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**THE ARC OF THE MID-SOUTH MARKS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES MONTH IN MARCH**

(Memphis, TN, 2/15/11) – The Arc of the Mid-South joins a network of 700+ chapters of The Arc, including self-advocates, families and volunteers across the nation to mark Developmental Disability Awareness Month in March. The month will commemorate the progress toward improving the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and also highlight the challenges that remain in achieving full inclusion for people with I/DD. The Arc of the Mid-South will kick off the month by hosting an event with food and entertainment at Christ United Methodist Church on March 1st from 11am – 2pm. The *Miracles Encore* from The Baddour Center and the *Company d* dancers will perform. Mayor A C Wharton will be in attendance to commemorate National Developmental Disabilities Month.

Nearly a quarter century ago, The Arc’s advocacy led to President Ronald Reagan officially proclaiming March to be Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. In bringing I/DD to the forefront, the proclamation underscores the pride and the promise of this constituency in achieving the same dreams of every American. This national declaration generated renewed respect for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and increased awareness of the issues faced by this constituency and by their families.

The Presidential Proclamation states, “For many of these people with developmental disabilities there is now the prospect of a brighter future and greater opportunity. Americans are becoming increasingly aware that such disabilities need not keep individuals from realizing their full potential in school, at work or at home, as members of their families and of their communities.”

“The Arc of the Mid-South and the many volunteers in our community work each day to provide the necessary services and supports to ensure that people with I/DD are valued, contributing members of the community and fully included,” said Carlene Leaper, Executive Director

The Arc’s network of 700+ chapters is on the frontlines of grassroots advocacy efforts and during the month of March, chapters will:

- Encourage people to get involved by volunteering or donating;
- Contact policy makers and legislators to speak out on issues impacting people with I/DD;

- Reach out to employers/businesses to hire people with I/DD;
- Spread the word through Facebook, Twitter, and more.

“Rosa’s Law and other legislation have helped to change attitudes about people with I/DD. As a self-advocate, I continue to fight for respect everyday because there is still much to be done. Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month represents the will of people with I/DD to enjoy the same right as every other citizen to a self determined life and full access to schools, employment and a fulfilling life in the community. We want and deserve respect, and along with other advocates I will send a message that we can accomplish more because we are empowered,” said Brittany Carter/Self-Advocate.