

➤ *Scott's Legacy of Success*

1,856 people moved to a home of their own, one person at a time. That's the legacy of success that Program Director Scott Schifsky (photo) leaves after eight years here overseeing Housing Access Services (HAS). Partnering with the Minnesota Department of Human Services' Disability Services Division, local chapters of The Arc, Minnesota counties, and numerous agencies across the state, Scott led our activity here from the inception of HAS. He took an innovative grant from DHS, mapped out a comprehensive plan to carry it out, and hired and directed outstanding staff who helped people with disabilities find a place of their own in the community. Scott helped ensure many of those successful moves himself; he worked with numerous HAS recipients to overcome obstacles and challenges that could have prevented them from moving, and he even brought his truck to help recipients pack up and transport their belongings.



Scott's contributions to The Arc go back many years before he joined The Arc Minnesota. As an individual advocate, communications director, and legislative advocate with The Arc Great Rivers and then The Arc Greater Twin Cities, he brought a passionate, person-centered focus to his work with self-advocates and families, his writings, and his efforts to organize and activate members of The Arc at the grassroots. He will bring that person-centered focus and philosophy to his new position at the Minnesota Department of Human Services. We are grateful for the legacy Scott has created and the strong foundation he has left, as we continue to support people wanting more independent lives in the community. Scott expresses his gratitude in return: "First and foremost, I want to thank my family and friends for their support for all my years with The Arc. I would also like to personally thank all the families, self-advocates, staff, counties, providers, and MN-DHS staff for their support and partnership in helping people with disabilities find homes of their own."

➤ *Good News & Disappointments in HHS Budgets*

The Minnesota Senate and House omnibus health and human services (HHS) bills, SF 800 and HF 945, were released on Monday, March 27th. Progress was made on several of our legislative priorities, but on some of our major initiatives, we were shut out. Here is the good news:

- SF 1065/HF 1445 -- Consumer Directed Community Supports: Both the language and funding were included in the House bill, and some of the language was included in the Senate bill. We are in a good position to move forward.
- SF 1055/HF 1239 -- New Employment Services: This legislation was included in both bills.
- SF 807/HF 1182 -- Lowering Parental Fees: The Senate language lowers fees by 13%, and the House language lowers fees by 25%. We will strongly advocate for the House language.



- SF 853/HF 865 -- MSA Housing Assistance: Language for this measure is in the Senate bill but not the House version. In conference committee we will push for the Senate position.

The disappointments:

- SF 250/HF 225, the Medical Assistance (MA) spenddown, was not included in either bill.
- SF 669/HF 873, the Best Life Alliance wage increase, was not included in either bill.

The HHS omnibus bills still need to be passed in the Senate and House and then will go to a House/Senate conference committee. The Senate and House goals are to pass bills in their respective chambers before the Legislature recesses for its spring break starting April 8th, then work out differences between the bills in conference committee after the recess. This gives us time to advocate for and support the positive provisions in these bills, as well as strategize on next steps for the Best Life Alliance and MA spenddown measures.

➤ *House Leaders Cancel Health Care Vote!*

As you've probably seen in the news media and in online postings, the leaders in the U.S. House pulled the American Health Care Act (AHCA) from a floor vote by the entire House of Representatives on Friday, March 24th, because they lacked the votes to pass it. This defeat of the AHCA means that people with disabilities and their families are spared from legislation that would have taken away health care coverage and decimated the Medicaid (i.e., Medical Assistance) supports that make life in the community possible. Defeating this bill became even more important when House leaders and the White House were negotiating its provisions last week before deciding to pull it. In order to garner more support from some House members who opposed the bill, negotiators agreed to measures that would have removed even more protections provided by the Affordable Care Act and made cuts to Medicaid even deeper. The Arc of the U.S. CEO Peter Berns [released a statement](#) applauding the House leadership's decision.

This victory happened because of your grassroots advocacy. You wrote stories, made phone calls, sent e-mails, delivered petitions, wrote [letters to the editor](#), and made personal visits. Communications Director Mike Gude detailed some of your efforts and their impact in this week's [Capitol Focus Blog](#). Your actions show the power you have when you make your voices heard and your presence felt.

➤ *Melinda Joins Us to Help Create Working Lives*

The Arc Minnesota welcomes Melinda Shamp (photo), our new Lead Community Resource Connector, for the newly launched initiative, *A Working Life Alliance*. A statewide collaboration among chapters of The Arc and partner agencies, the alliance will introduce job seekers with disabilities and their families across Minnesota to the possibilities of competitive, integrated employment. It will also support them as they plan person-centered job goals to obtain employment based on their strengths and interests.



Through workshops, toolkits, connections to resources, and local learning communities, the alliance wants to provide knowledge that supports those wanting to create a working life in the community. For more information, contact Melinda at melindas@arcmn.org or 651-604-8080, and read [the alliance brochure](#).

➤ *Help Wanted: Manager for Housing Access Services*

The Arc Minnesota is looking for qualified candidates to manage our Housing Access Services program. See the [attached job description](#) for more information.