A Word From Our Superintendent

When we started off 2020, this was definitely not the year we were expecting! COVID-19 has caused us all to change our lives completely. Here at the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD), we have remained open and operating, although in completely different ways than we were previously.

Shortly after our Open House in March to celebrate Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, we closed our buildings to most of our staff and the public. Fortunately, we were well-equipped for staff to work from home, as we had already allowed many of them to work remotely a couple of days a week. Over the last three months, probably like many of you, we have operated virtually through phone calls, Zoom meetings, and emails.

We had to cancel many of our events, including the Egg Hunt and our annual Dreams Within Reach 5K/10K event. However, our staff have stepped up and worked hard to ensure that services and supports continue for the people we serve. We have said through this whole pandemic “Our buildings are closed, but we are not. Our employees are still working.”

We continue to monitor the situation and make decisions that will keep our staff and the people we serve as healthy and safe as possible. We look forward to being able to see more people in person, but we will follow protocols to ensure safety. We will continue to keep you informed of any changes as decisions are made.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your Service Coordinator, Early Childhood Primary Service Provider, Transition Coordinator, or call (513) 228-6400. In cases of emergencies, please call 1-800-800-6847. We have someone on call answering that number at all times, 24 hours a day. Thank you for your patience and cooperation with the many changes we have had to make.

Thank you for reading our newsletter, and please check out the other articles to learn more about what has been happening at the WCBDD!

WCBDD celebrates Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held two Open Houses on March 10th, to celebrate Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. This year’s theme entitled, “2020 Vision: A View from the Top”, offered the community the opportunity to learn more about the agency’s services and supports provided to individuals with developmental disabilities.

The presentations included proclamations for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month by Warren County Commissioner, David Young and Probate and Juvenile Court Judge Joseph Kirby. Also featured were several speakers showcasing their personal experiences with the WCBDD. They shared their goals, actions, obstacles, and achievements. Speakers included enrolled individual Austin Hance and his
mother; enrolled individual, Hailey Friday and her mother; as well as, Cristin and Nate Reibel, parents to four-year-old Maddie, who has received services from WCBDD since infancy.

The evening’s Open House included a special performance by the Voices of Warren County Choir, followed by a Provider and Business Fair and the heavily anticipated gift basket drawing. $1,152 worth of donations were contributed by local businesses, enabling WCBDD to offer multiple elaborately assembled gift baskets!

Lastly, the Open House festivities incorporated theme-related décor of “A View from the Top” and featured hanging Hot Air Balloons, designed and created by individuals enrolled in WCBDD services.

“Zoom” becomes alternative to in-person engagement

While monitoring the fast-moving situation with the novel coronavirus, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals served. Due to the responsibility of minimizing at-risk exposure, agency trainings, events, and meetings with individuals, families, or providers, are now held virtually, thereby paving a new way of communicating.

Zoom Video Communications has become WCBDD’s alternative solution to in-person engagement. This cloud-based video communications app, allows users to set up virtual video and audio conferencing, as well as webinars, live chats, screen sharing and other collaborative capabilities. In an effort to continue
supports and services to individuals with developmental disabilities, WCBDD has utilized Zoom when managing trainings, meetings, and events.

Having a way to communicate from the comforts of their homes, has enabled enrolled individuals the opportunity to safely engage with their supports and friends, and also provides them the opportunity to learn and grow their skills.

In April, Community Integration Coordinator, Rhonda Schutte, and Community Relations Coordinator, Adam Jones hosted a virtual activity entitled, “Dips & Drafts”, where participants learned simple dip recipes to snack on during the NFL draft. Donning sports gear of their favorite teams, participants discussed food, football, and even safety and hygiene. Those unable to attend, were able to access the shared recipes on Facebook.

From a Cool Critter Outreach presentation, Chia pet hair growing contest, to art and cake pop tutorials, WCBDD continues to provide services, supports, and fun to individuals with developmental disabilities.

WCBDD lifts spirits with Cinco de Mayo themed “Reverse Parade” amid Pandemic

On May 5th, 2020, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held a Cinco de Mayo themed “reverse parade” as an alternative way to safely engage and lift the spirits of enrolled individuals during the pandemic.

Vehicles of individuals and families lined the parking lot of the Warren C. Young Center, while volunteers eagerly put together the finishing touches to their Cinco de Mayo displays. As vehicles began their approach, they were received by enthusiastic greetings from the volunteers holding hand-made signs offering words of encouragement and support.

Consisting of agency staff, local providers, and community members, the volunteers combined their “morale boosting” efforts, led by Community Integration Coordinator, Rhonda Schutte.

“As everyone is feeling isolated, the “Reverse Parade” provides individuals served by WCBDD with an opportunity to see staff, providers, and community volunteers, in a safe environment (practicing social distancing)”, Schutte comments. “We want them to know, we are still here for them.”
Schutte adds, “This simple event resulted in a great impact. We saw happy tears and many smiles. Several staff reported that this event was very needed by all, and uplifted their spirits as well, in a time that was uncertain.”

In addition to the vibrant Cinco de Mayo colors and the encouraging volunteers, individuals were gifted a goodie bag filled with “boredom busters” and treats donated by staff and providers, as well as a $5 off coupon from local restaurant, Acapulco. Though the event had a physical distance, it was certainly not distant socially.

Individuals with disabilities deemed “essential workers” during Stay at Home order

During the Stay at Home Order, Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) provided on-the-job support and retention services to enrolled individuals considered essential workers. With assistance of Job Coaches and Employment Developers, WCBDD worked diligently to ensure employees were successful in their jobs and business staffing needs were met.

Enrolled individuals Zack Hahn and Ben Smith work as Food Preppers at Pizza Hut. They are also students in WCBDD’s Transition Program which prepares them for the transition from student to adult life through work study training. Ben enjoys working during the pandemic because it enables him to “help feed people”. Zack practices daily safety precautions by wearing his mask and gloves, and washing his hands.
Transition student Kacie Ryan works as a Housekeeper at Mason Christian Village, an assisted-living facility. When asked how she felt being referred as an “essential worker”, Kacie humbly responded, “I feel confident and blessed.” She added, “I work to make the residents smile. I care for everyone and want to make them happy.”

Meijer Utility Worker, Ari Leibman found his job with the help of an Employment Developer. His responsibilities include collecting and returning carts from the parking lot, changing the trash bags, and disinfecting cart handles. Ari also benefits from job coaching. Stressing the importance of a job coach, Ari commented that his job coach, “helps me work through any issues that I may be struggling with, and also supports me if I need it with work.”

Nikki Prater works as an Apparel Sales Associate at Rural King. Job Coach, Leslie Thompson currently provides retention services to ensure Nikki remains on task and adheres to her employer’s expectations. Nikki elaborated, “She helps me out by explaining how to do my job in a way that I can understand”.

In addition to stocking clothes, Nikki maintains the safety and cleanliness of the store by cleaning the changing rooms every shift at 11AM. Eyes brightening above her “Nightmare before Christmas” mask, Nikki adds, “Rural King gave me gloves and hand sanitizer; lavender and mint scented!”

When asked what inspires her to continue working during uncertain times, Nikki replied, “I am motivated to work so I can help out my family with groceries and other expenses like pet care, and streaming services, like Netflix.”
Early Childhood News

The Early Childhood Team at the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) has had a busy spring continuing to provide support and services to children under age six who are enrolled in services through WCBDD. The staff at WCBDD had been in early stages of exploring and discussing additional ways we could add virtual supports to our programming prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 and Ohio’s Stay at Home and Stay Safe Orders. As a result of these efforts and events, in mid-March we decided we needed to jump right in and move forward to provide the best, safest, and most effective services and supports that we could. Through collaboration with the Early Intervention Service Coordination Contract agency, Warren County Educational Service Center, we worked together to provide 80 developmental evaluations and/or assessments and to develop Individualized Family Service Plans for qualifying children; completely through virtual platforms in the months of April and May. Additionally, Early Intervention Service providers at WCBDD who consist of Developmental Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists and PLAY Project Consultants delivered 756 virtual home visits from March through the end of May! We have continued to have our weekly Early Intervention team meetings via Zoom with all providers and service coordinators. This virtual platform has made it easier to implement the consultation and support of other Early Intervention service providers through the EI system, which include Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, Vision Services and Hearing Services.

As we settled in to this new way of life, we wanted to continue to provide some of the other supports we had been providing and wanted to make sure we were delivering great services to our families. We reached out with a survey to families and immediately started working to implement the feedback we received. In May we hosted our first ever virtual parent information session, Toileting 101, through a contract with Envision, began virtual play groups, planned more parent information sessions, and are now making plans for July/August. Be on the lookout for emails, and follow us on Facebook for daily information.

Check it all out below:

Early Childhood team members and families have been able to stay connected and celebrate new developmental milestones and adventures by sharing pictures, videos, texts, emails and phone calls. Check out all the fun Abel and his family are having!
Developmental Specialist- Ms. Margaret coaching mom through interactions via FaceTime.

Developmental Specialists- Ms. Margaret and Ms. Whitney launched a Virtual Playgroup where families can get together and sing songs, hear a story, and take away some great ideas for fun activities at home. Virtual Playgroups will run most Tuesdays and Thursdays through the end of August. Check out the flyer here: (insert link to the flyer).

Here are a few websites and resources we encourage you to check out!

Ohio Early Intervention - [https://ohioearlyintervention.org/](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/) (information about Ohio’s Early Intervention System)

The Inspired Tree House - [https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/](https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/) (child development resources and creative ideas to promote child developmental skills)

Imagination Library - [https://imaginationlibrary.com/](https://imaginationlibrary.com/) (sign up to have free children’s books delivered to your home every month. It is now available in Warren County)

We will continue to support children and families of Warren County in the safest way possible, and we look forward to phasing back into home and community visits for service delivery in the future, as safety permits. We will keep you informed of changes and options as they become available. Stay safe and well!

For any questions or additional information, regarding Early Childhood Services please contact Early Childhood Manager, Kelly Brooks at [Kelly.brooks@warrencountydd.org](mailto:Kelly.brooks@warrencountydd.org) or 513-228-6520.
WCBDD resources and support to providers during COVID-19

Throughout the evolving conditions of COVID-19, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) remains committed to sharing a variety of resources and supports, in order to ensure the needs of providers are being met.

WCBDD continues to provide updates to providers from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), the Ohio Association of County Boards of DD (OACB), the Ohio Provider Resources Association (OPRA), and updates from agencies such as The Arc, Ohio Self Determination Association, and other County Boards. Additionally, WCBDD has provided updates regarding their current agency status as well as who to contact, when, and why.

Feedback is of the utmost importance to WCBDD. Therefore, we implemented routine conference calls with providers, occurred twice weekly through March and April, once a week in May, and every other week in June. To determine providers’ supply and staffing needs, a survey was distributed. This survey enabled WCBDD’s Provider Development team, to connect adult day providers willing to work, with Homemaker/Personal Care (HPC) providers in need of additional staff. Also incorporated, was a shared Google Document dedicated to listing up-to-date staffing needs of providers. This also served as a network for spare supplies that could be shared among providers.

As a point of contact, Melissa Stall, the Support Services Manager, communicated provider supply needs to the Director of Operations, Pete Mason, in order to identify what needs and resources could be accommodated. The WCBDD purchased and supplied Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to providers, which included gloves, masks, toilet paper, paper towels, and other cleaning supplies. Additionally, Stall and the Provider Development Coordinators: Angela Brinker and Katelyn Willoughby, organized and funneled donated PPE from multiple volunteers. Such contributors included the volunteer group, “Helping Hands: Masks, Food, Essential items for all”, who donated a total of 150 masks, and Sharon Werner, owner of RDS Enterprise of Ohio LLC, created and donated customized masks for agency staff, providers, and enrolled individuals.

WCBDD values those who provide supports to individuals with developmental disabilities. To ensure providers have the opportunity to continue their growth and career development, the Provider Development team now offers trainings via Zoom. They likewise have created a YouTube Channel to better assist aspiring providers with the application process, as well as provide additional helpful resources.