

Warren County Dreams

March 2021

A Word From Our Superintendent



Happy Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month! This year's theme is "*Essential: We Matter*". Unfortunately, we aren't able to hold many of the programs we usually do, including our annual DD Awareness Month Open House. Because of the pandemic, we didn't feel it was a good idea to hold an open house this year. We are fortunate that we have a lot of attendees at this event, and we didn't want to risk anyone's health. However, we are looking forward to having another exciting event in March of next year to celebrate. We are planning some socially distant events throughout this month though, including a reverse parade event on March 29th called our "*Extra Essential Eggstravaganza*". We would love to have you join us at this event. More information can be found on our Facebook page.

On January 25, 2020, we hosted a very successful clinic in the gymnasium of our Warren C. Young Center for people who were eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Ohio's Phase 1-B. Three weeks later on February 15, 2020, we hosted another clinic for the same people to get their second shot of the vaccine. We can't thank the Warren County Health District enough for their collaboration on putting together these clinics and vaccinating over 200 people. We also express gratitude to Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Director Jeff Davis for prioritizing this group of people, due to their increased risk of death from COVID-19.

At the end of 2020, we unfortunately lost one of our valued board members, Debbie Delp. She passed away after an extended illness. Debbie was a great board member, and she brought a wonderful perspective as a mother of a person with a developmental disability. She will be missed.

Because of Debbie's unfortunate passing, we needed to fill the vacancy she left on the board. I am happy to say that we found another great person to fill that vacancy. Mr. Bryan Marsh will fill the vacancy and will start his role at the WCBDD March board meeting. We look forward to getting to know and working with Bryan.

As we look forward to the upcoming spring and summer seasons, we continue to plan on how to best serve people with developmental disabilities in Warren County. We hope the decrease in number of COVID cases and the increase in the number of people vaccinated will help us to have more in-person interactions. We will continue to share our progress!

If you need anything from us, please do not hesitate to reach out to 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. You can also check out our website at www.warrencountydd.org or our Facebook page. Thank you for your support of the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities!

WCBDD hosts holiday “drive-thru” for enrolled children and their families

In December, The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) Early Childhood Program held their first holiday “drive-thru”, as a way to safely connect with enrolled children and their families. The drive-thru entitled: *Gingerbread Friends Village*, took place at the entrance of the Milo H. Banta Center, and invited families of children birth to age six to visit with WCBDD staff while remaining in their vehicles.

The event boasted approximately 52 families in attendance, which included a total of 121 children. In an effort to practice safety and efficiency, all families were asked to reserve a time for their drive-thru visit. Attendees had the opportunity to visit with the familiar faces of the WCBDD Early Childhood team, as well as receive a complimentary book for their family. In addition, all children in attendance went home with a goody bag complete with delicious treats, fun activities, and their very own soft stuffed animal friend. Each stuffed animal friend was generously donated by the Milford PETSMART.

The *Gingerbread Friends Village* drive-thru received favorable feedback from the families in attendance, including one family who referred to the event as a “treat”, and another expressing, “Our kids have not put the stuffed animals down!”



Advocacy group of adults with disabilities spread love within the community

Voices Speaking Out is a self-advocacy group comprised of adults receiving services from the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD). Members meet monthly with the purpose of advocating independence and inclusion for those with disabilities. In addition to advocacy, the group actively seeks out ways to give back to their community. Although the year presented many unique challenges, Voices Speaking Out seized the opportunity to rejuvenate their community through acts of love.

It was during a summer advocacy meeting, that members suggested visiting local nursing homes and assisted living facilities. “One of our advocate’s grandparents live at Otterbein. She was talking about how lonely they are due to no visitors”, said WCBDD Advocacy Coordinator, Ellen Hudson, “That’s how the idea of showing love evolved”. Because of the pandemic, the group could not visit residents inside the facilities. This however, did not deter the advocates who with permission, gathered outside the building of multiple nursing facilities. While holding self-made signs promoting positivity, residents waved from windows, thanking the group for the gesture of kindness.

Their kindness and generosity continued into the fall, when Voices Speaking Out visited the Atrium Medical Center. In an effort to recognize and thank Healthcare Professionals and Essential Workers, each member assembled and donated dozens of goody bags. A total of sixty goody bags were donated by the group, and graciously received by the center’s Respiratory Care Unit.

The advocates of Voices Speaking Out remain vigilant in lifting the spirits of those around them. The most recent recipients of the group’s love, were the Warren County Sheriff’s Office and the Lebanon Fire

Department. With arms full of goodie bags, the advocates personally thanked the public servants for keeping the community safe.



Pictured: Members of Voices Speaking Out with Sheriff Larry Sims



Pictured: Members of Voices Speaking Out with the Lebanon Fire Department

Warren County man's self-determination earns state recognition

Aaron Bowman receives services from the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD). He is employed at Chuck E. Cheese, where he has enjoyed a 15 year career as their mouse mascot. He is also a recent recipient of the ESDY Award, presented by the Ohio Self Determination Association (OSDA).

OSDA is a statewide non-profit organization that empowers individuals with disabilities to decide the trajectory of their lives through the practice of self-determination. Each year, the organization celebrates and awards those who have not only excelled in establishing the direction of their lives, but have encouraged others to do the same.

No stranger to self-determination, Aaron is a proud member of Voices Speaking Out, a WCBDD sponsored group that promotes independence and inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities. Aaron was nominated by WCBDD Advocacy Coordinator, Ellen Hudson, who detailed the "countless ways" Aaron demonstrated self-determination.

In the nomination, Hudson describes Aaron as an "outstanding mentor and leader, who was initially shy and timid when first joining Voices Speaking Out." She adds that Aaron has since gained amazing confidence. Now a respected leader among the group, "Aaron serves as the elected Sergeant at Arms, due to his dedication to responsibility and attention to detail."

Hudson continues to illustrate Aaron's self-determination by citing specific examples. Last winter, Aaron routinely visited a group member who was critically ill and hospitalized. In addition to providing the member's spouse with monetary and spiritual support, Aaron gathered family members of other critically ill patients of the hospital, for comfort and prayer.

On another occasion, Aaron's self-determination enabled "quick-thinking under stress" when a peer was threatening to end his own life. A potentially tragic outcome was quickly avoided, thanks to Aaron's swift action to alert the appropriate authorities.

Though he exemplifies the principles of self-determination, Aaron remains a humble member of the group. Hudson shares that despite the encouragement from others to run for the President of Voices Speaking Out, Aaron shyly declines saying, “I don’t want to hurt the feelings of others running for office.”

Aaron was presented his award at the January virtual board meeting where his self-determination was recognized by Dana Charlton, Executive Director of the Ohio Self Determination Association.



Pictured: Aaron Bowman with his ESDY Award

Board of disabilities and health district join forces to “save lives” in Warren County

On January 25th, 2021, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) was pleased to host a vaccination clinic to individuals eligible for Phase 1-B of Ohio’s COVID-19 Vaccination Program. A total of 300 individuals identified as eligible in Warren County were immediately notified by county board staff and given the option to schedule an appointment.

Held in the gymnasium of the Warren C. Young Center, approximately 223 individuals received their first dosage of the *Pfizer BioNTech* vaccine, administered by the capable hands of the Warren County Health District (WCHD) team. Upon vaccination, individuals were then seated and closely monitored by staff in an effort to detect any adverse effects.

“We were so happy to collaborate with the Warren County Health District in order to distribute vaccines to the people we serve who also have a severe congenital, developmental, or early on-set medical disorder” said WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel. “Because the people included in this group have a higher risk of death from COVID, this opportunity was so important, literally saving lives.”

The combined forces of the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Warren County Health District were met with gratitude and relief from members of the community who described the vaccination clinic as “seamless” and “well organized”. Another community member added, “Lives are being saved in that gym today”.

Manuel concludes, “It was an amazing sight to see, and I was proud to be a part of it. We really appreciate Governor DeWine and DODD Director Davis for prioritizing people in this group!”

The second dose of the *Pfizer BioNTech* vaccine was administered at the Warren C. Young Center on Monday, February 15th, 2021, Presidents’ Day.



Pictured: Members of the Warren County Health District



Pictured: Enrolled individual Mattea (right) after being vaccinated

Early Childhood News

The Early Childhood Team at the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) continues to provide support and services to children under age six, enrolled in services. The employees of WCBDD Early Childhood Programs have grown their skill set in coaching families through technology by use of Zoom, video sharing, FaceTime, increased phone calls, and more.

During the last quarter of the year (October-December), our collaborative team comprised of WCBDD providers and Early Intervention Service Coordinators from the Warren County Educational Service Center, provided 97 developmental evaluations and/or assessments, and developed Individualized Family Service Plans for qualifying children. Our Developmental Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists, and PLAY Project Consultants for our PLAY 3-6 program, delivered 863 virtual home visits during this period through virtual platforms such as Zoom, Face Time, videos, and phone calls! We continue to have our weekly Early Intervention team meetings via Zoom with all providers and service coordinators. This virtual platform has made it more efficient 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.

Additionally, we continue to provide various supports using technology: In October, we hosted a virtual **Toileting 101** parent information session that was well attended. Our virtual playgroups have also continued weekly. In December, we hosted a *Gingerbread Friends Village* "drive-thru" at the entrance of the Milo H. Banta Center. Families of enrolled children birth to age six were gifted a book, a bag filled with treats, activities, and a soft stuffed animal. 52 families attended with a total of 121 children. Shout out to the Milford PETSMART for their generous donation of stuffed animal friends!

Upcoming Virtual Opportunities:

Check out our virtual playgroups:



Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities Early Childhood 2021 Virtual Playgroups

We would like to extend an invitation to you and your family to join us in our 'Virtual Playgroups' January 5 through March 25, 2021 via ZOOM!

Our Tuesday and Thursday playgroup activities include:

- Story time, sing-a-longs, movement activities and craft ideas
- Each virtual playgroup is approximately 20 minutes
- Playgroups will be held Tuesday @ 10:00AM and Thursday @ 3:00 PM on the dates noted below and you may sign up for as many dates as you wish
- Families of children up to age 5 currently enrolled in WCBDD may attend
- Our Virtual Playgroups are hosted by WCBDD Early Childhood staff

<i>TUESDAY 10:00 AM:</i>	<i>THURSDAY 3:00PM</i>
⇒ January 5, 12, 19, 26	⇒ January 7, 14, 21, 28
⇒ February 2, 9, 23	⇒ February 4, 11, 25
⇒ March 2, 9, 16, 23	⇒ March 4, 11, 18, 25

How do I sign up? It's easy! Register via Survey Monkey:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WX3PVMR>

Prior to each virtual playgroup, you will be sent the Zoom invitation and agenda for that respective date!

Questions? Please email: Carolyn.Bogenschutz@warrencountydd.org

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

- **Ohio Early Intervention** - <https://ohioearlyintervention.org/> (Information about Ohio's Early Intervention System.)
- **Zero to Three**- <https://www.zerotothree.org/> (Information and resources on child development from birth to age three.)
- **The Inspired Tree House** - <https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/> (Child development resources and creative ideas to promote child developmental skills.)
- **Imagination Library** - <https://imaginationlibrary.com/> (Sign up to have free children's books delivered to your home every month. It is now available in Warren County)
- **JBrary**- <https://jbrary.com/> (Songs, stories, and many fun things for little kids, compiled by 2 children's librarians.)

- Check out this handout from the Hanen Centre on helping build vocabulary:



Tips to Build Vocabulary: Repeat Words That Match Your Child's Interests

1, 2, 3... Repeat, repeat, repeat!

Children need to hear a new word many times before they can use it on their own. When you repeat a word in different situations with your child, you give him lots of opportunities to understand and eventually use it.

Finding Words to Repeat

Look for words that:

- **match your child's interests** – words that relate to what your child is communicating about and what he's interested in at that moment.
 - *E.g., if your child is playing with cars by making them go down a ramp, you could repeat, "the car is going down".*
- **your child understands and communicates with actions or gestures.**
 - *E.g., repeat the word "up" if your child often raises his hands to be picked up, but doesn't say "up".*
- **you can use in a variety of situations.**
 - *E.g., "up" can be used not only when picking your child up, but also when he goes up the stairs.*

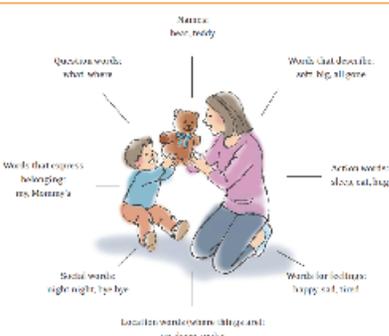
Research shows...variety is key!

Your child needs to learn not only the names for things ("dog"), but also a variety of word "types", like action words ("jump") and describing words ("big").

Word types to choose

The types of words you say should reflect what your child is interested in. For example, he might *run* or *jump* into a puddle, or he might show you that a page in his touch-and-feel book is *rough* or *soft*.

Here's an example of all the different word types you can use to talk to your child about a teddy bear:



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We look forward to providing continued support to children and families of Warren County in the safest way possible. WCBDD will continue to strive to phase in-home and community visits as a part of service delivery options in the future. 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:

Kelly Brooks, MS

Early Childhood Manager

kelly.brooks@warrencountydd.org or 513-228-6520

Enjoy reading? Join the Next Chapter Book Club!

Last winter, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) in partnership with the Lebanon Public Library, invited individuals enrolled in services to begin their literary journey through the Next Chapter Book Club (NCBC), a nationwide program that offers adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities a fun and engaging way to actively participate in their communities through reading.



NCBC provides its members the opportunity to read, learn, and connect with others. Members, along with trained facilitators, meet weekly to read aloud and discuss a book. As a group, the members determine all aspects of their participation in the meetings, including book selection.

Anyone can participate, no matter their reading ability. While not a structured reading class or tutoring program, NCBC focuses on “reading-to-learn”, not “learning-to-read”. Additionally, fundamentals of social interaction and community inclusion are equally emphasized.

Group meetings are traditionally held at the Lebanon Public Library. At this time, NCBC conducts virtual meetings via Zoom, in an effort to practice safe distancing. Despite not being in person, the meetings continue to be beneficial.

“Reading together creates opportunities to discuss topics with peers that might not come up otherwise,” said Jan Berger, IT Coordinator with the Lebanon Public Library. “Creating social ties through a book club, creates more of a connection to others and one’s community. It can help fight off depression and reduce feelings of isolation.” Berger, along with her associate, Elisa Dennis serve as two of the four facilitators, as well as the supplier of books. Both were recent recipients of the WCBDD “Friends of DD Award”.



For information regarding membership with the Next Chapter Book Club, contact Community Relations Coordinator, Adam Jones at (513) 806-3941 or email adam.jones@warrencountydd.org

WCBDD to hold “Eggstravaganza” Reverse Parade

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) will be hosting an “Eggstravaganza” Reverse Parade on Monday, March 29th at 6PM, as a way to safely engage with enrolled individuals and the community. The event will be held in the parking lot of the Warren C. Young Center and will serve as a celebration of both Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and Easter. Like past reverse parades, participants will drive through the parking lot, as agency staff, volunteers, and providers, wave, cheer, and showcase their decorated signs and trunk displays. Participants will then be gifted a special Easter basket or goodie bag.

We are currently collecting and accepting donations to include in the Easter basket or goodie bag.

If you are interested in entering a trunk display or would like to donate items to incorporate in the giveaways, please contact Rhonda Schutte at Rhonda.schutte@warrencountydd.org or 513-806-3809.

Donations are needed by March 22nd for assembly.

Needed items include: filled eggs, wrapped candy, books, puzzles, crafts, spring activities, bath bombs, novelties, juice boxes, fruit snacks, mini Gatorades, small fast food gift cards for “lucky eggs”, ect.

Any items typically found in an Easter basket are welcomed and appreciated!