

Nonprofit Chamber of Services
Nonprofit of the Week

This series has been established with the intent of increasing awareness of the many causes and efforts taken on by our nonprofit brethren. If your nonprofit has a particular event taking place during the course of a week, an anniversary for example, please make this known and we will do all possible to accommodate a spotlight that coincides. On behalf of our membership, we wish to say “thank you” for taking a few moments from your busy schedule to learn a bit more about our community of nonprofits.

The Arc of Sedgwick County’s 8th Annual Christmas Light drive thru is a treat for the senses. The beautiful lights accompanied by lively music and the crisp night air make for an experience that shouldn’t be missed. The display is open Sunday through Thursday from 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. and on Fridays and Saturdays as well as Christmas Eve from 6:00 p.m. – 11:55 p.m. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted to benefit The Arc’s many programs for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Arc of Sedgwick County began in 1953 when parents concerned about services and future opportunities for their children formed The Wichita Association for Retarded Children. The Arc currently serves persons with developmental disabilities including autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and epilepsy.

The Arc believes opportunities should be provided to all citizens so they can achieve the highest educational and social level of which they are capable. The Arc pursues their mission by offering multiple services including information and referrals, self advocacy education, and support groups.

Their newest program provides special education students with the opportunity to gain confidence and friendships through a mentor relationship with another teen. The Circle of Friends program matches high school aged mentors with Special Education Students. Mentors gain confidence acting as a leader, while their peer with special needs gains the support and guidance of a regular ed. peer. This program has been implemented at Maize and Wichita Northwest High Schools and has been very well received. In January of 2006 the program will expand to 8-10 other high schools in the Wichita area. Recently The Arc sponsored a dance for all students participating in the program and close to 200 students turned out.

The success of this newest program is due, in part, to the visionary leadership of The Arc’s Executive Director, Kevin Fish, who actually began working at The Arc ten years ago as the Youth Coordinator. In all the years he has been serving people with developmental disabilities, Kevin feels that he has gained more from his work than any of the people he has worked for.

For more information on The Arc’s *Lights on St. Paul*, *The Circle of Friends*, or any of their other programs and services, please visit their website at www.arc-sedgwickcounty.org or call them at 316.943.1191.