

What up Self Advocates and Friends,

I would like to introduce myself as the new project coordinator for the My Voice My Choice project of The Arc of Mississippi. My name is Nickey Kirkwood and I am a 29-year-old wheelchair user due to paraplegia caused by an illness attacking my spinal cord. I have been an active member of The Arc family since 2006.

I started as an AmeriCorps member who helped the previous project coordinator. During my time as the AmeriCorps member, I learned the ins and outs of the My Voice My Choice project and I actually got the wonderful chance to meet many of you.

As the project coordinator, I hope to take the project to the next level and make it more centered on what you need to know as a self-advocate in today's world. I am hoping to keep you up to date on how you can make sure your voice and choices are totally heard. We are hoping to host our first self-advocacy conference sometime next year and remodel the website. On the website you will be able to join other self-advocates in talking about different issues you may have with the services you receive and even make new friendships.

I am truly looking forward to seeing all of you again throughout the year. Just like the late great Ray Charles, **we gonna make it do what it do baby!** Until then I will say keep on being strong advocates. And give yourself a hug each day. ☺

Nickey



My Voice My Choice  
of Mississippi



*Publication of:*

## ***THE ADVOCATE'S UPGRADE***

*EMPOWERING  
INDIVIDUALS WITH  
DISABILITIES TO BELIEVE  
IN THEMSELVES, GAIN  
THE LIFE SKILLS NEEDED  
TO BE A PRODUCTIVE  
CITIZEN IN THEIR  
COMMUNITY, AND TO  
OVERCOME EVERYDAY  
CHALLENGES.*

*AUGUST 2009*

## 2009 ARC OF MISSISSIPPI CONFERENCE



This year The Arc of Mississippi had its annual conference on July 23-24 in the beautiful city of Natchez, Mississippi. The keynote speakers were Mr. Charlie Lakin and Mr. Peter Berns, who is the executive director of the Arc of the United States. During the conference there were many great workshops/speaker sessions concerning disability rights, services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities in Mississippi, and much more. At the conference, My Voice My Choice had a board meeting where the issues of electing new board officers and members, new organizational brochures, T-shirt designs, and upcoming grant related activities were talked about.

When it came to the fun, the dance and street fair was the greatest. Self-advocates, family, and friends hit the dance floor rocking hard to the songs that the DJ played. The hot air balloon, fireworks show, and the food were all the talk of the street fair.

Micah Miller, a self-advocate, was the official photographer for the conference. If you were not there you should have been. This was a great chance to gain more knowledge about The Arc and its services and have a little fun on the side. Make sure to plan to attend the 2010 Arc of Mississippi Conference because I am sure it will be a big blast.



## EASTER SEALS INTRODUCTION TO TRAVEL TRAINING WORKSHOP

During the week of August 10-14, the project coordinator attended a travel-training workshop in Weehawken, New Jersey to learn how to bring travel training to Mississippi. Travel training is one-on-one training to teach senior citizens and individuals with disabilities to travel safely and independently on fixed-route public transportation systems in their communities. The benefits of this training will be (1) more choices and flexibility for travel, (2) greater self-esteem and independence, and (3) better access to employment, job training, recreation, and much more.

## WORD OF THE QUARTER: SELF-ADVOCACY

Do you know what self-advocacy is? What does the word “self” mean to you? What do you think the word “advocacy” means?



Self-advocacy is speaking for yourself. It is making your choices in life; however, big or small. Self-advocacy is learning about your rights and responsibilities. It also is living the way you want and respecting the rights of others to do the same. Is that what you thought self-advocacy is?

Being a self-advocate may sound like a scary task, but it actually is not. Just by you saying, “I do not like milk” or “I want to go see my friend”, you are being a self-advocate. Speaking up for yourself and letting your voice and choices be heard makes you a self-advocate.

## WE CAN'T HEAR YOU...

We are asking you, the self advocates, to send in your stories or poems you may have written about disability awareness, self advocacy, self determination, and/or your life as an individual with a disability so we can get your voice heard by all of our self advocates and friends. If your story or poem is selected, it will be published in the next newsletter and on the RIOT website. Make sure to include your name, address, and telephone number with your story or poem. Come on don't be afraid, we want to hear YOU!!! If you want to learn more about the RIOT, please visit [www.riot.org](http://www.riot.org).

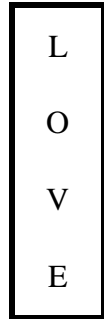
# WORD SEARCH

**Direction:** Find the following words. The word "Love" has been found already to give you a hand. The first self-advocate to send in your finished word search will receive a new My Voice My Choice T-shirt!



My Choice	Self Advocacy	Self Determined	Support
Choice	Responsibility	Respect	Advocate
Family	The Arc	Love ✓	Mike
Matt	Thanks	My Voice	Encourage

M E Z T I P T R O P P U S  
 H N D H G S H C N U L B E  
 I C H E T M A R V K X Y L  
 P O W A R Q N E E O C N F  
 O U E R Y G K S H A A P D  
 S R C C Q J S P C L L M E  
 T A I N C L B O E O K E T  
 E G O U M H V N Y V E C E  
 F E V K W D O S U E R I R  
 K A Y Y A T C I P Q T O M  
 R T M F D V Z B C Y C H I  
 A P L I C O M I K E E C N  
 T E X O L X E L H P P Y E  
 S H R Q N Y H I U S S M D  
 Q A D V O C A T E Y E H A  
 E T T A M T P Y C F R X Z



**APSE of Mississippi 2009 Conference**

September 2-3, 2009  
Eagle Ridge Conference Center  
Raymond, Mississippi

**The Arc of Mississippi 2009 Scramble for Disability Golf Tournament**

October 1, 2009  
Bay Point Golf Club  
Brandon, Mississippi

**My Voice My Choice Annual Retreat/FestiDays**

October 16-17, 2009  
Holmes County State Park  
Durant, Mississippi

**Mississippi MH/MR 2009 Joint Conference**

October 28-30, 2009  
Philadelphia, Mississippi



**Upcoming  
Events**

If you have any questions, about My Voice My Choice or The Arc of Mississippi please feel free to contact Nickey Kirkwood ([nickey@arcms.org](mailto:nickey@arcms.org)) or Mary Ann Robinson ([maryann@arcms.org](mailto:maryann@arcms.org)) through email or even call us at (800) 717-1180.

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