

# THE ADVOCATE

Bi-Yearly Newsletter from the Arc of Indiana County Fall 2023



In the sixth issue of The Advocate, the Arc of Indiana County would like to welcome our readers, parents, teachers, school administrators, students, community members, self-advocates, and the agency/organization service providers of Indiana and Armstrong County communities and beyond.

The Arc of Indiana County's mission strives to include individuals of all ages with intellectual, developmental delays, and other disabilities in every aspect of our community and beyond. Achieving this by identifying barriers, building partnerships, and realizing positive solutions.

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<https://www.facebook.com/arcindiana/>

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[www.instagram.com/arcindianacounty/](http://www.instagram.com/arcindianacounty/)

A smile from the Executive Director:



I am delighted to share with you the remarkable progress and achievements of The Arc of Indiana County. It is with great pride and gratitude that I express our sincerest appreciation for the continuous support and collaboration of our community, the Arc of PA, our general membership, the board of directors, and our valued community partners.

The Arc of Indiana County is not only thriving but also expanding its reach and impact. With your generous support, we have been able to provide year-round services, diverse programs, engaging community events, and empowerment opportunities to the ABILITY community.

This achievement wouldn't have been possible without your unwavering commitment and belief in our mission.

Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly throughout the summer and into this fall season to address the specific needs of our community. They have been champions of educational advocacy, creating valuable training opportunities, and organizing creative community events that foster inclusivity and empowerment. Their passion and dedication to this cause are truly commendable, and I cannot emphasize enough the incredible work they have accomplished.

Our collective aim is to continuously raise the bar, developing new ideas and avenues of support to empower the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities, developmental delays, and other disabilities, as well as their families. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of those who need it the most, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to thrive and lead fulfilling lives. We are determined to keep expanding our services, enhancing our programs, and building a stronger, more supportive community for all. With your continued support, we are confident that we can achieve even greater milestones in the future.

Our Team: Michelle Jordan Executive Director (pictured standing on the left), Logan Paul IM4Q Program Coordinator (not pictured), Becca Boston Educational Advocacy & Program Coordinator (pictured sitting on the left), Michelle Ferrington Administrative Assistant (pictured standing on the right), IUP Intern Alyssa Charles (pictured sitting on the right) and our office dog Blick.



This summer the Arc offered our 6<sup>th</sup> Spirit of Food class, featuring Sandy Toy who once again graciously volunteering her time to teaching cooking skills, and food safety while providing the opportunity for individuals to gather, and socialize, combating food insecurities and social isolation.

This fall the Arc has continued to provide parents, caregivers and students with the support and education needed to become their own self-advocates, empowering them throughout the special education process. These supports are offered during our monthly parent meetings, ongoing training, and educational advocacy services provided to parents in the office and the school systems. In September the Arc hosted an evening of information and training with the Parent Empowerment Night, located this year at the Hilton Garden Inn, with speakers discussing secondary transition and the waiver process. In Spring the Arc will host a second evening focusing on Early Intervention and transition to Jr. High.

In October the Arc hosted Healthy Relationships training partnering with the Center for independent Living of South-Central PA. Marty Dombrowski the Assistant Director educated our staff, community professionals, individuals, and their families about healthy relationships, staying safe in a relationship, healthy expectations with role-playing, interactive discussion, and plain language training tools. The last training series is set for November geared toward parents, and caregivers. See flyer for more details.



The Arc continues to host our dental clinics partnering with Golden Onsite Dental from Pittsburgh, PA offering a sensory safe environment with experienced staff, open area concept, and child care area. The Arc will continue to address health disparities experienced in our rural western PA community especially within individuals with disabilities. We will be partnering with the CILSCPA in the future to offer health fairs, any/vaccination clinics, and wellness checks. Individuals with disabilities continue to be at high-risk for severe illness and shorter life expectancy with the rise of rural health disparity and access to local specialized health care. The Arc of Indiana County continues its partnership with the Arc of PA and the PA Department of Health identifying barriers, solutions

and currently recommendations addressing health disparities and increasing positive outcomes in our area and across the state for individuals with disabilities.



In October we celebrated our second annual Bark for the Arc Fundraiser! This year's event, again located at Mack Park, was well attended considering the lack of cooperation from Mother Nature! We enjoyed the afternoon of pets, contests, vendors, and raffles all benefiting the cost-free services and programs provided by the Arc of Indiana County. We want to thank this year's sponsors, S&T Bank volunteers, donations and judges that came out on a cold/wet Saturday afternoon!!! A special thanks going out to The Mack Park Foundation and all their assistance in

making it again a successful year supporting the Arc, and to all the community who braved the conditions to support the Arc of Indiana County!

Reflecting on the past three years as the Executive Director, it's clear that the most significant and recurring theme has been the importance of partnerships, collaborations, school/provider

relationships, effective communication, and active community involvement and engagement. These elements have been instrumental in the success of The Arc of Indiana County, enabling us to reach and serve individuals and families effectively. The Arc operates as part of a larger village, and without this collective effort, our advocacy and support initiatives would not be possible. Indiana County is renowned for its collaborative spirit and the ability of its community members to work together, support one another, and make positive change happen. We feel deeply honored to be an integral part of this community and to contribute to the betterment of the lives of the individuals with disabilities and their families we serve.

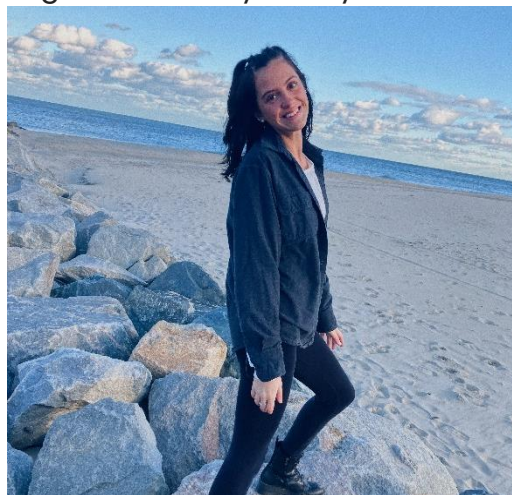
We are excited to announce that this spring, we will be hosting our second annual Community Partner Breakfast, which will further solidify our relationships with key community partners. This event will serve as a platform for bringing our partners together, fostering a stronger network, promoting collaborations, and celebrating each other's dedication to meeting the needs of the community and beyond. We believe that by working together, we can achieve even more and make a more profound impact. The Community Partner Breakfast is just one example of our commitment to nurturing these vital relationships and ensuring that we continue to be a driving force for positive change in Indiana County.

Until Spring: shine bright, smile often and love and help freely. Be the light you wish to see in your world.

Michelle Jordan

### **Welcome our fall IUP intern:**

Hi, my name is Alyssa Charles. I have a bachelor's degree in Criminology. I'm working towards a degree in Sociology, Human Services. I work at Benjamin's Restaurant and work at the Arc as an intern. I love animals and being outdoors. I also enjoy spending time with my family and friends when I am not at school or work. I have already helped with so much as an intern here at the Arc. I was able to go out and support the Special Olympics athletes at the regional competition at Slippery Rock. I also got to play a big part in helping organize the Bark for the Arc fundraising event this year. I am excited for the rest of the school year and to experience more things working with the Arc. I graduate in December and my plan after graduation is to continue helping people and to find a job I love and enjoy doing.





The Arc of Indiana County in partnership with Giant Eagle offers a cooking class and a free food box to participants and their household. This year's class was held at the Chevy Chase Community Center on July 13, 2023. The Arc is continuing to offer this program for individuals with disabilities to promote community inclusion and combat social isolation and food disparity. Thank you to the class instructor, Sandy Toy. Keep a look out for the date of the next Spirit of Food Program!



Italian Veggie Skillet,  
Peas with Shallots,  
and Orange  
Blueberry Salad.  
Promoting healthy  
eating habits!





We bring the dental office to you!

Our Public Health Team will provide:

- ❖ Exam
- ❖ Cleaning
- ❖ Fluoride Varnish
- ❖ Treatment options if needed, including with a local dental provider
- ❖ Parent education and hands-on learning for families

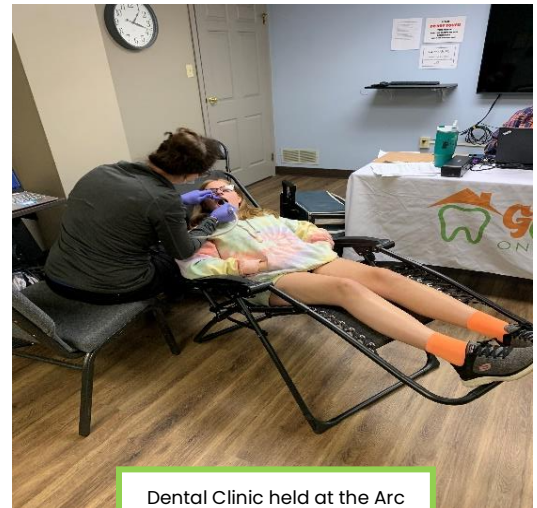
**UPCOMING DATES:**

December 13, 2023 10 AM – 2 PM

January 16, 2024 10 AM – 2 PM

February 27, 2024 10 AM – 2 PM

March 26, 2024 10 AM – 2 PM



Dental Clinic held at the Arc on September 14, 2023

The Arc partners with Golden Onsite Dental to provide individuals with disabilities a sensory-safe location to receive dental health check-up.

**All Insurances are Welcome!!**

**FOR AN APPOINTMENT – Please Text: Arc to 724-858-9295**

and someone will be with you to schedule an appointment time.

The clinic is held at the Arc of Indiana County

120 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street Suite #2

Indiana, PA 15701





# Special Olympics

**ARMSTRONG  
INDIANA  
COUNTY**

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
PENNSYLVANIA**



The athletes at the Regional Competition at Slippery Rock in September 2023.



For more information on winter sports schedule, competitions, and training contact the Arc of Indiana County. Spring sports sign-up will start 12/15 to 1/15 for Athletics (track and field). A link will be out shortly to register or call the Arc office on or after 12/15 at 724-349-8230.

## Winter Sports Schedule

Indiana County Bowling

Mohawk Lanes (IML)

Saturdays starting 11/11/23 12:30 PM

Armstrong County Bowling (AKL)

Sundays starting 11/12/23 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Snowshoeing

Getty Heights Park Indiana County

Saturdays starting 12/2/23 10 AM

SOAI Team Meeting

12/14/23 7 PM on zoom

11/16/23 7 PM on zoom

Local Bowling Competition on 1/27/23

Mohawk Lanes 9 AM - 12 PM

Snowshoeing Local Competition on 2/3/23

Kim Rode's House 10 AM - 1 PM

Special Olympics is always looking for volunteers and coaches to help with sports for the athletes. Come help us support and celebrate their achievements!

Reach out to Michelle Jordan or Michelle Ferrington for more information.

Michelle Jordan:

[smileincluded@hotmail.com](mailto:smileincluded@hotmail.com) or 814-441-7981

Michelle Ferrington:

[mferringtonarc@gmail.com](mailto:mferringtonarc@gmail.com) or 724-840-7470



The athletes at the Long Distance Running and Walking competition at the Hoodlebug Trail in October 2023.



# Individual Spotlight Interview

Our Spotlight interview for Fall 2023 is with Luke Phillips. Luke is an athlete in Special Olympics, and he enjoys running and jumping. His favorite sports to watch are football and hockey. He also enjoys being around his family. Pictured below is Luke and his family supporting him at a competition.



Q: What is your favorite sport to play?

A: Football

Q: What are your favorite sports to watch?

A: Hockey and football

Q: Why do you enjoy being with your family?

A: Help

Q: What is your favorite thing to do with your family?

A: Go for walks and vacations

Q: What is your favorite thing to do when you are on your pap's farm?

A: Feeding the chickens

Q: What do you like most about Special Olympics?

A: Running and jumping. Hanging out and having fun with the people at Special Olympics



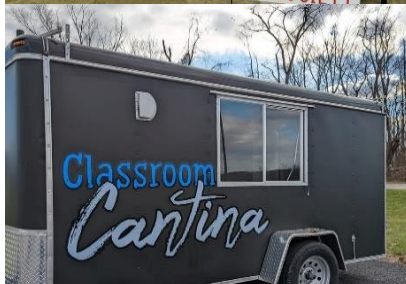


# Bark for the Arc 2023



**Bark for the Arc**

Supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities



Thank you to all the vendors and rescues that came out!!



We want to thank everyone who came out and supported the Arc of Indiana County. Thank you to our legislators for being the judges in the Superlative contest, S&T bank, and everyone else who volunteered and helped with the event.



Representative Jim Struzzi, Senator Joe Pittman, County Commissioners Mike Keith and Robin Gorman, and District Attorney Bob Manzi



**Parents With Purpose (PWP)** is a workgroup for parents of school-age students with disabilities. It is directed by the Arc of Indiana County, ARIN IU 28, and the Local Task Force of Armstrong and Indiana counties. The purpose of the workgroup is to provide parents with support, education, and advocacy. It provides advocacy support with everything from the IEP process to community inclusiveness and issues with employment or independent discrimination. The Arc offers childcare with verified volunteers and Sheetz gas card to assist with travel expenses.

Meetings will be hybrid, both online and in-person, on the **fourth Monday of the month at 6:30 PM** at the Arc of Indiana County.

**Meeting Dates:**

November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023

January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024

April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

\*\*No meetings in December, June, July, and August



**Community Disability Awareness Workshop (CDAW)** provides information and guidance about different disabilities, and disability issues, to help us understand everyone's needs and work to build a more inclusive community for Indiana County and beyond. CDAW partners with service providers, law enforcement, educators, parents, county officials, and community members to bridge the gap and increase awareness, build partnerships, and address barriers, and create community inclusion.

Quarterly meetings will be hybrid, both online and in-person, second Monday of the month at 9:00 AM at the Arc of Indiana County.

Next meeting is December 11, 2023 at 9:00 AM.

**Covid Disparities Grant** – We are working locally to activate and utilize recommendations to decrease health disparities in our area.

Just released: the *Recommendations to Reduce COVID-19 Health Differences for People with Disabilities*

Link: [Recommendations to Reduce Health Differences \(includemepa.net\)](https://www.includemepa.net)

The Arc provides free COVID-19 test kits. The Arc is going to provide more vaccine clinics in December-January. Look for the announcement on our website.

Link: [Arc of Indiana County – Achieve with us.® \(arcindiana.org\)](https://www.arcindiana.org)





# Community Partner

## Breakfast 2024

March 21, 2024

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Hilton Garden Inn

The Arc of Indiana County is hosting its Annual Community Partner Breakfast celebrating community-wide partnerships and collaborations with local agencies, organizations, businesses, legislative offices, and community members/leaders. We invite your organization/agency/business/public offices and community members to join us for breakfast at the Hilton Garden Inn. The event's purpose is to foster continued connections and community networking by discussing community successes, measuring community needs, and reconnecting with one another.

Tickets are \$20 per person or \$100 per table (6 people). 75 max seating event

To purchase tickets, go to [www.arcindiana.org](http://www.arcindiana.org). All proceeds benefit the services/programs available to the public free of cost provided by the Arc of Indiana County to families and individuals with intellectual disabilities/developmental delays in Indiana and Armstrong Counties.

# Parental and Educator Resources



- [www.aapd.org](http://www.aapd.org)
- [www.ahedd.org](http://www.ahedd.org) Social Security Benefits Counseling
- [www.autisticadvocacy.org](http://www.autisticadvocacy.org) Autistic Self Advocacy Network
- [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org) Council for Exceptional Children
- [www.centeronlinelearning.res.ku.edu](http://www.centeronlinelearning.res.ku.edu) Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities
- [www.chp.edu](http://www.chp.edu) Down Syndrome Center
- [www.co.mifflin.pa.us](http://www.co.mifflin.pa.us) "Preserve PA" PA's COVID-19 Crisis Counseling Program Helpline 24/7.
- [www.disabilityrights.org](http://www.disabilityrights.org) Disability Rights: Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DPR) is an independent, statewide, non-profit corporation designated as the federally mandated protection and advocacy. Pittsburgh Office (412) 391-5225
- [www.dli.pa.gov](http://www.dli.pa.gov) Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
- [www.ed.gov/ocr](http://www.ed.gov/ocr) Department of Education email [COVID-19@ed.gov](mailto:COVID-19@ed.gov) Helpline 1-800-412-3481
- [www.eita-pa.org/families/](http://www.eita-pa.org/families/) Family Resources available through the Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA)
- [www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org) Education Law Center Helpline (412) 258-2120 Western PA
- [www.includemepa.org](http://www.includemepa.org) is a resource from The Arc of PA. Include me is a new model for inclusive education and gaining meaningful employment for Pennsylvania's students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Arc of PA and Include Me believe all individuals with a significant impact of developmental and intellectual disabilities deserve equal educational and competitive employment rights. Our mission is to build and strengthen the inclusive education capacity for all public-school students and discover meaningful employment opportunities meeting PA's employee and employer needs. Include Me strives to ensure all impacted students have equal access to all aspects of life and the community throughout their lifespan. This website has various resources and important information for parents and their families.
- [www.myodp.org](http://www.myodp.org) Community Practice for Supporting Families
- [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org) National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
- [www.ncil.org](http://www.ncil.org) Additional Resources Online: American Association of People with Disabilities
- [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com) National Council on Independent Living
- [www.paautism.org](http://www.paautism.org)
- [www.paoralhealth.org](http://www.paoralhealth.org) PA Coalition for Oral Health
- [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com) PA's Promise for Children connect Helpline 1-800-692-7288
- [pafamilynetwork@visionforequality.org](mailto:pafamilynetwork@visionforequality.org) PA Family Network 1-844-723-2645
- [www.parenttoparent.org](http://www.parenttoparent.org) Parent to Parent of PA
- [www.parentcenterhub.org](http://www.parentcenterhub.org) Parent Center Hub
- [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net) PA Training and Technical Assistance Network has Publication Updates on their website
- <https://techowlpa.org> Technology for Our Whole Lives (TechOWL)
- [www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com) Wrights law Special Education Advocacy
- McAndrews Law Office YouTube Videos. Topics: Getting Prepared for IEP Meetings