

2008 Annual Report

The Arc®

of Arapahoe & Douglas
8100 E Arapahoe Rd #208
Centennial CO 80112
(303) 220-9228 voice
(303) 220-0994 fax
www.arc-ad.org



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The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas is a nonprofit 501-(c) 3-membership organization. We are guided by our mission, which says:

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas uses advocacy and education to include all children and adults with disabilities and their families in their community.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors for The Arc of Arapahoe and Douglas consists of 11 individuals. One board member also serves on the Board of Directors for The Arc of Colorado. This year the board has focused their work on public policy, working synergistically with other chapters and growing our membership.

- Board Members**
- Holly Ancell
 - Ed Casteel
 - Shawneen Cooney
 - Janis DeBaca
 - Scott Forlenza
 - Laura Guthals
 - Karen Huber
 - Kelly Stahlman
 - Anne Thomas
 - Al Valenti
 - Pam Valvano



Staff

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas has 3 full-time staff members who focus on Children’s Advocacy, Adult Advocacy, and Systems Advocacy. We have a half-time staff person that is focusing on Mobilizing Families and Guardianship, and a half-time Office Manager. Due to the small number of staff, many volunteers support our mission through: fundraising, group leaders, participation on various task-forces and committees, office work and facilitating social activities.

Geographic Area

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas serves people with disabilities and their family members in Arapahoe and Douglas counties, excluding the City of Aurora (which is served by another chapter). The population growth in this area continues to grow dramatically. According to the 2000 Census, over 66,507 people with disabilities live in Arapahoe County and 45,326 in Douglas County.

Funding

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas receives funding through a variety of sources including ArcThrift, membership dues, contributions from individuals and businesses, fundraising activities, and grants for specific projects. This year we recognized donations in the following categories:

Diamond Partner

The Vierra Foundation
Rhythms Net Connections, Inc.
The Daniels Fund
Douglas County Mill Levy Grant

Gold Partner

Wal-Mart, Highlands Ranch
Dept. of Health, Children with Special Health Care Needs

Silver Partner

Magic Moments
Wal-Mart, Centennial
Bob Walker
Elsa McTavish
Abilities Specialists

Bronze Partner

Kenneth McCulloh & Patricia McTavish
PASCO



Vehicle donations brought in over \$1,400.00 in 2008. There was a 2% increase in allocations from ARC Thrift stores for our funding for Arapahoe County and a 4% increase to our small allocation for Douglas County. In 2008, 81% of our revenue came from the ARCThrift stores.

An independent auditor reviews our finances every year. Our audit report for 2008 and 990 will be available for inspection in our offices by April 15, 2009.

In 2008 we raised a total of \$364,428.94, our expenses were \$363,527.55 which gave us a net income of a little over \$900.00. This was a significant change from the past 5 years when reserves had been drawn down to fund an advocacy position. Due to the poor state of the economy and the effect that may have on fundraising in 2009, when the staff person resigned they were not replaced. This has resulted in an increased work load for existing staff.

Systems Advocacy

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas works to ensure the rights of individuals with cognitive developmental disabilities are protected and recognized through participation in and facilitation of many different activities. Opportunities for influencing appropriate supports for people with cognitive developmental disabilities are many. Here is a partial list of the activities in which we participated in 2008:

- Colorado Autism Commission – our organization is acting as the fiscal agent for the Commission and staff has been supporting the coordination of this important work.
- The Family Support Council at Developmental Pathways – staff and members attend these meetings to advise the development of Family Support in our community.

- Parent to Parent of Colorado – staff serves on the Advisory Board of this statewide group that focuses on the organization of mutual support, inclusive community building, and constructive group action for parents who have sons or daughters with disabilities.
- Parents of Adults with Disabilities in Colorado – Staff and members collaborate with this active group of parents who provide mutual support to each other and work on systems change issues affecting adults.
- Autism Work Group – staff served on this work group to assist in the development of appropriate supports and services for individuals with autism in schools.
- The Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council – staff has served on this council for twelve years. The council is charged with advising the state director of Developmental Disabilities Services. Service on this council allows us to influence public policy with stories from the individuals who live in our community.
- Division for Developmental Disabilities Ad-hoc committee on Persons with High-Risk Behaviors – charged with recommending policy regarding statewide guidance to Community Centered Boards on how to uniformly manage sex offenders and others with high risk behavioral and developmental disabilities and keeping the community safe.
- The Colorado Budget Crisis group continued to meet to influence the budget process at the state to protect the interests of people with disabilities.
- Leadership Coalition to End the Waiting List – is a group that is supported by our chapter both financially and with staff time. This coalition developed and funded a ballot initiative – Amendment 51 - that would have funded the waiting list for children and adults with developmental disabilities in Colorado. Our chapter took the lead in developing and implementing the Field Campaign for this important effort. Unfortunately, this amendment was defeated at the polls in November of 2008.
- Colorado Consumer Health Initiative – we serve as a co-chair for the Public Policy group that looks at health care issues for all Coloradoans.
- Steering Committee at



the Division for Developmental Disabilities – staff was appointed to serve on this committee to assist in implementation of changes to the DD waivers to comply with a federal audit by the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare.

- Statewide Charter School Special Education Advisory Committee
- Denver Metro Systems of Care – coordinating supports and services for children with developmental disabilities and behavioral or mental health disorders

Individual Advocacy

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas continues to offer assistance in accessing services for children and adults with disabilities who may be entitled to one or more of the following: educational services, residential services, vocational services, Social Security benefits, and other local, state and federal benefits. Our advocates assist families and individuals with disabilities to access these services through education and individual support. Advocates counsel by telephone, email, or in person, attend meetings with the family or individual, and review documents for accuracy and services appropriate to meet needs.

Children's Advocacy

The need for advocacy for children continues to require a great deal of our time and attention. The population growth in the communities we serve has significantly increased the number of families requesting our services. Our Children's Advocates provided intensive advocacy services to **718** students and their families this year. Advocacy is defined as: reviewing documents, attending school meetings, working with parents and students so that they understand the laws, assisting parents with accessing SSI, Medicaid, Medicaid Waivers and other services that their child might need. Many of these advocacy cases are on-going and require support from our chapter for several months. Our organization provided advocacy for **136** students and families who were new to our organization.

We continued to see school districts struggle in their education of children with behavioral disorders. Many families call us when their child is about to or has just been suspended or expelled from school. Although we are seeing increased capacity in educating students with autism, it hasn't been enough to keep up with the incredible increase in prevalence (now 1-169 for 8 year olds in CO). Students with emotional disabilities in general are having a tough time in school. Colorado has a "zero tolerance" policy for behaviors in schools after the Columbine tragedy and unfortunately at the same time has meager support available through the mental health systems.

The intense population growth in our area has affected the ability of schools to provide adequate special education support to students in our community. There seems to be a shortage of qualified providers interested in working for the schools. Speech therapists, occupational therapists and others are hard to find and those that are working for the schools have very large case loads. We have been sharing these concerns at public policy tables to try to increase capacity.

Colorado is "number one" in out of pocket expenses for families who have children with special health care needs. Try as we might to refer people to resources, sometimes they just are not available. If they are available, they often times are not affordable. We have such deep respect for the families we support who receive very little assistance from the community to parent their children with complex medical and behavioral disorders.

Adult Advocacy

Systems changes due to the federal audit by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare throughout the Developmental Disabilities has created problems for some adults receiving the supports in the system. Turn-over in case management has become so high that we see this now as a priority problem for adults with developmental disabilities. This year our advocates provided intensive advocacy for **616** adults with developmental disabilities. Of these **46** people were new to our organization

As has been the case for several years, employment has been an area of particular crisis for individuals with Developmental Disabilities in Arapahoe and Douglas counties. A majority of people we provide advocacy for do not have meaningful employment and do not have any support in gaining it. Several bills were created to try to address this problem in 2007. It became clear to the legislature that if more people with disabilities were employed, fewer resources would need to be spent on day programs. Unfortunately, we have seen nothing in the way of implementation of these laws. We learned late in 2008 that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will not take any new clients due to funding problems. Without significant funding, we believe that unemployment for adults with developmental disabilities will continue to be a huge problem in our area.

Sadly, many adults with developmental disabilities who are clearly eligible for services continue to wait for the supports they need to live rich, full lives in the community. Many we fear are not even getting basic health and safety needs met. Through the intense work of many advocates including staff and board from this chapter, in 2008, the legislature was able to appropriate funding to take over 800 people off of waiting lists. We want to acknowledge the hard work that our Community Centered Board, Developmental Pathways, and many service provider organizations did to ensure that these resources were developed into services that people could use. This was a huge undertaking and they deserve our appreciation. However, the Waiting List is still a high priority issue for our chapter. As the percentage of people with disabilities living with aging caregivers continues to increase as the baby-boomers move toward retirement, we believe we will see a higher number of emergency placements needed to care for people in our community. Our most difficult advocacy cases are related to people in emergency situations who need services immediately, but are unable to access them because of waiting lists. Some are homeless, some are in jails.

Activities

- Spring Dance – this year the dance had a Spring theme with lovely decorations provided by volunteers from Abilities Specialists. DJ, Joelman, worked the music at the Knights of Columbus Hall.
- Picnic – every year The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas sponsors a summer picnic at a local park where members can network, play and share a meal. This year over 60 people attended the picnic. Gene Delhaie, volunteer, provided lawn bowling and other activities for the kids.
- People First of Arapahoe & Douglas – this group of adults with cognitive developmental disabilities meets monthly to participate in learning and social activities. This year they have been working on actively participating in the Presidential race. We are very proud of this group and all they do to support self-advocacy for people with developmental disabilities in Arapahoe and Douglas counties.
- To increase public awareness of our organization in the community, we did presentations at several resource fairs in the past year.

- For the third year in a row, the King Soopers at County Line and Holly made The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas the beneficiary for their giving tree over the holidays. This is a tremendous way of getting the community involved in supporting our 14 wards and families in our community during the holiday season.

Programs

- Learning For Living – This is a series of information sessions for teenagers and young adults with cognitive developmental disabilities that focus on learning about relationships. The curriculum explores friendships, boyfriends/girlfriends, and community safety. We believe that this program provides a very important service to our community and look forward to continued growth in this area.
- Mobilizing Families is a workshop conducted by this chapter every Fall to assist families who have young children with disabilities to understand the educational system, state and federal resources, and learn how to be effective advocates for their children through building communication and negotiation skill sets. This year we had to move our offices, so the workshop will be held in the Spring of 2009
- Mobilizing Families through Transition is a workshop conducted by this chapter every Spring to assist parents and young adults with understanding resources and planning for life after high school.
- Parents Coffee is a monthly gathering of families who gather together to share resources and discuss issues affecting their children with disabilities.
- Guardianship – The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas is guardian for 14 people in our community that have no family or friends who are willing or able to serve in this important role. We are court visitors in guardianship cases and have many resources available that provide information to families with guardianship issues. This past year staff provided court visitor services for an average of three families per month. Our organization also provides Power of Attorney services for adults with disabilities when their guardian lives out of state.
- Information and Resources – Every day, we receive calls in our office from individuals and families looking for resources or information. All of our staff members are very knowledgeable about the existing systems that support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. We spend lots of time on the phone connecting families to supports and services that could be helpful. In 2008, our chapter supported 1,408 people with information and referral.
- Education and Counseling - We also assist families with communication and advocacy strategies that can assist them in accessing various systems. These are usually extensive telephone or email conversations. This year we were able to support 726 people with education and counseling.
- Newsletters and Resources - Our monthly newsletter is available by mail, email and on our web page. This newsletter provides information about upcoming events, resources and policy changes. We continue to maintain a list of available respite care providers for families who need to take a break. We also email people who have expressed an interest for information that comes into our office about classes, resources, and a wide variety of activities that welcome people with disabilities and their families.

- Peaceful Valley – Through a grant from Magic Moments many of our People First members and friends enjoyed a mountain trip to Peaceful Valley Ranch and Lodge. Twenty-four people enjoyed 24 hours of fun filled activities during this weekend.

Collaboration

The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas works with many other organizations to reduce duplication of services and to increase supports to individuals affected by disabilities. Here is a partial list of the organizations that we collaborate with: People First of Arapahoe & Douglas, The Arc of Denver, The Arc of Aurora, The Arc of Colorado, The Arc of Jefferson County, The Arc of Adams County, The Arc of El Paso County, The Arc of Pueblo, The Arc of Weld, The Arc of Mesa, ACL of Boulder, Family Voices, The Autism Society of Colorado, Mile-Hi Down Syndrome Association, Parent to Parent of Colorado, Developmental Pathways, Six School Districts, The Colorado Department of Education, The Guardianship Alliance, Colorado Association for Supported Employment, The Legal Center, Colorado Consumer Health Initiative, PEAK Parent Center and Cerebral Palsy of Colorado.

Members

Currently The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas has 211 active members, a slight increase over last year. There are 1,677 people who are on our mailing list and receive information from us throughout the year. One Hundred and Seventy Five people have asked to receive emails from us regarding pressing public policy and legislative issues.

Volunteers

Finally, our volunteers are the greatest! Whether working on our Board of Directors, the Newsletter, office activities, or helping us celebrate 50 years of supporting people with disabilities. They are willing to give of their time and selves to make sure our organization runs smoothly. This year we have been able to document over 610 hours of volunteer time by 30 people. We really appreciate all of our volunteers for their commitment to The Arc of Arapahoe & Douglas.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol Meredith, Executive Director
December 31, 2008

