



# The Arc Today

Winter 2017  
Volume 16, Issue 1

## Save the Date

**February 12-14, 2017**

Inclusion Works Conference  
Royal Sonesta Hotel  
Houston, TX

**April 18, 2017**

Wings for All  
George Bush Intercontinental  
Airport

**April 24, 2017**

Annual Awards Dinner  
Safari Texas

**May 22, 2017**

Annual Business Meeting  
Prosperity Bank

**June 19, 2017**

Golf Classic  
Weston Lakes Country Club

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# AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

# The Arc's Annual Awards Dinner

## Monday, April 24, 2017

Do you know someone who has done an outstanding job in supporting the mission of The Arc?

Review the "Nomination Categories" and nominate that person/s for one of our awards.

It's a great way to say, "Thank you" to a hard-working volunteer/business/donor.

Nomination Form Deadline: March 24, 2017

**Please see newsletter insert for Nomination Categories and form or visit our website:**

[www.arcoffortbend.org](http://www.arcoffortbend.org)

*Achieve with us.*

**OUR MISSION**

The Arc of Fort Bend County ensures opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to maximize their quality of life within our community.

***The Arc of Fort Bend County  
Board of Directors 2016-2017***

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

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**Administrative Assistant**

Cheryl Olivier

**Account Manager**

Jenny Schulte

*Committee Assignments and Job Descriptions are available on our website*

**CORE VALUES**

1. Awareness: greater awareness about individuals with disabilities increases understanding about the abilities of individuals with disabilities, and greater understanding increases opportunities for individuals with disabilities, so we work to achieve greater awareness to achieve greater understanding to expand opportunities.
2. Diversity: we must serve all individuals with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families in this county.
3. Respect: we must be understanding of and sensitive to the concerns of individuals with disabilities about their identity and how we describe them.
4. Ownership: it is important to have community members serve on our committees and board, and support our association, but our association should remain an "individuals with disabilities and their families" organization.
5. Advocacy: with limited resources, if we become primarily or solely a provider organization, our association will never do more than make only a limited impact on the quality of life of a few individuals with disabilities.
6. Cooperation: advocacy and programs that benefit individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families in many cases will also benefit individuals with other disabilities.
7. Good Stewardship: as an association, we must be fiduciaries of the talent and resources that our volunteers and community supporters entrust to us.

**OUR GOALS**

The Arc's goals were chosen to be directed toward Mission and Vision and build on our strength and success.

- I. The Arc shall advocate for appropriate individualized educational programs/opportunities for people with I/DD in all stages of life.
- II. The Arc shall advocate for a variety of vocational/employment options for people with I/DD.
- III. The Arc shall advocate for public and private community institutions to become more responsive to the individual needs of people with I/DD, thereby promoting quality of life for all.
- IV. The Arc shall advocate for and promote a variety of appropriate and inclusive social, cultural and fitness/wellness opportunities in the community.
- V. The Arc shall continue to invest in properties that are self-sustaining and provide facilities for our constituents.
- VI. The Arc shall provide effective leadership and fundraising efforts to accomplish our mission.

***To Send a Special Tribute***

In Memory of      or       In Honor of

Pay tribute to a friend or family member while also supporting services and programs that benefit The Arc of Fort Bend County with your donation.

Person's Name

Occasion

Send acknowledgement to:

Name

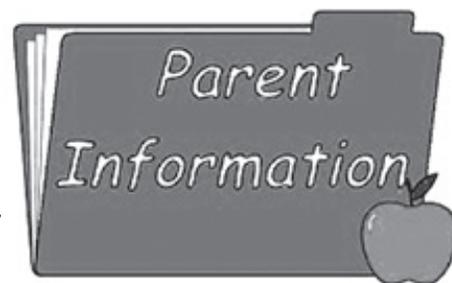
Address

City, State, Zip

Please make checks payable to:  
The Arc of Fort Bend County  
123 Brooks Street, Sugar Land, Texas 77478

# Letter to Families - The RULE

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Dear Families and Friends of The Arc,

Do you have an adult child who lives in a group home or for whom you are the Home Companion caregiver? And/or does your child attend a Learning Center?

**There are significant changes coming. Please read on to learn how these changes will affect you.**

As you may have heard, in 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved a rule which affects how all states will implement and receive funding from Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). States were afforded 5 years to develop a plan to implement the "Rule", as compliance is scheduled for March 2019.

The CMS "Rule" is lengthy - but it is imperative that parents understand the "Rule", and further, that they provide their input as the Texas HHSC develops a plan to implement strategies that will accommodate all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities – taking into consideration the broad expanse of their abilities/disabilities.

Texas is now designing the plan. The Arc of Texas is working with chapters to get information from parents about how the "Rule" will affect them. They have made some good suggestions to HHSC, but nothing has been formally approved by Charles Smith, the Executive Commissioner of HHSC.

As a single example, the current learning center service delivery model pays for up to 6 hours a day at a center which serves only people with IDD. Going forward, this service delivery model will be considered non-compliant with the "Rule". Therefore, Texas must develop alternatives to the segregated setting model and the amount of time that will be covered.

I will send information about the HHSC plan as it is formulated. The first step now, is for you to read the "Rule". Copy & paste this link into your browser to read the "Rule".

**[http://www.aucd.org/docs/policy/HCBS/HCBS%20Settings%20Rules\\_What%20You%20Should%20Know!%20Final%201%202022%202016.pdf](http://www.aucd.org/docs/policy/HCBS/HCBS%20Settings%20Rules_What%20You%20Should%20Know!%20Final%201%202022%202016.pdf)**

Thank you,

Laura LaVigne  
Executive Director

# Best in the West, Truly The Best!

Margo Pasko

Sshhh! Commissioner James Patterson was whispering and we all needed to hear who was bidding on the fantastic live auction items at The Best in the West! Laryngitis may have quieted his voice, but it certainly didn't put a damper on the festivities at the George Ranch Arena on November 19, 2016! The Arc of Fort Bend County's 38th annual Best in the West was another resounding success with bidding, barbecue and dancing, all in support of "Quality of Life For All"!

A perfect team of combined talents is what makes the Best in the West, truly the BEST! James Patterson, Ann Smith and Jo Ann Stevens produced another amazing evening. They were assisted by committee chairs Ron and Trudy Ortwerth (Ace in the Hole Auction); Jenny Gortney (cashier and live auction); Debbie Peterson (live auction) Julie Fix, Vicki Ikeler and Barbara Magana Robertson (publicity); Theresa Bathe, Melisa Bell and Danielle Garrison (reservations); Charlie Huber (drink ticket booths), Russell Cosbey & Rick Cushenberry (set-up and tear down) and Beverly Cushenberry and Sarah Parkinson (silent auction). And, thankfully, there were three, back-up auctioneers: Brandon Bell, Mayor Joe Zimmerman and Gary Pearson, who jumped in when the Commissioner's voice gave out.

Master of ceremonies was Chris Breaux, with the accounting firm of Whitley Penn, who presented the 23 sensational live auction items. The magnificent packages included "Lunch with the County Bunch", a trip for eight to the Beau Rivage Casino in Biloxi, MS on a private jet, a yellow Labrador puppy and tickets to the 2017 Indianapolis 500 race plus travel money and tickets to the "Snakepit".

Ron and Trudy Ortwerth's Ace in the Hole Auction was overflowing with 20 exciting items - a one week stay in a Wyndham Resort, an Amish quilt, a 12-gauge Berretta shotgun, Wine tasting outing for 20 via chartered bus, and A&M football tickets. The "Buy Now" option was quite popular!



The silent auction once again had some amazing items for bidding! Corral sponsors were The Arc of Fort Bend County, Big Boys' Woodshed, Cushenberrys/Parkinsons, Fort Bend ISD, OakBend Medical Center, RE/MAX Fine Properties, and Fort Bend Law Enforcement. The variety of items made for splendid shopping, from small to big-ticket items!

The evening was underwritten by many generous sponsors. Prosperity Bank was the presenting sponsor for the evening, designated as World Champion. Sprint Fort Bend County Landfill and The Johnson Development Corp. were the Gold Buckle sponsors. At the Bronze Boots sponsorship level were Aviles Engineering, Classic Chevrolet Sugar Land, Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation, Fred and Mabel R. Parks Foundation, and Sugar Land Rotary Club.

Rhinestone Cowboy sponsors included Aliana Development Company, Marilyn & Bob Ewing, Geoscience Engineering, Hunton and PGAL. Silver Spurs sponsors were AECOM, Bud Light/Silver Eagle Distributor, County Judge Bob and Pat Hebert, EHRA Engineering, Fort Bend County Deputy Sheriff's Association, Gunda Corporation, Huitt-Zollars, Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP, McDonald & Wessendorff Insurance, Mitchell & Duff, LLC, Ninyo & Moore, Pape-Dawson Engineers, PCD Management LLC, Raymond James, Shepley Bulfinch, SWCA Environmental Consultants, The Muller Law Group, PLLC and WJ Interests. In addition, 91 other individuals and companies purchased tables in support of The Arc.

Proceeds from The Best in the West will be used for a wide variety of services and advocacy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Ft. Bend County. Funds will be used to maintain group homes and learning centers that The Arc leases to HCS providers and clients; support the self-advocates group; provide social and recreational activities for over 140 clients including the annual holiday formal, monthly dances, weekly bowling league and other awesome outings. The proceeds also support The Arc's legislative and educational advocacy programs, the youth group programs, the Special Olympics program offering nine different sports with more than 110 athletes, the employment services program, and the TwentySomethings transitional group.

All of the "Best in the West" Wranglers express their sincere appreciation to each person, corporation, and organization that helped make this event a success. Your support helps us continue the work we do to improve the quality of life for hundreds of families

We hope you had as much fun as we did! Please mark your calendars to save the date for **Saturday, November 18, 2017!**

## **TOYS**

## **for Best in the West!**

Look at this box of toys! Kyle Olivier, our Cheryl Olivier's son, celebrated his 15th birthday with a party at Fuddruckers. He asked his friends to donate a toy, in lieu of a birthday gift, which he then donated to The Arc's silent auction corral at the Best in the West. Thirteen toys made up a great family toy box for kids of all ages!

***Thank you, Kyle, and happy birthday!***



# Thank you Jo Ann for all your dedication and hard work to The Arc!

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Jo Ann Stevens has been a co-chair of The Arc's "Best in the West" since 1988. She has recently decided to step down from that position so she can devote more time to her new position as the Women's Council of Realtors, Greater West Houston 2017 President-elect. What an honor for Jo Ann! She and husband, Ron, will spend some time traveling, as her new responsibilities will involve more travel for the next two years – especially when she is the President in 2018! Congratulations Jo Ann – WCR will be in very capable hands!



## The Arc Family Matters

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**Please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers:**

**Normie Auzenne**, mother of Cheryl Olivier, Administrative Assistant at The Arc of Fort Bend, passed away on November 17, 2016.

**Lola Woodard**, mother of Linda Casey, passed away on November 23, 2016, at 99 years of age. Linda and husband, Mike Casey, are long-time members of The Arc. Mike served as Board Chair for two terms.

**Catherine Churchill**, member of The Arc, passed away on December 13, 2016.

**Thomas (Tommy) Smith**, longtime supporter of The Arc, passed away on December 1, 2016.

**Dr. Elmer Jenkins**, grandfather of Special Olympics athlete Walter "Deon" Sullivan, passed away on January 4, 2017.

**Josephine (Joanne) Brown**, member of The Arc and Special Olympic athlete, passed away last year.



123 Brooks Street, Sugar Land, TX 77478

Apply Now!

## 2017 Kathy Moody Memorial Scholarship

The Kathy Moody Memorial Scholarship was established by The Arc of Fort Bend County to assist students with an intellectual and/or developmental disability who need financial assistance to attend a post-secondary educational or vocational program.

- Must be a resident of Fort Bend County
- Must be a member of The Arc of Fort Bend
- Must be already enrolled/accepted at a post-secondary program
- Applicant is eligible to receive one scholarship

Pick up an application at The Arc's office or  
download at our website: [www.arcoffortbend.org](http://www.arcoffortbend.org)

For additional information: Contact Laura LaVigne at:  
[llavigne@arcoffortbend.org](mailto:llavigne@arcoffortbend.org)



# Success for Today and Tomorrow Conference

## Accessing Disability Resources

*You've all heard, "it takes a village to raise a child," but the first step is knowing who and what's in your village.*

**Join us Saturday, February 25th**

**8:30am - 12:00pm**

**Hilton Garden Inn College Station**

**3081 University Dr. E., Bryan, TX 77802**

Meet **Anthony Ianni**, a Nationally renowned Anti-bullying Motivational speaker. Anthony earned his Bachelor's Degree from Michigan State University and was the first Division 1 Basketball Player in NCAA History with Autism. Despite bullies, adversity and numerous personal challenges Anthony worked hard and never gave up.



*Anthony Ianni*

**Please RSVP** at [cdd.tamu.edu](http://cdd.tamu.edu) by **Friday, February 17th** so that we can be sure to have refreshments and child-care available for all.

<b>Agenda</b>	<b>8:30am - 9:00am</b>	Coffee; Find your seats for the Keynote
	<b>9:00am - 10:00am</b>	Keynote Speaker, Anthony Ianni
	<b>10:00am - 11:00am</b>	Exhibitor/Resource Booths; Youth attend the Fungineering session or child-care with Project Sunshine
	<b>11:00am - 12:00am</b>	Parent/Student Panel

*For more information contact:*

**Brynn Biggs** at (979) 209-3738 or [brynn.biggs@bryanisd.org](mailto:brynn.biggs@bryanisd.org)

**Eric Roberts** at (979) 764-5500 or [ericroberts@csisd.org](mailto:ericroberts@csisd.org)

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# ACCESS COLLEGE TEXAS

## CONFERENCE

Opening doors to college opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



HCC VAST Academy proudly announces an all-day Access College Texas Conference for educators, professionals and families. Join us on Saturday, February 25, as we discuss resources to open doors to college opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout Texas.

**FEBRUARY 25, 2017**  
HCC Southwest College  
5601 West Loop South, Auditorium  
Houston, TX 77081

### Who Should Attend?

Access College Texas is an excellent opportunity to learn about programs serving adults and children with special needs who are interested in attending college. Topics include transitioning from high school, best practices, college preparation, and a panel of graduates who will share their college experiences.

**REGISTER AT [hccsfoundation.org/2017actconference](http://hccsfoundation.org/2017actconference)**

Interested in speaking or volunteering? Contact Ana Calvo at [ana.calvo@hccs.edu](mailto:ana.calvo@hccs.edu) or 713.718.6297

Early Registration: December 1, 2016 - January 5, 2017

\$30 per individual

(Includes Breakfast, Lunch, T-shirt and admission)

Non-Profit Exhibitor - \$30 per organization

(Includes one 6-foot table, electricity and 2 lunches)

For-Profit Exhibitor - \$85 per organization

(Includes one 6-foot table, electricity and 2 lunches)

Registration: January 6, 2017 - February 24, 2017

Attendee: \$40 per individual

(Includes Breakfast, Lunch, T-shirt and admission)

Non-Profit Exhibitor - \$40 per organization

(Includes one 6-foot table, electricity and 2 lunches)

For-Profit Exhibitor - \$100 per organization

(Includes one 6-foot table, electricity and 2 lunches)

# Special Olympics Aquatics Team Competes at Statewide Games

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*Margo Pasko*

Fall Classic, 2016, was an extraordinary event for our delegation! Our very own Kyle Eddlemon was honored as the male athlete of the year (22 and older category) for the whole state of Texas! He was a guest of honor at a special dinner before opening ceremonies and had his own banner to carry in the parade of athletes. The Arc extends a big roar of congratulations to Kyle and his family, just like the crowd did at opening ceremony!

On Thursday, October 13, 2016, The Arc's Special Olympics aquatics team hit the road to compete at the annual Fall Classic Statewide Games in College Station. All totaled, twenty seven members of The Arc's aquatics family attended the two-day tournament. A big thank you is extended to all of The Arc financial supporters who made the trip possible!

The swimmers were Steve Bily, Davis Caruthers, Chance Geary, David Gonzalez, Jimmy Griffin, Tommy Hajek, JJ Jimenez, Tony Presson, Danny Ries, Tyler Sims and Monica Wright. We had an orange crush theme going: the team had new, bright orange, aquatics shirts to stand-out in the crowds, and they certainly did! Aquatics coaches, Becky Geary, Beth Jimenez and Jimmy Jimenez did a phenomenal job keeping up with all the events and the athletes! The athletes all did a great job bringing home a rainbow of medals and ribbons!

But, it truly takes a village to manage all the athletes and their events during a swim meet. The athletes had the support of Joann and Robert Bily, Jeanette and Don Ries, Susie Sims, Ana Gonzales, Cristy and Bobby Caruthers, Megan Geary, Mike Geary, Jennifer Griffin, Larry Lobue and Margo Pasko.

Special Olympics Texas did an outstanding job organizing the 16th annual Fall Classic Competition in the Bryan/College Station area. Four sports competed at Fall Classic. This year, there were 544 aquatics athletes, 535 bocce athletes, 236 golfers, and 437 softball players.

The opening ceremony was, by turns, exuberant, as well as somber, as the Law Enforcement Torch Run members honored the athletes and the memory of fallen Bellaire police officer Marco Zarate. Officer Zarate was an active volunteer with Special Olympics throughout his career. Officer Zarate's widow and three children participated in this year's Fall Classic torch ceremony to commemorate his dedication to Special Olympics. The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) began in 1981 when Wichita, Kansas, Police Chief Richard LaMunyon created the Torch Run. LETR became the largest public awareness and fundraising group for Special Olympics.

Known as Guardians of the Flame, law enforcement members and Special Olympics athletes carry the "Flame of Hope" into opening ceremonies. The flame symbolizes courage and celebration of diversity uniting communities around the globe. If you have never witnessed an opening ceremony, put it on your to-do list!

When the competition ended, the athletes, coaches and volunteers headed home for a well-deserved rest. However, Coach Becky's rental van full of athletes took a slight detour-- to change a flat tire! No pressure, though, because they had help to spare (puns intended)! Special thanks go to the two Jimmy's for changing the tire—Jimmy Jimenez and Jimmy Griffin. It was another adventure on the road for our Special Olympics family.

# Special Olympics Golf Team Holds Tournament at Weston Lakes

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*Margo Pasko*

It all started in June. At The Arc's Golf Classic at Weston Lakes on June 20, Special Olympics athlete and golfer Stevie Meyer bid on an auction package for a mini-tournament at Weston Lakes. Yes, Stevie really likes golf! However, Commissioner James Patterson outbid Stevie. Not to worry, though, he then donated the package to The Arc's Special Olympics golf team. Head golf coach, Kelley Moseley and coach, Joanne Meyer, organized a 9-hole, casual, scramble tournament, which was held on October 18, at Weston Lakes.

The teams were Stevie and Buddy Meyer; Jeff Hoffman and Coach, Mike Wright; Mike Marshall and his granddad, Chuck Atwood; Gary and Tank Schottle and anchor team Coach Ken Elliott and Bob Connors. Golf pro, Thomas "Hawkeye" Valdez, who donates his services to our team, circulated his play among the three "athlete" teams. Kelley Moseley was the marshal and starter. Joanne Meyer and volunteer, Joyce Elliott, also circulated throughout the play, offering encouragement, even though they didn't drive a beverage cart. Afterwards, everyone celebrated with dinner at Victor's Mexican Grill in Fulshear.

Coach, Ken Elliott remarked, "We had a great afternoon! I think Stevie, Mike and Tank enjoyed being surrounded by family and people who obviously care for them. Stevie was the most talkative I have seen at the restaurant-- he knows a lot about golf events that have happened in the past... who won what tournament and when...it's great to see him relaxed and involved. I remember when we first started the golf program.... It was tough to get him to make eye contact or say anything, now you sometimes can't get a word in edgewise! Mike is a great hugger and dispenser of high fives and knuckle bumps. Tank was his usual, no nonsense, get-the-job-done self. I didn't see too many of his shots but he seemed to be very pleased with his game, and we all know that he is his most critical critic.

It's obvious that Thomas Valdez cares a lot for all of our guys and they all echo that love back. Thomas is into the same music, TV shows, movies, and celebrities as the guys, so they always want to do their best for him. His Batman head covers are awesome, as Mike would say.

Thanks to Joanne for organizing the event and James Patterson for donating the golf package-- he is a great friend to The Arc of Fort Bend and the families that it serves."

Head coach, Kelley Moseley, chimed in, too, with, "I think everyone had a good time yesterday. It was fun for them and we pretty much had the course to ourselves. Thanks to all of you."

Coach, Joanne Meyer so enjoys the Special Olympics golf program and wants it to grow. If you are interested, contact Margo at The Arc: 281-494-5928 or [mapasko@arcoffortbend.org](mailto:mapasko@arcoffortbend.org). Joanne says: "Next year, state-bound."

Celebrity of the day, Thomas Valdez said, "I had an absolute blast yesterday. I do love the guys a lot. I miss seeing them and I was so happy I got to play with them. It is an honor to me to work with them. They are by far the best part of my week when I get to see them. Thank you for having me. I look forward to doing more with the guys."

The Arc sincerely appreciates Thomas Valdez for donating professional training sessions at Golf TEC Galleria. In addition to Thomas's generosity, Riverbend Country Club also supports our program by donating course time and golf carts for our practices. Thank you to all!

# Social Recreation Burgers & Karaoke

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# Disney On Ice

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# Halloween Dance

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# Social Recreation Holiday Formal - Bay City

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# Holiday Formal - Safari Texas

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Thank you Allison Wen and Safari Texas for again hosting our 2016 Holiday Formal.



# Special Olympics Bowlers Compete in Area 22 Tournament

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*Margo Pasko*

The Arc's Special Olympics bowling team competed in the Area 22 bowling tournament in Webster on December 3. David Sturhan won a gold medal in his bracket of ramp bowlers. David was coached by his mom, Marguerite Sturhan. Jason Lungstrum and his dad, Steve, participated as Unified Partners, winning silver medals. Steve Lungstrum said they missed gold by only three pins! Steve said, "Next time!" Allan Harris, Jr. bowled in the men's singles bracket for his age group and won the gold medal—upping his game from last year's bronze medal. Allan and Jason were both coached by their dads. Congratulations to them! Now, Jason, Steve and Allan are headed off to Winter Games in Round Rock, February 2-5. Good luck to them all!

## Dulles High School Adult Transition Program (ATP) Supports The Arc's "TwentySomethings" Transition Program

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*Margo Pasko*

Each fall semester, the Dulles High School ATP class, under the leadership of Ms. Hyacinth Pickersgill, work hard making gift items to sell. The items include comfy throws, bead necklaces & bracelets, scarves, wreaths and many other embellished items. Ms. Pickersgill then schedules an Annual Exhibition and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony to showcase and sell all of the items made at an "Accessories Extravaganza".

The audience was first entertained by a choral performance and then Dr. Jennifer Nichols, principal, cut the entrance ribbon – and the shopping began! Proceeds from the event fund the supplies for the next event and a donation is made to The Arc's TwentySomethings transition program. The Arc is grateful for the support of the Dulles Adult Transition Program students and looks forward to seeing them participate in The Arc activities. Upon graduation, The Arc gives a complimentary family membership to Adult Transition Program students.



# TwentySomethings Have Lots of Fun at The Main Event

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*Margo Pasko*

On Sunday, November 6, 2016, forty members of The Arc's TwentySomethings group enjoyed a fun afternoon of bowling, arcade games and pizza at The Main Event in The Fountains. Our effervescent facilitator, Wendy Chong, led the group.



# Fall Fun for Families - Giving Thanks for our Families and Friends!

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*Cheryl Sewell*



Cheryl Sewell planned a Youth-in-Philanthropy (YIP) project which is sponsored each year by the Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce. YIP is designed to introduce Fort Bend County high school students to the merits of volunteerism. The Arc was chosen as one of the non-profit organizations to partner, through an activity, with YIP students.

Cheryl planned numerous, indoor and outdoor activities for The Arc's Youth

Group and YIP students to enjoy together at Lost Creek Park in Sugar Land. Thirty Youth families and 20 YIP students met on November 5, a beautiful, sunny day and had a blast together! Indoors, the kids had "make & take", holiday-themed, crafts and an "Angry Bird" Thanksgiving game. Under the covered patio, families enjoyed coloring turkeys, playing tic-tac-toe and dot-to-dot on Thanksgiving-themed tablecloths and games of Thanksgiving Bingo. Outdoor fun included bubbles, sidewalk chalk for hopscotch and drawing fun, balls and Frisbees to throw and catch, horseshoes, ring & bean bag toss games, and magnetic darts. The kids also enjoyed the large playscape. Together, all of our families participated in a "Dinovember" event when our dinosaurs decided to play hide & seek. Bedlam ensued as kids ran everywhere looking for the wayward dinos. And, we enjoyed throwing alien parachutists into a ring. (That was much harder than it sounds!) Our pièce de résistance was a battle to the finish! Everybody got stringed up with silly string! Laughter and squeals prevailed!

The event was a success and requests were made to, "Do it again!" Maybe in the spring.

# Two STARS at Clements High School

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Cheryl Sewell



Alexis Celeste Villarreal and Sydney Rose Shannon. Remember those names because these girls will be going places! You can watch both Lexi and Sydney at every Clements High School football game, performing with the Clements STARS Dance Team.

**Alexis Villarreal**, “Lexi,” is a star, but her mom knew that already. Clements High School just confirmed it. Lexi is 16 years old and was born with Down syndrome. She started dancing when she was 4 years old at the local YMCA. She has taken classes at Epic Dance, Cookie Joe’s School of Dance and also, cheerleading with Apex Cheer. At Cookie Joes, Lexi has taken ballet, advanced classical ballet, hip hop and jazz. She is also involved in “Buddy Ball” basketball and the Dream League baseball as well as, Special Olympics bowling.

Lexi loves to travel and has visited Italy several times and Kauai, Hawaii. She dreams of going to Paris. Cindy Villarreal, Lexi’s mom, says Lexi is a romantic at heart. Right now, though, Lexi has no time for boyfriends or romance but, she has enjoyed dates to proms and dances and she loves hearing stories about romance, especially about her mom and dad!



Lexi tried out for the Clements High School STARS Dance Team. She completed a week of after-school dance classes and then tried out with all the other hopeful applicants. And then, she waited for the results. She was finally notified that she made the team and performs with the dance team!

Lexi is very social and is involved with the “Best Buddies” student organization. Recently, Lexi and her “buddy” were chosen to represent Clements on Wed, Dec 2, at the Rice Hotel for the Best Buddies Gala! Cindy and Massey, Lexi’s parents, are overjoyed at how full Lexi’s life has been. They strongly believe that having Lexi in classes and programs with typical kids has been beneficial for all the students. They insisted that Lexi was included in regular education classes in both elementary and middle school. Additionally, a creative elective class was included in her schedule.

According to Cindy, Lexi has a very good memory, is very independent at home and school and accomplishes things that Cindy did not expect. Cindy has been amazed by

the art Lexi produced in her Art class and acknowledged that the Art teacher at Clements is incredible.

Lexi is also a “girly girl” acknowledging that pink is her signature color. She wants to learn to drive, attend the PATH program at Texas A & M and aspires to be the CEO of Precision Task Group, Inc., a family owned business where she works part time during the summers. But before all that, Lexi is looking forward to graduating and wants a special dinner on her big day.

**Sydney Rose Shannon**, an extraordinary, 17 year old student attending Clements High School (CHS), also was born with Down syndrome. Her parents, Camille and David Shannon, her sister, Riley (a Clements HS student who also has Down syndrome and autism), and all of her cousins are very proud of Sydney and her accomplishments.

Sydney has always been active in sports for much of her life. She plays baseball with the First Colony Dream League, plays “Buddy Ball” basketball and plays basketball in the Rice University All-Stars organization. The Rice All-Stars was founded in

2016 by Sydney's first cousin, Laura Keehan who is currently a junior at Rice. Sydney also participates in Special Olympics bowling and bocce ball. With the encouragement and coaching of Sydney's Uncle Kip, who has won several amateur golf championships, the entire Shannon family enjoys golf. Camille sees Special Olympics golf with The Arc of Fort Bend in Sydney's future.

Sydney has taken ballet lessons at Cookie Joe's School of Dance for years. So when Coach Barth proposed that Sydney join the CHS STARS dance team, it all worked out well - she made the Varsity STARS Dance team! Camille's heart couldn't be happier as she watches Sydney perform.

Sydney also enjoys swimming, reading, watching her favorite YouTube reality shows, going to the movies, eating out at restaurants, hanging out with family and friends (especially her best friend, Lexi Villarreal), traveling, writing in her journals and attending school dances.

Sydney is a very conscientious student. She was on the honor roll at Fort Settlement Middle School and received an Academic Excellence award in both her freshman and sophomore years at CHS. She earned a letter jacket for Academic Excellence and a Letter in Special Olympics for Bowling and Bocce Ball. Sydney's academic education is currently in the SAILS program, taught by Shannon Brown. Sydney will graduate to an adult transition program upon completing her high school credit classes. Camille said that Sydney is very proficient with computers and iPad and will, hopefully, use these skills in future employment. And, although Sydney is shy and soft-spoken, she is very independent and self-sufficient. She will continue to explore opportunities with the support and encouragement of her family and continue to celebrate her many interests, talents, strengths and abilities.

So, watch out for these two rising STARS! Their lights shine brightly!



## An *EPIC* Kids & Youth Group Event!

Cheryl Sewell



The Epic Center for Dance welcomed The Arc of Fort Bend's Kids and Youth Group families to "show off" their moves in two, free, 45 minute introductory "Dance and Movement" classes in January. Ms. Missy Tielke was our instructor for both events and was happy to work with us – parent's included.

Ms. Tielke began with several warm-up drills, taught us a short dance routine and ended with a "cool down" activity, appropriately tuned to Frozen's, "Let it Go". Several of us are past our dancing "prime" - but the youngsters caught on quickly.

EPIC Center for Dance offers weekly DanceAbilities classes for children with special needs and they welcome children who use wheelchairs. Epic also offers classes that include children with special needs into regularly scheduled classes, as well. The staff at Epic remains flexible to meet each family's needs.

Through movement, "DanceAbilities" increases body awareness, improves coordination and motor skills, increases social interactions and allows the expression of emotions and individuality! EPIC's DanceAbilities class meets Saturdays, from 11:45 am to 12:30 pm.

The staff will create specialized adult classes, as well, with the registration of at least six adults. They have offered adult hip hop and tap dancing in the past, and will entertain other types of movement or dance.

EPIC Center for Dance is located at 15510 Lexington Blvd, Sugar Land, TX 77478. For additional information visit [www.epic-dance.com](http://www.epic-dance.com), or contact Missy Tielke, 832-886-4527, [danceabilities@epic-dance.com](mailto:danceabilities@epic-dance.com).

# Educational Advocacy Receives Two Grants

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The Arc extends a Super thank you to The Exchange Club of Sugar Land for its \$3000 Grant and to the ECOLAB Foundation for its \$2000 Grant to support our Education Advocacy Program.



## “Wings for All” is coming to Houston!

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The Arc’s “Wings for All”, is coming to George Bush Intercontinental Airport!

“Wings for All” is an airport rehearsal program for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their parents. The purpose of the “Wings for All” program is to:

- Provide people with I/DD and their parents with an opportunity to prepare for, practice, and gain confidence with air travel in a controlled, real-life environment
- Provide airport, airline and TSA professionals with an opportunity to interact with and learn from people with I/DD and their parents and acquire a deeper understanding of how to provide services to accommodate their unique needs



**When:** Tuesday, April 18, 2017

**Where:** George Bush Intercontinental Airport

**Time:** 9:00 am – 12:00 noon

**Keep checking our website for the link to register as a participant for “Wings for All”.**

[www.arcoffortbend.org](http://www.arcoffortbend.org)

Please contact [llavigne@arcoffortbend.org](mailto:llavigne@arcoffortbend.org) or call 281-494-5923 if you have any questions.

We look forward to meeting you at “Wings for All” at IAH!



The Arc of Fort Bend County ensures opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to maximize their quality of life within our community.

Membership Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate  New Member  Renewing Member

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ HCS Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a:

Family Member  Person with Disability  Interested Citizen  Professional who works in the Disability Field

Indicate the age of person with a disability: 0-12 13-22 23-54 55+

Membership Levels:

Individual with Disability \$20.00
-reserved for those not living at home and not included in a family membership
-receives one vote at meetings of the membership

Single \$35.00
-receives one vote at meetings of the membership

Single Lifetime \$500.00
-receives one vote at meetings of the membership

Family \$50.00
\*Names of all family members: \_\_\_\_\_
-includes all immediate members of the family living in the home
-includes a family member with a disability living outside of the home
-receives two votes at meetings of the membership

Corporate \$100.00
-receives one vote at meetings of the membership

Corporate Lifetime \$2000.00
-receives one vote at meetings of the membership

VIP
-given yearly to chairs of Best in the West and Golf Classic
-given yearly to Head Coaches of Special Olympic Sports

Additional Tax Deductible Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish, you may donate to a specific program:

- Bowling  Education/Employment  Self-Advocacy
 Social Recreation  Special Olympics  Transportation

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form and payment to: OR Join online at www.arcoffortbend.org
The Arc of Fort Bend County
123 Brooks Street
Sugar Land, Texas 77478

The Arc of Fort Bend County is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

The Arc of Fort Bend County  
123 Brooks Street  
Sugar Land, Texas 77478  
Phone: 281-494-5959  
Fax: 281-494-5960

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## Fort Bend Junior Service League Supports Special Olympics



The FBJSL awarded The Arc a \$10,000 grant to help fund our Special Olympics program. Thank you FBJSL for your continued support.