

Warren County Dreams

September 2021

A Word from Our Superintendent



Summer has come to an end, and autumn is here! Our summer at the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities was very busy as we implemented our new staff work plan on July 6, 2021. In addition to that, there were some other areas in which we were involved as well.

The state budget was finalized by the required deadline of June 30th. Some of the key provisions that affected our developmental disabilities field included the following:

- 2% waiver rate increase for each year of the biennium was approved. Rather than implementing 2% on July 1, 2021 and another 2% on July 1, 2022, the state is going to implement the full 4% on January 1, 2022.
- Provision that would have extended the allowance of virtual meetings for public bodies through December 31, 2021 was removed and remained at June 30, 2021
- Funding for Early Intervention services remained
- Funding for assistive technology and remote supports remained
- An amendment that had been added that would have prohibited prioritizing exit waivers for people living in Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) was removed
- A requirement that DD service providers would have to be dually licensed by the Ohio Dept of Developmental Disabilities and the Ohio Dept of Health was removed

Fortunately, we were able to once again hold two of our agency events this summer! Because both events were held outdoors, we could safely offer our *Things That Go* and *Family Fun Day* events. *Things That Go* was held on August 28th in our Warren C. Young Center parking lot, and *Family Fun Day* was held on September 18th at the Springboro Miracle Field. You can read more about both of these events further down in this newsletter. We were so pleased to be able to hold these community events and to be able to interact with community members and the people we support.

Like many industries right now, our field is experiencing a severe shortage in workers available to be Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), Ohio County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, and provider organizations throughout the state have been working together to discuss this issue and to try to develop any solutions we possibly can to help with this crisis.

At the end of August and early September, representatives from DODD, the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA) and the Ohio Association of County Boards Serving People with Developmental Disabilities (OACB) collaborated to visit eight different counties throughout the state and hold "Listen and Learn" sessions. The intent of these sessions was to talk to county board staff, providers and family members of people with disabilities to talk about their fears, concerns, common themes, and ideas that might be working regarding staff shortages. Warren County was one of the eight counties chosen. Following these sessions, six statewide organizations collaborated on a letter intended for individuals served and their family members regarding the statewide workforce crisis. If you haven't yet seen this letter, you will be seeing it soon, as our service coordinators will be sending it out to everyone on their

caseloads. If you have any questions about workforce concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Service Coordinator.

As always, thank you for your support and patience as we continue to oversee services for over 2,000 people in Warren County. Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions!

Warren County law enforcement shines light on Special Olympics Ohio with Torch Run

On June 16, 2021, Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) united with members of the community to cheer on Warren County Law Enforcement as they participated in an informal Torch Run in honor of Special Olympics Ohio. Special Olympics Ohio is part of a global inclusion movement that uses sports, health education, and leadership programs to empower people with intellectual disabilities.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) partners Special Olympics Ohio with law enforcement agencies across the state and invites them to bike, run, and walk in an effort to raise awareness and funds for Special Olympics. Traditionally, the torch, also known as “The Flame of Hope”, is carried through Ohio, until it reaches The Ohio State University for the Opening Ceremonies of the State Summer Games.

Reprising his roles as last year’s coordinator of the Torch Run, was Chief Deputy Barry Riley of the Warren County Sheriff’s Office. An avid supporter of the LETR mission and emboldened by a good challenge, Chief Deputy Riley recruited his participants with a hearty, “Let’s destroy the fundraising goal!”, a challenge that would later come to fruition.



“I am very thankful for the ongoing support of law enforcement in Warren County,” said Megan Manuel, Superintendent of WCBDD. Manuel, who also serves as the Vice Chairperson of the Special Olympics Ohio Board of Directors added, “Every year they step up to participate in the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, and they did so again this year. Even though this event was a little different due to the pandemic, Warren County law enforcement exceeded their fundraising goal. We are so appreciative of all they do to support Special Olympics athletes in Warren County and throughout the state of Ohio!”

The Special Olympics State Summer Games event was cancelled this year, and instead, evolved into ‘Summer Games Reimagined’, a month-long celebration that provides Special Olympics athletes the opportunity to participate in virtual and in-person events in their communities. Offerings in Warren County included virtual Olympic Bingo, softball, floor hockey, and tennis. Athletes were also offered “Art in the Park”, an event hosted by WCBDD in Harmon Park that invited athletes to paint their own full-sized birdhouse, participate in a dance class, and enjoy a delicious Olympic-themed treat.



WCBDD transition students complete CEES Summer Program

This summer, Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) transition students, Aiden Marsh and Jakob Rosenthal participated in a six-week community-integrated summer program designed for high school students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPS), ages 14 – 22.

Collaboration for Employment and Education Synergy (CEES) helps young adults determine how their interests and abilities can be applied in the workplace through use of internships, social curriculum, STEM curriculum, and “near peer” staffing on the University of Cincinnati campus. Additionally, students will gain valuable life skills that will increase their ability to live and work more independently.

From watering flowers in the UC greenhouse, to pruning and plant maintenance, the program promotes social communication, career exploration, and self-determination.

Parents or family members of interested students: contact your Transition Coordinator or local school district to see how your child can apply.

For more information about the **Collaboration for Employment and Education Synergy (CEES)**, please visit <https://cech.uc.edu/schools/education/ats/cees.html>



Pictured: Transition student, Aiden waters the plants in the UC Greenhouse



Pictured: Transition student, Jakob assists in maintaining the UC Greenhouse plants

Enrolled individual gets recognized by Goodwill Easterseals



Molly Niederhelamn receives services from the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD). She works part-time as a Dining Server at Twin Lakes Senior Living Community. When Molly is not working, she attends Goodwill Easterseals Adult Day Support Program in Lebanon. Recently, Molly was featured in the Goodwill Easterseals newsletter where she was recognized for her growth and friendship to others.

The newsletter shares that Molly has grown so much throughout her time with Goodwill Easterseals. In addition to becoming a great friend to many in the program, Molly goes above and beyond to help out others. Staff stated, “Molly has a wonderful, kind, caring, strong heart, and we are very glad to have this opportunity to work with her.”

Molly lives on her own in an apartment located in Mason where she utilizes remote supports. She has a cat named Wesley, and enjoys shopping, going out to movies, and eating out. Molly’s independence, however, did not happen overnight.

After multiple hospitalizations due to severe anxiety and difficulty handling her emotions, Molly decided to turn her life around and apply self-determination to overcome her challenges. With support from her therapist, and frequent check-ins with her Service Coordinator and Behavior Specialist, Molly is able to refocus her anxiety into her goals and sense of purpose.

When asked how she would advise those who struggle with their emotions, Molly said, “It’s not too late to get help, there’s always going to be help around. You’ve got family to support you.” “If you feel really bad, and you get to the point where you can’t take it anymore, I would recommend you speak with a therapist,” Molly added.

With her big heart, caring personality, and invaluable life experiences, Molly serves as a great reminder to everyone, the value of true friendships, and leaning on others for support.

WCBDD *Things That Go* gets the “Show on the Road”

On Saturday, August 28, 2021, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) was pleased to host its annual *Things That Go* event in the parking lot of the Warren C. Young Center.

The free community event showcased a variety of community and commercial vehicles including: fire trucks, police vehicles, heavy equipment, school busses, and more. Adults and children alike had the opportunity to explore each vehicle, as well as learn about the businesses and people who operate them. Multiple businesses and organizations came together to ensure each guest came away from the event having had a special experience.

Things That Go received positive feedback from those who attended. One family expressed how each of their experiences with the county has made them “so happy” and “filled with comfort.”



Pictured: Enrolled individual, Will Muller shows off his bike to WCBDD staff.



Pictured: Little girl gets a bird's eye view of the fire truck.



Pictured: Children pose for a picture with the WC Sheriff's truck.

Early Childhood News

The Early Childhood Team at the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) provides support and services to families and their children under age six who are enrolled in services through WCBDD. We provide Early Intervention services, socialization events, and parent/caregiver educational opportunities.

During the second quarter of 2021 (April - June), our collaborative Early Intervention team, which includes service providers from WCBDD and Early Intervention Service Coordinators from the Warren County Educational Service Center, received **111** referrals for initial eligibility, provided **123** developmental evaluations and/or assessments, and developed Individualized Family Service Plans for qualifying children. Our EI Developmental Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapist, Speech and Language Pathologists, and PLAY Project Consultants for our PLAY 3 – 6 program, delivered **1,086** home or community visits during this period, mainly through technology platforms such as Zoom, FaceTime, and phone calls. We also began to move back to offering in-person visitation as a service option as well. The Early Intervention team continues to meet weekly via Zoom with all providers and service coordinators to discuss referrals, assign teams, scheduling, and to coach each other.

Our team has not only been busy providing services, they have also been busy continuing to build their professional knowledge so they can provide children and families with the most up-to-date techniques and information. We are excited to share that Peggy Engelhard, SLP completed the “Target Word” 2-day workshop from the Hanen Institute. This training will provide our families and teams working with children who are late talkers, with even more support and strategies to promote expressive language development. Additionally, we are happy to share that Kaki Donahue, PT, Beth Roberts, OT, and Stacie Wallace, OT completed a 4-day workshop called “Baby Treatment”, which is a course to provide

therapists evidence-based early interventions to support infants/toddlers and their families within daily life. A big thanks to all four ladies for their hard work and dedication.



Peggy Engelhard, SLP



Kaki Donahue, PT



Beth Roberts, OT



Stacie Wallace, OT

The Early Childhood team continued to provide other various supports including virtual playgroups and *Social Saturday*. Virtual playgroups consist of songs, story time, movement activities, craft ideas, and craft sharing over Zoom. Families also receive a packet in the mail with some supplies for craft time. The children have really enjoyed getting their very own mail sent to them! We were very excited to relaunch *Social Saturday* after over a year on hold due to COVID-19. Social Saturday consists of 90 minutes of fun activities (including play on our playground), and time for families to meet and connect with each other in person. The following pictures show a fun time being had by the children, parents, and WCBDD team members. Continue to be on the lookout for emails and follow us on Facebook for information on what is coming up next!



Upcoming Socialization Opportunities:

Virtual Playgroup

[Click here for flyer](#)

Social Saturday

[Click here for flyer](#)

Social Saturday is back! Check out all the details here:

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** – OhiolmaginationLibrary.org (Sign up to have free children's books delivered to your home every month.)
- **Sesame Street** - <https://www.sesamestreet.org/> (Games, videos, art ideas and resource information for children and families)
- **OCALI** - <https://www.ocali.org/> (Information and resources to inspire change and promote access to opportunities for people with disabilities.)

WCBDD Early Childhood programs are excited to be able to utilize both in-person and technology as a part of service delivery methods that take place in family's homes and communities. These service delivery methods are determined individually through each child and family's Individualized Family Service Plan process. It is our goal to merge the skills we have learned throughout the pandemic to continue to offer thorough evaluation and assessment, research-based practices and interventions and family-focused coaching to support the enhancement of child development and quality family daily routines.

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

“Board of disabilities swears in new board member”

On Tuesday, August 31, 2021, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) welcomed Bill DeLord as its newest board member. DeLord who had previously served on the board several years ago, was sworn in by Warren County Probate Judge Joseph Kirby, accompanied by Superintendent, Megan Manuel.

“Previously serving on this board was the most rewarding and fulfilling jobs I have had in my career,” DeLord stated.

With an extensive background in the automotive industry, DeLord purchased his General Motors dealership in 1993. A few years later, he built and managed the existing facility on Columbus Avenue located in Lebanon. After 25 years in operation, DeLord sold his dealership to Jake Sweeney, has since retired, and now enjoys spending time with his wife of 30 years and his three daughters.

“Dealing with developmental disabilities within my own family has made me come to appreciate the compassion and caring that is so desperately needed by the individuals we serve. I am excited and humbled to be able to be a part of this board again.”

Board members of the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities serve four-year terms, and may serve no more than three consecutive terms. All board meetings are open to the public, and typically take place on the third Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the WCBDD Administrative Offices located at 42 Kings Way, Lebanon.



Pictured: WC Judge Kirby (right) swears in Bill DeLord (left).



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel, Board member, Bill DeLord, and WC Probate Judge Kirby.



Pictured: WC Judge Kirby and Bill DeLord shake hands.

WCBDD honors Direct Support Professionals



On Tuesday, September 14, 2021, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities hosted its 3rd Annual Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Appreciation Dinner, to acknowledge the important role DSPs play in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. The event was held in the parking lot of the Warren C. Young Center and included a packaged dinner provided by Aynie’s Catering, followed by an awards ceremony. Lounging in lawn chair outside their vehicles, DSPs were hand delivered their meals by WCBDD staff members donned in “We Love Our DSPs” t-shirts.

Multiple DSPs were recognized and awarded for providing exemplary services. Award winners included: *Creativity Award*: Candi Duble of Lifestyle Housing and Independent Provider, Tracy Rapin, *Above & Beyond*: Carol Schmitz of Mothers & Sons and Crystal Dawson of Community Options, *Rookie of the Year*: Independent Provider, Courtney Brown and Alexis Turner of Good Works Farm, and *Working Supervisor*: Corrie Edling of Production Services Unlimited, Inc.

The *Agency of the Year* was awarded to Residential Community Care (RCC). Accepting the award was Owner and President of RCC, Tony Mitchell, who was described as a leader that “gives the individuals he serves and the staff he employs, the support that they need, and treats everyone as family.” *DSP of the Year* was awarded to Angie Wills of Production Services Unlimited, Inc. Wills was recognized for her “consistent hard work and her commitment to the individuals that she serves every day.”

DSPs in Warren County were celebrated throughout the week with yard signs, an impromptu honk parade, and customized tumblers. Following the Appreciation Dinner, each DSP went home with their own t-shirt entitled: “differenceMaker#DSP”

Removing Barriers to Employment

with STABLE Accounts

By Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) – a time to recognize and celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of workers with disabilities. NDEAM also highlights the importance and benefits of inclusive workplaces.

This year’s theme is “America’s Recovery: Powered by Inclusion.” As our economy continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to recognize that a strong economy must include opportunities for American workers with disabilities.

It goes without saying, people living with disabilities often face many barriers when it comes to employment, and disability-related expenses can pose a real financial strain on individuals and their families. However, we have a powerful tool to break down those barriers, unlock each person’s potential, and make our communities and economy stronger.

Through STABLE Account – Ohio’s ABL program – the Treasurer’s office plays a key role in the effort to enhance financial independence for people living with disabilities.

Before STABLE accounts, people living with disabilities could only save \$2,000 before losing means-tested benefits such as Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These old rules discouraged saving and investing, and asset limits made it very difficult for an individual to join the workforce.

STABLE accounts help remove those barriers to saving and employment, empowering people to have more control over their finances, and allowing accountholders to more fully participate in their communities and the labor force. People are living more independently – buying cars, paying rent, and even putting down payments on their first homes. This financial stability is powerful and gives individuals and their families the peace of mind that comes with a plan for the future. Impactful stories like these are why we’re reaching out to more Ohioans to get them enrolled.

Since taking office in January 2019, we have more than doubled STABLE Account enrollment. Today, there are over 25,000 active accounts and \$250 million in account contributions have been made. Partnerships with the State of Ohio, as well as several local governments and private employers now allow qualifying employees to make recurring direct deposits into STABLE accounts.

Accountholders can save up to \$15,000 each year without jeopardizing federal assistance programs. If the accountholder is employed, they can save an additional \$12,760 each year. Earnings on STABLE

accounts grow tax-free, as long as funds are spent on qualified expenses, such as housing, transportation, healthcare, assistive technology, living expenses, and many others.

In the Buckeye State, we've seen how STABLE accounts improve financial stability, promote independence, encourage employment, and improve quality of life. There's always more work to be done, but during National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we have plenty to celebrate.

Signing up for a STABLE account is easy – it only takes about 20 minutes and can be done from the safety and comfort of home. For more information about STABLE accounts and to sign up, visit www.stableaccount.com