

Challenger

A NEWSLETTER THAT CONNECTS, ENGAGES AND INFORMS

Our 2025 Annual Campaign

FROM PARTICIPANT TO EMPLOYEE: AN ARC SUCCESS STORY

At just 21 years old, Avalon May has already worn many hats. She's a devoted sister to five siblings, a loving daughter, an active member of her church, and is passionate about health and nutrition. But one of her proudest roles is as an employee at The Arc of East Central Iowa, which happens to also be the very place that helped her grow into the confident, capable person she is today.

Avalon's story is one of perseverance, growth, and the life-changing impact of community support. It's also a story that embodies The Arc's mission: empowering individuals with disabilities to live, learn, work, play and advocate with dignity and full inclusion and to reach their full potential.

AVALON FINDS HER FAMILY

Avalon joined her forever family when she was just 20 months old. Her very early life was difficult, but when the May family welcomed her into their home, they knew their family was finally complete. By age three, Avalon was officially adopted - and her parents immediately began seeking the best therapies and supports to help her thrive.

After being diagnosed with an intellectual disability and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), Avalon's family was encouraged to connect with The Arc.

"My parents knew I was capable," Avalon recalls, *"but I just needed the right supports to reach my potential."* The Arc proved to be the added support Avalon needed.

FINDING A PLACE TO BELONG

Avalon found her happy place at The Arc. Through programming, she learned to advocate for herself, gained new life skills, and built confidence in her independence. She loved her time in The Arc's Summer Day and Daycare programs. *"This was a safe place for me,"* Avalon says. *"The Arc has helped me so much."*

"WOULDN'T IT BE COOL IF I COULD WORK HERE?"

After graduating from Kennedy High School, Avalon held a few part-time jobs, but her heart was pulling her back to The Arc, this time in a caregiver role. She was unsure whether The Arc would hire someone who used to be a participant, but her compassion and enthusiasm to help others translated into a job offer. It didn't take long for staff to recognize Avalon's gift for connecting with participants, especially those who are nonverbal. Her empathy, patience, and insight made her a natural caregiver. Avalon says it best: *"When I was a participant, I used to pretend to be a staff member. It's a blessing to actually get to work here. This job doesn't feel chaotic for me. I just feel like I'm hanging out with really cool people."*

A FULL-CIRCLE SUCCESS STORY

Today, Avalon is a proud Arc employee who works in our summer childcare program as well as our afternoon adult day program. Avalon is a shining example of what happens when participants receive the support and opportunities they need to thrive. She once benefited from The Arc's programs, and now she gives back by helping others discover their own strengths.

Avalon's journey is The Arc's mission in action. Her success reminds us why our programs matter and why your support is vital.

HELP US CONTINUE THIS IMPORTANT WORK

When you give to The Arc of East Central Iowa, you make stories like Avalon's possible. Your donation stays right here in our community, providing critical programs and services for nearly 600 individuals and families each year.

Please join us in continuing to create opportunities, foster independence, and celebrate the abilities of everyone we serve. Together, we can help more people like Avalon thrive.

Don't wait... make your donation today!
Help support wonderful individuals like Avalon.

Please mail your donation to:
The Arc of East Central Iowa
680 2nd Street SE • Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
Attn: 2025 Annual Campaign
or donate online at www.arceci.org.



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From the Director’s Desk

Hello Arc Friends and Family!

Happy Autumn and the start of cool weather! These are difficult times in many ways and The Arc is here to help. In response to the termination of SNAP benefits, we opened a **pop-up food pantry** to help our participants, their families, and our DSPs who are in need of food items. This pop-up food pantry will stay open until the end of November.

With the holidays around the corner, The Arc can get you connected to organizations who have gift drives or adopt families, too. And if we cannot help you directly, we know who in the community can address your needs. Please reach out if you need assistance.

The **Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments (HOME)** project is back in play. HOME is the restructuring of the state’s Waiver system, moving from a seven (7) Waiver system to two (2) Waivers: Adult and Child. Beginning in January 2026, those on the Children’s Mental Health, Health & Disability, Physical Disability, and HIV/AIDS Waivers will transition to either a Child (ages 0-20) or Adult (ages 21+) Waiver. Those on the Brain Injury and Intellectual Disability Waivers will not transition at this time – they are scheduled for Phase 2 sometime in 2027. The goal of the HOME project is to create a Needs-Based system instead of a Diagnosis-Based system. Individuals will be assessed to determine level of need and assigned service hours based on that level. That means if you have a higher level of need, regardless of your diagnosis, you will be given more service hours than someone who has a low level of need. It is unclear how high/low level allocations will affect services and supports for individuals and impact their ability to become or remain independent and reach their goals. **DHHS is accepting public comments on the HOME project from December 1 through January 8, 2026.** Comments can be emailed to: HCBS_Public_Comment@hhs.iowa.gov and written comments can be mailed to: *Quality/Innovation and Medical Policy Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Medicaid, 321 East 12th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319-0114.* Have your voice heard.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide input and comments on our **Space Needs Assessment** conducted by Solum Lang Architects. We are very pleased with the findings of the assessment report and are excited for what this could mean for The Arc’s future. Highlights of the report are available for you to view here: <https://arceci.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Space-Needs-Assessment-Report-for-link.pdf>.

Happy Holidays! We wish you a safe, peaceful, and hopeful Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year’s Eve and Day, and other days your culture celebrates.

With appreciation,



Theresa Lewis,
Executive Director



Theresa Lewis

A Place To Belong:

An Inclusive, Fun, and Safe Daycare for Kids with Special Needs

Everyone deserves a place where they can laugh, learn, and feel truly accepted no matter what their age. The Arc's licensed daycare is proud to offer a safe, welcoming, and caring environment for individuals in kindergarten through adulthood with special needs.

At The Arc inclusion isn't just a word—it's the heart of what we do. We believe every child has something special to share, and we celebrate their unique strengths and personalities every single day. Our program is filled with fun, hands-on activities that encourage imagination and encourage friendship—whether it's through arts and crafts, music and movement, or outdoor play.

We are very proud to say our trained staff are caring and provide guidance and individualized support to help each participant feel safe. We maintain small group sizes so that every child receives the attention they need and deserve. Parents can rest easy knowing our program is fully licensed and meets all state health and safety standards.

We know that caring for a child with special needs takes a team, and we're honored to be part of that team. We work closely with families to understand each child's unique goals, routines, and preferences, ensuring consistency between home and daycare.

Most importantly, our daycare is a place where everyone belongs. Everyone deserves to feel happy, safe, and loved!

If you are interested in after school care, please reach out to Whitney Alber at walber@arceci.org.

We can't wait to welcome new faces to our Arc Daycare family!



SAVE THE DATE - ARC MARCH 2026



March 28, 2026

Lindale Mall

8:00 AM - Activities Begin

9:30 AM - Walk Starts

*Join us as we walk together to raise awareness about intellectual and developmental disabilities at the **28th Annual Arc March!***

Art Without Limits: A Celebration Gala

As galas go, this one was especially wonderful! In partnership with The Eastern Iowa Arts Academy, we were so thrilled to host Art Without Limits: A Celebration Gala, where we celebrated the works of art created by our Day Hab participants. Attendees were able to purchase art with all proceeds going to the artists. Everyone was so amazed at the quality of the art made by our Arc participants. Everyone should be so proud! Fun food, drinks and music combined to make a memorable evening for all.



Curl Jam

Curl Jam 2025 was a joyful success. We are so deeply grateful for the idea and support for this event brought by The Cedar Rapids Curling Club! This year we welcomed 12 teams who learned how to curl and then, with the help of a curling coach, competed in a bracket tournament. Teams learned vocabulary, rules and strategies. Winning teams were awarded one-of-a-kind trophies that were created by members of our Day Hab.

We are making plans for our 3rd annual event in the fall of 2026. Be on the lookout for opportunities to sign up next summer.



Thank You 2025 Community Partners

Stronger Together! Community Partners Make a Difference!

The support of local businesses is a vital part of The Arc's ability to deliver programs and services that make a difference every day. We are deeply grateful to the many Cedar Rapids-area businesses that stood beside us in 2025 and helped us fulfill our mission by being a Community Partner.

Community Partner support means important funding, but it also sends a powerful message to the families we serve. When our participants and their loved ones see businesses investing in our mission, they feel seen, valued, and supported by their community.

Together, we're building a more inclusive community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. When our families feel supported and our programs are strong, we are all empowered to continue the meaningful work we are so fortunate to do.

If your company would like to become a 2026 Community Partner, or to learn more about how to get involved, please contact Jenny Bosking at jbosking@arceci.org or 319-893-6935.



Presenting Partners

United Fire Group
Van Meter Inc.

Champion Partners

Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust
Cedar Rapids Toyota
New Leader Manufacturing
Tricon Construction Group

Advocate Partners

Corda Credit Union
TrueNorth Companies
Veridian Credit Union

Guardian Partners

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Form Function Studio
Graham Construction
GreenState Credit Union
Justice Electric
LL Pelling Co.
McGrath Family of Dealerships
Mercy Medical Center
MidwestOne
Riverside Casino & Golf Resort
Schimberg Co.
Simmons, Perrine, Moyer,
Berman, PLC

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Dakota Red Corporation
Hibu
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MidAmerican Aerospace
Pactiv Evergreen
Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 125

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Jersey Mike's
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Loosie's
Milios
Minnesota Vikings
Moss
Need Pizza
Nelson's Meat Market
OPN Architects
Panera
Play Lab
Raising Canes
Rough Riders
Scout
Shelby & Mark Kobliska
Shoot 360
Skin Society
Spare Time Cedar Rapids
Starlite

Sweet Cheesecake

Sweet Mercantile
Taco Johns
Texas Roadhouse
The Smothers Family
Theatre Cedar Rapids
Thrivent
Tomaso's
Tommy's Car Wash

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Bloomhall Foundation
Cargill
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Daybreak Rotary
Diamond V
Dupaco
Greater Cedar Rapids
Community Foundation
Grandon Charitable Foundation
Great America Financial
International Paper
Iowa Women's Foundation
Lil Drug Store Products
New Leader Manufacturing
RTX – Collins Aerospace
Starbucks
TransAmerica
United Way
UnityPoint Health –
St. Luke's Hospital
Variety

Participant Spotlight



Shaylin Patterson

About Me.

I am 30 years old, live in Cedar Rapids and have 3 cats.

Favorite Arc Memory?

Arc March every year! And of course, being the Participant Spotlight in this issue of the Challenger.

Favorite Arc Activity or Event?

I enjoy attending group respite activities.

Favorite Hobbies?

I love to collect stuffed animals, Animal Crossing Legos, NeeDoh Fidgets, and taking my cats for walks.

Favorite Outdoor Activities?

I enjoy riding my bike, shopping, helping in the yard and mowing.

Favorite Foods?

I really like Chinese food (Lo Mein), ice cream, Skittles, & Munchies.

I also enjoy Arizona Fruit Cocktails, specifically Dragon Fruit Mango. My favorite people are my parents and my boyfriend. One of my most favorite experiences was when I went to a Jonas Brothers concert and Joe commented on my jacket!

2026 Charitable Giving Changes

As we begin to wrap up 2025 and look ahead to a new year, we want to thank you for being a part of The Arc family. Support for The Arc makes it possible for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to learn, work, grow, and thrive right here in our community—and your generosity ensures our programs can continue to succeed.

We also want to share some important information that may affect your charitable giving plans in the year ahead. Recent legislation will change tax laws related to charitable donations beginning in 2026. Starting January 1, 2026, only the portion of a donor's charitable contributions that **exceeds 0.5% of their adjusted gross income (AGI)** will be tax-deductible.

Here's a quick example of what that could mean:

If someone has an annual income of **\$100,000**, the first **\$500** they donate each year (0.5% of their AGI) would no longer be deductible under the new law. So if that donor typically gives **\$3,000 per year**, only **\$2,500** would count as a deduction beginning in 2026.

If you've been thinking about making a significant gift or spreading your giving over several years, there may be a financial advantage to making a larger one-time contribution before December 31, 2025—while the full amount is still deductible under current rules.

Every gift—large or small—makes a powerful difference for the individuals and families we serve. Your generosity helps us provide inclusive programs, meaningful employment opportunities, and support for caregivers who depend on The Arc's services every day.

If you have questions about how these changes might impact your charitable plans, please reach out to Jenny Bosking at jbosking@arceci.org or consult with your tax advisor to determine what approach best aligns with your financial goals. Thank you for considering The Arc of East Central Iowa as part of your 2025 year-end giving. Your kindness and commitment keep our mission strong and our community connected.

With gratitude,

The Arc of East Central Iowa



You Make a Difference

Thank you for all of your continued generous contributions to The Arc. This edition of the Challenger recognizes volunteers, donors and members who generously supported The Arc from August through October 2025.

Thank You

General Donations

Alliant Energy, Donelle Baker, Brandon Beck, Andrew Bentz, Luke Bishop, Allie Blake, Patricia Blake, Bloomhall Family Endowed Donor Advised Fund, Jane Bockenstedt, Sam & Lauren Bolgiano, Andrew Boone, Neil & Jean Bronstein, David & Becky Bronstein, Bonnie Brown, Cargill, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, Cedar Rapids Women for Good, Marc Chery, Leigh Ann Cleland, Patrick & Sandra Cobb, Mary Collins, CRBT, Melissa Dean, Chandler DeWees, Diamond V, Anne Doody, Kevin Downey, Kean Drake, Dupaco Foundation, Gretchen Duque, Kelly Dybvig, Jessica Fahey, Brian Feld, Janice Feld, Stephen & Julia Feld, Matt & Shayla Feld, Judy Feummeler, Terese Fisher, Doris Fry, General Mills, Tim Glovas, Dana & Tyler Green, David & Sharon Harris, Glen & Kris Heims, Todd Henry, Ruth Hojka, Robert & Debra Hughes, International Paper, Ann Jeffries, Jeffrey Keslar, Alan Klotz, Rick Klotz, Teresa Kness, Becky & Clayton Lindwall, Patty Lynott, Lynette Marling, David Maier & Matthew McGrane, Robette McLellan, Jan & Mike Mitura, Devon Mizelle, Modern Woodmen, Trent & Joan Mobley, Beth Moore, Lisa Mullins, Suzanne Myers, Katherine Nance, New Leader Manufacturing, Nordstrom, Cal & Andrea Norris, Nicole Ohrt, OPN Architects, Shelby Osborne, Jessica Pleggenkuhle, Susan Polglaze, James Potts, Raytheon, Brendan Riley, William & Ann Riley, Jess Rockwell, Roots in Bloom, RTX, Tiffany Salz, Kristin Schaefer, Ruth Schroeder, Anthony Schwendinger, Libby Slappey, Mindy Sorg, Wilma Stallman, Standard Insurance Company, Tawnya Stone, Shelly Strellner, Joseph Terfler, Richard Their, Erik Trentman, Tyler Link & Barnes, DDS, Nicklaus Ulrich, Chris White, Patricia Wiebel, Emily Wilcox, Bridget Williams, Charlene Zrudsky

Memorials

Ryan Corrigan

Jeff Corrigan, Dale & Cheryl Corrigan, Janette Fiedler, Hills Bank & Trust Company, Lehman Family

Mary Lavonne Dozier

Anonymous, Trent & Joan Mobley, Derek & Karen McCully

Michael Kness

Teresa Kness

Lorraine June Larsen

Craig & Lorraine Larsen

Alec Meade

Anonymous (3), Jenny & Steve Bosking, Thomas & Rebecca Burke, Cynthia & Larry Donaldson, Becky Halsch, Allan & Luanne Heitshusen, Amy Karr, Annette

Kenney, Cheryl & Paul Kiburz, Lars & Kathryn Lee, Theresa Lewis, Gary & Connie Mackling, Carol Meade, Deb Miller, Nancy Pelegano, Vicky & James Richards, Marcia Sadler, Barbara Thomas, Dale, Sara & Adam Todd, Sandra Townsend, Kenneth & Linda Vawter, Sharon Weldon

Dody Pisel

Mary Young

Sara Smith

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Cody Whittaker

Cheri Whittaker

Volunteers Hours - 68

Katie Beckman-Shaull, Adam Brown, Jeff Corrigan, Jessica Fahey, Jordan Feltman, Terese Fisher, Maria Gaffney, Nate Haas, Brad Hauge, Shawn Knighton, Shelby Kobliska, Jeff Koffron, Sara Kruse, Cherri Lock, Carol Meade, Alex Molland, Ben Mulholland, Candice Murphy, Jackie Nau, Michael Neuerburg, Jessica Pleggenkuhle, Danielle Rodriguez, Kristin Schaefer, Mindy Sorg, Shelly Strellner, Nikki Wilcox, Blake Wilkinson

Membership

Arc Angel

Brad & Heidi Conerd, Suzanne Revers

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Arc Advocate

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**We would like to note a correction in our Annual Report list of donors. The donor Jess Rockwell was mistakenly left off the list for \$500-\$999 donors. We thank you for your support and apologize for the error.*

Wish List

From every day items to special requests. We are always in need of items to keep our office and programs running. Donations can be dropped off at The Arc's main office M-F 9 AM - 3:30 PM or shop our [Amazon Wish List](#).



Kitchen Needs

Cascade Dishwasher Pods
Kitchen Garbage Bags
Paper Plates & Paper Towels
Plastic Disposable Cups
Plastic Spoons & Forks
Ziploc Bags - Reg & Freezer (Gallon, Quart)

Snack & Cooking Activity Items

Applesauce
Canned Fruit & Vegetables
Cotton Candy Machine
Fruit Snacks / Granola Bars
Ice Cream Maker
Juice - 100% Apple or Grape
Snack Crackers & Chips - Variety Packs

General Supplies

Baby Wipes - Unscented/Sensitive
Bandages - Assorted
Deodorant - Travel Size (Men & Women)
Hand Lotion - Travel Size
Hand Sanitizer Refills / Hand Wipes
Kleenex/Tissues (Cube Boxes)
Lint Rollers
Mouthwash
Reusable Hot/Cold Packs
Shampoo/Conditioner
Tide Pods - Free & Gentle
Tiolet Paper
Toothbrush & Toothpaste - Travel Size

Office Supplies

#2 Pencils
Ball Point Pens (Blue or Black Ink)
Batteries (AAA, AA, C & D)
Construction Paper (Black) 9" x 12"
Dry Erase Markers & Washable Markers
Highlighters / Sharpies / Post-it Notes

Program Needs

Card Games
Coloring Books - Adult & Children
Crafts / Perler / Fuse Beads
Craft Felt Fabric Sheets & Pipe Cleaners
Digital Kitchen Timers
Fidget Toys - Pop-its, Stretchy Toys, Noodles, Dimples, Fidget Spinners, etc.
Fine Motor Skills Toys
Gift Cards - Aldi, Walmart, HyVee, Gas, Hair
Gift Cards (Community Activities) - Sky Zone, Potters Obsession, Speedeez, Fun Station, Air Fx, etc.
Googly Eyes - Various Sizes
Kinetic Sand & Sand Toys
Painting Canvases - All Sizes
Play-Doh
Safety Bands
Suncatchers

Clothes/Textile

Blankets / Pillows
Clothing - Sweatpants, T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Athletic Shorts - All Sizes, Youth & Adult
Compact Laundry Bags
Hats & Gloves - Adult
Towels - Kitchen & Bath



For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities

Member of The Arc of Iowa & The Arc of the United States

The Arc of East Central Iowa

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Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
Phone: 319-365-0487
Fax: 319-365-9938
www.arceci.org

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Mission Statement

The Arc of East Central Iowa empowers individuals with disabilities and their families to engage in lifelong opportunities to live, learn, work, play, and advocate with full dignity and inclusion in their communities.

Make a Difference

Donate at www.arceci.org



What are you thankful for?

I'm thankful for The Arc because I have been able to have friends. Staff and my peers have helped me develop a lot of confidence and strength that I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else. I'm better for it!

Thank you!
~ Tyler - Day Hab Participant

The Arc has been a very important member of our family for the last two decades. The Arc has provided respite for our family, friendship and interactions for our son, and a lifetime of cherished memories. Quintin enjoys every day at The Arc.

~ Don & Kristen - Parents

I am grateful that my son, age 34, has a place to go where he is well-taken care of and has friends. He feels very comfortable at The Arc, and so he is willing to try new things. I am especially grateful that he has a place to go where the staff WANTS to be there and enjoys taking care of people like him.

~ Amy - Parent

I am deeply grateful for the meaningful relationships I have built with participants and their families. It is a privilege to be apart of their journeys, witnessing their new experiences and celebrating their milestones.

~ Avery - Staff

I love The Arc and my friends.
I like feeding the baby goat!

~ Jaylon - Participant

The Arc is a place where an individual's opinion matters. It's a place individuals come to be themselves and discover new limits and adventures.

~ Gale - Staff