



Strong Start Leadership Training Empowers Parent to Open Art Center



Lesli Takasugi Davis is the proud mother of Mukti, a determined, affectionate and active first grader who experiences “Ups.” Mukti was born with an extra copy of chromosome 21, which is commonly referred to as Down syndrome. Since there is nothing “down” about Mukti, Lesli likes to say she has “Ups,” which paints a far more positive picture of Mukti and her amazing personality.

In addition to raising a strong daughter, Lesli is an arts integration teacher, children’s book author and artist. After taking the Strong Start Parent Leadership Training offered by The Arc Families Connected earlier this year, Lesli is now fulfilling a dream of opening an art center in Eugene, called the Little Hands Art Center. The center will offer art classes to both kids and adults, with a specialty in accommodating people who experience a disability.

The Strong Start training had a tremendous impact on Lesli. She learned how to develop a positive vision for Mukti’s future, how to advocate effectively to influence positive change, and how to build and use personal networks and community resources to help my daughter live a full life.

Ultimately, the Strong Start training gave Lesli the confidence to go out and build a community for her daughter rather than wait for it to happen. She graduated from the training feeling very empowered, and she is now working to see her dream of creating a welcoming, safe and accessible art space come to fruition.

In addition to Lesli finding a tribe of other like-minded parents with The Arc’s Families Connected program, Lesli’s daughter also benefits from The Arc’s Jumpstart program, which provides after-school, Saturday and summer activities for children. Mukti enjoys being with peers, participating in activities and going on fun community outings with Jumpstart, and she is thriving because of the dedicated and nurturing people supporting her.

Lesli wrote the book *Jellyfish*, a story about a young girl with a big imagination. Lesli is donating a

percentage of book sales to The Arc Lane County. Visit [Jellyfish](#) to learn more about the book and purchase a copy today. Also, check out [Little Hands Art Center](#) for a list of art classes for kids, youth and adults.

