

What's all the fuss about Mobilizing Families?



Hopefully by now most of you are familiar with *Mobilizing Families*, our award-winning training program for families of young children with disabilities. *Mobilizing Families* is designed to give participants the essential tools to navigate the complexities of the disability world and better advocate for their children's needs.

Maybe you've heard about *Mobilizing*, but you're just not sure the training is right for your family. Well, you're not alone. Nearly all of our graduates have shared how nervous they were to enroll, but *all* of our graduates have been grateful that they took the chance.

Over the course of eight Thursday evenings, *Mobilizing* participants learn about topics such as special education law and the IEP, how to access Medicaid and insurance, and how to develop resources in the community – to name a few.

By the end of the session, participants have amassed a large binder full of information, tips and resources to help

them get the support they need for their child.

One grandmother told us that after just eight nights of *Mobilizing*, she had been able to gather more information than she had been able to find in the previous seven years!

Still not sure if *Mobilizing Families* is right for you?

In addition to learning critical skills and developing an arsenal of resources, *Mobilizing* is a great opportunity to connect with other families.

When a child is first diagnosed with a disability, families are often overwhelmed with everything they need to do, and usually they're not sure where to start or how to get started. This confusion is often amplified by the fact that no one around you seems to know what you're going through or how to help.

Mobilizing Families helps parents connect with others who are struggling with similar issues, and together all families learn how to advocate for themselves and each other.

Thanks to the generous support of the McDonnell Family Foundation, training, meals and child care are provided *free of charge*. How can you beat that? Dinner, respite, education, and community – all for free!

The next session of *Mobiliz-*

ing Families begins Thursday, September 20, with meetings on Thursday nights through November 8.

For more information or to register, please contact Jo Lynn Osborne at (303) 232-1338 x206.

What are you waiting for?

Advanced topics for Mobilizing grads set for 2008

Beginning in 2008, The Arc in Jefferson County will now offer advanced training sessions for all *Mobilizing Families* graduates.

Topics will include:

- Educational advocacy, January 24, 2008
- Understanding Medicaid services, January 31, 2008
- Expanding Community & Legislative Advocacy, June 5, 2008

As with *Mobilizing Families*, training, meals, and child care will be provided free of charge thanks to the support of the McDonnell Family Foundation.

For more information or to register, contact Jo Lynn Osborne at (303) 232-1338 x206.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Critical Resources & News	2-3	Board Member Profile	10
Advocacy Arena	3-7	Get Involved.	11
Picnic Gallery	8-9	Calendar of Events	12

Health & safety fair to be held August 11

The 10th Annual Peace n' the Streets Health and Safety Fair will be held Saturday, August 11 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Curtis Mestizo Park, located at 31st & Curtis Streets. A special car safety seat check will begin at 9 a.m. The fair is a communi-

ty event to promote health and safety for the entire family.

Hosted by Catholic Charities, the fair will feature more than 40 information and educational booths, fun activities for kids, free food, games and entertainment. Children

can earn free school supplies by completing the free dental, vision and hearing screenings. Bring a copy of your child's shot record to be eligible for free immunizations.

For more information, call (303) 742-0828.

School supply giveaway at JAC

Jeffco Action Center has announced dates for their annual distribution of school supplies for children from low-income families enrolled in Jefferson County Public Schools. School supplies are free to families who are registered with Jeffco Action Center.

For distribution dates or to check your eligibility, please contact Jeffco Action Center at (303) 237-7707 or stop in to their offices at 8755 W. 14th Avenue in Lakewood.

Wacky Wicket tickets now on sale

Wine & Wacky Wickets, a fundraiser to benefit The Arcs of Jefferson County, Arapahoe-Douglas, and Denver, will be held Sunday, September 9 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Manor House in Ken Caryl Valley.

Tickets are \$40 for individuals and \$75 for couples. To purchase tickets, contact Pam Bailey at (303) 220-9228 or go to www.blacktie-colorado.com/rsvp and enter the event code **Wacky Wickets**.

Getting Connected

Below is an abbreviated list of agencies and community resources in the Jefferson County area. For additional resources, please visit our Web page at www.arcjc.org.

Access-A-Ride (303) 299-2960: Provides curb-to-curb transportation to passengers who are unable to use RTD buses and qualify for certification under the guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADD) of 1990.

Developmental Disabilities Resource Center (303) 233-3363: Services and resources are provided for people with developmental disabilities in Jefferson, Clear Creek, Gilpin and Summit counties.

Disability Center for Independent Living (303) 320-1345: Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are private, nonprofit corporations that provide services to maximize independence of individuals with disabilities.

Empower Colorado (866) 213-4631: Support, education and advocacy for families of children with mental or emotional health issues, also referred to as brain disorders.

Family First (303) 914-6307: Provides resources to help families obtain respite and child care.

Family Voices (303) 973-5780: National grass roots organization composed of families and friends who care for and about children with special health care needs.

JFK Partners (303) 315-2323: An interdisciplinary program to support people with developmental disabilities at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. www.jfkpartners.org

Jeffco Action Center (303) 237-7704: Serving homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Jefferson County Department of Health (303) 232-6301: Provides a variety of services and supports for people with specialized health care needs including WIC and HCP.

Jeffco First Steps (303) 273-1550: To enhance opportunities and support for families of young children with special needs as an integral and valued part of their chosen communities.

The Legal Center for Persons with Disabilities and Older People (303) 722-0300: Protecting the human, civil and legal rights of people with mental and physical disabilities, people with HIV and older people throughout Colorado.

Mental Health Ombudsman Program of Colorado (303) 813-1173: Serves residents enrolled in and receiving mental health services through Medicaid managed care.

Parent to Parent of Colorado (877) 472-7201: Connecting families of sons and daughters with disabilities or special health care needs in communities across Colorado.



Come learn about the exciting work of our organization! Please RSVP to Genni at (303) 232-1338 x209 with the date you would like to attend. Each tour lasts one hour.

- Wednesday, August 1 @ noon
- Wednesday, September 5 @ noon
- Wednesday, October 3 @ noon

ABOUT US

The Arc Independent is a publication of The Arc in Jefferson County, a local unit of The Arc of the United States and The Arc of Colorado.

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Tips on preparing for the new school year

In addition to getting those school supplies, new shoes and hair cuts, below are a few tips to keep in mind as you prepare for the new school year.

Review your child's IEP

- Read through the IEP to refresh your memory and familiarize yourself with the content of the IEP. IEPs have several sections, such as the Student Profile section which lists your child's strengths, needs and accommodations.
- Remember that Jefferson County Schools will be using a new IEP format this school year, so your IEP may look different, but the content should remain the same.
- Create an organized file of educational records and assessment information; you never know when you might need to look something up quickly.

Prepare for IEP Meetings

- Request a draft copy of the IEP a few days before the meet-

ing so you are familiar with the information.

- Write down your questions and ideas so you won't forget to discuss them during the meeting.
- Know who will be at the meeting so the number of people around the table won't surprise you.
- Share any private assessments prior to the meeting so the team will be familiar with the information.
- Don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Bring someone with you so you'll have support and another set of ears to hear what others are saying.
- Keep focused on what you want provided for your child, not on a specific method of teaching.

Build relationships

- Connect with each teacher who will work with your child to share your child's strengths and interests. This will help them know your child as a whole person and may provide insight for additional learning accommoda-

tions. Stay involved throughout the year by talking with your child's teacher on a regular basis.

- If you can, volunteer in the classroom, the library or with school functions. Join your building's Accountability Committee or PTA.

Educate yourself

- Don't let the educational system be complicated and overwhelming -- arm yourself with knowledge. Read books and articles, attend conferences and trainings.
- If you haven't already, attend The Arc's Mobilizing Families training (see pg. 1 for more information).
- Peak Parent Center offers a variety of workshops. Check their website for information at www.peakparent.org
- Attend a public hearing on the proposed Colorado IDEA Part B regulations. The Denver-area hearings will be held August 21st from 7 to 9 pm at Cherry Creek High School's Shilling Law

Center (9300 East Union Ave., Greenwood Village). To read more about the regulations or other hearing dates, go to <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/index.asp>.

Other important tips

- There's more to life than school. Extracurricular activities can help children learn and gain confidence. When looking for ways to make your child feel successful, consider this: No one knows him/her as well as you do. You understand his/her strengths, weaknesses, and interests better than anyone. Use this knowledge when choosing activities, even if it means bypassing what all the other kids in the neighborhood are doing in favor of something more suited to your child.
- Take care of yourself. Parents also deserve a balanced and fulfilling life. Finding a reliable and helpful sitter, exercising, getting enough rest, and having fun can help recharge your own batteries.

CDE cuts T4T funding; Community helps us roll with the punches



Jo Lynn Osborne
Assistant Executive Director

For the past six years, The Arc in Jefferson County has worked collaboratively with Easter Seals of Colorado and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to provide

training weekends around the state for parents, students and educators through a program called Training for Transition (T4T). T4T was designed to give parents the necessary resources to advocate for their children as they transition out of high school and into the adult world.

In June we learned that the funding for this project would no longer be available through the Colorado Department of Education. How could this decision happen when the training was such a success? Due to limited funding and a shift in federal requirements, CDE was unable to continue funding the program.

T4T as we knew it is a thing of the past. You could say T4T has entered its own transition period.

Of course the need for transition training and resources is still strong. There are many more families who could have benefited from this training, but they will just have to learn that information in a different way. Since we believe so strongly in the need for transition training, the staff at The Arc in Jefferson County is both looking for other funding sources and looking at how we could make the information available to families in another format. Watch upcoming newsletters

and our web site for new developments.

On a personal level, I have seen many changes since my son moved through transition from school to the adult world. Although it has been thirteen years since his transition began, we are still experiencing transitions. It seems change is constant and there are always new challenges on the horizon, but I have found the obstacles are not quite so overwhelming with the support and assistance of friends and family.

As advocates and parents, we all want "the system" to pro-

See CUTS on page 4

People First meets with Rep. Buescher, tours Western slope

by Joan Jurann, Donna Gunnison, and Louise Todd-Stoll
People First

On Saturday, June 29, twenty-seven self-advocates and allies from Speaking for Ourselves (SFO) held their quarterly meeting in Grand Junction, where they met with Colorado State Representative Bernie Buescher.

Not familiar with the name? Representative Buescher is the Chair of the state's Joint Budget Committee (JBC) and is also one of our allies working to ensure the use of people first language in state legislation.

Attendees at the meeting included The Arc of Jefferson County members Andrew Stocker, Joan Jurann and Donna Gunnison. Colo-

rado Springs, Greeley, Denver, Grand Junction were also represented.

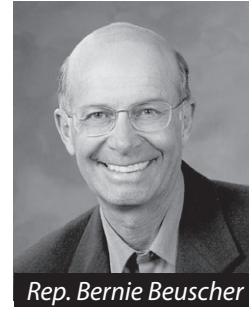
In addition to this important meeting with Representative Buescher, the SFO group shared some of the other highlights of their trip.

Everyone enjoyed visiting Frisco's historic village, the town of Vail, the fruit stands and wineries of Palisade, and the pool in Glenwood Springs. Joan felt the staff at the Grand Vista hotel was extremely respectful to people with disabilities. Donna enjoyed the camaraderie. Andrew enjoyed (and did a great job) the all-important job of running the state-wide meeting. But all of us felt a very special highlight was singing at the top of our

voice to "On Top of the Word" by The Carpenters -- over and over again -- while driving over two mountain passes.

Speaking for Ourselves is a national organization of people with disabilities working to educate the public about the needs, wishes, and potential of people with disabilities. Members speak out on important issues and support each other through sharing, leadership, and encouragement.

The Arc in Jefferson County hosts a local SFO chapter called People First, which we encourage you to learn more about by attending one of



Rep. Bernie Buescher

our monthly meetings (first and third Thursday evenings) or contacting one of our advisors, Louise Todd-Stoll (ext. 207) or Jeanne Weis (ext. 204). Members of People First at-

tend the state-wide SFO organizational meetings. Our next state-wide meeting will take place at Peaceful Valley Ranch this fall.

We hope you consider joining our local People First chapter. Not only do we have fun, but--more importantly--we learn a lot and have a great amount of work to do in this state to impact the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Changes on horizon for Wheat Ridge Regional Center



by Jeanne Weis
Director of Adult Advocacy

Now that I've caught your attention, please know that the changes really are not anything that I can inform you of or report to you about. There's truly more questions than there are answers, but I would like to just let you know a few ba-

sic things that are known at this time.

As many of you know, I am very involved working with individuals served through the Wheat Ridge Regional Center. The Regional Center operates five Intermediate Care Facilities/Group Homes on their campus, as well as approximately twenty group homes in the community called "satellite" homes.

There have been rumblings for some time about some significant changes coming in regards to case management for individuals served through the regional center system.

Basically, the Case Management system/team leader positions at WRRC are going to be eliminated effective 7-1-08, and

"the word on the street" is that Denver Options will be taking over all the WRRC Case Management at that time.

At July's Division for Developmental Disabilities Policy Advisory Committee meeting, the Regional Center's "transfer of case management/July 1, 2008" was identified on the agenda as a topic of discussion. I'm sorry I am not aware of the discussion that occurred on this topic.

As an advocate for many individuals at WRRC, I have many concerns about this. My biggest concern is that most people involved (parents, family members, individuals, etc.) haven't gotten wind of this.

The time to be aware is now!

CUTS from page 3

vide opportunities for our loved ones, but we have to always be mindful that government services aren't our only resource. Of course we need to stay involved and educated about services, but we also need to remind ourselves that "the system" is constantly changing and do our best to be informed about how these changes will impact people with disabilities.

As you try to keep up with the changes, don't forget about the community you live in. Not only is your life enhanced by strong relationships with friends and family, but they are often the strongest and most stable resources you have.

Reflections on the gifts disability brings

Corinne Gray
Director of Educational Advocacy

Today, July 20, is my daughter Kali's 17th birthday. I find myself struck by this because of what we, she and I, have accomplished in 17 years. About 15 years ago I was that new mom at The Arc picnic, unsure and nervous about this new world called disabilities that we had entered. Unsure and nervous about what we would encounter, and who we would meet.

Well, she entered a world of PT, OT, and Speech therapy, endless doctor and neurology appointments, MRI's, CAT scans, EEG's, lab tests, medication trial and error, needle pokes, bladder and bowel programs, over ten 911 ambulance calls, and countless emergency room visits and hospitalizations. She fought for education in her neighborhood school, to learn how to talk, eat and walk, and still fights every day of her life to battle through seizures that claim her body.

What world did I enter?

I learned to be an "expert" in scheduling therapy in and out of the home, appointments, and follow-up tests. I actually learned to read doctor's notes and understand what they say. I learned about brain function and seizure control (so I can hold my own with the doctors), about medication distribution and adjustments, and I learned how to phone order prescriptions on an automated



ABOVE: Kali with her father, Gene. LEFT: The Gray children (l-r), Kelsey, Kali, and Kole.

system that changes every time you get it figured out.

I learned to read health insurance policies from cover to cover and fight for every little bit of coverage I can get, and to understand the Medicaid system (which is an oxymoron because there is no system that makes sense). I learned how to call 911 and then fight the bill for the next two years to be paid by insurance instead of me. I learned to request medical records yearly and keep an active filing system at the ready, logging daily seizure activity to present to doctors.

I learned how to actual-

dren turn into caring, grateful people who live life from their hearts. I've been a part of changing the system to offer better supports. I'm actively working in the community on boards and councils that will be the future for people who need support. I've developed excellent multi-tasking and organizational skills because I had to.

I've met incredible people in all areas of my life who have helped me, Kali, or our family — I offer the most thanks to them. My life is full and blessed, and I cannot imagine any other way it should be.

So, what did Kali gain through all of this?

Kali has an amazing and undeniable will to live, a smile and a hug for everyone she encounters (even the ER doctors who are stitching her head up), a desire to be kind to all her friends, a great appetite for good food, patience that no human should have to have, tolerance for pain that I have never seen, great educational opportunities that allow her to love reading, writing, numbers, and coloring with the best of them, great teachers that she loves to this day, determination to fight through daily seizures that have taken her whole body and left it barely recognizable, and the will to get up every day, ready to face the world, knowing it is harder every day, with a heart that knows no boundaries.

We are truly blessed!

ly use the IEP process to make sure Kali gets the best educational opportunities. I learned how to navigate the disability "system" (which is not a system that is set up to be navigated).

I learned how to make sure my other two children have a healthy childhood that I can be present in and enjoy with them, and how to politely explain to people who stare or ask questions that this is a normal world for us.

The question I have to ask myself frequently is what have I gained from this life lesson? There are way too many things that I can't list them all. The blessings definitely outweigh the burden. I am so thankful for the knowledge I have gained in this world called disabilities. I have been able to help others along the way. I've watched all of my chil-

A family's journey to legislative advocacy

by **Todd Lowther**
Executive Director

What's it like to testify before the legislature? That's what my wife and I were requested to do recently in order to present our story of what it's like to "wait" for services for our daughter. Our daughter is one of more than 160 individuals who has been determined eligible for Children's Extensive Services but who are on a state-wide list with an estimated three-year wait.

So when asked to present to the Interim Committee on Long Term Health Care Services and Support to Persons with Developmental Disabilities, I realized we were not simply telling our story but we were also representing 160 other families, many of whom are currently in crisis, just like we were back in January.

Whenever I hear other families share their stories, I usually reflect that despite our difficulties, we're fortunate to have more support and connections than most families. Because my wife is an emergency room nurse, she thought to contact The Children's Hospital when we were in crisis. But unlike many, we also had insurance that would cover us; without insurance, our family would still be in crisis because we couldn't have afforded to pay for those hospital supports out of pocket.

Below is the text of our presentation. Trust me, I believe every one of the 160 stories is just as important as ours and I ache for them all.

Interim Committee Testimony of Todd and Paula Lowther, July 18, 2007

[TODD] First, on behalf of our family that includes five children, two of whom have developmental disabilities, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share our story. Of course, five minutes is not enough. Behind this "Cliff Notes" version, there is a novel—just as behind every waiting list number, there is a name of a person waiting for services.

When my wife and I adopted LiLi from China four years ago, we knew our daughter faced future surgeries based on her cleft lip and palate condition, and the report warned "she might need speech therapy." After a very trying time of adjustment, LiLi began to show us with her behavior just how horrific her first nine years in an institution had been—an orphanage comprised mostly of unwanted, disabled children. Not only was she sexually victimized by older children, she was at the bottom on the social pecking order, picked on by the other orphans, often going to bed cold, hungry and afraid of what might happen next. Although we've rescued her from a life of almost certain abuse and neglect, she now waits for the kind of support that will make it possible for her to survive and thrive in her new country.

Before I go further, let me tell you: we are some of the lucky ones. We live in a county with a very responsive and dedicated community-centered board—DDRC. I am executive director of our local

chapter of The Arc and have been in the disability field for almost thirty years. I figured if anyone could navigate through this complex system for LiLi, it should be me.

[PAULA] Last fall, on her last night visiting in our family home, my mother fell down our stairs sustaining a fatal head injury. LiLi watched from the stair rail as her "Nannie" was loaded on to a gurney and into the ambulance. LiLi and her younger sister, JaneGrace, also adopted from China, accompanied us to the services in two other states and lived through the experiences with us as a family.

We bring this up not to shock you—it's just part of life. But a month or so later, LiLi was in crisis, wanting to die, avoiding close contact, screaming at her parents and endangering herself and JaneGrace. For a short time back in January, we really didn't know if we could survive as a family unit.

[TODD] We were in crisis and we didn't know where to turn—this from a father who's a professional in the DD world and a mother who's an emergency room nurse at a level one trauma center.

[PAULA] Ultimately, LiLi was placed in the Children's Hospital Psychiatric Unit for five weeks to stabilize her behavior, and we began the process of applying for CES. We knew that at best, the hospital program was a stop-gap; what LiLi needed was



the ongoing service and support like you get through CES.

[TODD] The process of applying for CES was a nightmare, despite having more resources and guidance at my disposal than the average parent going through this process. The folks at our CCB tried to help, but a true single point-of-entry simply does not exist.

Because CES uses Medicaid funding, a family must first apply for SSI and be denied as part of the application process. I was told to ask for an "informal" denial letter from Social Security to expedite the process. When I called SSI, the person said I could not get an informal denial unless we had already applied, and then directed me to complete the SSI application online.

So I did—after three days and at least six hours online, I finally finished the application. After a few weeks with no response, I visited the Social Security office in person but the person behind the bullet-proof glass said I

See **TESTIMONY** on page 7

TESTIMONY from pg. 7

hadn't needed to apply because obviously, due to our income, we would be denied. But, she added, since we had applied, we would now have to wait for our "official" denial.

A few weeks after that, with official denial letter in hand, I took the CES application to our CCB. Once there, I was told they would process Part B of the application but that Part A needed to go to County Human Services because they "handle the Medicaid part."

I then hand-delivered the "Medicaid part" to Human Services and asked that it be time-stamped to indicate delivery. A few weeks later my daughter received a cold, computer-generated letter from the county, stating that if they didn't receive Part A of the application immediately, she would be denied and have to start the application process over again! The case manager at our CCB then had to call the county on our behalf to assure them they already had Part A, and provide documentation to show them it had already been received.

Our family was in the middle of this crisis, and we spent weeks going from agency to agency getting different answers along the way.

[PAULA] At the same time, LiLi was discharged from Children's after a \$27,000, 5-week stay, and we are now hoping that this intervention will be successful enough to keep our family together as we wait for the CES waiver to come through—a wait estimated to be at least three years. We know LiLi will require life-long supports at some level, and we hope and pray there won't be another emergency before those supports are in place.

[BOTH] Thank you.

Upcoming meeting schedule announced for Interim Committee on Waiting Lists

In the last newsletter, readers learned that an Interim Committee of the Colorado legislature would meet this summer and fall to address issues around the various Waiting Lists for people with developmental disabilities. The topics for each meeting have been announced but are subject to change:

Wednesday, July 18 - Introduction of committee procedures, overview of services for persons with developmental disabilities in Colorado, national overview of services for persons with developmental disabilities [*in this meeting parents presented on both the use of waiver services as well as what it's like to be on the waiting list for services in each waiver.*];

Tuesday, July 31 - Consideration of proposals related to ways

to create more transparency, reliability, efficiency, and accountability throughout the process of providing long-term health care services and supports for persons with developmental disabilities;

Tuesday, August 14 - Consideration of proposals related to innovative options to meet the long-term health care needs of people with developmental disabilities;

Wednesday, August 29 - Consideration of proposals related to recommendations to eliminate all waiting lists for long-term health care services and supports for persons with developmental disabilities with all deliberate speed and recommendations for the creation of new funding for persons on the waiting lists. Also, the committee will be requesting draft legislation

on this day;

Friday, September 21 - Consideration of draft legislation;

Wednesday, October 10 - Finalization of legislation.

Most meetings will be held at the Legislative Services Building just south of the Capitol in Hearing Room A. For an up-to-date account of the committee's activities and schedule, visit on-line at: http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lcsstaff/2007/comsched/07DisabilitiesSched.htm

A group of parents calling itself PAD-CO [Parents of Adult Children with Disabilities] has issued a document that addresses its concerns and recommendations. This document can be viewed at <http://members.aol.com/padcoweb/ParentWaitListPaperfinal.pdf>.

Caregivers: Remember to take time for yourself



by Patricia Fulton
Educational & Family Advocate

As I write this article, both of my kids (ages 10 and 12) are out of town visiting their grandparents for a week. This week has given me time to reconnect with my hus-

band, which makes me a better wife and mother. I've taken the dog for extra long walks, read a book, and stayed up late watching movies that I enjoy. My husband and I have gone out to dinner at restaurants without children's menus, had uninterrupted conversations, and held hands.

This time off from mommy duties has reminded how important it is to take time for you on a regular basis. You don't need an entire week, just a few hours each month. Time for you can be simple, like taking a walk or a long drive with the windows rolled down and the radio turned up.

Each of us, couples and single parents alike, need

to make sure we have someone we can trade time with. I know how lucky we are to have parents who are both willing to take our kids for a week, and active and healthy enough to care for them. Work out a deal with your parents or other relatives, or your friends and neighbors, but make it a priority to take time for yourself on a regular basis.

As parents, the needs of our children will always come first but that doesn't mean our needs have to be dismissed. It's important to take time just for you, so you can be emotionally fulfilled and reenergized, making you the best parent possible.

LEFT TO RIGHT:
Roger Quickle
in his totally
tubular hangout;
Pat Jurann and
Patsy Bridges;
Christopher
Cannizzarro
monkeys around.



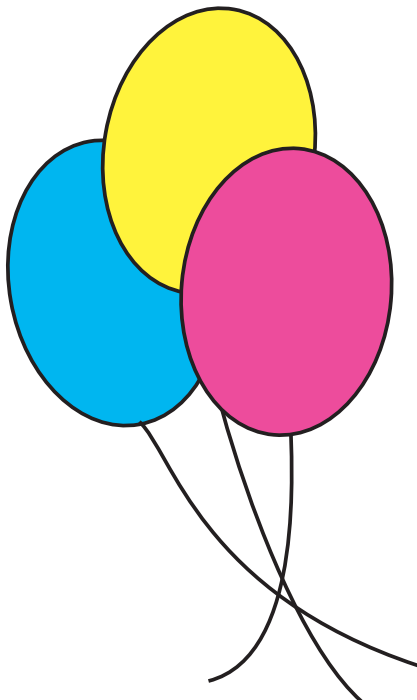
PICNIC!

Despite the ominous clouds above, The Arc in Jefferson County's annual picnic on July 18 was a barrel of festive fun!

More than 275 people enjoyed great food, live music, a magic show and custom balloon creations during the three hour event at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds.

A special thanks to Director of Adult Advocacy Jeanne Weis and her band of merry musicians who provided lively Irish music throughout the evening.

Thanks also to volunteer photographer Brittany Ibarra (check out her ad on page 11) for capturing these great pictures. If only we had less news and more room for photos.



CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT: Jeremiah
Baldon; Gina
Stolper; Jeanne
Weis and some of
the band; Edward
Jeffers during a rare
stationary moment.



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6

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 1) Angela Fritzinger; 2) Board member Lisa Madsen with husband Jim and son Sam; 3) Bekkah Randall hangs out on the zip line; 4) Konner and Kameron Evans; 5) Our youngest attendee, 4-month old Josh Cannizzarro with mom Shannon; 6) Brandon, Stacey, and Steve McHattie; 7) JaneGrace Lowther helps Stuart the Magician with a trick; 8) Jane and Ben Barnes chat with David Osborne; 9) Sam Martinez, Ethan Johnson, and Ian Whittington are wide-eyed with wonderment during the magic show; 10) Balloon Lady Tammy Taylor puts the finishing touches on her creation for Cooper Young, son of board president Barb Young.

Volunteer advocacy promotes inclusion, acceptance

Rachel Baldon
Arc board member and Treasurer

My son Jeremiah is about to turn fifteen. As I struggle to build an inclusive life with long-term relationships for him, I've learned an important lesson for myself and Jeremiah. At this point in our lives, I keep thinking I've done all the training I'll need to with the people who interact with Jeremiah; mission accomplished, right? Not exactly.

I'm beginning to see that, as parents, we've been given a special opportunity: we can volunteer ourselves to raise awareness and educate our community about the importance of inclusion in all parts of our children's lives.

Several years ago, I was trying to decide where I would focus my volunteer time, so I developed my own mission statement for my life: I decided I would strive each day to do something little to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. I know my family has been profoundly affected by the people in our lives who have volunteered their time and experience to help us, and I want to make sure that I can help others in the way that oth-

ers have been able to support us.

The support of these parent volunteers can be life-altering. A few years ago, Jeremiah was switched from a school that knew him to a school that didn't understand him — and he didn't respond well to their educational techniques. It took a long time for people at his school to stop being scared of him, to see him as a child who is craving for people to understand his needs, and for people to want to help him be successful in an inclusive setting. With one change of placement we took a major step back. We had to start over in a school with no inclusiveness, while my son reverted back to major behaviors. By the



Rachel & Jeremiah Baldon

abilities. These parents didn't know Jeremiah, but they understood the idea that each child needs different kinds of supports to be successful in an inclusive environment.

These parents helped me learn that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to supports in the classroom. My son was the square peg trying to fit in a round hole, just like their children had been. Their guidance helped me rebuild a positive and inclusive school environment for my son.

What if those other parents had not volunteered themselves to help my son get back to an inclusive school environment? I would still be pulling my hair out. I'm grateful for the families who came before us, and I'm grateful they made the effort to educate others about people with disabilities.

Once Jeremiah was back in an inclusive environment his behavior improved again. He liked going to school again; he was laughing again on a regular basis. My heart soared to see him happy again. I knew it was worth all the meetings to see him happy and included.

time his new school was finally able to understand his needs and accept him for who he is, it was time to change to a high school.

Looking back, I see now that I was able to work through each issue as it arose because I had assistance from other parents who understand the need for inclusion for all people with dis-

See VOLUNTEER on page 11



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VOLUNTEER from page 10

I must say thank you to all those parents who volunteer their time to other families. I will pass it forward to others I meet in my daily life.

There was another situation at our church that also brought to light the importance of having people in our community who are willing to volunteer themselves to learn more about people with disabilities.

Jeremiah and I have been going to the same church for about thirteen years. He is basically nonverbal, but he does vocalize a lot when he is comfortable in his environment. Some of the vocalizations are voluntary and some are not. On one particular day, Jeremiah was really comfortable in his environment, but some of the people at our church were not as comfortable with his vocalizations.

Ultimately we had a few meetings with people at the church who volunteered to learn more about Jeremiah's needs and how we could make adaptations so he could continue to be in-

cluded. This experience helped me realize that creating an inclusive setting takes planning and adaptation, and the willingness of others to come together to help make it successful for everyone. Now when Jeremiah stands up with the choir with a fake microphone, I know the joy we both feel is what inclusion is all about.

As parents and people who care about people with disabilities, we need to spend more time in our everyday lives (i.e. grocery store, synagogue, work) helping educate people in our community about people with disabilities and the need for inclusion. We need to teach people what inclusion looks like. After all, one size doesn't fit all.

I now know I will spend more time volunteering to help people with disabilities be truly included in our community. We still have a long way to go in making our community more inclusive, but the small victories along the way are magic for the person with the disability and for those who helped it come about.

2007 SPARC Awards set for Oct. 10

The Arc in Jefferson County will be hosting the 2007 SPARC Awards on Wednesday, October 10th at the Wheat Ridge Recreation Center.

Awards will be given to people in the community who have demonstrated their support for The Arc in

Jefferson County and people with developmental disabilities.

If you would like to attend or volunteer at this event, or for more information, please contact Genni Williams at (303) 232-1338 x209.

Due to space limitations, we will not be able to accommodate walk-ins.

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Calendar

August 2007

Wednesday, August 1

ArcJC Think Different Tour. 12 to 1 p.m.

Rocky Mountain Partners Aktion Club.

ArcJC offices, 4 to 5 p.m.

People First. 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Thursday, August 2

Mobilizing Families Reunion.

Wednesday, August 15

Rocky Mountain Partners Aktion Club.

ArcJC offices, 4 to 5 p.m.

Board of Directors Meeting. 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, August 16

People First Coffee House. 6:30 to 8 p.m. Atlanta Bread Company, Alameda & Wadsworth.

September 2007

Monday, September 3

ArcJC Offices closed for Labor Day.

Wednesday, September 5

ArcJC Think Different Tour. 12 to 1 p.m.

Rocky Mountain Partners Aktion Club.

ArcJC offices, 4 to 5 p.m.

People First. 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Board of Directors Meeting. 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, September 9

Wine & Wacky Wickets Fundraiser. 2 to 5 p.m.

The Manor House in Ken Caryl Valley. See page 2 for more information.

Wednesday, September 19

Rocky Mountain Partners Aktion Club.

ArcJC offices, 4 to 5 p.m.

Thursday, September 20

People First Coffee House. 6:30 to 8 p.m. Atlanta Bread Company, Alameda & Wadsworth.

Mobilizing Families (Week 1) 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

See article page 1 for more information.

Thursday, September 27

Mobilizing Families (Week 2) 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

October 2007

Wednesday, October 3

ArcJC Think Different Tour. 12 to 1 p.m.

Rocky Mountain Partners Aktion Club.

ArcJC offices, 4 to 5 p.m.

People First. 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Thursday, October 4

Mobilizing Families (Week 3) 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 10

2007 SPARC Awards. See pg. 11 for more info.

Thursday, October 11

Mobilizing Families (Week 4) 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 17

Rocky Mountain Partners Aktion Club.

ArcJC offices, 4 to 5 p.m.

Board of Directors Meeting. 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 18

People First Coffee House. 6:30 to 8 p.m. Atlanta Bread Company, Alameda & Wadsworth.

Mobilizing Families (Week 5) 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 25

Mobilizing Families (Week 6) 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.



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