



April 2016

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY
AWARENESS MONTH

Legislators, Administration Recognize Self-Advocates



DHS Commissioner Connolly presents Self-Advocates with a proclamation from the Governor, in honor of DD Awareness Month, during this year's State House event.

Approximately 20 Self-Advocates from the New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network traveled to Trenton in March to promote and celebrate Developmental Disabilities Awareness month at the State House. This annual event gave Self-Advocates the opportunity to speak with more than 50 elected officials, including the Senate President, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Senate and Assembly Majority Leaders as well as Budget Committee members and other important decision-makers. In addition to the important conversations with our state representatives, the Self-

Advocates were also honored with a joint legislative resolution from Senate Majority Leader Weinberg and Assemblywoman Huttie who chairs the Assembly Human Services Committee. Furthermore, Department of Human Services Commissioner Beth Connolly came down to the State House and presented the Self-Advocates with a proclamation from the Governor declaring March 2016 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in New Jersey.

UPDATE FROM THE STATE HOUSE

Testifying About the Budget, Weighing in on Legislation

In the month of March, The Arc of New Jersey testified before the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees about the importance of funding for people with I/DD and their families.

Executive Director Tom Baffuto and Board President and father Robert Hage explained to



Executive Director Tom Baffuto, left, and Board President and father Robert Hage, right, testify before the Assembly Budget Committee at Montclair State University on March 9.

Committee members how the funding in the FY17 State Budget will have real-life impacts on those we represent. The Arc of New Jersey asked for the Legislature's support of the proposed Waiting List funding and housing voucher funding, among other things, but also spoke about Direct Support Professionals and the need to increase wages to these staff people who provide such critical supports and services in the community. To continue reading, click [here](#).

The Arc of NJ to Host Sprout Film Festival

entertaining and memorable short films featuring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

The Arc of New Jersey is thrilled to

Jersey.

As a wonderful way to end DD Awareness Month, Senate President Sweeney recognized individuals with I/DD and families during a visit to The Arc of Mercer County on March 25. The Senate President presented a resolution in honor of this special occasion and he spent time speaking with attendees about the importance of I/DD services in the State. The event at The Arc Mercer was also attended by Senator Turner, Assemblyman Gusciora, Assemblyman DeAngelo, Assemblywoman Muoio as well as other local dignitaries and elected officials. This was a tremendous opportunity to expose legislators and decision-makers to the hard work and high-quality services of a local County Chapter. See photos from both events on our [Facebook page](#).



Senate President Sweeney and members of the NJ Legislature celebrate Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month with a presentation at The Arc of Mercer County.

'Step Up' for 2016 Walkathons



Pictured Above: Walkers enjoying a beautiful day while supporting The Arc of Morris County.

Spring is here and that means it's time to grab your favorite pair of sneakers and Step Up for The Arc 2016! Step Up For The Arc is

announce that we are hosting our first [Sprout Film Festival](#) on Saturday, June 4th in Piscataway, New Jersey. The Sprout Film Festival offers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to be on screen and behind the scenes in a wide range of video projects. Each film has a varied run-time and the genres can alternate from comedy and drama to documentary-style. The goal of the Festival is to

break down stereotypes and offer accurate portrayals of people with disabilities. The event will take place on the [Busch Campus at Rutgers University](#) and the auditorium is accessible for people with disabilities. There will be two showings, one at 11:15 am and the second at 2:15 pm. Doors open 15 minutes prior to each showing. **Tickets are on sale NOW** at [www.sproutnj.org](#) and you can view the trailer by clicking [here](#). You can also contact Celine Fortin at Cfortin@arcnj.org with any relevant questions. We hope to see you there!

Fill Your Calendar with these Upcoming Events

Do you like to plan ahead? If so, here are a number of upcoming events happening at The Arc of New Jersey that you can add to your calendar. Also, check out our [website's calendar](#) for additional news and events.

- **Friday June 3, 2016** - Registration is now open for The Arc of New Jersey's 27th Annual Conference on Medical Care for People with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities. The event will be held at the Westin Hotel in Princeton, New Jersey. For registration information and to view the conference brochure, be sure to visit this [web site](#). Please contact Jenn Lynch, at 732-784-6397, if you have any questions.
- Our **Planning for Adult Life Program** will host five **Opportunity Expos** in different locations across the state between March and June. During the Expos, you will hear from experienced parents and professionals on the following topics: support coordination, the continuum of community services, financial planning, eligibility requirements, and where to find help. The Opportunity Expos will also feature a variety of exhibitors that will include state and county government entities, community service providers, service coordinators, local health care support and recreation providers, and additional information and referral services. For the specific dates and times, and to register for an Opportunity Expo, [click here](#).

an annual statewide initiative of The Arc of New Jersey, with walkathons held locally by every county Chapter. It's a fun, healthy and easy way to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Walks are being scheduled throughout the State so if you want to participate or make a donation at the local county level, be sure to check out the [Step Up web site](#) for additional details and information. Check back often as more dates will be added in the near future.

Step Up for The Arc Walk 2016 Schedule:

- **April 9 - [The Arc of Monmouth](#)**
- **April 16 - [The Arc of Essex](#)**
- **May 7 - [The Arc of Gloucester](#)**
- **May 14 - [The Arc of Middlesex](#)**
- **May 15 - [The Arc of Burlington](#)**
- **May 15 - [The Arc of Camden](#)**
- **May 21 - [The Arc of Mercer](#)**
- **May 22 - [SCARC](#)**
- **June 4 - [The Arc of Somerset](#)**
- **June 5 - [The Arc of Salem](#)**
- **June 5 - [The Arc of Bergen & Passaic](#)**

Helping Families Navigate Through the IEP Process

The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute is proud to present: "An IEP Review with the Attorneys of Hinkle, Fingles, Prior & Fischer. As you may know, navigating the Individualized Education Plan



(IEP) process can seem overwhelming, but that's where The Arc of New Family Institute can help. That's why we are offering regional IEP reviews for families who may have questions or concerns about their child's plan. Families will have an opportunity to sit down with an attorney from [Hinkle, Fingles, Prior, & Fischer](#) to review their child's IEP, ask questions and discuss any concerns they may have about their school district.

Space is limited and registration is required to attend. Families will receive a free 30-minute IEP review. Contact Kristina Tosti at (609) 896-4200 to reserve your time slot. Scheduled dates are as follows:

- **April 12 - The Arc of Atlantic County**
6550 Delilah Road, Suite 101,
Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234,
Use main entrance door
- **May 4 - The Arc of Monmouth County**
1158 Wayside Road,
Tinton Falls, NJ 07712
(Please note: Families registered for the May 4 event will receive an hour long review session.)



Jerisa Maseko, Director of the PFAL program, delivers a presentation about transitioning to adult life after high school.

CJAP Dir. Talks Employment Barriers for People with Both I/DD & Criminal Histories

Jessica Oppenheim, The Arc of New Jersey's Director of the Criminal Justice Advocacy Program (CJAP), recently presented a workshop entitled: "Job Development for People with Developmental Disabilities Who Have Criminal Histories." The workshop, which was done in partnership with Katelynn Collick, Coordinator, Employment and Transition Services at the Division of Developmental Disabilities, took place at the Facing the Future 24: Discovering a World of Employment Opportunities Conference in New Brunswick. As New Jersey strives to be an Employment First State for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, it becomes imperative to talk about this issue and assist supported employment specialists with the difficult task of securing and keeping jobs in the community.



*Jessica Oppenheim,
Director of the Criminal
Justice Advocacy
Program*

More than 90% of employers now conduct a background check and across the country 1 in 40 adults has a criminal record. In addition, people with I/DD are grossly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Having a developmental disability can add more obstacles for a person with a criminal history. Offenders with I/DD often plead guilty to more serious charges, spend more time in prison and are unable to take advantage of programs while incarcerated that can improve the likelihood of finding employment. The workshop presentation was a great opportunity to arm supported employment professionals with updated information about expungement, Megan's Law, background checks, and other issues that impede employment success. Professionals received practical tips about identifying employers, making it through the application process and keeping jobs in the long term. Providers also took away pamphlets for clients, explaining the criminal justice system and how to interact with law enforcement.

The PowerPoint presentation is now available on the CJAP website:

Free Tax Return Help

In IR-2016-35, the IRS reminded taxpayers that there is free tax help available. First, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is available for persons with incomes of \$54,000 or less, disabilities or limited English proficiency. Second, Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) is available for persons age 60 and older.



A key area of interest for both VITA and TCE is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the child and dependent care credit. The EITC is refundable for qualifying taxpayers who have earned income. Last year, nearly \$66.7 billion

was refunded under this program. The amount per recipient was about \$2,400. The maximum benefit for year 2015 is \$6,242. You must file IRS Form 1040 to receive the EITC benefit.

For additional information on VITA or TCE, go to www.irs.gov and download Publication 3676-B. There is also a "locator" tool on irs.gov and the smartphone app "IRS2GO". The locator tool will help you find the nearest location with a VITA or TCE program.

If you want to make use of VITA or TCE, you will need to take several items to the location.

1. **Identification** - You will need a photo ID. This is usually a driver's license or similar document.
2. **Social Security Card** - Bring the Social Security cards of the taxpayer, spouse and all dependents. The birthdates of everyone must also be available.
3. **Income Tax Identification Number (ITIN)** - An ITIN may be an acceptable substitute for a Social Security Number.
4. **Wages and Earnings** - You will need your W-2s, Forms 1099-R or Forms 1099-MISC.
5. **Banks and Credit Unions** - Gather all of your income and dividend statements. If you have a mortgage and plan to itemize deductions, you will need that statement from your lender.

To continue reading, click [here](#).

Register now for April Webinars

Important information sessions will be held throughout the month:

Supporting Siblings of Individuals with I/DD throughout the Lifespan

Join The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute and SIBS NJ as we honor National Sibling Day with a webinar presentation and a virtual panel discussion. The role of a sibling in the life of a person with an intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) is as complex as it is meaningful. Siblings play a key role in the care and social development of their sibling. However, many siblings feel overwhelmed when thinking about their future role as a caregiver. Empowering siblings throughout all stages of life will help prepare them for their future caregiver role and can help ease anxieties.

[Monday, April 11, at 6 pm](#)

Webinar Wednesday Series: Self-Advocate's Perspective on How to Get Connected to the Community

Join us as we discuss with Self Advocates how you can help prepare your student for life after high school. They will share their own stories of success, difficulties, and lessons learned. This webinar is geared for students, their families and professionals in the field.

[Wednesday, April 20 at 6 pm](#)

Equal Justice Talks: Overview of CROSSINGS: RUBHC Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment Program for People with Developmental & Physical Disabilities

It can be difficult to locate programs to address specific needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Substance abuse treatment programs which are effective for people without cognitive disabilities may not be prepared to work with clients who have a developmental disability. The Crossings Program has been designed for this population and can address the particular needs of people who have developmental disabilities and struggle with addiction. Please join us as an experienced mental health clinician describes a program with a wellness approach which is geared to meet the needs of this underserved population.

[Thursday, April 21 at 1 pm](#)

PLANNED GIVING CORNER

Use Your IRA to help The Arc

With tax season in full swing, most of us have taxes on our mind. If you owe income taxes for 2015, it is now too late to change that situation. However, this can be a great time to consider how you can reduce your 2016 tax liability while providing much needed support to The Arc of New Jersey now.

Help Us Keep

The Arc of NJ Strong!

The Arc of New Jersey relies on charitable contributions to continue our strong advocacy. Please help keep our efforts moving forward by making a donation to The Arc of New Jersey.

moving forward by making a donation to The Arc of New Jersey.

There are several ways you can help us:

1. Make a donation at www.arcnj.org.
2. If your company has a matching gift program, be sure to register your gift so you can double your contribution.
3. Make your donation count all year long by becoming a monthly Sustainer. All you have to do is note on your online donation that you would like it to be a monthly contribution.
4. Donate a vehicle by calling (877) 272-2270.
5. Shop through Amazon Smile. Simply select The Arc of New Jersey from the charities at [Amazon Smile](#), and shop like you always do at Amazon.

If you are age 70 ½ or older and own a traditional IRA, you will need to take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from it. This is mandated by the federal government. In fact, the government imposes a significant penalty on those who do not take their RMD. If you find yourself in this position and are already planning to make a gift to The Arc of New Jersey in 2016, you could make a gift of some or all of your RMD.

Did you know that by making your gift using an IRA charitable rollover (a direct transfer from your account to The Arc) you will not pay income taxes on that amount which is given as a gift? Since there is no tax deduction available on the transfer, this type of gift can work well even for those who do not itemize their taxes.

To learn more about this gift, please contact Celine Fortin at 732-733-6013 or cfortin@arcnj.org. You can also visit our new [Planned Giving Webpage](#).

The Arc of New Jersey
985 Livingston Avenue
North Brunswick, NJ 08902
P: 732-246-2525 E: info@arcnj.org W: www.arcnj.org

STAY CONNECTED



<https://www.facebook.com/thearcofnj>

<https://twitter.com/thearcofnj>