

# The Arc Kent County

## 2023 Year in Review



**Thank you for helping us achieve an incredible year!**

**January** The start of a **new fiscal year** and what would become our largest fundraising year to date!

**February** We hosted an informative workshop for people with disabilities and their families. Thirty people attended The Arc's workshop on *Independent Facilitation (IF)*. They learned: What is IF? How can IF help you with your Person-Centered Plan to achieve a better life? Presenter: Angela Martin, Senior Associate Director at Wayne State University: Developmental Disabilities Institute.

**March** A month of celebrating **National March-Disability Awareness Month**, The Arc Kent County presented on the importance of acknowledging disability on the diversity scale. The Arc Kent County, The Arc MI & The Arc U.S., work every day to improve legislative policies that support people with disabilities to fully participate in all aspects of society, from education and employment, to social and recreational activities.

**April** **The Arc Michigan along with local Arc chapters (The Arc Kent County) Testified in House HHS Subcommittee.** On April 3, 2023, members of the Direct Care Worker (DCW) Wage Coalition, advocate Jan Lampman was joined by Bob Stein and Todd Culver, to testify in front of Chairwoman Morse's (D-Texas Township) appropriations subcommittee on health and human services. The testimony touched on the following points:

- The executive recommendation of a \$1.50/hour increase is not enough to fully support the direct care workforce.
- A \$4/hour increase is needed for direct care workers in the behavioral health and long-term care sector (\$150m GF/GP; one-time funding of \$188m of ARPA funds for a retention bonus).
- Direct supervisors also need to see an increase commensurate to the compensation of the individuals that report to them.

**May** The Arc Kent County completed another successful yearly audit by the Social Security Administration (SSA) of our Representative Payee program on behalf of the 150 Arc clients who receive representative payee services!

**June** The Arc staff conducted over 80 **National Core Indicator surveys** with individuals with disabilities, family members, and direct support professionals to measure National Core indicators which are standard measures used to assess the outcome of services provided. The key indicators address employment, community inclusion, choice, rights, service planning, and health & safety.

**July** This was **Disability Pride Month** and its purpose is to educate our communities about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), share stories of achievement, and help overcome the discrimination and stereotypes that exist in our world. **Disability Pride Month is celebrated every July... Why July?** It marks the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, landmark legislation that broke down barriers to inclusion in society.

**August** We offered a Social Security Benefits training for the community that focused on how to apply for and manage benefits, and how employment impacts those benefits.

**September** The Arc's first annual **Inspire Change Gala**- we raised just over \$30,000 to go toward advancing our work and mission!

**October** We renewed our partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services on the Foster Care Disability Navigation grant. This grant is designed to improve educational outcomes by offering **free educational advocacy** and supports to students currently experiencing foster care who have a disability or suspected disability, IEP, or 504 Plan.

**November** The Arc United States, The Arc Michigan, and The Arc Kent County, celebrated **EXCITING NEWS!** Congress introduced a new bill that would increase desperately needed funding for people with disabilities to live in their communities. The Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Relief Act of 2023 was introduced in Congress by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA). The bill would provide two years of additional Medicaid funds to:

- Improve access to HCBS by increasing direct care worker pay and benefits;
- Decrease the number of people on waiting lists for HCBS (currently over 650,000!); and
- Pay for assistive technologies, staffing, and other costs that facilitate community integration.

**December** **A new advocate joined our staff**- Debbie Whitford! We are excited to welcome Debbie and benefit from her experience as the Regional Parent Mentor for Michigan Alliance for Families. Debbie replaces Maggie Kolk, Arc Advocate for over 24 years.