



# All in the Family

## Superintendent's Message:

### COVID Pandemic is a time to do small things with great love

Mother Teresa once said, "Few of us can do great things, but all of us can do small things with great love." During this unprecedented time, not seen since the 1918 Spanish Flu, have our communities, our state, our nation, and our world been so affected by a virus – COVID-19.

At the time of this writing, there are over three million people worldwide infected, nearly a million people in the United States with a mounting death toll of 100,000+ Americans. Within Ohio, there are over 34,000 cases and 2,000+ deaths. For Stark County, we have more than 700 people with the virus and 90+ deaths. For the people we serve, we have been fortunate that only four people have been diagnosed with COVID-19, each who live in a nursing home.

Our new normal is filled with an added emphasis on handwashing, not touching our faces, wearing masks (to protect others), and "social distancing." Making these behavioral changes is us doing "small things with great love." We are working to stay in regular contact with people served, their families, and our provider community to make sure all needs are met. When we reach out, we remind them that we miss and care for them. Our calls, our teleconferences (Webex), and follow-up (includes shopping and the delivery of food and supplies) are "small things (done) with great love."

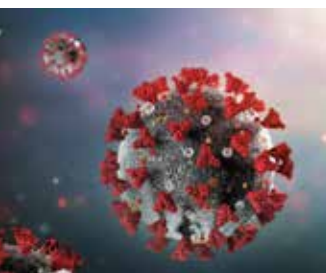
We are offering our staff to support families in need of respite or child care as well as to cover shifts for providers who are tired from working overtime, or affected by a workforce shortage. We are



William Green,  
Superintendent

offering providers financial assistance if requested. We have attempted to flood our stakeholders with positive messages and information that can assist through the stay-at-home order and us sheltering in place. Just more examples of "small things (done) with great love." Thomas Carlyle, 19th century

*Continued on page 2*



#### Editor's Note:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities, deemed an essential organization, has continued to work, ensuring that people with developmental disabilities stay healthy and safe. This edition shares how we have continued our mission throughout this world-wide health crisis.



Mission:  
Supporting people with disabilities and their families.

## #InThisTogetherStarkDD

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British essayist and historian, reminds us that “Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.” For us, it is to address the needs of the people we serve and to keep them and those who provide the supports healthy and safe.

One of the silver linings of this pandemic that has shown through is how this crisis has brought us together, even though we are more physically apart. We have seen us collectively (people served, families, employees, and providers) make sure everyone of the 3,859 people we support are #InThisTogetherStarkDD. We have seen food delivered, meals made, clothing provided, connections forged, smiles encouraged, and been there for those in need all in the spirit of doing “small things with great love.”

These words keep coming to mind and seem apropos:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.  
I was a stranger and you invited me in.  
I needed clothes and you clothed me.  
I was sick and you looked after me.”

## Social distancing guidelines, group size restrictions causes Stark DD governing board to meet virtually



**Next Board Meeting:  
Tuesday, June 23, 2020, 6:00 PM**



These words sure seem like the supports we collectively provide. Incredibly “small things (done) with great love.”

We hope you enjoy this special COVID-19 edition that is intended not only to be informational, but a record of this historic time and how we and the people we serve adapted. Please stay healthy and safe.

With warmest regards,

*William Green*

Beginning in March, the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities monthly board meetings moved to virtual meetings using teleconferencing technology due to the COVID-19 public health crisis.

The meetings are also open to the public, however, as required by the Ohio Department of Health, strict social distancing guidelines as well as the number of people allowed in the room at one time is strictly maintained. Those not wishing to attend may also watch the meetings live through our Stark DD Facebook page.

A video of the meeting in its entirety can be accessed from our Stark DD YouTube Channel. A link to the recording is also available on our website at [starkdd.org/about/board-meeting-minutes](http://starkdd.org/about/board-meeting-minutes)

## Service and Support Administration

By Amy Anderson, Director

Our jobs changed in an instant. The SSA Department went from its usual hustle and bustle to full response mode.



**“May the 4th Be With You”**  
SSA Jeff Frank got creative while visiting someone on May 4. “I thought it would be a good idea to surprise a person on my caseload at their day program. I dressed up as a Jedi and talked to him. He stayed inside and talked to me through the window while on our phones.”

Within days of Governor DeWine issuing the March Stay-At-Home order, we set up the [NeedSupport@StarkDD.org](mailto:NeedSupport@StarkDD.org) email, which is monitored 24/7, to answer questions and address people’s needs.

SSAs had to find a new way of doing their job. We began weekly phone check-ins, reaching out to over 2300 individuals and families and assessed any needs they had. SSA staff received remote access computer connection VPNs so they could work from home.

The SSA Department coordinated shopping trips and bagged groceries to drop off for those needing supplies. To date, we have supported more than 160 individuals and families with a four day supply of three healthy meals for a family of four.

- SSAs Jason Zupp and Tricia Morrison helped with multiple moves for people that needed furniture and other large items.
- SSA Rachel Poling worked with someone on her caseload who is volunteering at a food bank during this time in order to give back!

We also supported providers during this crisis. We coordinated with Provider Compliance and Support and Nursing Services to hand out Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for providers so they could continue to provide care.



Within their caseloads, SSAs also had to address emotional needs. It was time to get creative:

- SSA Tim Barcus and a group of SSAs participated in a birthday train for one of his individuals, yelling “Happy Birthday” out of the car window.
- SSA Jeannine Keim started doing meetings just to check in with people -- even sending a picture of herself to a lonely person.
- SSAs helped people participate in a video sharing all the fun things they are doing while stuck at home and then shared it on the Stark DD YouTube channel.

Eligibility and waiting list SSAs continue to complete assessments via phone and virtual meetings. Our Intake Department, also working remotely, is managing all intake calls and referrals to the department. Transition and Youth SSAs have also been in touch and are meeting needs of youth. Our SSA liaison for all Stark County nursing homes stays in touch with the administration of each nursing facility, reporting back how individuals are doing, including any positive COVID-19 diagnosis.

## Provider Compliance and Support

By Edward Lewis, Manager

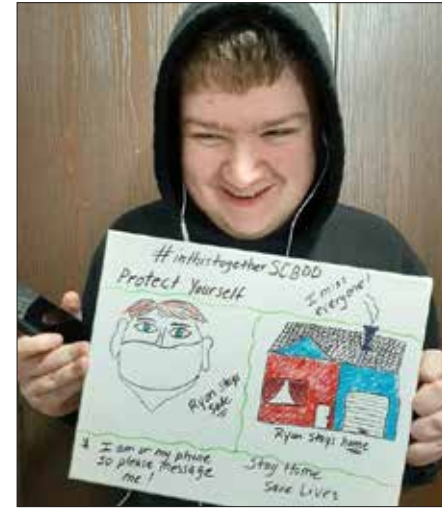
As a system, the developmental disabilities community has been transitioning to a private provider model.

This transition has become strengthened through this pandemic as the local county board continues to forge strong relationships with these partners. These relationships coupled with county board support are what have been assuring the safety, quality of life, and gainful activity of the people we serve.

The county board has offered the following supports to the provider community:

- *Provider grant program to assist with fixed overhead costs*
- *Bi-weekly video conference provider discussions*
- *Bi-weekly phone calls to each provider*
- *Bulk ordering of PPE/ emergency PPE delivery when needed*
- *Lending of county board staff to fill shortages*
- *Rapid Response Team to serve in cases of COVID-19 exposure*

While we all have had to make large adjustments to our daily lives due to COVID-19, we can be confident that when working together we are that much stronger.



## Investigative Services

By Tom Vaughn, Manager

While much in the world has changed during this health crisis, not nearly as much has changed in the Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Investigative Services unit, commonly referred to as the MUI unit. Ensuring the health and safety of people with disabilities remains an ongoing priority.

Ohio Administrative Code (O.A.C.) 5123-17-02 remains the defining rule for who needs to report, what needs to be reported, timelines to report, and what constitutes a complete incident report. That has not changed during this public health crisis.

While reporting has continued as pre-pandemic, there have been some notable changes in the investigative processes due to the challenges of maintaining social distancing while maintaining the requirements of conducting thorough investigations.

Face to face interviews, for the most part, have been very limited, with Investigative Agents conducting most interviews remotely and/or by telephone interviews. Written statements have typically been received through electronic means.

For reports that require Law Enforcement involvement, our contract with the Stark County Sheriff's Office has provided

ongoing supports, including well checks when indicated.

Investigative Agents continue to coordinate with Stark DD staff in Health Services, Service and Support Administrators (SSAs), and Provider Compliance/Support. We also work closely with Provider Administrators as indicated.

As always, our ultimate goal in concluding investigations remains solid preventive measures to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of those we serve.

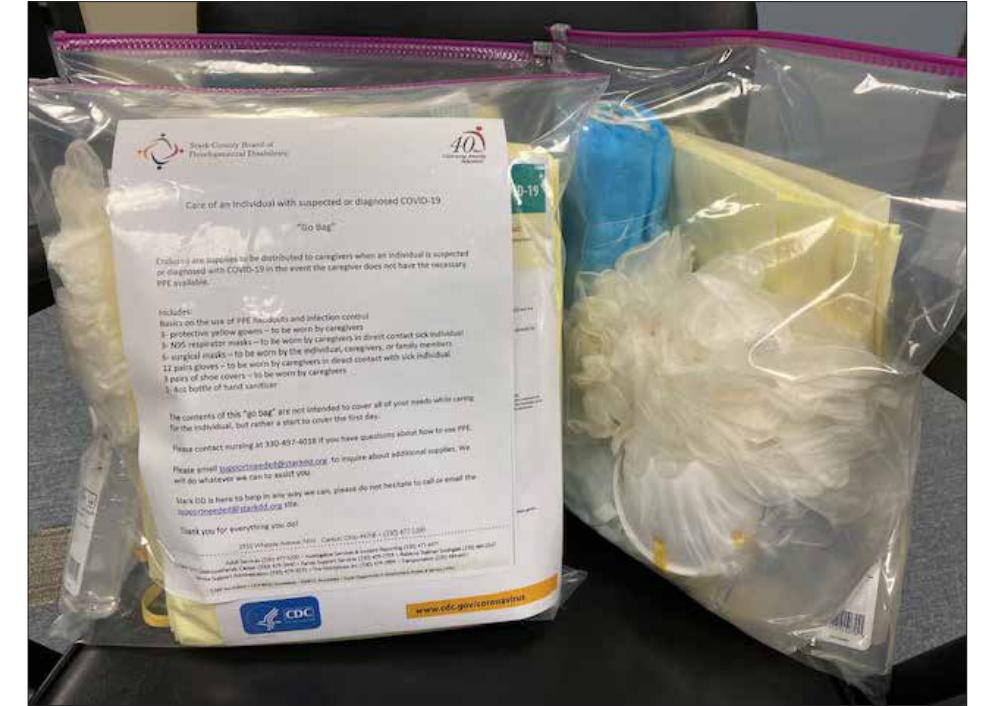
## Nursing Services

By Kristen Quicci, Director

With the onset of COVID-19, our nursing education department has had to re-create how we plan to provide education courses in the future. Our nurse educator has been working to revise our medication administration, continuing education, and CPR/First Aid courses to be delivered remotely using Webex. This includes updating presentation materials to fit this new format, and researching ways to safely arrange for hands on requirements of these courses. We are planning to offer remote courses starting in June as allowed by State and Local guidelines.



Our school nurses understand the importance of keeping the school buildings closed for the students' health and safety, although they miss their students very much. They worked to get supplies and medications sent home to students for the summer and are actively planning ways to keep students safe and healthy for the time when



Personal Protective Equipment "Go Bag"

they are able to return to their school buildings.

In the interest of our individuals' health, state leaders have suspended Nursing Quality Assurance (QA) activities until the end of May.

However, our QA nurses have been busy responding to the needs of our individuals and provider community. Nurses developed "Go Bags" with the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for providers in the event it is needed at a residential location. In addition to delivering necessary PPE, nurses are providing

education to providers and caregivers on the appropriate use of PPE, including cloth face coverings.

QA nurses continue to provide guidance to our agency and providers on medication administration. We are currently screening and monitoring homes where Stark DD has staff providing services to ensure the health of the individuals as well as our employees. Stark DD nurses and select staff are doing daily temperature checks on employees entering our buildings to ensure the health of our co-workers and visitors.

## Early Intervention Services



### Toddler Playgroup

Coming Soon...Virtual Playgroups!

Until we can meet and play together again, let's meet and play virtually.

We will have a short interactive play activity with the kids, then a time for parents to ask questions, share thoughts and ideas, etc.

For information, contact Chris Ehmer at [EhmerC@StarkDD.org](mailto:EhmerC@StarkDD.org)

By Kristen Quicci, Director

Stark DD Early Intervention service providers and service coordinators continue to serve over 300 families during this time. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, state leaders implemented that Early Intervention services would continue to be provided to our families and children, but services would need to be delivered over the phone or virtually over the web. Stark DD had already begun the initiative to provide virtual visits if families preferred that way of meeting with their service provider, so we quickly implemented this process for all families without any delay in services.

To date, we have provided 439 visits by Webex and 175 by phone. In the month of March we provided 144 visits by Webex and 57 by phone. In the month of April we provided 395 via Webex and 118 by phone. During visits we coach families on strategies to help their child work on identifying their IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan).

Your Early Intervention Teams meet weekly to collaborate regarding all the families we serve with parents, guardians, our vision and hearing specialists, as well as our Early Childhood Mental Health consultant. We continue to do developmental screenings and assessments via the web as needed to provide services to determine a child's eligibility for services.

In addition, we are meeting the individual needs of families by assisting families with much needed resources such as Thick-it, food, diapers, wipes, and other essentials to ensure the health and safety of our families.

Parents appear to be embracing this new way of receiving services and many have commented that the time together feels "more focused" and that the parent "gets to do the interventions" which they like. Recently, a parent emailed her service provider and said, "we are so grateful for Stark EI, as you all have been the only constant in our life throughout this whole thing...God bless you all".

### Looking for toddler-friendly ideas to do at home?

Sign up to receive our monthly Early Intervention Newsletter.

In there you will find:

Local Outings • Crafts • Recipes • Parenting Tips

Contact Chris Ehmer at [EhmerC@StarkDD.org](mailto:EhmerC@StarkDD.org) to receive our online newsletters.

Find past issues on our website at

<https://starkdd.org/news-and-publications/newsletter-publications/>



## Early Childhood Programs

By Tammy Maney, Director

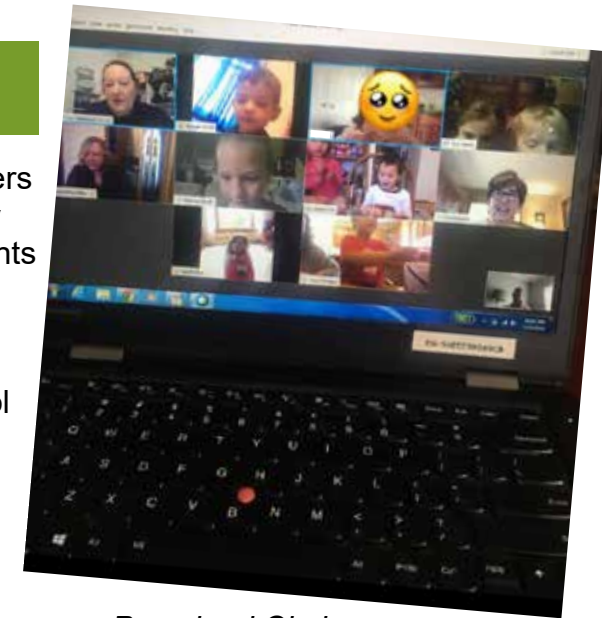
With preschool-aged children, maintaining their attention for an activity in person for more than a few minutes can be quite difficult. Imagine now trying to keep them occupied and engaged in remote learning over a computer! Due to the limited attention spans, we recognized it was the parents, grandparents, and other caretakers of our preschoolers who were the teachers for the final quarter of the 2019-2020 school year.

In addition to contacting the parents weekly to make sure everything is okay with each

family, the preschool teachers and therapists worked very hard to make sure the parents had all the support and resources they needed so students continued to learn during the COVID-19 school building closure.

Some of these supports have included packets of paperwork and materials geared for specific children mailed on a regular basis and daily communication with parents through Remind or Class Dojo Apps. These communications contain activity suggestions and links to many online learning opportunities, along with messages shared parent to parent.

In addition, private Facebook groups for several individual classrooms have been established where staff are sharing activities or videos of them demonstrating an activity, reading a book or singing a song and families are posting videos or pictures of the preschoolers' completed worksheets, art projects, sending messages to their classmates, etc. Teachers have also been holding whole class circle time, phonics lessons and show and tell via Webex video conference at least once a week in order to



Preschool Circle Time on Webex.

keep children engaged and maintain part of their school routine.

Traditional end of the school year activities looked different this year. We had 58 preschoolers graduate preschool and move on to kindergarten for the 2020-2021 school year. While we could not have our traditional graduation program, each class held a virtual graduation, complete with homemade graduation caps. Also, students in both Preschool and School Age programs were gifted with "#InThisTogetherStarkDD" t-shirts to reassure them that their teachers were there for them.

Finally, Stark DD transportation staff delivered each child's belongings to their home, such as extra clothing, diapers and medication that were left at school when the COVID-19 school building closure occurred.



## School Age Programs

By Myrna Blosser, Principal

As we heard about the probable state-wide school closure by Governor Mike DeWine in mid-March, staff quickly worked together to prepare educational activity packets to send home Friday March 13 with two weeks of activities for each student. With the assistance of Stark DD transportation staff, similar packets continued to be sent home for the remainder of the school year. Teachers designed these to accommodate each student's abilities so that families could work with their student at their current level of participation. To follow up with families, school administrators and teachers called weekly through the end of the school year to check on students and see if they had any needs.

Working with the Food Services Department, staff worked in teams and created breakfast to go bags for each student for three weeks and had them ready to send home with the entire student body also on Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>. The surplus supply of food from our breakfast program was boxed and delivered to Whipple-Dale Centre to add to family food bags distributed to those in need.

In an effort to keep a pulse on the learning for our students, the IT Department trained all ancillary staff and teachers to use Webex teleconference

meeting software so that everyone could be actively involved in each student's IEP and ETR. Ginna St. Clair, RS Southgate School Special Education Supervisor, lead these meetings that included all staff so they could answer parent questions and concerns.

We looked for creative ways to help parents work with the student at home. Each student's needs were considered individually and staff supplied supports for each student. These include communication devices, switches, and enlarged lettering of work, splints and equipment that was needed.

Teachers and ancillary staff have been reporting to school on a rotation schedule to create social distancing in the building when necessary work can't be done remotely. They have been videotaping story time, craft, cooking, and yoga sessions that are found on our YouTube channel for families to access and view. Our therapists created <https://sites.google.com/view/ot-rsss>. Like Pinterest, visitors click on a link to see activities in various categories such as fine motor skills, classroom tools/crafts, strength & coordination and more.

Meanwhile, all classroom assistants have used this time to complete both Stark DD and educational training requirements.

## Class of 2020 Commencement

Commencement exercises for the Class of 2020 went on the road this year. Each of the eight graduates had a personalized ceremony at their home. Stark DD Superintendent Bill Green, school administrators and staff dressed in their personal cap and gowns, visited each graduate, presenting them with their diploma, class medallion and gift from the RS Southgate School Parent Group. Special video tributes can be found on our Stark DD YouTube Channel RS Southgate School Class of 2020 Playlist.



Allie Lynn Bailey



Dixie Leigh Crum



Noah J. Eversole



Kevin Edward Gandee



Zachary Aaron Kirby



Olivia Celeste Lang



Kia Olcelan Noble



Joshua Allan Schlipp

## Transportation

By Diane Sidwell, Manager

While the Stark DD buses and vans may have quit rolling during the COVID-19 crisis, transportation staff stayed on the road supporting agency initiatives.

Drivers and riders assisted with pick-up and delivery of food and therapy equipment to preschool and school age children, as well as the twice monthly educational packets through the remainder of the school year. Once school ended in May, the drivers and riders delivered equipment, medications and children's personal items that had been left behind when schools closed in mid-March.

Drivers also maintained van transportation for any adults still attending Adult Day Programs until those closed in late March.

As Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was located and purchased, staff transported supplies regionally to be distributed to community providers.

Available staff also volunteered as part of the Rapid Response team, and worked for community providers who were needing staff.

When not on the road, staff caught up on routine vehicle maintenance, as well as completing required Stark DD and state training.,



## Information Technology

By Brandon Haney, Manager

The IT Department was hard at work during the first few weeks of the stay at home order deploying remote access solutions for our staff. To date, we have deployed almost 100 teleworker VPNs to make work from home a much more efficient process for our staff that have intense computer jobs.



A Webex SSA staff meeting

We trained and deployed software to over 200 users to access Webex for teleconference and video chat for our staff, individuals, students, and families. This has allowed our staff and families to stay in communication and help remotely support the people we serve. Since March 1st, we have held over 3,400 Webex meetings connecting over 10,000 people.

The IT staff will continue to look for new ways to support our employees and the people we serve as the landscape changes on how we do business.

## Administrative Departments

### Human Resources

By Connie Poulton, Director

The Human Resources Department is operating in new and creative ways with positive use of technology. Teleworking has become our new normal for two human resource employees and two others are “boots on the ground” to help with paper, personnel files, and support needs.

The fingerprinting portion of our background check process has been out-sourced to a local vendor in North Canton and employees have responded positively to this new practice.

Human Resources moved quickly to communicate and implement the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) which impacts all employees. Successful continuation of employee customer service through e-mail, teleconferencing, and phone response has occurred. We have promoted our Employee Assistance Plan to all employees as they have added an online video counseling component to their services.

Though incoming calls have significantly declined and visitors are minimal, the front desk at Whipple-Dale Centre remains open and responsive to employees and the needs of the community we serve.

During this time, connecting and communicating with our employees continues to be our priority.

### Finance Department

By Leigh Page, Chief Financial Officer

The Finance Department has worked in collaboration with all other Stark DD Departments to ensure funds are available for staffing and purchases made to support providers, individuals and their families. We have been able to purchase food, personal care items, baby care items, personal protective equipment and information technology equipment.

We have strived to make teleworking more efficient for all agency staff by making funds available to upgrade technology. This helps make it easier for staff to reach out to families and the individuals we serve.

We have also been supporting our providers to ensure they have the supplies they need to support the individuals, in addition to leasing staff to assist them in providing services. As we continue to work through this pandemic, we will continue to ensure that needs are met whether for our staff, providers, individuals or their families.

### Building, Grounds & Food Services

By Tim Beard, Manager

During this pandemic event, our custodial staff has been working daily to continue sanitizing and keeping our buildings clean.

The maintenance staff continues to maintain all sites, with the goal of getting our buildings prepared to reopen this summer.

### Communications

By Lisa Parramore, Manager

With the COVID-19 information changing almost daily, school and programs closing, and social distancing being common practice, Stark DD increased the use of email and online tools to publish valid and up-to-date information and resources.

#### Email for direct help: Families

[needsupport@starkdd.org](mailto:needsupport@starkdd.org)

#### Providers

[providersupport@starkdd.org](mailto:providersupport@starkdd.org)

#### Our Website:

[starkdd.org/covid-19](http://starkdd.org/covid-19)

#### On Facebook:

[Facebook.com/StarkDD](https://www.facebook.com/StarkDD)

#### On YouTube:

[youtube.com/user/StarkCountyDD](https://www.youtube.com/user/StarkCountyDD)

#### Our Newsletters:

Sign up to receive News Updates on our website homepage.

## Calendar

### Education

#### Sharing Solutions IDD Support Group for Families, Caregivers and Professionals

The group hopes to restart meetings once large group meetings are allowed by the state health officials. Virtual meetings may also occur. To stay up to date on their activities, “Like” their Facebook page (Sharing Solutions) or email Jodi Broom at [sbroom@neo.rr.com](mailto:sbroom@neo.rr.com)

### Social

#### Adult Social Night

Social Nights are cancelled until further notice in this time of social distancing. We will announce when they can resume.

### Community



#### Nathan's Hope Make 'm Smile Drive Thru

July 11, 1 - 3 p.m., Hartville Memorial Park. Don't miss this great FREE resource event! There will be stops along the parade route as they are greeted by awesome Resource Exhibitors, Vendors and Smile Makers to give out free items, free food and much more! Register so we make sure we have enough for all. Please send your name and all the VIP's that will be in your vehicle to [shelly11222@yahoo.com](mailto:shelly11222@yahoo.com)

### Recreation

#### Special Olympics

All Special Olympics events in the state of Ohio have been cancelled through July 5. Please watch for updates on [facebook.com/StarkDDSpecialOlympics](https://www.facebook.com/StarkDDSpecialOlympics) or contact Special Olympics coordinator Paula Gardner at [gardnerp@starkdd.org](mailto:gardnerp@starkdd.org).

## All in the Family

Published by the  
**Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities**

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• Ohio Self Determination Association member (OSDA)

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

Lisa Parramore  
Editor



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Developmental Disabilities**

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#InThisTogetherStarkDD

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Supporting people with disabilities and their families.