

To ensure the availability of supports to eligible citizens with developmental disabilities gaining inclusion in their community. Further, to assist individuals and their families in achieving a life that they establish for themselves.

# OTTAWA COUNTY BOARD OF DD

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER — FALL 2009

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Ottawa County Board of DD employees are working toward cutting 10% of the operating costs through the end of 2009 by turning off lights when not in use, decreasing the amount of office supplies, reducing travel expenses, etc.
- Election Day is November 3rd

## Board Hires New Superintendent



The Ottawa County Board of Developmental Disabilities is pleased to announce

Ms. Melinda Slusser as their new Superintendent, effective November 1, 2009. Ms. Slusser has been working in Ottawa County since June of 2009 as the Interim Superintendent, while also maintaining her position as Director of Quality and Compliance for the Wood County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The Board is very grateful for Wood County Board's generous "sharing" of Ms. Slusser during this period of time. "Melinda's background and education are a great match for the needs of the county", stated Jennifer Zelms, Vice President of the Board. She grew up in Putnam County

and has remained in Northwest Ohio throughout her career. She has a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from BGSU as well as a law degree from the University of Toledo, and is licensed as an attorney in the State of Ohio. Furthermore, she has over 24 years experience working for the Wood County Board of DD in various positions, starting with direct service positions through middle and upper management. She has over 15 years experience in management and leadership positions in Wood County, including directing their Adult Service and Operations programs. Additionally, Melinda has a lot of experience working within the Medicaid funding environment, an asset that will help the Board maximize federal funding and minimize the local dollars needed to effectively serve our constituents. "Melinda's strengths have been clearly demonstrated here in Ottawa County already,"

commented Rick Comings, Board member. Melinda has spent her career working with and for people with disabilities in Wood County. During her tenure there she worked diligently to better serve youth in transition and adults in both sheltered settings and community employment options. "Melinda's passion for excellence in service is obvious. We feel very fortunate to have a Superintendent of her quality here in Ottawa County and look forward to many years of exemplary leadership from her," stated Jennifer Zelms, Board Vice-President.

*Ms. Slusser stated that she is very happy to be given this opportunity.*

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## Business After Hours

The Ottawa County Board of Developmental Disabilities opened its doors on September 24th to members of the Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce and to the public. Approximately 40 people attended.

Guests enjoyed snacks and cake, along with an assortment of raffle prizes. OCBDD employee, Deb Schaefer, won the 50/50. Tours of the new office building were also given. It was an excellent opportunity for area

business people to learn more about what we do.



# Spotlight on...



LISA takes the Put-In-Bay ferry by herself to and from work every day while listening to "Grease 2" on her CD player.

*"We are  
**PEOPLE**  
before we  
are a  
disability"*



*"They have taught me a lot,"* Bev R.,  
Community Support  
Coordinator


LISA is 19 years old and lives on Put-In-Bay in Ottawa Co. Some of her favorite things to do include watching television & movies (especially "Blue Steel") or anything to do with cops. She also enjoys riding her bike when the weather is nice.

Lisa is very proud of the fact that she recently got a job at RVI (new name for Riverview Industries). She did this with the help of her teacher, Miss Market; Superintendent Mr.

Poe arranged for transportation to & from P-I-B and the mainland; and Susan Minier, OCBDD Service & Support Administrator, worked with Lisa to obtain OCTA transportation between the ferry dock and RVI. Lisa began working at RVI in September 2009. Once she gets herself signed in, she begins her job of labeling and assembling boxes.

Her favorite time of the year is winter because her birthday is in February and because school

on the island closes for an entire week that month! Her goal is to work three days per week at this time next year.

If she could take a trip anywhere in the world—she would love to visit her aunt Chrise who lives in Florida. Lisa loves the color pink and the people who make her the happiest are "Chef John" (her dad) and her sisters Roberta and Amanda. 



## People 1st

our first officers. Linda Barker, President; Ken Newton, Vice-President; Tom Welco, Treasurer; and Brett Babcock, Sergeant-At-Arms were elected.

During the first year the officers wrote the by-laws, learned parliamentary procedure and how to be self-advocates.

A membership drive was held. Ten self-advocates joined. They met monthly in the board room at RVI.

Linda Barker and Marcia Bauer attended a weekend self-advocacy seminar in Butler County. Marcia Bauer, Rosemarie Bear and Nancy Mackey attended Partners In Policymaking

The first question a **People 1st** member will ask you is, "Do you know what **People 1st** means?" It means we are PEOPLE before we are a disability. We all have things we need help with, but we are all great people.

**People 1st** is a self-advocacy group for people with disabilities.

People 1st began in Ottawa County in 2002. Sadie Hunter from **People 1st** in Ohio came and helped us elect

one weekend per month for nine months. They all brought back valuable information to the membership. As word of the group grew, so did the membership. They soon outgrew the board room and moved to the RVI lunchroom. There are now 46 members!

The first year was very exciting. The membership wrote their motto: **Plug into Self-advocacy—Everyone Fits.**

With this motto it was decided to allow people with non-documented disabilities to join. The membership decided it was discriminating, in a reverse way, by not allowing all people to join.



## SENIOR PROGRAM

The OCBDD Senior Program is unique because it is mobile and activities are planned by the Seniors. There are three weekly Senior groups plus a book club and a sanctioned bowling league. Weekly, Seniors plan their activities three months at a time. They all have their calendars and know what the weekly activity will be.

OCTA supplies a van for the Senior transportation because OCBDD Seniors are always *on the move!* Some of their favorite things to do are bowling, goofy golf, Yahtzee, garage sales, coffee shops, walking and shopping. Movies and out-to-lunch are also popular. They have taken trips to Amish Country, Put-In-Bay, Cedar Point, Ottawa County Fair, Velvet Ice Cream Company, Frankenmuth, Toledo Zoo and the Toledo Museum of Art.

The bowling league bowls on the Tuesday Morning Coffee League at the bowling alley in Oak Harbor. They have bowled on this league for 4 years and have formed many friendships. Last season, they took their turn planning the bowling banquet and had a great time doing it.

The Next Chapter Book Club meets on Monday mornings. The members of the book club select a book to read. They purchase it at Border's book store. Some of the books they have read are *Skinny Bones*, *How To Eat Fried Worms*, two *Hardy Boys* books and *Skipping Christmas*. They are currently reading *The Secret Garden*. The next books will be *A Little Princess* and then *The Undomestic Goddess*.

Book Club members help each other read. If there is a movie made from the book, the members watch the movie after reading the book. The book club members have become very close and have begun celebrating each others birthdays by going out to breakfast and buying each other small gifts.

The OCBDD Senior Program's main goal is to help Seniors maintain a routine, keep the skills they have and form friendships. The program does this by having Seniors go with the same people on the same day every week. In this way, we hope to keep Seniors going and going and going.

# Name Change Celebration

A small group of individuals from Athens County recently demonstrated that the government process does work. Through their tenacity, Governor Ted Strickland signed into a law a bill they began.

On July 7, the Governor signed Senate Bill 79, which was introduced by Sen. Jimmy Stewart of Athens County. The bill became law on October 7th.

The process began more than two years ago when a group of people with developmental disabilities attended the Athens County Board of MRDD, and said they didn't like being called "retarded".

Their personal stories touched the board members and then Rep. Stewart so intensely that the board immediately changed its name to Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities, and Rep. Stewart began the process of changing the Ohio Department of MRDD and all County Boards of MRDD.

"After listening to my constituents, I decided to sponsor this legislation because I knew in my heart it was the right thing to do," said Jimmy Stewart, just minutes after learning his legislation would be signed by the Governor.

In June, both the House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate unanimously passed the bill. The House version of the bill was introduced by Rep. Debbie Phillips and Rep. Deborah Newcomb.

"Every legislator understood that this bill wasn't about money or politics. It was about the people with developmental disabilities in Ohio and their families," said Linda Oda, Director of Communications for the Ohio Association of County Boards of MRDD, which also is expected to be making a name change in the near future.

While Athens County took the lead on the statewide change, other County Boards broke ground on this issue decades ago. In November 1990, the Delaware County Board of MRDD dropped "mental retardation" from its name and began doing business as a County Board of DD. Just a couple of months later, Fulton County followed suit.

In the past 20 years, nine of Ohio's 88 counties made the change to doing business as County Boards of DD. State law required that they officially remained County Boards of MRDD, so that is the name voters would recognize on the ballot.

Many other County Boards of MRDD also wanted to drop "mental retardation," but were prohibited by their prosecutors, who interpreted the Ohio Revised Code in such a way that would not allow County Boards of MRDD to do business under any name other than the state-sanctioned title. That is why a statewide name change was necessary, Oda said.

Oda said the name change is part of the continuing evolution for people with developmental disabilities. "As recently as 40 years ago, it was considered necessary to house our individuals in institutions, leaving many of them naked because it was easier to keep them clean, or putting people with autistic tendencies in cages to keep them from hurting themselves or others," she said.

"In 1967, our parents said, enough" and County Boards of MRDD were created to provide the services necessary. But even then, it was politically correct for learned people to refer to people with developmental disabilities as imbeciles or idiots," she said.

Oda said much of the credit for the passage of the bill should be given not only to the self-advocates of Athens County, but also advocates for the developmentally disabled throughout Ohio. Many were in attendance as legislators voted on the bill.

Locally, the Ottawa County Board of DD celebrated this historic event on Oct 1<sup>st</sup>. Several people with disabilities were present, along with agency representatives from the surrounding area. Cake and punch were enjoyed by all. People with disabilities were happy to stand up and express their pleasure with the removal of the words "mental retardation". One woman stated that it hurts when people call her that word and she looks forward to the day when it will no longer be used.



Port Clinton Mayor Debbie Hymore-Tester, Les Cunningham proudly displaying the Name Change Proclamation & Oak Harbor Mayor Fred Conley



Ottawa County Board of DD  
235 N Toussaint South Rd  
Oak Harbor OH 43449

The logo for Supporting Dreams is a square graphic divided into three vertical sections. The left section shows a stylized figure of a person with arms raised. The middle section shows a stylized figure of a person with arms raised, similar to the first. The right section shows a stylized figure of a person with arms raised, similar to the first. Below the graphic, the text "Supporting dreams" is written in a bold, sans-serif font.

# *Supporting Dreams*

# OCDD Board News

- On September 21st, the Board signed a proclamation declaring that their official name is now Ottawa County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Mental Retardation was removed).
- Fran Szabo was congratulated by the Board upon her recent retirement from the OCBDD. Fran worked for OCBDD for 23 years!
- Tenants are being sought to fill vacant rooms at the Riverview School building.
- Kara DiMasso was congratulated by the Board on the dedication of her Habitat For Humanity home, which was built in Oak Harbor this summer in just 4 short months!
- The Ottawa County Board of DD recently became involved in regional strategic planning meetings with four local County Boards of DD.
- A Pandemic Response Policy and Memorandum of Understanding was recently developed by the Board. It involves the cooperative efforts of the Ottawa County Health Dept, Riverview Healthcare Campus, RVI and OCBDD.
- Ottawa Residential Services Inc. and OCBDD are working collaboratively on a housing plan for the future.
- The Board meets monthly on the third Monday at 5:00pm at the OCBDD building. Meetings are open to the public.



## Ohio Schools Council Energy for Education II Program

The Ottawa County Board of DD is pleased to announce that they have received a check for \$642.44 due to our participation in the Energy for Education II Program from 2005-2009. This check represents our percentage of the \$886,507 distributed to 249 school districts participating in the Energy Efficiency (electricity) Program.

Rev. Lisa Peterson, Board President, stated, “Any amount of savings count!”

Kudos to Kim Strong-Todd, Director of Business and Operations, and to the county leadership for gaining access to this program.

# Early Intervention: Make It—Take It Workshops



Sparky the Fire Dog & Friend

The Early Intervention department began hosting Make It-Take It (MI-TI) workshops for families with young children this year. MI-TI workshops encourage families to connect, little ones to play & learn together and for everyone to take home something they created.

The first MI-TI workshop was held in March and families had fun with reading. A story was read to all our little guests and everyone went home with coloring books. The second workshop was held in May and

music was the theme. Kinder Musik brought instruments so everyone could sing, play and dance. Everyone took home an instrument that they made from household items. The third event took place in July at the Lakeview Park, Port Clinton and summer safety was the topic. Police, firemen, EMS, Sparky the Fire Dog and even Aaron the K-9 officer joined us! The children made sun visors to protect their faces from harmful sun-rays. The theme in September was Fall Fun. We decorated pumpkins, painted with golf balls, searched for plastic bugs, took wagon rides and we even had a face-painting booth!

Baby pumpkins were decorated by the little ones so they could take them home. Donut holes, apple cider, punch and pizza were enjoyed by all.



If you are interested in learning more about Make It-Take It—please ask an Early Intervention staff member. They would be happy to tell you more.

Families receiving Early Intervention services are asked to watch their mail for an invitation to the MI-TI Christmas Party.



*Thank you letter from Cris Magrum & Kayla (K.C.) Davis —*

My daughter K.C. Davis and I would like to thank you for all your help in making K.C.'s recent week at the Whispering Trails Camp for Williams Syndrome possible. K.C. had an awesome week with swimming, canoeing, art, archery, besides the usual camp activities. It was also her first social experience of spending a week with peers and not being made fun of.

K.C. made many friends and the staff put together a book with all of their pictures, names, addresses and phone number so they can stay in touch. It was great networking for me, as well. I was fortunate to attend the last night's program where the campers performed a wonderful 1 1/2 hour musical program.

K.C. (on the right) is obviously having fun!



## Upcoming Events & Meetings

### Bingo Night

November 5: 5:00-8:00pm

At OCBDD Boardroom

Bring your dinner

10 cents/card/game or 25 cents coverall



### Veteran's Day

November 11: OCBDD & RVI Closed



### OCBDD Board Meeting

November 19: 5:00pm

At OCBDD Building

### Movie Night & Supper

November 19: 5:00-8:00pm

Bring your dinner & any DVD you want to watch. We will vote on which one to watch.

### Thanksgiving & Day After

November 26 & 27: OCBDD & RVI Closed

### OCBDD Board Meeting

December 7: 5:00pm

(Location: TBA)



### Potluck & Christmas Movie

December 10: 5:00-8:00pm

At OCBDD Boardroom

Please bring a main dish or cooked vegetable dish to share. Dessert will be provided.

### Basketball Game

December 12: 10:00am-12:00pm



At Riverview School Gym

Bring your own water and wear tennis shoes.

### Christmas Concert

December 20: 3:00pm

At Oak Harbor High School

Meet in the lobby at 2:30pm



### Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

December 24 & 25: OCBDD & RVI Closed

### December 28

OCBDD Closed & RVI OPEN

### New Year's Eve

December 31: OCBDD & RVI Closed



### **We want to keep you informed!**

If you have an email address & would like to receive this newsletter electronically (saving the agency's paper resources), send your address to [bbeck@ocbdd.org](mailto:bbeck@ocbdd.org). This newsletter and other information about the OCBDD can be accessed at: [www.ocbdd.org](http://www.ocbdd.org)

*If you have an idea for the newsletter, please contact Bobbi Beck at [bbeck@ocbdd.org](mailto:bbeck@ocbdd.org) or 567-262-3100.*