



ARK ADVOCATES - NEWS & VIEWS

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TENTH ANNUAL "FILL THE ARK" BUDDY WALK/FUN DAY 2009

By Barbara Tubbs

ARK Advocates Board of Directors are busy continuing with the plans for our 10th annual community event that will raise awareness for ARK Advocates - who we are, what we do, and the many services we provide to families of persons with disabilities.

The goal of this community event "**Fill the ARK**" Buddy Walk/Fun Day is to pair people with and without disabilities in order to have a fun day filled with walking, games, inflatable slide and bounce house, food, and music. Come and join the fun on **Saturday, November 14, 2009 at Loras College Graber Center - indoor track**. Time of the event will be from 1:00 - 4:00 P.M.

Our purpose of hosting such a walk is:

- ◆ To create greater awareness in the Dubuque area for what the ARK is and the types of services the ARK can provide to families
- ◆ To provide a social event for our participants
- ◆ To raise money that will be used to fund ongoing programming in addition to adding new programs and services for persons with disabilities.

Participants are encouraged to pair up prior to the walk, but if a "buddy" is needed you may also be paired up at the door. This is the basis for our theme of "walking two by two" and our hope is to "fill the ARK" with laughter, happiness and funds to provide additional programming and services in our community.

We have sent a mailing to the businesses in our area and to our local membership. If you have been contacted, please take the time to fill out your donation form. Remember no donation is too small. We are also in need of volunteers to be greeters, help register participants, and be a "buddy". If you know of a person(s) with disabilities, please invite them to come to the walk. In the past this has been a special day for all who have participated and we hope to continue this tradition.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS now for this fun event. We are excited about our "Fill the ARK" Buddy Walk fundraiser. Brochure/pledge form and sponsorship form included in this newsletter.

If you have any questions, want to make a contribution, or would like to get involved in any way, contact Julie Jordahl at 556-0065 or call the office voice mail at 556-1785. Your participation in this event is greatly appreciated by all those we advocate for, their families, and caregivers.

See you Saturday, November 14, at Loras College Graber Center!!!!

Meet Your Board Members

By Jean Wuertzer

President - Jean Wuertzer
Vice President - Phil White

Secretary - Juli Geraghty
Past President - Julie Jordahl

Other Members:

Mark Anderson
Alyson Beytien
Johna Butler
Megan Chemin

David Duggan
Jennifer Hoffman
Aulanda Krause
Sharon Welborn

ARK Advocates has been witness to change in board membership over the past several years with several long-time members retiring and passing the torch. New members have been added who have come to ARK Advocates with great enthusiasm and desire to advocate for persons with a wide range of disabilities. We are grateful to have everyone on board.

As with anything new there is a learning curve for everyone involved. New members bring fresh ideas and perspectives and hold us to task to get out of ruts that have been long established and hard to get out of. Change can be a difficult thing — but also good. Just because something has “always been done this way” does not mean it can’t be done some other way or looked at from a different angle. We are challenged by different perspectives. I have appreciated the changes in board membership and welcome some new insight into how ARK Advocates sets about accomplishing its Mission “To Advocate and serve persons with disabilities in choosing where and how they learn, live, work, play, and pray; in partnership with families and the community.

Over the next several newsletters we will highlight various board member’s so that you can become familiar with them. And as always we are continuing to look to expand board membership, particularly in the area of parents of persons with mental disabilities.

The Board of Directors for ARK Advocates recently developed goals for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. They are:

1. To energize all committees of the Board so that they meet on a regular basis and provide consistent feedback to the Board of Directors;
2. To increase Board membership to include more active parents and persons who represent the MI/DD population;
3. To improve on orientation and training for new board members;
4. To distribute brochures to schools, other agencies, pediatrician offices, Keystone AEA, and pre-schools to help get the word out about our organization;
5. Develop an advocacy letter template;
6. Continue to stay aware of other group efforts in Dubuque dealing with persons with disabilities;
7. Research other fundraising opportunities.

Jean Wuertzer, President

Jean has been a member of ARK Advocates since 1999; served as Vice President 2004-2008 and elected to President in 2008. Jean is currently the Director of Vocational Services with Area Residential Care and has spent the past 25 year in the field working with persons with disabilities. Jean currently lives in Centralia, where she is on her 2nd term as Mayor. She is married to Mike and has one son who is a freshman at Loras College. In her spare time she likes to garden, to stay fit, and read.

Phil White, Vice President

Phil has been a member of ARK Advocates since January 1992. He is a very strong self-advocate and is very knowledgeable about events that are occurring on a local and national level affecting persons with disabilities. Phil is a huge Iowa Hawkeye fan and a stats/detail man.

He currently lives in Dubuque on his own and works at Center Redemption and the Vocational Services Center.

“MAKE A DIFFERENCE RUN/WALK” Benefiting Autism

Unified Therapy Services is hosting a 5 K Autism Run/Walk on October 17th, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. to raise awareness for autism. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at Unified Therapy Services, which is located on 4121 Pennsylvania Ave. Registration is \$15.00 for the event. Prizes will be awarded for top finishers and welcome bags are available for everyone. Refreshments and snacks will be available during the event and door prizes will be drawn at 10:30 a.m. This run/walk will be able to raise money, help fund research and change lives. Donations will be made to *OAR* (Organization for Autism Research) and *Autism Speaks*, which both focus solely on applied research that examines issues and challenges that children and adults with autism and their families face every day. For more information call (563) 583-4003 and ask for Sara Mook.

Registration Forms are located on www.fitnesssports.com/races.oct.html (under October 17th).

Kids for Dubuque

By: Jennifer Hoffmann

Ark Advocates is working with Kids for Dubuque, a local chapter of Kids on the Block, to educate area third graders about people first language and understanding disabilities. We believe that in supporting Kids for Dubuque we are able to carry out two of our core values of advocating and knowledge. Kids for Dubuque supplies classroom teachers with lesson plans and activities surrounding disability awareness. They also sponsor a puppeteer group to come into classrooms and role play daily life for people with special needs to demonstrate how they deal with some of life's challenges. Kids for Dubuque establishes that everyone is different and that it's okay. Ark Advocates would like to extend a thank you to Heather Rath and Aulanda Krause for assisting in updating lesson plans. If you would like to know more about Kids for Dubuque please check out their website: dubuqueforkids.com.



Wanted: Parents to join the ARK Advocates Board

When: Second Tuesday of every month

Where: Keystone AEA

Time: 6:00 P.M.

Why: Join other parents, teachers, and community leaders
in advocating and supporting persons with disabilities in the Dubuque area

Contact: info@arkadvocates.org





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Return Service Requested

Brooke Gassman is the new Parent & Educator Coordinator at Keystone AEA and would like to introduce everyone to the Parent & Educator Connection.

The purpose of the program is to develop and sustain effective partnerships between families, educators, and community providers to promote success for all children and youth. When genuine partnerships exist, quality planning and programming for children will occur.

The program addresses the issue of transitions, initially when children transfer from home programs to school based programs and secondarily during the process of preparation to leave high school and move into communities. The program also has a special emphasis on facilitating parent involvement as a means of improving results and services for children with disabilities.

What Can The Parent & Educator Connection Do For Parents and Educators?

- Provide support for families and educators through personal or phone contact.
- Link families and educators with needed services and resources.
- Attend and/or facilitate IEP, ISFP and 504 team meetings with parents.
- Assist parents in preparing for and understanding IEP, ISFP and 504 meetings.
- Develop parent and educator support groups.
- Conduct workshops on various subjects for families and educators.
- Provide resources through the Parent & Educator Connection Library.
- Provide the Parent & Educator Connection Newsletter five times per year.
- Network with other agencies and programs that work with families and educators.
- Connect families and educators with similar needs and interests.
- Arrange for panels of parents with children who have special needs to present to organizations or groups.

If you have any further questions or need assistance, Brooke can be reached at (563) 556-3310, Extension 742 or e-mail her at bgassman@aea1.k12.ia.us.