

## BCArc Advocacy & Family Support Programs

- ◆ **Adult Family Care**
- ◆ **Central & Southern Berkshire County Family Support Center**
- ◆ **Down Syndrome Family Support Group**
- ◆ **Autism Family Group**
- ◆ **Southern Berkshire & Central Berkshire Self Advocacy Groups**
- ◆ **Educational Advocacy**

For more information  
please call  
413-464-7262 ext. 22  
or email  
arobandt@bcarc.org  
or visit our website at  
www.bcarc.org

## You Can Make a Difference

By becoming a Citizen Advocate or Mentor you will change the lives of at least two people and possibly influence the lives of more.

If you would like to volunteer as a Citizen Advocate, Youth Mentor or would like more information, please contact the Advocacy Office at **BCArc**; located at 386 South Street, Pittsfield MA 01201

**For Citizen Advocacy call  
413-464-7262 ext. 11**

**For Youth Mentoring call  
413-464-7262 ext. 14**

*Berkshire County Arc is committed to assisting and supporting individuals in their quest to identify and realize their chosen lifestyles.*



## Volunteer Programs

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Citizen Advocacy  
&  
Youth Mentoring



“A best friend is like a four leaf clover, hard to find and lucky to have.” - Sarah Jessica Parker

## What is Citizen Advocacy?

Citizen Advocacy occurs when a community volunteer is matched with an adult individual with a disability. It involves a one to one relationship between advocate and protégé, based on common interests. The theory and practice of Citizen Advocacy was founded in the tradition of active community participation. The primary purpose of Citizen Advocacy is to develop an ongoing, long-lasting friendship.

## Why BC Arc's Citizen Advocacy Program?

Berkshire County Arc's Citizen Advocacy Program was started in 1981 to assist individuals with disabilities to make their way into community life. Today, BC Arc's Citizen Advocacy Program continues to be a strong support. Individuals are not just in the community, but are part of their community in self-determined ways. Many individuals with disabilities have limited opportunities to become part of the community and to develop friendships with people who do not have disabilities. Like anyone else, a person with a disability enjoys community recreational and social activities - going to the movies, going out to eat, walking in the woods etc.



A Citizen Advocate can make a huge difference in the life of his/her protégé.

## What is Mentoring?

Mentoring occurs when an older responsible individual is matched with a youth one to one or in small groups. Mentors provide support, role modeling, guidance, and friendship. Mentoring supports can occur in formal or informal settings. The goal of mentoring programs is to promote positive developmental outcomes so youth can succeed across all settings, such as school, home and community.

## Why BC Arc's Youth Mentoring Program?

Mentoring is an increasingly popular way of providing guidance and support to young people.. Berkshire County Arc's Youth Mentoring Program is so important because mentors provide their mentees with an experienced friend who is there to help in any number of situations. Existing mentoring programs confirm what we knew intuitively before– that mentoring works! On the social and emotional development front, taking part in mentoring promotes positive social attitudes and relationships. Mentors also help teach young people to strengthen communication skills with others. This program is designed to help echo the positive values the parents and families are teaching, and to help young people achieve their potential and discover their strengths.

We invite you to join our mentoring program to make a difference in someone else's life!

## Who are BC Arc's Citizen Advocates/Mentors?

Advocates/Mentors are people who are:

1. **Willing to volunteer** – it is important that an advocate/mentor understand that they are involved in a relationship based on an interest with each other and not for external benefits.
2. **Willing to be independent** - Advocates/ Mentors should be free from conflicts of interest. Their primary loyalty should be to his/her own protégé/mentee.
3. **Willing to honor whatever commitments they make** – Both partners must have realistic expectations about the time commitments and nature of the relationship and communicate openly with each other about their needs and limitations.

