

## **Media Release**

### **08/23/10 – ARCA Receives National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grant for Statewide Demonstration Project**

<http://www.ARCAOpeningDoors.org>

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### **ARCA's Health and Wellness Program Receives NIH Funding for Statewide Demonstration Project**

#### **Statewide Demonstration Project Promotes Healthy Lifestyles among People with Developmental Disabilities**

*Albuquerque, NM* – The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development awarded a \$1,000,000 grant to improve health for people with developmental disabilities in New Mexico and Illinois. Leveraging the power of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, ARCA, NorthPointe Resources, Inc. and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) formed an interstate consortium to build infrastructure for improving health among our population with developmental disabilities. “ARCA worked with UIC to test and refine a model health and wellness program developed by UIC for people with developmental disabilities,” said Elaine Solimon, President and CEO, ARCA. “Hundreds of individuals receiving ARCA services have graduated from this program having learned to make healthy choices. People

are exercising and making smart decisions about food that are positively impacting their quality of life. This grant provides us the opportunity to move our wellness initiative to another level by taking it statewide and looking at its effectiveness in diverse communities to improve public health. This project will empower New Mexico communities to identify and act on a broad scope of health related issues.”

“When people we serve access health promotion programming, they acquire the knowledge to make healthy lifestyle choices,” said Ed Kaul, ARCA’s Community Services Director. “They become partners with their healthcare providers, effectively communicating issues or concerns and significantly reducing their health disparities.”

Beth Marks, RN, PhD at UIC is the principal investigator in this innovative community/academic health center partnership. “For people with developmental disabilities little data exists on how to translate health promotion research into public health practice so that they have health equity,” said Marks. “By building capacity across communities we can better facilitate health care delivery.” Lisa Cacari-Stone, PhD, UNM Department of Family and Community Medicine, will serve as a local project consultant.

As Medicaid dollars supporting people with developmental disabilities are shrinking, this consortium has garnered significant resources through NIH to

develop clear recommendations for health parity for people with developmental disabilities by asking questions of community stakeholders that will result in local action plans. ARCA, with 53 years of providing direct care, will facilitate the research by engaging communities and tribal entities statewide in developing culturally relevant research questions and the translation and dissemination of evidence based health promotion practices.

Stanley (Stan) D. Handmaker, MD, has worked with infants and children with developmental disabilities in New Mexico since 1977, and has worked with ARCA for more than ten years. "The chronic medical issues associated with obesity and sedentary lifestyle are even more of an issue with persons with developmental disabilities and place an enormous burden on our healthcare system," said Handmaker. "Healthy choices improve a person's quality of life and can significantly reduce the number and severity of issues associated with obesity. Developing a methodology specifically for people with developmental disabilities is a proactive approach to reducing the strain on Medicaid dollars while giving people the tools they need to lead great lives."

This three year demonstration project will build much needed statewide infrastructures to promote and maintain healthy lifestyles among persons with developmental disabilities.

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*ARCA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1957 by a group of Albuquerque families who had children with developmental disabilities. The mission of ARCA has remained consistent for 53 years: opening doors for people with developmental disabilities to be valued members of our community. For more information, please call Michele Cody at 505-332-6803 or visit our web site at [www.ARCASOpeningDoors.org](http://www.ARCASOpeningDoors.org).*