

# TARC *in Action*

SPRING 2008

TARC is committed to ensuring a high quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families through education, empowerment, support and advocacy.

**TARC presents**

## 17th Annual Advocacy Awards

**T**ARC members, donors, and volunteers assembled once again for TARC's annual meeting and Advocacy Awards presentation in December. The 2007 event had the largest crowd on record, with over 200 people coming together for dinner and the awards presentation, held at Southwood Baptist Church in Tulsa.

Scott Epperson, TARC board member, presented the nominees for reelection to the TARC board: Dr. Mary Bea Drummond and Michelle Hanson. Epperson then presented the following nominees for election to the board: Jamie Cooper, Chris Embry, and Justin Lord. Outgoing board president Kent Garrett recognized retiring directors Michael Bucholtz, Jerry Parker, Y. Reed, and Kim Wofford. Following the awards presentations, he introduced his successor as TARC board president, Michelle Hanson.

Now in its 17th year, the Advocacy Awards recognize advocates who have consistently advocated for individuals with

developmental disabilities. Nominations are accepted from individuals across the state and winners are voted on by TARC members.

### The 2007 TARC Advocacy Award winners include:

**Will Watkins**, *Self-Advocate of the Year*, is the current vice president of Tulsa People First, a graduate of Partners in Policymaking, and an officer in Oklahoma People First. Will is a gifted leader and often exhibits a keen ability to see all sides of an issue or discussion and is very good at communicating those views to the group. He takes his offices in People First very seriously and sees the organization as a key component in his advocacy efforts.

**Dawn Harig**, *Direct Care Provider of the Year*, is the living skills teacher at the Bridges Foundation, training adults with



John F. Gajda presents retiring board member Jerry Parker with a plaque in appreciation for his years of service to TARC.

developmental disabilities in areas of hygiene, money, safety, cooking, and many other areas. Unable to find a curriculum for the program, and refusing to use living skills curriculum originally intended for children, Dawn began creating her own curriculum and lessons that directly relate to her adult students. She believes that the end result for her students is not just a higher quality of life, but also the ability to better advocate for themselves, as they feel better about themselves and see themselves as capable adults. Dawn insists that her students be treated and spoken to as adults, teaching advocacy by example. If a student is not receiving proper attention or care, Dawn helps them speak up for themselves and will also advocate on their behalf.



2007 Advocacy Award honorees included (from left) Robert Neal, Kathy Davis, Judy McCarter, Angela Kecseg (accepting on behalf of Rep. Kris Steele), Cheryl Srader, Dawn Harig, Barbara Jefferson, Will Watkins, and Brooke Andrews.



Outgoing board president Kent Garrett turns over the reins to Michelle Hanson.

Her dedication to those she serves is making a difference in their lives every day.

**Barbara Jefferson, Direct Care Supervisor of the Year**, was honored for her 18 years of care for people with developmental disabilities. She is a true advocate for those she serves and encourages individuals to try new things and to find activities that they enjoy. She also helps individuals convince their families that pursuing a new activity can be beneficial, and will spend hours making families at ease with the individual's wishes. Her thoroughness and organizational skills are second to none and she is a firm but fair supervisor, making her expectations clear to staff and supporting her employees to make the lives of those they serve better.

**Jeri Hajek, Case Manager of the Year**, currently supervises eight case managers while overseeing services to 175 service recipients assigned to her unit. She pairs new case managers with more experienced case managers for all meetings, home visits, etc for at least the first 4-6 weeks they are on the job to ensure that they have the knowledge and training they need to advocate for the individuals they serve. In addition, she often attends fair hearings along with the assigned case manager, even though she is not required to do so. Parents beg for their children to be assigned to Jeri's unit, because they know that she will support them and advocate for their needs.

**Judy McCarter, Professional Provider of**

*the Year*, is an occupational therapist who has gone out of her way to secure the necessary training required to offer needed services to Oklahomans and their families. Judy helps write level 1 activities for Special Olympians, consults for students requesting equipment who do not have a therapist and volunteers to write requests to medical and insurance companies to assure coverage. She has

been a lifeline for many parents in the community, attending IEPs, IFSPs and informal meetings with teachers to help parents advocate for their children's needs. Judy's nominator describes her as "a priceless jewel" who shares her knowledge through community workshops and conferences, writing grants, and volunteering her time. She is a gifted, respected professional who willingly and freely gives of her time and skills for children with disabili-

ties.

**Kathy Davis, Educator of the Year**, is a gifted, beloved teacher at Grissom Elementary School. In the fall of 2005, Kathy asked the administration of Tulsa Public Schools to grant her permission to develop a full inclusion regular education pre-kindergarten classroom in which she could serve as both the regular education teacher and the special education teacher. She was granted permission and the model has been a tremendous success. This year, she is teaching a kindergarten inclusion class as both the regular and special education teacher, but the program has expanded to include four kindergarten classes, all of which have children with special needs fully included. She is the inclusion specialist in charge of the special needs caseload for all, in addition to her teaching responsibilities. In her words—"this is the way inclusion is supposed to work—the special education teacher is in the classroom with the children as their teacher and is there to support the other teacher as needed. It works for us and provides a very positive environment for the entire team of teachers and students."

**Cheryl Srader, Parent-Advocate of the Year**, is a wonderful mother to her son, who has spina bifida and autism, and a positive example for others who have children with developmental disabilities. She is incredibly involved at her son's school, serving as PTA vice president, chairing the



Phyllis Philpot, Dwayne Boyd, Christine Detrick and Mark McCarver were recognized for 15 years of service as volunteers in TARC's OK-AIM program.



**TARC Executive Director John F. Gajda presents Cheryl Srader with the Parent-Advocate of the Year award. Cheryl's son Christian helped his mother accept the award.**


school carnival, and raising over \$7,500 for the school's playground committee to ensure that the equipment was accessible for students with disabilities. She also educates parents and the community about special education issues, teaching a series of workshops on IDEA-Part C for the Oklahoma Parent Training and Information Center. She is committed not only to her son, but to all children with special needs. She wants their school experience to be enriching, fun, and tailored to their needs.

**Brooke Andrews, Volunteer of the Year,** is an ARCCorps volunteer, an OK-AIM volunteer monitor, a People First advisor

and volunteer, volunteers at DayMakers (TARC's activities program for adults with developmental disabilities) and volunteers for TARC's annual Shot in the Dark golf tournament. Brooke is a phenomenal advocate and her most pressing concern is always what is in the individual's best interest. As the advisor for Broken Arrow People First, she helps self-advocates plan meetings and acts as a sounding board for officers and members. As a volunteer for Tulsa's People First chapter, Brooke never misses an event or activity and is always the first to sign up to help. As an ARCCorps volunteer, she is in the process of assisting a woman in regaining her capacity to

become her own guardian. Brooke is a dream volunteer-she never says no and always makes herself available to any program for people with developmental disabilities that may need her help.

**Robert Neal, Board Member of the Year,** is a board member of the Tulsa Autism Foundation (TAF) and works tirelessly to raise awareness of autism spectrum disorders within the Tulsa community. As a board member, he has planned and organized Autism Awareness Night at Drillers Stadium for the past two years, as well as implementing the agency's "Family Fun Nights" program and was instrumental in developing the 2007 Ready...Set...Run! 5K race to benefit TAF, serving as race director. He is completely devoted to TAF and his advocacy has helped countless other parents by setting an example of how to make a difference.

**Representative Kris Steele** received the *Special Achievement in Advocacy* award. Kris is the Oklahoma State Representative for district 26 and has paved the way for legislation to require background checks on court-appointed special advocates and was recognized as the 2007 Progressive Independence Legislative Advocate of the Year for his work on behalf of Oklahomans with disabilities. He was also the keynote speaker at the Oklahoma People First state conference in 2007. If all legislators paid such close attention to the needs of Oklahomans with disabilities, the world would be a much better place! Kris has extended his work as an advocate not only to his immediate community, but also to the state level and is known as a true advocate who will fight for the rights of people with disabilities. 

**In addition to presenting the Advocacy Awards, TARC honored volunteers in the ARCCorps and OK-AIM programs achieving 5, 10 and 15 years of service. Honorees were:**

**5-YEAR SERVICE AWARDS**

OK-AIM

Arthur McQueen  
Carl Morgan  
Denise Payton

ARCCorps

Randall Beegle  
Carolyn Brown  
Ronaye Classen  
Ladonna Cole  
Nettie Couch  
Eric Cullen

Hazel Danner  
Cathy Denison  
Velva Eubanks  
Beverly Grant  
Shonda Holt  
Judy Huhman  
Delton Isaac  
Linda Isaac  
Robert Jerkatis  
Becky Keeling  
Donna Kerr  
Patty Lund  
Susan Miller  
Jennifer Moore

Del Morgan  
Curtis Patrick Sr.  
Jim Saunders  
Gloria Swensen  
Carol Treat  
Carol Treat  
Ginger Ware  
Jennifer Webb

**10-YEAR SERVICE AWARDS:**

OK-AIM

Greg Barber  
Ramona Barnes

Shirley Buchanan  
Cecilia Crawford  
Linda Lambert  
Joy McNutt  
Darlene Moser

ARCCorps

Andrea Anderson  
James Gist  
Warren Hultgren  
Kevin Ivory  
Tonda Ivory  
Marsha Kutz  
Marie Marshall

Lisa Maxville  
Fran Redding  
Dolores Wells

**15-YEAR SERVICE AWARDS:**

OK-AIM

Dwayne Boyd  
Mark McCarver  
Christine Detrick  
Phyllis Philpot  
Norma Ledbetter  
Cindy Rogers

# “You Need to Know Me” Message Carried to State Capitol

**T**ARC Executive Director John F. Gajda delivered the following speech on the steps of the State Capitol at the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Day rally on March 5. The event’s theme, “You Need to Know Me,” was intended to drive home the importance of people with developmental disabilities’ voice in the legislative process. After the rally, attendees were encouraged to meet with their legislators to discuss the issues that are important to them.

## They Need to Know You

As I was driving here this morning from Tulsa I was thinking how familiar the road looked. I have traveled it many times before. And, as I stand here now I recognize this view from the Capitol steps. You see, I’ve been here before, on days similar to today, speaking to groups much like the crowd I am looking out over today.

Many of the faces in the crowd are familiar ones. Some I remember from other rallies in past years. Others, I see more often. There are also some new faces, and that’s good.

Why do many of you, like I do, keep coming back year after year to this event when we gather at our state Capitol to call attention to and create awareness about the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families?

For some it is very personal. You are people with disabilities.

In my case, though, I am not here for myself:

I am here for Robert who I saw at church on Sunday.

I am here for Mary who I saw at the food court at the mall this weekend.

I am here for James who I called last week to congratulate on the award he just received.

I am here for Mark who I had lunch with a couple of weeks ago so that we could catch up with each other’s busy lives.

I am here for Lucy with whom I regular-

ly exchange emails.

They all live full active lives in the community. They are all people with disabilities.

I am also here for Scott and Susan whose holiday card with their family portrait is tacked on my bulletin board and Rebecca with whom I recently spoke on the phone regarding her son. They are families who are living with children with disabilities.

When I talk about people with disabilities, these are some of the people and families that I know whose faces flash through my mind and make the issues we are here to address real for me. Their friendship, their achievements, their success, and unfortunately also their unmet needs, makes standing here before you today personal for me, and fires my passion to fight for change.

In this building, where our elected officials meet, they debate bills that provide funding for services and changes in our laws that directly impact the lives of these people and others that you and I know.

But it doesn’t appear to me that that our elected officials know Robert or Mary or James or Mark or Lucy or people like them. And they certainly don’t know Scott and Susan’s son or Rebecca’s son. If they knew these individuals or any of the thousands of other Oklahomans like them the way I do, these elected officials wouldn’t

continue to ignore the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

If they knew Robert and James and Mark and knew how they depend on their staff each day and also knew that they couldn’t always depend on their staff to support them because of the revolving door of staff turnover, then the members of the legislature would be much more willing to approve the money needed for the rate increases that would allow staff to receive a living wage. Perhaps then staff would be more likely to be committed to a career supporting Robert and James and Mark



rather than considering it just a short term job until they find something better.

If they knew Mary, a woman in her 30's, and the great life she now leads living on her own in the community, rather than in a nursing home, they wouldn't hesitate to provide resources for other similar transitions for the other Mary's of Oklahoma.

If they knew Scott and Susan and their struggle to care for their son at home, they would be much more likely to provide new funding for the waiting list for services that Scott and Susan's son is on.

And, if they knew Rebecca and her son they would be willing to support state funded and privately mandated services for people with autism spectrum disorders because when these matters were debated they would see, like I see, the faces of Rebecca and her son - not the faces of the insurance industry.

I know these people and I can't understand how the members of the legislature can ignore their needs and the needs of many similar individuals they represent. But it is easy for the members of the legislature because they don't know these individuals the way I do.

The challenge I present to each of you here today is to reach out and become a friend of your elected officials in this building. Tell them your story or the story of your family member. Share your dreams. Let them know what is important to you. They need to know you so that when they debate funding for services or disability policy or access to services or the many other topics that are on the agendas of meetings held each day in this building that impact the lives of people with disabilities and their families, they will - just as I am today - be there for you. If they really know you, then it will be your image that flashes in their minds during the debates, and it will be obvious to them what is needed and what is right.


Not all elected officials will respond favorably. Some won't care or won't share your outreached hand of friendship. That's why I want everyone to remember one important thing: 2008 is a major election year.

The Oklahoma system of services for people with developmental disabilities now offers many choices to people receiving services. If you are not satisfied with the services of one provider, you can switch to another. With the move to self-directed servic-

es, you will be able to literally hire and fire staff. The members of the legislature that represent you are your staff and like any other service provider, if we are not satisfied with their job performance, or their attitude, or how they treat you, you should fire them and hire someone who will do a better job for all of us.

This fall, all 101 members of the Oklahoma House of Representatives and 24 members of the Oklahoma Senate, who meet in this building as our representatives, are asking us to rehire them. Interview them the same way you would interview potential new staff coming into your home. If they don't pass your interview, vote for someone who will. We are also interviewing and hiring a President of the United States and representatives to the U.S. Congress.

In 2008 we have a lot of interviewing and hiring decisions to make, but it is a necessary process that we all need to take seriously if we want to change the way things are being done and improve the lives of people with disabilities and their families. That is why we are here today, isn't it? We are not satisfied with the way things are being done and we want a change.

So, before you leave here today, make a new friend of your elected officials and in November, be sure to vote and hire some good staff. 

**John F. Gajda**  
Executive Director

**Aaron Brown**  
Assistant Executive Director

**Lisa Berry**  
ARCCorps Volunteer Recruiter/Coordinator

**Michelle Bissell**  
ARCCorps Volunteer Recruiter/Coordinator

**Kelley Bowler**  
OK-AIM Administrative Assistant

**Jeremy Clark**  
ARCCorps Volunteer Recruiter/Coordinator

**Amie Farinella**  
Self-Advocacy Coordinator

**Brenda Garrett**  
ARCCorps Volunteer Recruiter/Coordinator

**Sally Hull**  
Bookkeeper/Office Manager

**Donna Kerr**  
OK-AIM Coordinator

**Kathleen Maupin**  
ARCCorps Volunteer Recruiter/Coordinator

**Fran Redding**  
OK-AIM Area II Field Coordinator

**Susan Reed**  
OK-AIM Area III Field Coordinator

**Marla Stewart**  
ARCCorps Administrative Assistant

**Amanda Turner**  
Director of Communications

**Sherilyn Walton**  
Family Support Coordinator

**Zaida Castro-Kepford**  
Bilingual Outreach Specialist

TARC Staff

## Participants in DayMakers, TARC's weekly activity programs for adults, recently made picket signs for the advocates participating in Rally Day.



Missy Messer, a participant in DayMakers, creates a picket sign to be used at the State Capitol.

Kyle Graham, a self-advocate and member of Tulsa People First, holds a sign created by DayMakers participants while rallying at the State Capitol, while Amie Farinella, TARC Self-Advocacy Coordinator, looks on.



TARC in Action is published quarterly by Tulsa Advocates for the Rights of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, Inc., for its members, for individuals with developmental disabilities, their families and friends, for people interested in the challenges faced by this unique community, and for individuals who work in the field of mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. Contact TARC at 16 E. 16th St., Ste 405, Tulsa, OK 74119-4447. Phone 918/582-8272 or 800/688-8272. Fax 918/582-3628. Email us at: [tarc@ddadvocacy.net](mailto:tarc@ddadvocacy.net)

© 2008 TARC. All Rights Reserved

## Spring 2008 Board of Directors

### OFFICERS

**Michelle Hanson**

President

**Dr. Mary Bea Drummond**

President-Elect

**E. Chris Wegener**

Vice President Programs

**Adam Paul**

Vice President, Public Relations & Development

**Scott Epperson**

Vice President, Legislative Affairs & Public Policy

**Justin Lord**

Vice President, Human Resources and Membership

**Jamie Cooper**

Treasurer

**Laurie Armstrong**

Secretary

**Kent Garrett**

Immediate Past President

### DIRECTORS

**Lisa DeBolt**

**Chris Embry**

**Sue Freeman**

**Paige Jackson**

**Biddy Kupke**

**Judy McCarter**



# TARC Offers New Support Group for Adults with Asperger's Syndrome


**B**ased on the growing number of people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and their need for support, TARC is launching the Links support group for adults with Asperger's Syndrome.

Asperger's Syndrome is a disorder on the autistic spectrum, characterized by restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities that cause significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of individual's lives. However, in contrast to autism, there are no significant delays in language or cognitive development.

The group will offer speakers on topics chosen by the group, social skills training, and activities and events to help participants become more at ease in social situations while becoming more active in the community.

"Links was developed as a response to the need for adults with Asperger's Syndrome to have a place to find support from others living with the disorder. We hope the support group will provide the vital one-on-one interactions with others with Asperger's Syndrome that people are so eager for. There is great value in

sharing experiences and knowing that you're not alone," says Amie Farinella, Self-Advocacy Coordinator for TARC.

Links will meet on the third Wednesday of each month at the Brookside Library in Tulsa, 1207 E. 45th Pl., from 6:30-8:00 p.m. The group's first meeting was held March 19. Meeting dates for the groups are also published in the TARC online calendar at [www.ddadvocacy.net](http://www.ddadvocacy.net). For more information, contact Farinella at 918-582-TARC. 

## Join us for Links!

**WHEN:** Third Wednesday of each month

**WHERE:** Brookside Library,  
1207 E. 45th Pl., Tulsa

**TIME:** 6:30-8:00 p.m.

**QUESTIONS?** Call Amie Farinella,  
918-582-TARC

## Yes, I want to join TARC.

**This is your invitation to join TARC, a grassroots organization of and for people with developmental disabilities and their families.**

**Since 1952, TARC has been committed to Oklahomans with developmental disabilities and working to ensure a high quality of life for them and their families through education, empowerment, support, and advocacy.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### Please select the type of membership:

Individual, \$25    Family, \$40    Organization, \$60    Sustaining, \$100    Patron, \$200

A TARC membership is an annual membership renewable in the month you join.

**Please return this form to:** TARC, 16 East 16th Street, Suite 405, Tulsa, OK 74119-4447

# From the President

**G**reetings fellow members,


patrons, clients and other supporters! I want to thank you for your help in making 2007 such a successful year for TARC. Your involvement in TARC is one of the most important ingredients for its success. I have seen TARC grow tremendously in the past three years in which I have had the pleasure of serving on its Board of Directors.

The growth of TARC from year to year sparks a challenge for us all to become more involved by recruiting new membership and/or volunteering where needed. One of the many opportunities to

volunteer with TARC is coming up soon. TARC's annual *Shot in the Dark* golf tournament will be held on Friday, May 2nd at LaFortune Park and we need your help! *Shot in the Dark* is a nighttime golf tournament played completely in the dark, with only glow-in-the-dark golf balls and glow sticks on the greens to light the way for golfers. If you have not had the chance to work this event, you are missing out! It is fun, it is simple and most importantly it is TARC's single most significant event of the year! This event further enables TARC to continue to provide its fundamental services to citizens with developmental disabilities in communities throughout Oklahoma.

The golf tournament requires countless volunteers for it to run smoothly and that is where YOU, along with friends and family, come in! Although we would love to have teams sign up to play, we would also love for anyone that isn't a golfer to participate in the event by volunteering as a tee moni-



tor or green monitor for this year's event. A tee monitor sits at the tee box and communicates by flashlight with the volunteers on the green to make sure the green is clear and it is safe to allow the next team to tee off (one volunteer is needed at each tee). A green monitor sits on the green and ensures that the tee box volunteer does not allow the next group of golfers to tee off until the previous group has finished the hole and has moved on to their next hole (two volunteers are needed on each green—one to communicate with the volunteer on the tee and one to walk the golfers to their next hole). The golfers tee off at 9:00p.m. and the tournament traditionally ends sometime between 11:00 p.m. and midnight. If you would like to volunteer or would like further information regarding *Shot in the Dark*, please call Amanda Turner at 918-582-TARC. Everyone is encouraged to come out, have a good time, and help make this year's event the greatest in TARC history. We hope to see you there! 



## Shot in the Dark

Save the Date!  
**13th Annual  
Shot in the  
Dark Golf  
Tournament**

**Friday, May 2, 2008**  
**LaFortune Championship  
Golf Course**

**9-Hole**

**Shotgun Start  
4-Person Scramble**

**Par 3**

**Sponsorships range from \$250-\$10,000.  
In addition, volunteers are needed to  
work the course as tee and green moni-  
tors. To become a sponsor or to  
volunteer, call Amanda Turner at  
918-582-TARC.**

presented by





Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Tulsa, Okla.  
Permit No. 909

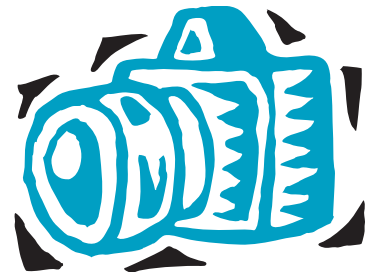
## Tulsa Advocates for the Rights of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities

16 East 16th Street, Suite 405  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119

**Return Service Requested**



# TARC QuickTakes



Jean Flournoy, a participant in TARC's DayMakers group, poses with the TARC holiday card, which featured artwork she created during a November meeting of the group.



Advocates from across the state rallied in Oklahoma City to raise awareness for disabilities issues.