

# Pennsylvania Message

## PA Advocacy & Policy Day

The 2014 PA Advocacy & Policy Day, held on April 1 and 2 in Harrisburg, was a fabulous success, gathering more than 150 members and guests of The Arc of Pennsylvania. The first day's activities included opportunities to network with peers, attend workshops, and meet with legislators and legislative staff. General session topics focused on programs and services affecting people with intellectual and development disabilities and their families, and as in past years, served as a primary source of good information and inspiration. Taking advantage of having so many visitors in town, day two of the event included The Arc of Pennsylvania's board meeting and annual membership meeting. The PA Conference of Executives of The Arc also hosted their quarterly meeting.

### Effective Communication with Legislators

The Arc of Pennsylvania was proud to have its own self-advocates lead a session on how to successfully interact with legislators. The session presenters were The Arc of Pennsylvania Board Directors, Sara Wolff and Joshua Stranix; Elise Westcott, Advocate, Board Member, SAU1; and Matt Stinner, Self-Advocate Consultant, SAU1, and Pam Klipa, Government Relations and Advocacy Director for The Arc of Pennsylvania. "It was a great highlight of the day and drove home the message that self-advocates are the experts on their own issues and are integral to an effective lobbying process" according to Maureen Cronin, Executive Director.

The self-advocates shared their best tips for effective communication with legislators:

- The most successful advocates develop relationships with their legislators. Use every opportunity that presents itself to further the relationship. Call to discuss the issues, but also call just to share information or to say thank you.



Self-advocates posing with First Lady Mrs. Corbett. *From left to right:* Sara Wolff, Josh Stranix, First Lady Mrs. Corbett, Matt Stinner, and Elise Westcott.

# President's Message - Jeanne Downey



*Little darling It's been a long, cold lonely winter  
Little darling It feels like years since it's been here*

*Here comes the sun  
Here comes the sun, and I say  
It's all right  
Beatles - Here Comes The Sun*

When I think of how difficult this past winter has been for so many people across the state of Pennsylvania, I am reminded of how difficult life can be for so many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. From trying to get their young children included in their neighborhood schools to trying to find a job and/or a place to live, they often experience frustrations and disappointments over and over again. Just when you think you have cleared one hurdle, another roadblock pops up.

The Arc of Pennsylvania and many of our local chapters across the state have been leaders in working to improve programs and services for people with disabilities. Our Include Me program is growing and we now have school districts' ASKING for this program! The Department of Education has not only continued to fund this initiative, but they have increased their funding and expanded the age groups over the years. The outcomes used in this program have provided measurable and evidence-based data to support that inclusion works! It is a ray of hope for families and their young children.

The Arc of Pennsylvania has also been awarded funding for an employment initiative. This employment initiative is focused on transition-aged students and connecting them with job experiences in their community. As many of us know, once students graduate from high school, there are often limited opportunities for them to find jobs in their community. As this employment initiative is rolled out, we hope more businesses will be looking to hire people with disabilities. Across Pennsylvania, many local chapters have created great programs to assist people in learning key skills necessary to securing good jobs in their communities. More rays of hope for young adults and their families.

As we keep a close watch on State Center activities, including new admissions to these Centers, we KNOW we must continue to work on influencing the mindsets of those who don't believe that community living is an option for some people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We need to work on influencing changes in funding formulas to allow money to follow the person from segregated and often isolated places to living in their own communities. People with disabilities and their families want to be sure that they will be safe wherever they live. Local Arc chapters and advocates need to have ongoing discussions with their community leaders, including police and fire departments, EMT's, real estate agencies, and others, in order to promote successful community living. Shine the light on what is possible when people are given the opportunity to be part of their own communities.

Now that spring is finally here, let's get out there and do whatever it takes to promote inclusive education, inclusive employment and community living. Let's make more rays of hope available. *Here comes the sun...*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanne C. Downey". The signature is written in a cursive style.

*Jeanne Downey is from Erie County, Pennsylvania.  
She began her 2-year term as President of The Arc of Pennsylvania in June 2013.*

# Executive Director's Message - Maureen Cronin



## The ABLE Act and the Olmstead Plan Gain Momentum - Let's Keep It Moving

The ABLE Act, (Achieving a Better Life Experience) H.R. 647, received much-deserved press this April as a result of Sen. Bob Casey's five outreach events in Pennsylvania. Each of these events drew support from The Arc members and their families. "The ABLE Act now has support from a strong majority in both parties in the House and Senate," Casey said, "because it is a common-sense approach to help families save and pay for their loved ones' long-term care." Passage of the Act would let people with disabilities of any kind set up tax-free savings accounts under Section 529 of the tax code – currently used by parents to save for their children's college educations. This money would not count against persons with disabilities' eligibility for Medicaid and other means-tested federal programs such as Supplemental Security Income but would provide for community living expenses that these plans do not cover, such as rent on a primary residence, transportation, aides to obtaining or maintaining employment such as communication devices, training and education, and health and wellness services.

The ABLE Act is closer than it has been to passage in more than eight years and we need to keep the momentum going until success is ours. I urge you to contact the following representatives that have not yet signed on to the bill and let them know that passage of the ABLE Act will permit people with disabilities to strive for financial freedom, and permit them to plan for a future that includes higher education, independent living, or employment.

U.S. Representative Chaka Fattah, (202) 225-4001

U.S. Representative Scott Perry, (202) 225-5836

U.S. Representative Bill Shuster (202) 225-2431

U.S. Representative Joseph Pitts, (202) 225-2411

The Olmstead Plan has also been tracking lately. I had the privilege to join Celia Feinstein, Co-Executive Director, Temple Institute on Disabilities, on March 31 to present testimony before the Human Services Committee, PA House of Representatives. I recounted for the panel, that in the '70s, The Arc of Pennsylvania led the movement to close state institutions, and now, some 40 years later we are still addressing the same problem. My testimony recalled, that in 1999, the Supreme Court affirmed that the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibited needless segregation of individuals with disabilities and that by law, all states are required to have an Olmstead Plan. Again, I am asking for your support to contact your legislators to join The Arc of Pennsylvania in calling on the Department of Public Welfare to develop a plan to call a moratorium on admissions and convene a group of stakeholders to develop an Olmstead Plan with benchmarks and timelines for closing the five Pennsylvania state centers that remain open. Let's seize the broad support for community integration and get a true Olmstead Plan developed and implemented in Pennsylvania to better serve those who are currently institutionalized in our state so that they can reclaim control over their own lives. Let's keep to our mission of promoting the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. More information on these bills can be found in our SAGA Briefs on pages 6-7.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen Cronin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

*Send Maureen your comments at [mcronin@thearcpa.org](mailto:mcronin@thearcpa.org).*

## Governor's Budget - Highlights

*Now is the time to meet with your legislators to let them know what you value in the Governor's proposed budget and what you cannot support.*

Governor Corbett has proposed a \$29.4 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2014-15, an increase of \$925 million (3.3 percent) over the current fiscal year. His proposed budget relies on anticipated, but uncertain, funding to balance the Department of Public Welfare budget. In his February speech, Governor Corbett said, "We need to create a Pennsylvania where people with disabilities, and their families, will never be forced to wait for services again." Highlights from the proposed budget, which can still be changed before the budget bill(s) are passed and signed, probably in late June, include:

- \$2.5 billion in total funding is committed to provide home and community based services to more than 53,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- This budget does not address the County Commissioners Association's requested restoration of the 10% cut that human services took in the 2012-2013 budget.
- The administration has expressed commitment to continue expanding the human services block grant program. **We are concerned that people with intellectual disabilities will lose critical services such as emergency services, respite and individual supports due to continued reduced funding and block grant implementation.** In the coming 2014-2015 fiscal year, counties will be able to use 50% of the community based funding legislatively appropriated for persons with intellectual disabilities for meeting needs in other human service areas; by fiscal year 2016-2017 100% of funding could be used in other human service areas. This could happen sooner if counties are granted waivers.
- **The Arc of Pennsylvania continues to be troubled that resources are being put towards sustaining state centers when the funds could go to community living.** The proposed increase in funding for state centers reflects the rising cost of simply maintaining these centers; this money can and should be used to move people out of these segregated settings and support them effectively in the community.
- The Arc of Pennsylvania is encouraged to see additional funds committed to reducing the Intellectual Disabilities Waiting List, an increase in Special Education funding for the first time in six years, and an increase in the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation funding for a new jobs initiative for young adults with disabilities.

For more information on the Governor's budget, please visit our website, [www.thearcpa.org](http://www.thearcpa.org)

## Wheels of Friendship Gifted to The Arc of Pennsylvania

Developed by Mikayla's Voice and The Arc of Pennsylvania, "Wheels of Friendship" is a one-of-a-kind program, through which children paint not with brushes, but with the wheels of a wheelchair and the paws and tail of a service dog. Their paintings are a beautiful reminder that it is always possible to find a way to include everyone. "Bright Suns and Happy Hands" was painted by children attending the Bethlehem community spring festival, Nazareth Middle School Best Buddies Club, and a preschool class from St. John Vianney School in Allentown. Finally, SkillsUSA students from Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School wrapped the canvas on a frame they built using wood reclaimed from trees downed by Hurricane Sandy. The painting is a gift for The Arc of Pennsylvania to celebrate our valued partnership and was delivered and presented to The Arc of Pennsylvania Board of Directors on April 2, 2014.



*"Bright Suns and Happy Hands" was presented to The Arc of Pennsylvania Board of Directors in April. The painting now hangs in the reception area of The Arc of Pennsylvania as a source of inspiration and encouragement for inclusion of all children.*



Sen. Casey poses with representatives of The Arc of Pennsylvania after his ABLE Press Conference on April 14 at Harrisburg Area Community College.

**From L to R:** Maureen Cronin, Matt Stinner, Dana Shick, Candice Clapsaddle, Sen. Bob Casey, Elise Westcott, Maureen Westcott



A first, second and third prize will be awarded in the following categories and age divisions:

**12 and under | 13 to 17 | 18 and older**

**Pen/Pencil | Watercolor | Acrylic | Oil | Sculpture | Jewelry  
Photography | Textile | Mixed Media/Other**

Contest is open to any Pennsylvanian of any age with a disability!  
Entries will be accepted Tuesday, April 15, 2014 through Monday, Aug. 25, 2014.  
Winners will be announced in October 2014.  
One entry per artist, please.

For official Contest Guidelines and the required entry form, visit  
The Arc of Pennsylvania's website at [www.thearcpa.org](http://www.thearcpa.org)  
Email questions to: [artcontest@pa.gov](mailto:artcontest@pa.gov)

The Art: The Universal Language contest is co-sponsored by:



The Arc of Pennsylvania is proud to be a co-sponsor of a statewide art contest that will showcase artwork from Pennsylvanians of all ages with disabilities. The contest was announced on April 1 by First Lady Susan Corbett and is a partnership between The Arc of Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

“We are thrilled to be working with the Governor and the First Lady to showcase the artistic talents of our members,” said The Arc of Pennsylvania’s Board President, Jeanne Downey. “Governor Corbett has shown that he recognizes the contributions people with disabilities make in Pennsylvania, and we are grateful for the opportunity to celebrate this through this art contest.”

“Art is truly a universal language. Some people with significant disabilities do not use words to communicate, but their passions and feelings are expressed in beautiful works of art,” said Maureen Cronin, Executive Director. “I am thankful that Governor Corbett and Mrs. Corbett value the perspective and talents of these artists, and I look forward to recognizing these individuals in October.”

For official contest guidelines and the required entry form, visit The Arc of Pennsylvania’s website at [www.thearcpa.org](http://www.thearcpa.org) or email questions to: [artcontest@pa.gov](mailto:artcontest@pa.gov).

“Art is a language that transcends ability,” Mrs. Corbett said.  
“Pennsylvanians with disabilities have a lot to overcome,  
but it is their abilities and talents that we often overlook.”

# SAGA: Systems Advocacy & Government Affairs

... In Brief

## **The ABLE Act**

In 2013 Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and Representative Ander Crenshaw (R-FL) reintroduced the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. It was first introduced in 2006 and has long been supported by disability rights organizations, including The Arc of Pennsylvania. This bill currently has broad, bipartisan support in Congress. The Arc of Pennsylvania Board Director Sara Wolff has worked tirelessly to help secure support for the ABLE Act.

The ABLE Act allows the creation of tax-free savings accounts for people with disabilities to use on community living expenses that Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid do not cover. These funds would not count in an individual's eligibility determination for Supplemental Security Income or Medicaid, allowing people with disabilities to responsibly save and use funds for the expenses that all people encounter—transportation, health care, housing, education, and employment support.

Currently people with disabilities cannot have more than \$2,000 in savings or over \$700 in monthly income in order to qualify for many benefits. This has created a system in which seeking financial stability through employment and savings is a disincentive for people with disabilities. Instead of promoting financial freedom, current guidelines restrict people with disabilities from being able to plan for a future that includes higher education, independent living, or employment. By creating a mechanism for people with disabilities and their families to save and use money for specific expenses without losing the benefits that support their life in the community, the ABLE Act will give people with disabilities greater freedom of choice and independence.

## **Healthy Pennsylvania**

Governor Corbett's plan to change Medicaid and private coverage options in Pennsylvania, called "Healthy Pennsylvania", is currently under review by the Federal Government. The Arc of Pennsylvania submitted comments on this plan to highlight our concerns for how Healthy Pennsylvania would negatively impact people with disabilities in Pennsylvania, including new limits on Medicaid benefits, tying premium payments to continued healthcare coverage, a work search requirement, and the elimination of Medicaid for

workers with disabilities. Individuals and groups submitted comments on the plan that spoke against many of these aspects of the plan as well. The Federal Government will take these comments into consideration when deciding how to amend or approve Healthy Pennsylvania.

## **House Human Services Hearing on Olmstead**

The Arc of Pennsylvania Executive Director Maureen Cronin, President of ACHIEVA Nancy Murray, and other members of key disability rights organizations from around the state testified at a House Human Services hearing in March. The hearing focused on the quality of life people with disabilities have in the community, and the continued institutionalization and segregation of people with disabilities. The importance of the Olmstead ruling for safeguarding community living was also addressed including the need for more progress on this plan in Pennsylvania. The Arc of Pennsylvania is following up with legislators to discuss next steps to address institutionalization and improve community living for people with disabilities.

## **Videoing in Group Homes Survey**

Disability advocacy organizations, including The Arc of Pennsylvania, ask for your participation! We created surveys to find out how video cameras are currently used in group homes and what people think about the topic. Please participate and let us know what you think about the use of video cameras in group homes. If you are a person with a disability or a family member, visit [www.surveymonkey.com/s/PZSRKKGK](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PZSRKKGK) to fill out the survey. If you are a provider, visit [www.surveymonkey.com/s/PFRZMNR](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PFRZMNR) to fill out the survey.

## **The D.R.E.A.M. Partnership**

The D.R.E.A.M. Partnership, founded in Pennsylvania by parents and educational professionals in 2012, is working to establish a network of colleges in the state of Pennsylvania that will provide postsecondary educational opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities which lead to competitive employment and independent living. The organization partners with universities and colleges to develop programs and capacity to provide postsecondary opportunities for students with disabilities and provides scholarships for students to

*Continued on Page 7*

attend these programs. For more information, visit <http://dreampartnership.org/>.

### **BURDEN OF PROOF:**

Senator Browne (Lehigh/Northampton) - SCO 1457 and Representative DiGirolamo (Berks) - HCO 2886 have introduced co-sponsor memos on Burden of Proof Legislation, through the encouragement of The Arc of Pennsylvania and its local chapters. Pennsylvania has no statute or regulation that assigns the burden of proof to school districts. Few parents go into this process with the resources or knowledge to properly present their child's case against seasoned professionals and bureaucrats representing school districts. This legislation is aimed to place the burden of proof in due process on school districts, regardless of who initiates the action. Please contact your local Senator and Representative to co-sponsor this important legislation.

### **REFORM SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING:**

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Governor Corbett signed HB 2- now Act 3 of 2013, into law. After 6 years of advocacy about the impact of special education on families, the Special Education Funding Commission was created, tasked with developing and recommending a funding formula that is equitable and adequate. A representation of The Arc of Pennsylvania staff, Board, and members and families attended the signing of the Bill. The Arc of Pennsylvania facilitated parents and families through Senator's Browne's office, to testify before the Commission during the six months of the Commission's work. The Commission tasked with developing the formula released its final report in November 2013 to the General Assembly and has developed legislation to reflect its recommendations. SB 1316 was introduced with the Commission's recommendations and is currently in Senate Appropriations. The Arc of Pennsylvania will continue to stay involved with the work of the Commission and the passage of this legislation.

### **STATE TASK FORCE:**

The Arc of Pennsylvania joins the Departments of Education and Public Welfare and a representative from the Governor's office to make up the State Task Force. Under the guidance of Ken Oakes, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Board of Directors, The Arc of Pennsylvania, and Pam Klipa, Government Relations Director, the State Task Force has presented the final version of the Right to Education Handbook. As part of an agreement with the Pennsylvania Department

of Education, Local Right to Education Task Force members may participate in Cyclical Monitoring of School Districts. The State Task Force has also been successful in the release of a link to access the results of Cyclical Monitoring from the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the public -[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/special\\_education/7465/p/1393556](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/special_education/7465/p/1393556).

Currently, Sharon Jones, Chairperson of The Arc of Pennsylvania Early Childhood and Education Committee, is serving as co-chair of a workgroup tasked with developing a parent satisfaction survey, to be used by Local Task Forces in the Fall of 2014.

### **BULLYING AND DISABILITY HARASSMENT POSITION PAPER:**

The Early Childhood and Education Committee recognized the prevalence of bullying among students with disabilities in schools across Pennsylvania and developed and distributed packets on Bullying and Disability Harassment, including a newly approved position paper. Additional resources include information on Positive Behavioral Supports, and its implementation. It was widely distributed and is posted on The Arc of Pennsylvania website.

## **LEARN MORE / DO MORE**

Stay Informed with PIE - The Policy Information Exchange (PIE) covers policy issues for Pennsylvanians with disabilities, their families, and advocates. The Arc of Pennsylvania manages PIE for the PA Developmental Disabilities Council.

Email us at [pie@theacrpa.org](mailto:pie@theacrpa.org) to receive electronic alerts and the quarterly newsletter.

# Sign On to Get Paul's Law Passed - HB 1474

**Purpose of Law:** Paul's Law would make it illegal for Pennsylvania medical professionals to discriminate against a potential organ transplant recipient on the basis of a physical, mental or developmental disability. This legislation is a major priority of The Arc of Pennsylvania.

**Background:** In 2011, 24-year old Paul Corby was denied a life-preserving heart transplant by the University of Pennsylvania because he was diagnosed with psychiatric issues and autism. Corby is still awaiting a transplant. This case highlights the reality, that despite national standards for transplant candidacy, some institutions consider highly subjective criteria in their decision-making. Corby was denied the life-preserving heart transplant due to a decision by the transplant panel that found he could not be recommended due to his psychiatric issues, autism and the unknown and unpredictable effect of steroids on behavior.

State Rep. John Sabatina, D-Phila, has sponsored the bill to assure that "people with a mental or physical disability should have the same chance of receiving an organ transplant as any other person on that waiting list." "Our hope is that no family will ever have to fight for their child's life because of a mental disability again," said Karen Corby, Paul's mother.

## **What You Can Do:**

1. Contact your state Representatives and ask them to co-sponsor Paul's Law if they have not done so already.
2. Sign the petition put forth by Sen. John Sabatina at [www.pahouse.com/Sabatina](http://www.pahouse.com/Sabatina).

## Spread the Word to End the Word



*Pictured front row L to R:* Dana Zinck, Ida Croushore, Mia Sabatini, Michael Weakland, and Audra Barozzini. *Second row L to R:* Lisa Ferris, Kristyne Geyer, Pam Morgan, Donald Morgan, Josephine Eckenrod, George Myers, Sharon Carrigan, and Lynn Orawiec.

In honor of Disabilities Awareness Month, The Arc of Fayette County joined the campaign to "Spread the Word to End the Word." The month long series of events and assemblies kicked-off on the steps of the Fayette County Courthouse. A rally was held in conjunction with the Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration on March 6, 2014. The Arc of Fayette County also held events at LaFayette School, Bullsken Elementary School, Uniontown Mall, and the Uniontown Wal-Mart. Over 1,200 signatures were obtained throughout Fayette County by people pledging to stop the use of the "R" word. The Arc of Fayette County believes in "people first" language and will continue to raise awareness through community outreach and education.



# “TECH TALK”

## The Value of Making Reading Accessible

By Jule Ann Lieberman MS CLVT

Reading provides us all with opportunities to learn, find entertainment and become a more involved citizen. Reading helps us learn about ourselves, our communities and our world. Now, accessing the written word has become easier for persons with disabilities. People with vision loss, blindness, people who are unable to hold a book, and people who can't read a book on their own, no longer need to rely on others to read aloud to them.



Talking books, or audio books, have been used for many years and were originally provided on disks and tapes. Now reading materials are available in digital formats and have visual display options, text to speech capabilities -- some are recorded by a narrator. Book reading

devices can be an audio book player, an eBook Reader or an app on a tablet device. These reading apps have been developed specifically to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and some require a membership and or subscription fees in order to use them. Some of the organizations that provide specialized digital reading materials are BookShare.org, Learning Ally.org and the Talking Book Service from the National Library Service at the Library of Congress. The variety of digital material is constantly growing and covers all ages and interests.

Nowadays, booksellers have devices for reading digital materials. Amazon has the Kindle, and Barnes

and Noble has the Nook. These devices include both a hardware book reader with some built-in features for changing display and reading text aloud. Mobile apps, just to name a few, include Kindle, Nook and iBooks. These apps, along with an Internet connection, can make digital reading materials available in minutes. These apps have some of the same features as their hardware counterparts. Audio books can also include features such as bookmarks, chapter navigation, and timers in case you drift off to sleep while listening.



If your print material is not already available in a digital format, there are apps that can take a picture of the text, convert it to digital format and read it aloud. These might not be the best choice for long books, but could work well when reading short passages (e.g. a magazine article or a letter). If you

are looking for an alternative for your news and entertainment other than television, give the gift of reading to yourself or a person who has difficulty reading by investigating assistive technology for reading.

For more information, contact Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology, by phone at 800-204-7428 or by email at [atinfo@temple.edu](mailto:atinfo@temple.edu).

### RESOURCES FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

PA Assistive Technology Foundation—1-888-744-1938 (voice) or 877-693-7271 (TTY) or 484-674-0510 (fax) or email [patf@patf.us](mailto:patf@patf.us) Website: [www.patf.us](http://www.patf.us)

PA Initiative on Assistive Technology—1-800-204-7428 (voice) or 866-268-0579 (TTY) or email [ATinfo@temple.edu](mailto:ATinfo@temple.edu)

PA Telecommunication Device Distribution Program 1-800-204-7428 or email [TDDP@temple.edu](mailto:TDDP@temple.edu)  
<http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/piat>

- Keep your communications positive whether in-person, by phone or via emails and letters.
- **Do your homework.** You are the expert on your issue; find those who are most likely to support you. Learn how to use your facts to persuade people who might oppose you.
- **Be clear** - Get your message across in as few words as possible. Accuracy matters. Explain the problem, how it affects people and the solution. Be clear about what you want the legislator to do.
- **Be balanced** - Share both personal stories and facts and figures.
- **Network** - Encourage your family and friends to help carry your message to legislators.
- **Engage the legislative staff** - They can help carry your message to your legislator(s).
- **Share the spotlight** - Invite your legislator(s) to join you for media opportunities
- **Don't let differences of opinion close doors.**
- **Get involved in the political process** - Help with voter registration and make sure that elected officials know that your group will turn up at the polls.

## LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The Arc of Pennsylvania's annual Legislative Reception, co-sponsored by *PA Conference of Executives of The Arc (PCE)* was held at the Harrisburg Hilton on April 1, 2014. The event was capped off with the presentation of "Senator and Representative of the Year" Awards.

The Arc of Pennsylvania honors legislators who demonstrate leadership in addressing the needs of Pennsylvanians with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. The Legislators of the Year awards were presented to the 2014 honorees, Representative Thomas Murt and Senator Pat Browne. Representative Murt and Senator Browne have been steadfast on numerous fronts in advancing state legislative and regulatory issues important to Pennsylvanians with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.



The 2014 Legislators of the Year received their awards at the PA Advocacy & Policy Day event. **Left to right:** Jeanne Downey, Senator Pat Browne, Representative Thomas Murt, Maureen Cronin.

Representative Murt has become one of the leading advocates in Pennsylvania for people with disabilities and their caregivers, particularly promoting funds to address the waiting list each year since he has been in office. In 2013 he wrote and was instrumental in securing bi-partisan support of HB 993, which changes the name of the Department of Public Welfare to the Department of Human Services. This change would reduce the stigma that people with disabilities face as they seek services. Representative Murt has represented the 152nd District in Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties since 2006 and serves as the Chair of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Caucus.

Senator Browne, a leading education advocate, co-chaired the Special Education Funding Commission in 2013. The Commission was created with the passage of Act 3, unanimously passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives and signed into law on April 25, 2013. The Commission is recommending the establishment of a new special education funding formula to ensure that funding is adequately and equitably distributed. Throughout years of advocacy efforts, Senator Browne has been a tireless champion for students and families. Senator Browne has represented Senate District 16 in Lehigh, Monroe and Northampton Counties since 2004. He is the Senate Majority Whip and Co-Chair of the Special Education Funding Commission.

## New Faces at The Arc of Pennsylvania



**Anthony Chan** is the new program assistant for the Include Me project. Anthony is responsible for the project's data management and social media. He will also serve as the main contact for Include Me consultants.

Before joining us at

The Arc of Pennsylvania, Anthony developed his managerial skills as a manager for Panda Express. Anthony's passion for helping others began early in life and his goal of working with nonprofit organizations developed during his studies at Boston University. When not working, Anthony spends his time learning programming and hiking Pennsylvania's many beautiful state parks.



**Chris Dimov** is the new editor of the Pennsylvania Message and also works part-time for the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank as their grant writer. Prior to joining the Food Bank in 2005, Chris spent 15 years at

the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association. During her tenure, she served as Director of Meetings & Conventions, Executive Assistant to the Executive Director and Vice President of Administration. Chris has a B.S. in Hotel Administration from Cornell University and spent ten years in the hospitality industry. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, kayaking, travelling and day trips with her husband, Mike on their motorcycle.

## GO GREEN

The Pennsylvania Message is now available via email. Please send your full name, local chapter, and email address to [ahouser@thearcpa.org](mailto:ahouser@thearcpa.org) to receive your electronic copy.

## The Arc of Pennsylvania Board of Directors

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Consultant  
Chris Dimov, Editor, Pennsylvania Message

Suite 403 – Pennsylvania Place  
301 Chestnut Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
717-234-2621  
[www.thearcpa.org](http://www.thearcpa.org)

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The Arc of Pennsylvania  
301 Chestnut Street  
Suite 403, Pennsylvania Place  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
717.234.2621  
www.thearca.org

The **Pennsylvania Message** is published by The Arc of Pennsylvania.

The Arc of Pennsylvania is affiliated with The Arc of the U.S. and 34 local chapters serving 56 counties and 8,000 members.

In early April, The Arc of Pennsylvania was well represented at the 2014 Disability Policy Seminar held in Washington, D.C. The annual event, presented in part by The Arc and other national organizations, is a wonderful opportunity for advocates for persons with intellectual and development disabilities to network, meet with their legislators, and attend seminars designed to provide a deeper understanding of public programs and policy. The occasion offers participants the chance to strengthen their talking points on a wide range of topics and work together on critical issues, making their collective voice stronger, with a more powerful impact on Congress.

During their trip, the Pennsylvania Arc Caucus had the distinct opportunity to meet with Senator Bob Casey and his staff. The Arc Caucus reiterated the key legislation important to our members including reauthorizing the Combating Autism Act, enactment of the ABLE Act and the sustainability of Medicaid. Maureen Cronin noted that "Sen. Casey actively supports every single legislative and policy position of The Arc."



The Arc PA Caucus met with Senator Bob Casey, Jr., in his Washington office on April 1 to discuss issues and legislation impacting the intellectual and developmental disability community.

**Bottom row from left:** Laura Princiotta, Don Broderick, Robert Arnold, Phil Rosenbauer.

**Top row from left:** Bonnie Squires, Tanya Regli, Sen. Bob Casey, Sara Wolff, Maureen Cronin, Karen Grady, Shirley Warburton, Pat Leo

#### MISSION STATEMENT

*The Arc of Pennsylvania promotes the human rights of people with intellectual and development disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.*