

The Arc of Mecklenburg County is dedicated to working with individuals with cognitive and intellectual impairments. We promote dignity, inclusion and choice for individuals and their families through advocacy, education, and support services.

We are on the Web! Check us out at
www.arcmeck.org



Help us save money!! Each returned newsletter costs us 60¢.
Please keep us updated with your address changes.

The Arc Voice

Creating Opportunities within our Community for People with Cognitive Impairments and their Families to Experience more Meaningful and Satisfying Lives

Giving in Tough Economic Times

With the current economic climate and the local United Way scandal that seems endless, I have been giving a lot of thought to how The Arc will sustain itself during these uncertain times. I certainly know that it will not be fun nor will it be easy. However, we are prepared. The Arc's Board of Directors & myself have had many discussions about how to proceed and how exactly we will move forward. The important thing to remember and to know is that we are 100% committed to moving forward.

I am relying on a common sense approach. We will cut back where we can. We will probably beg more for in-kind donations and ask for even more assistance from the community. We may ask for donations of things that seem simple, such as copy paper or office supplies. But these are the things that add up in terms of expenses. In addition, we will rely heavily on our current partners to sustain our programs.

It's important to remember that even though the economy is suffering and donations will be down from the United Way campaign, that people will still need our services. Needs of those with disabilities and their families don't simply go away because there isn't as much support available to them. Their needs are going to increase because there won't be as much support available. This is not the area in which we should cut back. The Arc will have to be there for these families, just as we have been there for the past 55 years.

All of the statistics say that when people are concerned about their personal finances, their overall giving declines by almost half and their volunteering decreases as well. These statistics are grim. Especially as a non-profit volunteer driven agency. This climate is going to challenge us to work harder and smarter. My hope is, that after we come out of this recession we will be better for having gone through it.

The economic climate and negative United Way media may actually pose an opportunity for The Arc of Mecklenburg to become even stronger, maybe less reliant upon the United Way for dollars. This may be the opening for us to get better at requesting donations from members of the community. It may actually give us an opportunity to become even better at what it is we do: advocacy. I will say this...nothing is impossible.

If you are interested or feel compelled to do something for The Arc, please call me to ask how you can get MORE involved. We will need you, as nothing that we do can be done alone if we are going to be successful.

Happy Holidays to you and your family — *Lauren Mullis*

From the
Executive
Director,

Lauren

Mullis

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Announcements

- Thanks to all the children that came out to the first meeting of K-Kids, our new program for children with and w/out disabilities. It was lots of fun and the kids interacted well with each other. If you have children between the ages of 6-12 or you know of someone that could benefit from the group please call Francine at (704) 332-4535 x101 to RSVP for the next meeting.
- COMMUNITY FAIR INFO NEEDED!!! Know of any community fairs that are taking place in 2009? Please contact Sabrina in regards to The Arc of Mecklenburg County having their information presented at the fair. We are looking for any type of community fair for families, on topics of health and safety or community in general. Any fairs that you hear about please feel free contact Sabrina!!!
- Don't Forget to come to our Annual Holiday Party on Friday, December 12th from 3—7pm. It's a drop in event and we hope to see you there! It is at the Scottish Rite Library located at 4740 Randolph Road. Celebrate the holiday season with us!
- A BIG Thank you goes to all of those who helped shop & adopt for Operation Santa Claus this year! We fulfilled the wish lists of over 400 children & adults in the Mecklenburg County area for the holidays.

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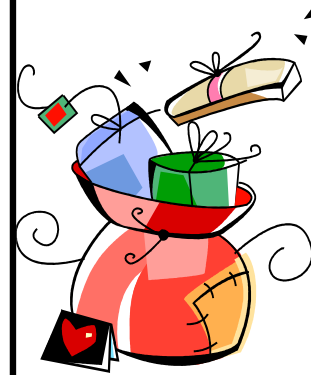
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Staff

- Lauren Mullis— Executive Director
- Sabrina McCracken—Community Education Coordinator
- Francine Patton - Child Advocacy & Volunteer Coordinator
- Meika Garner - Development Coordinator
- Steve McIlwain - Program Assistant

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2008 Holiday Party

We invite you to join us for our annual Holiday Party on Friday, December 12, 2008 from 3pm to 7pm at the Scottish Rite Library (located at 4740 Randolph Road, Charlotte 28211) You can RSVP to Meika Garner by December 5, 2008, at 704-332-4535 ext 104 or meika@arcmeck.org. Please come and partake in all of the fun with some tasty hors d'oeuvres, a great silent auction, and socializing with our staff, board of directors, other members, and clients. As 2008 comes to a close we can come together to recognize and celebrate the many successes of this year and share with you our plans for the next year. We appreciate the support that you have provided to us throughout this year and we hope you will mark your calendars and save the date so you can join our staff and board in celebrating the season and the closing of our 55th Year of service.



Ornaments for Sale



We will be selling ornaments again this year so get yours today! They make great gifts or can be beautiful holiday decoration for your tree. You can purchase one ornament for \$7 or two for \$10. They are lovely deep blue with silver writing, a great reminder of your support of The Arc and people living with developmental disabilities and their families. If you are interested in purchasing one please contact Meika at 704-332-4535 or meika@arcmeck.org.

Join the Development Committee

We are looking for development committee members. If you or someone you know enjoys special events planning, fundraising, or helping our agency reach out into the community we invite you to join our development committee.

Please contact Meika Garner at 704-332-4535 or meika@arcmeck.org with questions or for more information about how you can get involved.

Aktion Club's of Mecklenburg County

Aktion Club of Lake Norman Holiday Party Info:

On Thursday, December 11th from 6:00—8:00 pm at the Boy Scout Building on the grounds of Mt Zion Church (19600 Mt Zion Street in Cornelius) the Lake Norman Aktion Club will host their Holiday Party. There will be yummy food, craft activities and fellowship. Please join us! If you have questions call Lauren at 704-332-4535 x 102



Charlotte checkers "Night on Ice" fundraiser 2009

All Three Mecklenburg County Aktion Clubs will be selling tickets again to a Charlotte Checkers Game to raise money for their projects. We will be selling tickets to the Saturday, February 21st game where the Checkers take on the Florida Everblades. Game time is 7:00 pm. (This is a half hour earlier than in year's past). Tickets will be \$15.00 each this year. Nearly half of the proceeds will go back to the Aktion Clubs! Let's sell hundreds this year! To purchase your tickets contact Lauren at 704-332-4535 x 102

A special addition to this fundraiser is coming this year! Be on the lookout for upcoming info!



What's the future of our aktion clubs?

The Arc has been doing a lot of creative thinking in regards to all of our programs. Over the course of the next few years we would like to transform our Aktion Clubs into clubs that are for people with AND without disabilities. We have had immediate success with our new K-Kids program, which is an inclusive club for kids and we would like to model our Aktion Clubs in the same way. It's all about integration and learning about each other's ABILITIES.

Aktion Clubbers Have Talent!!!

On Friday, January 9th at 7:00 pm, The Aktion Club of South Mecklenburg will host their first annual talent show! The top three winners from the talent show will not only win a prize but will also go on to compete in the Matthews Kiwanis Club's "Matthews Has Talent" Talent Show, with the possibility of winning large cash prizes!

The entry fee for the Matthews has Talent show will be paid for out of the Aktion Club account for the top three Aktion Clubbers.

More information on this fun event will be made available and I hope that many of you will come out to support our Aktion Clubbers in this local Talent Show.

If you are an Aktion Clubber and would like to compete in the Aktion Club Talent Show for your chance to advance and compete in the Matthews has Talent Show please contact Steve to sign up at 704-332-4535 x 106

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Aktion Club (Nevins Center) Gets involved with the community!!

The Aktion Club of Charlotte-Mecklenburg has been busy helping out their community in recent months. Canned-Food drives have been taking place for several weeks and we are happy to report that they collected over 20 pounds of food to donate to those who are in need this holiday season.

In addition, the clubbers have been busy making special gifts for seniors at the Mecklenburg County Senior Centers, a fellow United Way agency. They painted flower pots with special messages and designs and then planted pansies in the pots to help brighten up the days of those who are in need of some cheering up. We hope to continue to make different gifts for the Mecklenburg County Senior Centers and form an ongoing partnership with them.

We Are...

- *We are a well-established network that connects families and people with developmental disabilities to community resources.*
 - *We create awareness of developmental disabilities.*
- *We lobby legislators to ensure all the needs of people with developmental disabilities are met. (i.e. education, housing, services and funding)*
- *We help people with developmental disabilities access services and the supports they need.*
 - *We encourage personal empowerment and self-advocacy.*
- *We educate the community about receiving, embracing, and engaging people with developmental disabilities in all facets of the community.*

Membership Application

Renew Your Membership Today!

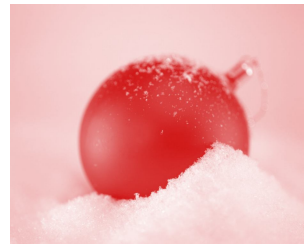
Sign up for:	Price
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Advocate	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$30
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate/Sponsor	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Arc Friend	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> President's Club	\$1000

Total: _____

Method of Payment	Name _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Check	Address _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Visa	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard	Phone _____

Credit Card # _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____



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generalinfo@arcmeck.org

Notification
Your Membership Goes a LONG way to help The Arc of Mecklenburg help those with disabilities and their families! Please become a member today!

It's TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!



Community Education Update

What Will It Take To Make Public Education Work?

The Arc of North Carolina is launching an Education Initiative aimed at improving Public Education for students with disabilities, through policy changes and legislation.

We continue to see students complete their years in public school with inadequate or non-existent post-school outcomes (marketable skills, post-secondary education, success in the community, options for meaningful activities).

Some of this information comes from chapters, some from families who call us. However, in order to determine what really needs to be done, we want to hear directly from families and students.

We are looking for input on some of the big issues that define quality education and real outcomes:

- *Teacher training*
- *Least Restrictive Environment (Separate classes, Segregated schools)*
- *Transition to what? (Occupational Course of Study/ VR/ Community Colleges/ Residential options/ Employment options)*
- *IEP's - quality and implementation*

The Arc of NC is looking for information that will help us advocate for STATEWIDE changes in policy, practice or legislation. While we want and need local input, these sessions are NOT intended to correct individual situations on the spot or bash your local school system. We want to identify the statewide issues that are keeping students from planning for and having meaningful lives. And then we want to DO something about it.

We will start each session with a brief presentation of The Arc of NC's assertions of areas of concern (transition services, LRE, teacher training, teacher retention, vocational training, segregated education, community involvement, community college options, etc) and then open the discussion for reaction and additional concerns of participants.

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There will be an option to submit questions or comments in writing, for those who prefer. There will also be a survey for participants to fill out.

On the evening of January 14, 2009 join the Arc of Mecklenburg County and The Arc of Union County to let your voice be heard on education to The Arc of North Carolina. More information to follow in regards to the time and place.

Any questions please contact Sabrina at 704-332-4535 ext. 103 or via email at sabrina@arcmeck.org

Wrightslaw 2009

The Wrightslaw Seminar works to provide accurate, up-to-date information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities. The purpose is to educate and inform parents, advocates, attorneys, educators, health care providers, and others who represent the interest of children with disabilities and their families.

Date: Thursday, February 5, 2009

Time: 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

lunch is not provided

Place: Charlotte Scottish Rite

4740 Randolph Road

Charlotte, NC 28222

Keynote Speaker: Pete Wright

\$50 per person / \$75 per couple (couple rate includes 2 books to share)

\$75 per professional

(CEU's and CLE's are included in registration)

***Registration Costs Includes 2 Wrightslaw Books ***

Register online at www.arcmeck.org/wrightslaw

with your pay-pal account.

For More Information:

Sabrina McCracken

704-332-4535 ext 103

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CPCCC grad wins state award

Observer Staff Reports

Posted: Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2008

A recent CPCCC graduate has won the North Carolina William D. Weston Co-op Student of the Year award.

Steven McIllwain, who graduated in May from CPCCC's Developmental Disabilities, Human Services Technology associate degree program, was named winner of the state award Thursday.

Sponsored by the N.C. Co-op Education Association, the award recognizes individuals who demonstrate outstanding achievements and contributions during their cooperative education experience.

McIllwain works at The Arc of Mecklenburg County, a local organization that seeks to create opportunities for people with cognitive impairments and their families, and helped many of the organization's clubs and support groups achieve success.

"Since the beginning of his internship, Steve has been an asset to The Arc," said Lauren Mullis, executive director for The Arc of Mecklenburg County and McIllwain's on-site supervisor. "His level of dedication to the agency and its clients is truly remarkable. We are all fortunate that he has chosen this career path. He has much to give."

During his co-op with The Arc of Mecklenburg County, McIllwain was instrumental in assisting with the organization's Aktion Club, a self-advocacy group for adults with disabilities; facilitating SibShops for children 5-12 years of age who have siblings with disabilities; and organizing monthly dinners with speakers for family members with infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Presbyterian Hospital.

In addition to these accomplishments, he helped raise funding for The Arc through the annual Operation Santa Claus Project and participated in the development of the upcoming Safe Fest, an event that will provide families of children with special needs an opportunity to learn how to stay safe at home, at school and in the community.

Because of his performance, attitude and dedication to individuals with disabilities, McIllwain was hired as a part-time Arc employee prior to the completion of his internship.

Adds Mullis, "Steve's caring spirit and connectedness to these folks are traits that aren't always easy to find. The Arc is extremely lucky to have him as an employee."

McIllwain received the 2008 Central Piedmont Community College Co-op Student of the Year Award earlier this year. The state recognition qualifies him to compete for the National Co-op Student of the Year Award later this year.

As the North Carolina William D. Weston Co-op Student of the Year, McIllwain earned a \$100 cash award and CPCCC's Co-Op Program -- as the nominating school -- received a \$100 matching award.

Congratulations Steve!

Noah's Arc NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) News



Babies born prematurely in winter may be more at risk from lung infections, like RSV, than their counterparts born in a different season.

With premature births at a record high, more babies are facing serious health challenges in their first year. These problems include respiratory infections that can compromise infants' lung function, leading to potentially serious respiratory problems.

This is a particular problem during the winter when RSV, Influenza, and several other important respiratory issues are usually in the community. Although RSV's symptoms are often similar to those of a cold or influenza, its consequences can be significantly more serious for premature infants.

RSV often starts with a runny nose, coughing and low-grade fever, but as the infection progresses, it causes breathing problems or wheezing, irritability or restlessness, and poor appetite.

Preventing infection is the best way to protect preemies and those particularly with high-risks, such as those with congenital heart or lung disease or a compromised immune system, from the potentially dangerous effects of RSV and other respiratory viral infections.

The Arc of Mecklenburg hosts monthly support group dinners for parents of children who have been born prematurely and are in the NICU at Presbyterian Hospital. We do this because children who are born early are at a higher risk for having developmental delays. Early intervention is key to the child's success and the more these parents are aware of the services and supports that are available to them the better the outcomes will be for their children.

The Arc brings in guest speakers from partnering agencies to speak of the services they can provide at these monthly meetings. In addition, we are always sure to bring in NICU parent graduates that can share their experiences with other families that are going through similar situations.

We are always in need of premie items to fill our gift bags to give to the parents. If you have donations or questions please contact Francine at (704) 332-4535 x 101.

Have a story you would like to share at one of these meetings? Please contact Francine to sign up to speak and share your experience.