



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mary Lou Meccariello
202-636-2979

August 12, 2008

**THE ARC OF DC CONDEMNS NEGATIVE DEPICTION OF PEOPLE W/
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN FILM "TROPIC THUNDER"**

Washington, DC – The Arc of DC announced a local campaign to address the very negative portrayal of an individual with an intellectual disability in the movie "Tropic Thunder" which opens nationwide August 13, 2008. The Arc of DC joins the efforts of The Arc of the United States and other national advocacy groups in mobilizing a "campaign around respect" after the use of harmful speech in the film that refers to individuals with intellectual disabilities. "Tropic Thunder" features Ben Stiller portraying "Simple Jack," a person with an intellectual disability; this character is repeatedly referred to as a "retard," "moron," and "imbecile."

The Arc of DC is organizing people with intellectual disabilities, their families, self-advocates, members and other stakeholders to establish a presence around the movie theatres where the film is being shown. "We are urging the general public not to spend their hard earned dollars on this film because of its' demeaning view of persons with intellectual disabilities," said Mary Lou Meccariello, Executive Director of The Arc of DC. "This is an opportunity to educate our neighbors about the rights of people with disabilities – most importantly the right to live with the same dignity and respect afforded every American," added Meccariello.

In 2006, DC City Council Chair Vincent Gray introduced legislation which became law entitled "People First Respectful Language Modernization Act of 2006." The Arc of DC worked closely with his office to remove offensive terminology relating to people with disabilities from the DC Code and directed the District government to use respectful language for individuals with disabilities in District law, regulations, rules and publications. This legislation has eliminated offensive language used in the film such as "moron" in local law. Respectful language helps to ensure that people with disabilities are afforded the respect and dignity they deserve to have the opportunity to live, work, and play alongside their neighbors as valued members of the Washington, DC community.

In response to the release of "Tropic Thunder," The Arc of DC, along with self-advocates, family members, advocates and concerned citizens, will be protesting "Tropic Thunder" at The Regal Gallery Place Stadium 14 located at 701 7th Street, NW on Wednesday, August 13, at 11:30am and between 5:00pm and 7:00pm. This rally will be a public display of the need for respect for individuals with intellectual disabilities and will include education materials stating the harm of using the R-word as well as materials about "people first" language.

The Arc of the District of Columbia, Inc. is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership organization serving persons with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities and their families in the District of Columbia since 1950. The Arc of DC strives to improve the quality of life of all individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families through supports and advocacy.

###