

Advocacy at its finest

Tennessee self-advocate inspires Text-911 bill, presents to legislators

By: Dara Bacon



Molly & Josh Anderson

In the world of advocacy, each person has a story to tell. Arc Tennessee staff member and Chattanooga resident, Molly Ridgeway Anderson, has an incredible story that's both nerve-racking and inspiring change when it comes to emergency resources here in Tennessee.

The 25 year-old Chattanooga resident recently graduated with a Master's degree from George Washington University. Her thesis project was unlike any other, to propose and advocate for a Text-911 bill to the Tennessee Legislative Assembly.

"I was diagnosed with Apraxia at 18 months old. Apraxia is a speech disorder that impacts my ability to speak. I can hear perfectly, yet I'm not able to verbally communicate. When I was a senior in high school, I had my first wreck in my hometown of Florence, Alabama. Thankfully my car had Onstar which detects an accident and calls 911 automatically."

This experience made Molly realize that Texting 911 could be a valuable resource to any community, especially individuals with disabilities, domestic violence victims, people in medical distress, and many more.

Fast forward six years and Molly experienced another car accident. This time with a funeral van!

"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.



Josh & Molly Anderson pose with Sen. Massey (center) after presenting to the full TN Senate in March

Si tiene un niño o miembro de la familia con una incapacidad intelectual o de desarrollo, puede contactar Pathfinder a: 615-875-5083 para recibir más información sobre recursos y servicios.

Executive Committee

President

Linda Brown

Vice President

Karen Downer

Secretary

Robyn Lampley

Treasurer

Nikki Klumb

East TN Representative
Marcus Thomas

Middle TN Representative
Lexi Shelnett

West TN Representative
Shontie Brown

Executive Director
Heidi Haines

Editor
Dara Bacon

The Arc Connection is funded
under an agreement with
the State of Tennessee and is
published quarterly. Articles
should be sent to:

Dara Bacon, Editor
dbaon@thearcctn.org

The Arc Tennessee
545 Mainstream Dr., Suite 100,
Nashville, TN 37228
Fax: 615-248-5879

*Permission to copy and
distribute is granted with
approval and acknowledgment.*

The Arc Tennessee values
diversity and does not
discriminate based on race,
color, ethnicity, religion, age,
national origin, geographic
location, sexual orientation,
gender, gender identity,
level of disability, Limited
English Proficiency or status
as a protected veteran.

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.thearcctn.org>

Other ways to give!



Link your Kroger Card to benefit The Arc Tennessee.
Visit the Kroger Community Rewards® program at
www.kroger.com/communityrewards
and use **The Arc TN's ID 37451**.



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.thearcctn.org/Car-Donation



TN CENTER FOR
**DECISION-MAKING
SUPPORT**

**Tennessee's Center for Decision-Making Support website
launches April 2021! More details coming soon...**



Meet The Arc Tennessee's New Executive Director, Heidi Haines

By: Dara Bacon



In October 2020, Heidi Haines was selected as the new Executive Director for The Arc Tennessee. After a nation wide 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



Board member for The Arc US Mitch Routon, joins Heidi Haines and Joseph Meadors for a quick picture.



Heidi with her husband Mark, and daughters Ava & Eliza

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.



Lines from Linda

By: Linda Brown, President

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.



FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

This listing reflects donations received 09/01/20 - 12/31/20. We apologize for any omissions and appreciate omissions brought to the attention of Gavin Dillinger at gdillinger@thearctn.org or 615-248-5878 x 17.

Charles Hobbs
Kroger
MR Foundation Melwood
Horticultural Center
Debbie Hood
Dara Bacon
Jen Vogus
Gavin Dillinger
Ashley Coulter
Jen Aprea
Sharon Bottorf
John and Cheryl Blake
Melissa Raines
Jacqueline King
Julian Fox
Chad Henson

Joanne Svenningsen
Network for Good
Wordcrafts
Julie Brawner
Lexi Shelnutt
Susan Carr
David Hawk
Shontie Brown



WANT TO MAKE A DONATION WHILE OUR WEBSITE IS BEING UPDATED?

Just visit www.thearctn.org or take a picture of this QR code with your smartphone



Check out the new logo for the TN Disability Mega Conference!
More event details and new website coming Summer 2021!



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Family Engagement Project Updates!

By: Jennifer Aprea, Director of Family Engagement

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.



To visit the new Family Engagment website, simply take a picture of this QR code with your smartphone camera.

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@thearcn.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 Engagment 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@thearcn.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.

Visit the Family Engagement in Special Education website at www.familyengaementtn.com



*By: Dave Griffin,
People First Project Coordinator*

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 Call- 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@theactn.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.theactn.org to become a member or renew your membership. Scholarships are available for self-advocates. Contact Dave Griffin for more details at dgriffin@theactn.org or call 615-594-6529.



**9/11 DAY
OF SERVICE**

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@theactn.org)

****Please keep your original artwork. If your design is selected, the original artwork will be needed to create the cards.**

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. Artists name and county 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@theactn.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/SKbmkTk0eTzjBovxVNI-7h4ieAcCvg00xH0fO_m-TGNag0bYoQ9RwuvVytd_-Zc-7.vS-Jg212EwOK98CtF



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!



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!



Ryan Aprea (right) got to experience his first hockey game with his father, Dave Aprea!



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.

Winter 2020



Achieve with us.

**545 Mainstream Drive, Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37228-1213**

Non-profit organization
Postage
PAID
Nashville, TN
Permit #1061



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 _____
Phone _____ County of Residence _____
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 _____
Phone _____ County of Residence _____
Email _____

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