

# DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

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Jeremy Park - Sunday, October 13, 2013

With October being Disability Employment Awareness Month, this week let us highlight The Arc Mid-South.

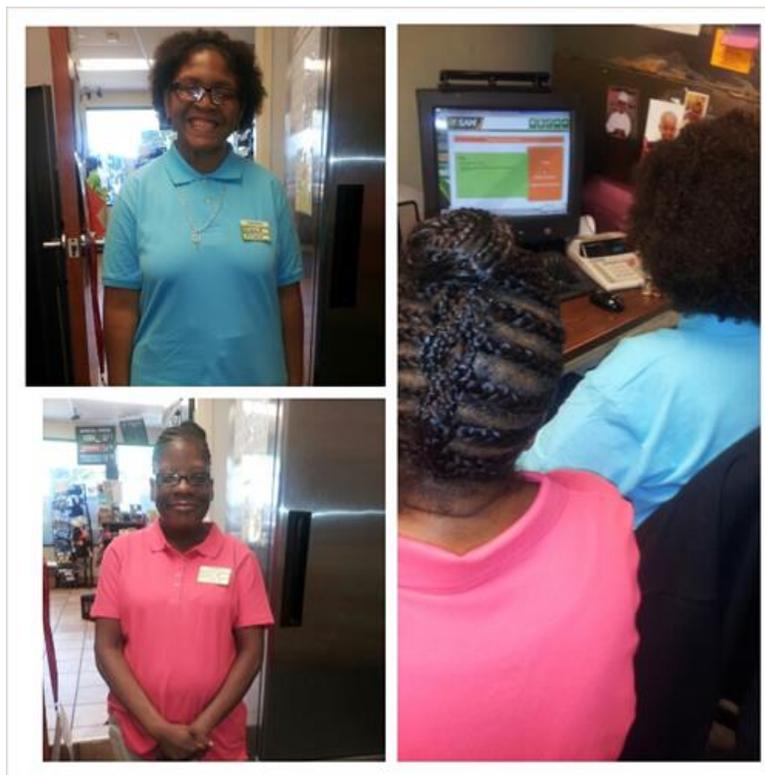
What started as a grassroots movement by parents and civic leaders in 1950 has blossomed into a far-reaching organization focused on empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to achieve their full potential. Last year, The Arc Mid-South served more than 1,350 people and touched another 5,000 through community education forums and advocacy. Their programs and services are holistic by design and include Career Development and Job Placement, Community Training and educational seminars, Elder Care, Family Support Services, weekend retreats and residential summer camp, and L.E.T.S. (Life, Education, Training Skills).

Their Career Development and Job Placement program increases self-reliance and confidence by providing job training, resources, and education to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, so they can live independently. Thanks to partnerships with corporations, like Hershey's, Mapco, Sam's Club/Walmart, and Genghis Grill, The Arc Mid-South is able to provide onsite job training and coaching. Students have the chance to shadow and partner one-on-one with employees at the job sites, in order to learn more about work ethics, customer service, and social interaction. The Arc Mid-South then helps these students find gainful employment.

There are many ways to help The Arc Mid-South, including volunteerism and becoming a Member to support their efforts. Employers can become more engaged by providing employment opportunities, becoming a job training site, or simply exploring accommodations. Accommodations include access to a stool from which to work instead of standing for a long duration or providing headsets to receptionists who find it difficult to use their hands. Perhaps carve out specific jobs from the workday that can be done by an individual with a disability, freeing up valuable time for others to focus on different tasks. Either way, The Arc Mid-South makes it easy by working with employers to match employees with jobs. They assess and develop the skills while providing individuals with disabilities the training necessary to function as independent, productive citizens in our community.



CDJP clients visited Sam's Club to learn more about what employers expect from their employees so that they are more prepared for job interviews.



Two of The Arc Mid-South clients on their first day of employment at Mapco Express.