March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Advances and Setbacks
By Robert B. Fleming, CELA

In 1987 President Ronald Reagan proclaimed March “Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.” The deinstitutionalization movement of the seventies and early eighties had laid the foundation for significant social change, and the presidential proclamation called upon Americans to provide the “encouragement and opportunities” necessary for people with developmental disabilities to reach their potential.

As those citizens began living within the general community in larger numbers, programs to provide career planning, job coaching and supported employment began to emerge. The idea that individuals with developmental disabilities could become productive members of the workforce was new to many people, and entrenched preconceptions had to be overcome. Advocates recognized a moral imperative to engage individuals with developmental—and other—disabilities. With passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, workplace discrimination against people with disabilities became sanctionable.

The expectations of young people with developmental disabilities and their parents began to shift. Productive, self-directed lives within the community increasingly became the goal, and (increasingly) an obtainable goal. At the same time, due to improvements in healthcare, people with developmental disabilities were living longer, leading to questions about the lifestyle of “retirement-age” individuals. In short, the national conversation began to address the full spectrum of services needed for people with disabilities to live secure, fulfilling lives.

Passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with its guarantees of early intervention, special education and services to transition high schoolers into adulthood, IDEA opened a world of possibilities.

I wish that I could say that, as a result of all these changes, stereotyping has decreased. Some observers might be encouraged by sensitive portrayals of people with disabilities in film, literature and onstage. At the same time, though, bullying of students with special needs has become a serious—and growing—national problem. Stereotypes remain, undoubtedly contributing to the continued high unemployment rate among people with disabilities. Hurtful words are too commonplace, and we are far from free from experiencing incidents of abuse and neglect. Taxpayer-funded programs for people with disabilities, always under pressure, are more at risk in today’s economic environment. Discussions at all levels of government threaten the advances made during the past 25 years. School districts across the country are faced with shrinking budgets, and sometimes they complain about special education mandates. Medicaid, which has funded many employment and community-based residential programs, is under fire.

Yes, more than a quarter century after the establishment of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, the world has changed in important ways. Much, though, remains to challenge us. In the coming years, we’ll need to fight not only for more advances but to retain the accomplishments of past decades. It is a fight in which we must all engage.
Dear Friends,

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness month. This is a time to be mindful of the ways people with developmental disabilities connect with, and contribute to, their communities. It’s also a time to raise awareness of barriers to full inclusion that still exist.

I hope you watched the inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Harris. One of my favorite parts of the ceremony was hearing Amanda Gorman recite her poem “The Hill We Climb.” The youngest poet laureate ever, she brought us hope that greater inclusion is happening NOW! She writes,

...We will rebuild, reconcile and recover and every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country, our people diverse and beautiful will emerge, battered and beautiful When day comes we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid The new dawn blooms as we free it For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it if only we’re brave enough to be it

(taken from www.thehill.com 1/26/2021)

She gives us an amazing vision of what our nation, and our world, look like when everyone is valued and included. She also calls us to action to not just see the light inclusion brings, but to be “brave enough to BE it”. What a powerful image of a world where everyone is an equal citizen, “aflame and unafraid”.

Not only does Ms. Gorman speak words of inclusion, she strives to be those words. In an interview with NPR, she shared that like President Biden, who stuttered as a child, Gorman grew up with a childhood speech impediment. “She had difficulty saying certain letters of the alphabet — the letter R was especially tough — which caused her to have to constantly ‘self-edit and self-police,’” reports NPR. She still struggles and sometimes has to re-write parts of her poems before reciting to ensure she can pronounce her own written words. She is an example of how any of us, regardless of our uniquenesses and disabilities, have a place and a voice to be the light, aflame and unafraid. (Taken from www.npr.org, Morning Edition 1/19/2021)

For 60 years The Arc NW has carried forward this message of full inclusion. In her poem, Ms. Gorman states that we are not striving to be perfect, but toward purpose. May our purpose continue as we are brave enough to be the light of inclusion!

With you in bravery,

Gretchen Sanewsky, Executive Director
Happy March to everyone! This is the month when spring begins. Hopefully we will begin to have less snow, more sunshine and daylight.

I have been enjoying seeing many of your Facebook pictures celebrating winter activities, Super bowl football celebrations and Valentine’s Day parties. Its been fun seeing the different at home projects that many of you have been making with your staff. What creative and talented folks we have!

At this time, we have no news about our Just Fun Club. No gathering or dances allowed. I do hope that many of you will be able to get signed up for your vaccine shots to help keep all of you safe.

Continue to stay active exercising, walking or talking on the phone with your family and friends. We MISS all of you very much!

Happy St. Patrick’s Day,
Jackie Norris

CDC, Ed Department Issue Guidance On Reopening Schools To Students With Disabilities

by Michelle Diament | February 15, 2021

Federal officials are laying out a roadmap for safely reopening schools to in-person learning complete with details on how to serve students with disabilities.

In a pair of documents issued late last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Education are emphasizing that evidence shows schools can safely operate during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic if they take precautions. That means universal masking and social distancing in addition to other measures including hand-washing, cleaning facilities and contact tracing, according to the CDC’s newly released operational strategy for schools.

Regular testing and prioritizing vaccinations for school staff also play a role, but neither are prerequisites for opening to in-person learning, the agency said.

A separate handbook from the Education Department that serves as a supplement to the CDC document clarifies that students with disabilities shouldn’t be left behind as schools resume in-person learning. In fact, given that their needs are often difficult to meet in a virtual environment, it may be appropriate to prioritize this group, the document indicates.

“Educators and community members should collaborate to facilitate safe in-person learning for the greatest number of students with disabilities feasible,” the agency said that an inability to wear a mask should not preclude children from being served in person. “The narrow subset of students with disabilities who cannot wear a mask because of their disability, or cannot safely wear a mask, may still safely attend school if other mitigation strategies are able to be followed, including correct masking for others who work or learn with them,” the Education Department indicated.

“If a child with a disability cannot wear a mask, maintain physical distance or adhere to other public health requirements, the student is still entitled to an appropriate education, which in some circumstances may need to be provided virtually,” the CDC guide indicates.

Welcome New Arc NW Staff!

Please welcome Deanna Reed to The Arc NW staff team! Deanna is the new Payroll Assistant working with our Financial Management Services. She will assist with payroll processing for direct support staff, assist with billing for staffing agencies, and oversee implementation of the electronic visit verification system. We’re so glad to have her aboard!
“Social Security” March 4, 2021
Speaker will discuss how to apply for and the services available to your son or daughter with a disability, including SSI, SSDI, and DAC.

“Transition Planning & Turning 18” March 18, 2021
Speaker will discuss the legal requirements of IEPs regarding transition planning, career and interest assessments, student, family and school responsibilities, community resources, and how to make a smooth transition from school to post-school life.

All sessions will be held on Zoom from 6:00pm to 8:00pm with a virtual happy hour before each session to chat and get help with technology. If you’d like to attend please email:

Chesley Giertz at cgiertz@thearcnw.org
Using the information on this page, you can quickly send a message or call the offices of the appropriate representatives; let them know that people with disabilities deserve a high priority for access to COVID-19 vaccinations.

PLEASE - Do it today!

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**2021 - 2022 Event Dates**

- **60th Celebration** – February 20th through February 27th (online)
- **Annual Meeting** – May 2021
- **Golf Outing** – August 15, 2021
- **Sip & Support** – October 2021
- **Dinner Dance** - February 26, 2022
60th Celebration Donors & Sponsors

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The Detroit Garage
The Henry Family
The Read Family
Thomas & Karen Bellhouse
Thomas DiPonio
Tito's Handmade Vodka
Tom and Chris Lerchen
Wallside Windows
Wilfred and Debra Brunk
Wine Palace - Fine Wine & Spirits
Yuqiong He

Where It is Needed Most
Michael and Lisa Shesterkin
Richard and Seletha Robertson
Dorothy Warren and Kimberly Adams

Just Fun Club
Natalie Freeburn
March 2021

The Arc NW Board Meeting Will be Via Zoom on Tuesday the 9th.

Sun  Mon  Tue  Wed  Thu  Fri  Sat

1   2   3   4   5   6

After I’m Gone (AIG) via Zoom  
6 - 8pm  
Must RSVP. To get login, email: cgiertz@thearcnw.org

7   8   9   10  11  12  13

Arc NW board meeting via Zoom 5:00pm.

14  15  16  17  18  19  20

St. Patrick’s Day  
“Social Security” via Zoom  
6 - 8pm  
MUST RSVP

14  15  16  17  18  19  20

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6 - 8pm  
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21  22  23  24  25  26  27

Financial Literacy Workshop - Online via Webex  
6:00-7:00pm Tuesday, March 23  
MUST REGISTER—at bcunningham@thearcnw.org or (313) 532-7915, ext. 204

21  22  23  24  25  26  27

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28  29  30  31

Guys & Dolls Bowling League will not meet for the duration of the 2020 - 2021 season.

All Sports activities of The Arc NW, as well as The Just Fun Club events have been suspended until a later date, yet to be determined.

CHECK IT OUT!  
The Arc of Northwest Wayne County’s Web Site  
thearcnw.org

Friend us on Facebook  
The Arc of Northwest Wayne County

MEMBER TAKEOVER  
Would you like to share your story on our Instagram? Email Wendy Emzen at wernzen@thearcnw.org
Membership Application

Member Name(s)  ____________________________________________

Address  ___________________________________________________

City  ___________________________   State  ______________________            ZIP____________________

Daytime Phone  ____________________________________________

Email Address  ____________________________________________

PHOTO DISCLAIMER: By joining The Arc NW I am agreeing to have my image used for printed and online marketing efforts.
Signature: ____________________________________________

Membership Dues

O New Member
O Renewing Member

DONATIONS

O $25  O $50  O $75
O $25  O $50  O $____ Other
O $100  O $150

$25 Individual Membership
$50 Family Membership
$100 Organization

Achieve with us!

Additional Membership Fees: $5 to join Just Fun Club
$15 to join Lekotek

An individual and his/her family or a group home with multiple residents. Includes additional membership fees for Just Fun Club and Lekotek.

Businesses, non-profits, community groups, or government entities that support people with disabilities.