



The Arc Today

Fall 2015
Volume 14, Issue 4

Best IN THE West

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST | 6:00 PM
GEORGE RANCH ARENA

Doors Open - 6:00pm

BBQ - 6:30pm - 9:00pm

Live Band - 7:30pm - Midnight

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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
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Margo Pasko

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Cheryl Olivier

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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

Fort Bend Volunteers!

Laura LaVigne

Two of The Arc's volunteers were recognized by County Judge Robert Hebert on September 23 at a breakfast sponsored by the Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce at Safari Texas.



Charlie Huber was recognized for his "Outstanding Board Member Service". Charlie, a current board member, has volunteered for over 20 years at The Arc. As a board member he has served on numerous committees and served as chairman of the board twice. As a practicing attorney, Charlie donates countless hours preparing and filing all the legal paperwork required for the purchase of group homes and day habilitation centers for The Arc. His donation of time and talent saves us thousands of dollars which can be spent on programs for our clients.

Charlie also serves as the president of the board for The Arc of Texas and secretary of the board for Brazos Bend Guardianship Services – a nonprofit he helped organize to serve the needs of Ft. Bend County residents.

Ann Smith owner of Pamela Printing, was completely surprised when she was announced as Fort Bend County's "Social Innovator of the Year". Ann has spent countless hours for years as one of the committee chairs for The Arc's Best in the West fundraiser. We can always depend on Ann's gracious generosity to provide everything we need to support the event.



Ann also contributes to many other nonprofits including Access Health, American Cancer Society, Ft. Bend County Fair, Gems of Ft. Bend County, Literacy Council of Ft. Bend and Sugar Land Cultural Arts Foundation.

Congratulations to Ann and Charlie! We are so lucky to have you supporting us!

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention Awareness Press Conference

Laura LaVigne



OakBend Medical Center (OBMC) held a press conference on Wednesday, October 14, to formally announce their commitment to spread the word that "no amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy". OBMC is implementing the project developed by The Arc of US and distributed by The Arc of Fort Bend to educate their entire staff, via a one-hour training webinar, on the dangers of drinking alcohol while pregnant. The training includes tips for discussing this sensitive issue with patients.

Lee Vela, VP of Public Relations, Clear Channel Outdoor, has committed to support this important campaign by publishing the message on billboards across Ft. Bend County. The billboards will spread the message in English and Spanish. The billboards that are up now are making over 700,000 market impressions every month!



Visit <https://vimeo.com/142433884> to watch a video of the press conference.

The Arc Family Matters

Please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers:

Alicia McLaren, wife of Charles McLaren and mother of Special Olympics athlete Whitney McLaren, Nicholas and Christopher McLaren, passed away on August 8, 2015.

John Reinhart, brother of Joanne Reinhart Meyer and uncle of Special Olympics athlete Stevie Meyer, passed away on August 10, 2015.

HCCS – VAST Academy – Sienna Plantation

Cheryl Sewell



Francine Melton-Bryant, director of the HCCS Vast Academy, currently located in Sienna Plantation, welcomed the opportunity to discuss the program and boast about its successful first spring semester. HCCS-Vast Academy has 3 locations at this time. The Downtown location is by far the largest, serving 150 students. Classes meet on Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday. There is also a Northwest Campus with 60 students and the new Southwest Campus had 10 students the first semester. The Southwest/Sienna Plantation Campus will eventually move to the HCCS building off Cash Road in Stafford.

“The VAST Academy provides post-secondary, transition programs and comprehensive support services which lead to meaningful credentials, employment and independence for differently-abled individuals. Opportunities include vocational certificates, pre-college and freshman

success “bridge” courses, career readiness credentials, internships and employment assistance offered through an inclusive, relevant and affordable avenue.”

The Sienna Plantation Campus offered classes only on M/W in spring 2015, but will expand as more students enroll to T/TH classes. Students are offered career exploration, study skills, math and reading improvement classes. A computer lab will be offered in Fall 2015.

Francine said she was really proud of the students’ growth in the spring. The students were first escorted to lunch but escorts were quickly faded as the students navigated independently. The classes were organized around group worktables at first, but students wanted their classes to mirror other college classes, so individual, student desks replaced the group tables. A “Smart Board” is planned for installation in the fall as well. All of the students worked very hard to complete their assignments and to “fit in” to college life. Francine said the VAST Academy students appeared to be accepted on the campus.

To learn more about HCCS – VAST Academy visit: <http://vast.hccs.edu>

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“Wings for All” held again at George Bush Intercontinental Airport

Laura LaVigne

The Arc of Fort Bend joined with The Arc of Greater Houston, The Arc of Texas, United Airlines, TSA and George Bush Intercontinental Airport to offer another “Wings for All” experience on October 13. Below is the news article published by the Houston Chronicle describing the event. Another “Wings for All” event is planned for spring 2016. Watch the video here:

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/article/Dry-run-takes-some-of-the-stress-out-of-flying-6569251.php?t=9f60e99d18438d9cbb&cmpid=email-premium>



“Max Hood pored over his “Lego Star Wars Character Encyclopedia” while waiting at gate 12 in Bush Intercontinental Airport. He used an LG phone to take pictures, and he spoke with other children sitting nearby.

And just in case it got too loud - certain decibels give him anxiety - Max had ear defenders decorated with No. 3 for the late NASCAR racer Dale Earnhardt. The 12-year-old has high-functioning autism, and Tuesday was his first time at an airport.

“It was wonderful,” he said.

For his mother, Helga Hood, the trip was a dry run to get Max acclimated to the airport. She said his anxiety decreases after experiencing something a few times.

“It’s our first step into the door of flight,” she said.

Airports can be a stressful experience, and more so for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Wings for All, held Tuesday for the second time at Bush Intercontinental, is designed to take away some of the anxiety.

The event was like an airport rehearsal. Individuals with disabilities and their families received boarding passes, checked luggage and went through security.

They waited in the terminal, some children riding the moving sidewalk and others snacking on Auntie Anne’s pretzels. The roughly 80 participants then boarded a United Airlines Boeing 737-900 and pretended it was flying. The pilot made announcements about the weather, and flight attendants offered water, juice and Goldfish crackers.

“This gives them an opportunity to go through the entire process in a less-stressful environment,” said Ken Whittaker, manager of customer service for Bush Intercontinental.

It’s important for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities to stick to a routine. And going to the airport is out of that routine, said Alexa Schoeman, who does policy and advocacy work for the Arc of Texas, the statewide chapter of a nationwide organization that advocates for and serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Schoeman said going to the airport can mean waking up at a different time and packing favorite toys. There are new rules, sights and sounds that can cause anxiety.

“It’s stressful for all of us, with or without a disability,” she said. The Arc hosted the event in partnership with Bush

“Wings for All” held again at George Bush Intercontinental Airport Cont’d

Intercontinental, United, the Transportation Security Administration and the Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism.

Some families have already noticed improvements. Eloisa and Alan Villareal brought their twin 11-year-old sons, Elijah and Earl, for the second time Tuesday. Both sons have autism and are sensitive to sound.

“This is better compared to the first time,” Eloisa said.

In April, they had to drag both sons down the jet way connecting the terminal to the plane. On Tuesday, Elijah was excited and boarded the plane without any issues. Earl was a little nervous and needed some persuasion.

The Villareals are hoping to visit family in the Philippines, and they want the flight to be a pleasant experience for their sons.

Wings for All is also an opportunity to train airport and airline employees on interacting with and assisting fliers with disabilities and their families. Volunteers attended a training session Monday.

Stephanie Green, a flight attendant with United, said airline professionals and the general public are becoming more educated about intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This public awareness, she said, helps people be more compassionate.

And having a 5-year-old-son, John Robert Green, on the autism spectrum, Green gave a tip for improving compassion. If a child is having a meltdown, don’t think about that child as giving the parents a hard time. Think about the child as having a hard time.

Green was able to bring John Robert and her 3-year-old son Grayson Green, who isn’t autistic, to the event Tuesday. It was the first time either had been on a plane.

In addition to becoming more familiar with airports and airplanes, she said, it allowed them to “see what I actually do when I leave on a trip.”

Photos by: Photo: Brett Coomer, Houston Chronicle Staff



WOW - What an AWESOME Conference!

Cheryl Sewell

I thought so but it was nice to hear the same sentiments made by parents, speakers, vendors and attendees. Even one of the children who accessed the childcare area said she had a great time. She said that a teenager hung out and played with her all day! Her enthusiasm was appreciated because spending time in the childcare area for six hours and enjoying it is no easy feat!

The 2015 "AU to Z" Conference & Resource Fair was a phenomenal success for our families. Nineteen sessions were offered with topics including early childhood, elementary and secondary education (both special education and inclusion), homeschooling as an educational option, "futures planning", obtaining guardianship, SSI/Medicaid issues, Special Needs Trusts and college options. Additionally, there was discussion about how families can participate in legislative advocacy and hopefully impact disability issues in the Texas legislature. Also, information for families who have a child who needs legal assistance in Fort Bend County was offered.

Attendees gathered information from more than 70 agency representatives in the Resource Fair area, including samples of Gluten Free goodies and enrolling their child in a Medicaid Waiver program through Texana Center or the MHMRA of Harris County.

Volunteers were plentiful and much appreciated! This event could only happen with the help of volunteers and others, like Therapy and Beyond, who provided behavior specialists to supervise the childcare area and Dulles High School, who provided the venue.

Thank you all and we look forward to next year's "AU to Z" Conference & Resource Fair.



Monthly Informal Parent Support Group

Cheryl Sewell

What can I say, we have a great time! There's food, there's drink and there's fun. What more can you ask for from a bunch of ladies with school-aged children who meet once a month at a parent's home? Well, you can also ask for tours.

October 1: Brain Balance Achievement Center

Our October parent group met at Cindy' Villarreal's home in Riverstone for a light breakfast and discussion. Then we went to Brain Balance Achievement Center in Missouri City off Cartwright Road and Dulles Avenue for a tour and presentation, and ended up having a light lunch at Off-The-Vine Bistro next door.

Brain Balance Achievement Center is a "comprehensive program that combines physical and sensory motor exercises with cognitive skill training and healthy nutrition, placing both hemispheres of the brain back into sync. They address academic, social, behavioral issues, processing and sensory integration disorders, focus/ADHD, impulsiveness, and learning disabilities."


November 5: Brookwood Store at Gallery Furniture on Grand Parkway in Richmond.

We will meet at The Arc's office - 123 Brooks Street, Sugar Land 77478 - promptly at 9:15 am to caravan to Gallery Furniture. Our tour begins at 10:00 am. We will tour Gallery Furniture's new facility, visit Brookwood's new store and peek in at their new vocational training center before lunching at the Brick and Mortar restaurant. RSVP requested.

December 3: The Brookwood Community in Brookshire, TX

You requested and I delivered! A "behind the scenes" tour of the Brookwood Community in Brookshire, TX. Meet at The Arc's office by 8:30 am. The tour will start promptly at 10:00 am. Our tour will include visiting homes, workshop and greenhouse facilities, recreational facilities and grounds. We will have a chance to shop in the very large Brookwood store and have lunch at the restaurant. RSVP requested.

This particular informal parent group is open to parents of school-aged children (ages 3 to 21) with ID/DD living in Fort Bend County. "Intellectual Disability" refers to people diagnosed with an IQ of 70 or below while "Developmental Disability" refers to people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, etc., regardless of IQ.



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Social Recreation

Burgers & Karaoke



Fort Bend County Fair



St. Theresa's Dance



Sugar Land
Skeeters



Barnum & Bailey Circus



GattiTown



Sunday Night Fever!

Margo Pasko

The Arc's TwentySomethings group enjoyed a brief comeback of the disco era on Sunday, July 26, 2015, at Safari Texas Ranch! New TwentySomethings facilitator, Wendy Chong, planned and executed an afternoon of disco fun, featuring a costume contest, jive off, karaoke, disco ball hot potato, limbo contest and a disco conga line. To top it off, there were disco ball trophies for all!

While the TwentySomethings partied with Wendy and her friends, the families were sharing information about providers, learning centers, guardianship attorneys and other topics of importance to them.

Allison Wen, owner of Safari Texas Ranch, donated the use of the San Antonio room, a perfect venue for the event. The dance floor was full of happy dancers. The stage made a great backdrop for the photo station. The beautifully decorated tables added to the festive, party atmosphere.

Hands down, Gary and Tank Schottle won the costume contest! The authenticity of their attire, as attested to by those who actually experienced the disco era, was spot on!



Special Olympics Swim Meet

Margo Pasko



The Arc's Special Olympics Aquatics team participated in the Area 22 Swim Meet at Don Cook Natatorium in Sugar Land on Saturday, September 19, 2015. Our coaches included Becky Geary, Beth and Jimmy Jimenez and Rudy Gonzalvo.

Coach Becky commented, "We had a great meet. Every swimmer brought home at least one medal, if not more. Our swimmers at the Area meet this year were Steve Bily, Tim Caldwell, Davis Caruthers, Chance Geary, Jimmy Griffin, JJ Jimenez, Karen Kniss, Tony Presson, and Danny Ries. A big thanks to all the family members that helped this year, especially Adrienne Caldwell."

Special Olympics Softball News!

Margo Pasko



Can there be 4 strikes in softball? If so, it was strike four for our softball teams—the FOURTH year in a row that their area 22 tournament was rained out! What a shame for them, after all their practice, and brand new uniforms that will have to wait yet another year for use.

Not to worry, though, Larry Lobue, head of delegation, head softball coach and board member of The Arc, had already arranged for the group to attend a Skeeters' game on September 18. Look at the pictures to see what fun they had! Thank you for planning the event, Larry.



So, even though our softball athletes didn't get to actually play ball, they had a great end of season ball game. Next up for them is their trip to College Station for Fall Classic.

The softball coaches this season were Larry Lobue, Gary Schottle, Debbie Eddlemon, Jackie Butler, Gaylon Butler, Cathy Zepeda and Don Duyka. They coached 33 players, divided among 3 teams. Thank you so much, coaches!

Special Olympics Golfers Attend Regional Golf Tournament

Margo Pasko



The Arc's Special Olympics golfers Mike Marshall, Stevie Meyer and new member of the Golf team, Jack Krueger, had a great outing at the Area 4 Special Olympics regional golf tournament on September 21, at Cypress Lakes Golf Club. It was perfect weather for golf! Coaches Ken Elliott, Mike Wright, Kelley Moseley and Joanne Meyer reported that they were proud of their athletes. For the Special Olympics golf tournament, Mike partnered with his grandfather, volunteer Chuck Atwood, and Jack partnered with his dad, Gary Krueger. Stevie Meyer golfed as a single with his dad, volunteer Buddy Meyer, as his caddy. Golf team members Billy Schuiten and Mike Garcia were not available on the tournament day, but we hope they will be able to play next year!

Mike Marshall and his partner Chuck Atwood won the silver medal in their bracket for 9-hole, alternate shot, team play. Jack and Gary Krueger also won the silver medal in their bracket for 9-hole, alternate shot, team play. Stevie Meyer won the gold medal for all 9-hole, singles players, in all brackets.

Once again, certified, personal golf coach, Thomas Valdez of GolfTEC, donated many hours of intensive video swing analysis training. "But wait, there's more": Thomas also arranged for each golfer to receive new drivers. The golfers and their families expressed their gratitude for Thomas's mentoring and friendship.

Riverbend Country Club also continues to substantially support our golf program. James Brown, the golf pro, allows our athletes to use the course at no charge. Thank you, James!

Coaches Ken and Kelley recruited 2 new coaches this year: Mike Wright and Joanne Meyer. Welcome aboard, coaches! Now the golfers will take a well-deserved break.

The Arc again Hosts Annual Bocce Tournament

Margo Pasko

For the second year, The Arc hosted the Area 22 Bocce Tournament. Five delegations, totaling 70 athletes, registered for the competition, held on September 26, at Dulles High School. Volunteers also came from far and wide to make the event a success: Dulles HS AFJROTC, Sugar Land Rotary Club, The St. Lawrence Knights of Columbus, honor societies from area high schools and Margo's friends. Dr. Jeremy Szeto volunteered to provide first aid services. Jeff Hoffman provided referee training and consultation. Also from our own group, Charles McLaren, Joanne Meyer, Jackie Butler, Cathy Zepeda, Kathy and Kelly Moynihan, Bonnie Brown and Deborah Blunt all pitched in to help with the tournament. It was an amazing crew! Thank you to all the volunteers who made the games possible!

The core of the whole bocce effort was The Arc's bocce family. The coaches included new head coach Debbie Patton, Kathy Moynihan, Janet Wantuch, Jeff Hoffman and Margo Pasko. The athletes were: Dominique, Trevor, and Carla, playing singles. Doubles teams were: Tony and Russell, Sharon and Whitney, SanJuanita and Nicki, Michael and Matthew, Jennifer and Chanta, Allan and Dave, Tyler and Paul, Stevie and Rudy. The players all brought home medals and enjoyed a beautiful day! Debbie did a fantastic job in her inaugural year as head coach!

The Games Committee was comprised of Pam Hollaway, Special Olympics Area 22 Director; Larry Lobue, Area 22 Competition Director; Allan Harris, Sr., facilities coordinator; and Margo Pasko, volunteer coordinator. Commissioner James Patterson, Major Doug Hawn and Sergeant Patrick Hardy took control of the bocce court set up—a huge undertaking! Allan Harris did a masterful job of coordinating the fields and the entire facility set up. The consensus was that we all had so much fun, we're going to do it again next year!



UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Two local companies are bringing training to the Sugar Land area in spring 2016. Social Motion Skills and Escape Family Resource Center. Dates, times, locations and fees will be announced.



Escape Family Resources:
<http://www.learntoparent.org>

EXCEPTIONAL PARENTING is a seven-week, 14-hour course offered in both English and Spanish. This course will give parents the tools to understand:

- the effects of special needs on a child's development.
- the challenges a child with special needs faces.
- how to interact with your child.
- how to raise a child with special needs while also supporting the family.

For additional information contact:

Katie Wiseman 713-942-9500 KatieW@learntoparent.org



Social Motion Skills www.socialmotionskills.org

PEERS® (Program of the Educational and Enrichment of Relational Skills) is an evidence-based program developed at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The PEERS program is designed to help teens and young adults who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, and anxiety by teaching validated social skills. The clinicians of PEERS ® are teaching social behaviors that are naturally used by teens and young adults who are socially successful in making and maintaining friendships. In addition, with the young adult program, we teach and generalize the validated social skills in the college and employment settings.

Who is right for this program?

- ✓ IQ above 70
- ✓ Teens - in middle or high school and
- ✓ Young Adults - graduated from high school
- ✓ Good verbal communication skills
- ✓ Has social issues / is socially withdrawn
- ✓ Lack of get-togethers with friends their own age
- ✓ Lack of friends at school or in the community
- ✓ Parent willing to participate
- ✓ Child willing to participate
- ✓ Child may not have behavioral problems i.e. violence, aggression or elopement

For additional information contact:

Jennifer Soley, M.Ed. PEERS® certified trainer (c) 480-326-7596 jsoley@socialmotionskills.org



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

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

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given yearly to Head Coaches of Special Olympic Sports

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The Arc of Fort Bend County
123 Brooks Street
Sugar Land, Texas 77478

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The Best & Worst States to Live in to get ABA If You Have a Child With Autism

If you have a child on the autism spectrum, where you live has never mattered more. See how your state fares.

Where you live has never mattered more if you have a child with autism! Certain states have passed strong laws requiring insurers to cover autism treatments, while other states have not. A smaller number of states have gone a step further and required that intensive autism treatments be a required benefit in Affordable Care Act plans sold on the state exchange. And finally, while the federal government has told states that their Medicaid programs must offer ABA therapy for children under 21, so far only a handful of states have put this directive into action.

Visit <http://autismhealthinsurance.org/the-best-worst-states-to-live-in-if-you-have-a-child-with-autism> to see how your state fares.