



## The Rose Dobrof Award July 2024 Twenty-Eight Years of Hope and Relief

For 28 years, The ARK of SC has provided exemplary services, meaningful programs, community involvement, and volunteer commitment to those with Alzheimer's disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) and their families. From a one day per week program serving 13 families in 1996 the program has grown to 5 days per week in Summerville with transportation provided via ARK van since 2004, a satellite program in St. George in 1997, The NOAH Project (Neighborhood Outreach Alzheimer's Help) in 2006 for educational outreach to rural communities, another satellite center in 2016 in Harleyville, and an EML in 2018 which meets twice per week. We are serving over 4,000 families as we sustain and grow. We attribute our success largely to Brookdale Foundation's model programs, seed grants and annual training conferences. Staff and board continue to improve skills with training that increase our revenues via special events with major sponsors, annual appeals, and grants. Our signature fundraising events *Dancing with The ARK's Stars* (14 years) and *Race for The ARK* (5K) (25 years) provide a third of our budget. Memberships in two area Chamber of Commerce's and professional nonprofit organizations provide referrals, access to network partners and educational opportunities for staff and board members. In 2018, The ARK in partnership with five investors (LLC) purchased a 5,000 square foot home on 1.2 acres to expand services and outreach to continue to fulfill our mission to provide hope and relief to the ever increasing number of families in need. Our service numbers and information and referrals calls have greatly increased. Caregivers seeking respite or EML services for their loved ones continue to increase. The home provides offices, space for our Respite and EML programs, onsite trainings and support groups, community visits/education to build donor relationships, and enhance our board of director's involvement.

The respite programs are fresh, infused with humor where persons with ADRD feel welcome. Fellowship, exercise, reminiscing, music, art-making, and other activities enhance independence and self-esteem. Through grants acquired, we purchased the *It's Never 2 Late* (iN2L) interactive computer technology where touch-screen options enhance the enjoyment and engagement of participants and has been a huge success for creativity and cognitive activities. A beautiful backyard provides space for outdoor activities as weather permits. In 2023, 5,389 hours of respite were provided for caregivers with 1,437 care receivers participating in the respite programs (both Summerville and Harleyville, (duplicated) and 100+ volunteers dedicated 2,525 hours (duplicated) - their time, talents, and efforts to The ARK's respite programs and EML programs.

The ARK continues to mentor five rural underserved counties and beyond with The NOAH Project. To date we have assisted 27 communities as they have developed support groups, educational workshops, and group social model respite programs that are a perfect fit for their community. Quarterly resource fairs paired with memory screenings increase awareness about memory loss and provide resources to caregivers. Law Enforcement and First Responders (LEFR) training has enhanced the skills of 100+ LEFR, who return to their departments and train additional colleagues thereby replicating and multiplying numbers of officers trained statewide. Both programs are certified through S. C. Criminal Justice Academy and DHEC for CEU's.

Five monthly caregiver support groups meet in a therapeutic environment facilitated by a trained leader. The ARK's dementia care advocate helps families understand the disease process, assesses needs, educates about caregiving tools and strategies, and recommends community resources. Since 2013, three of The ARK's staff have been Class Leaders/Master Trainers for the six-week *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* (PTC/CLT) workshops. In 2023, 194 Class Leaders were trained through six CLT Class Leader Trainings across the nation. 155 caregivers participated in five six-week PTC workshops. 259 caregivers (duplicated) were supported through 37 virtual and in-person support groups. PTC, which is offered free of charge, at least five times/year to anyone caring for individuals with a debilitating disease or chronic condition. We also provide an in-the-workplace Lunch & Learn series of educational talks on understanding dementia, coping strategies, managing stress, and available resources for caregivers.

Our dedicated corps of Respite/EML volunteers bring friendship, humor, and commitment to our organization. Training is on-going. They are irreplaceable and valued which allows us to provide quality services for nominal cost to our families. The ARK's signature art-making activity is stained glass windows that participants and volunteers create and are a perfect representation of how we put the shattered pieces of lives back together with love, patience, and acceptance.