

Challenger

A NEWSLETTER THAT CONNECTS, ENGAGES AND INFORMS

Looking Back At 2025

2025 brought loss of funding and news of future changes, not just for the State of Iowa but for the country as a whole. While there were challenges, last year also brought about many good things. Here are some favorites from 2025 by Arc team members:

"My favorite thing about 2025 was the CRANDIC holiday party. I loved to see all the families and participants getting together and feeling the holiday spirit and love."
~ Reegan



"I think the best thing for me in 2025 is all the feedback we received from our individuals and families in employment services. They are grateful for us and excited about their lives - they look forward to their futures. It is really rewarding to know that we are making people's lives better and happier."

~ Dylan



"My program lost funding in 2025, but prior to that, our team was so proud of how the program grew and the impact we were having on people's lives. When we had to close the program, our team very successfully transitioned participants to other community supports and we were able to continue serving most of them in other programs we offer."
~ Bailey



"In 2025 we brought on a new accounting system for the agency. It's up and running and helping to make things more efficient and better for the accounting team!"
~ Gayla



"Last year I had the opportunity to get more Day Habilitation participants on my caseload. I loved getting to know them! I especially enjoy seeing them out in the community - when they see my car drive by they get so excited and I love waving to them as they make their way around our community."

~ Gary

Board of Directors

Shelly Strellner, President
Cedar Rapids Bank and Trust
SVP Private Banking Manager

Danielle Rodriguez, Vice President
To The Rescue
Director of Housing

Terese Fisher, Secretary
Crystal Group
Office Manager

Nathan Haas, Treasurer
RTX
VP, Finance – CFO Mission Systems

Carol Meade, Past President
UnityPoint
Director of Behavioral Health Services

Katherine “Katie” Beckman-Shaull
K and K Consulting LLC PLC
CEO/Owner

Chandler DeWees
Rinderknecht Associates
Business Development Manager

Kelly Dybvig
United Fire Group
AVP Organizational Development

Jessica Fahey
The Standard
Director Information & Government Reporting

Maria Gaffney
Travero
SR HRBP

Chris Johnson – Self-Advocate
Meth-Wick
Dish Washer

Shawn Knighton
Linn-Mar School District
Family Resource Specialist, Homeless Liaison

Shelby Kobliska
Junior Achievement

Jeff Koffron
Koffron Custom Renovations & Property
Management, LLC
General Contractor

Sarah Kruse
Cedar Rapids Community School District
Executive Director of Special Education

Ali Limbert
UMB Bank
VP Treasury Management & Card Sales

Cherri Lock
Cedar Rapids School District (Harding MS)
Para Educator/Visual Interpreter

Ben Mulholland – Self-Advocate
Cassill Motors
Detailer

Candice Murphy
O’Connell’s Transport
President

Jackie Nau
Elite Fitness
Fitness Instructor

Michael Neuerburg
Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman PLC
Attorney

Doug Neumann
Self-Employed

Jessica Pleggenkuhle
New Leader Manufacturing
Community Impact Specialist

Nikki Wilcox
TrueNorth Companies
Strategic Development Consultant

From the Director’s Desk

Hello Arc Friends and Family!

Happy 2026! It’s the start of a new year and more excitement for The Arc. We are also pleased to move forward into this year with our one-word – Possibility. Our team took the time to think about this coming year, with state changes to the Waiver system, a quest for additional space, and an ever-changing federal landscape, and we are determined to find every Possibility to make things better for those we serve and the caregivers who support them.



Theresa Lewis



In December, The Arc had its 3-year accreditation visit by the Commission for Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Accreditation is a formal, independent verification that an agency or program meets established, high-quality standards for services. Through a consultative, peer-review process, The Arc was evaluated on 1,235 rigorous standards of quality and accountability for our

Day Habilitation, Project SEARCH, and our Employment Services programs by CARF peer reviewers. They were on-site for two days reviewing policies, forms, and procedures; interviewing leadership, Board of Directors, stakeholders, and participants and caregivers; and observing programs in action. The Arc received the highest credentialing level available, a 3-year accreditation, with ZERO recommendations. This means in 100% of operations, from leadership to administration to finance to compliance to service delivery and outcomes, The Arc implements to the highest level each of the 1,235 standards. Zero recommendations are only achieved by 3% of the 68,300+ accredited programs and services across the globe and The Arc is proud to add our names to this esteemed list of agencies. This stamp of approval demonstrates to families that their loved ones will get the best services and supports at The Arc, and it demonstrates to the community that The Arc is a great place to invest their time, talent, and treasure. Thank you to our team, Board of Directors, and stakeholders for your role in preparing for this review and for the work and dedication throughout the year by our Direct Support Professionals who make what we do and the impact we have a reality for over 600 families in the region.

Finally, with so many things happening in the state and across the country, The Arc commits to providing you with up-to-date information about the HOME project, Medicaid funding, and what is happening with the Department of Education. We ask for your energy and passion to sign-on to calls of action, talk to your legislators about the importance of Medicaid funding and quality special needs education, and be a loud voice for what is right and what is needed. Together we will fight to ensure a strong future for community based supports so individuals with disabilities can live independently or with caregivers, without the need for much higher levels of care.

With such uncertainty about the future, let’s remember that we have weathered many storms over many years, and can do so again: *“I can’t change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.” ~ Jimmy Dean*

With appreciation,

Theresa Lewis,
Executive Director

Services

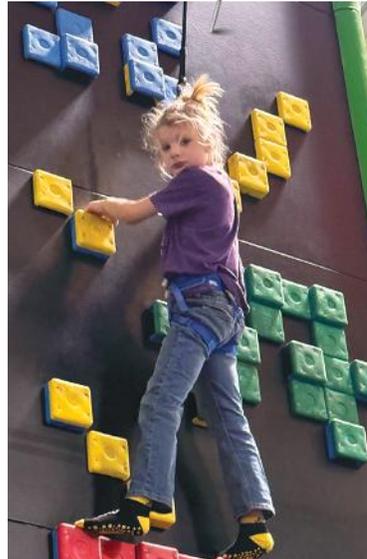
Group Respite

Did you know The Arc offers Group Respite activities almost every day of the week? Bowling, music, crafts, movies, dining out, Bingo, and field trips are just a few of the fun activities that keep us busy!

So, what is Group Respite and how can your loved one join in the fun? Group Respite is a service that provides short-term care for individuals with disabilities in a group setting. It offers opportunities to socialize, participate in engaging activities, and build friendships in a safe and inclusive environment. The program is designed to meet individual needs while encouraging independence, confidence, and community involvement. At the same time, it gives families and caregivers a much-needed break, knowing their loved one is cared for and supported by qualified staff.

Marissa Knoot, our Daycare and Group Supervisor, shares that the program continues to grow each week. Due to increased interest, additional groups have been added on select days to serve more individuals. Some of the most popular groups right now include **Bowling** and **Friday Night Grub and Gather**. Marissa and her team are also excited to add new groups this month, including Taco Tuesday and Sunday Brunch. We're looking forward to the summer months and introducing even more fun events.

If you or your loved one is interested in participating, please reach out to your Service and Support Coordinator to be added to our mailing list and stay informed about upcoming opportunities. We look forward to seeing you soon!



2025 Annual Campaign

Our 2025 Annual Campaign, which shared the inspiring story of Arc participant-turned-employee Avalon May, was a wonderful success and we have so many people to thank. Thanks to the generosity of 142 families and organizations more than \$111,000 was raised! Every dollar donated will stay right here at The Arc and will help to bridge critical funding gaps and strengthen the programs and services our participants rely on each day. This collective outpouring of support means so much to so many and we are deeply thankful to everyone who chose to give this holiday season!



Each year's campaign also offers donors the opportunity to give in honor, in memory or in celebration of someone meaningful in their lives. These tribute gifts remind us all that generosity is often rooted in love, gratitude and remembrance, and each donation carries a story of it's own. The names listed here represent individuals and families whose lives and impact were honored through tribute gifts during our holiday season.

Koan Barnum

Matt Baumann

Sheryl Cline Bass

Mars & Cassius Bean

Cyndi Craven

Marge & Ed Clark

Alyyah Cordell

Al Gieseaman

Isaiah Glubka

Joan Grave

Dorothy & Robert Hahn

Doug Hahn

Larin Krautbauer

Ethan Mortensen

Dorothy & Bill McGuire

Avalon May

Betty Regan

Dale Rettenmeier

Bihari Richards

Tyler Smothers

Stigers & Bosking Families

Gregory Sommerville

Emma Graham Taylor

Dale, Sara & Adam Todd

Emma Wilkinson

Jacob & Pauline Wilkinson

Thank You 2025 Annual Campaign Donors

Terry & Johanna Abernathy, Tom & Kathleen Aller, Anonymous(2), Deborah Arenson, Dianne & John Austad, Pat & Judy Baird, Judi & Jeff Barta, Sheryl Bass, Joshua Bean, Jared Roach & Amy Belice, Jim & Rachelle Bell, Bethany Lutheran Women's Guild, Thomas Blazek, Jana Bodensteiner, Breakfast of Champions, Brad & Jody Bridgewater, Cheryl Britt, Neil & Jean Bronstein, Michele Brown, Lavern Busse & Jeff Busse (Lavern & Audrey Busse Foundation), June Cach, Duane & Julie Cline, James Cone, Gary & Deborah Cordell, Anne Davis, Janie Dawson, Patricia Drumbarger, Mike & Cindy Dunn, Jon & Dina Dusek, Kelly Dybvig, Equitable Foundation, Janelle Erwin, Brian Fagan, Fairfax State Savings Bank, Connie Fillenworth, Dale & Judy Fitzgibbons, Amy & Patrick Fleming, Bruce & Julie Frana, Rosemary Gabe, Lisa & Andre Gallet, Faye Gerner, Teri Gibson, Richard Gieseaman, Kathleen Good, May Gortner Charitable Trust, Dave & Diane Graham, Duane Grave, Steven & Karen Greif, Ryan Hanrahan, Robert, Sharon & Sean Harschnek, Ann Hatfield, Eric & Ann Hearn, Carol Hills (The Jared & Carol Hills Foundation), James & Ann Hoffman, Virginia Hunstad, Connie & Kenneth Hurmence, Larry & Angie Ihnen, Terry Bergen & Liz Jacobi, Joseph & Ann Jeffries, Amy Kelley (Lynne E Hanse Perp Charitable Trust), Randy Klocke, Knights of Columbus #11942, Knights of Columbus #3893, Lori Knuth, David & Jillian Knutson, Shelby & Mark Kobliska, Steve Koczo, Edwin Kortenkamp, Gary & Bev Kotowske, Larry & Mary Kramer, Melinda Kranig, Mark & Jennifer Krautbauer, Sheryl Kruse, Jim & Margaret Kubczak, Kyle & Patti Kunz, Kay & James Lehman, Bill & Cheryl Lehman, Jim LeMaster, Scott & Kim Loggins, Doriene Loomis, Bill & Mary Lou McCartan, Bill Mead, Tyson & Teresa Morio, Clint & Gale Mote, Ellen Mouw, Richard & Colette Murphy, Mike Myers, James & Laurie Neuhaus, Doug & Jennifer Neumann, Jim & Sue Novak, Karen & Jim Nussle, Scott & Penny Olson, Carla Shey & Jay Osborne, Julie Parrott, John & Ann Persick (Persick Family Giving Fund), Pete & Delaine Petersen, Kathleen Poynter, Tom & Linda Randklev, Bruce & Myra Ray, Dale & Debra Rettenmeier, Phillip & Christy Rezin, Maya & Doug Richards, Nancy Rife, John & Thelma Rife, Susan Roling, Carolyn Rosberg, Shelby & Walter Roth, John & Nancy Roth, Jeff & Kristin Schaefer, Emmett & Ann Scherrman, Michael Schramp, David & Rhonda Schulz, Scott & Terrie Seibert, Richard & Patricia Semelroth, Bill & Rocki Shepard, Maryann Shinrock, Ray & Gloria Short, James & Cindy Smothers, Ellie & Richard Snavely, G&E Sommerville, Kelly & Mike Stagg, Ralph & Vicki Standley, Roger & Oline Stigers, Richard & Carole Swanson, Jeffrey & Kathy Thorsteinson, Sara & Dale Todd, Emma Trotter, Deborah Uhrina, Connie & Kenneth Wagner, Sharon Wagner, Joe Wallace, Jeanne Wampler, Jeffrey & Julie Wenzel, Kevin & Becky Whitman, Jessie Willman, Virginia & John Wilts, Larry & Joni Witzel, Judy Woods

Welcome to The Arc



Hi, I'm Cameron DeKruif and I am the new Day Habilitation Coordinator. I've been a DSP with The Arc's Day Hab program for the past two years, and I'm excited to continue supporting Day Hab in this new role. Those who know me here know that I love Pokémon and playing games for fun. I especially love how games can bring people together to create lasting memories. When I'm not working or playing games, I'm spending time with family, friends, or our 3 pets at home.

Hi, I'm Nicole Franc and I am a new Employment Specialist.

I have worked with The Arc in several different past positions, always appreciating the hard work and advocacy seen by the services provided. I am now looking forward to being a part of what makes The Arc a wonderful necessity in our community. I have already felt so welcomed.



Hi, I'm Tammy Hasler and I am the new Staff Accountant.

I was born and raised in Anamosa, Iowa moving to the Cedar Rapids metro area after graduation and I've been here ever since.

I love spending time with my family, whether it be Sunday dinners, playing games or hanging out at my parents' house on "Lake Delhi". I also enjoy spending time with my friends watching Hawkeye Football, traveling, gambling or just catching up.

I'm glad to be a part of The Arc of East Central Iowa's team and looking forward to working with everyone to achieve our goals.

Hi, I'm Steve Szyszka and I am a new Employment Specialist.

I enjoy spending my free time with my family or reading. I like most kinds of music especially if live. Someday I hope to visit Cuba.



I'm Allyson Anderson and I am the new Daycare & Group Respite Program Specialist.

I've previously worked with The Arc in several roles, including DSP, Groups Lead, and completed my internship experiences as well. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, but you'll probably find me reading or building Legos.

I'm looking forward to growing with The Arc and collaborating with such a dedicated team.

Participant Spotlight



Serenity (Remy)

About Me.

I have 3 older siblings; Drake, Drew, & Lanie. They don't live with me so I love to video chat with them to keep in touch.

I also have a two year old nephew that I LOVE to teach and explore with.

Favorite Arc Activity?

I love to sing and dance, so I really enjoy coming to the group respite activity, Jammin'!

Favorite Places?

I really enjoy going to parks. Morgan Creek is my favorite.

Favorite Foods?

Noodles, chips, & gummy bears.

I am a very proud student! I love teaching others about the things that I learn. I'm working really hard to write my letters and numbers. I even received the "Student of the Week Award" the week before Christmas break!

Food Bank

When SNAP benefits were unexpectedly stopped on November 1, 2025, it created an immediate and significant challenge for many Arc families and staff who rely on this resource to meet basic needs. As food insecurity quickly affected members of our community, The Arc took action by opening a small food bank to help fill the gap. This food bank was made possible through generous donations from friends, families, and community members. Through this effort, The Arc was able to support 100 participants

and staff during the interim. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to this successful and compassionate effort.



Our next turn in deadline is April 8th. Get your receipts turned in today!

CASH 4 STUDENTS

SUPPORT THE ARC BY SAVING YOUR HYVEE RECEIPTS!

Anytime that you shop at a Cedar Rapids or Marion HyVee or HyVee Drugstore save those receipts! Turn them into The Arc and we will turn them into cash for our daycare!

You Make a Difference

Thank you for all of your continued generous contributions to The Arc. This edition of the Challenger recognizes volunteers, donors and members who generously supported The Arc from November 2025 through January 2026.

Thank You

General Donations

Eric Anderson, Anonymous, Joshua Baynes, Andrew Bentz, Jane Bockenstedt, Jody Bridgewater, Cargill, Heidi Conerd, Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust, CrowdStrike, Kean Drake, Eastern Iowa Arts Academy, Jessica Fahey, Danielle Fahnle, Force4Giving, Stephen & Judy Fuemmeler, Maria Gaffney, Andre & Lisa Gallet (Gallet Family Charitable Fund), Todd Henry, Dawn & Stan Herkelman, Ruth Hojka, International Paper, Ann Jeffries, Junior League of Cedar Rapids, Jeffrey Keslar, Cheryl Kiburz, Tracey Koffron, Lil Drug Store Products, Claudine Linnenkamp Estate, Patty Lynott, Nordstrom, Danica O'Brien, Nicole Ohrt, Jessica Pleggenkuhle, Susan Polglaze, James Potts, Don & Marcia Primus, Dave Radack, Jess Rockwell, Gina Rooney, RTX/Rockwell, Salesforce, Tiffany Salz, Anthony Schwendinger, Mindy Sorg, Standard Insurance Co, Tawnya Stone, Shelly Strellner, Thomas Tapp, Target Corp, Joseph Terfler, Transamerica Foundation, Curtis & Mary Updegraff, Chris White, Patricia Wiebel, Kristen & Kyle Wilcox (Wilcox Family Fund), Peggy Wilkinson, Blake Wilkinson

Memorials

Mary Lavonne Dozier

Derek & Karen McCully

Lorraine June Larsen

Timothy & Jacqueline Flemming

Alec Meade

Jody & Brad Bridgewater, Tyler Smothers

Sara Smith

Ryan Smith

Cody Whittaker

Cheri Whittaker

Volunteers Hours -29

Katie Beckman-Shaull, Jeff Corrigan, Chandler DeWees, Jessica Fahey, Jordan Feltman, Terese Fisher, Maria Gaffney, Nathan Haas, Brad Hauge, Kristian Irving, Christopher Johnson, Shawn Knighton, Jeff Koffron, Sara Kruse, Ali Limbert, Cherri Lock, Carol Meade, Ben Mulholland, Candice Murphy, Michael Neuerburg, Doug Neuman, Jessica Pleggenkuhle, Danielle Rodriguez, Kristin Schaefer, Shelly Strellner, Nikki Wilcox

Membership

Arc Angel

Dennis & Rebecca McCollough

Arc Builder

Andrew Boone, Paul & Cheryl Kiburz, Mark Ogden & Iris Muchmore, Suzanne Myers, Michael Neuerburg

Arc Friend

Terry & Johanna Abernathy, Dianne & John Austad, Charles & Patricia Becker, Brad & Jody Bridgewater, Jessica Fahey, James Klosterbuer, Jeff & Tracey Koffron, Randy Krejci, Doug Neumann, Danielle Rodriguez, Emmett & Ann Scherrman, Shelly Strellner, Keith Wright

Arc Advocate

Katie Beckman-Shaull, Jeff Corrigan, Chandler DeWees, Jessica Fahey, Jordan Feltman, Terese Fisher, Maria Gaffney, Nathan Haas, Brad Hauge, Kristian Irving, Christopher Johnson, Shawn Knighton, Jeff Koffron, Sara Kruse, Ali Limbert, Cherri Lock, Carol Meade, Ben Mulholland, Candice Murphy, Michael Neuerburg, Doug Neuman, Jessica Pleggenkuhle, Danielle Rodriguez, Kristin Schaefer, Shelly Strellner, Nikki Wilcox

Wish List

From every day items to special requests. We are always in need of items to keep our office and programs running. Donations can be dropped off at The Arc's main office M-F 9 AM - 3:30 PM or shop our [Amazon Wish List](#).



Kitchen Needs

Cascade Dishwasher Pods
Kitchen Garbage Bags
Paper Plates & Paper Towels
Plastic Disposable Cups
Plastic Spoons & Forks
Ziploc Bags - Reg & Freezer (Gallon, Quart)

Snack & Cooking Activity Items

Applesauce
Canned Fruit & Vegetables
Cotton Candy Machine
Fruit Snacks / Granola Bars
Ice Cream Maker
Juice - 100% Apple or Grape
Snack Crackers & Chips - Variety Packs

General Supplies

Baby Wipes - Unscented/Sensitive
Bandages - Assorted
Deodorant - Travel Size (Men & Women)
Hand Lotion - Travel Size
Hand Sanitizer Refills / Hand Wipes
Kleenex/Tissues (Cube Boxes)
Lint Rollers
Mouthwash
Reusable Hot/Cold Packs
Shampoo/Conditioner
Tide Pods - Free & Gentle
Toilet Paper
Toothbrush & Toothpaste - Travel Size

Office Supplies

#2 Pencils
Ball Point Pens (Blue or Black Ink)
Batteries (AAA, AA, C & D)
Construction Paper (Black) 9" x 12"
Dry Erase Markers & Washable Markers
Highlighters / Sharpies / Post-it Notes

Program Needs

Card Games
Coloring Books - Adult & Children
Crafts
Craft Felt Fabric Sheets & Pipe Cleaners
Digital Kitchen Timers
Fidget Toys - Pop-its, Stretchy Toys, Noodles, Dimples, Fidget Spinners, etc.
Fine Motor Skills Toys
Gift Cards - Aldi, Walmart, HyVee, Gas, Hair
Gift Cards (Community Activities) - Sky Zone, Potters Obsession, Speedeez, Fun Station, Air Fx, etc.
Googly Eyes - Various Sizes
Kinetic Sand & Sand Toys
Painting Canvases - All Sizes
Play-Doh
Safety Bands
Suncatchers

Clothes/Textile

Blankets / Pillows
Clothing - Sweatpants, T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Athletic Shorts - All Sizes, Youth & Adult
Compact Laundry Bags
Hats & Gloves - Adult
Towels - Kitchen & Bath



For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Cedar Rapids, IA
Permit No. 313

Member of The Arc of Iowa & The Arc of the United States

The Arc of East Central Iowa

680 2nd Street SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
Phone: 319-365-0487
Fax: 319-365-9938
www.arceci.org

Address Service Requested

Mission Statement

The Arc of East Central Iowa empowers individuals with disabilities and their families to engage in lifelong opportunities to live, learn, work, play, and advocate with full dignity and inclusion in their communities.

Make a Difference
Donate at www.arceci.org



Join us as we walk together to raise awareness about intellectual and developmental disabilities at the **29th Annual Arc March!**

March 28th, 2026

Lindale Mall

8:00 AM - Activities Begin | 9:30 AM - Walk Starts



Go to www.arceci.org for details on this event or to make a donation!



Register by March 9th to guarantee a t-shirt!

• **CELEBRATING THE ABILITIES IN ALL OF US!** •