

ANNUAL AWARD CATEGORIES

Employer of the Year:

Purpose: To recognize a company or an individual within an organization who has created employment opportunities for individuals with mental and/or physical disabilities.

Eligibility: A nominee must be a business that has effectively promoted the employment of people with disabilities or be an individual within the organization who has actively assisted in making employment opportunities successful.

Basis for Selection: Business or individuals considered for this award must have:

- *Demonstrated leadership in employing people with disabilities*
- *Positively influenced the attitudes and thinking of other professionals as well as the general public regarding the employment of individuals with special needs, or*
- *Helped minimize barriers in creating employment success*

Volunteer of the Year:

Purpose: To recognize volunteer(s) who have given generously of their time and talents to help benefit individuals with disabilities. This may include parents, brothers, sisters, volunteers, etc.

Eligibility: Any person or group of persons who has contributed toward accomplishing the mission of ARK Advocates and who has not received compensation for these services.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- *Assisted individuals with disabilities and/or their families through a volunteer effort.*
- *Provided assistance with enthusiasm and commitment.*
- *Demonstrated a positive attitude toward ARK Advocates and its mission.*

Advocate of the Year:

Purpose: To recognize a community volunteer mentor who has helped an individual or a group of individuals with a disability achieve a higher degree of independence.

Eligibility: Any person who has been an advocate for at least one year and who has made a positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- *Strived to help individuals reach a greater degree of independence and a better quality of life.*
- *Provided the means to achieve a greater concept of self determination.*
- *Demonstrated a positive attitude toward individuals with disabilities.*

Teacher of the Year:

Purpose: To recognize a classroom teacher who has demonstrated excellence in teaching students with disabilities/special needs.

Eligibility: A nominee must have been actively engaged in teaching during the last school year. Eligibility is not limited to special education teachers.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- ***Demonstrated teaching excellence in the classroom.***
- ***Positively influenced the attitudes and thinking of other education professionals as well as the general public regarding the education of students with special needs.***
- ***Significantly involved parents and others from the community in the educational process.***
- ***Fostered inclusion with students without disabilities in the educational process.***

Para-educator of the Year:

Purpose: To recognize a classroom educator who has demonstrated excellence in helping students with disabilities/special needs meet their education goals.

Eligibility: A nominee must have been actively engaged in the classroom during the last school year. Eligibility is not limited to special education teachers.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- ***positively influenced the attitudes and thinking of other para-educators as well as the general public regarding the education of students with special needs.***
- ***significantly involved parents and others from the community in the educational process.***
- ***Fostered inclusion with students without disabilities in the educational process.***

Community Inclusion Award:

Purpose: To recognize an outstanding citizen or group of people who makes a substantial effort or performed a service to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully integrated in the community, either professionally, socially, academically, or otherwise.

Eligibility: Any person, aside from a teacher, who is having a positive impact on the social, vocational, therapeutic or other aspects of community living for individuals with disabilities, is eligible.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- ***Strived to help individuals reach a greater degree of independence and a better quality of life.***
- ***Provided the means to achieve a greater concept of self-determination.***
- ***Demonstrated a positive attitude toward individuals with disabilities.***

Service Provider of the Year:

Purpose: To recognize a direct care staff who has demonstrated exceptional sensitivity to people with disabilities and who has exhibited quality work within the position held.

Eligibility: Any person who has been a direct care staff for at least one year and who has made a positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- ***Strived to help individuals reach a greater degree of independence and a better quality of life.***
- ***Provided the means to achieve a greater concept of self determination.***
- ***Demonstrated a positive attitude toward individuals with disabilities***

Sibling of the Year Award:

Purpose: To recognize an individual who has a sibling with a mental and/or physical disability and has provided extraordinary support to that sibling to help increase his or her level of independence.

Eligibility: An individual who has a sibling with a mental and/or physical disability and has contributed to enhancing the life of that sibling and assisting the sibling to achieve more independence.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- ***Taken an extra effort to help their sibling achieve a better quality of life.***
- ***Provided encouragement to their sibling in achieving self determination.***
- ***Demonstrated a positive attitude toward overcoming disabilities.***

Citizenship Award:

Purpose: To recognize an individual with disabilities for outstanding participation in/or contribution to the community.

Eligibility: An individual who has contributed to or has participated more fully in the community in some outstanding way will be considered. Evaluation and consideration of person's leadership will include the challenges of the specific disability.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- ***Strived to reach a greater degree of independence and a better quality of life.***
- ***Provided encouragement to and advocated on behalf of others in achieving self determination.***
- ***Demonstrated a positive attitude toward overcoming disabilities.***

Professional of the Year:

Purpose: To recognize an individual employed in community services or supports who has demonstrated sensitivity or the ability to promote outstanding quality which results in increased independence or for additional opportunities for people with disabilities.

Eligibility: Any person employed in a field of service, aside from teaching, who is having a positive impact on the social, vocational, therapeutic or other aspects of community living for individuals with disabilities is eligible.

Basis for Selection: Individuals considered for this award must have:

- ***Strived to help individuals reach their highest degree of independence.***
- ***Provided assistance with sensitivity to the unique qualities and individual potential of people with disabilities.***
- ***Demonstrated a high degree of competence in his/her chosen field.***
- ***Influenced others by a positive attitude and performance of duties.***

Distinguished Community Service:

Purpose: To recognize a company or an organization that has performed an outstanding service on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Eligibility: Nominee must be a business or organization that made significant assistance either financially or through service or leadership.

Basis for Selection: Businesses or organizations considered for this award must have:

- ***Demonstrated a firm belief in the mission of ARK Advocates.***
- ***Exhibited leadership in the community regarding the needs of people with disabilities, their families and ARK Advocates.***
- ***Demonstrated a proactive attitude toward solving challenges facing individuals who have disabilities.***