



Adventures in our School Program

...By Crystal Payne, Education Director/Principal

Fall has been full of exciting learning experiences for our school students! It is hard to believe that we have reached the mid-way point of our school year already—WOW! As they say, “Time flies when you’re having fun!” Our students have participated in a career fair, countless art projects, a school hayride, grocery shopping trips to Rodhe’s, volunteering at the pantry, and picture day, in addition to our seasonal festivities!

Our Fall adventures began with an action-packed trip to Walnut Creek Farm in October! We enjoyed the wagon rides, corn pit, and of course, feeding the animals! It was a beautiful day to explore this Holmes County treasure.

In November we hosted sixty guests for our annual Thanksgiving Luncheon! We enjoyed a time of relaxed fellowship and celebration as we indulged in yummy traditional foods. We hold so much gratitude in our hearts for the opportunity to work with our beloved students every day.

Our busy semester culminated with our Winter Holiday Christmas Program and Art Show in December! In collaboration with Holmes Center for the Arts, Gentle Brook Adult Day Services, and HCBDD Community Supports Department, we hosted nearly 150 people for a festive evening of our Symbols of Christmas play, sing-a-long carols, student and adult participant artwork, and delicious refreshments. This heartwarming evening set the stage for a sweet send-off to our Winter Break! We look forward to diving into the second semester when we return in the New Year.

Wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday Season!

By Crystal J. Payne
Education Director/Principal





Early Childhood and Playgroup Update

...By Monique Jacobs, Early Childhood Director

Happy Holidays from the Early Childhood Department!

On December 1st, Santa made a memorable visit to the Holmes County Board of DD for two festive story-time sessions. The first session offered a smaller group and dimmed lighting to create a sensory-friendly atmosphere.



Both sessions included a craft, story time, a sensory bin, motor activities, and wonderful visits and pictures with Santa. Santa was especially surprised when someone requested pink reindeer!



All children aged 5 and under are invited to join the next Polar Bear-themed playgroup on January 5th at 10:00 a.m. at the HCBDD. We hope to see you there!



Holmes DD Staff Updates

...By Curtis Goehring, HR/Business Director

In November, Holmes DD welcomed Jill Eppley as our newest team member, filling one of two vacant SSA positions. Jill has quickly embraced the role, learning the ins and outs of both the DD system and SSA responsibilities. We are thrilled to have her on board and look forward to many years of collaboration.

The search for our second SSA is nearly complete, and we expect to share more details in the next newsletter.

At the same time, Holmes DD has accepted the resignations of two valued staff members. Karen Brown, a dedicated Teacher Assistant in our School-Age Program, was deeply committed to serving students with care and passion. We wish her the very best in her future endeavors. Recruitment for her replacement is in its final stages, with an anticipated start date in early January.

We will also soon bid farewell to Jacie Westover, our Front Desk Secretary/Receptionist, who has chosen a position closer to home. She is planning on leaving for her new employer following the Christmas Break. Jacie's positive attitude and warm presence at the front office will be missed, and we extend our heartfelt wishes for success and fulfillment in her next chapter.



In Loving Memory

...By Mimi Lawhead, SSA Director

As this year comes to a close and the season of light surrounds us, we pause to remember those who have gone before us.

Louise Palmer, Katrina Miller, and Townes Gingerich.

Though they are no longer here in body, their spirit lives on in the love they shared and the lives they touched.

This time of year reminds us of eternal hope—the promise that love never ends and that we are held in something greater than ourselves.

May we find comfort in knowing that their journey continues beyond what we can see, and may their memory inspire us to walk in kindness, grace, and faith.

Let us honor them by living with gratitude and carrying forward the light they left behind.

In remembering them, we celebrate not only their lives but the enduring connection that binds us together, now and always.



Superintendent Update

...By Marianne Mader

About 18 months ago we started focusing on increasing accessibility in Holmes County. One way we are doing this is by providing what we call an Accessibility Station at local events. Everyone is familiar with seeing a baby changing table in public restrooms. The Accessibility Station takes off on that same idea. The Accessibility Station is a trailer that holds a universal changing table. This table is 6 feet long and 3 feet wide and it is powered so it can move up and down. There are people of all ages, for a variety of reasons, who must wear an incontinence undergarment. Unfortunately, public restrooms, even if they are “accessible”, do not have the feature these people need...a clean, safe, private space for the person to recline so their caregiver can change their undergarment. Like so many things involving people with special needs, the effort to increase the number of universal changing tables in Ohio has been led by 2 moms of young men who have disabilities. These mothers have reached out to Ohio’s County Boards of DD to help spread the word. Today, there are more universal changing tables in Ohio than any other state! In addition to a table in our building and our Accessibility station, Holmes DD, through grant funds, has helped place a universal changing table at Harvest Ridge and at the Chamber of Commerce’s new Visitor Center in Millersburg. If you would like to see where other tables are located, visit [Universal Changing Table Map USA](#).

In closing, I would like to reach out to friends of Holmes DD to address what you may be hearing about eliminating property taxes in Ohio. There is a group collecting signatures of voters to get on an upcoming ballot to eliminate property taxes. It is understood that nobody likes paying property taxes, especially when property values have been on the increase. However, if there is an end to property taxes, it would mean a drastic reduction in many public services, including Holmes DD, or very likely the creation of a new sales or income tax to pay for public services. Because property taxes can be tricky to understand, I feel it is important that friends of Holmes DD know (and share this information with their friends) that not all property tax levies operate the same way. The type of property tax levy that supports the 300 people who get services delivered or funded by Holmes DD does not increase when property values go up! When residents voted for a property tax levy in 1990 to pay for DD services, Holmes DD gets the same amount of money today as we received in 1990, even if your home is now worth \$75,000 more. Hopefully, our elected officials in Columbus can come up with some commonsense solutions that protect vital public services and provide tax relief.

Wishing you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Staying Healthy in the Winter months

...Tennille Cline, RN

I would like to encourage all readers to work together to keep everyone healthy through this cold and flu season. No matter where your loved one attends school/adult day program/work, following simple steps and guidelines can prevent the spread of illness and maintain a healthy environment. Things like staying home when you are sick, proper handwashing with soap and running water for 20 seconds and covering your coughs and sneezes are important ways to help decrease the spread of germs. At the Holmes DD school, we have protocols in place for handwashing and disinfecting surfaces to help control the spread of germs year-round.

For many individuals with developmental disabilities, a cold or flu virus can lead to a more serious illness such as bronchitis or pneumonia. If someone you are caring for shows signs of illness, please keep them home until they are well. Illnesses can spread easily to others and come on quickly. If that happens, Holmes DD students will need to be go home. Parents and caregivers are advised to have an alternate drop-off that could care for your loved one if you are not at home.

To reduce the spread of illness, please keep your loved one home if any of these conditions exist:

- Students and staff must be fever free (Tylenol, Advil, Motrin, etc.) for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication
- Students and staff must be free of any vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours
- Severe colds- frequent coughing, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing
- Unusual behavior- excessive sleepiness, irritability, crying, increase in seizures
- Eye infections- redness, irritation, swelling, and/or discharge from the eye could mean a contagious eye infection

Remember these are guidelines to help you make the decision whether your loved one is too sick to participate in school/day program/work. If you are still unsure, I'm happy to speak with you or call your family physician for advice.

Tennille Cline BSN, RN



Winter Weather #52-1-25

As a professional supporting people with developmental disabilities, the winter months may pose some additional risks due to inclement weather and conditions. By following some general winter safety precautions, we can help people manage seasonal challenges, such as travel and dangerous temperatures. Be aware that steps, sidewalks, and streets can be slippery from ice, even if it's not visible, which can increase the risk of falling. Being outside for too long in extreme cold can also pose health threats, such as frostbite or hypothermia. Make a plan so the person can successfully avoid extreme temperatures, such as when waiting for a bus.



Prepare the Home for Cold Temperatures and Weather

1. Request that the furnace be checked and is in good order.
2. Check the carbon monoxide and smoke detectors.
3. Make sure you have extra supplies and food on hand. Keep an emergency kit that includes flashlights, extra batteries, a first-aid kit, extra medicine, etc.
4. If the power goes out, call your supervisor immediately. The people you support may be at greater risk for hypothermia and other concerns.

- Make a plan with your supervisor that is well communicated. For example, if the power has not returned by this time or the temperature falls below this level, we will be relocating to this location. Be clear about whom will be doing what, consider what medicines, supplies, and medical/adaptive equipment need to be taken, and who to notify.
- Make sure the power company is aware of the outage.
- Offer additional clothes. Be sure to consider the feet and hands.
- Shut off the gas. If there is a gas furnace and your heating system suddenly fails, make sure to shut off the gas immediately to prevent carbon monoxide leaks.
- The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are often described as “flu-like” – headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion.
- Close all windows and doorways. You can roll up a towel and place it along the bottom to stop any draft.
- Use a portable heater. Alternatively, you can also use a portable, non-electric space heater to warm your home. However, make sure that your propane heaters are indoor-safe, as many of these products are designed solely for outdoor use. Use of such units in enclosed spaces can lead to a carbon monoxide buildup.
- Close off unused rooms to keep the warmth in the used sections of the home.

Fast Facts

- People with diabetes, those who take high blood pressure medication, have poor circulation, or Raynaud's disease may be at a higher risk for hypothermia or other cold weather conditions.
- Forty percent of the body's heat is lost if a person's head is not covered.
- Carbon monoxide detectors save lives. Every year, over 400 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Be alert when using space heaters. Heaters that are not working properly or get knocked over can cause fire and death.
- You can get frostbite in 30 minutes or less when the wind chill is 15°F (-26°C) or lower.



Health and Welfare Alert Winter Weather #52-1-25



Protect Against the Cold

Being outside for too long in extreme cold can also pose health threats, such as frostbite or hypothermia. Make a plan so the person can successfully avoid extreme temperatures, such as when waiting for a bus.

- • • Wear appropriate footwear that is water-resistant with a sole that provides adequate traction. Traction devices are available with abrasive soles or cleats.
- Dress appropriately to stay warm.
- Wear brightly colored or reflective clothing, especially if walking when it is dark.

Frostbite and Hypothermia

Frostbite is when the skin freezes. It often affects fingers, toes, and exposed skin, like the face, nose, and ears. Signs can include gray, white, or yellow skin; skin that looks waxy, or numbness.

Frostbite Treatment

- Call 9-1-1. Don't rub a person's frostbitten skin. Warm the area slowly, but don't use heating pads.

Hypothermia is when the body loses too much heat and can't work properly. Signs can include cold feet and hands, pale skin, severe shivering, slurred speech, dizziness, trouble staying balanced, or a slow pulse.

Hypothermia Treatment

- Call 9-1-1. Remove any wet clothing. Don't use direct heat to warm the person. Don't rub or massage the person.

Things to Consider When Going Out or Traveling

- Be aware that steps, sidewalks, and streets can be slippery from ice, even if it's not visible, which can increase the risk of falling. Avoid walking on frozen waterways; don't assume the ice is safe.
- Leave early and take your time.
- Walk like a penguin. Model how taking short steps and walking flat footed can help when walking on ice or slippery surfaces.
- Check the forecast before heading out.
- Stock the car, van, or bus with needed supplies.
- Take extra clothing, blankets, and warm liquids on outings.
- Remember hats, gloves, scarves, heavy coats, and sturdy shoes.
- Keep your hands free when walking.
- Remove snow and ice from walkways frequently.
- Make sure that areas are well lit.
- Walk on designated pathways as much as possible.
- If you must walk on a slippery surface, slow down, take small steps, and keep your hands free for balance.
- Use special care when climbing or descending stairs, and entering or leaving buildings.
- Use handrails when available.
- Move slowly and look ahead.
- Maintain your center of balance.

Keep the Lines of Communication Open

- Your cell phone can help with any emergency you may come across walking, driving, or at a person's home. It's important to keep a charged cell phone with you or anyone you are out with so you can call for help if anything were to happen! Talk about the weather conditions and risks of going out in bad weather. Express safety concerns to your supervisor, the landlord, or others early and continue until resolved.
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Holmes County Bucks Update

....Sharon Allison, Community Supports Director

The Bucks basketball season is officially underway! After a tough opening loss to Wayne County Special Olympics, the team came back strong with a rallying win against the Half-Court Heroes in a community matchup. Their teamwork and determination are already shining on the court!

December is shaping up to be a busy month as the Bucks take on Special Olympics Ohio teams from Ashland, Knox, and Tuscarawas Counties. They'll also compete in another exciting community game against Rea Business Advisors.

Following a packed schedule, athletes and families will enjoy a well-earned Christmas break before games resume in the new year.

To stay up-to-date with game times and locations, check out the full schedule on our Facebook page and on the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities webpage calendar www.holmesdd.org. Come cheer on the Bucks and show your support all season long!





Community Supports Update

...Sharon Allison, Community Supports Directort



Corn Hole, Ping Pong & Bocce

The Holmes County Board of DD is excited to introduce Everybody Plays, an inclusive sports league featuring adapted **corn hole, table tennis, and bocce**, with each participant paired with a buddy for support and encouragement. This non-competitive sports league is for boys and girls ages 8 and older with special needs. A youth and adult league will be offered. Players will track their own points on personalized score cards, and with a focus on fun and participation, everyone wins in the end! ALL abilities can play, and no experience is necessary. We appreciate HCAHC's financial support, which enabled us to purchase equipment. Sign-ups begin January 2026. For more information, contact the Holmes County Board of DD at 330-674-8045—Sharon Allison (ext. 229) or Naomi Weaver (ext. 252). The league will kick off on **January 23** at Holmes DD during **Family Night from 6–9 pm**. League dates are scheduled for **March 13, March 27, April 10, and April 24** at Lynn Hope Industries, each from **6–8 pm**.

Mothers Club Update

...Naomi Weaver, Plain Community Liaison

Mothers' Club Quilting and Christmas Brunch



This year, Mothers' Club Quilting was held in conjunction with the School Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 12 at HCBDD. During quilting sessions, moms worked together to create two comforters, followed by the completion of a quilt and a decorative wall hanging. The Mothers' Club Christmas Brunch took place on December 11 at HCBDD. The featured craft was ceramic painting, led by Sonja Mitchell—mom of a child with special needs and owner of Grannies Ceramics—who generously provided the ceramics, materials, and step-by-step instruction. Callie Selder assisted by coaching the moms through the painting process. The morning also included a festive brunch, cookie exchange, and gift exchange. HCBDD staff were invited to join in and enjoy the homemade cookies and treats.



Community Happenings/Mothers Club/upcoming Family Fun

...Sharon Allison, Community Supports Directort

January

- Coffee And Connections; Autism and Special Needs Parent Support Group, 1/8/26, 6:30-7:30 pm at Jitters Coffee House
- Social Bowling, 1/16/ 26, 5:30-7 pm at Spare Times Lanes,
- Mothers' Club Family Night, 1/23/26, 6:30-9:00 pm, HCBDD
- Mothers' Club Family Night Snow Date, 1/30/26, 6:30-9:00 pm, HCBDD

February

- Coffee And Connections; Autism and Special Needs Parent Support Group, 2/5/26 6:30-7:30 pm at Jitters Coffee House
- Night To Shine, 2/13/26, 6:00-8:30 pm at Grace Church
- Mothers' Club Valentines Dinner, 2/17/26, 6-9:00 pm, HCBDD

Accessibility resources for residents

including:

- Assistive Tech Lending Library with devices like text-to-speech readers and alarm clocks.
- Airport-safe folding mobile wheelchairs (manual and powered).
- A stair climber that can transport individuals up to 120 flights on a single charge, supporting up to 400 pounds.
- A Universal Changing Table for diverse personal care needs.

To request equipment loans, contact us by phone or scan the QR code for forms. Equipment can be picked up from our facility once the process is complete.



HOLMES COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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The mission of the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities

is to support individuals in living meaningful lives.