

# Arc Creates a Win-Win Situation for Businesses and the Disabled

## WORKFORCE: Nonprofit Matches Job Skills to the Needs of Local Companies

By EMMET PIERCE

When **Anthony J. DeSalis** began working for **The Arc of San Diego**, he had no idea that he would be there 32 years later, helping people with developmental disabilities achieve economic independence.



Anthony J. DeSalis

It's a job that has given purpose to the life of the attorney, who serves as The Arc's executive vice president and chief operating officer.

"I originally came to the organization thinking it would be a stopgap for me," he said. "I had never worked with people with developmental disabilities before. The mission and the way people treated each other in this organization inspired me."

The Arc provides services to individuals who are physically or mentally challenged, DeSalis explained. Serving between 2,100 and 2,200 people at a time, The Arc is a private, not-for-profit corporation. It's also one of the San Diego region's largest human-service agencies.

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### The Benefits

And it's become an effective employment service, placing hundreds of people in jobs across the county. There are numerous benefits for employers as The Arc covers costs of hiring, training, payroll and workers' compensation. Utilizing

The Arc may provide financial incentives, including tax credits. And most importantly to businesses, Arc employees have proven to be loyal and motivated with low turnover rates.

DeSalis has worked his way through the ranks of The Arc. Prior to his present job, he was a senior director of operations, an area director, a workshop manager, a production supervisor, and a workshop floor supervisor.

DeSalis noted that it was founded in 1951 by a group of parents and community members who were concerned about the lack of services available for children with intellectual disabilities. The organization incorporated in 1953.

Today The Arc has offices in a variety of locations, including downtown San Diego, San Marcos, Serra Mesa, Chula Vista, and El Cajon. The Arc also oversees 12 group homes throughout the county and a set of apartment complexes.

There are early intervention programs for toddlers. In addition to employment and independent living programs, The Arc has recreation programs.

"We try to focus on the three major parts of life: employment, where they live, and recreation. You need all three to be a well-rounded individual," said DeSalis. "We also provide services to individuals who are functioning at a higher level. When someone comes with a potential to work, we strive hard to find a good fit in the community, so they can make a living wage and move into an apartment."

### A Variety of Supporters

The Arc is accredited by the **Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities**. The agency receives funding from

## THE ARC OF SAN DIEGO

**President & CEO:** David W. Schneider

**Financial information:** In fiscal 2014 The Arc of San Diego, a private, not-for-profit corporation, and the Arc San Diego Foundation reported consolidated revenue and support of \$34.2 million

**No. of local employees:** About 700 full-time and 600 part-time employees

**Investors:** None

the state and the federal governments, corporation and foundation grants, individual donors, and the **United Way**. The nonprofit **Arc San Diego Foundation** was created in 1992 to help with raising funds.

The Arc's Community Employment Services Program finds jobs for people in a variety of industries. One of the many people who found meaningful work through The Arc is **Amy Giffin**, 30, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. Giffin, who has an associate's degree in child development, has found employment



Amy Giffin

at the **Rancho Family YMCA** in Rancho Peñasquitos. "It's a beautiful location," Giffin said. "I can't say enough about how great it is. The facility is very adaptable for people with challenges and disabilities. It was and is a perfect fit. The kids are great. The staff is awesome."

Giffin was volunteering at local preschools and elementary schools when she heard about The Arc.

"They were the ones who connected me with the YMCA," she said. "So far it is going really well. My first official training day was in February. My first day on the job was March 3."

Working from a wheelchair hasn't been an impediment.

"I love working with the kids because they are so innocent," she said. "One of the things they ask is why I am in the chair. I say 'It's because my legs don't work like yours do, and the chair helps me get around.' I feel lucky I found the Y."

### Supporting the Troops

Located in the Midway District, the **Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD)** is one of The Arc's longstanding employer partners. Retired Marine Col. **Paul Gerencser**, deputy assistant chief of staff for installation and logistics at MCRD, says he has been impressed by the hard-working people The Arc has sent to the depot.

MCRD employs approximately 260 people from The Arc's job-placement program to maintain 388 acres of grounds and work in the depot's mess hall.

He said it's important to MCRD to maintain the appearance of the depot's historic grounds. However, the time of young recruits is better spent learning combat skills than cutting grass and trimming trees. Gerencser said Marine Corps officials realized it was more effective to outsource grounds maintenance so the depot could concentrate on its primary mission: training recruits to be Marines.

The partnership between MCRD and The Arc began in 2000, Gerencser said. Workers from program are highly conscientious, he said.

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