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# EMPOWERING ABILITIES

## THE FIRST CLASS!

*"I'm excited for all of us, that people will be able to see us in a different light...that we are more than just our disabilities."*

Macena Mason is one of the first graduates of The Arc Montgomery County's new Empowering Abilities Direct Support Professional (EA DSP) Fellowship. On June 20, surrounded by family, friends, and employees, pride and excitement embraced the ten Fellows of the inaugural class as they celebrated their graduation.

The EA DSP Fellowship is the first program in Montgomery County designed for adults with lived experience of a disability to prepare for careers as direct support professionals. Fellows complete a paid training program that combines classroom learning, mentorship, job coaching, and certifications in CPR and First Aid. The program builds confidence, professional skills, and a pathway to meaningful employment.

Project Director Nicole Lindsay intentionally gave participants

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Issue 28 | Fall 2025

Published twice annually

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## FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



It's clear we're in turbulent times. Uncertainty echoes across every headline. The challenges we face can be daunting. But we're not just weathering the storm—we're reshaping the horizon with the values that have always guided us: integrity, inclusion, and advocacy.

**Integrity** keeps us grounded. It means doing what's right, even when it's not easy. It means being transparent, accountable, and deeply committed to the people we support. **Inclusion** reminds us that every person deserves to be seen, heard, and valued. And advocacy? **Advocacy** is our voice. It's our courage. It's the promise that we will never stop fighting for equity, access, and opportunity.

Together, these values shape a community where people of all abilities are not only supported, but empowered. Whether it's through advocacy, education, employment, or friendship, we're building a world where belonging isn't conditional—it's a given.

Your belief in our mission doesn't just fuel change—it ignites it. In every story shared, every barrier broken, and every person uplifted, your support becomes the catalyst for transformation.

So let's keep going. Let's keep showing up. Because together, we're not just imagining a better world—we're making it real. One voice. One act. One unstoppable movement.

—Daria Cervantes, CEO

## DSP WEEK 2025

We strive to show appreciation for our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) every day and especially during DSP Recognition Week in September. This year's celebration included a mid-week party at headquarters with lunch, music, and crafts. Daily drawings featured prizes like a \$200 gift card for The Capital Grille, and a one-night stay at Bethesda North Marriott Hotel with breakfast for two. We love our DSPs!



## COVER STORY CONT.



the title of Fellows. “A Fellow is an expert in a field of study,” she says, “and who better to explore and help shape the DSP profession than someone with the lived experience of a disability?”

For Macena, the program has been transformative. She came with an associate’s degree in Microcomputer Technology, a history of disability advocacy, and even a published autobiography, but she says the Fellowship gave her something new: confidence to step into the workforce in a new way. “Anyone with a disability can do anything and everything that they set their minds to,” she says proudly.

Her classmate Tiffany Griar agrees. “We know the different challenges people with disabilities face because we face challenges too.”

Fellows supported one another through resume building, mock interviews with HR staff, and group discussions. “Miss Nicole takes time to actually listen to us,” Tiffany says. As for Nicole, she is quick to point out the program’s potential, “Across Maryland, many human service agencies are hiring DSPs. With this training, Fellows can interview as highly qualified candidates.”

On graduation day, each Fellow received a certificate of completion before unveiling their class capstone project: a 365-day affirmation calendar. Filled with motivational statements, it was designed as a gift for the next cohort.

The journey isn’t ending here. A second Fellowship class will launch in spring 2026, expanding to 15 Fellows.

As Nicole sums it up, “It’s not just about training DSPs. It’s about giving people the tools to lead, to grow, and to show the world what’s possible.”

The program was made possible through funding from the Montgomery County Community Grant Program.



*“We know the different challenges people with disabilities face because we face challenges too.” – Tiffany Griar*



## COMMUNITY LIVING SERVICES

It's been a time of restructuring at the homes operated by The Arc. A thanks to all involved in some of the moves that were necessary, and now – the program is in the process of welcoming new people!

Speaking of the people we support, they have been on the go, going to events like The Montgomery County Fair. Plus, a birthday party is never missed! Multiple homes have even gotten together to share in birthday celebrations.

Over the last year, three homes have gotten upgrades with renovations to the kitchens and bathrooms.

One of the many goals for CLS is to implement four internal committees to address the particular needs of the program. This includes a committee focusing on researching and planning activities. Director Kari Borgealt says, "We are excited this committee is moving forward as we recently hired a number of DSPs to specifically work on the weekends with the hopes that people we support can get out and about more often as they choose."



## EMPLOYMENT & MEANINGFUL DAY SERVICES

Employment & Meaningful Day Services (E&MDS) is on fire this season—expanding opportunities, deepening community engagement, and celebrating every win. The recent Town Hall drew a packed house, where families heard powerful testimonials from people supported and shared ideas that are already shaping future services. From Special Olympics Bocce Ball teams to college enrollment and job interviews, confidence is rising, and possibilities are multiplying.

To counteract funding cuts, E&MDS is extending service hours and creatively enhancing supports. Volunteer and social crews are shifting toward employment enclaves, and families are helping shape a bold new vision through listening sessions. The energy is contagious!

There's room for fun and games too—in late spring, employees and people supported enjoyed a celebratory cookout with food trucks, games, and comradery, and coming up this fall, they will hop onto the Potomac in DC to dance and check out the monuments with their annual lunch cruise. With 160 people supported and more on the way, E&MDS is proving that when community, purpose, and joy come together—anything is possible.



## PERSONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

The past few months have been about checking in and communicating in Personal Support Services (PSS). The program has implemented a DSP check-in/supervisory meeting tracking system to ensure it communicates, documents, and provides support to every DSP monthly. The focus is professional goal progress for the DSPs, and to check in on goal achievement for the person they support.

Speaking of goals, Bryan has made much progress, trying new things, with the help of his DSP Kemi. Bryan has started volunteering, establishing relationships and developing natural supports.

Meanwhile, Barbara and her DSP Georgina (pictured right) got to visit The Butterfly Experience at Brookside Gardens. This inclusive activity gave them an up-close look at hundreds of live butterflies.

Showing how The Arc's adult programs work hand-in-hand, the evolving needs of Nicole were seen and heard as she has moved from PSS to Community Living. PSS Team Coordinator Maame Baffour says, "Nicole has been wanting an opportunity to learn independence, and this could be a great start! During the process, both departments worked together. Her goal is to move into her own apartment in the future...It's bittersweet as she is leaving Personal Supports, but she has made wonderful strides bonding with her new roommates."



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## CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

### KFICCC

It has been a big few months for KFICCC! In addition to the renovations to the building that were finished this summer, KFICCC has added a new classroom for two-year-olds, allowing them to chip away at their waitlist.

Perhaps the biggest news coming out of KFICCC, however, is the fact that all of the four-year-old classrooms at KFICCC now participate in the PreK Expansion grant as part of the Maryland Blueprint. What this means is that any child who attends KFICCC, who is four-years-old by September, will be in a PreK funded classroom. This allows KFICCC to offer additional scholarship seating to families that qualify by income, language spoken at home, or a child's developmental needs. KFICCC continues to live out the ethos that all children deserve a quality education, regardless of income, background, or ability.



### AFTER ALL

The After All program has been busy getting ready to open the new After All Germantown location! The team has been hard at work the last few months getting the new space set up and hiring employees. The location, at the Longview School, will be operating a bit differently than After All Kensington. The new program is set to offer after school options for students at the Longview School and in the surrounding community who lack after school opportunities. While this program will be small, the hope is that the option will spread to other locations throughout Montgomery County. Initially, the team hopes they will be open for two days a week for the month of October, as they finish licensing approval for full services.

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## RESPITE COORDINATION

*When it comes to our Respite Coordination Program, it can be so much more than a “one and done” type of deal. One family can use the program for multiple family members and the respite services can vary over time to meet evolving needs.*

### Meet the Schofield family.

Kim Schofield is the mother of 28-year-old Rachel, who has 22q11 deletion syndrome, a genetic disorder causing health and developmental challenges. Kim first used respite services to fund a respite provider for Rachel's afterschool program. After graduating high school, Rachel wanted to exercise regularly for her health. She and Kim discovered SPIRIT Club, an inclusive fitness center in Kensington, MD, that also serves as a respite provider in The Arc Montgomery County's Respite Coordination program. Using SPIRIT Club for respite has allowed Rachel to attend classes while Kim enjoys some much-needed personal time.

In 2023, Grandma (Barbara) moved in with Kim, her husband and Rachel. A year later, Barbara could not stand or walk without assistance after recovering from a severe case of COVID-19. In addition to physical therapy, the doctor recommended she find additional ways to exercise. Kim applied to the respite program so her mother could also attend classes at SPIRIT Club.

Rachel and Grandma are now both attending SPIRIT Club classes through The Arc's Respite Coordination program, and Kim is getting a chance to “exhale and relax.” Kim says Barbara and Rachel come out of their SPIRIT Club classes smiling because “they feel good about what they can do.”



## PRIORITIZING WELLNESS

The Wellness Committee, our employee-focused wellness group, is dedicated to promoting a culture of body and mind health at The Arc Montgomery County. We wrapped up our August Team Walking Challenge, which saw incredible participation from 60 employees in different divisions. Together we accumulated just short of a staggering 16 million steps, which is about 7,500 miles!



We are excited for the next challenges and events just around the corner, and we invite all employees to join in on the fun! By participating in a wellness activity, employees engage in healthy competition, build relationships with colleagues, and develop new habits that support their overall well-being. The impact trickles down to our work, in that the healthier our workforce is, the better services we provide to the people we support. We look forward to continuing to offer innovative and engaging challenges and activities that promote holistic wellness and foster a positive work-life balance.

## A.R. Bancroft Community Development Corp.

AR Bancroft promotes general welfare of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing housing in an inclusive community.

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# 2025 COMMUNITY, VOLUNTEER & EMPLOYEE AWARDS

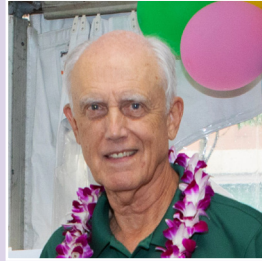
## GOING BEYOND EXPECTATIONS. RISING ABOVE OBSTACLES.

On June 7, 2025, awards were presented to community partners, volunteers, and employees who demonstrate their commitment to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. These heroes are making a difference in people's lives and we extend our thanks to each one of them!

### COMMUNITY INCLUSION

#### Bruce Adams

Bruce Adams, founder of Big Train Bethesda Baseball, promotes inclusivity at every game. Bruce has welcomed people we support, honored The Arc as a hometown hero, and created memorable experiences like throwing the first pitch to the people we support. (See pg. 17)



### BOARD MEMBER

#### Ray Davidson

Ray joined The Arc's board in 2017, bringing decades of experience in child welfare and a passion for community service. Serving as Secretary, Vice President, Director, and chairing the Governance Committee, he provided guidance, strategic planning, and mentored board members.



### COMMUNITY PARTNER

#### CCS Program

#### Montgomery County Health & Human Services

The CCS Program of Montgomery County Health and Human Services has brought collaboration, advocacy, and flexibility to the community. In streamlining Person-Centered Plans, ensuring timely approvals, and uninterrupted services for people supported, it has been an outstanding community partner.



### VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

#### Zara Lakharpal

The Volunteer of the Year Award goes to Zara Lakharpal, who was inspired by her great uncle who received supports from The Arc. She formed a school club, volunteering regularly at After All, making a lasting impact through her leadership. (See pg. 15)



### ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

#### Aaron Hyndman

Aaron is a dedicated advocate. He has worked with REMAX, volunteered at his church, and Sandy Spring Fire Department. He enjoys helping others and supervising activities where proceeds benefit charities like St. Jude and Down syndrome research.



### PRESIDENT'S CUP AWARD

#### Ande Kolp, Laura Howell, Rachel London

These women are honored for their leadership in Maryland's IDD community. When the Governor's budget threatened critical service cuts, they mobilized advocates, led impactful events, and engaged legislators to secure an alternative plan. They exemplify the power of unified action.



## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMUNITY LIVING SERVICES

### Kodjo Agbessi

Kodjo's compassion, patience, and dedication in supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with his guidance, teamwork, and innovative contributions, make him exceptionally deserving of Employee of the Year for CLS.



## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR EMPLOYMENT & DAY SERVICES

### Kodjo Tchamegni

Kodjo exemplifies leadership and mentorship, providing unwavering support to new employees. His patience, guidance, and dedication inspire his team, foster success, and reflect excellence in advancing The Arc's mission.



## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR PERSONAL SUPPORTS

### Portia Cann

Portia excels in building meaningful connections with people she supports and their families, fostering communication, respect, and trust, while demonstrating creativity, flexibility, and reliability.



## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR ADMINISTRATION/MANAGEMENT

### Breanna Tavernier

Breanna stepped up as interim director at KFICCC during a period of transition, providing exceptional leadership, support, and maintaining a positive, engaging environment.



## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

### Sherry Ruiz and Karen Sivulich

The Employee of the Year Award for C&YS honors Sherry and Karen. Karen's dedication includes managing a child's complex diabetes, while Sherry's decades of service and exceptional care as Med Tech for infants exemplifies outstanding commitment to children and families.



## RIISING STAR David Bullock

David has transformed recruitment efforts, reduced vacancy rates, and strengthened teams through his insight and dedication. His positivity and commitment to supporting colleagues make him truly deserving of this recognition.



## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

### Julia "Julz" Abate

Julz has been a dedicated employee of The Arc for nearly 19 years. Her leadership and passion shine through her work in Respite Care, including planning the successful 2025 Respite Fair and guiding families in accessing respite services.



## GET TO KNOW AND JOIN STAND TOGETHER!

STAND Together is a support and advocacy group that is run by, and for, people with disabilities. Monthly meetings give space for all those who are members of the disability community to be among peers, discuss issues of importance, find friendship, and support each other.

Additionally, STAND has a rotating series of speakers slated to come to meetings to discuss issues of public safety, transportation, mental health, art, and advocacy. Several members of STAND also attend social meet ups, whether it is the Montgomery County Fair, or The Arc Maryland's Annual Convention.

Some members of STAND also volunteer in defense of their disability rights, with the opportunity to speak at rallies and with legislative representatives.

If you are interested in being involved with STAND Together, on any level, please let us know by emailing [STAND@TheArcMoCo.org](mailto:STAND@TheArcMoCo.org). We hope to see you at our next monthly meeting!

### STAND Together Calendar\*

#### 2025

October 8- Guest speaker, Montgomery County Police Department

November 12- County government field trip

December 10- Card making

#### 2026

January 14- How to be an advocate

February 11- Guest speaker, Dating with IDD

March 11- Get together with fellow Maryland advocacy groups

\*Subject to change

## AFTER ALL: A SUMMER OF FUN, GROWTH, AND NEW EXPERIENCES

In the summer, the After All program was full of energy, laughter, and learning as students enjoyed an exciting mix of activities designed to spark creativity, build independence, and strengthen friendships.

A highlight was a trip to Pinstripes (bowling & bocce) in Bethesda, where students shared lots of fun and bonding time. Throughout the summer, they also enjoyed trivia games, explored virtual reality (VR), spent afternoons at the park, and dove into hands-on sensory activities like slime-making. Special staycation experiences included a Beatz drumming class led by SPIRIT Club and a magical performance by Drew the Magician.

One memorable moment came during a smoothie-making activity. It was something new to some of the students, some who weren't entirely certain they would like it, but to everyone's delight, they found a new favorite healthy, filling drink!

Alongside these experiences, students focused on building life skills that encouraged independence and confidence. From cooking simple meals and practicing cleaning routines, to organizing supplies, these activities helped students develop important daily skills while promoting teamwork and responsibility. Dedicated volunteers and substitutes, including Sorya, Victoria, and Viki, played a key role in supporting the program's continued success.

Parents shared overwhelmingly positive feedback, expressing gratitude for the growth, confidence, and social connections their children gained through After All. Several families also celebrated their high school graduates who are moving on with skills and friendships that will serve them for years to come.

In the fall, After All will continue to emphasize life, job, and social skills through new experiences both in the community and within the program. Empowering students to build independence while creating meaningful connections.



## AWARDS, HONORS & NOMINATIONS

### Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS)

Direct Support & Frontline Supervision Conference  
Kenneth Earley (DSP winner),  
Senayit Melese (DSP nominee), John Winkelman (DSP nominee),  
Maame Baffour (Supervisor nominee), Olivia Jebboe Gassim (Supervisor nominee)

### CEO Daria Cervantes named President-elect

of the MACS Board of Directors. She will serve as President FY28 and FY29.

### The Arc Maryland's Maryland Conference of Executives (MCE)

#### Class of 2026 Leadership Participants:

David Bullock, Patricia Harrison, Chris Leacock, Jennifer Muscato, and Yanitza Ricardo

### Patience Ekpo (DSP, CLS)

Earned her Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration from University of Maryland Global Campus

### Julia "Julz" Abate

Named as a Governor's Appointment to the Maryland Commission on Caregiving

### CLS Program Managers Essivi Messan, Dulcie Duose & Rebecca Thliza

Graduated from the 2nd phase of the University of Maryland Baltimore County's "Emerging Leaders" program

## Strategic Plan Progress Loading...



Exciting updates coming soon.  
Stay tuned to get involved.

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE ARC MONTGOMERY COUNTY!

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## KFICCC'S NEW LOOK!

The Karasik Family, Infant & Child Care Center (KFICCC) recently underwent some much-needed renovations. “The new gym, paint, floors and lighting give our building new life,” says KFICCC Director Renee Zapadka.

Some of the renovations include new floors, lighting, security system upgrades, the fixing of interior doors, and a brand-new sensory wall for the gym. “I am in awe of how everything came together, and the teamwork it took from many people to make KFICCC, which is already a great school, get a much-needed upgrade to match the talent, passion, and inclusive education of young children happening inside the walls of the building,” Zapadka remarks.

Before the renovations, KFICCC had to pack up and move to an alternative site at Glen Haven Elementary for the summer. According to Zapadka, “Our staff worked tirelessly to pack up their rooms and move to and from a different location with minimal disruption to our families.” Zapadka says KFICCC employees “made this move and transition look easy when change for students can be difficult. They ensured the children felt welcomed in our new home for the majority of the summer.”

After all the work was done, the community came together when members of the public, KFICCC employees, and elected officials celebrated the reopening of this pillar of the community with a ribbon cutting. It is clear from the dedication of the staff, and support from the community, that KFICCC will continue to support the families of Montgomery County for years to come.



## DONORS CONT.

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## M&T BANK HELPING OUR HOMES

Through a generous grant from the M&T Charitable Foundation, The Arc has made important renovations and upgrades to the homes in our Community Living Services (CLS) Program. M&T Charitable Foundation's mission is to establish meaningful partnerships, amplify impact and build inclusive communities across M&T Bank's footprint – including here in Montgomery County. M&T Bank seeks to be equitable, accessible, and responsive to the communities that serve, meeting needs locally and centering on all people in everything they do.

As part of that commitment, M&T Bank's grant was used for high-priority needs in CLS, including critical repairs and renovations such as roof replacements, ADA-compliant entrances, and essential structural improvements. These are not luxuries but rather necessities for the safety and accessibility of people supported.

"The M&T Charitable Foundation believes strong communities are built when everyone has the opportunity to thrive," said Theresa Ramsaroop, Manager of the Bethesda branch. "We're proud to support The Arc's vital work to provide safe, inclusive housing and transformative opportunities for countless people across Montgomery County."

To learn more about our Corporate Partner Program, contact Adrienne Gude at [Adrienne.Gude@TheArcMoCo.org](mailto:Adrienne.Gude@TheArcMoCo.org) or 301.984.5777 x2218.



## YOUR MEMBERSHIP POWERS POSSIBILITIES



## YOUR SUPPORT KEEPS OUR PROGRAMS THRIVING AND OUR COMMUNITY INCLUSIVE

When you become a member, you help fund:

- Fully-inclusive child care
- Youth after-school and summer programming
- Work skills training
- Community living support
- Family workshops with resource sharing
- Disability benefits counseling
- Coordination of respite care

SCAN ME



RENEW OR  
BECOME A  
MEMBER  
TODAY!

## BUILDING BRIDGES AT AFTER ALL

*"Stigma surrounding people with IDD (intellectual and developmental disabilities) is widespread. Honestly, people with IDD are some of the kindest and most genuine people I know."*

Zara Lakharpal is a senior at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC. The school requires students do 60 hours of community service. Zara did hers at KFICCC.

"I really enjoyed working with the kids there. I had a lot of fun with them, from chasing them around the playground as the 'lava monster', to reading them stories and doing puzzles with them. My main takeaway from working at KFICCC was the benefits of inclusive settings."

Those 60 hours were a requirement, but Zara didn't stop once fulfilled. She has founded a club at her school, called Building Bridges, for students interested in learning about IDD and connecting with students with disabilities. "People with IDD often experience social isolation as a result of societal stigma, discrimination, and a lack of accessibility. In schools, students with IDD are often taught in special education programs that are not in integrated settings. So, I wanted to create inclusive spaces to reduce that social isolation and also to raise awareness and foster greater empathy."

Zara and club members have monthly workshops at After All. "We work on arts & crafts, music, sports, they love bowling, that's their favorite, and also bingo." With a smile on her face, Zara talks about After All students like Jordan and Hannah whose friendships "bring her joy."

"There's also a student named Stephanie, and she solely speaks Spanish. Since I study Spanish at my school, getting to speak to her in Spanish is a great opportunity for me to make her feel included and to practice my Spanish with a native speaker."

Zara's connection to The Arc Montgomery County runs deep. "My great uncle had cerebral palsy, and he actually received services from The Arc Montgomery County. I wanted to give back to this organization that supported my great uncle."

Looking to the future, Zara is thinking about a career in medicine, and while she's in her last year of high school, her club will not end with her graduating. She has chosen someone to replace her, so the meaningful work Building Bridges does will continue.

"We built strong relationships with all the students at After All. They really are some of my close friends."



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## NO BOTS, NO AI—JUST REAL PEOPLE READY TO HELP

We get it—there's nothing more frustrating than calling an organization and getting stuck in a robotic phone tree, or sending an email only to receive a canned auto-reply (that never gets followed up). You deserve better.

At The Arc Montgomery County, we've made it a priority to improve how we connect with you. That's why, as part of our Strategic Plan, we've created a new role:

### **Information & Resource Navigator.**

This isn't a chatbot. It's a real person—knowledgeable, approachable, and ready to help. Whether you're curious about our programs, looking for services, or just trying to figure out where to start, the Information & Resource Navigator is your go-to guide.

Here's what you can expect:

- **Direct answers** to your questions about The Arc Montgomery County
- **Personalized support**—if she doesn't have the answer, she'll find it or connect you with someone who does
- **Helpful referrals**—if they don't have the answer, they will find it or connect you with someone who does

We're committed to making sure you feel heard and helped. So go ahead—give us a call at 301.984.5777 x1263 or send an email to [Info@TheArcMoCo.org](mailto:Info@TheArcMoCo.org). We promise you'll get a response from a real person who cares.





## WE ARE A TOP WORKPLACE!

We're thrilled to share some exciting news—The Arc Montgomery County has been named one of The Washington Post's 2025 Top Workplaces!

What makes this recognition so special is that it's based entirely on feedback from our employees. That means the people who make our mission possible every day—our incredible team—feel valued, supported, and proud to be part of The Arc.

"The greatest value in being named a Top Workplace is that it comes directly from our employees," said Daria Cervantes, CEO. "It tells us that we're building a culture where employees feel heard and empowered to make a difference. The Arc Montgomery County's work is driven by purpose, and our employees are our greatest strength—this honor reflects the heart and soul they bring to our mission every day."

We've always believed that a strong, people-centered culture is the foundation for meaningful work. Whether it's through collaboration, inclusion, or simply showing up

for one another, our team brings heart and purpose to everything we do.

"This recognition affirms that our efforts to build a culture of trust, inclusion, and collaboration are truly making a difference," added Clyde Agnew, Jr., Director of Human Resources & Staff Development.

As we continue to grow and evolve, we remain deeply committed to creating a workplace where people love what they do—and feel inspired to do their best every day.

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## NEW POSITION MEANS MORE CREATIVITY FOR EMPLOYMENT & MEANINGFUL DAY



"I'm 75 years old... I have a perfect bill of health." Frank says this proudly before going on a walk with Montgomery Park's Trail Trekkers – a walking series for people with disabilities, friends, family, and community members.

"I think it is keeping me healthy."

Frank walks with the group, which includes E&MDS Community Activities Coordinator Loretta Howell. "I keep saying 'meaningful' because it's how I would want people to treat my son or my daughter if they were in the program. I would want them to go exciting places, having choices."

Loretta started with The Arc in 2008, took a break, and came back in 2019. She was a DSP and was promoted to her current position in 2024. She connects with the DSPs to see what the people they support really want to do in the

community, "have someone to give them more opportunities, more places to go, someone to be more creative and have other activities available for the DSPs to choose from to offer those we support so their day is meaningful."

The goal is to think out of the box. Loretta recalls a woman they support who loves firefighters and The Montgomery County Fair. She got to go to the fire department and talked to the firefighters. She went to the fair too, plus—"She always said she wanted to buy a Hummer. We went to the car dealership, sat in a Hummer, took pictures...things that make them happy."

Director Kelli Hunter-Bennett says, "Having the Community Activities Coordinator role is a huge time-saver for the Team Coordinators, DSPs and Job Coaches. Instead of spending hours trying to find fun and meaningful activities for the people they support, they can rely on Loretta. This means supervisors can focus more on supporting their teams, and everyone gets to enjoy better, well-planned activities."

Since Loretta's position was created, there have been trips, paint 'n sips, fitness and dance classes, and a weekly book club, "We read aloud for everybody. The DSP will sit with the person we support and I ask them to go along with them so they can stay on point."

While it can be about the story, Loretta says it's more about enjoying each other's company and their day – a meaningful day.

"They look forward to it, their day means something."

## SATISFACTION BY THE NUMBERS

It's no secret the need for respite hours in Montgomery County continues to grow. For more than 30 years, The Arc has proudly held the sole contract to provide these essential services, coordinating an average of 140 hours annually for 600 families. Each year, the waitlist expands—clear evidence of the value and impact of this program.

Much of this success is thanks to the 100+ consortium members who deliver compassionate, high-quality care to loved ones, allowing primary caregivers the chance to rest and recharge (see page 7). But behind the scenes, a small yet mighty administrative team keeps the engine running year-round. With an 81% satisfaction rate, more than 200 families have expressed appreciation for the team's responsiveness, professionalism, and empathy. An overwhelming 97% reported a reduction in stress or caregiver burden.

One caregiver shared, "It gave me a chance to do outside chores and have occasional social time with friends. I would be facing severe financial problems without it. It helps me keep my love and promises I made to my husband 60 years ago—a challenge, not a burden."

Another noted, "Having this extra income allowance has allowed our family to continue sending our daughter to therapeutic camps, which greatly benefit her in the long run."

And, from a grateful child: "It's given my dad and me the ability to enjoy free time, guilt-free, knowing my mother is cared for and socializing."



Photo from Ann Maas Photography

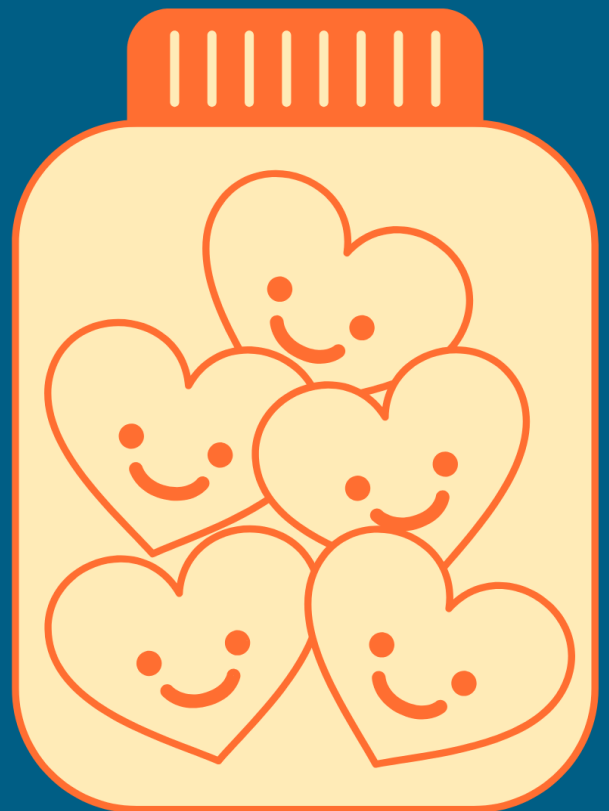
## END THE YEAR WITH IMPACT. | START THE NEXT WITH HOPE.

Every dollar you give helps opportunities grow for people with disabilities in Montgomery County all year long.

SCAN ME!



[TheArcMontgomeryCounty.org/Give](https://TheArcMontgomeryCounty.org/Give)



## WE'RE IN THE ARC OF THE UNITED STATES' VIDEO CAMPAIGN!

We are thrilled to share that four videos from The Arc of the US, released just this summer, feature some of our programs! In February, they brought crews out to film at KFICCC, After All, and Omega Studios (showing a person we support under Employment). Daria Cervantes, CEO, and Loretta Howell, Community Activities Coordinator, did sit-down on-camera interviews sharing about our chapter and The Arc at large. To see our superstars, go to [youtube.com/@thearc\\_us](https://youtube.com/@thearc_us)



## Follow us on our YouTube channel!

[www.youtube.com/@TheArcMontgomery](https://www.youtube.com/@TheArcMontgomery)



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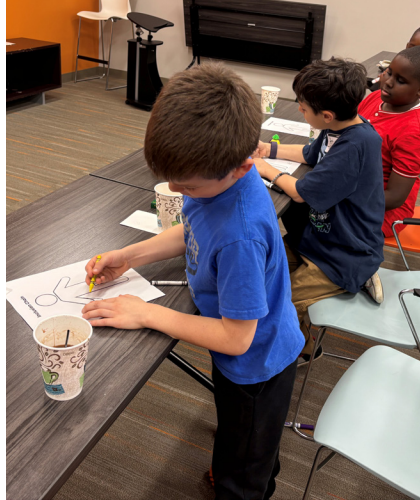
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## TAKE YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY

April 24 was Take Your Child to Work Day and the kids had a blast. The morning started with fruit, donuts and juice, giving the kids energy to do some dancing and a scavenger hunt throughout headquarters. The theme for the day was "Inclusion" and the children did an arts & craft project that was on theme and were also read the book "Included" by Jayneen Sanders. They also went home with gift bags including an Arc t-shirt. We smell a future crop of Arc employees!



## A HOME RUN PARTNERSHIP WITH BETHESDA BIG TRAIN

The Arc Montgomery County is proud to partner with Bethesda Big Train Baseball to celebrate community, inclusion, and the power of connection.

Through Big Train's Community Heroes program, The Arc has been recognized for its work supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These evenings at Shirley Povich Field are about more than baseball, they highlight what's possible when organizations and community leaders come together to create inclusive spaces where everyone belongs. In July, it was a blast cheering on Lloyd, a person we support, who threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

This partnership has also been strengthened by the leadership of Big Train owner Bruce Adams, who was recently honored with The Arc's 2025 Community Partner Award. His commitment to uplifting local nonprofits and advancing inclusion ensures that the ballpark is not just a place for competition, but also for celebration, recognition, and community pride.

We are grateful to Bethesda Big Train for their continued partnership and for shining a light on the mission of The Arc Montgomery County. Together, we are hitting home runs for inclusion on and off the field.



**The Arc**  
Montgomery County

### Calendar of Events

October 1, 2025–March 31, 2026

**KFICCC, After All,  
Employment & Meaningful  
Day Services, Headquarters  
Building–Closed\***

Thursday, November 27

Friday, November 28

Wednesday, December 24

Thursday, December 25

Thursday, January 1

Monday, January 19

Monday, February 16

*\*The Arc does not designate holidays for employees, however select programs and locations are closed on certain holidays.*



**Giving Tuesday**

December 2

**Calendar Day**

January 15

**Developmental Disabilities  
Day at the Legislature**

February 18

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Join Us in Making a Difference!

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Arc Montgomery County provides inclusive childcare, summer camp, work skills training, employment opportunities, respite care resources, and advocacy for people with and without disabilities and their families.

## Opportunities Available :

- **KFICCC:** Preschool classrooms
- **AFTER ALL:** Youth after-school/ summer camps
- **GROUP VOLUNTEER:** Tailored project to your group
- **EVENT SUPPORT:** Help at special events



INTEREST  
FORM

