Dear Arc Donors, Community Partners and Volunteers,

The Arc Mid-South wants to do our part to ensure better outcomes for our community at large during this unprecedented time. We also know that all of you are doing what you can to protect yourself, your family, friends, and our community.

The Arc is closely monitoring the guidance from the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as well as local government regarding the spread of COVID-19. In light of the recent recommendations from the CDC about limiting gatherings to 10 people or less for the next eight weeks, The Arc will postpone all events until further notice.

We will move forward with our 70th Anniversary celebration and our 25th Annual Awards and Benefit Gala in November. During this special landmark, our agency will be producing a Commemorative Tribute Album. I encourage you to take this time to think about a self-advocate, anyone who has made significant contribution in the lives of people with developmental disabilities, that you would like to honor in this commemorative book. We are in the process of developing guidelines.

Our Agency is being proactive in our response to COVID-19. In adherence to our core values as an organization, please see the following developments related to our business operations and support for our grantee partners. To ensure our uninterrupted operations and support the community, we’re taking the following steps:

♦ As of March 20 we suspended our Community Participation Services and face-to-face home visits. The safety of our staff and the greater community is our priority. Face-to-face internal and external meetings will be postponed or rescheduled as phone calls or online videoconferencing, where possible.

♦ As you know, during uncertain times, due to school closing, individuals with disabilities have limited income and their families may experience increased food instability and have other needs for their families. We will be working with our grantee partners and will be sharing a list of community resources on our website for our grantee partners and advocate for those who need help. We appreciate your support and commitment to our organization. Thank you for your patience as we adapt to this evolving situation together.
Dear Readers,

Another Milestone for The Arc Mid-South!

The Arc Mid-South will be celebrating our 70th anniversary and The Americans with Disability Act will celebrate its 30th anniversary.

This is a big year for The Arc -- Celebrating 70 Years! We have come this far by faith; we have come through budget cuts and funding downfalls. Over 70 years, the agency continues to advocate and educate on behalf of all children in our local and private school systems. During my tenure as Executive Director at The Arc, the organization has remained resilient- regardless of constant decreases in funding, budget threats and budget cuts. The agency continues to provide services to people ranging from children to seniors who have varying levels of disabilities. As in 1950, The Arc is proud to continue with our mission of “empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to achieve their full potential.”

The anniversary we celebrate this year outline an arc of real change for people with disabilities, As a provider agency we are looking forward to the 70th year. We know that change happens when our community work together to be sure the voices of people with disabilities are present and heard; in every classroom every community, and every room where decisions are made that affect their lives.

**Shape Your Future: Start Here.** Aside from these milestones, this year offers important opportunities for people with disabilities to be counted and be heard. In this issue of The Arc Appeal, you will read about the census and why it’s important for people with disabilities to take part. The law requires the census to collect information for the government. The government uses that information to make decisions. These decisions affect people with disabilities. While people with disabilities make up 22% of the American public according to figures released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in August 2018, they remain largely a neglected, albeit sizeable minority in terms of recognition and participation in the decennial census according to CDC findings.

**Monitoring COVID-19.** In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Census Bureau has adjusted 2020 Census operations to protect the health and safety of our employees and the public, and to ensure a complete and accurate count of all communities based on guidance from federal, state, and local health authorities.

Under the adjusted 2020 Census operational plan, field activities would resume after June 1, 2020, as Area Census Offices begin returning to full staff capacity. In-person activities, including enumeration, office work, and processing activities, will incorporate the most current guidance from authorities to ensure the health and safety of staff and the public.

It is critical to get the numbers right, to be counted is to be heard and represented in your community “Everyone deserved to be counted.”
On February 4, 2020 The Arc Mid-South went to Nashville to participate in Disability Day on the Hill. With a grant from the Tennessee Disability Coalition, we rented a bus from Cline Tours and took our participants, their families, and interested individuals from the community to Nashville to participate in this day-long event. The larger group was split up into smaller groups of about 6 - 8 individuals each who met individually with legislators to tell their stories and advocate for issues affecting individuals with disabilities.

The issues that we discussed this year were:

- **Increase in Pay for Direct Support Professionals** - follow through on the promise made to providers in 2019 and make all the funds appropriated for DSP wages to be recurring. This is a part of TNCO’s *Fulfilling Tennessee’s Commitment to People with Disabilities* 2020 Campaign for $15.00 an hour lobbying for our DSP wage increase budget amendment.

- **Creating an Office of Accessible Transportation in Tennessee** - Transportation is a huge barrier for many people with disabilities and people who are aging. We support the creation of the first-ever Office of Accessible Transportation in Tennessee as created by Senate Bill 1612/House Bill 1596.

- **Stricter rules regarding conservatorship** - Senate Bill 0867/House Bill 896 requires conservators to complete educational training on conservatorship and allows a guardian ad-litem to investigate an individual’s credit history and their criminal background.

This year, we had a record turnout, and several new individuals participated in the event. Everyone had a great time, and we are very appreciative for this opportunity to make a difference in the community.

Mr. John Hiatt, one of The Arc Mid-South Advocacy Committee members speaks with Rep. Jay Reed and sharing how important it is to make sure that DSPs are paid more money.
Agency Program News

Highlights from National Disability Awareness Month

We Teach, We Advocate, We Assist

On March 10, 2020, The Arc Mid-South held the second Self-Advocacy Brunch at the Benjamin Hooks Library. The event featured four speakers who shared their stories about how they advocate for themselves in their every day lives and how attendees can work to become self-advocates and inspire others to do so as well. The Arc Mid-South’s LETS student DeAngelo Leggett gave the welcome and benediction, and speakers Brittany Carter, Latora Fitz, Mika Hall, and Stephanie Jones discussed the challenges they have experienced as individuals with disabilities and how they overcame barriers to achieve great success.

One of the speakers, Adrian Walker spoke to the group about labels and how they weigh us down, “But they don’t belong to us! Inspire yourself - believe in yourself and don’t let others define you!” Mr. Edwards shared a very uplifting message and everyone left with a positive outlook. Each of the speakers shared something that left everyone inspired to become the self-advocate that is inside of them. The purpose of this workshop was to give self-advocates the tools to act and speak on their own behalf to achieve independence in their lives. The Arc Mid-South aims to support individuals with disabilities as they learn to advocate for their own needs in the community.

Check out our new Arc Connect Facebook Group!

This group is intended for families to connect during the Covid-19 pandemic. This space is intended for families to discuss ideas, tips, and resources that they are using to get through this difficult time. Hope to see you all there...

Also you can contact us via The Arc Connect email connect@thearcmidsouth.org
Valentines Party Celebration 2020
For the Kingdom Retreat

On February 14th, Arc Mid-South’s weekend retreat campers celebrated Valentines Day with a series of activities designed to focus on friendships, interpersonal relationships, and sweet treats! Graciously hosted by For the Kingdom Retreat, campers enjoyed games, cookies, cake, candy and activities that highlight the creativity of each client. The Arc Mid-South’s weekend retreat program builds social skills to enhance a person’s ability to build lasting relationships. Our weekend retreats allow our clients to identify and engage with peers and DSPs in a safe setting and provides tailored activities and opportunities specific to their identified interest related to self-improvement. Our DSPs are specially trained to give clients the attention they require in a 3 to 1 ratio and are trained to be advocates and work to promote independence with those they support.

Happy Valentines Day! Students had a great classroom outing at PYRO’S Fire Fresh Pizza to celebrate great friends and great pizza!
Community Resources

Resource links:

A Parent’s Guide to Virtual Learning:

Click here to view 4 Actions to Improve Your Child’s Experience With Online Learning

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities.

School Closure Toolkit for Districts: Academics and Instruction
Updated 4/14/2020

Summary
While the concerns for the physical and emotional well-being of our students, their families, and our educators during this unprecedented time remains everyone’s top priority, strategies to support ongoing opportunities for continued learning and academic growth can provide students with the security of a familiar routine and sense of community. Considerations for learning activities that are based upon content and skills already experienced by students may be most appropriate at this time given the anxiousness that many students and adults are facing. As you make plans for digital learning and other opportunities to engage children, we encourage you to find ways to maintain your focus on the same things that matter in every classroom: student safety, building strong relationships with students and families, and creating equitable access to learning by accommodating students’ different learning needs.

District and school staff must make decisions about the best way to support their students’ learning during time away from school. A district must understand the digital capacity of its community, the devices available to students, and the flexibility parents, teachers, and school leaders have to support the needs of students. In this document, you will find:

- A checklist to help guide your decisions about your approach to instruction
- Best practices for a variety of learning opportunities including paper-based, blended activity-based, and full digital curriculum approaches
- Example schedules and timelines
- A list of digital online resources available for free to all districts

Click here to view the School Closure Toolkit for Districts

Source: TN Department of Education

Accompanying Your Loved one with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability (IDD) at the Hospital During the COVID-19 Crisis

Click here to read how you can Accompanying Your Loved one with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability (IDD) at the Hospital During the COVID-19 Crisis

Source: The Arc of TN

If you have a problem with a doctor or hospital during COVID-19, call Disability Rights Tennessee at 1-800-342-1660 or go to https://www.disabilityrightstn.org/get-help


Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) - A Statement of Common Principles on Life-Sustaining Care and Treatment of People with Disabilities
https://www.sabeusa.org/meetsabe/policy-statements/life-sustaining-care/

Social Security Administration Response to COVID-19
Click here to read the PRACTICE TIP • March 2020

The Arc Appeal