

Our mission is to empower people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to lead better lives by providing a lifetime of high-quality services, family support, and advocacy.

Understanding Autism



There is not one type of autism, but many.

In recent years, awareness of autism has increased significantly. However, there remains an ongoing challenge of understanding autism. Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by difficulties with social skills, nonverbal communication, repetitive behaviors, and speech. A combination of genetic and environmental factors influence the development of autism, and autism is often accompanied by other disorders and medical issues.

In the United States, autism has been identified in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. According to the latest research, it is estimated that 1 in every 59 children in the United States is affected by autism. The same research shows that autism is four times more common among boys than girls. Finding reliable data on the prevalence of autism among the adult population continues to be a challenge. However, we know that autism affects a significant minority of the adult population. Though some adults are not diagnosed until they are well into their 20s or 30s, many may never receive an official diagnosis.

Given the nature of autism, research shows that early intervention is a critical strategy in making a long-term impact on people's lives. The Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) is one of the most promising evidence-based interventions for children with autism, ages 12 to 48 months. St. Louis Arc is proud to offer ESDM at our inclusive preschool, Childgarden Early Childhood Center. The objectives of ESDM are to alleviate the severity of autism symptoms in children and to enhance children's developmental functioning across many domains including cognitive, social-emotional, adaptive, and language skills. Childgarden will be expanding its ESDM program by opening a new fully inclusive classroom in April.

"The ESDM program is just one of many efforts to enhance the lives of people with autism," said Dr. Michael Quinn, the Arc's Vice President of Autism and Clinical Services. "We are committed to providing a lifetime of cutting edge services to people with autism, with a special emphasis placed on addressing early childhood and transition-aged young adults."

For more information on Childgarden or the ESDM program, visit our website at www.slarc.org/programs/early-childhood/

Mark's Message



It's a new year and a time for reflection and resolutions. When you make a New Year's resolution, is it for personal growth, health and wellness, financial responsibility? Or perhaps your resolutions are focused on kindness and making the world a better place for all? The St. Louis Arc was started in 1950 by a group of parents who were resolute in their determination to make their children's lives better. As the Arc has grown over the years, we have maintained our resolve to help people with disabilities live their best possible lives. And luckily we aren't in this alone. We have partners, volunteers, board members, donors, funding sources, and amazing employees who all come together to help us achieve our mission. At a time when everyone seems divided, our agency is benefiting from the efforts of people who are united in their commitment to people with disabilities. I am grateful to those of you who have resolved to give your time, talents and financial support to ensure that all members of our community have an equal opportunity to live, learn, work, and play.

I ask you to make a simple resolution this year. Many people regard the St. Louis Arc as one of our town's "best-kept secrets." I hope you will resolve to share your stories of how the St. Louis Arc has helped you or a family member, why you work for the St. Louis Arc, or why you choose to support the St. Louis Arc. We want everyone in our community to know that the St. Louis Arc is here for them whenever and however they need us.

I wish all of you a happy and healthy new year!

Mark Keeley, MSW, LCSW
President and CEO

Welcome New Board Members

We are pleased to welcome Paul Belfer, Maggie Blakelock, Mark Jostes, Dan Kelley, and Bhavik Patel to the 2019 St. Louis Arc Board of Directors. Each of the five new members brings a wealth of talent and experience that will greatly benefit the organization. We also extend our deepest gratitude to retiring Board members Tom Auffenberg and Brandi Williams for their commitment over the past four years.



From left to right: **Paul Belfer**, Vice President of Vehicle Acquisition-Canada for Enterprise Holdings; **Maggie Blakelock**, Retired, Cambridge Associates; **Mark Jostes**, Manager at CliftonLarsonAllen; **Dan Kelley**, Director of Assurance Business Development-Central Region for Ernst & Young LLP; **Bhavik Patel**, Managing Partner and Chairman of the Executive Committee at Sandberg, Phoenix & Von Gontard P.C.

Special Olympics

When summer ends and school begins in the fall, one of the questions often asked is, “What did you do this summer?” How many people can say “I was a winning Olympic athlete!”? At the St. Louis Arc, we have two young men who excelled in the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games held this past July in Seattle. Harrison (Harry) Schmidt and Cade Marion both won silver medals in their respective sports. Harry took home the silver in Unified Basketball, while Cade and his dad, Doug, shared a silver medal in Unified Golf.

Harry, a 2018 graduate of Marquette High School, participates in basketball, softball, volleyball, and track. He has been an athlete with Special Olympics Missouri for just two years. For the past three summers he has been part of the Arc’s Neighborhood Experiences program. Harry worked last summer at More Than Coffee, where he learned how to bake and make a variety of coffee drinks. He is now working with the Arc’s Supported Employment team and doing an internship at Mercy Hospital.

Cade, a senior at Parkway North, has been an athlete with Special Olympics Missouri for five years participating in golf, basketball, softball, and volleyball. He has participated in the Neighborhood Experiences program for the past two summers. Last summer he did what he loved – working at the Berry Hill Golf Course, learning the ropes and helping on the course.



Above: Harry Schmidt, Cade Marion

Harry and Cade were joined by more than 4,000 athletes and coaches from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, who took part in the weeklong USA Games. The event had more than 10,000 volunteers, and 70,000 spectators in attendance throughout the week. Congratulation Harry and Cade!

Volunteer Spotlight

Connie Mayhall has volunteered with the Cooking for Comfort classes since Fall 2017. She has been a wonderful addition to the program, getting to know the new participants each session and continuing to strengthen relationships she has made with regular participants. It is always such a pleasure to watch Connie work with the participants and see how much they genuinely enjoy her too. It is hard to find Connie without her bright smile and you are always guaranteed to laugh when she is in class!



A Chaminade Tradition

For more than 10 years, the Mother’s Club and young men from Chaminade High School have been helping to decorate residents’ homes in Dautel Circle at the holidays. Each year they bring joy and happiness to our residents through volunteering.

“They are full of energy and holiday cheer! The volunteers are always a huge help, and the fact that they bring freshly baked cookies to us when they come, makes the day even more enjoyable.” said Volunteer Manager Matt Bates.

St. Louis Arc Community Partners

Giving Tree

Each year at the holidays, the community comes together to show their kindness to children from disadvantaged circumstances who participate in Arc programs. The St. Louis Arc Giving Tree is a way to ensure that all children from the Arc's Parents Learning Together and Capable Kids and Families® programs have presents under their trees. This past December the Giving Tree provided gifts for 171 children from 85 families. Three companies deserve a special round of applause for being extraordinarily generous partners this year: Dent Wizard in Kirkwood, US Bank, and Express Scripts. We appreciate all who made the 2018 Giving Tree possible, with a special thank you to Lisa Miller, the Arc's executive assistant, who coordinates the Tree.



Foundation Support

The St. Louis Arc is grateful to the many donors and contributors who help to support the programs and services we provide to the community. We would like to thank the Episcopal Presbyterian Health Trust for their grant of \$11,797. The Arc has been able to establish a pilot intervention, multi-sensory space for the participants in our Community Engagement programs. Managed by the St. Louis Community Foundation, the Episcopal Presbyterian Health Trust is dedicated to providing health care and medical services for underserved populations in the St. Louis area.

In addition, we would like to thank the Harmon Charitable Foundation for their generous grant to support Employment Services to grow in St. Charles County. The gift will be used to buy support tools and iPads to fill a resource library, transportation scholarships to help alleviate transportation barriers, and to expand our marketing efforts in St. Charles County so more individuals can learn about and receive our services.

Planting the Employment Seed

Sometimes it just takes one person to plant the seed. Eric Kronmiller is that person. “Eric got noticed,” says Michele Peterson, job developer at the St. Louis Arc. “Because of him, doors have been opened.”

Eric is employed part-time, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, as a porter for Compass Group, PLC, one of the world’s largest employers. Compass, contracts with Pfizer to provide food service and building support at Pfizer’s campus in Chesterfield.

What began as a vocational training position maintaining the coffee bar morphed into an unpaid internship, where Eric learned what’s known as a “porter route.” He works independently, handling recycling, delivering packages, and keeping communal spaces neat. Peterson worked with Eric’s supervisors to identify duties he could excel at that would also bring value to the company.

“I think his professionalism amazes people,” said Peterson. “Eric takes great pride in his work, and he’s attentive to details. He asks questions and he’s never standing still. He’s always looking for what more he can do.”

After about one month, Eric’s internship became a paid job that fits his busy lifestyle. It’s been a success for Eric, and the beginning of a new partnership for St. Louis Arc’s Employment Services.

“Pfizer came to us because they noticed the people training at their site,” explained Peterson. Over the past year, the St. Louis Arc has been systematically building a relationship with both Compass Group and Pfizer, so that more individuals like Eric can find success in paid employment.

“The support staff and supervisors from both companies have been so great to work with, talking through different situations, and developing job descriptions so more people can train and work there,” said Peterson. “And it was Eric who sold it!”



Above: James Pope, Compass; Eric Kronmiller; Scott Brody, Compass

More Than Sandwiches

Just over a year ago, Taylor Hartmann, St. Louis Arc’s Coordinator of Pre-Employment Services, met Dan Buell at a Creve Coeur Chamber of Commerce event. Dan was managing the new Potbelly Sandwich Shop in St. Charles and was in need of qualified employees, while the Arc’s pre-employment training program was looking to expand training and internship opportunities. From that initial meeting a partnership began, and for the past year, the Arc has had an individual successfully train at Dan’s restaurant. In addition to having the great connection with the St. Charles Potbelly, the St. Louis Arc has developed a strong relationship with the Potbelly Sandwich Shop in Creve Coeur. Thank you to Potbelly for their commitment to hiring people with disabilities.



ANNUAL AUTISM INVITATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Eighty golfers helped raise more than \$185,000 to support the Arc's autism services at the 8th annual Autism Invitational on August 27. Held at Boone Valley Golf Club, the event's success was a direct result of the leadership and generosity of tournament chairwoman JoAnn Kindle and tournament co-chairs Tom Caruso and Dan Kelley.

Congratulations to the winning foursome: Patrick Dumstroff, Keith Koopmann, Phil Schildknecht, and Ray Carlton; and to the "Closest-to-the-Rolex" contest winner, Arc board member Andy Kanefield.



Top: Mark Keeley, Andy Kanefield, and Rolex representative, Todd Broadbent

Bottom: Dan Kelley, Mark Keeley, and Tom Caruso

Texas Hold 'Em Poker Tournament

On November 2, 100 card sharks helped raise more than \$33,000 at the Arc's 13th annual Texas Hold 'Em Poker Tournament at the Frontenac Hilton Hotel. Taking home the trophies were 1st place winner Chris Koon, 2nd place winner Nick Pate, and 3rd place winner Pete Sebelski. Save the date for our next "Showdown for St. Louis Arc" on Friday, November 8, 2019.



Pete Sebelski, Chris Koon, and Nick Pate

Young Friends 6th Annual Summerfest Bocce Tournament

The Young Friends of the St. Louis Arc held their annual Summerfest Bocce Tournament at Milo's on the Hill. This year's tournament raised more than \$3,000! The Young Friends are looking for more enthusiastic, philanthropic, young professionals to join the group. Summerfest is just one of the fun events hosted by the Young Friends. Come help raise awareness about the Arc, meet new people, and raise money through a variety of fun activities! Contact us at youngfriends@slarc.org for more information.



Tournament winners, Landon Zirkelbach, Ryan Hallows, Ryan Lobbig, and Tony Cowin.

Save the Date

SUPERHEROES
FOR KIDS

April 25, 2019

The Arc Advantage

The St. Louis Arc is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the children, teens, adults, and families we support. We have identified several areas that show an increased need for additional supports including transition services, nutrition and dietary services, and family support. The Arc has hired three qualified individuals who will be addressing each of these areas.

Gabrielle Szarek has been promoted to the newly created position, Director of Transition Services. The focus of this leadership role will be to support individuals to successfully transition from adolescence to young adulthood (16 to 26 years of age). This position will primarily focus on the areas of education, employment, social development, and independent living. Gabrielle started as an intern with the Arc in 2012 and most recently worked as the Assistant Director of Pre-Employment Services with the Arc. She brings great experience and a proven track record of supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Katharine Rug, MS, RD, LD, was hired for the newly created position, Director of Nutrition. Katharine is a registered dietitian (RD) and has her Master's degree in Medical Nutrition Therapy with an emphasis in pediatric nutrition from Saint Louis University. She has worked for the St. Louis Arc since 2011, starting in Employment's summer programs while in college, then moving to a full-time position in 2013 after receiving her bachelor's degree in neuroscience and psychology. Using an evidence-based approach, Katharine will direct and coordinate all aspects of food and nutritional programming across the agency. The Arc would like to thank Board Member Maggie Blakelock for securing seed money for the nutrition program from the McCall MacBain Foundation and the J.M.R. Barker Foundation.

The Family Support department is excited to announce that Julie Thompkins has accepted the position as Family Navigator. Before joining the Family Support team, Julie worked for two years as a Family Resource Specialist in the Arc's Capable Kids and Families® program. Julie's youngest son Isaiah has Cerebral Palsy and her family has benefited from participating in Arc programs, including Capable Kids and Families®, workshops, respite, support groups, and music classes. Julie brings a tremendous amount of knowledge to the family support team, particularly with children birth to 12 years old. The Family Navigator position was identified as a priority through our strategic planning process with several stakeholder groups and was funded through a generous donation.



Are you creative, enthusiastic, and reliable?

Do you enjoy helping others?

**Come Join Our Team and
Be Part of the Arc Advantage!**

Seasonal, Full-Time and Part-Time positions available.

Visit our website at www.slarc.org/about-us/careers

Questions? Please email Recruiting@slarc.org



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