



***The Arc***<sup>®</sup>


*Maryland*



# **SpArc Tank**

*Igniting Innovation and Advancing the Mission of The Arc Maryland*

**IMPACT REPORT**



# SpArc Tank

*Igniting Innovation and Advancing the Mission of The Arc Maryland*

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July 2023

To our Community Partners,

In 2022, The Arc Maryland awarded \$30,000 in funding to innovative projects in Maryland during our First Annual **SpArc Tank Ig-Nite** event! From a competitive applicant pool, four innovation projects were selected and the event participants had the opportunity to hear 4 unique pitches, and have a voice in the award amounts to be granted to each. These projects are currently underway and we are so excited to see the outcomes at our Second Annual SpArc Tank Ig-Nite event!


**SpArc Tank**, which has been a hallmark grant initiative from The Arc Maryland for the past 4 years, is a unique opportunity and process through which innovative ideas for projects advancing [the mission of The Arc Maryland](#) compete for funding. The awarded funding is used to facilitate the project or initiative within a prescribed timeframe and is intended to ignite change through the development of new technology, pilot project, new resources, devices, or other initiatives to enhance the lives of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Maryland.

What ideas do you have to **SpArc** change in your community? Great advances start with a spark- an idea followed by tenacity to make change and unwavering passion. Check out our Impact report: you just may be inspired to create your own SpArc project!

Our 2023 SpArc Tank Ig-Nite will be on November 16, 2023 at the Ten Oaks Ballroom in Clarksville, MD. The attendees of this event will have the opportunity to learn about how the 2022 grantees ignited change in their communities- their projects and successes- then enjoy hors d'oeuvres and networking before hearing the pitches of the 2023 applicants. Following pitches will be live voting to help the selection committee determine the awards to be given.

Please consider joining the Board of The Arc Maryland, The Arc Maryland staff team, and representatives of our community partnerships as we celebrate and recognize the wonderful things innovators are doing in Maryland for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families.

Sincerely,

  
Ande Kolp  
Executive Director  
The Arc Maryland

  
**The Arc**  
Maryland

# SpArc Tank

*Igniting Innovation and Advancing the Mission of The Arc Maryland*

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

SpArc Tank has provided funding in amounts ranging from **\$1,500 to \$10,000** over the past 4 years for innovative projects, resources, equipment, training, and other initiatives aimed at enhancing the lives of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Maryland.

We are proud of our forged partnerships with several individuals and organizations over the years that have made SpArc advances possible.

Learn more about the SpArc Tank program, by visiting our website at [www.TheArcMD.org](http://www.TheArcMD.org)



## STATEWIDE IMPACT



**\$129,303**  
**FUNDED**



**17**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS**



**11,951**  
**INDIVIDUALS SERVED**



**20**  
**INNOVATIVE PROJECTS**

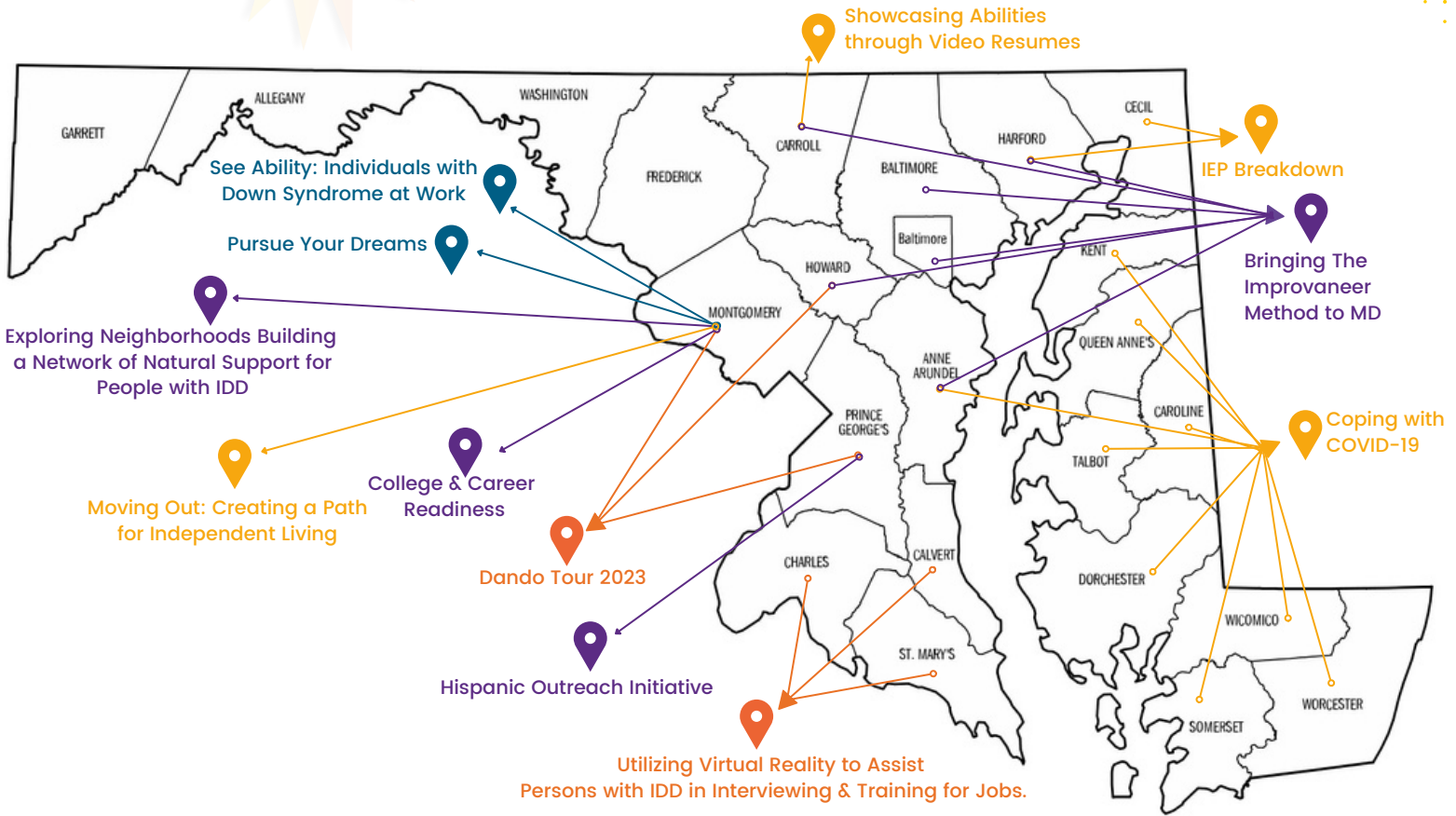


**178**  
**EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS**



**19**  
**INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS DEVELOPED**

# IMPACT IN MARYLAND



## Statewide Projects

-  Allied Sports Equipment for Individuals with IDD
-  Listen To My Voice
-  Simplifying The IEP Process
-  Self-Direction Connections of MD
-  DSP Employment/Recruitment Campaign
-  Restraint and Seclusion Reduction Project
-  Dribbler's Soccer Program
-  What's So Great About Self Direction?

## Grant Years

-  FY23 Grantees
-  FY22 Grantees
-  FY21 Grantees
-  FY20 Grantees



## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



### Moving Out. Creating a Path for Independent Living

Seeking Employment, Equality and Community (SEEC) created a series of training sessions for adults with IDD and their families to develop their own path to independent living. Through their SpArc project funding, they created a "Moving Out" guide that continues to be a valuable resource used today!

- 12 families participated in 5 virtual education sessions.
- A Moving Out Guide/Toolkit was developed and distributed to cohort members.
- A session on the course and materials were provided to the Family Support Statewide Monthly Webinar.



### IEP Breakdown

The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region developed a series of 6 workshop trainings for parents and guardians of children with IDD on the IEP process, components of an effective IEP, and tools for effective advocacy.

- 6 parents with different IEP's and scenarios, participated in the educational sessions.
- Participants demonstrated an increased understanding of the IEP process and they were able to provide support and guidance to other parents.



### What's So Great About Self Direction?

SDAN coordinated two promotional and educational videos about the history and benefits of Self-Directed Services in Maryland.

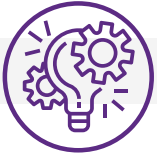
- Individuals with IDD & family members were able to access vital information about the option to self-direct, even before they began the transition process.
- The project attracted people who were unaware of the wonderful opportunities and option of self-direction.



### Showcasing Abilities through Video Resumes

The Arc Carroll County produced a series of videos that were used by people with IDD to showcase their job skills and abilities, and obtain meaningful employment.

- The Arc partnered with individuals to produce 6 videos that showcased 6 individuals with IDD demonstrating job skills and interests with the goal of obtaining meaningful community employment.
- One individual with IDD became the Video Editor for the project.



## PROJECTS



### Coping with COVID-19



## ORGANIZATIONS

At the beginning of the global pandemic, The Arc Central Chesapeake Region developed a series of group sessions focusing on teaching people ways to cope with the effects of the pandemic- intended for individuals with IDD, DSPs & family members.



## OUTCOMES

- The organization offered 24 sessions for individuals with IDD.
- They conducted 6 sessions for 8 Direct Support Professionals and 6 sessions for family members.



### Pursue Your Dreams

Rehabilitation Opportunities, Inc. supported entrepreneurial endeavors of individuals with IDD to create and maintain their own businesses.

- The organization supported the establishment of 3 new entrepreneurship initiatives by individuals with IDD.
- They develop a website featuring the entrepreneurs and other nearby entrepreneurs with IDD to enhance commerce.



### Dribbler's Soccer Program

Elite Soccer Youth Development Academy created the Dribbler's Soccer program that is geared toward supporting children with IDD to play, while also integrating neurodiverse and neurotypical children together in soccer.

- SpArc funding was used to provide 5 full scholarships for children with IDD.
- The organization provided training to their coaches in supporting athletes with IDD during practice and games.
- They provided 3 free special education parenting coaching sessions.



### See Ability: Individuals with Down Syndrome at Work

The Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County's project highlighted and promoted the skills and abilities of individuals with Down syndrome to schools, providers, employers, families, and the community at large.

- DSNMC created a video that was disseminated widely to share outcomes and assist schools, providers, employers, and families to articulate and illustrate the value of individuals with Down syndrome in the workplace.
- An individual with Down syndrome was hired to work on the project.
- There was further sharing of the project findings and video to the 10 Down syndrome groups across Maryland.



## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



### DSP Employment/ Recruitment Campaign

The Arc HR Directors' Group co-created a Direct Support Professional Recruitment campaign to address the healthcare workforce shortage.

- The campaign included a photo contest which provided images of DSPs from around the state.
- There was increased awareness of DSP careers and the benefits of this work.
- There was increased awareness of The Arc as a statewide network of quality employers.



### Hispanic Outreach Initiative

The Arc of Prince George's County launched an initiative to provide outreach, education, and connection of Spanish-speaking families to disability services and resources.

- The "Familia Together" support group was created. This group shares information and provides support to 100 Spanish-speaking families.
- They translated numerous resources into Spanish.
- They hosted several community events.



### Self-Direction Connections of MD

The Self-Directed Advocacy Network Of Maryland initiated a project to recruit Direct Support Professionals through partnerships with colleges, for work in Self Direction.

- SDAN assessed the needs and wants of people who self-direct and provided a well-designed recruitment resource for meeting those needs.
- They increased overall awareness of the benefits of self-direction.



### Restraint & Seclusion Reduction Project

The Alliance Against Seclusion & Restraint created a pilot program to provide professional development for a select number of schools in Maryland which included in-person expert training for educators, a film study, a book study, pre and post testing, and data collection from the school system.

- 2 schools in MD participated in a 15-week competency training for the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions training.
- There was a documented reduction in the use of restraint and seclusion in the pilot schools.
- There were fewer crisis situations with the use of trained proactive strategies.
- Teachers felt empowered and enriched by receiving training in an evidence-based alternative to restraint and seclusion.





## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



**Exploring  
Neighborhoods  
Building a Network of  
Natural Support for  
People with IDD**

SEEC explored the practice of “Neighborhood Walks” to offer a new format of support that invites individuals with IDD and their staff to re-envision their interactions and how they form connections within the community.

- SEEC created a learning management system to host a community of practice to share the model with others.
- SEEC shared findings via a white paper on utilizing neighborhood walks to support people with IDD.



**Simplifying The IEP  
Process**

Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute developed a series of “micro-lesson” videos on a variety of special education topics to help parents and families better understand their rights, and the rights of their children with disabilities in the education system.

- The 7 videos were translated into Spanish and Arabic.
- The videos are accessible to all families in Maryland, and are intended to provide virtual on-demand access to information.
- The potential for parents and guardians to access these resources is limitless.



**College & Career  
Readiness**

The Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County created the college and career preparation pilot, intended for individuals with Down syndrome. Throughout the course of several sessions, participants were able to learn about college and career assessments and have a deep exploration of their values, interests, and needs.

- 6 students participated in 9 sessions.
- One participant was hired to serve as the Project Assistant.
- The DSNMC hosted a statewide panel discussion to share outcomes of the program for replication.



**Bringing The  
Improvaneer  
Method to MD**

The Down Syndrome Association of Maryland purchased the training materials and licensure to bring the “Improvaneer Method” to Maryland. They hired, licensed and trained coaches who worked with youth, teens, and adults with Down syndrome, using improvisation to build spontaneous and reciprocal communication skills for enhancement of social and workplace connections.

- Approx. 75 self-advocates were served.
- DSAM increased their capacity to continue to provide Improvaneer classes through the licensure process.
- 3 facilitators/coaches/directors were hired and trained to provide The Improvaneer Method in Maryland.



## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



Allied Sports  
Equipment for  
Individuals with IDD\*

The Howard County Glenelg High School Robotics Team 888 is currently designing and fabricating athletic wheelchair attachments for teenagers with IDD to aid them in their respective sports such as soccer, bowling, and softball.

- Students will refine and adapt wheelchair attachment designs for potential mass production.
- Students will also aid fellow classmates with physical disabilities by constructing personalized assistive devices.



Utilizing Virtual  
Reality (VR) to Assist  
Persons with IDD in  
Interviewing and  
Training for Jobs\*

The Arc Southern Maryland is providing Virtual Reality through a VR Atlas allowing a small group of people with IDD be able to experience the working world in a fully immersive way throughout career exploration.

- 10 people will explore career options and select an area of focus using VR.
- At least 5 people will complete a course curriculum in VR by meeting all objectives.



Listen To My Voice\*

The Autism Grind created the "Listen to My Voice" project which focuses on providing resources and skill development training to parents of children with autism, who are non-vocal, and educators serving these students to establish opportunities and provide differential reinforcement for learning in academic and social environments.

- The Autism Grind will host coaching sessions with at least 40 participants.
- Approximately 90% of participants will have a change of mindset concerning the intellectual learning capacity of children/students with autism that are non-vocal communicative.



Dando Tour 2023\*

Advanzos Educational and Behavioral Services created the "Dando (Giving) Tour" where they are currently providing awareness and support to Spanish-speaking parents so they may be able to identify and suggest improvements to address concerns in their childrens' IEPs.

- Caregivers in Montgomery, Howard, and Prince George's County will have a better understanding of IEP goals and their children's rights through in-person and live streaming sessions.
- They will share project findings with school districts and legislators.
- They will create a 2-hour free Ethics CEU course for BCBAs to learn about Latino families' needs and how to provide support.

\*Projects currently in progress for FY23.

# GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

The Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County (DSNMC) created the College & Career Readiness pilot, intended for individuals with Down syndrome. Throughout the course of six sessions, participants were able to learn about college and career assessment and have a deep exploration of their values, interests, and needs. Additionally, it taught participants how to build their skills for success. It also provided opportunities for visits to workplaces on campus and the University of Maryland's TerpsEXCEED program.



## College & Career Readiness



6 students with Down syndrome were served directly.



Students were able to assess & explore their own strengths, values, interests, and needs, & build skills for success.



DSNMC offered 6 sessions of college and career preparation. They concluded the program with a 3-day "college and career boot camp."



A person with Down syndrome served as the Project Assistant.





## Allied Sports Equipment for Individuals with IDD

The Glenelg High School Robotics Team 888 is currently designing and fabricating athletic wheelchair attachments for teenagers with IDD to aid them in their respective sports, such as soccer, bowling, and softball. This will be executed by individually consulting with each student with a disability, reviewing their needs/accommodations needed for optimal sports participation, and designing devices to assist them.

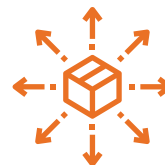
The Robotics team plans to standardize the designs they develop to the extent it's possible to allow the devices to fit onto most manual and power wheelchairs, consequently increasing the accessibility of sports, especially for those who were previously unable to fully and actively participate.



Refine and adapt the wheelchair attachment design using industry standards, thus making it easy to install on most wheelchairs.



Aid students who have physical disabilities which impact their ability to participate in sports by constructing personalized assistive devices for them.



Begin outreach regarding the distribution of products to individuals who would benefit from them. After improving a demo soccer device that has been fabricated, they plan to remake/mass produce and distribute the devices so more student athletes have access to them.



# Save the Date: November 16, 2023

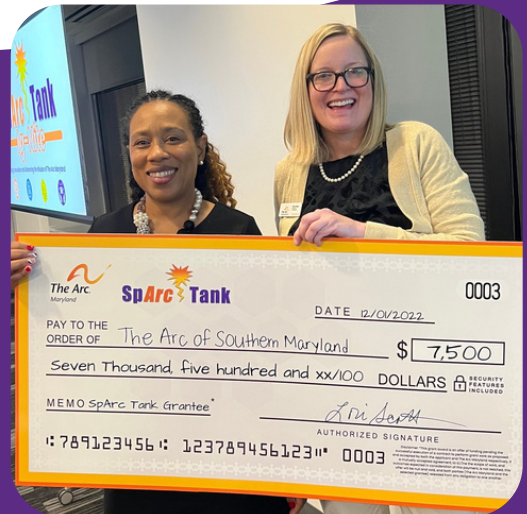
IGNITE change through SpArc Tank: The Arc Maryland's premiere event to support the development of new technology, resources, devices, or other initiatives to enhance the lives of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Maryland.

# SpArc Tank Ig-Nite



Join us for an evening of partnership, inspiration and innovation!

Check out opportunities to sponsor 2024 SpArc Awards and support our event at [www.TheArcMD.org](http://www.TheArcMD.org)





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