



Community Supports Second Annual Sprout Film Festival: Event Raises Over \$4,000 for The Arc

Entertaining and educational evening included film about Harford County woman who, despite her disabilities, thrives as an employee of Acadia Windows and Doors

[Aberdeen, MD] December 4, 2014—More than 80 community members of all ages and backgrounds attended the second annual Sprout Film Festival presented by The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region (“The Arc NCR”) on Friday, November 14th to watch 10 short, award-winning films that highlighted or starred people living with autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, Down syndrome or other disabilities. The festival’s goal was to shatter misconceptions about or prejudices toward individuals living with disabilities and to show how these individuals can enjoy a rewarding life within their community. The event also raised more than \$4,000 to support the work of The Arc NCR, which has served people with disabilities for more than 61 years.

Sprout, the New York City-based parent organization that founded the Sprout Film Festival, partnered with The Arc NCR to create this unique event. One of Sprout’s representatives, Harriet Yaffe, served as host and Film Program Coordinator. Thanks to this support, in addition to numerous other local sponsors, the festival was very successful. Other sponsors included: Ravens Nest No. 1, MNS Group, The Goddard School of Bel Air, Harford County Cultural Arts Board, and Elegant Restoration, Inc.

“Film is a powerful medium that uses the art of storytelling to alter someone’s perceptions,” said the Arc NCR Development Director Julie Chmura. “This festival was a huge success for us because it allowed us to deliver our message in a different way, helping the public experience and understand both the challenges faced by and possibilities available to people with disabilities.”

A highlight of the festival was a short film about Jessica Markle, a local Harford County resident who is blind and has developmental disabilities. When she graduated from Maryland School for the Blind in 2006, The Arc NCR assisted Markle with finding work at Acadia Windows and Doors in Rosedale. For

Acadia, she installs wood pile weather stripping in window sashes and packages small components for their contractors and field installation crews. Due to her exemplary work record and dedication to her job, Markle was named Employee of the Year by the Harford County Commission for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities for 2006. To watch the video “Jessica Markle’s Story,” visit www.arcncr.org and click on “Hire Our Workforce” to learn more about Jessica.

Ms. Chmura added, “Jess’ story is inspiring because it shows the indomitable will of a young woman who not only overcomes her disabilities, but has found work where she truly thrives and makes a positive contribution to her company. She is one of the many The Arc NCR works with on a daily basis who refuses to be defined by her disabilities. I’m so pleased that this Festival helped share their stories with a larger audience.”

###

About The Arc NCR (<http://www.arcncr.org/index.html>)

For 61 years, The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region (The Arc NCR) has helped people with intellectual and developmental disabilities build better lives one person at a time. The Arc NCR currently offers services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in Harford and Cecil Counties.

About the Sprout Film Festival (<http://gosprout.org/film-festival/>)

The Sprout Film Festival was founded in 2003 and is programmed and supported by Sprout, a New York City based non-profit organization dedicated to bringing innovative programming to individuals with I/DD. The mission of the film festival is to inspire audiences, promote inclusion and support transformative filmmaking as an integral part of social change. This unique event, which focuses exclusively on films that celebrate the diverse lives and creativity of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), strives to challenge assumptions and breakdown stereotypes. By introducing powerful, thought-provoking films from around the world to new and ever-more inclusive audiences, we hope to promote greater acceptance, celebrate difference and light the spark to help make the invisible, visible.