



HOLMES COUNTY Board of Developmental Disabilities NEWSLETTER



Admin Spotlight

Message from the Superintendent

By Marianne Mader, Superintendent

Each year, Holmes DD prepares an Annual Report to show progress in our Strategic Plan.

Because the 2025-2026 Annual Report is lengthy, I am happy to share some of the accomplishment highlights from the last year.

• **Expanded Community Inclusion:**

Launched the Community Supports Department, introduced Buddy Softball with 30 participants and up to 300 spectators, and created EVERYBODY PLAYS with 20 inclusive community events.

• **Strengthened Services:** Served 328 individuals, maintained no waiting list for services, completed 17 waitlist assessments, and allocated 9 waivers.

• **Enhanced Educational**

Opportunities: Implemented the evidence-based Unique Learning System curriculum, increased inclusive school partnerships, and expanded enrichment

programming through community arts partnerships.

• **Secured New Funding:** Obtained four new funding streams to support long-term fiscal sustainability and service expansion.

• **Increased Community Awareness:**

Conducted outreach through schools, healthcare providers, county events, provider fairs, social media engagement, and by using the accessibility station.

• **Expanded Opportunities and**

Supports: Achieved a major increase in assistive technology utilization and supported local providers through training, compliance assistance, and development of a hardship policy.

• **Developed New Programs:**

Launched the Autism Diagnosis Education Project, Home Visiting services, sensory-friendly community activities, and a parent support group.

• **Earned Organizational Successes:**

Received a 3-Year Accreditation from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, achieved 100% compliance with Department of Children and Youth Early Intervention Service Coordination standards, adopted an Artificial Intelligence Policy, improved operational processes, and maintained 91% employee satisfaction with workplace culture.

If you would like to see the full Annual Report or provide us feedback, please [click here](#), or contact me by email mmader@holmesdd.org, or phone (330) 674-8045 x 202.

We are proud of our accomplishments and hope that your interactions with us reflect our dedication and commitment to quality services.

Speaking on behalf of the staff at Holmes DD, it is our pleasure to serve individuals and their families here in Holmes County!

Community Supports Spotlight

Buddy Softball vs First Responders

By Sharon Allison, Community Supports Director

The Buddy Softball All-Stars took the field for a special community game against local first responders on September 17, 2026, at Oasis Youth Center. Thirty-five Buddy Softball athletes participated alongside first responders representing the Holmes County Sheriff's Department, Wooster Community Hospital, Clinton Township Fire Department, South Central Fire Department and Killbuck Township Fire Department. The All-Stars played hard and came away with the win! More importantly, the game provided a great opportunity for the athletes and first responders to build relationships, make connections, and enjoy time together on the field. A special thank you goes to all the first responders, community members, and volunteers who participated and helped make it a memorable night for our athletes and their families.



HR Update



Staff Changes: Welcome Kayla, Beth, Emily, and Kim

By Curtis Goehring,
HR/Business Director

There has been a great deal of activity and several personnel changes over the summer and as we begin the new school year.

In July, the Board welcomed **Kayla Bird** to the Early Childhood Department as our new **Early Intervention Service Coordinator**. Kayla has been connected to our Early Intervention Program in the past, and through those experiences she developed a passion for supporting children and families as they navigate similar journeys. We are excited to have her working with young children and their families throughout Holmes County.

This school year, we also welcomed **Beth Taylor** and **Emily Legg** as paraprofessionals (classroom aides) in our school program. Both Beth and Emily bring valuable direct care experience and are compassionate staff. We look forward to the contributions they will make in the classroom and the positive impact they will have on the students they support each day.

Additionally, we have had two staff members embrace change and step into new roles within the Board. **Kim Miller** became our **Community Supports Worker** over the summer. In this role, she focuses on promoting community integration and increasing participation in community events and programs for the individuals we serve. Kim is a natural fit for this position and has already made a significant impact in a short period of time.

Finally, **Lisa Hochstetler**, who currently serves as an **Early Intervention Service Coordinator**, is undergoing training to become our **Early Childhood Department Home Visitor**. This is a new and demanding role, but we are confident in Lisa's abilities and her extensive experience in case management. We believe she is well positioned to succeed and make a meaningful difference for the families we serve.



Education Spotlight

Introducing: New Day Academy

(Formerly the HCBDD School Program)

By Crystal J. Payne, Education Director/Principal

It's a NEW DAY!!!

We are VERY excited to announce the launch of New Day Academy (NDA) at HCBDD! We have rebranded our school program to better reflect our refreshed mission, vision, values. This "rebranding" is an ongoing process that has included several new initiatives to begin this school year!

Why the rebranding?

Nationally and state-wide, there is a greater focus on community inclusion and inclusive practices within school settings. The term **New Day** emphasizes a fresh perspective and eager response to these shifting educational landscapes of Holmes County and the State of Ohio. **Academy** emphasizes our high-quality educational practices that continue to align with Ohio's Extended Learning Standards as well as post-high school transition preparedness.

New Day Initiatives

The beginning of the '26-'27 School Year has brought the implementation of several new initiatives in support of the educational climate of Holmes County.

1. School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS):

As a school, we are emphasizing our core values through positive supports and a token "reward" system that is implemented across our school settings (i.e., classroom, hallway, gym, bus, cafeteria, playground). Students can earn "B.U.C.K.S. Bucks" when they are "caught doing good." B.U.C.K.S. Bucks may be used 1x per week at our school store. Our B.U.C.K.S. principles are:

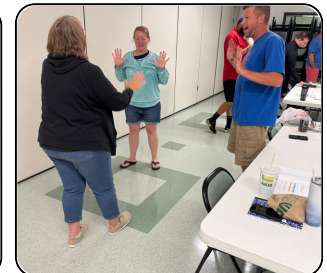
- Be Responsible
- United
- Courageous
- Kind
- Safe

2. **"Buddy P.E. Classes"** In partnership with West Holmes Elementary, Middle, and High Schools, our students now have the opportunity to participate in a weekly gym class at a local school with support from our amazing NDA teachers, assistants, nurse, and therapists. This partnership with West Holmes provides opportunities for our students to have interactions with peer models during athletic activities and provides important pro-social lessons on sportsmanship and citizenship for WH students. We are excited about this initiative and look forward to the positive peer relationships that we hope will develop as a result!

3. **CPI: Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training:** In August, Mr. Grant Fox (Teacher/Instructional Coach) and Crystal Payne (Ed Director/Principal) participated in 4 days of CPI Instructor Training in Columbus. Over the course of the '26-'27 and '27-'28 school years, Mr. Grant and Ms. Crystal will be providing training to NDA, HCBDD, contracted providers, and school district(s). They hosted two training sessions for West Holmes Administrators, Teachers, and Paraprofessionals prior to the opening of the new WH Elementary School. We are excited for this growing partnership in support of the educational and behavioral needs of students in our community!

We are off to a very busy start to the school year and are excited for whatever adventures this year holds for us! Later in September, we have our annual trip to the Akron Zoo, a visit from Central Christian School students, and a trip to a farm in the works for October. Stay tuned...

"Every day is a NEW DAY!!!"





Community Supports Spotlight

Upcoming Events

By Sharon Allison, *Community Supports Director*

- *  **Buddy Softball**
September 29 at 6:30 PM
Game will be held at Oasis Youth Center. Come out and cheer on our Buddy Softball players!
- *  **Autism & Special Needs Parent Support Group**
First Thursday of each month from 6:30–7:30 PM at Jitters Coffee House
Connect with other parents and caregivers for conversation, support, and encouragement.
- *  **Fall Glow Fest**
October 3 from 6:30–8:30 PM
Come enjoy an accessible wagon ride, a fenced-in accessible playground, treat trail, and an outdoor movie. Food will be available for purchase from food trucks, and free popcorn and drinks will be provided during the movie. This fun fall event is open to everyone in the community!
- *  **Mom's Meet Coffee Hour**
9:30 AM
 - October 7 – Café Chrysalis
 - October 21 – Rebecca's Bistro
 - November 4 – Honey and Fig Café
 - November 18 – Ginger House Coffee
- *  **Mothers' Club Quilting**
November 10 & 12
Call Naomi Weaver for more information at 330-674-8045 ext. 252.
- *  **Bowling for All Abilities**
November 12 from 5:00–7:00 PM
Spare Time Lanes, Millersburg
All ages are welcome! Lanes will be separated into youth and adult groups. The bowling alley is wheelchair accessible, and bowling ramps will be available. Bring the whole family and join the fun!
- *  **Mothers' Club Christmas Brunch, Craft & Gift Exchange**
December 9, Holmes County Board of DD
Join us for a festive morning of brunch, crafting, fellowship, and a gift exchange!



SSA Update

Holmes County Professionals Gather for Transition Planning Workshop

By Mimi Lawhead, *SSA Director*

On September 15, professionals from across Holmes County came together for a Transition Planning Workshop hosted by the Holmes County Transition Partnership Team at the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The workshop brought together educators, Service and Support Administrators (SSAs), Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs), and other community partners who support transition-age students as they prepare for adulthood.

Participants explored tools, resources, and planning strategies designed to help students identify their vision for adult life and successfully transition into engaged and inclusive communities. The event emphasized the importance of cross-agency collaboration, recognizing that students experience better post-school outcomes when schools, county boards, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, families, and other partners work together to align supports and services.

The Holmes County Transition Partnership Team is grateful to everyone who attended and contributed to the discussion. By strengthening partnerships and sharing resources, our community continues to create more opportunities for students with disabilities to pursue meaningful employment, further education, community involvement, and independent living after graduation.

If you'd like to learn more about the Holmes County Transition Partnership Team and ongoing transition initiatives, visit our website.





Early Intervention Feature **Splash, Learn, and Grow: Water Play with Holmes County Families**

By Monique Jacobs, Early Childhood Director

On August 3rd, the Holmes County Early Childhood Department hosted a fun and educational Water Day playgroup for families in our community. Children had the opportunity to explore, play, and learn through a variety of water activities, including several splash pads and a dinosaur sprinkler.

Water Day provided a wonderful environment for children to practice social skills, engage their senses, and explore water through hands-on play. Children were encouraged to participate at their own pace and according to their individual comfort levels. Some children eagerly jumped right into the water, while others preferred to take their time and gradually become comfortable with the new experience. No matter how they participated, children had opportunities to smile, laugh, explore, and create meaningful memories together.

The Benefits of Water Play

Water play is more than just fun—it provides children with valuable opportunities to learn and develop important skills.

- **Builds fine motor skills:** Scooping, pouring, squeezing sponges, and transferring water between containers help strengthen the small muscles in children's hands and fingers. These skills support future activities such as writing, drawing, buttoning clothing, and using utensils.
- **Encourages sensory exploration:** Water play allows children to experience different sensations, including wetness, temperature, texture, and movement. These experiences can help children build confidence and gradually become more comfortable with new sensory experiences.
- **Develops hand-eye coordination:** Pouring water into containers, catching floating toys, and filling cups require children to coordinate what they see with their hand movements, strengthening hand-eye coordination.
- **Supports language development:** Water play naturally creates opportunities for conversation and vocabulary development. Caregivers can introduce words such as pour, splash, float, sink, full, empty, wet, and dry while asking questions and encouraging children to describe what they are doing.

Keep the Learning Going at Home

As temperatures begin to cool, families can continue incorporating water play into children's learning experiences at home. Water activities can easily be adapted for indoor settings, such as the bathtub or sink. Simple activities like pouring water between cups, squeezing sponges, or watching toys float and sink can provide meaningful opportunities for children to learn through hands-on exploration.

Join Us for Indoor Playgroups!

Families with children under the age of five are invited to continue learning, playing, and connecting with one another as our playgroups transition indoors during the cooler months.

Mark your calendar for October 5th from 10:00–11:00 a.m.

Look for the playgroup signs and join us for another opportunity to play, learn, and grow together!

We look forward to continuing to provide families in our community with meaningful experiences that support children's development while creating opportunities for families to connect and make lasting memories.



Community Organization Spotlight

HCAHC Membership

HCAHC (Holmes County Association for Handicapped Citizens) is a nonprofit, non-political organization whose purpose is to raise and distribute funds to improve the quality of life of individuals eligible for Holmes DD services and their families. Proceeds from the Annual Spring Festival and Auction provide their funding. Decisions regarding how funding is spent are made by HCAHC Trustees who are elected by HCAHC members. Each year, HCAHC members pay annual dues which afford them a wide variety of supports and services. Each family may use \$2500/year for respite if they have 1 child with DD; \$3500/year if they have 2 children with DD. Each family can receive transportation reimbursement when they take their loved one with a disability to medical/therapy appointments and attending HCAHC, Mothers Club, and Holmes DD Special events. HCAHC also provides grants to families to help meet the unique needs of their loved one with special needs. Lastly, HCAHC provides financial assistance to Holmes County Special Olympics, agencies serving people with developmental disabilities, Mothers Club, Share-A-Christmas, Buddy Softball, and pavilion upkeep. If you would like to join HCAHC or want more information, feel free to contact Naomi Weaver at nweaver@holmesdd.org or (330) 674-8045 x 252.



Community Supports Spotlight

Fall Glow Fest Brings the Community TogetherBy Sharon Allison, *Community Supports Director*

Join us for Fall Glow Fest on **Saturday, October 3, from 6:30–8:30 PM** at the Holmes County Board of DD!

This free, family-friendly evening is a partnership between Holmes DD, the Holmesville Community Center, and local churches, working together to create a fun and welcoming fall event for people of all abilities.

Families can take a wagon ride to find a pumpkin, walk the glowing trail to gather treats, enjoy an outdoor movie, bounce in the bounce house, and play on our fenced-in playground. The event is wheelchair

accessible, and a universal changing table will be available.

Come hungry! Smokenchippers and Caffeine Addict food trucks will have food and drinks available for purchase. Free popcorn and drinks will also be provided during the outdoor movie.

Fall Glow Fest is about more than fall fun—it's about bringing our community together and creating an event where everyone can participate and feel welcome. Bring your family and friends and join us for a great evening!





Medical Minute

Health Alert

By Tennille Cline, RN

There is currently an increase in measles cases locally. Measles spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 9 out of 10 people around him or her will also become infected if they are not protected. Someone can get measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, even up to two hours after that person has left. An infected person can spread measles to others even before knowing he/she has the disease—from four days before developing the measles rash through four days afterward.

Some common measles symptoms include:

- high fever (may spike to more than 104° F)
- cough
- runny nose
- red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis),
- rash (3-5 days after symptoms begin). It usually starts at hairline and face and works down the body

Measles is especially dangerous to babies and small children, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems.

The best protection against measles is the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. MMR vaccine provides long-lasting protection against measles.



HR Update

Celebrating Years of Service at HCBDD

By Curtis Goehring, HR/Business Director

- Ray McCullough (5 years)
- Grant Fox (15 years)
- Bernice Shepler (20 years)
- Mary Beth Zuercher (25 years)

THANK YOU

Community Supports Spotlight

Holmes County Special Olympics News

By Cindy Boals, Community Employment & Advocacy Worker

A Special Thank You!

Tennille Cline and her son, Collier, recently held a mini basketball camp for the Holmes County Bucks basketball players. The athletes got in a great workout and learned new practice drills they can use at home and when team practices begin in October. A big thank-you to Tennille and Collier for leading such a fun and active workout.

Holmes County Special Olympics athletes are getting ready to compete in cornhole, a new sport recently added to Ohio Special Olympics competition. Athletes John Miller and Dayne Morrison, along with coaches Jim Miller and Duane Morrison, will take part in the first official Special Olympics Regional Cornhole Tournament on September 27 at the Cloverleaf Rec Center in Lodi, Ohio.

Mark Your Calendar

The annual Community All Stars vs. Holmes County Bucks basketball game is scheduled for Tuesday, March 9, at West Holmes High School. The game starts at 7 p.m. We'll share the full Bucks basketball schedule on our Facebook page as soon as it is finalized.



HCAHC Feature

Mother's Club News

...By Naomi Weaver, Plain Community Liaison



Family Fun Night was held in conjunction with our school Open House this year. Open House at New Day Academy started our evening and was followed by a pulled pork meal and homemade ice cream, prepared and served by the Prairie Township Volunteer Fire Department, located in Holmesville.

The evening's focus was on

fellowship for families and fun on the playground for the children. It was a great kickoff to the school year and a wonderful opportunity to provide support for families of individuals with special needs in Holmes County.

Be sure to follow the schedule for upcoming Mom's Meets support events.





Community Supports Spotlight

Finding New Employment Opportunities in the Community

By Cindy Boals, Community Employment & Advocacy Worker

When Lynn Hope Industries closed after 50 years of providing employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, several long-time employees began looking for new ways to stay active and connected in the community. Dennis, who had worked at Lynn Hope Industries for all 50 years, was not ready to retire. With his kitchen experience, he recently joined Jitters Coffee House as a dishwasher, working a few hours a day, 3 days a week. He enjoys the work, and the staff appreciates the help he provides.

That connection soon led to another opportunity. While helping Dennis settle into his new role, I learned that Jitters was looking for someone to make homemade muffins. I connected the owners with Joceline and her mom, Rosemary, who enjoy baking together. After a successful trial run with blueberry and lemon poppy seed muffins, they are now also making caramel apple and banana chocolate chip muffins for the coffee house. This job has also inspired Joceline to work harder on her math in school to become more independent and learn how to keep her inventory and costs/profits.

Additional opportunities also developed with West Holmes School District, which needed support in its middle school and new elementary cafeterias. Dawn Martin recognized the potential fit for the job seekers I was supporting, especially because the women already had connections to West Holmes Schools.

Hannah began working in the middle school cafeteria on September 17th. She helps wash lunch trays and dishes and assists with lunch preparation, including filling condiment cups, preparing bananas, and placing pizzas on trays for the next day.

At the new elementary school cafeteria, Nicole and Hope share a position that fits their current schedules. They help with lunch preparation, condiment cups, and washing lunch trays for a building that serves six grade levels plus pre-K. These placements show how strong community partnerships can create meaningful employment opportunities while also meeting real workforce needs.

With help from his sister, John Miller completed an application to work at Wendy's. John had worked there before, but the experience was not a good fit. He did not feel valued and felt he was only being taught how to clean. This time, Christine, his immediate supervisor, began teaching him how to work in the kitchen. Now, John feels valued, has meaningful responsibilities, and enjoys going to work on his scheduled days. His experience is a reminder that everyone deserves the chance to try something new—and that having the courage to try again can help people reach their goals.



HOLMES COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

8001 TOWNSHIP ROAD 574

HOLMESVILLE, OH 44633

Upcoming Events and Important Dates:

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|---|--|---|
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September 29 at 6:30 PM
Oasis Youth Center |  Mom's Meet Coffee Hour
October 7 9:30 AM
Café Chrysalis |  Mom's Meet Coffee Hour
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December 9th
Holmes County Board of DD |

HOLMES COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES CONTACTS

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The mission of the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities
is to support individuals in living meaningful lives.