

ANNUAL REPORT



SEPTEMBER 15TH
2020



FROM THE DIRECTOR

FRIENDS OF THE ARC COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

It has been a year of transition for The Arc Community Advocates, as we look back on the last 12 months. While it has been busy, we continue to be ever so grateful to all of our supporters, from members to foundations to the community at large. All of whom help to make our work meaningful.


The month following the last membership meeting was focused our annual fundraiser, *Arctoberfest*, which was a huge success; raising almost \$12,000 for Community Advocates. Shortly after that our Executive Director, Susan Rush retired for health reasons. (See our thank you to Sue, later in this report.)

The board, staff and Community Advocates members undertook the daunting task of finding a new leader at the end of 2019, which culminated in the hiring of Sheldon Schwitek.

Sheldon comes to us with more than 30 years experience in the disability sector and has a vision to support our mission to make sure that everyone has a life that is connected to the community.

Sheldon started in January 2020 and has deftly managed to keep the organization moving forward, while learning his new role and navigating the complexities that Covid19 has brought. In addition, we hired a part-time advocate in January to assist with the increased need for educational advocacy.

We hosted Innovative Inclusion, our 2019 *Inclusion Conference*, just before the Stay-at-Home orders were put in place! Much energy has been spent adapting to this post-Covid world that we are all now experiencing.



While our staff have been working from home the majority of the time, they are all still managing to support families across South-West Michigan. The office is being staffed during regular business hours to make sure we are available to our stakeholders. Our open caseload of 100+ active cases reflects the need for our services, as families continue to reach out to us for support in navigating systems that have proven to be unprepared for a post-Covid time.

We continue to experience increases in requests for services in both educational and adult advocacy as a result of this.

One last point of interest is that we have secured a new office space for the organization! Those of you who have been part of Community Advocates will remember that we were formally located on the edge of downtown Kalamazoo in the heart of the Vine Neighbourhood. It turns out that the space has become available again, and we are working with the Vine Neighbourhood Association to make the space even more accessible and amenable to the needs of our constituents.

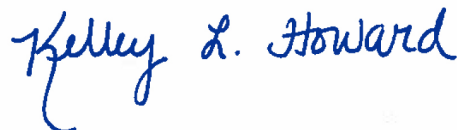
The next 12 months will prove to be challenging for all of us, as we make necessary adjustments in keeping with the changing cultural landscape that Covid19 has brought us. Now more than ever before, we are relying on your support and assistance to continue the important work we are doing in our community every day.

There are many ways you can support Community Advocates financially; by check or online donation, IRA distribution, bequests, and support of fundraisers; to name a few.

Your benefit is knowing you have not just made a charitable donation but have made a Social Investment in the future of the Kalamazoo community where everyone belongs.



Sheldon Schwitek, Executive Director



Kelley Howard, Board Chair

BOARD & STAFF

EXECUTIVE BOARD 2019-20

Kelley Howard - Board Chair

Vickie Edwards, Vice Chair

Phil Copeland - Secretary

David Ullrey - Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Chase Grounds

Lauren Harkness

Steve Leep

Katie Soule

Teresa Tucker

STAFF

Sheldon Schwitek, *Executive Director*

Beverly McBrien, LMSW, *Director of Advocacy*

Annie Gaertner, *Individual & Family Advocate*

LaTaynia Conant, *Marketing & Communications
Coordinator*

Karen Soule, *Special Education Advocate*

ELECTIONS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & NEW DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

Vickie Edwards, Chair

Teresa Tucker, Secretary

John Argo, Director

Sarah Carmany, Director

D'Jaris Coles-White, Director

Allison Hammond, Director

Jen Nap, Director

ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

WELCOME

SHELDON SCHWITEK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INTRODUCTION OF BOARD & STAFF

2019/20 HIGHLIGHTS AND SERVICE UPDATES

*SHELDON SCHWITEK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR &
BEVERLY MCBRIEN, DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY*

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION OF 2020-21 SLATE OF NOMINEES & ELECTION

BY-LAW CHANGES/UPDATES

KELLEY HOWARD, BOARD CHAIR

BOARD CHAIR & SECRETARY APPROVAL VOTE

KELLEY HOWARD, BOARD CHAIR

GENERAL MEMBER COMMENTS

ADJOURN

SUSAN RUSH



Susan Rush Executive Director 2016-2019

Susan Rush was hired in 2016 at a time when The Arc Community Advocates was in a precarious position financially. In the time that Sue was at the helm, she worked tirelessly to “right the ship” that is Community Advocates.

Sue worked with partners in the Kalamazoo community to ensure that our mission and services were known throughout the sector. She made connections with local, county and state organizations to forward our mission and ensure that the needs of those we serve were being voiced and met wherever possible.

Most importantly, Sue was able to connect with various foundations to secure funding that supports the ongoing work of Community Advocates. That effort has placed the organization on a firm footing financially and allows us the opportunity to continue our work supporting individuals who experience disability.

Sue made the choice to retire in Oct. 2019, for health reasons. She has been enjoying time at the lake with Disco and getting back to golfing in the last few months. For those of you who knew Sue or would like to check in with her, she can be reached through Caring Bridge.

On behalf of the Board, staff and members of Community Advocates, we wish Sue all the best, as she now explores what it really means to retire and focuses on doing what makes her most happy in the world.

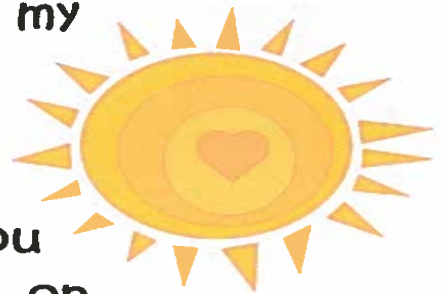
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelley L. Howard".

Kelley Howard
Board Chair

BEYOND ADVOCACY



I Can't thank you enough for my mobile stair-climbing chair! Now I'm mobile! I can now go somewhere other than my bedroom on the second floor: I can come downstairs to see family and friends . . . I can sit outside on our deck . . . I can get to our car to go out to eat or visit my Circle of Friends (or even doctors!) . . . and my parents are relieved they now have a way to get me to safety in case of a fire or severe weather! My family is so blessed by your generosity, and we couldn't be more grateful. Since my nickname is Rey of Sunshine, I know all about shining ~ so we recognize and appreciate more than words can say the rays of love and support you have shone on our family! Keep on shining! God bless ~



Rey

SERVICE IN NUMBERS

SEPTEMBER '19-SEPTEMBER '20

CLIENT CONTACTS: 723

TIME SPENT ON CLIENT CONTACTS: 532 HOURS

TOTAL SERVED: 982

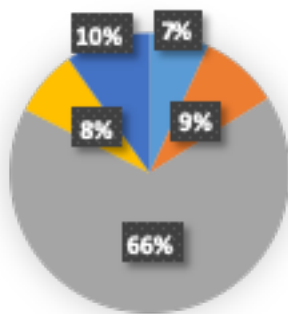
Intakes 7%

Screenings 9%

Trainings 66%

Exhibits/Fairs 8%

Presentations 10%



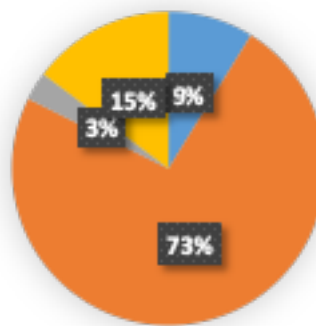
ETHNICITY

African American 9%

Latino 3%

Caucasian 73%

Other 15%



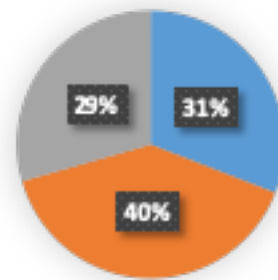
INCOME LEVEL

Individuals with and ID/DD are 2-1 times more likely to be in poverty.

Above Poverty 31%

Below Poverty 40%

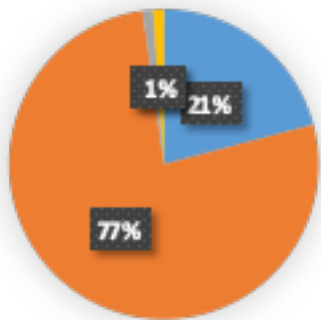
Did Not Disclose 29%



YEAR IN REVIEW

CLIENT GOALS

Each client has an advocacy goal whose team (advocate, school, guardian) works hard to achieve.



Completed 21%

In Progress 77%

No Longer Being Pursued 1%

Goal Changed 1%

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

BY COUNTY

Barry 1%

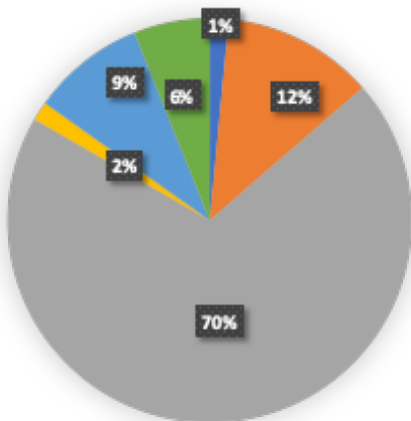
Berrien 12%

Kalamazoo 70%

Lewis/Cass 2%

St. Joseph 9%

VanBuren 6%



AREAS OF ADVOCACY

Majority of our clients reach out for help in Education Advocacy, but we also provide advocacy in other areas!

Community Inclusion 4%

Education 81%

Housing 1%

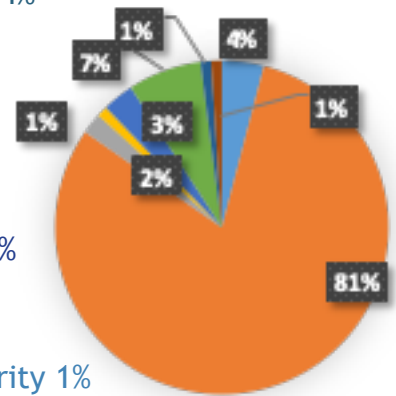
Employment 2%

Long Term Planning 3%

Power of Attorney 7%

Medicaid/Social Security 1%

Transportation 1%



SHELDON SCHWITEK



WELCOME!

Sheldon Schwitek comes to Community Advocates with a diverse background in supporting individuals who experience disability across the sector, from direct care to training and consulting. His passion for Inclusion and supporting people to have lives of meaning and contribution has always been at the core of his work.

Sheldon brings more than 30 years of experience supporting people who experience disability which began with the birth of his youngest brother when he was 13 years old. He has continued to work and volunteer in the disability sector in Winnipeg MB, Toronto ON

and across Michigan and internationally.

With a firm grounding in Person Centered Work through long associations with Inclusion Press and the Toronto Summer Institute, Sheldon's focus has always been on encouraging people to "dream bigger" as a pathway to true citizenship. He is passionate about people living meaningful lives of contribution in their communities.

In 2011, Sheldon began to work with The Center for Positive Living Supports and their implementation of a Culture of Gentleness in Michigan. This work solidified his knowledge that relationships and community connections are fundamental to a safe and happy life.

In 2016, Sheldon founded In the Company of Others with his colleague and friend Shelley Nessman, who resides in Vancouver BC. Together they traveled nationally and internationally, promoting and training folks from all parts of the disability sector in such things as Person Centered Planning and Thinking, A Culture of Gentleness, Relationship Building and mentorship; as the foundation to excellent supports for those who experience disability. Their work was shared in Europe, Australia, Canada, and United States.

He is an active member TASH here in the USA, as well as Gentle Teaching International and is on the board of Total Living Concepts; a provider of disability supports in Kent, Washington.

The key message in Sheldon aspires to deliver is that all people can lead lives that are rich and meaningful and that this is our most important work. He is excited for the opportunity to lead Community Advocates as a way to deepen his practice and understanding of this work and share that with the community he has lived in for the last 20 years.

THANK YOU SUPPORTERS

AARON SOULE
ALLEGRA PRINT & IMAGING
ANGELA FIORI
BARBARA SPAHR
BARRY LAFLER
BEVERLY MCBRIEN
BRIAN SOMERS
BRIDGET ROHS
CATALYNA WESTCOTT
CHARLES LANDIS
CHASE GROUNDS
CYNTHIA GREEN
D. K. FITZSIMMONS
DAVID & DEBORAH SACKETT
DAVID ULLREY
DENNIS & LAUREN O'MEARA
DEREK AND LATAYNIA CONANT
DONALD DANGLER
DONNA KONOPKA
ELIZABETH SEMAAN
EVELYN STURKIN
GEORGE & GAIL MARTIN
GIRL SCOUT TROOP 80449
HOLLY HOLLET
IMPERIAL BEVERAGE
INTEGRATED SERVICES OF
KALAMAZOO
IRVING S GILMORE FOUNDATION
JACKI STAHR
JAMES AND MELANIE MILES
JAMES GRAM
JAQUA REALTORS
JEX JUDD
JOE & EVELYN SOYA
JON HOADLEY
JULIE HEATH

KALAMAZOO COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
KAREN AND LOREN GOULD
KAREN LONGANECKER
KAREN SOULE
KELLEY AND DENNY HOWARD
KELLIE SIMMONS
KIRKPATRICK BREDIN
KLAAS AND SHARON MARING
KREIS, ENDERLE, HUDGINS
& BORSOS, P.C.
LISA FABER
LISA SALAY
LORI BARNETT
LORRAINE MOSIER
MARILYN HAMILTON
MARK AND KIM LONGSTROTH
MILLER-SCHURING AGENCY
MOLLY MORGAN
NOTTAWASEPPI HURON BAND OF
THE POTAWATOMI
OAKWOOD BISTRO
OLD NATIONAL BANCORP
PAMELA WENZEL
PARIS CLEANERS & LAUNDRY
PARKER HANNIFIN CORP
PATRICIA GARBER
PFIZER ANNUAL GIVING
CAMPAIGN
PFIZER FOUNDATION MATCHING
GIFTS PROGRAM
RHONDA FEATHERSTON
RICHARD & SANDRA EDWARDS
ROBB KRUEGER
RONALD AND FRANCES HOARD

SARA SHIELDS
SASHA OSPINA
SEBER TANS, PLC
SERENA STEELE
SHELDON SCHWITEK
SUSANNE JOHNSTON
SUSAN RUSH
TERESA TUCKER
THE MARVIN & ROSALIE OKUN
FOUNDATION
TIM CASHEN
TOD RUSH
TYLER HOWARD
VICKI JOFFE
VICKIE EDWARDS

2019/20 HIGHLIGHTS

- *Successful Arctoberfest 2019*
- *Hired new Executive Director*
- *Hired part-time Education Advocate*
- *Staff completed Arc in Schools Training*
- *Successful Inclusion Conference, pre Covid19 shutdown*
- Positive Covid19 response with staff continuing to work from home
- Implementation of a Monthly Newsletter to keep our membership and community partners informed
- Increased community participation on Inclusion Conference Committee
- Collaborated with Gryphon Place during Covid
- Successful On-line training program initiated with over 650 participants
- If Not Me Then Who: Why Person Centered Planning is Important, especially during Covid19
- Return to Learn: Know your Options Advocate Webinar
- Next: Circles of Support
- Executive Director working with ISK to develop self-advocate and facilitation training
- Applied and granted a Payroll Protection Program grant
- Increased projected grant revenue
- Coordinated with Jessup Group to implement 3rd year full audit
- Secured a more accessible and community-based office location.
- Updated bylaws to clarify ambiguous language and processes
- Updated HR Manual to include Covid related policies
- Developed and published Statement of Solidarity with Marginalized Communities Against Systemic Discrimination and Bias

