SUMMER 2025

The Archive

THE Arc OF THE Ozarks

SERVING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SINCE 1964

Letter from The President

The Fall Season has flown by quickly and the winter months are already upon us. During the month of August, The Arc renewed its national accreditation and received a 3-year accreditation by CARF International. This reflects The Arc's commitment to meeting rigorous, nationally recognized standards ensuring high-quality services, ethical practices, and positive outcomes for the people we support.

In the month of September, we celebrated national DSP Appreciation week, recognizing our Direct Support Professionals. I would once again like to thank our DSPs for the incredible work they do every day. Their dedication, compassion, and commitment to supporting individuals with dignity and respect make a profound difference in their lives and in our community.

In October/November, The Arc was recognized as a Health Care Champion and awarded the Organization of the Year by the Springfield Business Journal. We are deeply honored to receive this award! This recognition reflects our shared commitment to quality care, innovation, and belief that every person deserves dignity, respect, and opportunity. We accept this award with gratitude and pride, knowing it represents the collective effort of our staff, partners, and the community – all united by the passion for making a difference in health and human services.

In this newsletter, you will read stories about DSP week, The Arc Gives, the new Volunteer program, and the Real Voices, Real Choices conference.

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

THE Arc OF THE Ozarks

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Jennie's Road to the 2026 USA Games

It's not every day that one of our own earns the chance to represent the United States on a national stage—but that's exactly what happened for Jennie, a proud member of our Renovations program!

Earlier this year, Jennie and her shift supervisor, Charity, attended Selection Camp at the Mexico Military Academy, where they tried out for Team Missouri's Bocce squad for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. During camp, Jennie impressed the coaches so much that she was chosen to play in a scrimmage with the Missouri Reign Soccer Team in Columbia. Then, on August 1st, she got the exciting news—she made the Missouri Bocce Team, MO Magic!

Jennie's hard work, dedication, and determination have truly paid off. Her success is also a reflection of the unwavering support from her staff, especially Morganne and the entire Team 14 crew, who have cheered her on every step of the way. Together, they've shown what teamwork, perseverance, and belief can accomplish.

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will take place June 20–26, 2026, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where Jennie will compete in Bocce alongside her unified partner, Charity.

To help fund her trip and housing, she is inviting community support through her MO Magic Special Olympics 2026 fundraising page. Jennie and her team are also getting creative—they're selling custom keychains to raise money for travel expenses. Every donation and purchase helps make her dream of competing on the national stage a reality, while showing the incredible spirit of teamwork, perseverance, and community pride.

Please join us in congratulating Jennie, Charity, Morganne, and Team 14 on this incredible milestone. We're so proud to have one of our own representing the spirit of inclusion, courage, and joy on the national stage. Good luck at the Games, Jennie—go Team USA!

Jennie showing off her trophy wall!

AT&T volunteers cleaning the bedroom.

An AT&T volunteer dusting the TV.

Stronger Together: The Arc's New Volunteer Program

This fall, The Arc proudly launched a new volunteer program designed to bring the community and the individuals we support closer together. The program is open to both individuals and groups who want to make a difference by volunteering alongside our clients in meaningful ways.

Originally piloted within our residential services, the program has already seen great success in fostering community engagement and connection. Volunteers have provided hands-on help, friendship, and encouragement, making a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

Recently, staff members from AT&T joined the effort by cleaning and organizing one of our residential homes, demonstrating the powerful difference teamwork and community involvement can make.

The Arc is thrilled to see the program grow and welcomes anyone interested in getting involved. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact Alex Cobb, Assistant Director of Recruitment and Retention at acobb@thearcoftheozarks.org or (417) 874-1966.

An AT&T volunteer mopping the floor.

Program Spotlights

Jamie McGranahan dancing with a client.

All of our wonderful volunteers connecting with families.

The HEARO Representative in action.

Firefighters with an attendee.

Creating Safer Spaces for Neurodivergent Families

Recently, The Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center hosted a Safety Resource Fair to help neurodivergent families stay safe and supported. Research shows that people with autism are seven times more likely to interact with law enforcement than their neurotypical peers, making safety conversations especially important.

The event created a unique opportunity for families to connect face-to-face with law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders.

"We do training already with professionals, law enforcement, and first responders about what autism is and how to be aware and supportive," said Jamie McGranahan, Autism Resource Specialist. "But we knew that families also needed that support."

In addition to first responders, specialists were available to share guidance on financial safety, cyber safety, and tools such as personal trackers and live remote support in the home—resources designed to give families more peace of mind.

"As a parent myself, that's a very real fear," McGranahan added. "When you have a kiddo with autism, you worry about going to the park, going to the grocery store, and even about safety in your own home."

The Safety Resource Fair offered families an unparalleled chance to ask questions, connect with community experts, and take-home valuable safety tips. The Center looks forward to continuing this event, helping neurodivergent families build confidence and access resources to stay safe.

Real Voices, Real Choices: Empowerment in Action

Each year, The Arc of the Ozarks takes part in Real Voices Real Choices, a conference designed to "unite, inform, and empower individuals and families living with mental illness, developmental and intellectual disabilities, and those in recovery for substance use disorders." Held at a lakeside resort, the two-day event features six educational sessions and offers a mix of learning, fun, and friendship.

For many participants, the conference is both empowering and memorable. Johnnie, a six-time attendee from Joplin, shared that what he enjoys most is "learning to be a self-advocate" and "getting to know more people." For first-time attendee, Jaffon from Monett, the highlights included bingo night, for which he won a prize, and karaoke.

In addition to the fun, the conference offers sessions focused on self-determination, self-advocacy, empowerment, coping skills, and more. This year, 14 individuals and their supporting staff represented The Arc's Springfield, Monett, Joplin, and Kansas City Divisions. The experience helps participants see themselves, and their voices, as part of a larger community. Jaffon's staff shared that he now has "a much easier time speaking up for himself" since returning from the event. Johnnie reflected that the conference helped him "listen to other people's opinions" and "work towards living on his own," adding simply, "I'd like to be more independent."

Real Voices Real Choices takes place each August, with next year's conference scheduled for August 23–25. Johnnie and Jaffon are already excited to go again, and Johnnie would "like to invite others to Real Voices Real Choices."

If you know someone who could benefit from the experience, consider encouraging them to attend and find their voice at the lake next summer.

Johnnie enjoying the conference with a stress ball.

Jaffon and his staff smiling big with their ice cream.

Collaborating with Teachers for Student Success

This year, regional teams from The Arc partnered with the Development Department to welcome special education teachers back to school. Regional leaders visited area schools, delivering coffee mugs and educational materials to teachers as a gesture of appreciation and support.

Director Treanna and staff member Drake delivering treats and resources to teachers at Cassville Public School.

"The teachers absolutely loved the materials we left them and were excited to learn about the programs and services available to their students.

This outreach really made a difference in our community," shared Treanna Daughterly, Director of Monett Division.

By connecting directly with educators, The Arc is building stronger partnerships and increasing awareness of the services available to students with developmental disabilities. The organization looks forward to continuing these efforts and developing even more opportunities to collaborate with schools across the region.

The Arc of the Ozarks

Join us in making a difference.

VOLUNTEER TODAY

thearcoftheozarks.org

MAKE A REAL IMPACT

Your time and skills can genuinely transform lives, offering our clients opportunities for growth, independence, and happiness.

CONNECT

Volunteering at The Arc of the Ozarks allows you to meet incredible people, from the clients we serve to fellow advocates and supporters.

GROW

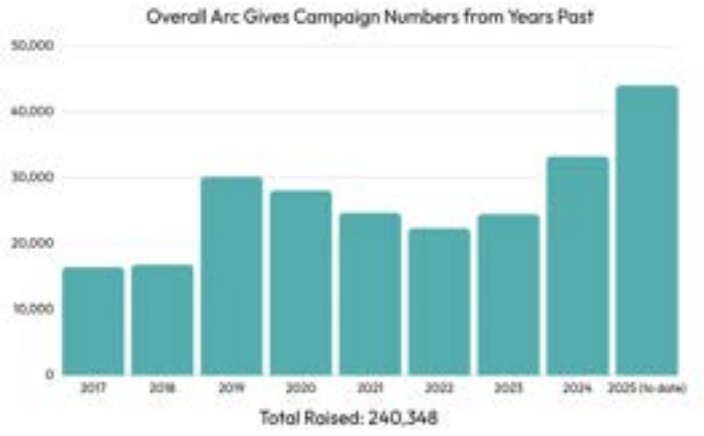
Learn new skills, gain valuable experience, and enhance your understanding of the challenges facing individuals with disabilities.

Arc Gives: Together, We Make an Impact

At The Arc, our mission is rooted in the belief that every person deserves the opportunity to live fully, independently, and be a part of their community. Although our mission goes beyond our daily work, it's about making a lasting difference in the lives of the individuals we serve. One remarkable example of that commitment is The Arc Gives, our internal employee giving program.

This internal campaign, which began in 2017, invites employees across the organization to contribute to two critical initiatives that directly enhance the quality of life for our clients:

- The Education & Recreation program offers enriching programs like summer camp, Lifetime of Learning classes, and inclusive social activities. These experiences create joy, foster friendships, and open doors to personal growth for the individuals we serve. With no dedicated funding source, this program relies on generous contributions from supporters.
- The ISL Start-Up Fund helps individuals that are moving into Independent Supported Living (ISL) settings, furnish their new homes. This fund ensures that people have access to essential household items like furniture, cookware, and bedding, so they can begin their new chapter with comfort and a true sense of home.



The Arc Gives is more than a campaign; it's a culture of care. Every dollar donated goes directly toward enhancing the lives of others. And every employee who participates sends a powerful message: that we are all in this together. Since the inception of this campaign, our employees have pledged over $220,000, which is an incredible investment in creating brighter futures for those we serve.

We're proud of the work we do to fulfill our mission. We're even more proud of the people who make it possible.

Summer Camp attendee about to hit a baseball.

Springfield	Joplin	Monett	Kansas City
Jennifer Cox	Jessica Bernal	Lisa Army	Brittani Owens
Brittney Betts	Tera McGhehe	Hunter Kuappamaki	Brendan Hemenway
Hope Dyke	Chad Compton	Mariah Springston	Lillie Gay
Alexa Horton	Jacob Rodgers	Austin Jacobs	Caleb Thomas
Corbin Cardenas	Tara Brady	Marley Nash	Paul Osoro
Michael Fillhart	Christy Montour	Josie Jordan	Mar'Quan Wren
Ciera Graves	Lindsey Roberts	Elena Couch	Leonard LaGuardia
Dominique Shelton	William Young	Essie Fernandez	Tiffany Fiorani
Mackenzie Godino	Emily Ropp	Raul Saucedo	Jason Garrett
Kynleigh Kelley	Peyton Long	Boaz Linn	Keisha Benton

Employees of the Month for each division from January through October.

DSP Week: Recognizing the Heroes Behind the Work

From September 7–13, we joined organizations across the country in celebrating Direct Support Professional (DSP) Week, a dedicated time to recognize and honor the incredible work of our DSPs. These individuals are truly the backbone of our organization, providing daily, hands-on support that empowers individuals with disabilities to live fulfilling lives. Their compassion, patience, and commitment are at the core of everything we do.

To show our appreciation, we celebrated our DSPs all week long with activities and recognition designed to highlight their value and impact. Each day featured special drawings, offering fun prizes to bring a little extra joy to those who give so much to others. Throughout the week, we took to social media for supervisors to share shout-outs and heartfelt messages of gratitude. This helps the community see the difference our DSPs make every day. We also celebrated all of our amazing Employees of the Month, whose outstanding contributions reflect the very best of what it means to serve with care and excellence. The week was culminated by our CEO, Mr. Powers, sharing a personal thank-you video, expressing his appreciation for the work our DSPs do.

To all of our Direct Support Professionals, thank you for all that you do! Our organization runs on your strength, your heart, and your unwavering commitment. We are proud to work with you.

Mission in Motion

For the past six years, Jen of Jenergy Movement has been inspiring movement, connection, and confidence among The Arc's clients through creative fitness and mindfulness programs. What began as a focus on dance and accessible recreation has blossomed into a full range of offerings—from aquatics, martial arts, strength training, and boot camps to outdoor obstacle courses, yoga, and mindfulness. Jen even authored Peace Out, a manual designed to teach meditation, stress relief, and coping skills.

Jen's philosophy is simple yet powerful: anyone can do anything; it just might look different. From the moment she began working with The Arc, she formed meaningful bonds with participants, helping them discover their strengths through movement and music. Each day, she brings positivity and encouragement to every class, empowering individuals to move, express, and grow.

Jen is continually inspired by her clients, especially those who are nonverbal. "I've seen individuals begin singing karaoke after being nonverbal," she shares. "Music and movement are incredible—some who use wheelchairs move in ways they haven't in years. I'm humbled and honored to witness those amazing moments. But often, the magic is in the subtle changes; confidence, courage to try something new, and the freedom to truly express themselves."

Amy Holland, Education and Recreation Director, says: "We love Jen! She's full of energy, positivity, and care for our clients. She makes moving your body fun!"

Jen has been a dedicated partner to our Education/ Recreation and SOAR programs, playing a key role in summer camp, rehearsing for our annual talent show, and more. Her commitment to the talent show is remarkable, helping participants take pride in showcasing their unique abilities in a fun, inspiring way.

Bev Griffith, Program Supervisor, adds: "Jen is one of our dearest partners. Her energy, creativity, and kindness have made a huge impact. Through music and movement, she helps individuals express themselves, work through anxiety, and, most of all—have fun!"

What started as a plan to teach a few classes a week has become Jen's life's work. Seeing the impact of movement on individuals with disabilities inspired her to develop a full training program for The World Groove Movement, teaching others how to lead inclusive movement classes for all abilities. She's now launching it globally to expand opportunities for expression and connection.

Liz Dressler, Assistant Director of Education & Recreation, says: "Jen is a favorite with all our Arc individuals, and truly a celebrity around here! Her positive light is contagious, and we love getting to groove with her every summer at camp."

We're so thankful for Jen's partnership, passion, and dedication. Her creativity and joy have touched countless lives at The Arc, and the ripple effects are spreading far beyond.

Jen and Khia hugging after the SOAR Talent Show.

GREAT SOUTHERN BANK

Client and staff at The Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center

Student at Rivendale

Student and staff enjoying music class at Rivendale

Great Southern Bank

Great Southern Bank has been a valued partner of The Arc of the Ozarks for many years. Committed to strengthening the communities they serve, Great Southern Bank believes that a company is only as strong as the community around it. They view it as both a privilege and a responsibility to provide services and capital that help communities thrive.

"The Arc provides essential programs and services for individuals with developmental disabilities in our community. We are honored to support this organization and its mission," said Andrea Brady, Community Outreach and Development Manager at Great Southern Bank.

Founded in 1923 with a $5,000 investment, Great Southern Bank has grown into a leading financial institution, serving more than 222,700 customers with a comprehensive range of products and services. Supported by over 1,100 dedicated associates, the bank is committed to delivering exceptional service to every customer.

The Arc of the Ozarks is proud to count Great Southern Bank as a community partner.

Conference Inspires Missouri Disability Leaders

The Arc of the Ozarks' President/CEO, Mike Powers, was presented the Legacy Award at the 2025 Starling Leadership Conference in Branson. This honor recognizes his 30 years of leadership and advocacy in shaping Missouri's system of services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Under Mike's guidance, The Arc has expanded its reach, strengthened partnerships with the Department of Mental Health and state legislators, and continued advancing opportunities for individuals with disabilities across Missouri.

Leaders from across the state gathered for the two-day professional development event, which featured keynote speakers and breakout sessions on leadership growth, technology in IDD services, and strategies to strengthen workplace culture.

The Arc's Assistant Director of Staff Development, Candece Hite, presented on building and implementing internal leadership development programs to cultivate future leaders and enhance employee engagement, retention, and organizational culture. Networking sessions and the Starling Champions' Reception provided valuable opportunities for collaboration among community providers. The Arc was proud to send staff members from multiple teams to participate in this year's conference, reflecting its continued investment in leadership development and professional growth.

The event closed with an inspiring keynote encouraging attendees to lead with intention and foster positive team culture—ending the conference on a high note of motivation and purpose.

Trick or treating in action.

The Autism and Nuerodevelopmental Center staff with a cart of candy.

A Halloween Celebration Designed with Every Child in Mind

The Autism & Neurodevelopmental Center recently hosted a Sensory Safe Trick-or-Treating event, where over 500 children and their families enjoyed a fun, safe, and treat-filled evening. The event provided a welcoming environment designed to accommodate children with sensory needs, allowing everyone to fully enjoy the Halloween spirit without the stress of overstimulation.

For many children with autism or other neurodevelopmental differences, traditional trick-or-treating can be overwhelming due to bright lights, loud noises, large crowds, and unpredictable environments. Sensory-safe activities like this event create a space where children can participate comfortably while encouraging social interaction, building confidence, and helping families make joyful memories together.

The Autism & Neurodevelopmental Center remains committed to fostering inclusion and understanding through community events that celebrate all abilities. A special thank you goes out to the dedicated staff and volunteers whose hard work and compassion made this special evening possible.

Trunk-or-Treat Turns the Parking Lot into Pure Magic

On Friday, October 10, Infinity Academy's parking lot transformed into a festive fall block party as students, families, and The Arc staff gathered for our annual Trunk-or-Treat. The weather couldn't have been better, and neither could the turnout. Costumes dazzled, trunks impressed, and the smiles were nonstop. From superheroes and storybook characters to clever trunk themes, trunks lined the lot with decorated vehicles, handing out sweet treats and small prizes.

Events like Trunk-or-Treat highlight what makes Infinity Academy special: community, kindness, and a commitment to meeting each student where they are. We're grateful to our staff for the thoughtful planning, to the volunteers who brought the fun to life, and to our families for showing up with such spirit.

Spooky Fun at Education and Recreation's Trunk or Treat

The annual Trunk or Treat event was a wonderful evening filled with festive fun, creativity, and community spirit. Participants showcased their imagination with elaborately decorated trunks — featuring themes ranging from Wicked to sea creatures and everything in between.

Clients enjoyed trick-or-treating throughout the event, visiting each themed trunk, and capturing memories at the photo booth selfie station. Awards were also presented for Best Attire, recognizing those who went above and beyond in celebrating the Halloween spirit. A sincere thank-you to all the volunteers who dedicated their time and creativity to make this event such a success.

Fun costumes from Infinity's Trunk or Treat.

The Grinch giving out hugs at Education and Recreation's Trunk or Treat.

Transforming Lives for Generations

For more than 60 years, The Arc of the Ozarks has been dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities and creating lasting change for children and families.

This year, we are especially proud of the progress made through our Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center. Our team is on track to finish 600 autism evaluations by year's end, in addition to conducting nearly 9,200 appointments. To meet the growing demand, we are excited to welcome a new Child Psychologist to our Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center. Her expertise will expand our capacity to complete vital evaluations and ensure that more families receive the answers and care they need without delay.

Yet, the need continues to grow. Over the next decade, more than 40,000 children in Missouri are expected to be diagnosed with autism. Families in our community are counting on us to expand services, increase access to therapies, and provide the resources that will help their children thrive.

With nearly six decades of experience developing innovative programs for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities, The Arc of the Ozarks has been a trusted partner for families navigating these challenges. But we cannot do this work alone.

Your support makes it possible to provide evaluations, therapies, and life-changing programs that shape brighter futures. Together, we can ensure that every child has the opportunity to grow, succeed, and live a meaningful life.

As we close out this year and look ahead with hope, we invite you to join us in carrying this mission forward. Your gift today will help transform lives - now and for generations to come.

Christmas EXTRAVAGANZA

Benefiting The Arc of the Ozarks Children's Autism Services

SILENT AUCTION AND DINNER

DECEMBER 5 | 5:30 PM

WHITE RIVER CONFERENCE CENTER

600 W Sunshine, Springfield, MO

HOSTED BY
CHAD THE DAD

LIVE MUSIC FROM

SCAN TO
BUY TICKETS
OR DONATE

Presented by alps Pharmacy

The Arc of the Ozarks

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* Satellite centers available in Joplin and Branson.

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