

TUESDAY » WHAT'S WORKING

Arc gives work, hope to disabled locals

By Dave Carey
Examiner Staff Writer

Through education, shelter and employment, The Arc of Baltimore is making a difference.

A recipient of the Maryland non-profit Standards for Excellence seal, The Arc targets its services to adults and children with developmental disabilities. In 2006, the organization helped provide living arrangements — family or group home — for 302 people, while providing foster homes for 105 developmentally disabled children.

Scattered throughout the region are six vocational training centers that provide a place to work for hundreds of disabled adults. By providing purpose and a way to earn a stable income, The Arc can provide structure for their clients.

But The Arc wants to focus even more on getting its workers out into more mainstream jobs, said Allis Kensing, the director of supported employment at The Arc.

Last year, the nonprofit had more than 255 contracted sites that it used to provide employment and about 90 companies that hired some of the disabled workers. Total, The Arc helped provide employment for more than 1,025 individuals.

"The most rewarding part of my job is developing a partnership with employers and having them realize how successful, dependable and reliable the individuals we support are in the work force," Kensing said. "They can change the diversity and outlook of a place they work in."

ON THE WEB

arcofbaltimore.org

Sixth Annual Art in the Round

This fundraiser for The Arc of Baltimore features art created by individuals with disabilities, a silent auction and wine tasting.

American Visionary Art Museum
6:30 to 9:00 p.m. Oct. 16
Tickets: \$25
410-296-2272 ext. 5227

Steve Morgan, the executive director of The Arc of Baltimore, started with the nonprofit 35 years ago as a teacher for children who didn't have access to equal education.

"What's kept me a part of The Arc is being part of an organization that is progressive in its approaches and is looking to push the envelope to help people reach the next level," Morgan said.

Programs offered by The Arc include last year's six-session special education seminar co-hosted with The Parents' Place of Maryland. It was so successful, a follow-up is planned for this year. One event coming up this fall is the Art in the Round show — a collection of work created by developmentally disabled individuals that is auctioned off for charity.

Through this event and other fundraisers, The Arc of Baltimore is able to maintain a yearly operating budget of about \$40 million to deliver its services.

"Given the proper opportunity and training, these folks can achieve quite a bit," Morgan said.

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Mark Billman, of Baltimore, has worked in the labeling and packaging department at Tescos for more than 12 years in a position supported by The Arc of Baltimore. "I like having my weekends off and I really like the people I work with," Billman said. — Kristine Buls/Examiner

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