Advocacy at its finest
Tennessee self-advocate inspires Text-911 bill, presents to legislators
By: Dara Bacon

"Although the dead guy was okay, the casket did get dented," Molly says laughingly. "But the fact remained, I still couldn’t call 911 for help."

Like many individuals with Apraxia, American Sign Language is a essential way of communicating.

"When I face-timed my husband, he could not understand me because I was balling and my signs were everywhere. A kind bystander stopped and called 911." Although many deaf and hard of hearing individuals use video-relay services, Molly doesn’t because she can hear.

"It’s so scary when I can’t get help during an emergency. And when I do call 911, and I’m not able to be heard, emergency responders default to sending every emergency vehicle because they do not know my specific need."

So advocating for the Text 911 bill has become a family affair. Molly’s husband Josh and baby-on-the-way have accompanied Molly to Nashville to present the full Tennessee Senate.

House Bill 173/Senate Bill 182 is sponsored by Sen. Becky Massey and Rep. Eddie Mannis. It has already passed the full Senate and is seeking approval from the House Finance Committee and full House in April 2021.

To follow the progress of the bill, visit the Tennessee General Assembly legislative bill search page.
The Arc Tennessee Mission Statement

The Arc Tennessee empowers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to actively participate in the community throughout their lifetime.

Have you heard?
We’re getting a new website!!!

In May 2021, The Arc TN will launch a new, fully accessible website. Enhancements will allow equal access to individuals with hearing impairments, vision impairments, learning disabilities and non-English speakers.

To make a donation or renew your membership you can still visit:

http://www.thearctn.org

Other ways to give!


note: you must update your profile every year.

Make The Arc Tennessee your designated charitable organization with Amazon Smiles. When you shop Amazon Smile, 0.5% of the eligible purchases will benefit The Arc TN! Login to Amazon account, click on Accounts & Lists, then Your Amazon Smiles, then select The Arc TN as your charitable organization. https://smile.amazon.com/

Donate a Car Today

1-877-ARC-CAR-0
www.thearctn.org/Car-Donation

Facebook LIKE us

TN CENTER FOR DECISION-MAKING SUPPORT

Tennessee’s Center for Decision-Making Support website launches April 2021! More details coming soon...
In October 2020, Heidi Haines was selected as the new Executive Director for The Arc Tennessee. After a nationwide search, Haines moved cross-country during a pandemic to take the lead of Tennessee’s state chapter.

“My family and I came to the Great Smoky Mountains on vacation a few years ago after the The Arc National Convention in Nashville. We loved Tennessee and when the ED position became open, all of us were excited about the potential of moving here,” says Haines.

For the past nine years, Heidi served as Director of Advocacy for The Arc Colorado, as well as an advisor for Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE). SABE is a national self-advocacy organization for people with developmental disabilities.

Heidi is a graduate of the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware Advance Leadership Institute and a 2016 graduate of the William & Mary Law Institute of Special Education Advocacy. For two years, she also served as a technology navigation fellow for The Arc of United States.

Apart from leadership responsibilities, Heidi has jumped in ready to swim.

“There’s been so many changes in the last year for The Arc TN staff alone. We saw many great people retire or move to different positions. Not to mention enduring all the challenges in Middle Tennessee with the pandemic, tornados, Christmas bombing and severe weather. It’s been an adjustment, but I couldn’t be more proud of our current team. Opportunities have come out of the woodwork and our community engagement is really taking off,” Haines says with enthusiasm.

Heidi says her main priorities right now are being intentional with the TN Legislative Assembly, launching the new TN Center for Decision Making Support, the Arc’s new website and comprehensive database.

“We’ve got plenty to do and look forward to going higher,” she says with a smile.
As we welcomed in 2021, the world knew that we would still be in a state of change for our nation. We ushered in a new president, COVID numbers continued to rise, rollout of a COVID vaccine began and people were concerned as to how to register for the vaccine. Although this has been a very confusing time, I have seen many families having very informative conversations.

Facebook groups have been great in learning of the concerns of families in trying to schedule an appointment for the vaccine for their loved ones that fall under the category of being 18 years and older and cannot live independently due to a serious chronic medical condition or intellectual or developmental disability. There has been much communication on social media from family members on their journey to obtaining the first dose and scheduling of the second dose. This information has helped many know that their loved one(s) are able to receive the vaccine and who to contact. A huge shout out should go to Tennessee for adding this category to the first phase. It has helped to ease concerns about COVID for many families.

As we try to continue making progress and impacting the implementation of services in a positive way, The Arc Tennessee is undergoing many changes. With new Executive Director Heidi Haines, the Executive Board approved of a capital investment for a fully accessible website and integrative database for The Arc Tennessee. This decision couldn’t come at a better time, since a majority of people continue working from home. Online presence and accessibility of information is at an all time high.

The Arc Tennessee remains committed to empowering individuals with disabilities and their families to have full participation in the community. Even if we aren’t back to in-person events, we’re doing our best to reach everyone in the state who needs us. Thank you for your continued support and involvement.

Lines from Linda
By: Linda Brown, President

Check out the new logo for the TN Disability Mega Conference! More event details and new website coming Summer 2021!
Looking back, 2020 was a year of change and growth for the Family Engagement Project! Our team of Regional Family Engagement Specialists has been hard at work planning workshops for families, collaborating with districts across the state on trainings, and presenting at conferences. We love working with the Department of Education and other Advocacy Groups across the state to help improve student outcomes across the state of Tennessee.

And we've grown by a new team member! We welcome Kathleen Basham to our Regional Family Engagement Team serving the East TN Region. Molly Anderson has moved into the South East Region and will continue her role as a Family Engagement Specialist in that area.

One of the most exciting announcements we have is the launch of our brand new website dedicated to Special Education! Please visit FamilyEngagementTN.com any time we can help with anything related to Special Education or click scan the QR Code below.

There will be one section just for families and one dedicated to teachers or schools, so it really is a one stop shop! On the website, you will have access to a chat box where we can assist you live during business hours, or you can email us anytime at specialeducation@thearctn.org and we will connect you with the support you need.

You can also find out about our Regional Family Engagement Specialists and connect with the team member supporting your area. You can also check out the calendar for upcoming events.

One of the silver linings to the pandemic has been pivoting so many events to virtual, which has made it easier for a lot of families to attend from the comfort of their own home! We hope families find this website resource useful. Please feel free to share this with anyone involved in Special Education across the state of Tennessee: FamilyEngagementTN.com.

One of our most popular workshops in late 2020 was the one on Diploma Options. We worked with Alison Gauld from the Department of Education to create a family-friendly training on the four diploma options available in Tennessee. If you'd like to watch it, we have the recorded version available here: https://fespedtn.blogspot.com/2020/12/diploma-options-training-by-arc.html or you can scan the QR Code below:

To watch the Tennessee diploma training created by the Family Engagement team, simply take a picture of this QR code with your smartphone camera.

When COVID-19 first made its way into Tennessee in Spring of 2020, we launched a Facebook Live Q&A Session with the TN Department of Education to help families get answers to all their questions directly from the Department. This has been such a huge help to families, and it has also helped the Department understand trends and hot spots in questions or issues that are arising in Special Education across the state.

Please join us on the first Wednesday of the month at noon central time on The Arc Tennessee’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/TheArcTennessee. You can submit your questions at any time by emailing japrea@thearctn.org. The more engaged you are, the more information the Department can gather from us to help guide them as they create resources, trainings, and guidance to schools.
People First continues to offer a variety of ways for self-advocates to remain connected, informed and inspired. Virtual Chapter meetings have been happening throughout the state since July 2020. We have hit our stride with a reoccurring monthly schedule. Tuesdays have been unofficially devoted to People First virtual events and happenings. Here’s a breakdown of the monthly schedule:

**State Calls**
First Tuesday of the month  
10am & 5pm CST

**Job Club**
Second Tuesday of the month  
10am CST

**Social Hour**
Third Tuesday of the month  
10am & 5pm CST

**State Calls** kick off the month in an informative way. We hear public policy updates, upcoming news and events, COVID-19 updates and the three regions. This is a great way to stay up-to-date on what’s going on in the state and throughout People First TN.

**Social Hour** is open to any person interested in learning more about People First. Self-advocates lead discussions and share their talents at social hour. Social hour is also a great way for interested self-advocates to earn a free year’s membership. Anyone can Please contact Dave Griffin for details at dgriffin@thearctn.org or 615-594-6529.

**Job Club** is an open forum for people with disabilities to learn more about looking for and keeping a job. Though People First TN doesn’t offer job placement services through this club, we do use the Pre-ETS presentations as our guide.

People First Tennessee has now grown to over 300 members statewide. We will play a pivotal role in The Arc Tennessee’s Sept. 11th Remembrance grant, which kicks off with an art contest open to any self-advocate in the state to participate. See the next column for more details.

For pictures and highlights from our Predators Bingo event in January and a members attending a Predators game, check out chapters highlights on the next page.

It is an exciting time to be part of People First Tennessee! Please visit www.thearctn.org to become a member or renew your membership. Scholarships are available for self-advocates. Contact Dave Griffin for more details at dgriffin@thearctn.org or call 615-594-6529.

---

**Art Work Competition for self-advocates**

The Arc Tennessee is launching a Sept. 11th Remembrance Project to honor Nashville First Responders. The project kicks off with an art contest for Tennessee self-advocates.

Winners will have their artwork featured on the front cover of 2,977 cards printed for Nashville First Responders. One card in honor of each life lost on Sept. 11th, 2001.

**Project goal:** build community resiliency after a hard year and show that everyone, including individuals with disabilities, have the ability to contribute to the community.

**What we need:** Works of art that reflect unity, resiliency, respect, appreciation and/or service. Self-advocates are encouraged to use any type of materials (paint, pastels, markers, etc.). Get creative! Make a masterpiece that inspires and reminds us that we’re all in this together!

**Who can participate:** Any individual with a disability in Tennessee can submit a design. You do not have to be a member of The Arc TN or People First to participate. Individuals can submit more than one design.

**How to enter:** Email a picture of your artwork to Angela Braach (abraach@thearctn.org)

**Deadline to submit:** Thursday, April 22nd, 2021

The People First Advisory Council will review and choose the top artwork entries in May. Winners will be notified by May 20th. Winners will be listed on the inside of each card. Cards will be hand-written by volunteer groups and mailed to first responders the week of Sept. 11th, 2021.

Contact Dara Bacon at dbacon@thearctn.org for more details.
The Arc Davidson County & Greater Nashville
In September 2020, The Arc Davidson County & Greater Nashville was awarded $200,000 to help Wilson, Davidson, Rutherford, Cheatham, Sumner, Williamson, and Robertson county individuals with disabilities and families with a family member with a disability who have been affected by COVID-19. Each individual was awarded up to $1,000.00 in assistance to help with paying rent/mortgage, utilities, and / or computer equipment. They were able to assist a total of 204 individuals.

The Arc of Cumberland County
hosted a virtual presentation on Dec. 5th regarding social security disability benefits. To see the recording of the presentation, take a picture the QR code below with your smart phone. Or you can visit: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/SKbmkTk0efzjBovxVNI-7h4ieAcCxf00xH0M_o-m-TGNag0bYoQ9RwuVYxt/_Zc-7.vS-Jg212EwOK98CTF

Developmental Services of Dickson County (DSDC)
In partnership with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, DSDC is conducting a year-long outreach to consider how the Dickson County community can come together in supporting young adults as they transition into employment, higher education, adult health care and community involvement.

People First TN had virtual Bingo with the Nashville Predators!!!
More than 25 People First members and Arc TN staff got to play a few rounds of bingo with Ryan Johansen & Yakov Trenin of the Nashville Predators in January!

The Arc Davidson County & Greater Nashville
In September 2020, The Arc Davidson County & Greater Nashville was awarded $200,000 to help Wilson, Davidson, Rutherford, Cheatham, Sumner, Williamson, and Robertson county individuals with disabilities and families with a family member with a disability who have been affected by COVID-19. Each individual was awarded up to $1,000.00 in assistance to help with paying rent/mortgage, utilities, and / or computer equipment. They were able to assist a total of 204 individuals.

The Arc of Cumberland County
hosted a virtual presentation on Dec. 5th regarding social security disability benefits. To see the recording of the presentation, take a picture the QR code below with your smart phone. Or you can visit: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/SKbmkTk0efzjBovxVNI-7h4ieAcCxf00xH0M_o-m-TGNag0bYoQ9RwuVYxt/_Zc-7.vS-Jg212EwOK98CTF

Developmental Services of Dickson County (DSDC)
In partnership with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, DSDC is conducting a year-long outreach to consider how the Dickson County community can come together in supporting young adults as they transition into employment, higher education, adult health care and community involvement.

Many thanks to the Nashville Predators for giving The Arc Tennessee a few tickets to home game March 24th! Families got to enjoy a night of hockey!

Joanna Ferrell and Jimmy Shepherd cheered on the Preds during their game against Detroit Red Wings.

Be recognized for your impact!
Submit Chapter news and pictures to Dara Bacon at dbacon@thearctn.org.
To continue prospering and growing as an organization, we must receive charitable contributions and enroll new members. The form below was designed for your convenience in making a donation, giving a gift, or becoming a member! Please send completed form to:

The Arc Tennessee, 545 Mainstream Drive, Suite 100, Nashville, TN 37228-1213

YES, I/we want to make a contribution to The Arc Tennessee!

Name(s)______________________________________________________________
Address________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip_________ County of Residence____________________________
Phone__________________________
Email__________________________________________________________________

I am making a gift of $______________. (Make check payable to The Arc Tennessee.)

I prefer to pay by credit/debit card: _____ Visa _____ MasterCard _____ Discover

Card number_____________________________ Verif. Code_________ Exp. Date _________________

Signature________________________________________________________________

___Enroll me as a member ($20 Individual, $5 Self-advocate, $100 Business Associate)

I would like my gift to be: ___ in honor of: _____________________ ___ in memory of: _____________________

___ gift membership for: __________________________

Name (of person to receive acknowledgment or gift)__________________________________________
Address________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip__________________________ County of Residence__________________________
Phone____________________________________
Email____________________________________

___ Send me information about including The Arc in my will.

Name (of person to receive acknowledgment or gift)__________________________________________
Address________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip__________________________ County of Residence__________________________
Phone____________________________________
Email____________________________________