

2007 Annual Report



The Arc Kent County

Our mission is to advocate for persons with developmental disabilities and their families in Kent County

Message from the Board President

Dear Members of The Arc Kent County, Donors and Stakeholders,
It is my pleasure to write this letter for the annual report that reflects the activities of 2007 for The Arc Kent County. This was a transition year for our organization. Our staff, Maggie Kolk and Patt Clement conducted the daily business in the absence of an Executive Director. Our programs and services remained strong due to their commitment and dedication. The Board of Directors remained diligent to identifying new leadership for The Arc. During the course of the year, we also had the opportunity to employ an innovative executive director, Tammy Finn. Ms. Finn's skills and experiences are great attributes that will bring The Arc Kent County successfully into the future.

***Advocacy** is central to the mission of The Arc Kent County. Many hours were devoted to this area. Advocacy touches many agencies and schools involved with the lives of individuals with disabilities in Kent County. Some of the agencies that we had contact with are the Social Security Administration, network 180, Center for Medicare and Medicaid, Department of Human Services, and area schools. Our advocacy efforts also included commenting on new legislation and regulations, both state and federal, and advocating for expanding and improving current legislation.*

*We continued to implement our **Dignified Life Styles** program in collaboration with The Arc Michigan. The volunteers and staff work to assure that dignity, community connections, choice, and health and welfare are maintained for each individual.*

*Our **Project Illumination** program offered a two day workshop featuring National Speaker, David Hinsburger. Mr. Hinsburger discussed some causes for sexual abuse and preventative strategies. This program seeks to raise awareness about sexual abuse to people with developmental disabilities.*

*The **We Lead Kent** project funded by the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) sought to engage young adults with disabilities in a community project. Seven students worked together for three weeks to collect children's books, construct a mobile book cart and donate it to Devos Children's Hospital.*

The Arc continues to be a leading disabilities rights organization in Michigan and across our nation. The strength of The Arc Kent County is, and always has been, its membership. Together we will continue to improve the lives of people with disabilities in our community.

I want to thank all of our members, supporters, and the individuals that we serve for all your hard work and support. To the Board of Directors who have given so willingly of their time, I thank you. Without all of your dedication and belief in our mission, The Arc Kent County would not be the organization that it currently is. Please look through the content of this Annual Report for more detail on what has been accomplished. To continue the good work, we will need your ongoing support. I look forward to working with you in growing and vitalizing the future of The Arc Kent County.

Kathleen Allen

Board President

The Arc Kent County Board of Directors

(as of December 2007)

Executive Committee

Kathleen Allen, President
Dave Lehker, Secretary
Terry Lenhardt, Treasurer

Directors

Lynelle Dodge
Beth Ann Light
Sandy Weir
Mike Smith
Brooke Fuller
Lisa King
Jeff Hawkins
Brian Quinn

Programs and Services

Dignified Lifestyles Community Connections Program

The Dignified Lifestyles/Community Connections grant works to assist individuals with disabilities to improve their quality of life. The program began in 1987 as a way to monitor quality of life issues for people living in group homes. While maintaining that core activity, the project has expanded to working with individuals living in the community on quality of life issues including housing, employment, transportation and community participation. Trained volunteers monitor group homes/day programs from a quality life perspective. In addition, staff provide advocacy for individuals with disabilities to increase or facilitate their community participation. Local coordinators and volunteers received information on a regular basis. All local coordinators participated in training to update our efforts to continue focus on the individual, how he or she chooses a life and what is in that life, and for people who live in group homes, how they are able to access individualized services and supports.

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)

*Federally Funded by the
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION*

The Arc Kent County operated a Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) project covering eight (8) counties in West Michigan. WIPA information and referral or Social Security case management services are provided to Social Security beneficiaries who work or want to work. Trained and certified Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) who are employed by WIPA projects meet one on one with Social Security beneficiaries. Three other organizations in the state were awarded similar cooperative agreements from SSA covering other counties across the state. Our fellow partners in the Michigan WIPA Coalition include UCP Michigan, UCP Detroit, and Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit. Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services, Inc. also received funding to provide legal advocacy for Social Security beneficiaries. Through the WIPA project in 2007, The Arc Kent County staff provided information and referral or Social Security case management to more than one hundred sixty nine (169) individuals and attended eighty four (84) individual follow up meetings in 2007.

Strengthening Relationships for Diversity: Include All of Us

The Include All of Us project funded by the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) sought to facilitate the involvement of people with developmental disabilities and their allies from culturally distinct populations in the activities and workgroups of the MDDC and Regional Interagency Consumer Councils (RICCs). Just as people without personal experience with disability cannot speak for people with disabilities, individuals who do not belong to a racial or culturally distinct minority cannot accurately speak to the needs of individuals who do come from these groups. By identifying and addressing barriers to participation by members of these culturally distinct groups (African Americans, American Indians, Arab Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/Hispanic Americans), this project supports people with developmental disabilities from minority and culturally distinct groups to voice their needs and concerns and positively impact Michigan's policies and projects. Include All of Us engages people from the five different culturally distinct groups by meeting them in their communities with the guidance of local community organizations or leaders who plan and host gatherings. The gatherings provide information about the MDDC and RICCs, gather information about the barriers to participation, and encourage the involvement and influence of individuals with developmental disabilities in MDDC and RICC activities. The Include All of Us Web pages are located at www.arcmi.org/include/

Project Illumination

This program raises awareness about sexual abuse and victimization of individuals with developmental disabilities. In 2007, The Arc Kent County in collaboration with The Arc Newaygo, GVSU's School of Social Work and Nokomis Foundation sponsored a two day workshop featuring national speaker, Dave Hingsburger. Over 100 participants learned about the causes of sexual abuse of people with developmental disabilities and strategies for prevention.

Representative Payee

This program ensures that SSI and SSDI funds go to the benefit of the clients. We also assist and train individuals with disabilities about budgets and money management. The Representative Payee program worked with forty five (45) individuals with their finances in 2007.

Advocacy, Mental Health

Many adults and some children who have developmental disabilities receive supports and services through the mental health system. When they cannot access services or obtain appropriate services, we assist them through attending person-centered planning meetings, communicating with network180 and provider agency staff, sending letters, etc.

Information is the Key for Successful Decision Making

One key to success for individuals with disabilities and family members is information in various formats, to develop the knowledge needed to make informed decisions. Research shows that individuals with disabilities and families have difficulty securing necessary and/or desired services because they lack the knowledge to coordinate needed supports. The Arc Kent County strives to assure that individuals with disabilities and their family members have the knowledge they need. By providing various information and communication services, our constituents can make informed decisions and choices. The Arc Kent County conducts specialty trainings about: Special Education Laws, Community Mental Health, Person-centered Planning, Social Security, Recipient Rights and Self-determination.

Annual Events

Holiday Party – Sponsored by Egypt Valley Country Club, features dinner and dancing. The most popular event of the year and the highlight for many of our constituents.

Zech Award- Chuck Zech was a champion for the rights of individuals with disabilities. His work was valued by The Arc Kent County and the entire Grand Rapids Community. He is sorely missed and has been memorialized through the “Zech Award” given every year to an individual who exemplifies Chuck’s service to The Arc’s clients.

Systems Advocacy

The Arc Michigan Governmental Affairs Committee – This committee meets monthly in Lansing and advises The Arc Michigan’s Board of Directors on legislation and other topics. Both the Executive Director and the Advocate attend.

The Arc Michigan Educational Committee – This committee advises the GA committee and The Arc Michigan Board of Directors about education issues affecting persons with developmental disabilities. The Advocate attends these meetings monthly in Lansing.

The Michigan Conference of Executives- is the state branch of the Executive Directors’ association for The Arc nationally. The Executive Director and the Advocate attend these meetings.

Special Education Advocacy Committee (SEAC)- is a Federally mandated advocacy committee under IDEA to advise Michigan State Board of Education about Special Education rules and is attended monthly by The Arc Kent County advocate.

Recipient Right Advisory Council- This committee meets quarterly as stated in the Mental Health Code to ensure the integrity of decision-making on the part of the Network 180 Recipient Rights Office. The Arc Kent County advocate is a standing member of this committee and attends the meetings.

Advocacy, Special Education

In Michigan, children with developmental disabilities may be eligible for educational services from birth to age 26. When families are unable to obtain appropriate services, we assist them by attending Individual Education Planning Meetings, working with school staff, administrators and sending letters, etc.

Special Needs

After I'm Gone/Estate Planning Program – A pilot program begun in 2003; assists former Sentry Care Group members with special need requests; holds an annual estate planning presentation.

The Lyle and Mina Anderson Emergency Memorial Fund – Provides cash support to persons with developmental disabilities who have emergency needs as food, clothing, shelter, medical or dental care.

The Burnap Recreational Fund – Supports people with developmental disabilities who would like to participate in recreational activities.

Communication/Publicity

Newsletter – The Viewpoint was published 2-4 times per year and is used to inform the membership and others about legislative issues, chapter business, donor activities and upcoming events. It reaches over 800 individuals and agencies in our community.

Website – www.arkent.org tells the story of The Arc Kent County and posts the organization's calendar.

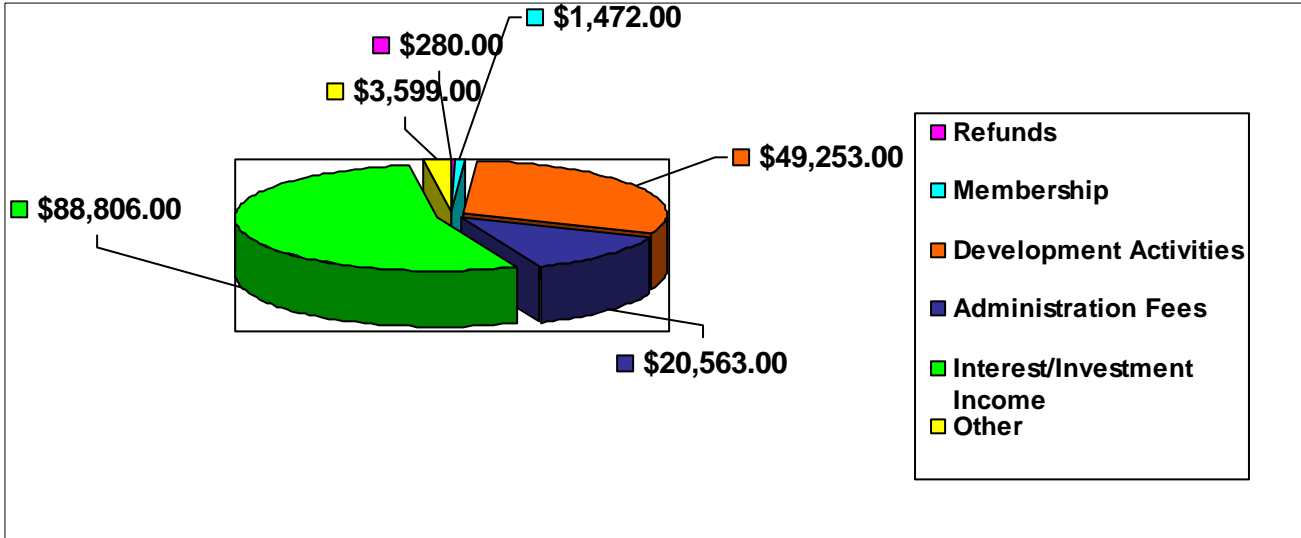
Charity Advantage Website – a web service through the United Way for volunteer recruitment.

The Arc Kent County 2007 Financial Summary

Account Summaries and Charts are derived from The Arc Michigan audit for 2007

Income and Expenses 2007

Total Income: \$163,973



Total Expenses: \$145,287

