

THE STARK COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES NEWS RELEASE

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**RE: Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities to Consolidate
Workshop Programs at West Stark and Lester Higgins Adult Centers
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CANTON, OHIO – The Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities announced today that it will consolidate all of its adult workshop programs to two locations in Canton and Massillon by late 2015, and close the workshop program at the Whipple-Dale Centre in Canton. The decision is in keeping with the Board’s three-year strategic plan to transform its role and redistribute its resources in order to provide more support to those in need. The Board voted to consolidate services at its January 24 meeting, after carefully reviewing usage and costs of its three adult workshops.

“We want to be certain this transition is as smooth as possible for individuals, families, and our employees impacted by the consolidation,” said Superintendent Bill Green. “We will soon announce dates for community information meetings for individuals who use these services and their families, to answer their questions and to address their concerns. Though the consolidation won’t take place until the end of the year, we want to be sure everyone affected has the information they need to plan for this change.”

As part of the plan, Stark DD will relocate its Service and Support Administration staff from rented office space in North Canton to the Whipple-Dale Centre, a move that will result in annual savings of more than \$130,000. Approximately 85 employees will move to the Whipple-Dale Centre by October 2016, when the lease expires on the facility in North Canton.

Today's announcement is not expected to result in loss of current jobs; however, Green said positions that become open because of attrition or retirement may not be filled.

The decision to consolidate services supports the Board's goal of moving as many individuals as possible to employment in the community, and recognizes the rights of individuals with disabilities to live and work in the community rather than in segregated environments. "We are beginning to see some success with our efforts to find more opportunities for employment in the community," Green said. "In addition, we are seeing people with disabilities choosing other area service providers for their day programs. As a result, we no longer have as many individuals working in our adult workshops." While the number of adults served has steadily increased, Green said enrollment of individuals in the three workshops has declined by about 37 percent over the past four years.

Stark DD will continue providing the opportunity for individuals with disabilities who want to work in a sheltered workshop environment at both the West Stark and Lester Higgins Adult Centers.

"Our highest priority will continue to be connecting individuals with disabilities and their families with the services they need, but we must do that in a way that ensures our services are sustainable," said Green.

For more information about the Stark DD workshops and strategic plan, visit the website at: www.starkdd.org.

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