



To: All Chapter Presidents & Executive Directors
From: Amy Mizcles, Director, Government Affairs
Date: February 3, 2006
Re: MR/DD Awareness Month Media Kit

As many of you know, March is Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Month across the country. In preparation, we have prepared a simple media kit for use by local chapters and advocates.

The kit includes:

1. Sample Letter to the Editor
2. Sample Proclamation
3. Sample Press Release
4. Radio Public Service Announcements
5. Ideas for use leading up to and during March
6. Guidelines for reporting and writing about people with disabilities
7. Fact sheet about mental retardation
8. Sabbath Sunday promotional information (for use with faith-based communities)

We encourage chapters to utilize the tools in this kit to create awareness about MR/DD issues in local communities. If you would like further guidance on using this media kit in your area, contact either Amy Mizcles at amizcles@thearcoftexas.org, or Esther Chung at echung@thearcoftexas.org.

If your chapter is interested in using this media kit to jump-start a local A-Team (Advocacy Team), contact Dee Dee Eberle at (800) 252-9729, ext. 110, or at deberle@thearcoftexas.org.



PUBLIC AWARENESS IDEAS FOR NATIONAL MENTAL RETARDATION & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

- Contact producers of local public affairs radio and television programs, inviting them to devote a program to advocacy and supports for people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities.
- Invite the community to attend an open house at your facility. Don't forget to send an advisory/invitation to the local media.
- Stage an awards ceremony or banquet to honor outstanding community leaders or volunteers. Honor a member of the local media for reporting on issues affecting people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities – you're guaranteed to earn some media coverage.
- Submit print ads or public service announcement copy to local banks or utility companies to include The Arc's message on monthly bill stuffers.
- Contact civic clubs such as Lions, Kiwanis, Civitan, Rotary International, Jaycees, or Junior League and offer to provide them with a speaker for their March meetings. Self-advocates are some of the most effective communicators of The Arc's mission.
- Submit materials on "Language Guidelines for Reporting and Writing About People with Disabilities" to local reporters. Attach a friendly cover note explaining that March is Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and that you're supplying all local reporters with the guidelines as a public service.
- Work with your local clergy to include people with mental retardation & developmental disabilities in religious services on Sabbath/Sunday weekend, March 11-12. Include people with developmental disabilities in readings, lighting candles, performing music, or leading a prayer.
- As some folks celebrate St. Patrick's Day with alcoholic beverages, work with local radio and television stations as well as bars/taverns/restaurants in communicating the risks of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome during March.
- Submit a Top Ten list of self-advocate achievers to your local newspapers and newsrooms. Offer some creative stories about people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities who are contributing to the community in ways that people may not realize.
- Enlist a local celebrity or personality to serve as Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month spokesperson. They may read PSA scripts, make appearances for your chapter, sign a fundraising letter, or attend an open house at your chapter's facilities. Consider enlisting a local radio personality, television news anchor, Congressman or legislator, local sports star, company president, or a self-advocate.
- Submit an op-ed column or letter to the editor explaining National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness month and inviting the community to learn more about The Arc and its mission.
- Call your local newspapers and request an editorial board meeting, during which you can describe the issues affecting people with mental retardation & developmental disabilities and their families, as well as the issues affecting your chapter. You can use this opportunity to offer story ideas and to position yourself as a resource for information on mental retardation and developmental disabilities.

Sample Letter to the Editor

(DATE)

Dear Editor,

(INSERT CHAPTER NAME HERE) would like to invite residents of (INSERT CITY OR TOWN NAME HERE) and the surrounding communities to participate in National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month throughout March. This national observance offers a chance to learn more about the vital contributions that people with mental retardation & related developmental disabilities are making in our neighborhoods.

This year, our nation continues to address serious budget issues, seeking to provide security – in every sense of the word – for all Americans and ensure that each one of us has the opportunity to pursue our dreams and to contribute our own unique talents to the fabric of our communities. The diversity that enriches our nation and the freedoms that all Americans cherish are embodied in the lives of people with cognitive, intellectual, and developmental disabilities – those whose interests are often overlooked and whose needs are often unmet when budgets are tight.

(YOU COULD INSERT A BRIEF PARAGRAPH HERE DETAILING SOME OF YOUR CHAPTER'S PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES.)

(INSERT CHAPTER NAME HERE) invites you to meet some of your neighbors and find out more about our mission. Visit our web site at (INSERT WEB SITE ADDRESS HERE) or call us at (INSERT PHONE NUMBER HERE) and help us celebrate National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

Sincerely,

(INSERT NAME OF CHAPTER PRESIDENT OR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HERE)

Contact: (YOUR NAME)
(YOUR PHONE)

(SEND TO MEDIA IN LATE-FEBRUARY)

**MARCH IS MENTAL RETARDATION & DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH**

(ENTER CHAPTER NAME) Plans Local Events to Increase Public Awareness

(YOUR TOWN/DATE) – **(NAME OF YOUR CHAPTER)**, an affiliated chapter of The Arc, the nation’s largest volunteer-based organization devoted to issues affecting people with mental retardation & developmental disabilities, marks National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month next month. During March, **(NAME OF YOUR CHAPTER)** joins chapters of The Arc around the country in engaging in a media and public awareness campaign aimed at bringing attention to issues concerning people with mental retardation and their families.

To recognize Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, **(NAME OF YOUR CHAPTER)** will **(ENTER LOCAL EVENTS, ETC., WHERE APPROPRIATE.)**.

“Each year, chapters of The Arc across the nation take the opportunity to make the public aware of the unique contributions of people with **(COGNITIVE, INTELLECTUAL, AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES or MENTAL RETARDATION)** in our communities,” said **(ENTER NAME AND TITLE OF CHAPTER LEADER)**. “We believe that making our constituents fully included members of our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and houses of worship is vital to sustaining a healthy diversity in **(ENTER NAME OF YOUR TOWN)** that appreciates the strengths and abilities of everyone. National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month also offers The Arc the chance to express our thanks to those in **(NAME OF YOUR TOWN)** who’ve been our strong supporters, and to invite others to learn more about us and our mission during March and the rest of the year.”

National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month also includes a Sabbath/Sunday event on the weekend of March 11-12, during which chapters of The Arc encourage churches, synagogues, and other places of worship to welcome people with mental retardation & developmental disabilities into worship services and to help them become part of the spiritual life of the community.

Chapters of The Arc around the country are embarking on public awareness events during March to bring attention to their programs and activities. Through advertisements, media coverage, public service announcements, and community activities, The Arc hopes to reach millions of people with its message of inclusion for people with **(COGNITIVE, INTELLECTUAL, AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITES or MENTAL RETARDATION)**.

The Arc Core Values serve as the guiding principles of the organization. These values include: People First, Democracy, Visionary Leadership, Community Participation, Diversity, and Integrity and Excellence. For more information about The Arc, visit the organization’s web site at www.thearc.org or visit **(ENTER CHAPTER NAME)**’s web site at **(ENTER WEB SITE ADDRESS)**.

(ENTER CHAPTER MISSION STATEMENT.) **(ENTER CHAPTER NAME)** is an affiliated chapter of The Arc of the United States.

The Arc of the United States is the nation’s leading national organization on mental retardation & developmental disabilities. The Arc represents over seven million children and adults with mental retardation & related developmental disabilities, as well as their families. The Arc has over 100,000 members within approximately 900 state and local chapters nationwide. The Arc of the United States works to include all children and adults with cognitive, intellectual, and developmental disabilities in every community.

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SAMPLE PROCLAMATION

(Below is a sample proclamation for March as National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. You may localize this proclamation by inserting the appropriate local information and information about your chapter. You can type this proclamation onto your chapter's letterhead and submit it to your mayor/governor/legislator's office as soon as possible.)

IN RECOGNITION

- WHEREAS** mental retardation is a condition which affects more than 7 million Americans and their families;
- AND WHEREAS** public awareness and education enhance a community's understanding of the issues affecting people with mental retardation & developmental disabilities;
- AND WHEREAS** people with mental retardation & developmental disabilities can be vital and vibrant members of our communities, improving the quality of life for all of us;
- AND WHEREAS** the month of March has been designated National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, with 100,000 members and 900 chapters of The Arc undertaking public awareness, educational, and fundraising initiatives;
- AND WHEREAS** The Arc of the United States is the nation's leading volunteer-based organization advocating for and with people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities and their families;
- THEREFORE** (INSERT MAYOR OR OTHER PUBLIC OFFICIAL'S NAME HERE) does hereby proclaim March, 2006, as

MENTAL RETARDATION AWARENESS MONTH

in (ENTER CITY, TOWN, STATE, ETC.) and urges that the citizens of (ENTER CITY, TOWN, STATE, ETC.) give full support towards enabling people with mental retardation & developmental disabilities to live full and productive lives in their communities.

(AFFIX SEAL OR SIGNATURE HERE)



RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Below are scripts for three public service announcements (PSAs) regarding Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month that can be submitted to your local radio stations that use PSAs. Request that these spots be aired during March.

:30 SPOT

Hello, this is _____. March has been designated National Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, a chance for our community to learn more about the issues affecting more than seven million Americans with developmental disabilities. The Arc invites you to take part in National Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month by visiting our web site at www.thearcoftexas.org (OR SUBSTITUTE YOUR CHAPTER'S WEB SITE ADDRESS). We thank you for taking the time to support your local chapter of The Arc.

:15 SPOT

You can support children and adults with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities during National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in March. Join The Arc in its advocacy for and with people with mental retardation. Visit www.thearcoftexas.org (OR SUBSTITUTE YOUR CHAPTER'S WEB SITE ADDRESS).

:10 SPOT

March is National Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Visit The Arc's web site at www.thearcotexas.org (OR SUBSTITUTE YOUR CHAPTER'S WEB SITE ADDRESS) or by calling 1-800-252-9729 (ENTER YOUR CHAPTER'S PHONE NUMBER HERE.)