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ARKANSAS LIFESPAN RESPITE

FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER



RECOGNIZING YOU: NOMINATE THE CAREGIVERS IN YOUR LIFE TODAY!

The Arkansas Lifespan Respite Coalition (ALRC) is pleased to open nominations for the 2022 Arkansas Respite and Caregiver Recognition Awards. These awards look to recognize the selfless work done by caregivers, service providers, advocates and respite workers across the state.

Recognition award themes may include:

Family Caregiver of the Year- honoring an individual who cares for a family member or friend, this award will spotlight a caregiver that complements caregiving with their own needs and interests while inspiring others

Caregiving Organization of the Year- This award will spotlight an organization that leads by example and inspires other service providers to make a difference in the lives of caregivers and their loved ones.

Visionary Award- this award will recognize an individual or organization that has developed and implemented an innovative way to support family caregivers or former family caregivers.

Caregiving Advocate Award- as a caregiver and advocate, this individual will be honored for providing support for family caregivers or former family caregivers in a way that makes the caregiving experience better and easier.

Young Adult/Youth Caregiver- a growing number of younger people are taking on caregiving responsibilities. This award will recognize a young nominee that either care for a loved one or provides support to others who

care.

To nominate an individual or organization you know, or to nominate yourself, please complete the following application. Deadline to submit a nomination is October 28, 2022. An awards committee will select award recipients who will be revealed during the 2022 Arkansas Respite and Caregiver Conference held on November 14-15th.

All award recipients will be featured on the Arkansas Lifespan Respite website as well as be offered the opportunity to contribute to the quarterly newsletter and participate in media opportunities involving Arkansas Lifespan Respite activities.

[Click here to submit a nomination](#)

SAVE THE DATE! The 2022 Arkansas Respite and Caregiver Conference Dates Have Been Set

The Arkansas Department of Human Services, in partnership with the Arkansas Lifespan Respite Coalition, has set the dates for the annual respite and caregiver conference for 2022. This year's event will be held in-person as well as virtually online for those who are unable to travel to the Central Arkansas area.

Topics for this year's event will include information on DHS programs and services, Medicaid and Medicare eligibility and assistance, caregiver self-care, as well as respite and caregiver support activities happening around the state of Arkansas.

There is no cost to attend the conference this year. We encourage family caregivers, advocates, respite providers and caregiver support organizations to attend.

[Register now by clicking here](#)



Arkansas Respite and Caregiver Conference

November 14- 15, 2022

**Brewer-Hegeman
Conference Center**

**University of Central
Arkansas
Conway, Arkansas**



NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED: Conway based program, Community Connections, recognized as a RISING STAR in respite services

On June 21, 2022, the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center recognized five respite services from across the country as “Innovative/Exemplary” as well as two services as “Rising Stars” in relation to their outstanding respite programs that address the needs of family caregivers of children, adults and/or older adult family members.

Arkansas-based, Community Connections, located in Conway, Arkansas, was recognized as a 2022 Rising Star program on the national stage. Other winners of these awards were located in North Carolina, Alabama, Minnesota, California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Nevada.

Community Connections was established in 2007 when the owners of a pediatrics therapy clinic observed that children with developmental disabilities tended to be excluded from the greater community, and that parents were in need of support. Available to caregivers of children birth to 18-years of age with disabilities, Community Connections offer three-hour respite sessions monthly, at no cost to families, in three locations within the state- Bryant, Conway, and Little Rock. Community Connections strives to support caregiver’s mental health by providing a worry-free short break from caregiving and guidance in time used to enhance the benefits of respite. Children with disabilities and their siblings are provided time spent doing enjoyable activities in community settings. In addition to a program director and nurse at each site, volunteers are recruited from local colleges and universities, and local faith based and service organizations to provide services. Each volunteer is supported with one-to-one training and staff

support after having completed on-line respite training. Some volunteers providing respite services are bilingual, and Community Connections offers both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parent support and parent education groups.



SPOTLIGHT: A Caregiver's Story shared through DHS Promotional Video highlighting the need for respite workers

Early this year, the Arkansas Lifespan Respite Coalition and DHS began searching for families and caregivers to share their stories. It was during that time that we were introduced to an amazing mother and caregiver, Jerilyn Swalve-Wasson, who along with her husband, Kenny, care for their now 10-year-old daughter, Emma. Emma was diagnosed with a genetic disorder called Turner Syndrome, a chromosomal condition in females where genetic material is missing and may prevent the body from growing and maturing naturally, as well as a combination of other health conditions and diagnoses.

Jerilyn graciously volunteered to sit for an interview and allow a videographer to journal their daily routine and the importance for caregivers to receive respite care. She stated that she felt honored to be a part of the video

because she and her husband remember how hard it was for them starting out, and still to this day. Even with her own background working with developmental disabilities, it could not prepare her for what being a 24/7 caregiver would entail. Being a part of the video meant that she could play a role in spreading the message of hope to other caregivers that supports are available in the state.

Jerilyn advocates not only for her family but other families caring for loved ones with disabilities or special needs through social media. With over 6,000 followers on her Facebook page, [Totally Emma](#), Jerilyn takes you through what life is like with a child diagnosed with special needs and provides resources and support information to others.

[Click here to view Jerilyn's video](#)

PUBLISHED: THE 2022 ARKANSAS CAREGIVER FEEDBACK- PRELIMINARY DATA REPORT IS NOW AVAILABLE!

In February 2022, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, partnered with the Arkansas Lifespan Respite Coalition, released a caregiver feedback survey looking to receive preliminary data on the needs and demographics of Arkansas caregivers throughout the state. The survey was released via SurveyMonkey which resulted in 553 caregivers identified within 67 of the 75 Arkansas counties.

Caregivers were asked a series of questions on topics such as demographics (including age, race/ethnicity, geographical location, annual household income, caregiving relationship, military status, etc.) and stress or strain levels on their own emotional, physical, and financial health. 52% of those caregivers felt that caregiving does provide them with a sense of purpose; however, 37% of those caregivers indicated a feeling of loneliness and 53% felt they did not have a choice in taking on their caregiving role. 43% of those caregivers said that they found it difficult to take care of their own self while caring for another.

Less than 25% of the caregivers had heard of caregiver respite and only 7% had experienced caregiver respite in the past.

The data and feedback received from this survey will help DHS and our respite partners in developing respite and caregiver support services as well as guide advocates on how and where to conduct outreach activities. The data report can be viewed [here](#).

If you are an unpaid caregiver to a family member or friend and you would like to provide your feedback and voice, a public feedback survey is open and available for you to access. To access the public feedback survey, [click here](#).



