

Monarch, Arc of Stanly receive grant for forums

In 2012-13, 18 percent of Stanly County's 8,662 students had an individualized education plans (IEP), which establishes educational goals and outcomes for students with disabilities. The plans are developed collaboratively by teachers, administrators and parents of students with disabilities, who often find the IEP process complex and daunting. Consequently, many parents struggle to advocate for the best interests of their children.

To help parents and families better understand and navigate the process, Monarch and The Arc of Stanly was recently awarded a grant of \$1,000 from the Stanly County Community Foundation to host four advocacy and education forums for parents and families of students with disabilities and special needs in the Stanly County School system.

The four parent education forums will be led by

Jeanette Wilhelm, quality enhancement coordinator and advocate at Monarch, who has special training in advocacy and inclusion services. Wilhelm will address key IEP concerns and equip parents with the knowledge needed to work with educators on plans that help their children achieve success in the classroom.

The forums are designed to look closely at IEP required by law for students receiving special education services in public schools. Participants will receive a resource notebook for use in IEP development and lesson topics will include:

- The IEP process and purpose.
- The advantages/disadvantages of self-contained classrooms, resource classrooms.
- Parents' rights and responsibilities.
- Guardianship and advocacy.
- Panel discussion with parents who have navigated

the IEP process.

"Monarch and The Arc of Stanly are eager to help parents become strong advocates for their children with disabilities," said Laurie Weaver, director of grants and foundation relations for Monarch.

"The training provided by this grant will help parents more easily and effectively navigate the education system."

The first forum will be hosted from 6-8 p.m. Aug. 11 in the second floor conference room at Monarch's administrative office, Lillian Mill, 350 Pee Dee Ave., Albemarle. Participants should park in the visitor lot and follow the directional signs. Additional forum dates for later this year and early 2015 will soon be announced.

For information about the forums, contact Jeanette Wilhelm at (704) 986-7234 or jeanette.wilhelm@monarchnc.org.

