

## The Arc 2020 Joint Annual Meeting Summary

On November 5, 2020, The Arc of North Dakota in collaboration with The Arc of Bismarck, The Arc of Cass County, The Arc of Dickinson, and The Arc Upper Valley, hosted a joint annual meeting.

The pandemic presented many barriers to in-person gatherings in 2020. The Arc of North Dakota and affiliated chapters used these challenging circumstances as an opportunity to gather more than 50 people together from across the state by using an online meeting platform. The theme of the evening was “Together We Are Stronger,” which focused on the fact that people must work together to create positive changes for people with disabilities.

Traditionally, chapters of The Arc give numerous awards to people and businesses who exemplify the work of the organization by advancing the rights of people with disabilities and helping them to live a full life in the community. Instead of giving out multiple awards, as the meeting format had changed, The Arc decided to honor the work and life of one person, who dedicated her life to advocating fiercely for the rights of people with disabilities. The Arc of North Dakota and affiliated chapters presented the 1<sup>st</sup> Helen Bechold Advocacy Award to Helen posthumously. Friends Rhonda Anderson and Carla Tice accepted it on her behalf.

The Arc of North Dakota provided a brief update about the work happening around the state. Afterwards, it was a privilege to welcome Peter Berns, the CEO of The Arc of the United States, to speak about the work happening at the national level. This presentation highlighted the importance of all chapters (local, state, and national) working together to create the biggest impact. The most exciting part of the evening was hearing from Keynote Speakers Cristina and Angel, from the award-winning show Born This Way. They spoke about why full community participation is important to them and how chapters of The Arc can help others live independent lives as they do.

With 5 chapters participating in the joint meeting, it was decided to keep the agenda as simple as possible. Therefore, individual chapters did not conduct any formal business that night. It was announced at the end of the meeting that local boards would temporarily approve anything that would normally be approved at annual meetings, as needed, and then have those items ratified at annual meetings of individual chapters in 2021.

This report was compiled on November 3, 2021, by the Executive Directors of the participating chapters: Rachel Hafner, Kirsten Dvorak, Janell Ness, and Pam Kolling.