



Kids Korner Connection

A newsletter from the Children's Division of ARC

Join Us As We Celebrate 50 Incredible Years

By Shawn Preston, Director of Children's Services

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As I begin my eighteenth year at ARC Broward, it is so astonishing to me to take a look back at where we were and to see where we have come and to plan for where we are heading! What an amazing journey it has been and what an amazing milestone we are about to embark upon....fifty years of providing outstanding services and supports...fifty years of enriching lives of children and adults with disabilities and their families...fifty years of being a pioneer and leader in our field...fifty years of being privileged to do such important work and share such tremendous joys and triumphs!



Fifty years is something BIG to celebrate...so celebrate big we will!!!

Please mark your calendars and join us on Friday **March 16** to celebrate and to honor many who have contributed to our successes! There will be plenty of festivities throughout the day and evening. Plans are currently being finalized and invitations being prepared! Everyone is welcome, children and adults, current and past program participants, family members, staff members, community members, stakeholders...we will all share in the festivities TOGETHER! There will be fun activities, music, dancing, games, prizes, food, awards, ceremonies, tours, and more!!!

There is also a tremendous opportunity for anyone wishing to volunteer in any way, large or small! If you are interested in joining the staff, families, and community members who are actively planning and organizing or you are interested in helping to sponsor the events, we greatly need and appreciate your contributions! Please contact Matt Leachman at 954-577-4173 or Mleachman@arcbroward.com to learn how you can help!

March 13th, 2007

- Developmental Disabilities Day
- 8 to 10 am- Continental Breakfast for staff members
- Luncheon for consumers
- Photo Wall and Video Timeline

March 16th, 2007

- 12 pm- Food and Entertainment
- Hosted Tours and Activities
- 5 pm- Cocktails & Hors D'oeuvres
- Awards and Recognition
- Family and Friends Tribute
- 8 pm- Time Capsule Ceremony

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Upcoming Special Events

- ◀ March 8: Gerlinde Photography (Graduates and Group pictures)
- ◀ March 12 to March 16: Preschool Book Fair
- ◀ March 13: Developmental Disabilities Day Events
- ◀ March 16: ARC 50th Anniversary Celebrations

Parent Corner: "Something to be Gained..."

By Christina DeFlorio

January has come and gone, and like all new years, 2007 brings about a time of reflection on the year that has passed, and things to look forward to in the New Year to come. Since my daughter's diagnosis of Autism about 5 years ago, it is often hard to look forward to the New Year, not wanting to place my expectations too high, or too low for that matter. Isn't it safer to look back on the accomplishments of last year: with little steps forward, that most other parents just take for granted? Mostly, I have learned to take life just one day at a time, as I am sure most of you reading this, do much of the same. But let us forget about the accomplishments and the expectations for just a moment, and take a look at ourselves. I am certainly not the person I was 5 years ago, are you? I am worse in some ways and better in others, but mostly I tend to believe that I am more of the later. I can plainly see what Autism has stolen from me, but I can't help but wonder, is there anything that I have gained living these passed five years with this life changing diagnosis? Besides some gray hairs, a few wrinkles and a couple of extra pounds, what else could I have possibly gained from living a life with a child affected by Autism? I can tell you that I have stopped caring about the people who stare at me in Publix, when my daughter is acting out, and I have stopped majoring on minor things: like traffic jams and my floor being dirty, but is that really something I have gained? No, of course not. Living these passed years with an Autistic child I have been given the opportunity to meet some of the most unbelievable people that work and live in this community. People that I would have never otherwise met if I had had only neuro-typical children. Think about it. How many times have you watched a therapist, a teacher, a doctor, or a caregiver interact with your child, and work so hard to help them to learn something new. I find myself looking at these individuals who have devoted their lives and their careers to making a difference in our lives, and in the lives of our children with disabilities. Most of these men and women do not have, or even know children who are affected with a disability, and yet they have chosen a line of work which offers a modest income, tons of frustrations, and few rewards. What can you say about a person like that? Certainly heaven has a special place for these people someday. I am truly blessed to know each of them and this is what I have gained. The individuals at ARC Broward and at the ABLÉ program are some of the finest people that I have ever met in my lifetime, and it is those people that have gained my respect and my admiration. So as the month of January closes and a new month of February begins, let us not think about the person we used to be, the one who used to complain about finger prints on the sliding glass door; instead let's think about all that we are today, and all that we have gained over the years with regards to our perspective on life and the unbelievably wonderful people that bless us with their presence each and everyday. For they are the people who continue to encourage us as parents, while continuing to teach our disabled children with their uncanny patience and unconditional love. Someone once said it best, "This isn't exactly what I wanted, but I have gotten far more than I could have ever asked for." Thank you ARC Broward, and all of you at ABLÉ for all that you are, and for all that you do.

"This isn't exactly what I wanted, but I have gotten far more than I could have ever asked for."



Christina's daughter, Angelina, enjoying a day at the beach!

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Remembering My Friend Henry...

By Shawn Preston

There are so many people we cross paths with for different reasons and different lengths of time in our lives. Some have greater impact on us than others. Some we will never ever forget and never ever stop missing.

Henry is one person who has touched my life and who remains forever in my heart. He was my friend. I had heard of Henry years before I had the honor and pleasure of meeting him. He was what you might call "famous" because at that time all of the service providers and funding agencies not only in Broward but throughout the state had known of him. He was called, "difficult to serve." And those who did him the favor of serving him, sometimes did so in not very humane ways.

That broke my heart and the hearts of many other caring staff at ARC Broward. So we signed on...for whatever it meant. We would be there for him.

I met Henry in the middle of the night.. It took us that long to "set up" an apartment for him with a few hours notice on the day he was discharged from the hospital. We picked him up and drove him to his very own first apartment. When we arrived, he began to cry. He told us, "I waited my whole life for this. I am finally HOME." He was 28 years old.

Henry passed away several years later. Some days when I think about him, I smile and some days I laugh, and some days I cry. Always I miss him. I miss our long interesting dynamic conversations. I miss dancing with him. I miss eating buffalo wings all messy with him. I miss how his face lit up when we ate his favorite foods and went to his favorite places. I miss hugging him. I miss his gospel singing. I miss his funny sayings. I miss his gigantic smile. I miss confiding in each other who we thought was cute and who we had a crush on that day.

He taught me so many lessons and filled me with so many treasured memories.

I was with him when the OJ Simpson verdict was read. He hugged me.

I was with him in the hospital so many times. I hugged him.

And I got to say my final goodbye to him as we laid him to rest. I wore his favorite shoes of mine that day...he loved my shoes. He loved everyone's shoes.And I loved him...we all loved him.

Project Lifesaver: Location Device

Worried about your son or daughter wandering away? A new bracelet which holds an internal transmitter may be right for your family. The location device looks similar to a watch and relies on pulse-carrier wave radio-frequency technology. This device can track up to forty feet in depth of water and can track up to one-quarter mile, with victims found as far as one mile in range on land. The battery must be changed approximately once per month. There is mandated parental involvement. The family is required to check the power of the battery and fill out a daily log sheet. For more information on how to obtain one of these devices, please call your local police department.

Preschool Happenings...

By Cat Chesla, Preschool Teacher

There is a lot of love flowing throughout the halls of the preschool! The celebration of Valentine's Day was a great success! Students, teachers, therapists and volunteers smiled and squealed with delight while decorating Valentine's Day cookies with frosting, cinnamon hearts and sprinkles. Thank you to all of the families that help make this fantastic activity possible! The *Play and Learn* curriculum continues to provide our teachers with great ideas to adapt lessons to all levels of capabilities. February's theme is "Friends," where students are learning valuable cooperative skills through fun activities, such as playing with and finding objects in a sensory table filled with bird seed. Looking forward into March, our theme turns to "Animals on Parade." Be on the lookout for many animal sightings throughout the preschool! Time is flying by for our 37 graduates, only a few months left until they transition into big kindergarteners! Graduation practices are under way so all of the little ones will be just perfect on their big day!

Congratulations Students of the Month!!!

Congratulations to our **Students of the Month** who are among our many students who are making notable gains this month:

Preschool:

Room 134: Kristopher M.
Room 135: Lexi F.
Room 136: Elias C.
Room 137: Angelica C.
Room 138: Emerald H.

ABLE:

Room 132: Mikhaela B.
Room 133: Matthew K.
Room 325: Dominique S.
Room 306: Jeffrey E.
Room 307: Jude D.
Room 308: Andrew S.

Our hats off to All our students!!!

Congratulations!!!

Welcome Aboard to Our Newest Members:

Maria Reed (Preschool Teacher, 136)
Nakia Walker (Preschool Teacher, 137)

Congratulations on your Promotions:

Congratulations to **Donna Ruddock**. Donna has been with ARC Broward for many years and was recently promoted to Lead Preschool Teacher' Assistant. She does a phenomenal job planning, organizing and leading classroom activities and is a wonderful model to all other Teacher's Assistants!

Congratulations to **Tina Paul** who was recently promoted to ABLE Lead Behavior Associate. We will be sad to see Tina leave the preschool; however, look forward to watching her excel in her new role.

Keep up the great work Donna and Tina!

And The Award Goes To...

Team player of the month:
Preschool Teacher's Assistant: **Ibexis Suarez**

Congratulations to the following team players who had their PRIDE cards filled, signifying demonstration of every core value. Thanks for all of your hard work and dedication toward the children and for being on our team:

Preschool Teacher's Assistant: **Donna Ruddock**

Children's Services

Preschool
ABLE After-School Program
Respite Care
Youth Links Transition Support
Behavioral Analysis
Summer 'Kamp Krayola'
'PAT' Parent Training
Rehab Therapy (OT, PT, SLP)
Mental Health Counseling

Adult Habilitation

Supported and Community Living
Community and Center Day programs
Individualized Supports
Transportation Services

Workforce Development

Community and Self Employment
Skills Development
Culinary Arts
Calypso Grill
Electronics Recycling
Landscaping Services
Vehicle Washing

Advocacy & Social Services

Nursing Services
Information and Referral
Human Services Training Solutions



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*At ARC Broward, we take **PRIDE** in all that we do...
"We have a Passion for what we do, Respect for all of our stakeholders, Integrity for how we do our jobs, a Drive for excellence and an Entrepreneurial spirit."*

