuals served by The Arc to be part of the action.

Twelve of our individuals were able to attend and participate in this skill building activity. “The event is something we want to do again. Our team got to work on their adaptive skills and met a lot of new people”, said Stormy Farmer, Kansas City Program Manager.

The event reflects a shared commitment to making community experiences more inclusive and ensuring that people with developmental disabilities have opportunities to participate, build relationships, and create lasting memories.

Founded in 2017, the Beautiful Lives Project began with a vision to make meaningful experiences more accessible to people with disabilities. The organization grew from the collaboration of entrepreneur Anthony Iacovone, and Bryce Weiler, a blind sports broadcaster whose passion for sports and inclusion inspired opportunities for people with disabilities to experience athletics in new ways.

The UMKC women’s basketball event is another opportunity to put that mission into action. For The Arc of the Ozarks, participation means more than attending a basketball event. It is an opportunity to support inclusion, foster a sense of belonging, and help ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities can enjoy the same community experiences as their peers.



















Community, Costumes, and Halloween Fun!

This fall, The Arc of the Ozarks brought Halloween fun to families in Springfield and Ozark through two events: The Autism & Neurodevelopmental Center's 11th Annual Sensory Safe Trick-or-Treat and Infinity Academy's Annual Trunk-or-Treat. Both free events brought people together for an evening of treats, activities, and Halloween fun for everyone.

In Springfield, the Autism & Neurodevelopmental Center welcomed over 650 people for its Sensory Safe Trick-or-Treat. Families signed up for designated time slots to help minimize sensory stimulation, creating a calm environment where children could practice trick-or-treating at their own pace. Traditional trick-or-treating can sometimes feel overwhelming for children with autism or other neurodevelopmental differences, especially bright lights, loud noises, and large crowds. Arc staff and volunteers handed out candy and non-candy treats, while clinicians decorated their doors for the occasion. Families also enjoyed snacks and outdoor games, adding even more fun to the evening. Sensory-safe events like this offer a more comfortable way for everyone to join in the Halloween fun and for families to create lasting memories together.

In Ozark, Infinity Academy's Annual Trunk-or-Treat welcomed approximately 125 children and their families for a free evening of costumes, treats, and community connection. Fourteen decorated trunks offered candy, treats, and information about local programs. Guests also enjoyed face painting, a photobooth, Halloween music, games, and a sensory truck. Community partners included We Rock the Spectrum Kids Gym, Vision Clinic, Huey Magoo's, Discovery Center, CC Links, Big O Tires, and Art Zone.

From decorated doors to festive trunks, both events were full of Halloween spirit. We're glad to offer events where families can celebrate in unique ways that work for them, and we're thankful to the staff, volunteers, local businesses, and community partners who helped make these events possible!





Celebrating the People Behind Our Mission

At The Arc of the Ozarks, our mission is made possible by the people who show up every day with compassion, dedication, and a commitment to helping the individuals and families we serve live their best lives. This fall, we had the opportunity to celebrate those employees and recognize the many ways they make a difference.

One of the ways we celebrated our wonderful employees was through our Employee Appreciation Nights. We had three different celebrations to include all of our divisions across the state. A highlight of the celebrations was recognizing employees reaching important milestones, with service awards honoring 5, 10, 15, and 20 years with The Arc of the Ozarks. Each milestone represents years of dedication to our mission and to the people we serve. We also honored this year's Legacy Award recipient, Sara Ibbeston, Director of ABA Services. This award recognized the lasting impact Sara has made through her dedication and leadership at The Arc.

And, of course, there was plenty of fun along the way! Employees enjoyed dinner, live music, karaoke, dancing, and plenty of opportunities to make memories with their coworkers. While each celebration was unique, they all shared the same purpose: taking time to say thank you to the people who make our work possible.

Our celebration continued during Direct Support Professional's (DSP) Week on September 13th-19th, when we took time to shine a spotlight on the Direct Support Professionals who make a difference at The Arc every day. Throughout the week, we highlighted different departments, divisions, and individuals while recognizing that there are countless DSPs behind the work we do. DSPs also had the opportunity to receive special giveaways throughout the week as a small token of our appreciation for everything they do.

DSPs are there for the everyday moments that make a lasting difference for our clients, such as supporting independence, encouraging individuals to try something new, celebrating accomplishments, and providing support through challenges. Their work requires patience, compassion, dedication, and commitment, and their impact can be seen in the lives of the people we serve every day.

To close out DSP Week, President and CEO, Mike Powers, shared a special thank-you message to all our DSPs, recognizing the important role they play in our organization and in the lives of the people we serve.

While Employee Appreciation Night and DSP Week gave us special opportunities to celebrate, our gratitude for our employees goes far beyond these occasions. Every person on our team plays an important role in advancing our mission, and we are incredibly grateful for the time, talent, and heart they bring to The Arc of the Ozarks each day.













Rolling Out New Possibilities

The Arc of the Ozarks and Abilities First are expanding accessibility and inclusion across the region with the launch of two new mobile resources: the Mobile Sensory Truck and the Accessible Restroom Truck.

Made possible through funding from Abilities First, these trucks are designed to help individuals with disabilities participate more comfortably in community events and activities.

The Mobile Sensory Truck will provide a sensory-friendly space for individuals who may need a quieter environment or access to sensory resources while attending events. The Accessible Restroom Truck will offer additional restroom facilities designed to meet accessibility needs, helping individuals and families feel more comfortable participating in community activities.

Together, these resources help remove barriers that can prevent individuals with disabilities from fully enjoying community experiences. By bringing these services directly to events, The Arc and Abilities First are creating more opportunities for everyone to participate.

The Arc looks forward to putting these trucks to use and continuing to build more accessible and inclusive communities throughout the Ozarks. Stay tuned for more updates on how to book!





Grants Awarded

- Ball Foundation Grant - $25,000 for Rivendale Institute of Learning and Infinity Academy
- Nick Hostler Foundation - $8,000 for Rivendale Institute of Learning and Infinity Academy
- Arvest Foundation - $8,000 for Monett Summer Camp
- Nixa Affiliate Grantmaking Program - $1,600 for Crowhaven Apartments
- Cassville Affiliate Grantmaking Program - $1,000 for Cassville Summer Camp

Total Grant Funds Awarded - $42,600



Every Step is a Victory: David's Story



For eighth grader David Meyer, every new challenge is met with a "challenge accepted" attitude. His mom, Shield, says her son has a remarkable way of looking at life; he sees things as a "victory" before they even happen. That positive attitude has been an important part of David's journey.

David has ADHD, a neurodevelopmental disorder, and his story is an example of how the Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center serves children with a wide range of developmental needs, not only those with autism. For David, that means receiving therapies tailored specifically to him.

For Shield, finding the right support for David hasn't always been easy. She knows that children like her son, who may need additional help but don't necessarily fit neatly into one category, can sometimes fall through the cracks. That's what she appreciates about the Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center.

"They put the child above everything else," Shield said. She sees that philosophy in the way David's therapists work alongside their family. They communicate about his progress, provide updates, and discuss where they plan to go next. It feels like a true partnership, with everyone working toward the same goal: giving David the best opportunities to succeed.

She says she sees The Arc's mission reflected not just in words, but in its staff and the work they do every day. David is seen as an individual; what he needs, what he can accomplish, and what will help him continue growing. For Shield and her family, The Arc has become a place where David is understood, supported, and encouraged to keep moving forward one victory at a time.

Christmas Extravaganza supports programs and services at our Autism & Neurodevelopmental Center and our educational services, helping children grow, build independence, and provide opportunities to learn. Join us December 4 for the 32nd Annual Christmas Extravaganza! Every ticket, sponsorship and auction donation makes a difference for children and families across our community.

CONTACT

The Arc

Administrative Office
1501 E. Pythian St.
Springfield, MO 65802
417-864-7887
Fax: 417-874-4307

Program Services Office
1721 W. Elfindale St.
Springfield, MO 65807
417-864-7887
Fax: 417-874-4307

Monett Office
1010 Old Airport Rd.
Monett, MO 65708
417-354-0071
Fax: 417-354-0631

Kansas City Office
500 NE Colbern Rd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64086
816-929-8129
Fax: 816-929-8165

Joplin Office
4722 E. 32nd St.
Joplin, MO 64801
417-625-4826
Fax: 417-625-4827

Cornerstone Office
5301 Veterans Memorial
Parkway, Suite 201,
St. Peter's, MO 63376
636-268-2188

thearcoftheozarks.org

Autism & Neurodevelopmental Center
2864 S. Nettleton Ave.
Springfield, MO 65807
417-605-7100

Behavioral Health Services
3023 S. Fort Ave.
Springfield, MO 65807
417-605-7100

* Satellite centers available in Joplin and Branson.

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