

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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# A Message From The CEO



*"Transparency is a trust building tool; the more transparent your organization becomes, the more trustworthy you will be viewed by the public, donors, consumers and families. It is important for non-profit organizations to clearly state their mission and communicate the outcomes of their actions to the outside world."*

This is a quote I saved from my first month as the CEO at Ridge Area Arc three years ago. I knew we were a trusted leader in the care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the community, but how were we communicating our needs and our vision for the future? Were our consumers and their families part of the discussion? Did our staff understand just how important they were to the bright future of Ridge Area Arc? We began to ask these questions and really look inside our organization so that we could adjust to the needs of the community with transparent and open honesty about the things we do right and the things that we wanted to change. And then, COVID hit!

It became abundantly clear to us just how much we needed to see our consumers every day and how they needed us. We ached for staff that stayed home to fight this disease once they contracted it or helped loved ones fight to be healthy again. We have come out on the other side a stronger; closer family of individuals not a group of staff and consumers.

We have learned a whole lot this last year. We understand that we have technology needs in order to do business virtually. We understand that we have to adjust our regular shifts to accommodate work, life balance. We understand that the community will rally around us when we ask companies to turn their sponsorships into donations when we have to cancel our fundraisers. But in full transparency we understand that all of that is just the whirlwind of this crazy life and what really matters is how we care for each other through thick and thin and in sickness and health.

We wish you all a year of positive physical, emotional, and mental health.

In love and appreciation,

*Kathleen Border*

***Achieve with us.®***

# A Message From The Board Chair

Dear Ridge Area Arc Family,

2020 was a year unlike any other and will certainly go down in history as one of the most challenging years we've ever faced as a community, a county, and an organization. Amid the crisis, I was so proud of our employees, consumers, volunteers, and community partners for coming together and supporting our organization in serving and advocating for those with developmental and other disabilities.



It has been said that crisis reveals true character and that when circumstances are out of your control your reaction to it is not. As our staff was forced to close many of our programs to Consumers due to Covid-19 distancing requirements, rather than give up, their response was to go directly to the Consumer's homes as well as Zoom meetings to continue the mission of teaching, assisting and supporting. Our fundraising events were cancelled or postponed but our Community Partners continued their much need financial support. Our Consumers were faced with responding to the "new normal" by increasing their knowledge of technology to continue their learning. Despite all the hardships, by forging ahead together we proved exactly what makes the Ridge Area Arc special.

As the vaccines continue to roll-out and hopefully stop the spread of this virus, my greatest hope and desire is we all come out stronger and more appreciative of the things we took for granted only a year ago. We are getting back to shared times together in our facilities, cheering each other's accomplishments over this past year and once again proving just how amazing the Ridge Area Arc family truly is.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I want to thank every Ridge Area Arc supporter, consumer and employee for helping us to grow and succeed well into the future.

I wish you all good health and happiness,

*Victor J. Divietro*

Victor J. Divietro, Board Chair/Ridge Area Arc

# Community Awards



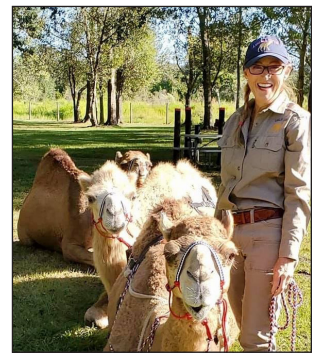
**People First! Advocate Award** honors an individual or group or organization which consistently demonstrates a leadership role in the advocacy for people with developmental disabilities at a county, state and/or national level. Representative Kaylee Tuck and staff, including local Legislative Aide Mr. Dana Orr are this year's

People First Advocates. Rep. Tuck has served as a member of the Florida House of Representatives since 2020 sitting on such committees as the Education & Employment Committee, Secondary Education; Career Development Subcommittee, Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Professions & Public Health Subcommittee where she consistently advocates in favor of initiatives that benefit individuals with disabilities and pushes forth their desire to live person-centered lives as part of their community. She and Mr. Orr have taken time to listen to the issues facing Ridge Area Arc and the individuals and families we serve; they have taken action to understand how they can be active participants in removing obstacles and have spent their time taking part in celebrating the agency's successes. It is as a result of the leadership role in the advocacy for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities at a state level that we celebrate Representative Kaylee Tuck and her staff.



**Outstanding Community Partner of the Year Award** recognizes an organization for its commitment in nurturing a mutually beneficial relationship. This year's award goes to **Terri Lynn Crutchfield, staff and volunteers at LaLa Land** who have opened up their hearts and home to Ridge Area Arc and its consumers. Consumers are able to interact and get up close and personal with camels, kangaroos, goats, llamas, donkeys and zdonks. Trips to LaLa Land have been life experiences for consumers. Individuals who were initially afraid to pet a dog, now snuggle up comfortably with llamas and camels. Terri and her staff and volunteers recognize the magic that happens

with consumers interact with animals and that not everyone has the capacity to travel to destinations to see exotic animals. They accept consumers unique abilities and provide all necessary accommodations to ensure a unique and personal experience in a nurturing environment. Terri, her staff and volunteers have become a vital part of the Ridge Area Arc family.



**Volunteer of the Year Award** recognizes an individual who has a desire to elevate the lives of people with developmental disabilities, an advocate who also displays actions and commitment to make change happen. This year's award goes to **Chris Coning**. Chris goes above and beyond to help at the resale store. She is willing to help anywhere that is necessary and shows up to resale 3-5 days a week and helps in day to day operations. Chris helps sort donations daily, assist with getting the store presentable each morning, and truly goes out of her way to make sure there is nothing more she can do to help before leaving each day! We truly appreciate all of Chris's hard work and dedication to the resale store!



**Arc Hero of the Year Award** recognizes an individual or group who has provided on-going services and/or resources to promote Arc's mission. This year's award goes to **Gerald Snell**.



Everyone knows Gerald takes his sibling love very seriously, always caring and advocating for his sister Yolanda. But, if you hang around for a while you will see that Gerald goes above and beyond for all of Yolanda's friends at the ADT, jumping in to host an annual birthday party complete with lunch and of course cake! Gerald also saw the commemorative flags flying high on the Ridge Area Arc's ADT Campus in March of 2020 and he expressed that it reminded him that without the staff at Ridge Area Arc, our consumers would not be living their best life and so he sponsored a staff appreciation luncheon.

# Consumer Awards

## Residential Consumer of the Year Award:

### Antoinette Feliciano



Antoinette had some difficulty early in the year with some emotions that were overwhelming. This led to some issues in her house and at ADT. Antoinette recognized the need to be an advocate for her own health in a positive way and continues to work on giving credible details when relaying stories and in describing how she is feeling. Antoinette has come a long way toward personal growth. She continues to thrive at the ADT, working to act as a leader and friend to her peers. She is very creative and this comes out in a bright way when you look at her artwork. She is contributing to the programming at the ADT, even suggesting a paint party which she will be helping to plan.

Congratulations Antoinette!

## Supported Living Consumer of the Year Award:

### Eva Monk



Eva is a very outspoken young woman that resides with her significant other, Ralph and has for many years. She keeps her house neat and clean while taking care of her pets. She has been working for many years at The Jacaranda Hotel, but was laid off due to Covid-19. She is hoping to return to work soon. Eva has continued to work on her reading skills and has shown improvement. She has been reading food labels while grocery shopping in order to make good food choices. She enjoys participating in SpecialSTARS, competing in tennis, softball, shuffleboard, bowling, swimming, basketball and cycling. As an Aktion Club member, Eva has volunteered for road cleanup as well as Christmas toy and diaper collection. Eva has a big heart and is always willing to help others. Eva has many friends at Ridge Area Arc and in the community.

Congratulations Eva!

## ADT Consumer of the Year Award:

### Dama Massey

Dama has participated in the ADT program for 9 years. Dama has had many struggles over the past year including the loss of her mother. Additionally, Dama's



health began to be impacted resulting in her admission to the hospital with a new diagnosis, Colon Adenocarcinoma. Dama had to have surgery and go through chemotherapy as a result of her diagnosis. After recovering from chemotherapy, Dama fractured her right shoulder and had to wear a sling.

After some time off from the ADT program, Dama returned to the day program. Ridge Area Arc assists Dama with her daily living skills and how to be safe. Dama has a one of a kind personality and is very spunky and charismatic. Even though Dama has her moments, she is very loving so that her good moments outweigh the bad. Dama's witty personality makes it difficult for one to be angered by her occasional outburst. Dama enjoys being active and can convey her wants and needs clearly. It's wonderful to see Dama bounce back to her old self after all of the obstacles she has faced this past year. Ridge Area Arc continues to work as a team with Dama to ensure she maintains a healthy and active lifestyle.

Congratulations Dama!

## ADT Intensive Consumer of the Year Award:

### Jack Howard



Jack has been participating in the Adult Day Intensive program for 11 years. Jack has struggled with hand-eye coordination, language skills and meal etiquette. Ridge Area Arc staff has been working with Jack over the past year with all of these skills. Due to Covid-19, the ADT was closed in March 2020, but Jack was able to return in July 2020. Jack adapted well to all of the changes, like rotating to different classes with his

group home.

Jack has improved with his hand-eye coordination activities by participating in a variety of new activities. Jack is now able to touch the picture on the Bingo board and kick the ball when participating in kickball with his peers. Jack has greatly improved with his communication skills and is now able to share his weekend stories with staff when staff asks him "What did you do over the weekend?" During lunch, Jack is now able to independently throw away his trash and assist staff with putting away his containers in his lunchbox and putting his lunchbox in the designated area. Ridge Area Arc staff continues to work with Jack on the skills that he needs to ensure that he stays healthy and happy! Congratulations Jack!

## Community Employment Consumer of the Year:

### Ilana Levy



Ilana enjoys helping people, and that is what she gets to do as a customer associate and bagger at the South Winn Dixie store in Sebring. Ilana also helps customers get their carts and helps them by putting groceries into their car. This past year has been extra busy with the new store guidelines for Covid-19. Besides wearing a mask during her shift

and washing her hands often, Ilana was also responsible for making sure the shopping carts were disinfected before and after each customer use.

Ilana says that she enjoys having a job because it keeps her busy and she likes having extra money to buy things she might not be able to afford without having a job.

Her supervisor, Trudy, says that Ilana is a great employee. She comes to work ready to go and has a positive attitude. She also demonstrates excellent customer service, gets along with her coworkers and is easy to work with.

Ilana has been a longtime employee at Winn Dixie. She transferred from the store in Avon Park to Sebring two years ago and likes being closer to home. Ilana made the transition easily because of her friendly smile and can-do attitude.

Ilana is very independent, lives on her own in her apartment and has many friends to keep her company on her days off from work.

Congratulations Ilana!



## Resale Consumer of the Year:

### Maria Rivera

Maria shows up every day to work at Resale and always completes her tasks with no complaints. Maria has really grown over the past year and continues to achieve the goals set for herself. Maria keeps a positive attitude and a smile on her face. She is happy to help customers as well as her co-workers. Maria's supervisors are very proud of Maria's accomplishments and feel she is very deserving of this award!

Congratulations Maria!



## COVID-19 Impact

Along with the rest of the world, when Covid-19 entered our lives early in 2020, everything changed. On March 16, we closed programs and quickly learned how to adapt our services.

Although our everyday lives were now ever-changing, it was crucial to continue to serve our consumers with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our consumers rely on us each day and looked to us to adapt in this new situation.

You, our donors and partners, played an important role to ensure we had the resources necessary to continue.

When our ADT program closed, it was essential to figure out a way to stay connected to our consumers and families who depend on us Monday through Friday for training, enrichment, mental health services, personal care and a way to earn a living.

Residents in our five group homes sheltered in place and ADT program staff members were deployed to continue service.

Our Adult Basic Education teachers quickly embraced Zoom video conferencing and were able to continue their lessons from our Eckstadt building on campus.



During COVID-19, Special STARS found a way to rock the house outside of Ridge Area Arc in December for its Drive-In Christmas Concert and Parade. There were more than 200 people attending sitting in 42 vehicles in the parking lot to watch the show.

## Special STARS

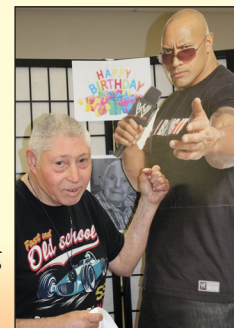
Special Sports Training and Recreational Services (STARS) was formed in 2004 by a group of special athletes, families, caregivers and volunteers. STARS offers different sports and recreational activities throughout the year to children (starting at age 6) and adults with mental and physical disabilities in Highlands and the surrounding counties. All levels of disabilities are encouraged to participate as sports are adapted to the individual. Athletes can start out on a skill level designed to help them learn to play better and then move into a more competitive environment once they are more comfortable. Awards are given to everyone who competes.

Special athletes receive training in the sports that they choose and compete for awards. There are trainings and competitions for horseshoes, bocce, shuffleboard, tennis, softball, bowling, swimming, volleyball, kickball, track and field, cycling, equestrian, cheerleading and basketball. The trainings and competitions help individuals to develop better socialization skills as they compete with a partner and/or a team. STARS athletes are also partnered with community members without disabilities in sports such as softball and kickball. The activities help to build natural supports for the athletes and help to educate the community on the unique abilities of our consumers.

All sports are free of charge to people with disabilities but medical and release forms have to be complete, on-file, and updated every three years. Special STARS relies heavily on volunteers and community donations. Opportunities include organizing or coaching various sports. Volunteer can also help hand out awards, food and drinks.

### “Reaching Out to The STARS”

This social media feature helped Special STARS athletes stay in touch with each other even though they couldn't get out into the community during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cindy Marshall, Director of Program Development/Special Stars, personally contacted each and every one of the athletes to chat from a distance in their yard, take a walk, or toss a ball back and forth just so they know someone cares.



### Special STARS Recreation Club

There is a Special STARS Recreation Club that offers eight social events during the year including dances, theater shows, local ball games, parties, recreational games and picnics. Club members of all ages and disabilities are encouraged to join and pay a small \$5 fee in annual dues. The club helps to direct activities through their elected officers. Volunteers and donations are also appreciated for the STARS Recreation Club activities.

## Before You Donate

### Common Sense Tips

Before you donate to Ridge Area Arc Resale Store, use this guide to determine whether your items can be put to good use.

**Questions? Call 863-453-6072**

### ✓ **DONATE**

Clothing & shoes  
in resellable condition  
Gloves, Hats & Scarves  
Jewelry  
Handbags  
Housewares  
Pots & Pans  
Dishes, China & Silverware  
Complete  
Board Games & Toys  
DVDs & CDs  
Furniture  
Antiques

  
**The Arc**  
Ridge Area  
Resale Store  
899 W Main St  
Avon Park, FL 33825

### ✗ **DO NOT DONATE**

Broken, Malfunctioning,  
Molding items  
Stained Clothes  
Furniture with Pet Stains  
Weapons (including hunting  
knives or ammunition)  
Hazardous Chemicals - Like  
paint or household cleaners  
Expired or crashed car  
seats and helmets  
Any recalled products  
Tires or Car Batteries  
Cribs or Broken baby items  
Computer components  
Sleeper sofas  
Large exercise equipment  
Medical supplies  
and medications  
Some heavy electronics

## Resale Store

The Resale Store is located at  
899 West Main Street, Avon Park, (863) 453-6072.

Volunteer opportunities include cashier,  
sorting donations, decorating, and/or  
arranging floor displays.



## Our Mission

Serving and advocating for individuals with developmental and other disabilities so they may have the opportunity to choose and realize their goals. Ridge Area Arc in Avon Park, Florida is a private, not for profit 501(c)3 organization, which was founded in 1957 by Franklyn and Mary Ellen Ward. At the time their son, Rob, was born there were very few places to work with disabled children.

Many families sent their child away to a distant institution. The Wards did not want to send their son away and sought a way to provide the needed educational resources and training. They also realized other families in the area needed these services. Thus, the Ridge Area Arc Day School began in 1957, and served 17 children ages seven and older from Highlands county.

Arc now provides 10 services to hundreds of individuals with developmental and other disabilities and their families from Highlands county.

Ridge Area Arc is a member of The Arc of the United States and The Arc of Florida. Arc is supported through private contributions and Ridge Area Arc Foundation.

## Ridge Area Arc Foundation History

A special group of investors rallied around Ridge Area Arc in 1994 making large gifts to create the Ridge Area Arc Foundation.

The mission of the Foundation is to secure funds through estate planning and other measures and invest funds specifically for endowing the programs and services of Ridge Area Arc.

The Foundation is steadfast in its belief that with the help of caring members of our community, the Ridge Area Arc will continue to provide necessary programs for people with developmental, intellectual, and other disabilities for generations to come.

## How you can help

Make a Gift to the Foundation! The following gifts are accepted: Cash; Securities—Stocks, Bonds, Mutual Funds; Real Estate; Life Insurance Beneficiary Designations; Charitable Remainder Trusts; Charitable Lead Trusts; Retirement Plan Beneficiary Designations; Bequests—Wills, Trusts

We appreciate your considering investing in a partnership with the Ridge Area Arc Foundation.

# Donations

A special thank you goes out to the following individuals and organizations who provided monetary support to the agency in fiscal year 2019-20.

## \$25,000 & up

Department of Transportation  
HHS Cares Act Providers Stimulus  
Highlands County Board  
of County Commissioners  
Ridge Area Arc Foundation  
United Way of Central Florida

## \$5,000 to \$9,999

Avon Park Bingo, Inc.  
Ms. Nancy Carr  
Knights of Columbus #14717  
Swaine & Harris, P.A.  
Women's Club of Sebring

## \$3,000 to \$4,999

Mr. Stephen R. Aldrick  
Senior Connection Center, Inc.

## \$1,000 to \$2,499

Ms. Deborah Barber  
Mrs. Lois Brown  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Farmer  
Grace & Heart OBGYN, LLC  
Heacock Insurance  
Johnson-Stivender Wealth Advisors  
Mr. Victor M. Lozano  
Mr. & Mrs. David Magowan  
Publix Super Markets Charities, Inc.  
Mr. Michael J. Sharkey  
Dr. David Singha  
Mr. & Mrs. James Snively  
Tom Perry Family Foundation  
Ms. Marcia Ward  
Waypoints Financial

## \$500 to \$999

Alan Jay Automotive Management  
Mr. Robert J. Barben  
Ben Hill Griffin, Inc.  
James Brooks  
CenterState Bank, South  
Craig Alan Jordan Agency  
Duke Energy Foundation  
ITW Corporate  
Mrs. Rebeca Rivera-Jennings  
Marmer Construction, Inc.  
Mr. Tom Nunnallee  
ReMax Realty Plus

Terry Reynolds

Sebring Elks, Inc.  
Trilogy Home Health  
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

## \$250 to \$499

64 West Collision Repair, Inc.  
Arc of Florida  
Bare Wood Market  
Bugs Bee-Ware Exterminating, Inc.  
Edward Jones, Heather Harshman  
Edward Jones Financial, Jeff Roth  
Knights of Columbus #5441  
Dr. & Mrs. George D. Leidel  
Mr. & Mrs. Curtis McCullough  
Network For Good / Facebook  
Red Hats of Adelaide  
Stephenson Nelson Funeral Home  
C. Parke Sutherland, P.A.  
Wicks, Brown, Williams and Co.

## \$100 to \$249

Mr. William Allbritton  
Doug Andrews  
Bagwell Lumber  
Mr. Gary L. Bagwell  
Barben Fruit  
Mrs. Rhonda Beckman  
Mrs. Melissa Blackman  
Chester Brojek, Jr.  
C.S. Edwards Realty, Inc.  
Dr. C.P. Cornelius  
Michelle Dannels  
M. Linda Ebrite  
Ms. Nancy Fassler  
Linda Gee  
Dale Grubb  
Heartland Periodontics, P.A.  
Charles & Rebecca Johnson  
M.D.R.  
Mrs. Debra W. McCullough  
Peter McDevitt  
Maritza O'Donnell  
OSS/iGive  
James Palmer  
PayPal Giving Fund  
Pi Phi Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi  
Ms. Dale Ramsey  
Laura Rankin

Mrs. Maria Rivera

Rotary Clubs of Lake Placid Noon

Ms. Donna G. Scherlacher  
Schumacher Foundation, Inc.

Mr. Charles Schumacher  
SFSC

Christopher Shoemaker  
Storage Trailers of Florida, Inc.

Ms. Pat Tomlinson

Paul Von Merveldt

Mrs. Lisa Williams

Karla F. Youlden

## Major In-Kind

## Non-Cash Donations (\$500+)

In addition to the donors below, Ridge Area Arc received many non-cash gifts in 2020 valued at less than \$500 which are not listed here. This list also does not include gifts made to the Resale Store. The value of the gifts below are established by the donor.

Sebring Radio Group

AdventHealth

Highlands News-Sun

## Ridge Area Arc Foundation

The foundation, governed by a board of trustees, is responsible for building an endowment fund, the interest from which will support the Arc for years to come.

The goal of the foundation is to cultivate contributions through wills, estate plans and major gifts to ensure that the foundation will grow. The foundation does not solicit money through local fundraising events.

## OUR STORIES



*My daughter, Bethany has benefited from the experience of attending the day program. It was a transitioning period for her. She was attending APHS at the time, It was cut short due to the pandemic, and she had to finish up school by attending virtual school. She enjoyed her peers in art class and was always trying to get one over on Miss. Wanda by moving things around in her classroom, and of course always smiling about it. She especially liked trap drumming and was already familiar with Special STARS, and Heart-*

*land Horses. She attended those two programs since grade school. Bethany will be attending the day program once again in August one day a week. She's looking forward to seeing some of the individuals she attended class with.*

- Betty Rowland, proud mom and ADT Program Specialist

*My sister, Yolanda Snell, is a consumer at Ridge Area Arc ADT program. I am the caregiver for Yolanda and I can say that the staff of Ridge Area Arc has had nothing but a positive impact on Yolanda's life and words could never express how grateful I am for this. I applaud the ADT staff for the tremendous job that they're doing to impact Yolanda's life and it shows in so many ways and is often mentioned by those with who we come in contact. Yolanda's speed has improved tremendously and I attribute this to the Adult Basic Education (ABE) class as well as her behavior and communication skills. The monthly outings that they have when they go out as a group and have a meal has given Yolanda exposure as far as communicating with others outside of the ADT program. I am ever grateful for the Ridge Area Arc ADT program and the awesome job that they continue to do for Yolanda and others that attend the program.*



- Gerald Snell, Avon Park



## WHY I SERVE



*"I serve Arc and advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities because of a local family, the McGowans, who had a son with disabilities. Their friendship prompted my mother to be involved with the Arc and after she passed I wanted to serve in her honor."*

- Ridge Area Arc Foundation Chair,  
David Schumacher

*"It is important as a Christian and member of a community to serve where you feel a passion for the cause and see an opportunity to make a difference. I think it is important to be a voice for those whom may not be effective in advocating for themselves."*



- Ridge Area Arc Board of Directors  
2nd Vice Chair, Jeff Roth

*I am honored to serve with Ridge Area Arc. During my time on the board, I have witnessed this organization's passion and dedication for serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Ridge Area Arc leadership and staff are committed to providing a compassionate environment in which consumers and their families can reach their life goals. The administrative team lead by Kathleen Border and staff of Ridge Area Arc work very hard to secure grants, plan fundraisers, and advocate for positive legislation on behalf of the consumers of Arc.*



- Ridge Area Arc Board  
of Directors member, Karla Horton

# 2020 News Highlights

## ‘Scarf Bomb’ explodes in local downtown areas to raise awareness

March 2020

Wondering what those scarves tied to lamp posts in Avon Park are all about? March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and Ridge Area Arc wants to warn Highlands County that a scarf bomb has exploded in a downtown near you. Main Street in Avon Park has been covered. Up next is Devane Park in Lake Placid followed by Circle Park

in downtown Sebring as a part of an awareness campaign.

The agency employees tie scarfs to lamp posts and trees in an effort to raise awareness for the several hundred individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities served in Highlands and the surrounding areas. People are encouraged to walk the areas, pick out a scarf and take a selfie wearing their new scarf,

tag their photos to the Ridge Area Arc Facebook page or on Twitter at Ridge Area Arc #RAArc and #DDaware2020.

Ridge Area Arc was honored once again in Sebring with a proclamation during a recent Sebring city council meeting. John Shoop declared March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

## Knights of Columbus donate to Arc

March 2020

The Knights of Columbus Tootsie Roll Drive for Persons with Developmental Disabilities has been in existence since 1970. For every donation, each donor is offered a piece of candy by the Knight present, most commonly a Tootsie Roll. Because of these little gifts of appreciation, the “Campaign for People with Intellectual Disabilities” has frequently referred to as the “Tootsie Roll Drive.” It is a popular and successful fundraiser conducted by Knights of Columbus councils.

This years’ drive by the Knights of Columbus Council #5441 benefited Ridge Area Arc with nearly \$2,000. The funds were collected at local Winn Dixie stores.

This year’s chairman of the drive, Arnold Austin along with Tom Blomeke visited the Ridge Area Arc campus recently to present the proceeds to Arc’s CEO, Kathleen Border. The funds generated from this drive will be used to support Ridge Area Arc’s mission to be the best consumer-focused provider of services for individuals with developmental disabilities in Highlands and the surrounding counties. “We are so very grateful to the Knights of Columbus for this generous donation, we will use these funds efficiently to benefit the individuals we serve,” said Border.



## Ridge Area Arc commissions murals

April, 2020

What do you do when a global pandemic and a stay at home order closes your Adult Day Training (ADT) center? Once you reorganize your staff to serve your consumers, you take the time to clean, enhance and refurbish areas for the highly anticipated reopening of the center.

In 2019, Ridge Area Arc introduced a new education program. The Rhythmic Arts Project (T.R.A.P.) drumming program uses a unique curriculum to educate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by embracing rhythm as a method to address basic life and learning skills as well as reading, writing and arithmetic. This program has become a favorite of consumers and is embraced by the Adult Basic Education teachers.

Through community donations and a Christmas fundraising event, an existing space has been transformed into a comfortable and practical classroom to house the program. New

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## Spectrum announces \$15,000 Digital Education Grant for Ridge Area Arc

September 2020

Spectrum announced Ridge Area Arc has received a \$15,000 Spectrum Digital Education Grant to help build digital learning gaps for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as part of the company's multi-year, \$6 million cash and in-kind national commitment to digital education in Spectrum communities across the country.

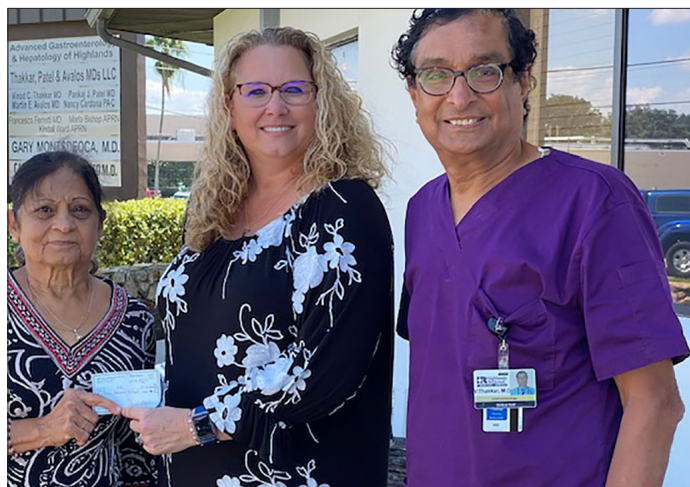
"We thank Ridge Area Arc for being instrumental in helping us provide support for digital education in the Central Florida community," said Rahman Khan, vice president of Community Impact for Charter Communications, Inc., which operates the Spectrum brand of TV, Internet, Voice and Mobile products. "Through Ridge Area Arc we can continue to provide those in need with the resources to navigate the challenges of the digital age."

Recipients of this year's Spectrum Digital Education grant range from long-standing nonprofits that continue to make a difference in local communities, to newer organizations meeting educational needs for children, including those experiencing homelessness and remote learning challenges.

"We feel so blessed and are impressed with Spectrum's commitment to providing quality digital products to the communities they serve and helping local non-profits, like Ridge Area Arc. We know that the lack of digital education and access to technology can be the number one barrier to individuals with disabilities getting jobs and being able to volunteer in the community. With the Spectrum Digital Education grant, Ridge Area Arc will be able to empower the individuals we serve," said Kathleen Border, Ridge Area Arc's CEO.

Ridge Area Arc provides and is devoted to improving services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Central Florida and ensuring that every individual has access to the information, advocacy, and skills they need to participate as members of their community.

Spectrum Digital Education aims to help local community members across Charter's 41-state service area to improve their lives through digital education. Since launching the program in 2017, Charter has committed to award \$6 million in cash grants and in-kind commitments, including PSAs and technical assistance, to support broadband education, training and technology.



## Thakkars, Arc join in Autism Initiative

November 2020

It is well known in the community that Drs. Vinod and Tarlika Thakkar are supportive of students in the Highlands County School District. The Thakkar Award has become synonymous with STEM learning and leadership excellence, but their recent partnership with Ridge Area Arc's Autism Initiative proves their commitment to life-long learning.

"We have always felt that it is important to, not only support students in their learning environments, but to support the community as a whole," said Dr. V. Thakkar. "We know that Ridge Area Arc is serving a great need and we want to empower them to better care for people on the autism spectrum."

In the past 30 years, the prevalence rate of Autism Spectrum Disorder has skyrocketed. Recent estimates by the Centers for Disease Control indicate that Autism Spectrum Disorders occur in 1 out of every 54 children born. Autism is not rare. The Ridge Area Arc Autism Initiative, affectionately called The A-Team Initiative, will provide local families with a resource for life skills education beyond the school system.

"According to staffers at the School Board, they currently serve close to 160 students on the autism spectrum. When those students graduate, we want to help them bridge the gap between school and independence," said Kathleen Border, Arc CEO. "We will have the training resources they need to move into their own homes or to gain employment. The possibilities are out there and they are endless."

The alarming increase in the prevalence of autism has caused, not only an increase in the number of cases, but also an increased need for better awareness and

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The information contained in this annual report was taken from the 2019-20 financial report prepared by Wicks, Brown, Williams & Co. As indicated below, Ridge Area Arc requires a substantial amount of revenue to provide essential services and training for persons with developmental disabilities. We use our resources to assist individuals to become as productive and independent as possible. All contributions from companies and individuals in the community are essential in assisting the agency in offering a better quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities. A copy of the agency's most recent audit can be obtained by contacting Ridge Area Arc, 4352 Independence St., Avon Park, FL 33825.



REVENUE	FY 2020	FY 2019
Public Contributions	693,586	496,303
Contract	245,465	250,687
Consumer Entitlements*	31,524	6,047
Medicaid Waiver	1,598,270	1,600,728
Resale Store	187,933	249,046
Private Pay	63,615	61,389
Other Revenue	223,466	188,764
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,043,859</b>	<b>2,852,964</b>

EXPENSES	FY 2020	FY 2019
Residential	1,337,417	1,378,038
Day Service	485,852	490,653
Community Employment	51,203	45,778
Community Services	169,139	163,426
Resale	264,630	272,231
Supporting Services	360,173	329,220
Loss of disposal of assets	5,269	37,322
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,673,683</b>	<b>2,716,668</b>

\*Food Stamps

## PROUD PARTNERS



## RIDGE AREA ARC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Chair** Victor Devietro  
**1st Vice Chair** William Allbritton  
**2nd Vice Chair** Jeff Roth  
**Treasurer** Tom Nunnallee  
**Secretary** Mary Brown  
**Advocate Liaison** Ralph Meyers  
 Melissa Blackman  
 Dee Dee Harstine  
 Karla Horton  
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## FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Chair** David Schumacher  
**Vice Chair** Victor Devietro  
**Treasurer** Mary Brown  
**Secretary** Marcia Ward  
 Tina Adams  
 William Allbritton  
 Dee Dee Harstine  
 Rick Helms  
 Christen Johnson  
 Debbie McCullough  
 Joann Seralde

Ridge Area Arc Foundation is governed by a board of trustees, is responsible for building an endowment fund, the interest from which will support the Arc for years to come. The goal of the foundation is to cultivate contributions through wills, estate plans and major gifts to ensure that the foundation will grow. The foundation does not solicit money through local fundraising events.

**Want to donate? Call 863-452-1295**

## MURALS

chairs donated by South Florida State College, sound-proofing tiles and floor covering were purchased with a donation from the Sebring Women's Club and an incredible, colorful mural was completed thanks to the funds generated from a Christmas concert by the Heartland Harmonizers at the Church of the Brethren in Sebring.

Director of Development Donna Scherlacher connected with artist Caleigh Bird through the Highlands Art League when Bird was the artist in residence.

Bird received her bachelor's degree in studio art with an art history minor from the College of Charleston and received her master's degree in studio art at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina. Bird has also spent time studying painting at the Istituto Michelangelo in Florence, Italy as well as Studio Escalier in Argenton Chateau, France. She has a family in Lake Placid.

Bird toured the ADT and met with staff and consumers. Inspired by the colors of the drums, Bird came up with a sketch that reflected the energy and rhythm of a typical T.R.A.P. session.

"Any kind of music space, especially a drum and shaker room is going to be very high energy, so I wanted to make sure to exemplify it in this mural. I decided to make this

one a bit more bold to really enliven the spirit while bringing in the music makers by using cohesive colors that matched the instruments in their hands with the instruments on the walls," said Bird

Bird significantly reduced her typical artist fee as a donation to Ridge Area Arc. Bird, who is new to muraling, enjoyed being able to focus using a new medium.

"I'm used to painting highly detailed plants and portraits and figures in oil, so using this interior acrylic house paint is quite a different medium, but I definitely enjoyed the thickness and fluidity and feeling a little bit looser than I normally allow myself to be. I think I have found my new calling," said Bird.

The mural which wraps around a corner of the room was the finishing touch for the newly updated classroom. "I cannot wait for our consumers to return to see what we have created for them," Scherlacher said.

While the whimsical and fun T.R.A.P. mural was the finishing piece to the T.R.A.P. classroom, a serene beach scene mural is just the starting point for the new senior room. Ridge Area Arc's CEO Kathleen Border envisioned the space as an oasis for the senior consumers. The new senior room is made possible through a grant from the Palms of Sebring Foundation.

"We serve a wide range of age

groups and that includes a group of several dozen seniors with disabilities," Border said. "It is so important that we adapt and adjust our space to fit their need for things like walkers and wheelchairs but also their need for a serene, calming environment. We are extremely grateful to The Palms of Sebring Foundation for helping us care for our seniors. This space will be a perfect senior room thanks to their grant funds."

The area that formerly housed a screen printing operation has been walled in and the floor has been treated and polished. The mural created by Bird is the centerpiece of the room allowing consumers to experience a peaceful day on the beach without leaving the room.

"For the beach scene, I really wanted to create a tranquil place for the mind to wander. I wanted to make sure to squeeze a lot in so I kind of played with perspective a little bit, but I wanted to make sure the beach chair was front and foremost and ready for someone to have a seat and relax the day away," said Bird.

Ridge Area Arc looks forward to welcoming home consumers and staff and is planning on a celebration to unveil the murals and improvements to the facility. For more information on Ridge Area Arc, please call 863-452-1295.

To contact Caleigh Bird, email her at [caleigh@caleighbirdart.com](mailto:caleigh@caleighbirdart.com).

## AUTISM

understanding of the condition, its assessment, and management among professionals, like Arc, in the field of disability advocacy. Ridge Area Arc's more than 70 staff members will receive additional hours of comprehensive professional development training spe-

cific to the post-secondary classroom environment paid for, in part, by the Thakkar Foundation. The training will drive proficiency in the implementation of current evidence-based interventions that research has proven to be effective in caring for adolescents and adults with disabilities.



# Thank You Highlands County!



## The Arc®

Ridge Area



## Proudly serving our consumers since 1957

# STAFF YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

Twenty-five Years

Susan Vilberg – Group Home Manager

Twenty Years

Clara Pough – Group Home Manager

Fifteen Years

Michelle Young – Residential Assistant

Christina Cooper – Case Manager

Wanda Rojas-Colon – ADT Program Specialist

Ten Years

Makeia Gay – Supported Living Coach

Five Years

Mike Martino – Director of Community Employment Services



## 30th Anniversary of the ADA

July 26, 2020, marked the 30th anniversary of the groundbreaking legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). While we should celebrate the advancements the ADA has made for people with disabilities, we must also acknowledge that people with

disabilities still lack access to employment, reliable transportation, experience high rates of poverty and are frequently denied personal autonomy. Florida ranks 31st out of the 50 states in accessibility and we all collectively have work to do to protect the lives, wellness, and rights of Floridians with disabilities.

