

CORE VALUES

- People First
- Democracy
- Visionary Leadership
- Diversity
- Integrity
- Excellence
- Community Participation



Summer 2009

The Arc of Nebraska

FOCUS Newsletter

United States Signs the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice signed the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on July 30, 2009. She and Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement, Valerie Jarrett, hosted a reception to celebrate the occasion. Kathy Hoell, President of The Arc of Nebraska Board, was invited as the Executive Director the Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council, and her personal attendant, Mary Angus, attended.

The reception was incredible! Ambassador Rice made comments on the importance of the Convention she had just signed, saying that the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act "are at the heart of the Convention." She added that it "embraces persons with disabilities as valued individuals with fundamental and equal rights."

Ms Jarrett then reported that President Obama recognizes that, "Much work remains to be done." He has "launched the year of community living to affirm the fundamental rights of people with disabilities to live with dignity and respect wherever they should chose." She told the audience of "the creation of a brand new position in the Department of Transportation which will be a special assistant to focus on accessible transportation for people with disabilities." She also was "pleased to announce, on his [the President's] behalf, the creation of a new, senior level Disability Human Rights position in the State Department."

Also in attendance were Kareem Dale, the President's Special Assistant for Disability Policy and Michael Strautmanis, the Ambassador's Chief of Staff. Guests where from as far away as New Zealand! Kathy and Mary made some wonderful contacts and thoroughly enjoyed the Ambassador's hospitality.



In this photo: Back Row: Ambassador Rice and Jim McLay, UN Ambassador from New Zealand

Front Row: Kathy Hoell, Mary Angus

Mark Your Calendars!!

Senatorial Dinner 2010
Tuesday, February 9th

An Invitation to the White House

That was the subject line of an email I received on Monday evening, July 20th. I was being invited to attend a celebration at the White House on the following Friday, July 24th.

The event at the White House was to celebrate the 19th Anniversary of the ADA. In addition, President Obama was to sign the intention of the United States to sign on to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. There were 100 in attendance in the Gold Room at the White House. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, introduced the President with a wonderful speech about the importance of this international agreement. She will oversee the work of the US Office to uphold this declaration. The United States is the 147th country to sign on to this agreement.

The President gave a fabulous speech about the importance of the ADA and its effect on the lives of those with disabilities.

Quotes from the President's speech:

"What was needed was a bill of rights for persons with disabilities, and that's what the ADA was. It was a formal acknowledgment that Americans with disabilities are Americans first, and they are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as everybody else: a right to belong and participate fully in the American experience; a right to dignity and respect in the workplace and beyond; the freedom to make of our lives what we will."

"So the ADA showed the world our full commitment to the rights of people with disabilities - and now we have an opportunity to live up to that commitment. Today, 650 million people - 10 percent of the world's population - live with a disability. In developing countries, 90 percent of children with disabilities don't attend school. Women and girls with disabilities are too often subject to deep discrimination."

"Disability rights aren't just civil rights to be enforced here at home; they're universal rights to be recognized and promoted around the world. And that's why I'm proud to announce that next week, the United States of America will join 140 other nations in signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - the first new human rights convention of the 21st century."

This was a great day and event. For me personally, it was wonderful to see old friends and colleagues that I worked with during my many years in Washington, DC.



Patty McGill Smith, past president of The Arc of Nebraska in the Blue Room of the White House after the signing of the ADA Proclamation.

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Updates from the Executive Director

A lot has been happening at The Arc in recent months. The biggest updates are listed below.

- We've Moved!

As you may have heard, The Arc of Nebraska has moved! We are now located at:

3601 Calvert Street, Suite #25 • Lincoln, NE 68506

Our phone, fax, and e-mail are still the same.

- Website

Expect to see big changes to The Arc of Nebraska website soon! We have begun work on a new website. Anne Lauritzen has done a tremendous job on our current website and we hope she will continue to give us invaluable input as we develop our new one! We are lucky to have such a great resource available to us. The Arc thrives from the efforts of volunteers, like Anne, and we greatly appreciate her work.

- Activities

Sibling Handbook

Last fall The Arc received funding from the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities to create a handbook for siblings who may be assuming a supportive role in the life of a sibling with a disability. We have completed the handbook and have it available for dissemination. We would be glad to provide a copy to anyone who is interested. The Arc contracted with Jill Meile, an adult sibling of a person with a developmental disability, to create and present the handbook. Jill has done a magnificent job and she is an engaging speaker who generates a lot of participation from her audience. The Council has created a wonderful opportunity for The Arc to be able to provide such a resource. We appreciate anything you can do to help us distribute the information across the state. Upcoming presentations are listed in the events section of this edition of the FOCUS.

Voting

The Arc has been awarded a contract with Nebraska Advocacy Services to conduct voting rights education and activities throughout the state. The Arc will be sub-contracting with Angus Disability Consulting and the Munroe-Meyer Institute to carry out the activities under the contract. We are looking forward to working with our subcontractors and getting out across the state to work with local chapters to ensure that everyone knows their rights, is registered to vote, and is able to actively participate in the political process!

Chapter Development

The Arc is committed to taking a collaborative approach in developing local chapters across the state. Expect to see The Arc working closely with other organizations as we travel Nebraska to ensure chapter success at the local level. If you have any ideas, please be sure to let us know how we can best help you.

- Leadership Institute

In July, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities in Delaware through a scholarship from the Mentor Network Charitable Foundation. This was a phenomenal chance to meet leaders in the field from other states and to learn about best practices and developments in services and advocacy. We are making progress in Nebraska, but we have so far to go. The information and networking connections through the Consortium will be instrumental to The Arc membership as we progress in ensuring full community participation for Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. If you would like to learn more about the Leadership Consortium, please contact The Arc for information.



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Nebraska State Council

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, September 9th

5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Hamilton/Merrick Picnic
Aurora Elementary School
300 H Street, Aurora, NE
Free BBQ, bring side dish or dessert

Monday, September 14th

7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Sibling Handbook Presentation
Arc of Central Nebraska
Peace Lutheran Church
1710 N. North Road, Grand Island, NE

Thursday, September 17th

6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Sibling Handbook Presentation

Arc of Lincoln/Lancaster County
Culler Middle School
5201 Vine Street, Lincoln, NE

Monday, September 21st

3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; 6:45 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Sibling Handbook Presentation
PRISIM Project of Ollie Webb Center
Paralyzed Veterans Education Center (PVA)
7612 Maple Street, Omaha, NE

Tuesday, September 22nd

6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Sibling Handbook Presentation
Arc of Buffalo County
First Presbyterian Church
4511 6th Avenue, Kearney, NE

Pledge Drive Donors

Warren & Linda Blesssing
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