

The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County

...removing walls to create community inclusion for all



The Arc of NETC 2012 Board of Directors

Officers

President
Bill Matheu

bill@arcnetc.org

Vice President
Dora Irigoyen

irigoyenarcnetc@gmail.com

Secretary
Wendy Wilson

wwarcnetc@gmail.com

Treasurer
LaMoyne Snyder
(817) 281-4573

Directors

Jennifer Jordan
jordanarcnetc@gmail.com

Heather Landeros
Heathermi1@aol.com

Victoria Herman
SALT Representative

The Arc of NETC
Newsletter is
published monthly.
Information and
resources included are
intended for
informational
purposes only and
should not be
considered as an
endorsement.

A Message from the Board...

All children are blessings! Our second daughter Isabella came with a surprise diagnosis of Down syndrome at her birth. At that point in time, our lives were forever changed - for the better. Initially, I felt a sense of impending doom, just because I did not yet know any better. I did not feel that I was emotionally or otherwise prepared for such a reality. There are times when a person has the right to feel however he or she wants. We were told, "I'm sorry" quite a number of times in NICU. I was not sure what to think of this because my own capacity to love had increased. Our feelings often deceive us. I had not personally ever known a person with a diagnosis of Down syndrome before my daughter. I did not yet see what a privilege it was to have been chosen as the parent of my second daughter. Isabella and every different chromosome she has is part of the 4 greatest joys of my life; my husband and my 3 children.

Shortly after leaving the hospital, our family was taken to dinner by a family we didn't even know, who also was blessed with a child with Down syndrome. The family did not know us at all, but just wanted to encourage us in that way. That was not an isolated event either. Our sphere of friendship was enlarged. They were actually able to help us see that a new normal for our family could be even more beautiful than the old. This was only a foreshadowing of all the precious families we would meet and connect with because of an advocacy or disability connection in some way. Whether at Disney World or in the rain forest in Maui, I've had instant camaraderie with other moms who are just living life and sometimes battling to afford their children similar opportunities to experience a good life. I was previously unaware of the "sisterhood", if you will, of other moms of children who are "differently-abled."

Now I am actually a little biased because I have a theory that my daughter may have an extra capacity to unconditionally love based on how many times she has been stuck with needles, had blood draws, and endured all the other medical or therapy related hassles. I had no idea at the time how our daughter, different than typical in a few ways, would bring our family so many new experiences and gifts. Isabella is currently a healthy, happy 2 year old with an abundance of personality and spunk! She has helped our family to draw closer to each other during the challenges and when times were difficult and great. She has shown me personally that I am stronger in many ways than I would have ever guessed otherwise. She introduced us to a whole new community of family that exists between members through organizations like the Arc of NETC and others in our area and beyond. Because of who Isabella is and how she has added to our lives, I personally have a raised awareness of wanting to ensure I do everything possible to increase the quality of life of individuals that I may not have given as much thought to previously, before my own life was so closely reached. I want to help afford my daughter and all the other daughters and sons the ability to interact in society and community with all the

Continued on page - 4



Assistive Technology & the Individual Education Program _____

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to make available to all eligible children who have a disability a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate to their individual needs.

It also requires that public schools develop an appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each eligible student. The IEP is a written plan for educating a student who has a disability. The IEP describes the student's specific special education needs as well as any related services, including assistive technology (AT).

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology devices and assistive technology services are defined as follows:

- **Assistive technology device:** Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off-the-shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.
- **Assistive technology service:** Any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology service.

In basic terms, assistive technology, often underutilized, advances opportunities for individuals who have a disability. Assistive technology can be any piece of equipment — no-tech, low-tech, or high-tech — that can help a person who has a disability do something he/she cannot do or help do it better than he/she can without the device. AT provides access to and enhances all aspects of life; education, communication (written and spoken), leisure, employment, day-to-day activities and more.

If your child has difficulty accomplishing a task, assistive technology may be the answer you are looking for. Assistive technology should be considered when a child wants or needs to complete a task, tries to do it, but is unsuccessful because of a physical, motor, or sensory need. This is when assistive technology can make a significant difference.

“For a person who does not have a disability, technology makes life easier. For a person who has a disability, technology makes life possible.”

- Unknown -

Where to Start

Assistive technology can free students who have a disability from dependence on others and provide greater access to learning. Parents or school staff can request an AT evaluation to determine if a student can benefit from assistive technology. If you believe your child would benefit from assistive technology, request (in writing) a formal assistive technology evaluation. The term “assistive technology” may never appear on some ARD/IEP forms used by your child's school. Instead, the form may use terms such as “accommodations, supports, program modifications or supplementary aids and services.” No matter what term is used by the ARD/IEP team in your child's school, IDEA requires that the assistive technology needs of the student be considered. Students needing assistive technology should have IEP goals and

objectives that integrate assistive technology into all aspects of their educational program. It is also critical that the student, their teachers, and family members all receive appropriate training to ensure that the student is able to take full advantage of the technology. For many students, assistive technology is an invaluable resource for promoting inclusion and helping them to realize their full potential.

What if I disagree with the schools decision?

As a member of your child's ARD/IEP team, you have the right to disagree with the school's decision regarding his/her assistive technology needs. Some situations in which the family and school should come together to resolve differences are when:

"I wish I would have known that there is a difference in Assistive Technology Devices and Services and requested both. To simply provide an AT device without understanding its function is no different than building a house without a foundation – it doesn't work." - Unknown

- you believe your child could benefit from assistive technology devices and/or services and these have not been recommended previously
- you disagree with the assessment recommendations and sign the ARD/IEP paperwork in disagreement
- you believe the assistive technology devices and/or services provided (written in the IEP) no longer meet your child's needs or additional devices or services are needed
- the assistive technology devices and/or services written in your child's ARD/IEP paperwork are not being provided

If you disagree with the school's evaluation recommendations, you can request in writing an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at public expense.

— IDEA §300.502 (a)(1) The parents of a child with a disability have the right under this part to obtain an independent educational evaluation of the child, subject to paragraphs (b) through (e) of this section.

— IDEA §300.502 (b)(1) A parent has the right to an independent educational evaluation at public expense if the parent disagrees with an evaluation obtained by the public agency, subject to the conditions in paragraphs (b)(2) through (4) of this section.

Keep in mind that even if your child does not require assistive technology at the moment, he or she may benefit from using it in the future. As parents, we are often our child's only advocate. It is crucial that we be prepared and informed when meeting with the ARD/IEP team. It is our responsibility to ensure our child has what s/he needs to be successful in, and have access to, all life has to offer; limited only in ways a person who does not have a disability is limited.

Resources

- The **Assessing Students' Needs for Assistive Technology Manual** is a great resource for families and schools. It includes information about the assessment process, documenting assistive technology in the IEP and funding resources. To view the manual, visit: http://www.arcnetc.org/uploads/AT_Assessment.pdf.
- **IDEA Rules and Regulations** http://www.arcnetc.org/uploads/Side-by-Side_Jan_2010.pdf
Information regarding an Independent Educational Evaluation can be found on pages E2 — E4.
- To find a **Certified Assistive Technology Practitioner (ATP)** in your community, visit the Rehabilitative Engineering and Assistive Technology – RESNA website: <http://www.resna.org/>.

Continued from page - 1

choices and opportunities that every other citizen has rights to experience. Isabella is first our daughter, and then a person with slightly different chromosomes. We just strive to continue to live our lives as normally as possible with 3 children. So to all who have a child or children, who were fearfully and wonderfully made, rejoice in the gifts that have been given to you! And I know that there are many more gifts to come! Open your eyes. Grab hold to each blessing, and be thankful! In the New Year, consider becoming involved in The Arc of NETC. Together, we can build a strong community of support while also educating others about the abilities of individuals living life with a disability label. May you all have a wonderful and blessed 2012!

- Heather Landeros

The Arc of NETC Happenings & Updates

PEAS Meetup Group

Family Connections, a Partnership in Education, Advocacy & Support

Mission

To create a network of support for families of, and children who, experience life with a disability label.

We Believe

- in our children and their hopes and dreams
- in the use of People First Language and recognize that labels do not define our children or their potential
- that all people have value and can contribute in their own way
- in each other and know that together we are stronger

Our Work

- Parent-to-parent support & networking
- Social opportunities
- Friday Coffee Talk – informational meetings

PEAS at Pump it Up Playtime – Join us on Tuesday, January 3, 2012. For more information or to RSVP, visit the PEAS group at: <http://www.meetup.com/PEAS-ArcNETC/>.

The Next Friday Coffee Talk



Student Introduction Portfolios

Presenter: Kelly Mastin, mom of 3 children, 2 living life with a disability label

As a key member of your child's IEP team, you are required to communicate with many people throughout the school community. How we describe our children to others shapes their perceptions and values concerning our children as contributing members of the school community. Come learn how to describe your child and how to create a student introduction portfolio in order to assist others in getting to know your child for who he or she is rather than just their disability label.

Space is limited. RSVPs requested but not required.

For information or to RSVP, (817) 834-7700 or <http://www.meetup.com/PEAS-ArcNETC/>.

FRIDAY
JANUARY 13, 2012
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
The Arc of NETC
1806 Haltom Road
Haltom City, Texas 76117

Friday with Friends Social

A monthly social for individuals who have a disability ages 14 and up

The Next FWF Social: Game Night!

January 20, 2011 • 8:00 PM – 9:00 PM

The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County

1806 Haltom Road | Haltom City, Texas 76117

RSVPs REQUIRED: wwarcnetc@gmail.com or (817) 834-7700.

SALT – Self Advocate Group

Self-Advocate Leaders of Today

SALT is run *by & for* individuals who have a disability, 18 and older with the support of an advisor. Monthly meetings provide opportunities to work on identified goals and to learn about leadership and the independent living movement.

The Next SALT Meeting

Friday – January 20, 2012 • 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County

1806 Haltom Road | Haltom City, Texas 76117

Join us as we plan for the New Year! We will talk about and vote on meeting topics, volunteer activities, advocacy strategies, and more.

RSVPs REQUIRED: wwarcnetc@gmail.com or (817) 834-7700.



Don Pablos

(the Staff at Don Pablo's Rufe Snow)

All we can say is, **THANK YOU** for your generous donation to our holiday party. The food and your hospitality were fabulous!

Arc NETC Online Resources

Website - The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County website www.arcnetc.org is designed to *inform, inspire, educate* and *provide resources* that promote community inclusion for all!

- Assistive Technology
- Employment
- Funding Resources
- Guardianship & Alternatives
- Person Directed Planning
- Self-Advocacy / Self-Determination
- Special Education and *more...*

Yahoo Groups - The Arc of NETC serves as the host of two yahoo groups, each dedicated to a specific issue.

Inclusive Schools & Communities Special Education

If you are interested in joining one or both of these groups, send your request to: arcnetc@att.net.

PEAS Meetup Discussion Board

One feature of the PEAS Meetup Group is an online discussion board. Join today to connect with other families.

<http://www.meetup.com/PEAS-ArcNETC/>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/ArcNETC>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/ArcNETC>

INVEST in The Arc of NETC

Your support *does* make a difference!

- Become a Member
- Make a Donation
- Recycle Household Items
- Volunteer

All investments, no matter the size, make a difference in a non-profit, volunteer run agency.

Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)

What is AAC?

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) defines AAC as — Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that is used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. We all use AAC when we make facial expressions or gestures, use symbols or pictures, or write.

People with more involved speech or language challenges rely on AAC to supplement existing speech or replace speech that is not functional. Special augmentative aids, such as picture and symbol communication boards and electronic devices, are available to help people express themselves. This may increase social interaction, school performance, and feelings of self-worth.

AAC users should not stop using speech if they are able to do so. The AAC aids and devices are used to enhance their communication.

Resources

- ASHA at: <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/AAC/>
- The AAC Institute: <http://www.aac institute.org/>

The Parent Perspective

Kendall's Communication...



Jocalyn is the proud mom of two amazing kiddos; Kamden, age 11 and Kendall, age 3. In her blog, "Kendall's Hope", Jocalyn openly shares her family's journey as they learn to navigate life while raising a child with a disability. The post below, which was originally written on November 6, 2011, expresses how vital communication is. It's also a great example of what is achievable with technology. The possibilities are endless! To learn more about this incredible family, visit them at: www.kendallbriggs.blogspot.com.

The past few weeks, since Kendall's initial Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Evaluation, my mind has been racing.

Seriously, just ask her teaching team.

I wake up in the middle of the night and send e-mails. I think about it constantly. I can't help but feel so elated and hopeful for her future.

Let me back up... Kendall has been hugely frustrating to me lately. She says no to

absolutely everything. Well, she says uh-uh and shakes her head.

We've initiated her low tech device at home. She's way past it. She looks at me and grits her teeth and sighs when I ask her to make a choice between two objects.

It is so very clear that she has something to say and gets seriously upset when we can't understand.

On Tuesday night, when she was awake for 3 hours in the middle of the night screaming, and shaking her head from side to side, I decided enough was enough. No more me being patient, no more me not wanting to step on toes. My job is to make sure my daughter gets what she needs when she needs it. My dream for my "special" child is no different from any other parent's. I want her to be happy, healthy, and her own person. For her to have original thought and stand strong in her convictions. And communication is the MOST IMPORTANT stepping stone toward that dream.

Our private SLP attended a seminar in PA a few weeks ago. She invited us over for a movie night last Wednesday. The featured program was the documentary: "Only God Could Hear Me." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2r9pvtNTx4k>

It couldn't have come at a more perfect time. After reading "Out of My Mind", her AAC evaluation, and the newly initiated plan in her IEP, I finally had some clarity. Kendall's life doesn't have to consist of a yes or no guessing game. There is a possibility of her gaining independence, graduating from high school, going to college, and choosing a job that she wants to do.

I'm sure some of you, especially those in education, may think I'm a little premature in this thinking. Three and a half is early for a high tech communication system. At least it has been early. But today kids are using cell phones, iPads, iTouches, etc... before they're two. There wasn't any mention of the timeline for these people featured in the video. But honestly, I don't want to know. The truth is, we live in a time where technology is available and quite amazing. Doors are opened for our kids that were closed before.

My goal is for Kendall to have an established communication system (after this documentary, PRC with MinSpeak is a front runner) before Kindergarten. I know it will require a lot of work, but I know we can do it.

Last week I went to a school district nearby to observe a Functional Vision and Learning Media Assessment. I entered a Resource classroom where the children were sitting at tables doing absolutely NOTHING. Seriously, sitting there staring into space. And this wasn't a Life Skills class. This was a Resource class. But either way, it was sickening. Obviously, I wasn't in a position to judge or comment, but it really resonated with me. If nothing else, it made me decide that there is absolutely NO WAY IN HELL my daughter will be sitting in a classroom wasting away because some teacher doesn't think she understands or can express herself.

Times are changing, and I fully intend on making sure Kendall benefits from those changes.

The full documentary is actually on YouTube, so if you have the chance, do check it out. It's a little over an hour, but so worth the time. At 42:50, they mention that some would call these people "savants" but go on to say that the reality is that at some time, someone determined that they get a device that would enable them to be spontaneous and interactive (something like that).

My promise to my girl is that we find the device ASAP which will allow her to have a voice and continue her education fully mainstreamed (with support).

And by the way, I'm not afraid to step on any toes in the process. Those who have the opportunity to get to know and talk to Kendall Ann will be better people for it. She's going to change lives. Guaranteed. _____

"I'm a great believer that any tool that enhances communication has profound effects in terms of how people can learn from each other and how they can achieve the kind of freedoms that they're interested in."
— Bill Gates —



COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

DMA - AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Free Family Celebration - Dallas Museum of Art
January 28, 2012 | 9:00 – 11:00 AM | Dallas, TX
214-922-1200 or Access@DallasMuseumofArt.org

LIL' S.N.A.P.

(Special Needs Awareness Playdate)

January 14, 2012 | 11:30 | Weatherford, TX
For more information: Tiffnie Borcherding,
805-705-2543, TBorcherding@msn.com or
<http://www.facebook.com#!/pages/Lil-SNAP/121560911232332>

PARENT NETWORKING WITH A SWEET TWIST!

National Autism Association of North Texas, NAA-NT
January 3, 2012 | 7:00 PM | Plano, TX
For more information: <http://naa-nt.org/>

COMMUNITY -VS- INSTITUTIONS

A FRIEND INDEED, THE BILL SLACKTER STORY

This documentary is an inspiring true story of Bill Slackter, who left a lifetime in an institution to emerge as an international champion for individuals who have a disability.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUfaB41xjao&feature=youtu.be>

CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

19th ANNUAL INCLUSION WORKS! CONFERENCE FROM DISABILITY TO POSSIBILITY...

February 1-4, 2012 | Austin, TX
<http://www.thearcoftexas.org>

ADDRESSING KEY LIFE TRANSITIONS FOR USERS OF AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center
March 24, 2012 | 8:30 – 5 | Nashville, TN
<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/site/newsandevents/calendar/page.aspx?id=3126>

EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER TRAININGS

Each ESC provides for the joint training of parents and education professionals.

For sessions offered through ESC – Region X
<http://events.ednet10.net/FE2Production.nsf/eventsearch?readform>

For sessions offered through ESC – Region XI
<https://mis.esc11.net/catalog.asp>

EMPOWERING STUDENTS IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF CHANGE

The Texas Transition Conference
Center on Disability and Development at
Texas A&M University
February 20 – 21, 2012 | Austin, TX
For more information or to register, visit:
<http://ttc.tamu.edu/>

LET'S ALL PLAY, INCLUSION IN RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS CONFERENCE

National Inclusion Project
March 7 – 8, 2012 | Raleigh, North Carolina
For more information or to register, visit:
http://www.inclusionproject.org/level_2.php?id=50

NAVIGATING SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Wayman Center Workshops
The ARD Process
January 19, 2012 | 7: 15 – 9:15 PM | Plano, TX
Selecting and Writing IEP Goals
January 26, 2012 | 7: 15 – 9:15 PM | Plano, TX

For more information or to register, required:
http://www.wlctx.com/WaymanCenter_workshops.html

NUTRITION & AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE

Gluten Intolerance Group of North Texas
January 7, 2012 | 10 AM | N. Richland Hills, TX
For more information or to RSVP, visit:
<http://www.northtexasgig.com/>

PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARD VIDEO

PATH Project
January 23, 2012 | 9 – 10:30 | Ft. Worth, TX
For more information: prnstormy@hotmail.com

SCHOOL SUCCESS & BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Spectrum Training Systems, Inc.
March 5-6, 2012 | Plano, TX
For more information or to register, visit:
<http://www.spectrumtrainingsystemsinc.com/plano.html>

SENSORY INTEGRATION & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY INTERVENTIONS

Lewisville SEPTSA
January 19, 2012 | Noon – 1 | Lewisville, TX
For more info. or to RSVP, <http://lisdseptsa.txpta.org/>

SPEECH & LANGUAGE - TALKING, THINKING, READING, WRITING & BEHAVING

Down Syndrome Guild Dallas
January 28, 2012 | 10 AM | Richardson, TX
For more information or to register, visit:
<http://www.downsyndromedallas.org/>

SURVIVE AND THRIVE WITH ADHD

ADDA Southern Region
February 17 – 18, 2012 | Houston, TX
Fore more information or to register, visit:
<https://www.adda-sr.org/>

THE EFFECT OF DYSLEXIA AS A CHILD VERSUS THE EFFECTS AS AN ADULT

International Dyslexia Association, Dallas Branch
January 9, 2012 | 7 – 9 PM | Dallas, TX
For more info. or to RSVP: <http://www.dbida.org/>

VISIONS FOR TOMORROW

National Alliance on Mental Illness, NAMI Dallas
This is a 10 week course. Classes held on Mondays
from 6:30 – 9:00 PM
Classes start – January 23, 2012 | Dallas, TX
For more info or to register: <http://www.nami.org/>

DISABILITY AWARENESS

Credo for Support

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKCwDF-Srl>

Disability is Natural

<http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/>

I Am NORM Campaign

<http://www.iamnorm.org/home.aspx>

EDUCATION APPS

iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch EDUCATION APPS

This list of apps is a great resource for parents and professionals. To review the list, visit:
<http://wcslink.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/ipad-Education-Apps-2-1.pdf>

FUNDING RESOURCES

(DADS) - TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES – LONG TERM CARE

Long-term care services provide daily health care and living needs to *qualified* individuals who have a disability or long-term illness. For more information, visit, <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/ltss/index.html>

(DARS) - DEPARTMENT OF ASSISTIVE AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES (DARS)

To view a list of all programs and services provided by DARS, visit: <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/>

(DSHS) - DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES

For information about the Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHN) Program, visit: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/cshcn/>. For other DSHS services, visit: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/>

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

The Arc of NETC maintains a list of funding resources in the D/FW Area. To view the list, http://www.arcnetc.org/uploads/Funding_Resources_R_10-2011.pdf

PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING

Below is a list of planning tools designed to assist families of, and individuals who, have a disability in planning a meaningful life. **Allow yourself to dream!** It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret. If thinking about the future for your child, a family member or yourself is frightening or overwhelming, you're not alone. The future concerns most people, even those who don't live with disability. Person-centered planning can move you from fear to an action oriented plan.

Creating a Good Life in the Community – A Guide on Person Directed Planning

<http://www.individualizedfunding.ca/A%20Guide%20on%20Person-Directed%20Planning.pdf>

DREAMWORK!

Available on the "links" page of The Arc of NETC website: <http://arcnetc.org/Links.php>

Families Planning Together: Starting Work On As Essential Lifestyle Plan

<http://www.elpnet.net/documents/FPTGuide.11-03.pdf>

Look Back, Plan Forward

<http://www.lookbackplanforward.com/>

Person-Centered Planning Tool Kit

<http://www.arcnetc.org/uploads/PersonCenteredPlanningToolkit.pdf>

"Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being." – Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

The Special Child

The Child ~ yet ~ unborn spoke with the Father... Lord, how will I survive in the world? I will not be like other children · my walk may be slower · my speech hard to understand · I may look different. What is to become of me?

The Lord ~ replied to the child... My precious one, have no fear, I will give you exceptional parents.

They will love you because you are special, not in spite of it.

Though your path through life will be difficult, your reward will be greater... You have been blessed with a special ability to love ~ And those whose lives you touch will be blessed ~ Because You Are Special

A Forever Family

My journey to motherhood began 14 years ago and has taken me through the birth and adoption worlds. My husband and I knew we were going to grow our family through adoption. Through a miracle we were blessed to become parents of a precious baby boy who had been born into this world 16 ½ weeks early. Mason was with us for 5 beautiful weeks before he was called home by our Father in Heaven.

Through our devastation came 5 blessings from half way across the world through an organization that was dedicated to helping find forever families for orphans with special needs in Eastern Europe. We chose to adopt a total of 5 children with special needs through 2 separate international adoptions from Eastern Europe. Our first adoption blessed us with 3 children, all 5 ½ years old with Down syndrome, and our second adoption brought us 1 daughter with Down syndrome and another daughter with spina bifida.

I can honestly say that adoption really parallels a physical pregnancy only it is a paper pregnancy. You experience a lot of nausea and headaches when it comes to filling out countless paperwork. You daydream about what your new additions to your family will be like. Mornings can find you staring at the computer picture you have of your child. But most of all, your heart longs to hold this precious creation in your arms where you vow to protect them with your every being. Life with the children certainly has us traveling on a road that can be comparable to the coastal freeway in California. It takes you through wondrous beauty, takes you around corners where you do not know what is ahead, gives you time to ponder what is really important in life, finds you sometimes frustrated with road conditions that are out of your control, and can speed by in the blink of an eye or drag on like my grandpa's driving. We do not allow medical diagnosis to determine who are children are and what they can do.

Carrington was almost 4 years old, weighed under 11 pounds, most of her teeth were rotted away, and she had such severe reflux that she could not stop crying the whole time we visited with her. She was in such bad condition that her whole body was emaciated and she was going downhill quickly. My friend had the idea to start a blog for Carrington, www.carringtonscourage.blogspot.com so her story could reach any and all who would read about it. The doctors, nurses, caregivers, and staff at Cook Children's Hospital gave Carrington the very best of medical care and attention.

Carrington's story also has led our family to another blessing and that is of our two boys who are awaiting their adoption into our family. Our family is now working diligently to bring home our sons born with Down syndrome: Teagan is 4 ½ years old, weighs only 14 pounds and Kelten is 12 years old, and weighs only 26 pounds. Both boys are living in conditions that have inhibited their growth and threaten their very lives. Through their blog, www.atorchforteagan.blogspot.com we hope to raise awareness of the condition of the orphanage and to keep everyone informed about our events to bring home both boys.

Days are not always easy and things don't always come out as planned but what matters most is that our home is filled with love and laughter of 7 precious children. We did not, nor do we still, have all the answers for our children. We do not know where they will live when they grow up, what they will be when they grow up, or how much they will be able to accomplish. Our hands are full of blessings for which we are thankful.

~ Shelly Burman

“This country was founded and built by people with great dreams and the courage to take great risks.”

– Ronald Reagan

The Arc of NETC January 2012 Calendar of Activities

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Wishing YOU 	2	3 PEAS at Pump It Up Playtime	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 PEAS Friday Coffee Talk Student Introduction Portfolios	14
15	16 MLK Day! 	17 Arc NETC Board Meeting 7 PM at The Arc House	18 Jersey Mikes Fundraiser 4 – 8 Denton Hwy. Keller	19	20 SALT Meeting & Friday with Friends	21
22	23	24	25	26 National Mentoring Day	27	28
29	30	31	<p>The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County 1806 Haltom Road ▪ Haltom City, Texas 76117 Phone: (817) 834-7700 ▪ Email: arcnetc@att.net Website: www.arcnetc.org</p>			

January is National Mentoring Month

Visit <http://www.nationalmentoringmonth.org/> for ideas on how to celebrate with your school.

Partners in Policymaking ® E-Learning Courses

These courses are offered to anyone who would like to increase their knowledge and understanding of best practices in the disability field, and learn how to communicate effectively with their elected officials. For more information, visit: <http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/online.html>.



P.O. Box 14455
 Fort Worth, Texas 76117
 (817) 834-7700
arcnetc@att.net
www.arcnetc.org

Mission: The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County promotes the human rights of individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their life span.

Vision: Our vision for the future is a world where people with disabilities are included in their communities and where quality supports and services respond to their needs and personal choices.

Invest in
The Arc of NETC

- Become a Member
- Make a Donation
- Recycle Household Items
- Volunteer

Your support *does* make a difference!

The Arc of NETC, a 501 (c)(3) membership non-profit organization is an affiliated chapter of The Arc of the United States and The Arc of Texas.



The Arc of Northeast Tarrant County Membership Form

Date: _____

Name

Address

Apt. #

City/State/Zip

Phone Number

Email Address

(Please mark all that apply)

New Member Renewing Member Adult with a disability Parent of a child with DD

Parent of an adult with DD Interested Citizen Professional Other: _____

Membership Fees: \$10 Person with a disability \$15 Individual \$30 Family \$100 Corporation

I would like to receive the newsletter by: US Mail Email Address: _____

Please complete this form and mail it with your payment to:

The Arc of NETC — P.O. Box 14455 · Haltom City, Texas 76117 **or** join online at: www.arcnetc.org

“Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.”

— Helen Keller