

The Advocate

Bi-Yearly Newsletter from
the Arc of Indiana County
Spring 2025



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In this ninth 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 Champion and Empower a life of inclusion, ability, opportunity, and equality for individuals of all ages and backgrounds with intellectual and developmental delays and other disabilities.

Vision Statement: We achieve this through advocacy, education, and resource support. We identify barriers, build partnerships, and realize positive solutions.



Hi everyone! It's been a busy and exciting time for The Arc of Indiana County since our last update. We've been working hard to offer fun programs, events, and important training for people with disabilities and their families. Our goal is to help everyone feel included and have the support they need.

But that's not all we've been doing. Lately, we've been very focused on some big issues that could really hurt people with disabilities. The government might make huge cuts to Medicaid, which is a program that helps many people get important services. In Pennsylvania, lots of kids, older adults, and people with disabilities rely on Medicaid for things they need.

If these cuts happen, it would be really hard for Pennsylvania to make up the money. People with disabilities might lose the support that helps them live at home and be independent. This could force them into places like the old institutions, where they don't have as much freedom or a good quality of life. We need to tell our leaders that this is not okay!

Recently, I had a productive meeting with Congressman Glen Thompson. We talked about how bad these Medicaid cuts would be and other important issues for The Arc. He listened carefully to our concerns, including from people who are self-advocates, and said he wants to help.



Over the past five years, I've learned that sharing our personal stories is the best way to make people understand why these issues matter.

So, please take a moment to contact your local leaders – your Congressperson, State Representative, and State Senator. Tell them your stories and why it's so important to

protect the rights and well-being of people with disabilities. Your voice makes a difference!



I also spent a day in Harrisburg talking to lawmakers about The Arc's goals. I asked them to support a bill that would allow family members to get paid for providing skilled care to their children with disabilities.

Thank you so much for your ongoing support of our community and The Arc of Indiana County. I'm so grateful for all the friendships and help I've received in my first five years as Executive Director. Together, we're working to make sure people with disabilities have the chance to live full, included, and happy lives. Here's to many more years of making a difference!

Sincerely,

Michelle Jordan



Did you know we updated our logo and mission statement?

Mission Statement:

To Champion and Empower a life of inclusion, ability, opportunity, and equality for individuals of all ages and backgrounds with intellectual and developmental delays and other disabilities.





Medicaid Is a Lifeline for Pennsylvanians

Medicaid is a joint federal and state program that provides health insurance and access to long-term care to more than 3,191,750 Pennsylvanians, including:

Around 40% of Pennsylvanians with disabilities under the age of 65	Around 37% of Pennsylvania children	More than 537,000 adults receiving long-term supports and services
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What Medicaid Means for Pennsylvanians

- **Health:** Medicaid coverage unlocks access to health care and improves health.
- **Financial Security:** Medicaid protects families from high health care costs.
- **Dignity and Community:** Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) enable 479,000+ disabled Pennsylvanians to live, work, and participate in their communities.
- **Federal Investment:** The federal government spent \$27.8 billion on Medicaid in Pennsylvania in 2023—providing around 63% of the total cost of the program in the state.
- **Jobs:** Medicaid creates thousands of valuable local jobs in the health care sector and increases employment for people with disabilities.
- **Stronger Rural Hospitals:** Medicaid funding enables rural hospitals and other critical health care infrastructure to stay open and provide care to rural residents.

69% of Pennsylvania voters oppose cuts to Medicaid funding.

Impact to Pennsylvania's State Economy

- Cuts to federal Medicaid funding would shift costs onto Pennsylvanians, squeezing already tight state, local, and family budgets.
- The state would be forced to make up for the loss in federal funds.
- The risk of cuts to HCBS is especially great because the state spends more on HCBS than any other optional benefit. Pennsylvania already limits HCBS due to constraints on available funding. 14,779 Pennsylvanians are currently on a waitlist to receive Medicaid-funded HCBS.
- Without adequate funding for HCBS, thousands of Pennsylvanians with disabilities would lose their independence and be forced into nursing homes or state-run institutions to survive.

- For more information, contact Kim Musheno at musheno@thearc.org.

Spirit of Food Program

The Arc of Indiana County, in partnership with local food stores and organizations, offers a cooking class for individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental delays. This program promotes community inclusion and combats social isolation and food disparity, while teaching independence, food safety, and healthy habits. Participants receive a food box and cooking tools at no cost. Our last class was in February, and the Arc has two more scheduled for this summer: July 24th and August 7th.

Funding provided by a grant from the Collective Impact Working Group Project:
The Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank

Contact the Arc to be added to the email list or stay tuned to the website for updates!

www.arcindiana.org





Colonial MOTOR MART

June 21st, 2025

9 AM – 5 PM

**Optimist Park
Indiana, Pa**

**Create a team for Colonial
Motors Kickball Classic for
the Arc of Indiana County
or come cheer them on!**

**Visit www.arcindiana.org
for more info**



**Who will be this year's winner?
Participating teams TBA**

Cars on site!

**Pittsburgh Steelers/Pirates Tickets signed
memorabilia, and team Swag**

Do not have to be present to win
Selling & Drawing tickets @ game

BASKET RAFFLE





PITTSBURGH STEELERS/PIRATES ANNUAL BASKET RAFFLE!!



Purchase tickets in support for the Arc of
Indiana County!

Basket includes 2 Steelers game tickets
and 4 Pirate game tickets, plus swag and
signed memorabilia.

Purchase Tickets at the Arc of Indiana County!

\$5/ticket

Tickets will also be sold and drawn at the Kickball Classic
Fundraiser, you do not need to be present to win

June 21, 2025 9 am - 5 pm
Optimist Park

The Arc of Indiana County
120 N 5th St. Indiana, Pa 15701
724-349-8230
www.arcindiana.org



The Arc
of Indiana County
Empowering Abilities

Local Task Force

TE... a committee of parents, consumers, and representatives who work to ensure children with disabilities receive the services and support they need. LTFs are active across Pennsylvania, and they follow procedures outlined by the State Task Force.

The speaker series will be released closer to the beginning of the school year. Will be holding meetings in person and offering childcare for the duration of the PM meetings and Sheetz gas cards to assist with travel costs for parents.

Preliminary 2025-2026 LTF Meeting Schedule:

- September 3rd: AM Meeting
- October 1st: PM Meeting
- November 5th: Parent Support Dinner
- December: OFF
- January 7th: AM Meeting
- February 4th: PM Meeting
- March 4th: AM Meeting
- April 1st: PM Meeting
- May 6th: PM Meeting



Local Task Force

Parent Support Annual Dinner

Parents, educators, and professionals were invited to an evening of connection and support at our Parent Support Dinner, hosted by The Arc. This event discussed the benefits of the Local Task Force (LTF) and the vital role of parent participation. This was a wonderful opportunity to share experiences, learn from one another, and strengthen our community of support. We were honored to have our guest speaker, Dr. Carole Clancy – Director of the Bureau of Special Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, attend our event.



John Angelo Secondary Transitional Scholarships



Each year, the Arc offers students two John Angelo Secondary Transitional Scholarships—one in Indiana County and one in Armstrong County.

This year, we awarded two students at our Local Task Force Parent Support Dinner. – Isaac Kester and Rowan Kai Buchanan. These students show excellent self-advocacy skills and a clear plan for after high school. We are so grateful to be able to help these students achieve their goals.



Isaac Kester:
Purchase Line High
School Senior

Rowan Kai Buchanan:
Armstrong High School
/Lenape Tech Senior





Special Olympics: Armstrong/Indiana Counties

In the past few months, SOAI has been busy training and competing in bowling, snowshoeing, and track and field. It has also hosted several events, including the local bowling competition, the Dine N Dance Social, Carnegie Mellon Sectional Spring State Sectional, and the Winter Games. We thank all the volunteers and coaches for making this possible. We are so proud of all the athletes for their hard work these past two seasons! Up next is the Summer Games, and Fall sports sign-ups for Bocce (Indiana) and Long Distance running and walking (Indiana and Kittanning).



Athlete Spotlight



Cecelia Mullen
pictured with Jay
Paterno at the 50th
Arc Anniversary
Gala

Cecelia Mullen is a Special Olympic athlete and a self-advocate board member for the Arc of Indiana County. She currently works at Joann Fabrics and is an active community member.

1. How does being a self-advocate help your daily life?
 - a. Make my own decisions, wake up, making daily plans
2. What are your thoughts on Joann Fabrics closing?
 - a. I don't like the idea of it closing, it has disrupted my daily work schedule, and I am overwhelmed with pressure to change jobs since I have worked there since 2018
3. What are your plans after Joann Fabrics closes?
 - a. Getting another job, still deciding where
4. What is your favorite part of Special Olympics?
 - a. Seeing all of my friends
5. Is there any advice you would give your fellow athletes?
 - a. Walk more during the summer or whenever you can. If you work then work hard and never give up
6. What is one goal that you have for yourself?
 - a. I want to own my own business one day. Probably an earring business
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?
 - a. No

Dental Clinic

Don't forget about our Dental Clinics held here at the Arc of Indiana County!

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

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

**ALL INSURANCES ARE
WELCOME!!**

For an appointment – Please text

Arc to 412-361-9265



Upcoming dates:

May 15, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

June 19, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

July 17, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

August 21, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

September 18, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

October 23, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

November 13, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

December 18, 2025 10 AM – 2 PM

“Getting Stuff Done for ID/A Community”

DHS Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh recently joined advocates from [The Arc of Indiana County](#) for a roundtable discussion on the successes to-date of the Shapiro Administration’s multi-year growth strategy for intellectual disability and autism (ID/A) services and the importance of continued funding in Governor Shapiro’s 2025-26 budget proposal for this community and the workforce that supports them.



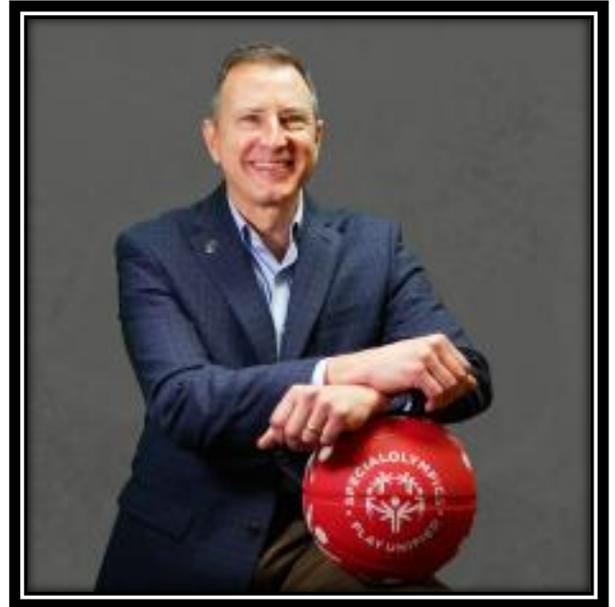
DHS Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh with one of our Special Olympic athletes’ Sean Auckerman.

“Every Pennsylvanian deserves the freedom to chart their own course. People with intellectual disabilities and autism are no exception, but to do that, they need access to the right services at the right time so they can live healthy, independent lives,” said Secretary Arkoosh.



Community Partner Breakfast

This year's Community Partner Breakfast theme was "Community in a Cup". The goal was to bring everyone together to foster continued connections and community networking by discussing community successes, measuring community needs, and reconnecting with one another.



We had the pleasure of having guest speaker, Matthew Aaron, Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) President and CEO, speak at our event about the importance of collaboration and community partnerships.



Resources

- www.ahedd.org Social Security Benefits Counseling
- www.autisticadvocacy.org Autistic Self Advocacy Network
- www.cec.sped.org Council for Exceptional Children
- www.centeronlinelearning.res.ku.edu Center on Online Learning and Students with

Disabilities

- www.chp.edu Down Syndrome Center
- www.disabilityrights.org Disability Rights: Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DPR)
- www.dli.pa.gov Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)
- www.ed.gov/ocr Department of Education
- www.eita-pa.org/families/ Family Resources available through the Early Intervention

Technical Assistance (EITA)

- www.elc-pa.org Education Law Center Helpline (412) 258-2120 Western PA
- www.includemepa.org
- www.myodp.org Community Practice for Supporting Families
- www.ncset.org National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
- www.ncil.org Additional Resources Online: American Association of People with Disabilities
- www.aapd.com National Council on Independent Living
- www.paautism.org
- www.paoralhealth.org PA Coalition for Oral Health
- www.papromiseforchildren.com PA's Promise for Children connect Helpline 1-800-692 7288
- pafamilynetwork@visionforequality.org PA Family Network 1-844-723-2645

- www.parenttoparent.org Parent to Parent of PA
- www.parentcenterhub.org Parent Center Hub
- 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 Wrights law Special Education Advocacy
- McAndrews Law Office YouTube Videos. Topics: Getting Prepared for IEP Meetings
- <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/contact/DHS-Offices/Pages/ODPBureau%20of%20Autism%20Services.aspx> PA – Bureau of Supports for Autism and Special Populations
- <https://transitionta.org> National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative
- <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html> Office of Special Education Programs
- www.pacareerlink.pa.go PA – CareerLink
- <https://pasilc.org/independent-living/centers-in-dependent-living/> PA Statewide Centers for Independent Living
- <https://www.pasecondarytransition.com/> PA Secondary Transition
- <https://supporteddecisionmaking.org/> National Resource for Supported Decision-Making
- <https://transitiondiscoveries.org/> Transition Discoveries
- <https://www.pealcenter.org/> Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center