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**Faces of the The Arc**

**Gary McMichael**

Community Living Consultant



When it came time for The Arc Jacksonville to plan for its 50 year anniversary, Gary McMichael was the go-to guy. As The Arc Jacksonville's most tenured employee, at 30 years with the agency, Gary has been here for the good, the bad and everything in between. When the agency began

**Glancing Back/Moving Forward**

This month, The Arc Jacksonville staff celebrated at an in-service the incorporation of our agency 50 years ago on May 26, 1965 by glancing back at milestones along the way and planning our movements toward the future. For me, the review of years past includes both personal and corporate memories. I began working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) when I was 16 years old. I literally grew up as did the field of special education. I expanded professionally while the philosophy of care changed to community-based, public education opened to those with I/DD and the demand for community inclusion grew. I began this work at a state institution, and now I am guiding the development of a residential neighborhood designed to maximize independence and community inclusion. That is a whole lot of change, and yet there is more on the horizon.

I am very proud of the role of change agent that The Arc Jacksonville has taken. Whether it be through our day programs, residential homes, employment services or our college program, The Arc Jacksonville has become an innovative leader among organizations serving the disability community.

This happened because our employees are continually striving to serve persons with I/DD in efficient, effective and empathetic ways. Please join me in saluting our most tenured employee Gary McMichael, our 2015 Employee of the Year Chrissy Pearre and the entire Arc Jacksonville team who are taking steps every day toward achieving during the next 50 years our Arc Jacksonville vision: a community where disability is a distinction without a difference, where individuals will have choices on how they live, learn, work, worship and play.

Jim Whittaker  
President/CEO

putting together a historical timeline, Gary filled in the information gaps, sorted through photos and shared stories of how much things have changed.

The most memorable change Gary noted was Jim Whittaker, The Arc Jacksonville's current President/CEO, assuming leadership of the agency in 2000. "None of us would be here if it wasn't for Mr. Whittaker," said Gary. "We were about to close the doors and he turned it around."

Although the programs, leadership and agency focus may have changed, for Gary the sense of family has not.

"The Arc has always been like a family to me," said Gary.

He has created life-long friendships with co-workers, watched their children grow up and became like family to individuals served by The Arc Jacksonville.

"I fell in love with the individuals and their families and created so many personal bonds," he said.

On May 26, 2015, 50 years to the day from the agency's incorporation, The Arc Jacksonville recognized and honored Gary at a staff-wide celebration and training for his dedication to The Arc Jacksonville and for being an outstanding advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**"Because of The Arc...":** I've become the person I've really wanted to be and after 40 years I can still say I love my job." -Gary McMichael

## Amazon Wish List

The Arc Jacksonville's programs are

## Employee of The Year

Congratulations to Christine Pearre who was awarded Employee of the Year at our recent Employee InService, where we not only celebrated the agency's 50th anniversary but the great employees who've contributed to our legacy of service over the years. Christine Pearre has embraced her position as Community Living Consultant and immersed herself in the program. Over the past year Chrisy has stepped



President/CEO Jim Whittaker and Employee of The Year, Christine Pearre

in and assumed many additional responsibilities in the absence of the program manager. She has worked extensively with the staff to enhance program services and increase the educational and recreational choices available to program participants. She has volunteered at numerous events throughout the year, including speaking at schools and working at The Village Meet and Greet. Chrisy values teamwork and works to keep open communication with other staff members and makes sure everyone stays informed. She is continually making suggestions for improvements and is never satisfied with the status quo. She is a loyal and devoted team member. For these reasons Chrisy Pearre has been chosen as The Arc Jacksonville's 2015 Employee of the Year.

## In-Service Celebration

On May 26th, The Arc Jacksonville celebrated its 50th Anniversary with an In-service honoring our employees and 50 years of wonderful service. During the in-service, The Arc's history and milestone moments were highlighted via a digital timeline presentation. Our President/CEO Jim Whittaker gave a brief "State of The Arc" speech addressing The Arc Jacksonville's origins and progress over the years, where we are currently and how the agency plans to adjust to potential future needs. Special awards were given to celebrate the 2015 Employee of The Year, and staff members were recognized for completion of 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30 years of service.



always in need of items to enhance daily activities. **We have created a wish list of these items on Amazon.**

If you would like to purchase any of these items, they can be mailed to:

**The Arc Jacksonville**  
**Attn: Development**  
**1050 North Davis Street**  
**Jacksonville, FL 32209**

#### **AmazonSmile**

Go through AmazonSmile for all of your Amazon purchases and 0.05% is donated to The Arc Jacksonville.

Thank you anyone who has purchased items from our wish list. Your gift(s) are greatly appreciated by our participants and staff.

**Shop AmazonSmile today!**

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## **Mission Moment**

In honor of mental health month, our Mission Moment focuses on participants from our Psychosocial Rehabilitation program (PSR). The program assists individuals with I/DD with reintegrating into the community. The participants that attend PSR are diverse in their cognitive ability, level of independence, and background. Participants learn to cope with the symptoms they experience so they can remain stable and become more independent. PSR provides a source of support and encouragement to participants while teaching them to self-advocate for their needs.

**[Click here to see the PSR participants featured in this month's mission moment](#)**



## **Stay Connected**

The newsletter isn't the only way to stay connected with updates from The Arc Jacksonville, we've expanded our social media outlets:

**[Friend us on Facebook](#), [follow us on Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#) and view our videos on our [YouTube](#) Channel.**



### **The Arc Jacksonville**

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