



# TARC NEWSLETTER

Oklahoma's leading information source on issues impacting the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families

**September 2008**

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## **New Movie Promotes Humor at the Expense of the Dignity of People with Intellectual Disabilities**

*by John F. Gajda, TARC Executive Director*

In the past I have written about bigotry and hatred directed at people with disabilities in the popular media. Given the outcry whenever there are derogatory racial and gender comments that are printed, broadcast or featured in movies, it is easy to assume that things have changed and that our society's tolerance of any such bigotry and hatred direct at minority groups is no longer tolerated.

I was reminded how naive I am after reading the *Tulsa World's* movie columnist Michael Smith's review of the new movie "Tropic Thunder" in the August 15th paper.

"Tropic Thunder" is a big-budget, R-rated comedy/action/adventure released on August 13. Based on attendance in the early weeks of its release, the movie promises to be one of the blockbusters of the summer. DreamWorks is the film's producer and Paramount is its distributor.

The film features popular actors Ben Stiller (who also directed and co-wrote the movie), Robert Downey Jr. and Jack Black as self-absorbed actors filming a big-budget war movie on location. Through a series of freak occurrences, they are forced to become the soldiers they are portraying.

Stiller plays Tugg Speedman, a fading action star who earlier failed in his bid for an Oscar as "Simple Jack," a man with an intellectual disability. "Simple Jack" is featured as a film-within-a-film, with Stiller sporting a classic institutional bowl haircut and bad teeth. The film within-a-film's promotional poster bears the subtitle "Once upon a time there was a retard." Elsewhere is the slogan "What he doesn't have in his head, he makes up for in his heart." A satirical plot synopsis quotes a critic as saying that Speedman's Jack was "one of the most retarded performances in cinema history."

Disability advocates who saw the film prior to its release felt that it was far worse than anything they could have anticipated. According to David Tolleson, the Executive Director of the National Down Syndrome Congress, "it provides real ammunition for cruelty" especially for the film's target audience of adolescent males. "Not only is the Simple Jack character highly central to the film's plot, it is portrayed in the most demeaning way," according to Tolleson.

In perhaps the single most offensive scene in the film, Matthew McCon-

*please see "Movie" on pg. 2*

Affiliated with



TARC is committed to ensuring a high quality of life for Oklahomans with developmental disabilities through education, empowerment, support and advocacy. For additional information about TARC or to volunteer, contact us at:

**16 East 16th Street, Suite 405, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119-4447**

www.ddadvocacy.net tarc@ddadvocacy.net 918-582-8272/800-688-8272 918-582-3628(Fax)

## “Movie” from pg. 1

aughey, who plays a Hollywood agent, speaks to the film’s main character who wants to adopt a child. “Well, at least you still have a choice. I’m stuck with mine,” states McConaughey while pointing to a photograph of his teenage son who appears to have an intellectual disability.

Clearly, the movie “Tropic Thunder” is a very negative portrayal of people with intellectual disabilities. The type of mockery in the movie is nothing but another form of hate and tolerating this language in the media makes it more likely that these references will be used in everyday language.

In the *Tulsa World* review of the movie, Mr. Smith defends the movie and criticizes those who have spoken against it. He believes that it is still OK to target people with disabilities in a derogatory and demeaning way in the name of humor.

Mr. Smith needs to speak with the people who are targeted by this so-called satire. People with disabilities who I work with daily would tell him that the language and references to people with disabilities in this movie are hurtful.

The terms “retard” and “retarded” will continue to be used in social conversations because of movies such as this. The greatest danger is that this type of language sets the stage for more severe outlets of prejudice, harm and abuse.

Cleaning up references in everyday language to people with disabilities is not just an issue of being politically correct. As a Tulsa father of a child with disabilities who contacted me reminded me, “no one wants to be called by that term. There’s nothing cute about it. We are doing ... damage (to people with disabilities) with that word.” In a press conference held at the National Press Club to address the controversy surrounding the film Mike McLaughlin, a parent of a child with an intellectual disability said, “...anyone who doesn’t think this movie will influence the attitudes and behavior of young people towards people with disabilities hasn’t been in a high school or around young kids recently. As soon as they leave the theater, kids are quoting movie lines and acting out scenes as well as the actors did. They won’t care that this movie is meant to be a parody of Hollywood’s excesses.”

What do we do about it this movie and the continued use of the “R-word?”

Fist of all, we need to become a fan of dignity and

not use the “R-word.” Special Olympics, The Arc of the United States, the American Association of Persons With Disabilities and a large group of supporting organizations have taken the lead in promoting acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities and persuading people to pledge not to use the R-word. For more information about the campaign go to [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org).

Second, we need to stop tolerating movies like “Tropic Thunder.” Instead of laughing at this movie we need to take a stand that we do not tolerate disrespect for any group by boycotting the movie.

Finally, whenever we see it, we need to let radio, television, movies and print media know that continued use of language that mocks people with disabilities will no longer be tolerated. Until this use ends we cannot expect people, especially young people, to stop using these damaging words in everyday language. Let the producers of this film, DreamWorks, know what you think about it by emailing: [comments@dreamworkstudios.com](mailto:comments@dreamworkstudios.com) or calling 1-(818) 733-9919 (Note: This is not a toll free number).

Working together we can move forward to a day when a movie studio will never again release a movie as denigrating to people with disabilities.

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Visit us on the web at  
[www.ddadvocacy.net](http://www.ddadvocacy.net)



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## Runners Can Help TARC!

The Route 66 Marathon, to be held November 16, 2008 in Tulsa, is offering a new fundraising opportunity for TARC. This year, a new event has been added to the marathon, “The Mayor’s 5K Fitness Run and Walk.”

Registrants in the Mayor’s 5K are required to choose a Tulsa Area United Way agency to receive \$5 of their registration fee when they register for the race.

To register for the Mayor’s 5K, visit [www.route66marathon.com](http://www.route66marathon.com) and click on the “register today” button and don’t forget to choose TARC as the agency to receive part of your registration fee!



# THE R-WORD ISN'T JUST HURTFUL, IT'S HATE SPEECH.

## WHAT IS HATE SPEECH?

Hate speech occurs when a majority group freely makes jokes about a minority group including negative stereotypes and negative images, not just language. It is commonly seen as harmless by the majority, but it sets the stage for more severe outlets for prejudice, harm and abuse.

## PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ARE AT GREATER RISK OF VIOLENCE.

- 1 in 3 children with disabilities are victims of some form of abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
- Individuals with developmental disabilities are 4 to 10 more times more likely to be victims of a crime than people without disabilities.
- Children with developmental disabilities are at twice the risk of physical and sexual abuse compared to children without disabilities.

## PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ARE DISENFRANCHISED FROM JUSTICE.

- Many people with intellectual disabilities are not able to articulate the abuse they've sustained.
- Many victims with intellectual disabilities are not perceived as credible witnesses.
- Abuse often occurs as part of name calling, bullying, hazing, or other targeted attacks based on disability status. THIS IS A HATE CRIME.

## ENDING THE USE OF THE R-WORD IS MORE THAN A "POLITICALLY CORRECT" NOTION.

- "Retard" and "retarded" are derogatory and dehumanizing terms—on par with the N-word when used to describe African Americans, and various hateful terms used to describe members of the Jewish, gay and lesbian and other minority communities.
- Self-advocates with intellectual disabilities have clearly stated that negative language leads to harmful action, discrimination, abuse, negative stereotypes, disenfranchisement, and violence.

## SHOULDN'T PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES JUST LIGHTEN UP? IT'S A JOKE!

- NO! People with intellectual disabilities have a history of institutionalization, genocide, forced sterilization, segregation, and being regarded as 'less than human.'
- More than any other group, they experience record unemployment, significant physical, mental and sexual abuse, and limited rights.
- This discrimination and victimization continues, in large part, due to antiquated, discriminatory portrayals in the media and pervasive prejudice.

published by:



## Coalition Statement of Support and Solidarity



*(NOTE: The following national groups have endorsed this statement: Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts, American Association of People with Disabilities, Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, Best Buddies International, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc, National Coalition on Self-Determination, National Council on Independent Living, National Down Syndrome Congress, National Down Syndrome Society, Parent to Parent USA, Self Advocates Becoming Empowered-SABEÁ, Special Olympics, TASH, The Arc of the United States, and United Cerebral Palsy.)*

We, as organizations and self-advocates representing members of the disability community, recognizing the dignity of individuals with intellectual disabilities, the challenges they and their families face, and the meaningful and powerful contributions they make to their families, their communities, and their country,

**Acknowledge** that individuals with intellectual disabilities have been subject to discrimination, abuse, and exclusion from society throughout history;

**Recognize** that the more than 200 million individuals with intellectual disabilities worldwide, and more than 6 million individuals with intellectual disabilities in the US, have suffered severe consequences including: institutionalization, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, denial of education, employment, and healthcare, segregation, and targeted hate crimes;

**Acknowledge** that “attitudes and expectations of the public, in part, determine the degree to which children, adolescents and adults with intellectual disabilities are able to learn, work and live alongside their peers without disabilities.” (President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, 2004);

**Understand** that for over four decades, the media has consistently mischaracterized people with intellectual disabilities; (Pardun, 2005)

**Realize** that over 80% of U.S. adults surveyed feel that media portrayals are an obstacle to the acceptance and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. (Pardun, 2005)

**Recognize** that many people, including those with

intellectual disabilities, their families and friends, consider the “R-word” just as offensive as the “N-word;” and

**Declare** that under the guise of “parody,” whether intentional or not, Tropic Thunder demeans, insults, and harms individuals with intellectual disabilities by using the “R- word.” Furthermore, it perpetuates derogatory images and stereotypes of individuals with intellectual disabilities including mocking their physical appearance and speech, supports the continuation of inappropriate myths and misperceptions, and legitimizes painful discrimination, exclusion, and bullying;

**TOGETHER**, we declare our intention to make the public aware of the need to create and foster inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities as a matter of social justice by:

-Boycotting the film and explaining to our nation’s children why the film is harmful;

-Educating the public, especially young people, about intellectual disabilities through far-reaching awareness campaigns to ban the use of the “R-word,” and other initiatives to permanently change attitudes and promote inclusion;

-Calling on Hollywood studios, writers and executives to pledge to make this the final chapter in a sullied history of demeaning portrayals of individuals with intellectual disabilities and assist in public education campaigns; and

-Requesting that Congress investigate and conduct oversight of how Hollywood portrays individuals with intellectual disabilities and the effect these portrayals have on our nation and around the world.

## Kit Released to Aid Families in First 100 Days After Autism Diagnosis



Autism Speaks has published a kit containing information and advice for families to use during the first 100 days following the diagnosis of autism. It contains a week by week plan, as well suggestions and forms that families can use as they begin to find services for their child. For more information and to access the kit online, go to [http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family\\_services/100\\_day\\_kit.php](http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family_services/100_day_kit.php).

Source: Monday Morning in Washington

# 18th Annual TARC Advocacy Awards Call for Nominations

TARC is accepting nominations for the 18th Annual Advocacy Awards, to be held **December 8** in Tulsa. Anyone can nominate advocates for recognition by following these simple steps:



- Complete both sides of the nomination form and mail or fax to TARC.
- Return nominations to TARC by 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, October 10**.
- Nominations are reviewed by a selection committee, which slates at least three nominees in each category, based on quality of advocacy described in the nomination.
- The selection committee reserves the right to withhold an award in any category in which an insufficient number of nominations are submitted.
- Award recipients are selected through a vote of the TARC membership. Ballots will be mailed to all members in good standing (dues paid) as of October 15, 2008.



2008 TARC Advocacy Award Nomination Form Due October 10!

## 2008 TARC Advocacy Awards Nomination Form

# Advocacy Award Categories

### *Advocate - Board Member:*

Recognizes a member of the board of directors of any non-profit, community-based service provider who has gone beyond the interest of his or her agency to become an advocate for all people with disabilities. *Robert Neal was the 2007 recipient.*

### *Advocate - Case Manager:*

Recognizes the OKDHS/DDSD case manager who has surpassed job requirements to advocate for his or her clients. *Jeri Hajek was the 2007 recipient.*

### *Advocate - Direct Care Provider:*

Recognizes the direct contact staff person, working for a community provider, who has gone beyond job requirements to advocate for people with disabilities. *Dawn Harig was the 2007 Direct Care Provider recipient and Barbara Jefferson was the 2007 Direct Care Supervisor recipient.*

### *Advocate - Educator:*

Recognizes a public school educator who has promoted the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular school settings. *Kathy Davis*

*was the 2007 recipient.*

### *Advocate - Professional Provider:*

Recognizes any professional such as a therapist or physician who advocates for people with disabilities beyond their professional responsibilities. *Judy McCarter was the 2007 recipient.*

### *Advocate - Volunteer:*

Recognizes the volunteer or group of volunteers who, in a program serving people with developmental disabilities, has gone beyond the call of duty to advocate. *Brooke Andrews was the 2007 recipient.*

### *Elected Official:*

Recognizes an elected official who has effectively promoted better understanding and integration of people with disabilities in employment, education, and the community. *There was no recipient of this award in 2007.*

### *Media Advocate:*

Recognizes the media professional who has

effectively promoted better understanding and integration of people with disabilities living in the community. *There was no recipient of this award in 2007.*

### *Parent Advocate:*

Recognizes the parent(s) of a person with developmental disabilities who has been a voice for all people with disabilities. *Cheryl Srader was the 2007 recipient.*

### *Self-Advocate:*

Recognizes the self-advocate who has spoken out for all people with disabilities. *Will Watkins was the 2007 recipient.*

### *Special Achievement in Advocacy:*

Recognizes the individual, business, or organization not included in other categories, which through a significant advocacy effort has improved the lives of people with disabilities. *Kris Steele was the 2007 recipient.*

Nomination forms must be received by 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, October 10, 2008**. Mail the completed 2-page form to TARC, 16 E. 16th St. Ste. 405, Tulsa, OK 74119-4447, or fax to 918-582-3628.



3. Describe the ways in which the nominee advocated for individuals with developmental disabilities.

4. Why is the nominee deserving of special recognition?

5. Use this space (or attach up to two pages) to make any additional comments.

6. Please provide your (nominator) contact information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (       ) \_\_\_\_\_

Questions? Call 800-688-8272 or 918-582-8272

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*All nomination forms become the property of TARC and will be kept confidential.*

# What Do You Call People with Disabilities?

Men, women, boys, girls, students, mom, Sue's brother, Mr. Smith, Rosita, a neighbor, employer, coworker, customer, chef, teacher, scientist, athlete, adults, children tourists, retirees, musicians, computer operators, individuals, leaders, people, voters, friends or any other word you would use for a person.

People First Language recognizes that individuals with disabilities are - first and foremost - people. It emphasizes each person's value, individuality, dignity and capabilities. The following examples provide guidance on what terms to use and which ones are inappropriate when talking or writing about people with disabilities.

People First Language	Labels that Stereotype & Devalue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people/individuals with disabilities</li> <li>• an adult who has a disability</li> <li>• a child with a disability</li> <li>• a person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the handicapped</li> <li>• the disabled</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people/individuals without disabilities</li> <li>• typical kids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• normal people/healthy individuals</li> <li>• atypical kids</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people with intellectual and developmental disabilities</li> <li>• he/she has a cognitive impairment</li> <li>• a person who has Down syndrome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the mentally retarded; retarded people</li> <li>• he/she is retarded; the retarded</li> <li>• he/she's a Downs kid; a Mongoloid; a Mongol</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person who has autism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• autistic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people with a mental illness</li> <li>• a person who has an emotional disability with a psychiatric illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the mentally ill; emotionally disturbed</li> <li>• is insane; crazy; demented; psycho, a maniac; a lunatic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person who has a learning disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he/she is learning disabled</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person who is deaf</li> <li>• he/she has a hearing impairment/loss</li> <li>• a man/woman who is hard of hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the deaf</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• person who is deaf and cannot speak</li> <li>• he/she has a speech disorder</li> <li>• he/she uses a communication device</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is deaf and dumb</li> <li>• is mute</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• person who is blind</li> <li>• a person who has a visual impairment</li> <li>• man/woman who has low vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the blind</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person who has epilepsy</li> <li>• people with a seizure disorder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an epileptic</li> <li>• a victim of epilepsy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person who uses a wheelchair</li> <li>• a person who walks with crutches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person who is confined to a wheelchair</li> <li>• a cripple</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• person who has quadriplegia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a quadriplegic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he/she has a congenital disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he/she has a birth defect</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accessible buses, bathrooms, etc.</li> <li>• reserved parking for people with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• handicapped buses, bathrooms, etc.</li> <li>• handicapped parking</li> </ul>

courtesy of:





# TULSA ADVOCATES FOR THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

16 EAST 16th STREET SUITE 405  
TULSA, OKLAHOMA 74119-4447

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## RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

The TARC newsletter is published monthly by the Tulsa Advocates for the Rights of Citizens With Developmental Disabilities, Inc., to inform readers about issues and legislative action that affect adults and children with developmental disabilities, their families, and professionals working in the field of developmental disabilities. The contents do not necessarily represent the official position of TARC.

# HELP TARC HELP FAMILIES – BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!

*Families in Transition*

*Families in Transition* is a support group for parents of adult children with developmental disabilities.

**NEXT MEETING:**  
**Wednesday, November 12**  
**6:30-7:45 p.m.**  
**Goldie's Patio Grill**  
**4401 E. 31st St. in Tulsa**

RSVP to Amie Farinella, 918-582-8272

**Connections Asperger's Group**

**Next Meeting:**  
**Wednesday, September 24 - 4:30 p.m.**  
**Hardesty Library, 8316 E. 93rd St.**

The "Connections" Asperger's Group is a social skills group for adolescents and young adults with Asperger's Syndrome. The group meets monthly. Contact Sherilyn or Amie at 918-582-8272 for more information.

**Hispanic Parents Support Group**  
 El Grupo Hispano de Apoyo a Padres de Familia

**Next Meeting: Monday, September 29**  
**7:00 to 8:30 p.m.**  
 Central Library,  
 400 Civic Center

*Contact Zaida at 918-582-8272 for more information.*



**links** to support. to information. to friends.  
Support Group for Adults with Asperger's Syndrome

**Next Meeting:**  
**Wednesday, September 17**  
**6:30-8:00 p.m.**  
**Brookside Library, 1207 E. 45th Pl.**

Links is a support group for adults with Asperger's Syndrome. Contact Amie Farinella, 918-582-8272 for more information.

**Day Makers** Activities group for adults with developmental disabilities  
Contact: Amie, 918-582-8272

**Tuesdays • 10:00-11:30 a.m.**  
 Gatesway Foundation-Mabee Gym  
 1217 E. College in Broken Arrow

**Thursdays • 1:00-2:30 p.m.**  
 McClure Recreation Center  
 7440 E. 7th Street in Tulsa

**MOMS & DADS** SUPPORT GROUP

**Next Meeting:**  
**Thursday, September 25**  
**7:00-9:00 p.m.**

Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church  
 4102 E. 61st St., Room B-8

*The mission of the Moms & Dads Support Group is to nurture and support families whose children have a developmental disability, to encourage positive strategies in dealing with challenges, and to share in the joys of raising our children.*

*For more information, contact Sherilyn, 918-582-8272*

**1<sup>ST</sup> TULSA PEOPLE FIRST**  
Tulsa People First

**Next Meeting:**  
**Tuesday, September 9**  
**Golden Corral,**  
**8144 E. 21st St.**

Dinner-5:30 p.m.  
 Meeting-6:30 p.m.

For more information, contact Amie at 918-582-8272

**Support Group for Families of Children with Special Needs in Sapulpa**

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 16, 6:15 p.m.**  
**CREOKS Behavioral Health, 23 E. Ross in Sapulpa**  
*Childcare is not provided, but please take advantage of Sapulpa's great Respite Care Program*

*For more information, contact Mindy Littlefield, 378-5632*