




***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*

## Table of Contents

3	Letter From Our Executive Director
4	Information About The Program
5	Impact in Maryland
6	SpArc Tank Projects
12	Grantees Highlights
15	SpArc Tank Ig-Nite Event



July 2024

To our Community Partners,

In 2023, The Arc Maryland awarded over \$16,000 in funding to innovative projects in Maryland during our Second 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 Third Annual **SpArc Tank Ig-Nite event** on November 21, 2024!

**SpArc Tank**, which has been a hallmark grant initiative from The Arc Maryland for the past 5 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 projects, 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 the tenacity to make the change and unwavering passion. Check out our Impact Report: you just may be inspired to create your own SpArc project!

This year's **SpArc Tank Ig-Nite** will be on November 21, 2024, at the Ten Oaks Ballroom in Clarksville, Maryland. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about how past grantees ignited change in their communities- their projects and successes- then enjoy hors d'oeuvres and networking before hearing the pitches of the 2024 applicants. Following project pitches will be live voting to help the selection committee determine the awards to be given.

Please consider joining The Arc Maryland Board of Directors, 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



# SpArc Tank

Igniting Innovation and Advancing the Mission of The Arc Maryland

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

SpArc Tank has provided small grants in amounts ranging from **\$1,500 to \$10,000** over the past 5 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).



## OUR STATEWIDE IMPACT

**\$145,312**  
**FUNDED**

**21**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS**

**12,032**  
**INDIVIDUALS SERVED**

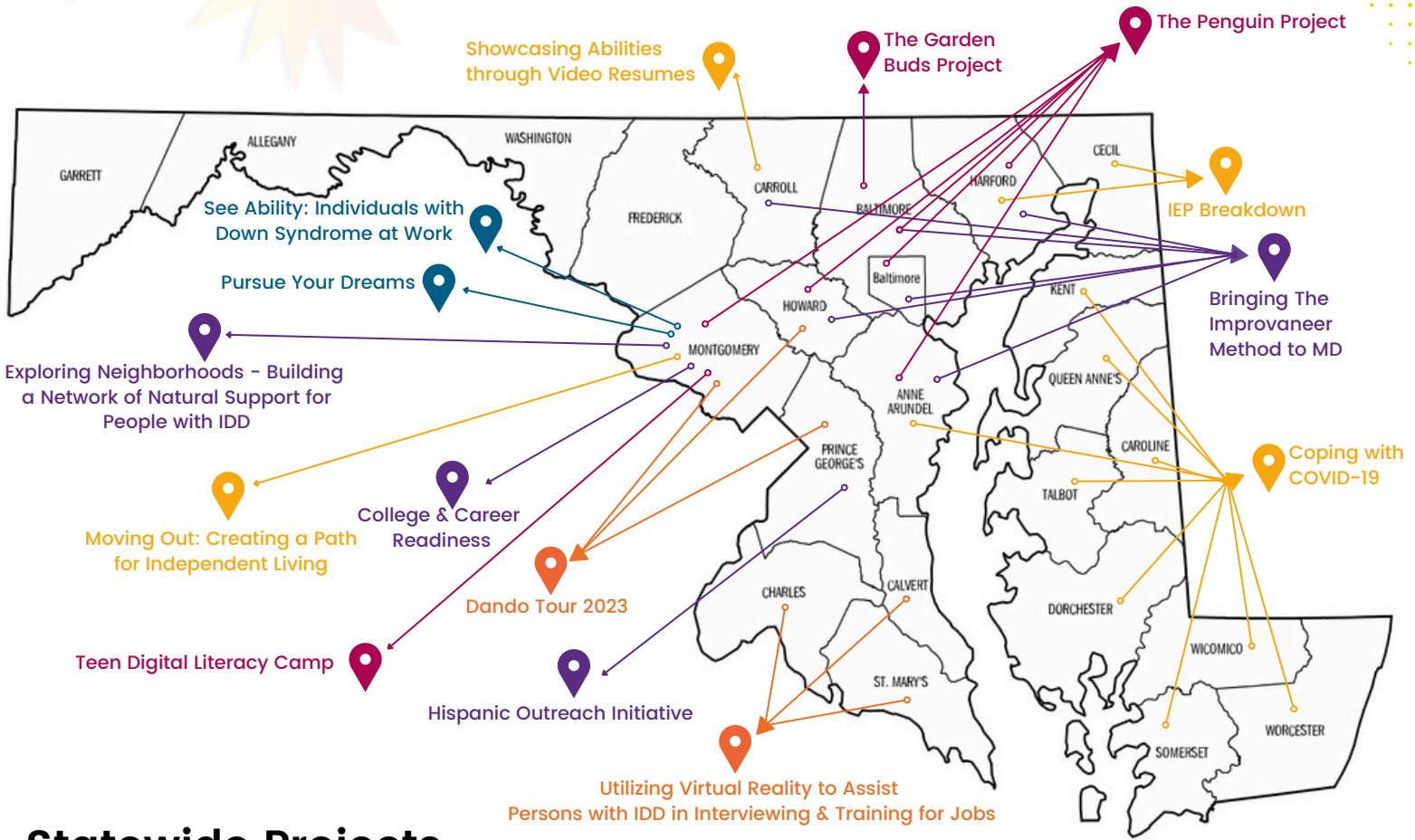
**24**  
**INNOVATIVE PROJECTS**

**240**  
**EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS**

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



# IMPACT IN MARYLAND



## Statewide Projects

- Nothing About Us, Without Us: Increasing Meaningful Participation of those with IDD on a Nonprofit Board of Directors
- 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

- FY24 Grantees
- FY23 Grantees
- FY22 Grantees
- FY21 Grantees
- FY20 Grantees



## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



### Garden Buds\*

Villa Maria School at Dulaney Valley is working with middle school students from their school and adults with IDD from the Gallagher Day Program (The Arc) for an inter-generational and integrated opportunity, engaging in therapeutic gardening activities, mentorship, and community building.

- Over the course of 20 sessions, 6 students with IEP's, and 6 adults with IDD will meet two times per month to complete therapeutic gardening activities, nature journaling, outdoor encounters, growing their greenhouse, and art integrated projects all while fostering relationships between youth and adults.



### The Penguin Project\*

Using a peer mentor model, The Penguin Project in partnership with The Talent Machine Company Inc., spent 4 months rehearsing with children with IDD, a well-known modified Broadway musical and took the stage twice, in front of a live audience.

- 20 children with IDD, and 21 mentors trained for over 4 months to produce a high-quality musical theater production.
- They expanded inclusive recreation opportunities available in the Central MD region and spread the message of community inclusion to the greater community.



### Teen Digital Literacy Camp\*

The Arc Montgomery County is developing and implementing a pilot digital literacy summer boot camp for teens with IDD.

- 10 teens are learning strategies to independently access and use technology devices and software.
- The participants are expanding knowledge about using technology and software to participate in a digital society while learning how to make independent and safe choices while using technology.



### Nothing About Us, Without Us: Increasing Meaningful Participation of those with IDD on a Nonprofit Board of Directors\*

The Arc of Howard County is developing a board governance toolkit that includes a case statement on why it is important and meaningful to include people with IDD in board governance, and is also in the process of conducting an in-person pre-orientation.

- Approx. 32,000 nonprofits in Maryland would be eligible to have a board member who could stand to benefit from these services.
- Will create a framework for board members with IDD to participate fully and equitably in the board governance process.
- Will amplify the voices of people with IDD in board governance activities.

\*Projects currently in progress for FY24.



## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



**Allied Sports  
Equipment for  
Students Athletes  
with IDD**

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

- Students were able to refine and adapt wheelchair attachment designs for mass production.
- They aided 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 of Southern Maryland provided Virtual Reality through a "VR Atlas" headset, allowing a small group of people with IDD be able to experience the working world in a fully immersive way through career exploration.

- 38 people explored career options, and participated in 53 different areas of focus simulations, while completing 95 different simulations using the VR Atlas.



**Listen To My Voice**

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

- The Autism Grind hosted coaching sessions for 40 participants.
- Through their trainings, participants had a change of mindset concerning the intellectual learning capacity of children/students with autism that are non-vocal communicative.



**Dando Tour 2023**

Avanzos Educational and Behavioral Services created the "Dando (Giving) Tour". They provided awareness and support to Spanish-speaking parents so they may be able to identify and suggest improvements to address concerns in their children's IEPs.

- 30 Spanish-speaking caregivers in Montgomery, Howard, and Prince George's Counties gained a better understanding of the IEP goals and their children's rights through in-person sessions.



## 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 their services and provided a well-designed recruitment resource for meeting those needs.
- They increased overall awareness of the benefits of self-direction.



### 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.

- Approximately 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



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.



## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



### 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.



### 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.

- A video was created and shared widely to showcase outcomes and assist schools, providers, employers, and families, illustrating 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 MD.



### 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.



### 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 developed a website featuring the entrepreneurs and other nearby entrepreneurs with IDD to enhance commerce.



## PROJECTS



## ORGANIZATIONS



## OUTCOMES



### Coping with COVID-19

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.

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



### 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 showcasing 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.

# GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

With a partnership between The Penguin Project and the Talent Machine Company, children and youth, between the ages 7 and 21 years old, with IDD are being empowered through theater. Using a peer mentor model, the artists spent 4 months rehearsing a well-known modified Broadway musical and took the stage twice, in front of a live audience.



20 children and youth with IDD, and 21 mentors, were served directly.



They participated in 2 live performances of Annie Jr., cultivating meaningful relationships between artists, mentors, parents, and guardians.



The Talent Machine Company was excited that WJZ TV highlighted The Penguin Project during their nightly news cast on April 17th.

Scan this QR code to watch the video



## The Penguin Project







## Allied Sports Equipment for Individuals with IDD



The Glenelg High School (Howard County) Robotics Team 888 designed, fabricated, and manufactured athletic wheelchair attachments for teenagers with IDD to aid them in their respective sports, such as soccer, bowling, and softball. They achieved this by individually consulting with each student with a disability, reviewing their needs/accommodations needed for optimal sports participation, and designing devices to assist them.

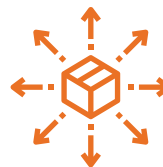
The Robotics team plans to continue to standardize the designs they developed to the extent it's possible to allow the devices to fit onto most manual and power wheelchairs, consequently increasing the accessibility of sports, especially for those who were previously unable to fully and actively participate.



They refined and adapted their wheelchair attachment design using industry standards, making it easy to install on most wheelchairs.



They aided students who have physical disabilities, impacting their ability to participate in sports, by constructing personalized assistive devices for them.



They continue to work on outreach regarding the distribution of products to individuals who would benefit from them, so more student athletes have access to them.

Scan this QR to visit their website



# 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.



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.



## College & Career Readiness





Save the Date: **November 21, 2024**

Ten Oaks Ballroom, 5000 Signal Bell Lane, Clarksville, Maryland

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 2024-2025 project awards and support our event at [www.TheArcMD.org](http://www.TheArcMD.org)









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