

Achieve With Us!

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From the President's Desk, **A MILLION DOLLAR IDEA**

“If you do not go after what you want, you’ll never have it. If you do not ask, the answer will always be no. If you do not step forward, you will always be in the same place.”

The Arc of Wabash County is going after what it wants, making the big ask, and stepping forward! We are excited to announce that the AWS Foundation of Ft. Wayne has awarded The Arc of Wabash County a \$998,620.00 grant to transform competitive, integrated, employment opportunities for Wabash County residents who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The grant will be disbursed to Arc over a 5-year period from 2022 to 2026 and must be specifically used for employment programs and services. In September 2021, AWS gave Arc a \$75,000 research grant to investigate obstacles and solutions to competitive employment for people with I/DDs. Even in the current labor shortage, people with I/DDs are unemployed and underemployed two-and-a-half times greater than people without disabilities. Arc staff spent four months traveling and gathering data about best practices in employment programs and services for people with I/DDs. We held face-to-face meetings, site visits, and Zoom meetings with disability “movers and shakers”

in California, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, North Carolina, Texas, and Wyoming. We met with and listened to people with disabilities, parents, guardians, employers, and disability services professionals. We learned about the vocational dreams and goals of people with disabilities, what skills employers are looking for, what talents and abilities people with disabilities can offer, and about amazing partnerships between business, industry, and agencies like Arc. We saw amazing feats of success and victory by people facing great obstacles. We met a young man with autism who earns six figures as an engineer at a colossal



Think differently about disabilities.

Toyota plant! We met a young man with an intellectual disability who is the head of maintenance at a multi-million dollar hydroponic farm in Wyoming called Vertical Harvest. We met a team of people with disabilities in Wichita, Kansas who install window panels on jetliners! We met with franchise owners of Howdy Homemade Ice Cream from Dallas, Texas and Asheville, North Carolina who hire people with disabilities and equip them with transferable job skills and then launch them on to greater heights of employment. We were inspired to ask “why not us?” And now it WILL be us! Arc’s five-year employment services plan calls for the expansion of employment opportunities, the increase in community-based employment, the introduction of competitive wages, and the integration of the workplace so that people with disabilities can work side-by-side with people who do not have disabilities, enriching the lives of everyone involved. Arc’s plan calls for the expansion of our current business ventures and the creation of three new “microbusinesses” over the next five years. These business ventures will provide curriculum-based vocational training for people with I/DDs that will enable them to attain competitive employment that will enrich their lives and provide a greater level of financial freedom and self-direction. The next five years will see a lot of change and transformation at Arc of Wabash County, especially in our employment programs, but “if we do not go after what we want, we’ll never have it, and if we do not step forward, we will stay in the same place.”

We are choosing to step forward!

Jeff

Patience is not a virtue; it's an achievement.



Now Hiring

Exciting New Positions in Arc's Employment Services Initiative!!!

Call Jeff at 260.563.8411 to see what might be a good fit for you or stop by and fill out an application

1 Full-Time Employment Specialist

1 Part-Time Employment Specialist

2 Part-Time High School Program Instructors

1 Receptionist 30-35 hour/week

2 Full-Time Industrial Services Job Coaches

1 Part-Time Fundraiser/Communications Specialist

Temporary Contract Positions:

Part-Time Curriculum Writer

Part-Time Business Plan Developer

Excellent Benefits!!!

CARF: Three More Years!

On February 10, Arc of Wabash County received word that it had received a full three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). There are three levels of accreditation an organization can receive from CARF, and Arc of Wabash County received the highest endorsement. CARF surveyors were onsite for two days in January to audit over 1200 standards by reviewing records and documents, interviewing clients, staff, parents, Board members, employers, and other community stakeholders, and observing programs in action.



CARF stated, "This achievement is an indication of your organization's dedication and commitment to improving the quality of the lives of the persons served. Your organization should take pride in achieving this high level of accreditation." CARF accreditation is a legal requirement Arc must meet in order to continue to provide for people with disabilities. The Bureau of Quality Improvement Services (BQIS) also requires CARF certification for Arc to continue to provide programs and services to people with disabilities in Wabash County. **Well done Arc!**

Wonderful World

Arc staff members Tabitha Cooper, Heather Enyeart and Brittney Hernandez recently accompanied 8 residential service participants to Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The group spent an entire week experiencing the Magic Kingdom, EPCOT, Universal Studios and Hollywood Studios. "We also included a day of shopping," Brittney reported. "We came home tired and happy!"



Grace Halicki
Purdue University



Julie Weeks
Liberty University

Arc Launches Intern Initiative

"Forgive yourself for not knowing what you didn't know before you learned it." Maya Angelou

The Arc of Wabash County is excited to be intentionally and strategically utilizing internships to promote workplace learning and to promote careers in human services fields. As part of Arc's Strategic Plan, internships are being utilized in two ways: 1) Recruiting college students for internships at Arc, and 2) Developing internships with local employers for Arc clients who have disabilities to explore careers and gain work experience. Research has proven that a structured, intentional short-term internship is an indicator of positive employment outcomes. In other words, participating in an internship increases successful employment. As part of Arc's AWS Vantage Grant to transform employment services, internships will be developed and utilized with local employers to give people with disabilities valuable work experience and opportunities to explore their vocational interests. Arc will also be utilizing a national internship program called Project Search. Last summer Arc hosted intern Julia Weeks, a student at Liberty University. Julia enjoyed her internship experience so much that she is now employed with Arc while she finishes her online education. Currently Arc is facilitating an internship for Grace Halicki, a Human Services degree student at Purdue University. Grace will be with Arc the entire Spring semester to explore the ins and outs of programs and services for people with disabilities. Grace is specializing in Advocacy in Human Services and will be assisting Arc with various advocacy-related projects. Internships are a valuable resource in the employment journey and Arc is thrilled to be launching this initiative.

Arc's Name Up In NEON Lights!

The Arc of Wabash County was recently named one of only twelve organizations nationwide selected to participate in the National Expansion of Employment Opportunity Network!

NEON is an initiative to collaborate with national provider organizations like Arc to develop strategic plans for increasing Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) opportunities for the individuals they serve, including those with significant disabilities and those who have faced barriers to employment. Arc will receive 40 hours of free expert technical assistance and training to help improve employment programs for job seekers with disabilities. The grant also includes technical assistance in how to effectively partner with local employers to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Arc joins a cohort of 11 other disability organizations from around the United States.

"This was a highly competitive process," Jeff Patton, President/CEO explained. "This is a big win for the Wabash County Community. NEON will teach us how to work with the employee as well as the employer and set them both up for success."

What is the NEON Project?

The Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (ACICIEID) submitted a report to Congress which detailed issues that impact the pursuit of competitive integrated employment (CIE) by individuals with disabilities and made recommendations for mitigating these issues. A key recommendation of the committee was to increase the capacity of employment service providers to provide CIE through both organizational restructuring and staff professional development. To address this need, the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) established the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON).

Celebrating Milestones

Tasha Legg was recently recognized by Pizza Hut for ten years of dedicated service. Tasha started working for the Wabash Pizza Hut in 2012 and works there three days a week during the lunch rush. "It can get crazy busy sometimes," she says. The rest of the week you'll find her at Arc in Industrial Services Training, where actual work experiences and the honing of soft skills translate to good work habits in the community.

Please join Arc in congratulating Tasha on a job well done and wishing her continued success.

