

The Arc's Parent Coalition to Host Legislative Coffee



Wednesday, December 10

9:30am-12:30pm

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

An important goal of the Parent Coalition is to provide the connections and resources for families to make their voices heard. The Annual Legislative Coffee provides a relaxed environment for people to meet their legislators face-to-face and communicate their experiences in a meaningful way.

Prior to the coffee, there is an informational forum and guided discussion. Whether you are knowledgeable about the legislative process or completely new, this information is important to make the most of the opportunity with the legislators.

The legislative coffee is a highlight in our year of working alongside individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Arc encourages and promotes understanding of legislative issues that impact developmental disabilities. Federal and State programs, services, budgets, and staffing all influence our lives. We have invited elected officials and their staff from state and federal offices, and we look forward to this chance for listening and responding to the community they represent. Attending officials continue to report enjoyment and satisfaction with this event, appreciating the opportunity to truly connect with individuals and families.

*Due to limited space, please register by contacting Monica Burke:
715-0170, ext. 303, monicab@arcwhatcom.org.*

News and Views

Housing Options for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Finding appropriate housing can be a daunting task. Start by learning about your options and rights, so you can make an informed decision.

Supported Living

Instructions and supports offered by service providers contracted directly with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to clients who live in their own homes. Homes are owned, rented, or leased by the clients or their guardians.

Group Homes

Living with other people in a home run by an agency where you can receive 24-hour supervision and training. A group home is contracted directly through DDA to provide residential services.

Skilled Nursing Facility

Living in a skilled nursing home that provides 24-hour nursing services. Nursing Facilities are licensed by the Washington State Aging and Long Term Support Administration (ADSA).

Adult Family Home (AFH)

Living in a home serving no more than 6 people that provides assistance, room, and board. AFH's are licensed by the Washington State Aging and Long Term Support Administration (ADSA). An adult family home locator can be found at: <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/adsaapps/lookup/AFHPubLookup.aspx>

Steps to Take

- Make sure you are an eligible client of DDA and request Medicaid Personal Care and housing supports. If you are not eligible for DDA, contact Home and Community Services: (360) 756-5750.
- Enroll with Social Security to ensure access to disability housing options.
- Register for HUD subsidized housing.
- Investigate your options and make a plan that best fits your needs given the limits on services.

Subsidized and Low Income Housing Options

Two types of housing assistance programs are managed by the Bellingham/Whatcom Housing Authority: 360-676-6887, TTY(360) 527-4655, www.bellinghamhousing.org/

1. Housing Choice Vouchers section 8 (tenant based)

Recipients of the voucher may be used to rent from any private market landlord whose:

1. Rent is within guidelines.
2. Agrees to rent under the section 8 program.
3. Rental meets all health and safety standards.

Subsidies are paid directly to the landlord, and the voucher stays with the recipient if they move. The individual is required to pay the difference between the actual rent and the amount subsidized by the program. Recipients need to follow program rules to remain eligible.

2. Senior/Disability Housing (project based)

Project based housing is owned and managed by the Housing Authority and does not follow an individual if they move. Waiting lists may be shorter than for Section 8 tenant based vouchers.

Source: Transitions: From Birth to Adult (Whatcom County Transition Planning & Resource Guide)



Tips for Finding Appropriate Housing

- Increase independence by doing as much for yourself as you can. Help out with cooking, cleaning and household maintenance.
- Decide if you plan to live alone or with roommates.
- Find a home that is close to your family and friends, doctors, grocery store, work, etc.
- Make sure your home is close to bus lines if you plan to use public transportation.
- If you rent, be aware of landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities.
- Remain connected with your support network and maintain healthy relationships.
- Take necessary precautions to remain safe.
- Complete an application with the housing authority if you are interested in subsidized or low income housing (see below.) Waiting lists can be very long. Be sure to check in every six months and notify them if your contact information changes: (360) 676-6887.

Where do adults (18 and older) with developmental disabilities live in Whatcom County?

- 42% live with their family.
- 22% live in their own home.
- 20% live in supporting living.
- 7% live in an adult family home.
- 3% live in a group home.
- 2% live in a skilled nursing facility.
- 1% are homeless.

Advocacy Days 2015

Advocacy Day offers a way for you to learn about the legislative process in person. It's a hands-on tool kit for learning how to make a difference!

Advocacy Day begins at 10am on Wednesdays during the legislative session. The day begins with an hour briefing on current issues and ends with an afternoon of advocacy (about 3:00 pm). There are highlighted topics each week, as well as late breaking news on budget items and bills of interest relating to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Advocacy Day Schedule

Dates & Highlighted Topics

January 12	(First Day of Session)
January 28	Legislative Briefing
February 4	Budget Overview
February 11	Promoting Independence
February 18	Medicaid Services
February 25	Supported Living Rally
March 4	Education
March 11	Civil Rights
March 18	Supporting Families
March 25	Employment Supports
April 1	Autism Awareness Rally
April 27	(Last Day of Session)

All Advocacy Days are held at United Churches (110 - 11th Avenue SE, Olympia, WA) unless otherwise noted.

Limited reimbursements for travel to Olympia and interpreter services are available on a one time, first-come first-served basis. For information and/or to register, call: 1-888-754-8798, ext 105, email: bean@arcwa.org, or visit <http://arcwa.org/takeaction/washingtonstate/advocacyday>.



Individuals with developmental disabilities, along with families and community members, joined together at a 2013 Legislative Advocacy Day to promote independent living and employment services.

ABLE Act Being Considered by Congress

In early December, Congress will consider a vote on the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. The bill aims to ease financial strains faced by individuals with disabilities by making tax-free savings accounts available to cover qualified expenses such as education, housing, and transportation. U.S. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., said in November that the House of Representatives will hold a floor vote on the ABLE Act soon.

This is one of the most bipartisan bills currently before congress and is co-sponsored by 85% of legislators. The bill has been under consideration in Congress since 2006, but committee action earlier this year positioned the legislation for the first time for floor votes in the House and Senate. However, the window of opportunity is closing quickly. Without approval this year, the process would start anew when a new Congress convenes in 2015.

"As the mom of a son who was born with an extra 21st chromosome, I understand firsthand how federal policies can limit — not expand — opportunities for those with disabilities. The ABLE Act will change that, and I am thrilled to announce we will get this critical, bipartisan legislation to the floor this December," McMorris Rodgers told Disability Scoop.

Funds in the proposed ABLE accounts could be used to pay for education, health care, transportation, housing, and other expenses. Modeled off of the popular 529 college savings plans, interest earned on savings within the accounts would be tax-free. Under the ABLE Act, people with disabilities would be able to establish special accounts at any financial institution where they could deposit up to \$14,000 annually. Individuals could accrue up to \$100,000 in savings in the accounts without risking eligibility for government benefits like Social Security. What's more, Medicaid coverage could be retained no matter how much money is deposited.

Excerpts from National Down Syndrome Society and Disability Scoop

Community Events

Down syndrome Outreach Family Gathering

6-8pm, Thursday, December 18

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

Parents will have a chance to connect, while the youngsters hang out downstairs, play games, make some art, and have fun!

Please pre-register by December 12th to guarantee supervised care for your family member.

To RSVP or for more information, contact Jessika Houston: 360-715-0170, ext. 304, or jessikah@arcwhatcom.org.

Special Olympics Basketball Season Starts Soon!

EVENTS

Individual Skills (dribbling, passing, shooting)
Team Skills (5 players pass, shoot and rotate spots)
Team Competition (5-on-5 full court)

BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

Practice: Tuesdays, Nov. 25 – Feb. 24 (No practice Dec. 23, 30)

Location: Bellingham High School

Contact your teacher or visit:

www.bsdspecialolympics.blogspot.com

BELLINGHAM INDEPENDENTS

Practice: Saturdays from 10-12, starting December 6th (No practice December 20 or 27)

Location: Whatcom Middle School

Contact: Dave Frick, 360-296-1537 or dfrickso@yahoo.com

NORTH WHATCOM

Practice: First practice is Saturday, December 6 at 4pm. During this time, teams will be established and athletes will receive a schedule of when their team will practice.

Location: Lynden Middle School gym, 516 Main St.

Contact: Steve Barthlow, 332-6601 or sbarthlow@webmail.blainesd.org

Application for participants and physical must be current and on file.



Special Olympics

P2P Holiday Party

Saturday, December 6th, 12-3pm
Bloedel Donovan, Bellingham



Join other families of children with developmental delays, disabilities, and ongoing health care needs in a comfortable, inclusive setting for a potluck-style meal, a visit from Santa, and on-site literacy and craft activities. Families of children ages birth to 7 are invited from 12-1:30pm and ages 8 and older from 1:30-3pm.

This event is co-sponsored by Bellingham Parks & Recreation and WCLS. RSVP REQUIRED by December 2 to 255-2056 ext. 2 or email karlene@p2pwhatcom.org.

Young Adult Self-Advocacy (YASA) Meeting

10am-12pm, Saturday, December 6

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

Are you between 16 & 30 and an eligible client of the Developmental Disability Administration (DDA)? If you answered yes to both questions, you are welcome to join!

Come learn valuable communication and advocacy skills, gain the tools and confidence to express your needs, and get involved in the community.

For more information, contact Jessika: jessikah@arcwhatcom.org, call 360-715-0170, ext 304.

Autism Support Group Meeting

Friday, December 12
12 - 1:30pm

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

For more information, contact Monica: monicab@arcwhatcom.org, call 360-715-0170, ext 303.

Spin Dance

6-8pm, Monday, December 15

Bellingham Senior Center
315 Halleck Street, Bellingham

Bellingham Parks and Recreation, The Max Higbee Center and Whatcom County Parks sponsor monthly dances for individuals with disabilities. All persons age 14 and over are invited for music, dancing and fun! For information, call Amanda: 778-7000.



The Beautiful 2015 Smiles of Life Calendar Now Available!

Red Carpet Calendar Release Party

6:30-8pm, Monday, December 1st
Squalicum Boathouse
2600 N. Harbor Loop Dr, Bellingham
Visit www.arcwhatcom.org for tickets.

Featuring beautiful photos, inspiring profiles and motivating quotes, The 2015 Smiles of Life Calendar is dedicated to people with developmental disabilities and their friends and family. It is our true honor to celebrate the accomplishments and joys brought to us by our models. Despite any medical, developmental or behavioral challenges, they live with joy, courage, and determination.

The calendar makes a unique and inspiring gift for families, friends, neighbors, teachers and anyone special on your holiday list. Your generous support (suggested donation is \$10 per calendar) will help fund valuable programs for individuals with developmental disabilities. Calendars are now available to order online at www.arcwhatcom.org.

Smiles of Life 2015



Proudly presented by The Arc of Whatcom County

Autism Outreach Project

The Autism Outreach Project offers an exciting schedule of workshops for the 2014-2015 school year designed to provide the tools and information necessary to effectively educate learners on the autism spectrum. Educators, parents, early childhood providers, and community members are invited to learn valuable information and strategies; network with other professionals and family members; and share resources, advice, and support.

Thanks to the Bellingham School District, several of the workshops will be offered locally through the use of interactive video conference with live presenters. There are reduced rates available for parents who wish to participate.

Registration Fees: Single-day courses are \$90 for professionals and \$30 for parents of children with autism spectrum disorder.

For more information or to register visit: <https://www.nwesd.org/aop/training>



Upcoming workshops offered in Bellingham



Monday, December 8 – Addressing Challenging Behaviors in Students with Autism Using Positive Behavior Support (Beginning), Nancy Rosenberg, Ph.D., BCBA-D.

Thursday, February 5th – Building Executive Functioning Skills in Students with Autism. Julie George, M.Ed., BCBA

Tuesday, February 24 – Transition Planning for Students on the Autism Spectrum, Crystal Gray, Ph.D.

Friday, March 20th – Behavioral Approaches to Self-Stimulatory Behaviors in Autism. Nancy Rosenberg, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Q&A WITH MIKE HABERMAN, BELLINGHAM SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR



SEPAAC Members with Mike Haberman

What is your best advice to parents about strategies for advocating for their child in the school system?

We appreciate parents who are knowledgeable and advocate for their child. This makes the team working for your child stronger.

I remember early in my career as a school psychologist advocating for a student I was working with. I called a meeting of the student's teachers and put down a copy of the student's accommodations on each teacher's desk and asked why they weren't being followed. Needless to say, this didn't go so well. It wasn't that my intent was bad, but my clumsy method left the teachers feeling attacked and defensive. I had to go into fence-mending mode quickly, and the focus became my approach rather than what we needed to do for the student.

While there is a place for "laying down the law," it's generally more effective advocacy to have a conversation about the student's needs and help the team understand how to meet them. Remember that we are in this together for the long haul. Build a positive relationship with your child's team. Remember that

what feels like resistance is often lack of understanding.

It's helpful for both parents and educators to take the perspective of the other. Before a potentially tense meeting, it helps educators to imagine caring for a child with significant needs, 24/7, carrying the weight of being that child's voice into the foreign and confusing world of special education jargon. For parents, it might help to imagine being a teacher with multiple high-needs students, working in a system that mandates and funds a "free appropriate public education," which isn't the same as the best practices that we aspire to.

Then we all breathe, roll up our sleeves and work together, for the child, for the long haul.

What are the strengths you see in Bellingham Special Education?

We have a strong and dedicated staff. We have focused professional development for both our certificated and paraeducator staff, and our new calendar offers increased opportunities for professional development and collaboration. (Yes, we need to do more.) We have increased our commitment to early learning, including staffing in preschool for our youngest students with disabilities.

We also have the Bellingham Promise, our strategic plan that calls for all children to be loved and cared for, and for each child to discover and develop a passion, contribute to their community, and achieve a fulfilling and productive life. It's a great mission to be part of.

What are your priorities for improvements?

We need to continue to plan and offer quality professional development and collaboration for our staff. We can never do enough of this, and there always will be limits of time and resources. But our kids deserve staff who are highly skilled, both individually and as a team.

We are working hard on developing clearer procedures and expectations to support a high level of practice in teaching and compliance in every building with every student. We also are engaged in a year-long project to look at our student outcomes and research-based practices in middle school and high school.

Bellingham Schools Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAAC)

Bellingham Schools have established a Special Education Advisory Committee to increase opportunities for family engagement and collaboration. This group meets with district staff on a monthly basis to share information and broaden understanding of school-related issues. Members work together to:

- Identify common needs and goals among the parents of students receiving special education services and facilitate strategies to increase the effectiveness of their respective school programs.
- Provide monthly district updates to parents regarding current issues in special education such as staffing, budgeting, curriculum, facilities, etc.
- Provide consistent opportunities for training on relevant and timely issues/topics.
- Bring to the district's attention existing and emerging issues expressed by parents at the school they represent.
- Serve as an advisory, not a decision-making, body that encourages brainstorming and effective problem solving regarding the Special Education Program.

Meeting Dates: Dec. 18, Jan. 15, Feb. 19, Mar. 19, Apr. 16 & May 21

All meetings will be at Bellingham Public Schools District Office Room 212 from 11:30 am to 1 pm.

More info is available on their website:
<https://bellingshamschools.org/special-education-parent-advisory-committee>
or call Special Education at (360) 676-6458.



What is School Advocacy?

“Advocacy” means to support or speak on behalf of someone or something. School or education advocacy is supporting a student by speaking up and taking action to make sure they get all the services and supports they need.

An *advocate* is a person who speaks up for and defends the rights of him or herself, or of another person.

Parent-advocates are people who speak up for and defend the rights of their children and are willing to work with a school or other service provider to make sure that their children get the services they need and deserve.

What if I have a question about special education or need someone to help by looking over a document or coming to a meeting?

- The Arc of Whatcom County provides free workshops, information, one-on-one support, and IEP advocates. Visit www.arcwhatcom.org or call 360-715-0170 and ask to speak with Monica, our Parent Coalition Coordinator.
- Partnerships for Action, Voices for Empowerment (PAVE) provides free information, resources, and trained advocates who can assist individual families. Visit www.wapave.org for more info or call 360-929-6840.

What if I have a dispute with the school and need help to resolve it or need information on what I can do?

The Office of the Education Ombudsman provides informational booklets and can resolve complaints, disputes, and problems between families and elementary and secondary public schools in all areas that affect student learning. Visit www.governor.wa.gov/oeo/ or call 866-297-2597.

Where can I go on the web for comprehensive and parent-friendly information about special education law and advocacy?

WrightsLaw provides special education law and advocacy information. Visit wrightslaw.com.

Where can I learn about specific laws governing special education?

- The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has information on the laws governing special education in Washington State. Visit www.k12.wa.us/specialed/default.aspx or www.k12.wa.us/comments/default.aspx or call 360-725-6000.
- The US Department of Education (IDEA) has information on federal laws governing special education. Visit idea.ed.gov/.



The Arc

For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities

The Parent Coalition

The Arc of Whatcom County provides leadership support for individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians. The goal of the Parent Coalition is to enable persons with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians to become effective and involved in accessing services.

The Parent Coalition newsletter is published monthly by:

The Arc of Whatcom County

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Stay Connected

Online Community Calendar: Visit The Arc's online calendar: www.arcwhatcom.org/events.

Facebook: Visit our FB page: www.facebook.com/ArcWhatcom for the latest information and events.

E-alerts: The Parent Coalition emails updates on legislation, workshops and upcoming activities. To sign up, visit www.arcwhatcom.org or email monicab@arcwhatcom.org.



PARTNER AGENCY

The Parent Coalition is funded by grants from the Developmental Disabilities Program of Whatcom County, the United Way and your generous donations.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Page 1: Legislative Coffee
- Page 2: Housing
- Page 3: Advocacy Days
- Page 4: Community Events
- Page 5: Autism Outreach Project
- Page 6: Q&A with Mike Haberman
- Page 7: School Advocacy

DID YOU KNOW?

The AMC Theater in Cascade Mall in Burlington offers sensory friendly films on a monthly basis. Call (360) 707-2727 to confirm times. Visit www.autism-society.org for sensory-friendly film details.



Next film:
Paddington
December 13
@10 am



The Arc of Whatcom County
Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Bellingham, WA 98225

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Event Calendar

December 2014

1 Monday, 6:30-8pm
Calendar Release Party
Squalicum Boathouse
2600 N. Harbor Loop Drive
Contact Christine: 715-0170, ext 305

2 Tuesday, 12-1:30pm
WICC At Large Meeting
St. Lukes Health Education Center
3333 Squalicum Parkway
Contact Monica: 715-0170, ext 303

6 Saturday, 10am-12pm
Young Adult Self-Advocacy (YASA)
The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Jessika: 715-0170, ext 304

6 Saturday, 12-3pm
P2P Holiday Party
(see page 4 for details)

10 Wednesday, 9:30am-12:30pm
Legislative Coffee
(see page 1 for details)

12 Friday, 12-1:30pm
Autism Support Group
The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Monica: 715-0170, ext 303

15 Monday, 6-8pm
Spin Dance
Senior Center, 315 Halleck Street
Contact Amanda: 778-7000

18 Thursday, 11:30am-1pm
SEPAC Meeting
(see page 6 for details)

18 Thursday, 6-8pm
DsO Family Gathering
(see page 4 for details)

20 Saturday, 6-7pm
People First Meeting
114 W Magnolia Suite 106
Contact Susan: 738-2060

NOTE: All listed events are in Bellingham unless otherwise noted. More events are listed on The Arc's community calendar: www.arcwhatcom.org/events.

The Arc's Halloween Party was a great success!

Approximately 150 community members, students, self-advocates, and families came to The Arc's 3rd Annual Halloween Party on October 31st. Everyone enjoyed playing games, eating yummy treats, and celebrating with family and friends. Thank you to The Arc's Young Adult Self-Advocacy group for helping with this event and the many volunteers who helped make the night a great success.

