Stark DD’s yearlong celebration marks 50th anniversary of
ALWAYS being THERE for people with disabilities

The Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities announced the launch of Always There — a yearlong campaign to recognize the 50th anniversary of Ohio’s County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, which also served as the theme for this year’s Developmental Disabilities (DD) Awareness Month in March.

The Always There campaign marks the founding of Ohio’s 88 county boards by the Ohio General Assembly in 1967. The theme reflects the continuity of support, promotion of opportunity, and history of partnership county boards have offered to people with developmental disabilities and their families throughout the past, in the present, and into the future.

“Reflecting upon our history and
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Superintendent’s Message: 
**CHOICE is a sacred right for everyone**

Choice is defined as “an act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities.”

Tackling the attitudinal barriers that people with disabilities sometimes face is a root that we have been chopping at since the establishment of the county board of developmental disabilities system 50 years ago. Yes, there is movement and successes for people with disabilities living and working in our communities thanks to legislation and court decisions that have paved the way from institutional care to home and community based services.

Clearly, we believe people have the right to choose. However, there are smaller choices that happen every day that have just as much significance on life that include: when to wake, when to shower, what to eat, what to watch on television, where to go in the evening, and what time to go to bed.

Our core value is not specific about how these choices, big or small, should be offered. There is still much work to be done to ensure people with disabilities are afforded the rights established by our forefathers for the “pursuit of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

A direct support professional shared with me a poignant story that each morning he would make coffee with cream and sugar (like he liked it) and offer it to the people he was supporting. Each day, one of the gentlemen repeatedly turned down his offer of coffee. One day, nearly a year later when the offer of coffee was made, the gentleman looked in the cup and said, “Black.” The light bulb went off and an “aha” moment was had. The support professional brought him a black cup of coffee and he drank it with delight from that day forward.

Maya Angelou said, “When we know better, we do better.” We all have moments like this that transform us. This is a profound lesson as we support, guide, and coach people with disabilities to make choices about what is important to them. We must simply ask. It is too easy to miss the forest for the trees by making assumptions based upon what we like and think is best for a person, which may or may not be true. How would you like your coffee? Do you like it black or with cream and sugar? We know intuitively that it begins by us asking, “What do you want?”

The heart of the person centered plan is about choices and that person’s life. There are several ways that we find out what is important to them: we ask and listen; we observe; and we ask others. For those with significant disabilities, who may be non-verbal, this is about “supportive decision making.” The person’s circle of support work with them to share what makes them happy as well as the services needed so they will be safe and independent as possible. For others, it is about capturing their desires through their gestures and words and making them a reality by removing barriers and obstacles that may exist. Choosing the manner that people want to spend their day is one of the most important choices that can be made.

Choice is clearly a sacred right for everyone. It is fundamental to what we do and makes us who we are. These choices should not only be for the “big” things, but even more so for the “small” ones. Robert Brault mused, “Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.” Are these not the things that life is made of?
Learn more about the Stark DD Service and Support Administration/Investigative Services at www.starkdd.org/ssais

Submitted by Ed Lewis, SSA Supervisor, Provider Compliance

In January the Stark County Board of DD, through the Service and Support Administration/Investigative Services department, launched a specialized unit of trained professionals to begin conducting provider compliance reviews and monitoring in Stark County. This is yet another step the board is taking to assure quality service to all individuals served in the community.

Prior to the January launch, the team spent months undergoing extensive training in Columbus in preparation for their new roles. In addition to this training, each member of the team has at least five years of service in the Stark DD community.

Every provider in Ohio has to undergo a compliance review once every three years in order to maintain their certification. It is these reviews that Stark DD is conducting under the guidance of DODD.

However, Stark DD also believed that the board could do even more. That is why the team also includes a dedicated monitoring specialist. This person can make unannounced visits to places where service is provided and see what is occurring on any given day, or night. This service, added to the work that SSAs are already completing, will give the board many eyes to see what level of service is being offered throughout our county.

Admittedly, not every visit will go perfectly, and when issues are uncovered they can be reported back to the compliance review team. This team can then conduct a Special Review, one that is in addition to the typical three-year review that is mandated by the State.

The board does all of this to continue to ensure a safe and quality environment for people with disabilities. The provider compliance team is out there every day checking in and training providers in areas that may need improvement. If an issue goes unresolved, the board will notify the State and the provider’s certification can be suspended or even revoked. However, the true benefit to the board and the families served is knowing there is constant contact with our community partners and keeping everyone safe, healthy, and happy.

Clockwise from left: Lindsay Nemetz, Sandra Reed, Edward Lewis, Kristin Moon, Laura Binnig-Norman
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looking toward our future is a wonderful way to mark the 50th anniversary of Ohio’s county boards and DD Awareness Month, which is all about building awareness and understanding among the public about the lives of people with developmental disabilities,” said Bill Green, Superintendent of the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Through personal stories and historical items submitted by county boards and the people, families, and communities they serve, the Always There campaign will tell the collective story of developmental disabilities in Ohio and how the role and services of the county boards have evolved throughout the years.

Submitted stories and items will be archived and shared as part of the Always There History Project, which will be launched on the campaign’s website – www.alwaysthereforohio.org – in March. In addition to the website, the campaign will be supported through social media channels, posters, billboards, and local and statewide events.

In preparation for the 50th anniversary, the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities is documenting local stories in a new video series “This is me. This is us.” With monthly installments, viewers will get to know twelve people through their unique stories, as well as how Stark DD and other community partners work together to provide a lifetime of support. The video series can be accessed through the Stark DD YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/user/StarkCountyDD.

Newly released in March is the video “This is me. This is us... Carlos Elder.” Previously released are “This is me. This is us... Eric Foit,” and “This is me. This is us... Anna Brady.”

As part of DD Awareness Month, the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities encourages members of the community to submit their personal stories and historical items to the Always There History Project. Information about how to submit is available at www.alwaysthereforohio.org/submit.

Stark DD officially kicked off DD Awareness Month activities with a Free Movie Night, showing ‘How to Dance in Ohio’ on Thursday, March 16 in the Abbey Foltz Theater at GlenOak High School. The HBO documentary follows a group of young people from Columbus, Ohio, who have an array of developmental challenges, prepare for an iconic event—a spring formal dance.

The movie event was a collaboration with Plain Local School District’s annual Flight Night, highlighting services for youth 14 - 22 years of age.

Two exhibition games between Stark DD Special Olympics men’s and women’s basketball teams and Stark DD staff highlighted the March Awareness month activities. In addition to the games, aspiring sports journalists conducted court-side interviews and commentary.
The Gold Standard was initiated in Hamilton County with a group of providers looking to create standards and training curriculum that were above minimum compliance. This was in an effort to promote quality in the community provider pool.

During the conflict free case management task force (a committee developed to address the end of Stark DD’s provider role as mandated by the federal government) several providers requested that Stark DD develop a Gold Standard program to assure quality community providers in the Stark County community. Stark DD started this initiative by meeting with providers to develop tentative standards.

Not long after, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) asked counties to stop their own Gold Standard initiatives. This request was made so the department, in conjunction with Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA), and Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB) could develop a consistent statewide approach through a six county pilot program. In January, the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities was selected to participate in this small pilot group to develop a statewide system to promote quality providers in the community.

**Next Steps**

The Stark DD Board will host family input meetings on April 19 at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. at Whipple-Dale Centre. During these meetings parents will be able to address concerns about community providers, review the tentative standards proposed and give input and suggestions on standards that are important to them.

Following this, Stark DD will request approval from the state to move forward with implementing, verifying and then annually monitoring these standards and the providers that meet them.

Find more information in our monthly Stark DD E-Newsletter

Stark DD launched an E-Newsletter in March to get information out to people with disabilities, families and the greater Stark County community. Within each brief story are live links connecting the reader to helpful websites, training registrations, or even an e-mail for a person who can offer assistance.

The E-Newsletter is delivered through e-mail, and may be shared and forwarded to anyone who might be interested in Stark DD news and events.

Sign up to receive our E-Newsletter by contacting Lisa Parramore, Communications Manager at parramorel@starkdd.org or calling 330-479-3934.
March 8, 2017

DD Awareness & Advocacy Day
March 8, 2017

See more highlights, photos and video clips at https://www.facebook.com/OhioDDAwareness/

Submitted by
Brad Hamilton
People First Adviser
West Stark Center

March is designated National Developmental Disabilities Awareness month, and to demonstrate their support, individuals from all over Ohio attended Developmental Disabilities Awareness & Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse on Wednesday, March 8, 2017.

DD Advocacy and Awareness Day is an annual event that takes place in Columbus, and is designed to educate and empower people with developmental disabilities, their families, and community members.

This year, hundreds of advocates listened to remarks from several prominent figures in the DD advocacy community, as well as surprise visits from Governor John Kasich and Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Director John Martin.

Participants were challenged to help others understand that people with disabilities each have their own story to share, are uniquely gifted, work, go to school and participate in their communities, and must all work “Side by Side” to make a difference in their lives.

In addition, participants were entertained and inspired by blues guitarist Zayne Harshaw of the band Blue Spectrum. Diagnosed with autism at age four, Zayne dazzled the crowd with his skilled rendition of songs by Prince and Adele.

Many state representatives were also on hand for question and answer sessions with advocates from their respective counties.

An exciting day in downtown Columbus concluded with a tour of the Statehouse and lunch at a local bistro.

Attending the conference from Stark DD were Pearline Thomas (WSC), Robert Klink (JRC) and WSC People First advisor Brad Hamilton and staff member Sonja Dake.

Both Pearline and Robert were especially impressed by the performance from Zayne Harshaw. “I had a really, really nice time. It was a lot of fun,” said Pearline.

Zayne Harshaw, center, rocked the Statehouse during the 2017 DD Awareness & Advocacy Day in Columbus. Attending the event were (from left) Robert Klink, Brad Hamilton, Pearline Thomas and Sonja Dake.
Ohio Governor John Kasich

DODD Director John Martin

Pearline Thomas (above) and Robert Klink (right)

See more highlights, photos and video clips at https://www.facebook.com/OhioDDAwareness/
April is Autism Awareness Month, and Stark DD wants to share the following helpful information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (CDC).

What it is

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.

If You’re Concerned

If you think your child might have ASD contact your child’s doctor, and share your concerns. At the same time, call your state’s public early childhood system to request a free evaluation to find out if your child qualifies for intervention services. You do not need to wait for a doctor’s referral or a medical diagnosis to make this call.

If your child is not yet 3 years old, contact your local early intervention system. In Stark County, call Stark County Early Intervention at 330-492-6900. If your child is 3 years old or older, contact your local public school system. Even if your child is not yet old enough for kindergarten or enrolled in a public school, call and ask to speak with someone who can help you have your child evaluated.

Toastmasters give adults practice with public speaking, leadership

Submitted by
Deb White
echoingU
Classroom Coordinator

Eleven students from echoingU have become part of the Toastmasters of Green, participating in the organization’s Youth Leadership Program and membership.

Toastmasters is an international organization, founded in 1905, with the mission of helping its members develop communication and leadership skills by learning how to speak publicly, conduct meetings, plan programs and work on committees.

The connection with the Toastmasters of Green club started last summer when echoingU staff invited one of the Toastmasters members to present to the students as part of the Public Speaking module.

After the presentation, Don Hurst, Local Director of Toastmasters of Green, recommended the echoingU students for the club’s community-based Youth Leadership Program (YLP), which began in September.

The YLP is a workshop consisting of eight sessions that enable participants to develop communication and leadership skills through practical experience. Participants learn to: Evaluate present speaking ability; Organize and give speeches; Give impromptu talks; Control voice, vocabulary and gestures; and Give constructive feedback.

As part of the workshop, the students also learned proper procedures for meetings, elected two terms of officers and took on the task of conducting a meeting with very little assistance. Each student was also responsible for weekly assignments and preparing their speeches.

Two students, Weston and Ashley, also competed in the first-ever YLP Speech Competition in Mayfield, OH. They both did an excellent job, and Weston received trophies in both Humorous Speech and “Table Topics” (impromptu talks).

Hurst, mentor for the YLP said about one session, “We heard four speakers, four evaluations and a timer’s report. Of the four speakers, NOT ONE read their speech from notes. One speaker even used visual aids! The timer gave a clear and accurate report. The evaluations were encouraging and provided excellent points of growth. One evaluation in particular was better than most that I’ve ever heard and would likely have won an evaluation contest! It was amazing!”
Calendar

Find more events www.starkdd.org/calendar

Social

**Toddler Playgroup**
Each Friday, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at Eastgate Early Childhood and Family Center. Play groups are intended for children, birth through 5 years old. For a complete list of activities go to http://www.starkdd.org/data/sitebuilder/uploadedfiles/ei_newsletter_march_2017.pdf

**Adult Social Night**
April 13 from 7 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the St. George Cultural Center, 364 First St. SE, Massillon. Must be 18 years of age and over to attend.

**Adult Social Night**
May 11 from 7 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the St. George Serbian Center, 4667 Applegrove St. NW, North Canton. Must be 18 years of age and over to attend.

**Adult Social Night**
June 15 from 7 p.m.- 9 p.m. at the Massillon Knights of Columbus, 988 Cherry Rd. NW, Massillon. Must be 18 years of age and over to attend.

Recreation

**Stark County Exceptional Olympics**
May 12, 9 a.m. at Perry High School. Student athletes, elementary through high school from area districts, compete in both field and indoor style events.

**Canton Challenger Baseball Opening Day**
May 13, 9 a.m. at Barr Elementary School. Team sign up is still available by contacting League President Teri Hannen at tihannen@sbcglobal.net. Regular league (ages 4-18, or 22 if still enrolled in high school) and Senior league (ages 16+).

**Special Olympics North Canton Jaycees/Stark DD Invitational Track Meet**
May 27, 9:45 a.m. at North Canton High School Stadium. Track and Field events and Bocce Competition will take place. Individual or Groups of volunteers needed. Contact Mike Sturdivant, North Canton Jaycees at 330-274-2272 to volunteer.

Education

**Guardianship Training Session**
May 25, from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Goodwill Campus, 408 Ninth St. SW. Speakers will include representatives from Guardian Support Services and Stark County Board of DD. This free training is hosted by Guardian Support Services. Reservations are required. Call 330-437-3720 or email volunteerguardians@gmail.com

**Family Information Series**
May 8, 5:30 p.m. in the Cohen Room at Whipple-Dale Centre, 2950 Whipple Ave. NW. “Public Transportation Services and Options” SARTA Outreach Specialists will be on hand to answer your questions.

Community

**Gold Standard Provider Criteria Development - Feedback Session**
April 19, 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. at 2950 Whipple Ave. NW, Canton. The public is invited to give feedback on the preliminary Gold standards developed by the provider community.

**Monthly Board Meeting**
Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities; April 25, 6 p.m. at 2950 Whipple Ave. NW, Canton.

**Monthly Board Meeting**
Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities; May 23, 6 p.m. at 2950 Whipple Ave. NW, Canton.

**Volunteer Guardians Needed**

Due to the growing needs in our community, we are looking for adults who would be interested in serving as voluntary guardians for people with disabilities living in Stark County who do not have family or supportive others to be qualified as guardians.

To learn more about how you can become a volunteer guardian for someone in our community, call Guardian Support Services at 330-437-3720 or visit their website at http://www.guardiansupportservices.com
Stark DD High School Commencement Ceremony
May 25, 10:30 a.m. at Rebecca Stallman Southgate School gymnasium. NOTE: This ceremony will take place directly after the Jr/ Sr High School Awards.

Stark DD Early Childhood Graduation Ceremonies
June 1, Taft Preschool at Time to be announced; Eastgate Early Childhood Center at 11 a.m. in the school gymnasium.

Monthly Board Meeting
Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities; June 27, 6 p.m. at 2950 Whipple Ave. NW, Canton.

Camp Jukebox
July 10 - 14, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at GentleBrook Center, 940 West Maple, Hartville. A performance arts camp for youth ages 10-21, with a public performance on July 14. For information contact Arts for All representative Norma Capocci at 330-499-0749.

Family Information Series
April 10, 2017
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. - Cohen Room, Whipple-Dale Centre

FUTURE PLANNING STARTS NOW:
TRUSTS, STABLE ACCOUNTS, MEDICAID

Amanda M. Buzo, Esq.
Executive Director
Community Fund Management Foundation

Amanda M. Buzo from Community Fund Management Foundation will review financial eligibility for many common government benefit programs, such as SSI, Medicaid, and Waiver. Amanda will also discuss how trusts and accounts, such as the new Ohio STABLE account, can work with government benefits to provide quality of life to a person with a disability.

For more information and to let us know you are coming:
Misty McGirr at 330-479-3632 or email at mcgirrm@starkdd.org
Board Members
Daniel Sutter, President
Todd Frank, Vice President
Roger Gines, Recording Secretary
Carlene Harmon
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Richard Hoffman
Rebecca Stallman

Superintendent
William Green

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