



# All in the Family

## NE Ohio Self Advocates gather in Stark County to motivate others to live life to the fullest

Submitted by Lora Boyce and Brad Hamilton  
People First Advisers, West Stark Center

In early November more than 50 self-advocates from across Northeast Ohio attended the Ohio Self Determination Association's regional meeting at the Meyer's Lake Ballroom. Stark DD's People First chapters hosted the event.

The half day event featured a panel discussion on community jobs and community living, as well as a special guest speaker.

Jesi Stracham, Miss Wheelchair North Carolina 2016 and Professional Grand National Cross Country Motorcycle rider, spoke to the group about her story, "Come wheel with me. Live your life to the fullest." Originally from Canton, Ohio, Jesi currently resides in North Carolina.

She inspired and challenged



all in attendance to dream big dreams, pursue your goals and never give up. Her positive approach to pursuing her life goals has served her well in her quest to fully recover from a motorcycle accident in 2015 which rendered her paralyzed from the chest down. Within a year, Jesi was back on the circuit racing a hand controlled Ace Polaris. She stated in her presentation with confidence and conviction that she will walk again.

Some of Jesi's accomplishments include: appearing on the Today Show, second runner up Ms. Wheelchair USA, tried out for the Disabled Water Ski Team and started her own line of clothing with 100% of the proceeds going to newly injured spinal cord patients. In addition, she aspires to try out for the women's Olympic curling team.

During the panel discussion,

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**Mission**  
To connect individuals and families to the services they need.

# Public forums, new Five-Year Strategic Plan slated to help Stark DD Establish a new course for the future

**As we launch into 2017, we are pleased to announce that we are now serving over 3,723 people with disabilities, which is more than we have ever served before.**

We enrolled more people on home and community based services waivers this year than we have in the past five years. This has been possible because of the financial support of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and their initiative to ensure as many people as possible live in the community.

## Proposed 2017 - 2020 Strategic Plan available for review



After four months of meetings, the strategic planning committee has drafted the proposed 2017 - 2020 Stark DD Strategic Plan. Please review the entire plan on our Stark DD website home page at [www.starkdd.org](http://www.starkdd.org).

We also served more infants and toddlers (0-3 years old) than we ever have in our history. Nearly 500 families benefitted from the early intervention services we provided. We supported families in their home as we taught parents skills to promote the independence of their infants/toddlers who are experiencing delays.

We continue to deliver pre-school and school age services through the education we provide. We are equipping our students, more than ever, to return to their school districts to receive their education.

These accomplishments are just a few of many that illustrate the great work that Stark DD accomplishes each day for individuals and families.

**As we look to 2017, the Board will approve a new strategic plan for 2017-2020.** This plan will set a new course as we establish our identity as a funder, planner/coordinator, and monitor of services to ensure people with disabilities are living the life that they choose. This plan will further solidify us as being the “greatest benefit to the greatest number of people” by being stewards of the financial resources provided to us by the tax payers of Stark County.

**The draft plan is available for review on our website home page. We welcome your feedback at two public hearings scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 2017, at 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. If you are unable to attend, you may provide your feedback through our online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PNMMNZV>.**

Yes, we recognize that our adult services, and our adult non-medical transportation will be transitioning to private providers and that TWi will be taking over our Higgins and West Stark Centers on July 1, 2018.

**We want all of our stakeholders to know that until July of 2018, we will continue to provide the highest quality of services and ensure a smooth transition for each person.**

We do want you to know that TWi will be operating the remainder of the enclaves by the end of this year, which includes: TWIG, Rubbermaid, Malone University, and the Federal Building. For each site, there will be a transition plan to ensure that the hand off between us and TWi is a smooth one.

Clearly, 2016 was not easy as we laid the groundwork for changes in how services are delivered by private providers. **Yet, I am proud of the progress our employees and community is making as we support people with disabilities “to be fully included within the Stark County community.” This is a work in progress.**

Thank you for your ongoing support of the work we do. From all of us at Stark DD, we wish you a happy new year.

Bill Green, Superintendent  
Stark County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities

## Stark DD Board Members



Todd Frank



Roger Gines



Carlene Harmon



Maria Heege



Richard Hoffman



Rebecca Stallman



Daniel Sutter

Learn more about the Stark DD Board at [www.starkdd.org/Abouttheboard](http://www.starkdd.org/Abouttheboard)

## County Commissioners appoint Heege to Stark DD Board; re-appoint Sutter, Gines to additional terms

Maria Heege was appointed by the Stark County Commissioners to the Board in September. She replaces Larry Marcus who resigned earlier in the year.

Heege has over 37 years of experience in the non-profit sector. She is the President & CEO of the United Way of Greater Stark County and has been with the United Way for over 35 years. With a lifetime commitment to community service, Heege has been actively involved in volunteerism, not only locally, but also nationally. She is the guardian for her adult-aged sister, Chris, who receives support from the Board.

In December, the Commissioners also re-appointed Daniel Sutter to a second term and Roger Gines to a third term on the Board. Other Board members include, Todd Frank, Carlene Harmon, Richard Hoffman and Rebecca Stallman.

Board members are appointed by either the Commissioners or the Stark County Probate Judge to serve a four year term. As a voluntary appointment, members can serve no more than three terms, unless appointed to fill an existing opening.



New Board member Maria Heege is sworn in by Stark County Commissioner David Bridenstine.

## Stark DD receives Three Year Accreditation from CARF



CARF International announced in January that Stark DD has received a three year accreditation.

CARF provides accreditation services worldwide at the request of health and human service providers. Providers that meet CARF standards have demonstrated their commitment to being among the best available.

Following their visit in early December, the CARF review team said “The organization’s dedication to excellence in all aspects of administration and service delivery is reflected in how it embraces the CARF International standards as an integral piece of its quality improvement program.”



## 19TH ANNUAL

### ATHLETES COME TOGETHER

On October 29, 2016, Stark County DD hosted the 19th Annual Great Pumpkin Race to benefit Special Olympic athletes and programs.

The event, which is part of the Subway Challenge Series, saw just under 500 men, women and children registered for either the 1-mile or 4-mile race.

More than 40 Special Olympians and other adults/children with developmental disabilities participated in either the walk or competitive run. Several local public school children and their teachers also participated as a class, many supported by peer classmates.

Financially, the 19th Annual Great Pumpkin Race raised more than \$10,300 for Stark DD Special Olympics. This financial support will go a long way in paying for athletic uniforms, equipment and competition travel expenses.



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self-advocates from Stark County offered examples of how they spoke up for themselves. Eric Foit explained how he aspired to become a DJ. He discussed his love of traveling and his desire to go parachuting. With the help of his team and his persistence, he recently traveled to Chicago for a simulated parachute jump.

Sarah was determined to move into her own apartment and find an independent community job. She loves living independently and is proud to be employed at Gabriel Brothers Department Store.

Another young lady was told she would never be able to get her driver's license, let alone drive a car. Her message was to "always keep going, trying and never take no for an answer."

Finally, a young married couple, made an impassioned plea to follow your dreams no matter how difficult the circumstances. With the blessing of their parents and support from their team they are enjoying the benefits of married life.

## Information, websites can help families understand Medicaid Managed Care plans

Families are receiving letters from the Ohio Department of Medicaid because it's open enrollment time. People on Medicaid need to choose a managed care plan unless they are on a DD waiver. If they are on a DD waiver they do not need to enroll unless they want to. For anyone needing to enroll, if they do not choose a plan, JFS will automatically enroll them. Thus it's very important for people needing and/or wanting to enroll on a managed care plan to be informed and participate in planning. People can call automated health systems to help them decide if they should enroll and if so, which plan will work best for them.

For general information:

<http://www.automated-health.com/contactus.aspx>

<https://www.ohiomh.com/AvailablePlans.aspx>



In Stark County, families may seek information from the following companies:

- Buckeye Health Plan; (866) 246-4358; <http://www.bchpohio.com>
- CareSource; (800) 488-0134 ; <http://www.caresource.com>
- Molina HealthCare of Ohio, Inc.; (800) 642-4168 ; <http://www.molinahealthcare.com>
- Paramount Advantage; (800) 462-3589 ; <http://www.paramountadvantage.org>
- United Healthcare Community Plan of Ohio; (800) 895-2017 ; <http://www.uhccommunityplan.com>

## Family Information Series

February 13, 2017

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. - Cohen Room, Whipple- Dale Centre

Managing your Very Important Papers:

*What is the GPS System?*

**Amy Clawson**

*Family Specialist, Northern Ohio*

*Ohio Family to Family Health Information Center*

*UC University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities*

This GPS website is an organizational tool for families and individuals to keep and manage information at their convenience. This is an online, customizable Care Notebook. GPS offers users a way to keep important information about a person all in one place, that is accessible to all members of the healthcare team. It also helps families and individuals access other local and statewide resources, such as transition and emergency planning.

Read more at <https://www.ohiogps.org>

*For more information and to let us know you are coming:*

Misty McGirr at 330-479-3632 or email at [mcgirr@starkdd.org](mailto:mcgirr@starkdd.org)



## Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

<http://www.ocecd.org/>

### MISSION

To ensure that every Ohio child with special needs receives a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment to enable that child to reach his/her highest potential

- Established in 1972
- A statewide nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children and youth to age 26 with disabilities in Ohio
- Coalition is comprised of over 40 parent and professional disability organizations, and over 70 individual members serve as the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for the state of Ohio
- Staff are primarily parents or family members of children or adults with disabilities or persons with disabilities

## “It’s My Turn” hands-on training at school teaches rights, advocacy

During November, staff from the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities brought a fun and educational program to Rebecca Stallman Southgate High School and Transition students.

It’s My Turn is a hands on learning experience geared to teach young adults with disabilities about the I.D.E.A.: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, how to apply it to their own lives and how to advocate for themselves within the community.

Over the course of three days, students acted out skits, made crafts and explored the options for both employment and enjoyment in their post graduate lives.

On the first day, the students reenacted the birth of the I.D.E.A. with their very own Judge Ebby and Judge Zachary dressed as robed officials banging the gavel for educational equality. Students decorated hats to express their dreams and goals, and narrowed down their job preferences.

Day two activities centered around self advocacy and personal choice. Staff acted out an IEP meeting gone wrong while students identified areas where a fictitious student was not being well served. Students also learned about different attributes to look for in reviewing job options and how to match their abilities to job requirements, such as indoor vs outdoor environment or seated vs standing jobs.

On the final day, students learned if the jobs they selected at the beginning of the program fit into their preference categories. Uncle Sam made an appearance to introduce the various civic organizations that provide community integration opportunities for people with disabilities and we played a life sized game of Life to practice monthly budgeting techniques.

An evening session provided parents with a chance to see what their student had learned and to gather more information about the many free services available to families through the OCECD.



# Calendar

Find more events [www.starkdd.org/calendar](http://www.starkdd.org/calendar)



## Social

### Adult Social Night

February 16 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.

### Adult Social Night

March 16 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

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.

## Education

### Family Information Series

February 13, 5:30 p.m. in the Cohen Room at Whipple-Dale Centre, 2950 Whipple Ave. NW. "Managing Your Very Important Papers: What is the GPS System?" Amy Clawson, Family Specialist, Northern Ohio, Ohio Family to Family Health Information Center, UC University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

### 9th Annual Conference for Families and Educators of Diverse Learners & Avenue of Answers

April 8 from 7:45 a.m. to 12 Noon at R.G. Drage Career Technical Center, 2800 Richville Dr. SE, Massillon. Presented by State Support Team 9. Online registration at [www.sst9.org](http://www.sst9.org) begins on March 1. Registration is required.

## Community

### Strategic Plan Public Hearings

February 9, 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. at 2950 Whipple Ave. NW, Canton. The public is invited to comment on the proposed 2017-2020 Stark DD Strategic Plan. Review the entire plan at [www.starkdd.org/StrategicPlan](http://www.starkdd.org/StrategicPlan)

# All in the Family

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Stark County Board of  
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Developmental Disabilities

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- Equal Opportunity in Employment, Access and Services. M/F/H.

EMPLOYMENT  
FIRST

CITIZENS WHO CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES PRESENTS

7<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL

**GOLF**  
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Title Sponsor

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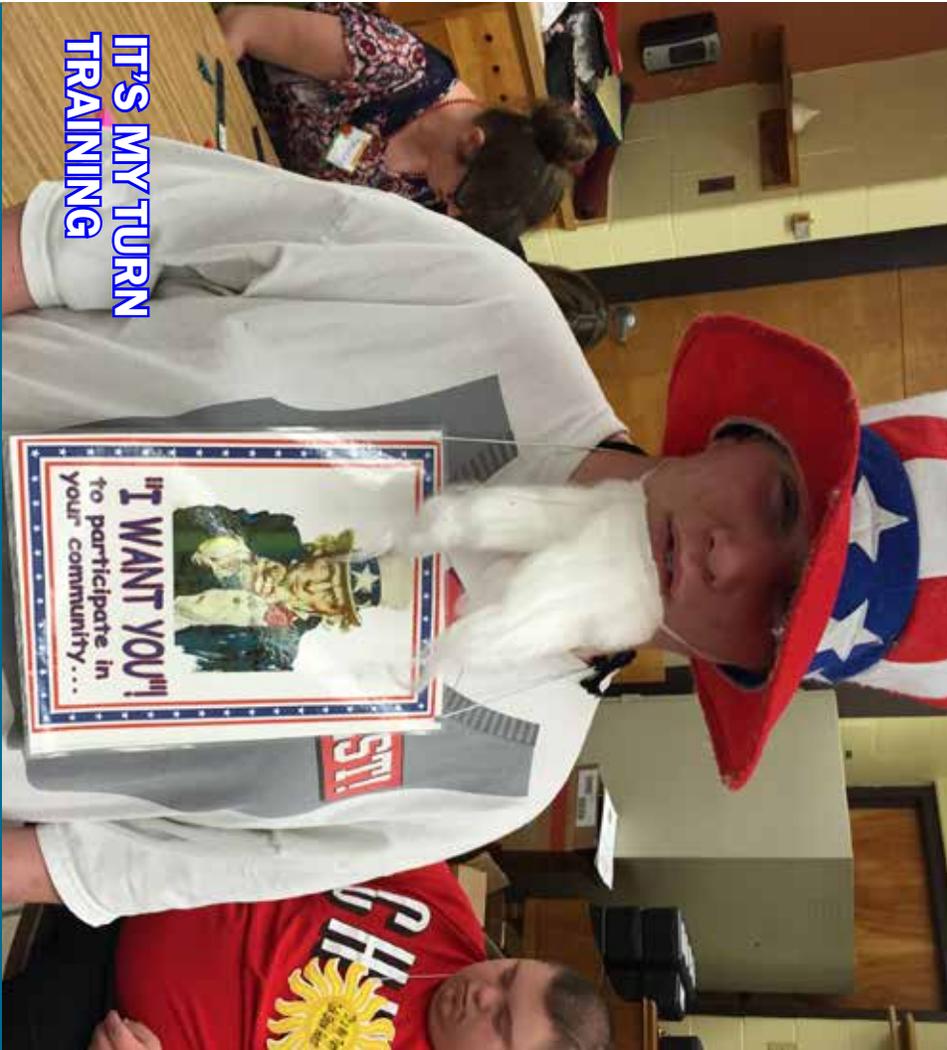
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Richard Hoffman  
Rebecca Stallman

**Superintendent**

William Green

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Stark County Board of  
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To be the support that connects individuals and families  
with the services they need.