



SPARC | Specially Adapted
Resource Centers
Creating Community & Inspiring Ability

Specially Adapted Resource Clubs 2024 Annual Report





SPARC | Specially Adapted
Resource Centers

Creating Community & Inspiring Ability

Dear SPARC Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, I am thrilled to share with you the remarkable progress and achievements that SPARC has accomplished thanks to your unwavering support. **Your generosity has truly been the cornerstone of our success, enabling us to embark on a transformative journey towards financial sustainability and expanded outreach.**



Over the past year, SPARC has undergone a profound financial transformation, thanks to securing both state and federal funding and hosting our Gratitude Gala. These initiatives have propelled us forward, allowing us to achieve significant milestones such as hiring a full-time program director and a full-time credentialed and experienced site lead. These two hires ensure the best possible programming in all our centers. This marks a pivotal moment in our organization's history, as we have achieved financial sustainability for the first time in 18 years. This success not only validates our efforts but also empowers us to expand our reach and impact. Thanks to federal funding sponsored by Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, SPARC will open in Loudoun County in 2024!

The impact of your support goes far beyond just numbers and figures. It directly translates into tangible and positive outcomes that affect the lives of individuals within our community. Your donations have enabled us to provide vital programs to individuals who would otherwise be confined and isolated at home, and to address crucial objectives such as ensuring financial stability, skilled personnel, and essential services to those in need.

But perhaps most importantly, **your support has helped us create an inclusive community where individuals with severe and multiple disabilities can thrive.** Your contributions make it possible for us to engage in skill-building activities, therapeutic programs, and foster meaningful connections through fun, friendship, and learning. These programs are not just recreational; they are lifelines for individuals who may otherwise face social isolation.

Your support ensures that we continue to provide a choice for our population, addressing the critical need for social connections and a sense of belonging. **You are the hero of our story,** and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to building a better, more inclusive community for all.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Debi Alexander
Executive Director

A Note From Our Board Chair



“Nothing
About Us
Without
Us.”

Steve Jobs said, “Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work.”

I am more than satisfied and proud of the magnificent work that our staff, board, and participants achieved in 2024. We made enormous strides, realized great successes, overcame challenges, and removed barriers, while celebrating the incredibly special lives of the population we serve. A few of this year’s highlights:

- We held an enormously **successful gala** at which we emphasized the accomplishments and dreams of our SPARC community and netted \$100,000.
- In partnership with **George Washington University**, we were awarded an NIH \$500,000 grant to develop an innovative, generative AI-empowered art therapy toolbox to enhance behavioral health and help individuals with severe and multiple disabilities overcome obstacles.
- We were awarded a **Congressional Directed Spending grant** of over \$750,000 to open centers in Alexandria, Herndon, and Loudoun, thus expanding services to communities which provided no services for adults with severe and multiple disabilities.
- At the end of 2024, the **state budget** contained a line-item for SPARC in the amount of \$250,000 per year.
- **NOVA students** created low-tech assisted solutions to some vexing problems facing our population.
- **Google** became our most generous corporate partner, awarding SPARC an initial \$150,000.
- We entered new or expanded relationships with some of our area’s largest businesses and foundations, such as **Marriott Washington Dulles Airport, Thompson Hospitality, Washington Gas, NW Federal Credit Union, The Loudoun County Social Collectives, Burmester Family Endowment for People with Developmental Disabilities, Dominion Energy, Visa, Claude Moore Foundation, and Jack R. Anderson Foundation.**

We essentially **accomplished our 5-year strategic plan in 2024**. Congratulations!

Because SPARC’s future depends on this year’s successes. Because we believe in the beauty of our participants’ dreams. Because our present situation is not our final destination.

The best is yet to come!

~ Ellen Dyke
Board Chair



The Power of Partnerships: Expanding Opportunities Through Higher Education



The Power of Partnerships

At SPARC, we know that transformative change happens when organizations come together with a shared vision. Our partnerships with academic institutions like George Washington University (GWU) and Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) have opened new doors for innovation, inclusion, and impact.

Advancing Inclusive Art Therapy with GWU

SPARC is proud to partner with the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Biomedical Informatics Center on a groundbreaking ArtAI research project. This initiative harnesses AI-empowered art therapy to promote health equity in low-resource settings, ensuring that adults with multiple and severe disabilities have access to innovative, inclusive therapeutic experiences. Through this collaboration, we are exploring how technology can enhance creative expression, well-being, and accessibility for our community.

By bridging the fields of medicine, technology, and disability services, we are working to ensure that creative expression is not a privilege but a right—one that can be adapted to the diverse needs of all individuals, regardless of their abilities and disabilities.

Creating Pathways to Careers with NOVA

In our second year of partnership with NOVA's Occupational Therapy Assistants "Low Tech Assistive Technology" class, the students identified barriers faced by three SPARC participants and developed creative solutions to improve their daily lives. The first innovation was a portable dog feeding station that could be attached to a wheelchair, allowing greater independence for a participant with mobility challenges. The second was a sensory basket designed to attach to a walker, providing a calming effect during moments of stress. The third solution improved a participant's ability to transport essential items while out in the community by replacing traditional bags with a more functional system attached to their walker. These projects exemplify the power of collaboration in developing practical, low-tech solutions that enhance accessibility and independence.

Through innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to inclusion, we continue to push boundaries and redefine what's possible.

2nd Annual Gratitude Celebration



SPARC's 2nd Annual Gratitude Celebration was a powerful evening of recognition, inclusion, and joy, embodying Rebekah Taussig's words: "The goal is to be seen, asked, heard, believed, and valued as we are, allowed to exist in these exact bodies, invited to the party and encouraged to dance however we want." Presented by the **Washington Dulles Airport Marriott**, the event honored **Corporate Hero Google** and **SPARC Hero Senator Mark Warner**, whose support helped secure congressionally directed funding to expand SPARC's reach with new centers in **Herndon, Alexandria, and Sterling**. **Jim Dyke** presented the awards, while the evening was masterfully hosted by **Tracye Funn of Washington Gas**, bringing warmth and energy to a celebration of community, advocacy, and gratitude.



Thank You to Our Gratitude Celebration Donors

SPARC by the Numbers

19 Years of Service

54 Participants

7 SPARC Locations

- Reston
- Vienna
- McLean
- Sterling
- Herndon
- Arlington
- Alexandria



THANK YOU for ensuring a life of possibilities by sponsoring the 2nd Annual Gratitude Gala of SPARC!

SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, November 15, 2025 • 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM • Washington Dulles Airport Marriott

Honoring SPARC Hero 2024 Senator Mark Warner | **Corporate Hero 2024** Google

SPARC is a nonprofit serving young adults — often forgotten — with severe and multiple disabilities.



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- ENTERTAINMENT**
Spin City
501st Legion
- RAMP**
Next Day Access

3rd Annual SPARC Pancake Breakfast: A Morning of Community and Celebration

39%

of participants attend on full scholarship

**All participants pay only one-third of the program's actual cost.*



SPARC's 3rd Annual Pancake Breakfast was our biggest yet, bringing together 200 attendees for a morning filled with delicious food, community spirit, and heartfelt recognition. Celebrity Chef Charlie Loomis, who famously beat Bobby Flay, led the kitchen alongside Steve Harper of Exterior Medics, who has faithfully flipped pancakes every year.

This year, we proudly honored **Supervisor John Foust** with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication to our community and **Supervisor Dalia Palchik** as our SPARC Hero, recognizing her support in securing funds for vital equipment—including hydroponic gardens now thriving in every SPARC center!



A huge thank you to **McLean BNI** and the **Oakton United Methodist Serve Team** for volunteering their time and energy to help make the event a success. Their support, along with the generosity of our attendees, ensures that SPARC continues to grow, thrive, and serve adults with severe disabilities in Northern Virginia.



Advocates Advisory Council

In 2024, the members of the AAC participated in the Coordinating Council for Aging and Adults with Disabilities (CCAAD) Social Connections Subcommittee and the Equity in Aging and Disability Subcommittee. SPARC's Executive Director, Debi Alexander, is also serving on the Council on Aging's "S" or Services Subcommittee on SHAPE. The AAC informs her input to this vital work. SPARC provided input to the CCAAD Pilot Guidebook ensuring that information was based on principles of inclusion.

"SPARC's unique public-private partnership with Fairfax County has proven that this alternative to the Medicaid model provides a choice for many adults with severe disabilities who do not fit into traditional day support programs funded by Medicaid. SPARC has changed the long-term care blueprint for young adults with severe disabilities by providing a safe, caring environment where young adults with severe disabilities learn and have fun together. The SPARC model is designed to provide access to community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self determination."

*— Rose Mario Risley, Chair,
Fairfax Area CCAAD*

Thank You To Our Auction Donors!

BEER, WINE, & SPIRITS

8 chains North
Coopers Hawk Winery
Miriam Goldin
Old Busthead Brewing Company
Philip Carter Winery
SPARC Board of Directors
Wines for Humanity

DATE NIGHT

1st Stage theatre
Fogo de Chao
Hylton performing arts
Leesburg Beads
Pinot's Palette – Dulles

FAMILY FUN

Fairfax Ice Arena
George Washington's Mount Vernon
Loudoun United Football Club
Morven Park
Polo in the Park
StageCoach Theater
Top Golf

GOLF & FITNESS

Creighton Farms
Raspberry Golf and Hunt Club

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In and Out Mobile Auto Cleaning
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Karins Florist
Meadows Farms

LIVE AUCTION

Angie Erschens
Anonymous
Bill and Debi Alexander
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Diamond Spa
Fortress Acupuncture
Fragrance.Net
GourmetGiftBaskets.com
Handmade by LMAC
Jill Campbell
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Miriam Goldin
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SPORTS & MEMORABILIA

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Bill and Debi Alexander
Dave and JoAnne Adams
Ed and Molly Herbst
Loudoun United



TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

Eric Fahr
Fairport Harbor West
Six Flags America

SPARC CENTERS

Framed SPARC Art
Rocking Chair
Spice Tower
Sugar Scrubs
Swag Bag
Tea Party with Kat & Lisa

UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Atlantic Chess Association
Bobby McKey's Dueling Piano Bar
Capital Genealogy
D3D Photography and Videography
Fleur de Cuisine
K1 Speed
Leandra Finder
MJL Studios



Hydroponic Gardens: Cultivating Growth and Connection

The gardening program has flourished this year with the addition of hydroponic gardening systems, complete with pods and plant food, at every location. SPARC's participants have successfully cultivated a variety of plants—including herbs, wildflowers, salad greens, and vegetables. SPARC's Herndon location has achieved particularly impressive results thanks to the dedicated care given by our participants to the plants.

Participants take turns maintaining the gardens by monitoring water levels, adding nutrients, and harvesting fresh ingredients. The process of growing herbs has been especially rewarding, with basil, oregano, and thyme incorporated into homemade spaghetti sauce, fresh pesto, and creamy vegetable dip. Many also enjoy bringing herbs home to use in their own kitchens or share as gifts.

Beyond the harvest, the indoor gardening program fosters a sense of responsibility and pride, offering a tangible connection to the growing process. Advanced features, such as "vacation mode," ensure plants remain well-maintained over the weekend, with automated water conservation and lighting schedules. This initiative has not only provided fresh ingredients but has also nurtured engagement, learning, and accomplishment.



The Social Collectives Christmas Tea – the Power of Community



The Loudoun Social Collectives Christmas Tea is a heartwarming celebration of community, generosity, and the holiday spirit, with founder Lisa Adams at the helm. Lisa, also the owner of Artisan Plumbing, has built a dynamic and supportive network for local business owners through the Collectives, creating a space where collaboration and giving are at the forefront. Her tireless efforts have led to the successful raising of over \$400,000 for various charitable causes. This year's tea raised \$50,000 benefiting SPARC's new center in Loudoun County.

The Christmas Tea took place at Bluemont Station Brewery and Winery, and was a day filled with camaraderie, fundraising, and celebration. Newly elected Congressman Suhas Subramanyam attended the tea and read a letter from Congresswoman Wexton, commending Lisa Adams for her dedication to fostering a positive and inclusive networking environment for local business owners. Wexton also praised Lisa for her impressive work raising substantial funds for charity, acknowledging the profound impact her efforts have had on both the local community and the causes she champions.

As SPARC's executive director, Debi Alexander, shared her heartfelt thoughts, her words resonated deeply with everyone in the room: **"It is a joy to be with you today as we gather in the spirit of the season — a season of giving, kindness, and hope. As I look around, I see a room full of people whose hearts are open and whose generosity lights the way for those who need it most. On behalf of SPARC and the remarkable adults we serve, thank you for being here."**



The Social Collectives Christmas Tea – the Power of Community

Debi’s speech highlighted the importance of community, connection, and the shared humanity that binds us all. She spoke passionately about the individuals with severe and multiple disabilities who benefit from SPARC’s programs, emphasizing that while their disabilities may be complex, their need for belonging and connection is universal. **“Unfortunately, implicit bias often clouds our society’s ability to see that humanity. Many believe that because these adults cannot work, their lives are less worthy of investment,”** Debi explained.

She continued, **“The truth is, no one’s worth should ever be measured by productivity. Worth is inherent, and dignity belongs to everyone.”** Debi reminded everyone that the support raised through the event does far more than fund programs—it affirms the dignity of individuals with disabilities and combats social isolation, which can be as damaging as loneliness itself.

“We are so thrilled to announce the opening of a new center in Loudoun County,” Debi said, noting that until now, there has been no day program to support adults with severe and multiple disabilities in the area. **“This new center will be a beacon of hope, a place where participants will experience friendship, connection, and the opportunity to thrive.”** She then introduced Amy Stone, SPARC’s first Loudoun employee and community liaison, who will play a pivotal role in the center’s success.

Debi concluded by reminding everyone that their support doesn’t just fund activities—it fuels joy, offers hope, and, most importantly, sends a powerful message: **“You are not forgotten. You are valued.”**

The Christmas Tea, made possible by Lisa Adams and the Loudoun Social Collectives, was a beautiful reminder of the difference one person can make in creating a space for kindness, compassion, and generosity—ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability or disability, is seen, heard, and celebrated.



Thank you to our Donors!

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Washington Dulles Airport Marriott

Donor Spotlight: Google

At the 2024 SPARC Gratitude Celebration, we proudly recognized Google as our Corporate Hero for its extraordinary investment in our mission. With a generous contribution of \$150,000 to sponsor our Fairfax centers, Google plays a pivotal role in expanding opportunities for adults with severe and multiple disabilities, ensuring they have access to enduring learning experiences, meaningful social connections, and a rightful place in our community.



Google's commitment to corporate social responsibility aligns seamlessly with SPARC's vision. Google's emphasis on inclusivity, innovation, and community support underscores the importance of creating a society where individuals of all abilities are valued and empowered.

Google's mission to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful, along with its vision to create a more inclusive and connected world, resonates deeply with SPARC's goal of fostering accessibility and inclusion. By championing SPARC's mission, Google exemplifies how leading companies can leverage their resources and technology to foster positive social change and dismantle barriers to community participation.

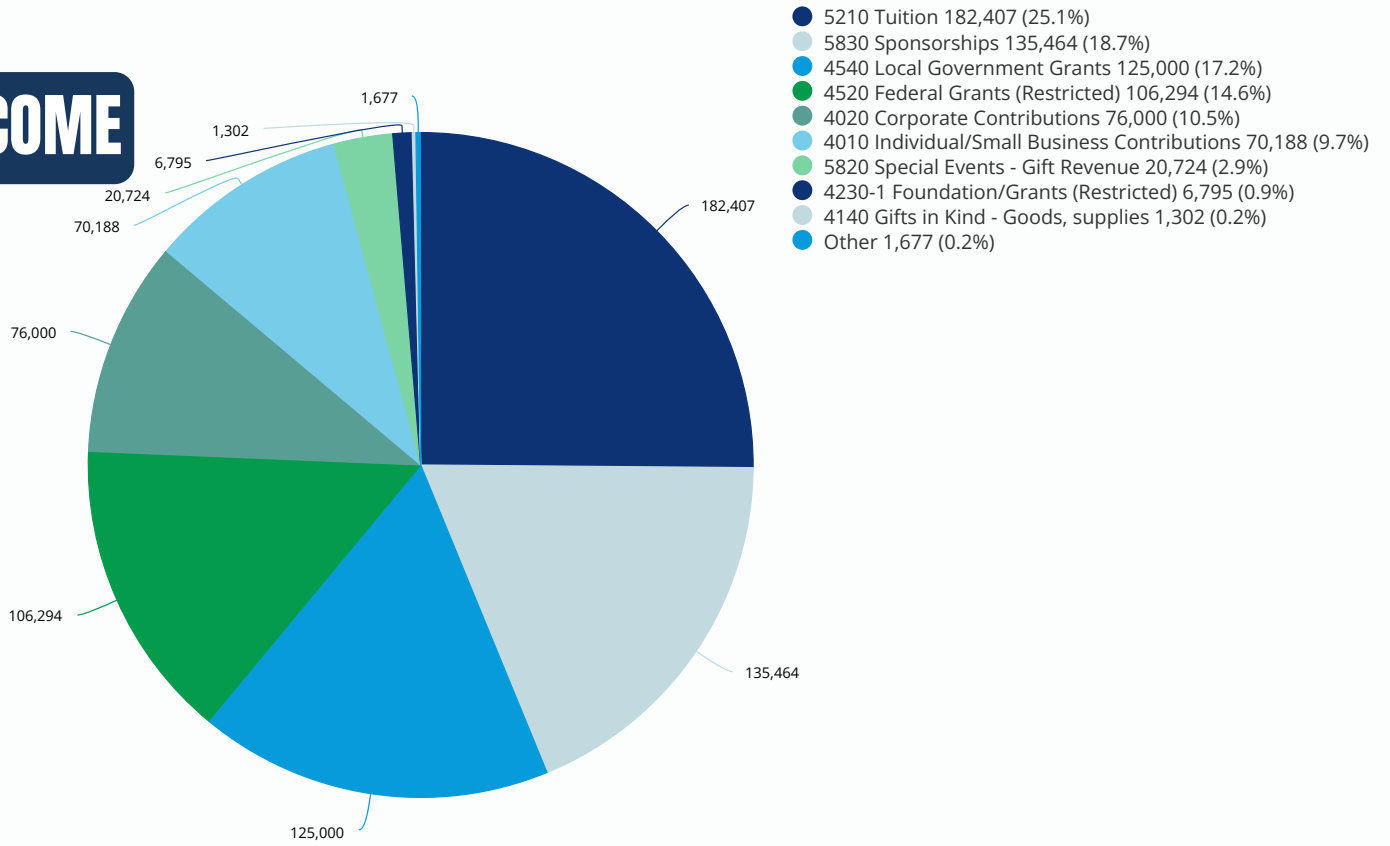
As SPARC's 2024 Corporate Hero, Google sets a powerful example of corporate philanthropy and transformative impact. Google's support not only strengthens our programs but also inspires a broader movement toward accessibility and inclusion for all.

Thank you, Google, for your generosity, leadership, and unwavering dedication to making a difference!

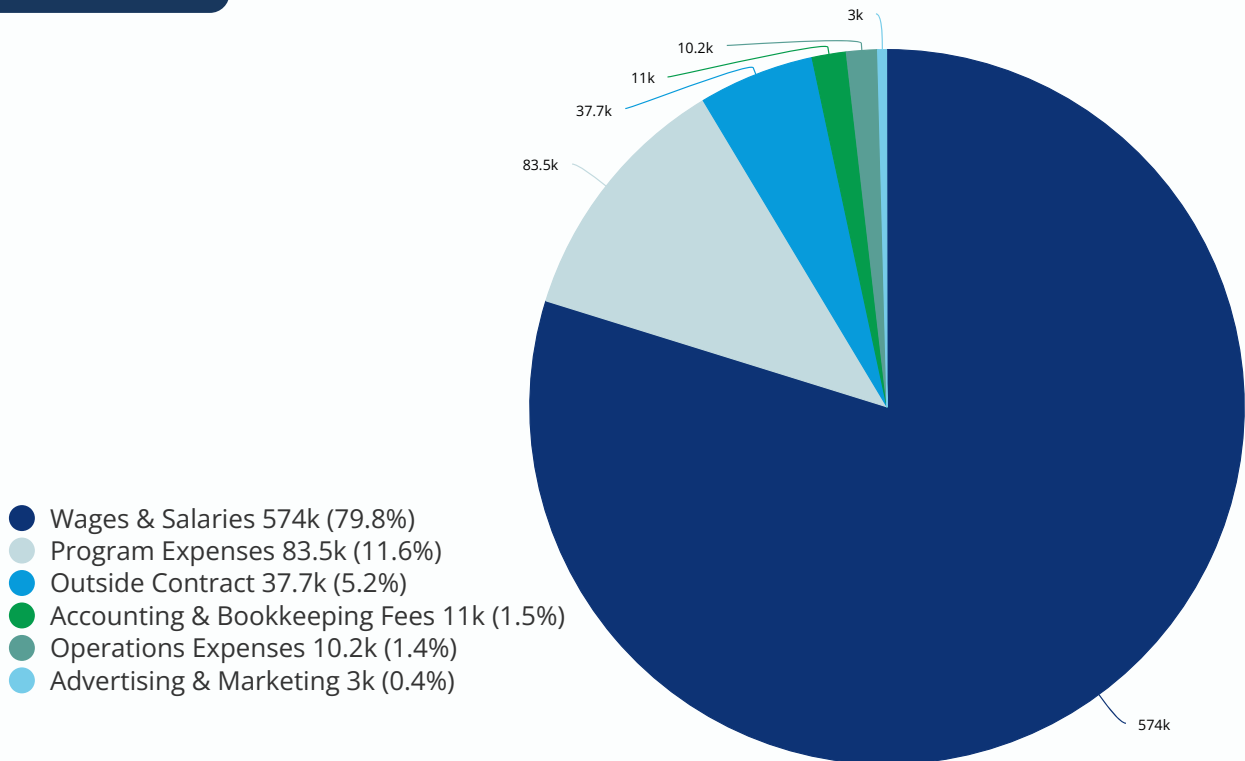


2024

INCOME



EXPENSES



SPARC Saves Millions in Opportunity Costs

WHO WE SERVE

Some SPARC participants have developmental delays. Others have intellectual delays. Some have been diagnosed with cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, spina bifida, non-verbal and other similar conditions. Most of SPARC's participants lack self-care and social skills, effective verbal communication, and basic physical mobility. **They need support with all daily living activities and have difficulty seeing, hearing, speaking, and moving.** They are unable to work and often feel isolated with few opportunities to interact with their peers.

\$2 MILLION PER PERSON IN HOUSING COSTS

With SPARC providing meaningful day programs for adults with severe and multiple disabilities, the option to continue to live with family members rather than transitioning to group homes or supported housing is often selected. Over a ten-year period, this is a cost savings of \$2 million per person.

\$3.25 MILLION PER YEAR IN MEDICAID CUSTOMIZED RATES FEES (PER 50 ATTENDEES)

Attending five days at SPARC costs a participant \$9,000 per year. Under the applicable customized Medicaid rates, the County pays for an individual with severe and multiple disabilities on the Medicaid waiver waitlist to go to a Medicaid provider in the range of \$64,000-\$65,000 per year plus transportation costs of \$9,000 per year. If SPARC's current participants went to a Medicaid provider the cost to the County in program enhancement funds would be \$3.25 million annually plus the cost of transportation.

Save the Dates!

July 12: Pancake Breakfast & Awards Celebration

November 15: An Evening to SPARCle: 3rd Annual Gratitude Celebration Honoring:

SPARC Heros: The Honorable **Phyllis Randall**, Chair at Large, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors; and **George Washington University**

Lifetime Achievement Award: Jessica Burmester





SPARC | Specially Adapted
Resource Centers

Creating Community & Inspiring Ability

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