

Ark Regional Services Annual Report 2014



July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

Message from the President

This year we embarked on many exciting and somewhat tough changes. Change can be frightening, especially when that change affects you or someone you love. We certainly had our worries and concerns as we moved to a community based approach to providing services and supports for people with disabilities, but the enthusiasm, anticipation, and absolute sense of “this is the right thing to do” that we felt propelled us forward.

We are not where we want to be yet. We are still learning, and making the occasional mistake. We are reshaping, revamping, and reorganizing as we face new issues and unintended consequences. We have found that it can be difficult to help people access community resources when we are entrenched in the practice of providing opportunities for people versus facilitating opportunities for people. We still have a long road ahead of us, but we are getting closer every day.

We are proud of what we have accomplished over the last year, and are revved to continue down the path we have taken. We will build on individual strengths, and focus on helping people be less reliant on staff and more reliant on themselves. Our vision and mission will continue to guide us as we embark on another year of facilitating opportunities for people to live, learn, work, and play.

Shirley Pratt, President & CEO

Vision, Mission, and Values

The vision of Ark Regional Services is that all people have the opportunity to experience the world in which we all live.

In order to support this vision, Ark Regional Services will facilitate opportunities for people

- to LIVE enriched, full, and individualized lives;*
- to LEARN what is necessary and meaningful to realize personal success;*
- to WORK toward individual accomplishment, employment satisfaction, and community contribution;*
- and to PLAY...*

We value:

- All People*
- A Strong Organization*
- Integrity*
- Respect*
- Commitment to the Community*

Organizational Change

Community Based Living

The most significant change at Ark Regional Services in the past year was a move away from a facility based approach to supporting people with intellectual disabilities to a community based approach. This change has not been easy for anyone involved, but was without question the right thing to do to better support people to live, learn, work, and play in their community.

The basic philosophy behind this change was simple. It is our belief that the people we support should have every opportunity to live their lives in a way that is typical of other members of the Laramie community, and that Ark Regional Services should not be a place to come but rather a provider of support in a person's life. It is typical of other members of the Laramie community to live their lives from home. It is not typical to have to get up, eat breakfast, and leave at the same time as everyone else with whom you live. People should have the opportunity and ability to do the things that they want and need to do based on their hopes, dreams, and desires; not on the schedule of their staff members or everyone else living in their home.

Living in a community is just geography, but to be fully involved in and an integral part of a community is something that people with intellectual disabilities have not always had the opportunity to experience. Out of fear, concern, and protection we have sheltered people and insulated them from fully experiencing their community and ultimately from experiencing life at its' fullest. Our intent in changing our approach was to better facilitate the opportunities outlined in our mission; to live, learn, work, and play, and we believe that to do that people need to live their lives in a way that is meaningful to them, and not in a way that makes it easier for us as an organization.

Some of the changes that we have made as an organization and the purpose behind them are listed below;

Changes to our organizational structure

To better facilitate the move away from being facility based, and to accommodate the eventual move from organizational case management it was necessary to make some significant changes to our organizational structure.

The primary structural change was the elimination of the traditional Day Habilitation and Residential Habilitation departments to create what we are calling suites. Suites are managed by a Client Services Manager (CSM) who is responsible for the day to day operations within the suite. They are the point of contact for families and guardians' regarding what is happening with their loved one. They are the expert for all things that are happening with each person within the suite.

To support the CSM, two other positions were created to best support our transition to a community based life.

The Planning Coordinator position is responsible for all scheduling within a suite. They schedule staff members, and assist the people with whom they work to plan and do the things that they want to do and that are important to them.

The Housing Specialist and Lead Staff positions are responsible for assisting the CSM with the training of staff, safety procedures, tracking documentation, and assuring that people have the things that they need and want.

All of these positions are critical to the overall success of supporting people to live in their community of choice. We are still fine tuning some of the duties, but we feel like the structure is solid.

Organizational Change Continued

Employment

In January 2014 we discontinued providing sub minimum wage or sheltered work as a service. The elimination of sheltered work is a national trend that is absolutely in line with our organizational changes to support people in living their lives outside of a facility based setting. We closed the sheltered workshop at Ark to encourage more competitive employment for those people who want to work, and to facilitate an individualized approach rather than a group approach to employment.

One of the cornerstones of a community based life is the opportunity to be gainfully employed, which allows an individual to more fully experience their life. Gainful employment not only provides financial resources, but the self-esteem and confidence that comes with employment are basic to someone's chances of being fully included in their community.

Our effort toward providing more competitive employment for people has seen great strides in the first six months of our new structure. Twenty-one of people who had previously not been employed, or were under employed have gained competitive employment in a variety of jobs. We employ two full time Employment Specialists who are very skilled at supporting people to find work. They work with individuals and employers to find situations that are beneficial to all parties. They also continue to make many valuable contacts with businesses in Laramie that will provide opportunities for employment for many more people in the future.

Education

To ensure meaningful and necessary opportunities for people to spend their day we have dedicated extensive time and effort to further developing our educational offerings at Ark.

We have always facilitated some sort of learning for the people we support, but traditionally it was based on a day habilitation group, and not based on what each person really wanted to learn. The first step that we have taken in developing these opportunities was to develop an outcome based, curriculum driven set of courses. Each person has the ability to pick and choose the courses in which they would like to participate. Courses are offered in the arts, movement, and language arts and literacy. There are expected outcomes for each of the courses which are evaluated at the end of each semester to determine the improvement and progression of each student. Several instructors have been hired over the past year that have particular expertise in an area of instruction, which has increased our ability to offer even more courses on a variety of subjects.

Our education offerings are intended to supplement and enrich a persons' life, not to take the place of seeking competitive employment, or accessing the many wonderful things that are offered throughout the community of Laramie.

Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan has been instrumental in guiding us through the many changes we have made over the last four years. With so many changes being implemented, we determined that it was time to complete a total overhaul of the plan in order to ensure the most up to date focus areas and action items.

The result of this overhaul was a slight change in our areas of focus. In addition to Diversification of Funds, we have added Diversification of Services, Excellence in Services, and Engagement in Ark's Vision and Mission.

We feel that these new focus areas more accurately reflect the needs and direction of the organization at this time. As always, we will review the plan and report progress on action items each month, and ensure that we stay mission and values driven in every aspect of the services we provide.

Grants and Funding

Over the past fiscal year, Ark has benefited from the following grants:

Guthrie Family Foundation – Cooper Center Visual Arts - \$25,000

United Way of Albany County – General Operating Support - \$19,641

Wyoming Arts Council – Arts Education Grant – Youth Arts Initiative - \$6877

Wyoming Arts Council – Grants to Organizations – Public Performances - \$5682

Bank of the West – General Operating Support - \$5000

Rocky Mountain Power Foundation – Youth Arts Initiative - \$2000

Safeway Foundation - General Operating Support - \$1000

Soroptimist of Laramie – Breast Cancer Screenings - \$1000

US Bancorp Foundation - General Operating Support - \$1000

Walmart Foundation – Rain Barrels - \$1000

Satisfaction Survey

Annually, Ark sends out a satisfaction survey to family members and guardians. The feedback and input we received from our stakeholders is very important to us. Results from the 2014 survey include:

- 96.6% favorable response to the question, “Overall, I feel that services and supports that Ark provides are making a positive difference in the life of my family member.”
- 96.6% favorable response to the question, “Overall, I am satisfied with the supports and services provided by the Ark.”
- 96.5% favorable response to the question, “Ark fosters an environment that allows your family member to learn what is necessary and meaningful to realize personal success.”
- 94.8% favorable response to the question, “Ark facilitates opportunities for your family member to live an enriched, full and individualized life.”
- 94.7% favorable response to the question, “Ark provides opportunities for your family member to develop meaningful relationships and participate in activities they enjoy.”

Some of the comments received:

- “I am grateful for all you do. Thank you, thank you, thank you.”
- “Ark is an amazing place!”
- “Our son’s lifestyle has been greatly enriched by Ark Regional Services.”
- “I understand the challenges are hefty. This is exactly why boldness and fearlessness are so important in going forward in a new direction. I applaud what you’ve done so far.”
- “Great Job to all of you!”
- “I’m just so grateful for all you do and the care is so awesome. Thank You!”
- “The entire staff has been great. Keep doing exactly what you are. You all have made a very positive impact on all our lives. Thank you.”
- “Really appreciate all you do.”
- “I am thankful every day that [our son] is safe with 24 hour care.”
- “We realize you are challenged by changes in your system, and feel you are continuing to improve services.”
- “All in all I’m very happy with Ark and what they furnish my son. Thank you so much for your organization.”
- “Thank you for caring for [my brother] in an ever professional and compassionate manner.”
- “Thank you for being a very positive influence in [our son’s] life. You are helping him become an independent individual. Thank you.”
- “I LOVE THE ARK!!!!!!”
- “Thanks again for everything you have done over the years.”
- “Ark has done a FANTASTIC job. We are very impressed with all aspects of the services Ark provides.”
- “Ark has been there for our family and our client for over 30 years, and has always strove to do what we want and what he needs. Thank all of you!”
- “We are excited and impressed about all the services and all the changes being made and we cannot say enough about them or every single staff member involved in her care. The staff, every single one of them are so outgoing, friendly and caring with her and every client and yet so committed to their jobs and it shows in every way.”

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators and Results for Fiscal Year 2014 were:

Indicator: People will be free from restraints and receive medications as prescribed.

Progress: Reducing and minimizing restraints and medication errors continue to be an organizational focal point. Restraints performed averaged less than two per month, the same as the previous year. Medication errors reported were 0.05% of overall assisted medications during the fiscal year.

Indicator: People will have stability and consistency in their staff support.

Progress: Part-time staff turnover decreased 7% as compared to the previous fiscal year.

Indicator: More people will have the opportunity to receive support from Ark Regional Services.

Progress: Ark began providing services to five new clients as compared to two the previous fiscal year.

Indicator: People receiving services and their family are satisfied with services provided by Ark.

Progress: 96.6% of people responding to the survey positively responded to the question: "Overall, I feel that services and supports that Ark provides are making a positive difference in the life of my family member.

Indicator: People we support will maintain continuous employment with the same employer.

Progress: Fifteen individuals maintained continuous employment with the same employer during the fiscal year.

Indicator: People we support will receive community employment services that are cost effective.

Progress: Employment specialists were instrumental in coordinating numerous job opportunities and gainful employment for individuals who had not previously been seeking employment.

Indicator: People we support will have more opportunities to obtain employment.

Progress: Twelve individuals completed job interviews in the community during the year.

Indicator: Employers are satisfied with the job performance of people served.

Progress: 100% of monthly and quarterly employer's surveys indicated overall satisfaction.

1st Annual Fundraising Dinner & Auction

On Saturday, April 19th at the Albany County Fairgrounds Activity Building, we hosted our 1st Annual Fundraising Dinner & Auction. The event was attended by over 200 people and we raised over \$45,000 to support the services we provide. We had 33 sponsors, and over 100 businesses and/or individuals provided raffle or auction items. We are looking forward to our 2nd annual event which will take place on Saturday, April 25, 2015.

Platinum Sponsors

Bank of the West

Carpet One Floor & Home

Gold Sponsors

ACPE Federal Credit Union

Groathouse Construction

Premium Health at Home

Spiegelberg Lumber & Building Co

Trihydro Corporation & Keith and Ann Marcott

Walgreens

Silver Sponsors

Norm and Dottie Bock

Warren Federal Credit Union

White's University Motors

Bronze Sponsors

Adventure Dodge & Steve and Brenda Marshall

Cheesbrough Rentals

Cowboy Moving & Storage

Downey & Associates Wealth Management

Gary and Ami Egge

First Interstate Bank of Laramie

Jim and Jean Gray

Wayne and Sandy Huber

Insurance Unlimited

J. Vasquez Construction

Laramie Plains Federal Credit Union

Laramie Tire Factory

Gene and Sandy McCarty

Mary and Herman Moreno

Pathways Mental Health Professionals

Tim and Shirley Pratt

Timothy M. Hearne, CPA PC

Friends

ReMax - Les' Auto - Ellenbecker Oil, Inc - Melvin and Isa Riley

Ark Annual Meeting

On Saturday, October 5, 2013 we hosted our annual meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to update our most important stakeholders about the important things that happened over the previous year and discuss changes that were taking place across the organization and throughout the disability system in Wyoming. The meeting was attended by many family members, guardians, and Ark staff. We had a very frank discussion about changes taking place at the State level and how that was going to affect Ark Regional Services. We feel this communication was vital in order to ensure that everyone had the most recent information. We were especially pleased with the question and answer portion of the meeting. It allowed for many of our most important stakeholders to ask some very poignant questions and allow for a really positive conversation. We are looking forward to our next annual meeting which will take place on October 11, 2014.

Technology

With our shift from a facility based approach to a community based approach came the need for several of our staff to have mobile offices. Mobile offices allow our Client Service Managers and Planning Coordinators to be more flexible with their time and be more available to the staff and people served within each suite, rather than being tied to a desktop computer in an office. We supplied these individuals with Chromebooks and the ability to connect to the internet wirelessly at every location in which they work. All of their profiles and documents are saved to the cloud, which simplifies the recovery process if a device is lost or broken.

Therap continues to be our most used technological tool. The majority of our client information, documentation, and health tracking is stored on Therap. This provides all of our staff access to real time information regarding the individuals they assist any time or place that they have an internet connection. Additionally, staff with Android devices can now use the Therap app to document medication assistance on the Electronic Medication Administration Record.

Wyoming State Legislature 2014 Budget Session

The 2014 budget session of the Wyoming State Legislature focused on two laws that will impact the disability system, although minimally.

House Enrolled Act No. 53 (HEA0053) established Employment First as a state policy in order to support competitive employment in integrated settings. It defined employment first as a concept to facilitate the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workplace and community, and defined Integrated Setting as a setting typically found in the community in which individuals with disabilities interact with individuals without disabilities to the same extent as other individuals who have disabilities.

This act also directed Governor Mead to convene a task force to develop a strategic plan to implement the Employment First policy. The task force must submit status reports annually to the interim Joint Labor Committee by October 1st from 2014 through 2017. These reports will provide updates on the adoption of rules and the implementation of the Employment First Strategic Plan.

This act doesn't change the services that Ark Regional Services provides, nor does it change the way in which services are provided. It does however, conceptually raise the level of awareness that the State of Wyoming collectively has of the importance of hiring people with disabilities, and the important role employment plays in people's lives.

HEA0058 is the second piece of legislation that received significant attention during the session. There are three major elements to this law:

- Permits the Behavioral Health Division to pursue any allowable exceptions to federal conflict free case management rules for rural or frontier areas.
- Allows individual or organizational case managers to provide case management to "discrete clients."
- Extends the transition time for case managers to obtain required education to three years, and allows credit for previous case management experience in lieu of education.

We have made significant structural changes to the organization in preparation to move to a conflict free case management system. We believe that the case management aspect that is most important to families is the relationship and daily contact that they and the people we serve are able to have with their current case manager. To continue to meet this expectation we have built the internal relationship, the Client Services Manager, into our new structure.

We know that the disability system in Wyoming is unsustainable. We will continue to work with the Behavioral Health Division, the Department of Health, and the Wyoming Legislature to be part of the solution that ensures continued quality services for all people with disabilities throughout Wyoming.

Skilled Nursing

A major change for our organization in the past year was the discontinuation of skilled nursing as a service offered by Ark. This decision was not made lightly, and was based on a couple of factors.

There was a financial consideration due to changes in service definitions to the Title XIX Home and Community Based Waiver. It would have been difficult to meet the requirements to bill for skilled nursing, but that was not the primary reason for our decision.

Because Ark is a community based program, we believe that the people for whom we provide support should access the resources found in Laramie to meet their individual needs, including health care. We are not, nor do we want to be a medical facility. If someone requires intensive medical support, we will work with their primary health care provider to assure that those needs are met by using typical community resources like home health care and hospital services. Having skilled nurses on staff is contrary to that philosophy and had created a dependence that kept people from fully participating in their community.

Recycling

Throughout Fiscal Year 2014 we put pen to paper to define how recycling fit into our future. We crunched numbers to determine how to make recycling profitable so that we might be able to continue the program. We did the math...and unfortunately it didn't add up.

Ark Regional Services has been honored to provide a much needed and very worthwhile service to the City of Laramie and Albany County for over 30 years. We are proud to have been even a small part in promoting and increasing recycling in our City, our County, and our State. However, due to steady decreases in volumes, significant changes in the recycling market, and the challenges of competing in the global recycling industry, Ark Regional Services discontinued our recycling services, effective May 1, 2014.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity we have had to work with the Laramie community and the amazing support we have received throughout the years. Although our recycling program will no longer exist, Ark Regional Services will continue to facilitate opportunities for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities to live, learn, work, and play. We will continue to develop relationships that lead to tremendous volunteer and employment opportunities for the people we support. We look forward to a future that is bright, and brings with it new and exciting prospects for people with whom we work to truly participate in this community that they call home.

Cooper Center for Creative Arts

The Cooper Center hosted several events throughout Fiscal Year 2014. Below are some of the high points:

- August 2013 - Art Sale and Auction at the Cooper Center
- November 14-16, 2013 - “The Rat Pack” was performed at the Cooper Center
- May 29, 2014 - “Spring Awakening” visual art exhibit at The Cooper Center
- May 29 - 31, 2014 - The Canterbury Tales was performed at The Cooper Center

Ark Health In Action

In January of 2011, Ark introduced a new health and wellness program for employees and clients called Ark Health in Action (AHA). The purpose of AHA is to promote healthy and active lifestyles for everyone at our organization by focusing on fun. The vision of AHA is that all people at Ark Regional Services will lead healthy and active lifestyles. AHA will support this vision by:

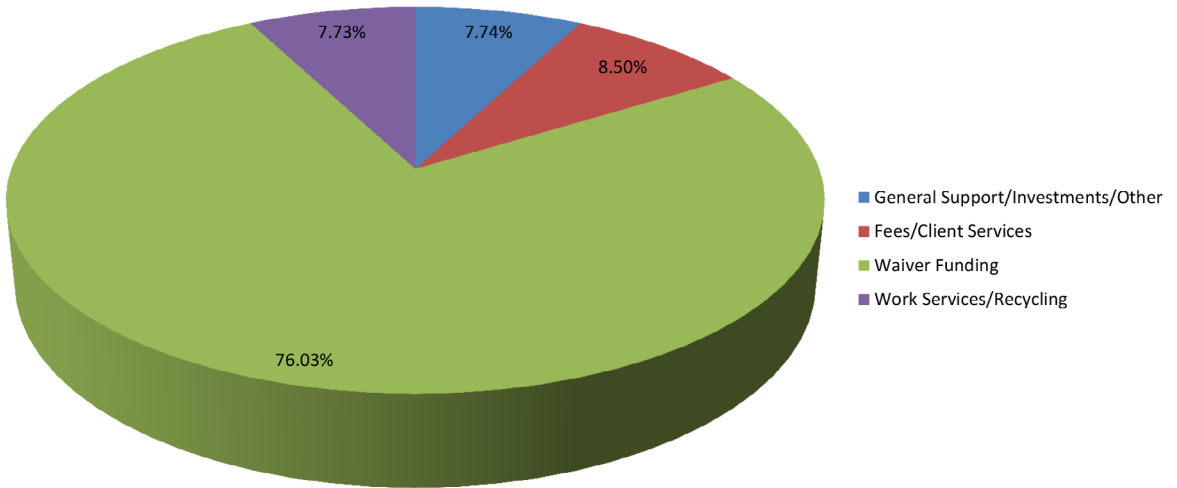
- distributing information and teaching skills;
- coordinating events and activities;
- creating an environment of support & teamwork;
- and, celebrating people’s accomplishments and successes!

During Fiscal Year 2014 this program provided a variety of activities that were open to everyone at the organization. Some of the highlights included:

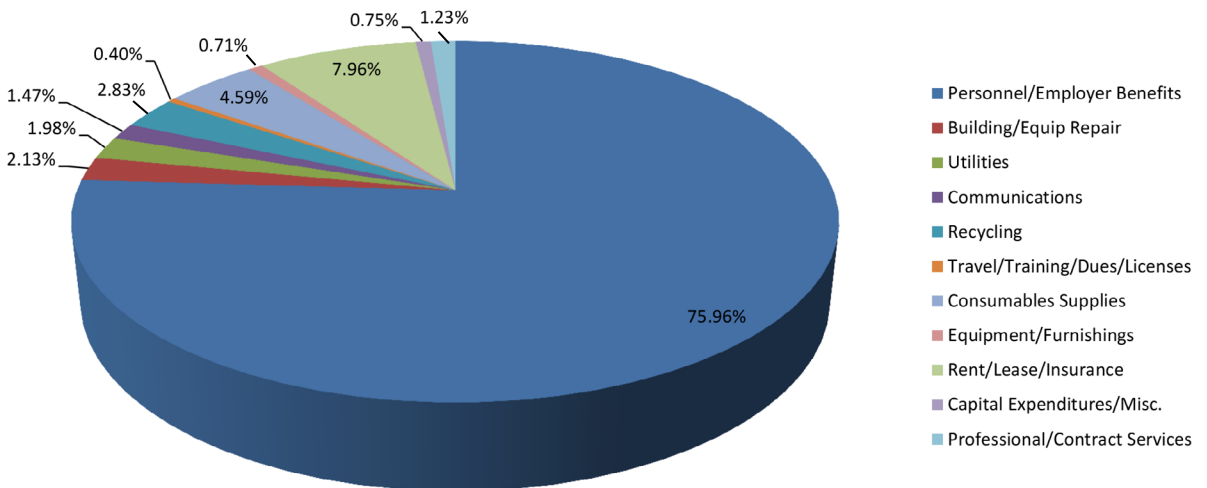
- Winterfest, which was a week long team event that featured games and contests including food sculptures, a winter clothes relay race, a dance competition, and a snowman building competition.
- Additions to our fitness DVD lending library.
- A monthly event titled AHA’s Monthly DVD Fitness Test where we select one DVD from the lending library and test it in a group setting.
- Several photo contests which encouraged people to go outside and take photos of the things they saw while hiking or walking.
- Activity punch cards, which allowed people to record their activities and be entered into a monthly and quarterly drawing for prizes

Financial Information

Income



Expenses



Board of Directors

Our board of directors continues to dedicate their time, talent, and commitment to Ark Regional Services. They have been an instrumental source of insight and vision as we embark on these exciting and challenging times. We are fortunate to have Pam Dovey, Keith Downey, Sam Dunnuck, Keith Marcott, Joe Shumway, and Emory Spiegelberg to guide and govern our organization.

Ark Memorial Foundation

The Ark Memorial Foundation was established to help ensure the financial stability of Ark Regional Services. The Foundation offers a variety of giving options so that donors can support individual programs or the organization as a whole. Some of the options include, contributing to the Cooper Center Endowment, setting up memorials for loved ones, making a general donation to the Equestrian Center, supporting the Adopt-a-Horse program, or providing general operating support for Ark. Information on all of these giving options is available on our website. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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