



The Arc[™]

New Mexico



MOVING FORWARD
ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Arc of New Mexico Annual Awards Ceremony At Dinner

Moving Forward and Self-Advocate
Conference, Transformation to Success

June 21, 2024

The Arc Annual Awards Ceremony



The Bob Thomas Achievement Award

Robert LeCompte Jr. Leadership Award

Work Initiative (2)

Agency of Distinction

Inclusive Employer

Public Awareness Award

Exemplary Educator (2)

THE BOB THOMAS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Sarah Wilson

Sarah is 37 years old and is currently working at the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy. For the past three years she has been a volunteer ambassador for the Albuquerque Zoo. Sarah is also known as an artist who paints birds. She had an art show in Gallup, NM and she has a website where she sells her paintings. During Women's History month she and her business was featured on KOAT TV. Sarah was also a guest with an Arc NM delegation in Washington DC to advocate for continued funding for Medicaid. She presented each member of Congress with one of her bird paintings.

Nominated by Gwen Wilson

This Award is given in memory of Bob Thomas and honors an individual with intellectual or developmental disability that has achieved much in their life despite their disability and other challenges.



ROBERT LECOMPT, JR LEADERSHIP AWARD

Carolyn Delgado

Carolyn Delgado deserves this award because she is a long-time supporter of People First for many years. She always has valuable comments and input into the issues being discussed, and feels very strongly about advocacy.

She has dedicated her time to attending every single People First meetings since I have been president.

Nominated by Roel Adamson

This award honors an individual with an intellectual or developmental disability that has shown exceptional leadership in their community through community activism and/or public policy.



WORK INITIATIVE

Tracy Agiovlasis

Tracy Agiovlasis is the Program Manager of NMTAP and has been a rehabilitative nurse since 1983. As a nurse case-manager, grassroots non-profit director, nurse educator, and as an intensive in-patient and long-term home rehabilitation nurse, she has been involved working with Assistive Technology (AT). She brings a foundation of many years of service, advocacy, and understanding of the challenges for individuals with disabilities. Her nearly 40-years of program management provides the collaboration, leadership, staff motivation, program evaluation, and implementation needed for the many NMTAP services. Throughout her career serving people with a wide variety of disabilities, the aspect that inspires her the most is watching a person fully engage in life, in the manner they choose. Tracey works hard to create a more inclusive world by promoting the use of AT in education, employment and community life. Tracy collaborates with many agencies trying to further the rights of persons with disabilities, such as the State Rehabilitation Council for the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, where she serves as the Vice-chair person. Tracy has been instrumental in reaching rural underserved areas in New Mexico.

Nominated by Bernadine Chavez, DRNM

WORK INITIATIVE

Rachel Wilson

Rachel Wilson has worked for ARCA for 12 years as a direct care provider, a program manager, and now as a service coordinator for three group homes. Rachel is devoted to the individuals that she works with. She strives to be sure they receive the high quality care they deserve by meeting both their physical and emotional needs. As much as is possible she gets her clients out into the community. Like so many agencies that provide care to individuals with disabilities, understaffing is common. Rachel is willing to work overtime and holidays to be certain the individuals are with someone who truly cares about them. Just ask the people she cares for to know how awesome she is!

Nominated by Gwen Wilson



AGENCY OF DISTINCTION

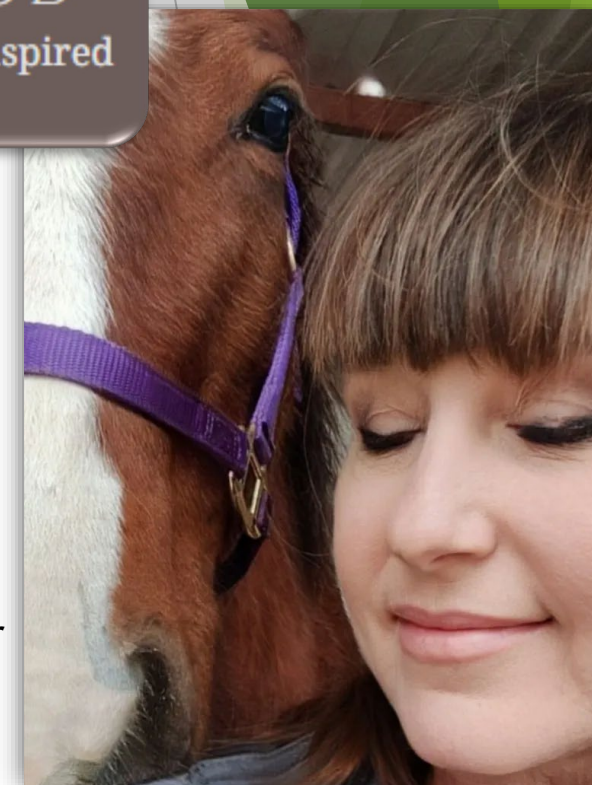
Wilderwood



Wilderwood has grown phenomenally since its very humble beginnings in 2018. With a dual mission focus on autism and horses and led by an autistic Executive Director and neurodivergent Board members, we started by serving 6 people. Last year, we served 639, and continue to exponentially expand our services, programs, and research. We are now being recognized worldwide for our research expertise and knowledge about autism in women and girls.

The included short video, submitted as part of this application, outlines some of the many highlights of Wilderwood and give you more information about what we do in support of our nomination for the Arc of New Mexico's 2024 Agency of Distinction. **YouTube Video Link:** <https://youtu.be/jsLFI2MNEVo>

Nominated by Rebecca Evanko



INCLUSIVE EMPLOYER

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy

My daughter, who has Down syndrome, has been employed at the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy for several years. This organization is an exemplary employer. The staff there have embraced my daughter and she feels like she is a part of the team. There have been challenges that come up and Rachael Mesillas and the other staff have dealt with the issues in a kind and positive manner. They have allowed Sarah to grow and mature. Sarah has been invited to join the school's special Olympics swim team and to participate in other school activities.

Nominated by Gwen Wilson



The Albuquerque Sign Language Academy

PUBLIC AWARENESS AWARD

Terra Bernheisel

Terra Bernheisel is an exceptional candidate for the Public Awareness Arc Award. Being disabled herself (brain injury); she dedicates much of her time advocating for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our communities.

Terra is the Chair of the NW Community Policing Council as a volunteer. Terra hopes to bridge the gap between individuals with disabilities and APD. Terra strongly advocates for legislative law and policy reforms regarding those with brain injuries and intellectual/developmental disabilities by contacting representatives at the city and state level by email, phone and in person. Terra is fully committed to bringing public awareness to the achievements, needs and human rights of people with disabilities in our community.

Nominated by Anna Hall

EXEMPLARY EDUCATOR

Johanna Abeita

Johanna Abeita has been a teacher for almost 12 years. Johanna has taught at The Pueblo of Laguna for Early Childhood for 5 years. Now, she is back at home working as a teacher at The Pueblo of Isleta Headstart. She's also going to be graduating from New Mexico Highlands University with her bachelor's degree in early childhood Multicultural Education. She will also be receiving a Cord for High Honors. Johanna is a fantastic teacher, and takes her teaching seriously because it's the love she has for children and our Native Children especially those who have disabilities at an early age in life. Johanna is also a Wife and a mother of one autistic son. As a Parent - Teacher; Johanna has really learned a lot, not by herself but Johanna, her husband, and son are all such a tight family. The love Johanna has for her child is so amazing and it brings so much peace. Overall, Johanna, is an Outstanding Teacher, Wife, and Mother.

Nominated by DeHaven Sousea

EXEMPLARY EDUCATOR

Tom Brejcha

Tom Brejcha is a professional artist who for many years taught art to individuals with special needs at North Fourth Art Center. When the art center closed during the pandemic Tom lost his job. He made the decision to continue to offer art lessons to his former students out of his studio in his garage. It has been a wonderful opportunity for these individuals to continue to develop their art skills and to interact with an excellent teacher who really cares for them. He frequently posts his student's work on his Facebook page and it is wonderful to see their progress and creativity.

Nominated by Gwen Wilson

Congratulations to our Award Recipients!



7 Steps to Live an Awesome Life

Featuring our special guest, Tim Harris!

Time To Dance!

