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 4 days per week in Summerville with transportation provided via ARK bus 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 plans for EML in 2018. We are serving over 2,000 families as we sustain and grow. We attribute our success for a large part 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 and Race for The ARK (5K) provide a third of our budget. Memberships in area Chamber of Commerce’s and professional nonprofit organizations provide referrals, access to network partners and educational opportunities for staff and board members. We are launching a Capital Campaign this year to purchase property 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.

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.

The ARK mentors five rural underserved counties with The NOAH Project. To date we have assisted 13 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. Upcoming training for Law Enforcement and First Responders will initially enhance the skills of 100 law enforcement officers and first responders, who will return to their departments and train additional colleagues thereby replicating and multiplying numbers of officers trained.

Four 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. Seven of The ARK’s staff are class leaders and three of those are also master trainers for the six-week Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) workshop. To date, 210 caregivers have completed PTC which is offered free of charge five times/year to anyone caring for individuals with a debilitating disease or chronic condition. Over 50 class leaders have been trained in a total of nine states. 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 over 50 respite 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 to together with love, patience, and acceptance.