



HOLMES COUNTY  
**Board of Developmental Disabilities**  
**NEWSLETTER**



### Admin Spotlight

## Message from the Superintendent

By Marianne Mader, Superintendent

As March is coming to a close, I am thinking back to all the activities related to Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. The highly anticipated Bucks vs All-Star Basketball Game did not disappoint with plenty of drama and comedy for the 400 spectators who were there. Attendees at the basketball game also had an opportunity to learn more about Holmes DD and GentleBrook, Sacred Ground, and Catholic Charities, provider agencies in Holmes county, at the annual provider fair. Additionally, the Holmes County advocates participated virtually in DD Awareness Day at Ohio's Statehouse. Holmes County Commissioners were visited and signed a Proclamation declaring March DD Awareness month.

From left **standing**: Julie Yoder, Kay Earney, Kyle Snyder, Marianne Mader  
**Sitting**: Eric Strouse, Dave Hall, Joe Miller

I was featured on WKLM Friday Focus broadcast on 3/20/26 and shared with their listeners that many services provided by Holmes DD. Thirty-seven (37) copies of Something Different: A story about what helps us be our best selves by Reilly Greene, a disability awareness book, was presented to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms and local libraries. The Holmes County Public Library's Story Walk at Deer Run Park featured a disability awareness book for the month of March. The Holmes Center for the Arts sponsored a DD Awareness Day at their facility complete with art, music, and pizza! The month wrapped up with Holmes DD school students performed a Reader's Theater story using various communication devices at Millersburg Elementary.

I thank all who participated in these events that bring attention to the strengths, abilities, and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Holmes DD is interested in hearing from individuals who receive services and their families regarding your satisfaction with our services. If you haven't already taken our survey, you will receive a call in the next several weeks. There are 5 questions that will require just a few minutes of your time. Your responses will help us improve! As always, if you have questions, concerns, or ideas for improvement, I encourage you to call or email me at [mmader@holmesdd.org](mailto:mmader@holmesdd.org).



Education Spotlight

# Adventures in our School Program

By *Crystal J. Payne, Education Director/Principal*

Spring has arrived, bringing renewed energy as students wrap up the 3rd quarter and return outside for recess. Despite winter weather and time at home during holiday breaks, our school has been bustling with meaningful learning experiences for both students and staff.

Ms. Kelly's and Mr. Grant's students studied space and space travel, with Ms. Kelly's class conducting a lively crater experiment using the scientific method. Meanwhile, Ms. Merri's class learned about restaurant jobs and prepared delicious lemon bars and brownies that were delivered to other students and staff.

Our teachers and TAs have been actively engaged in professional development aligned with their individual goals. Mr. Grant and Ms. Jenna recently completed an eight-week Interception training course through OCALI, gaining insights into how body systems influence student behavior. Other staff members continue partnering with Cardinal Rehab therapists to strengthen their use of student communication devices.

Students celebrated Disability Awareness Month with spirit days, a school pep rally, and a special event at the Holmes Center for the Arts featuring music, movement, and art activities alongside Hiland High School students, Sacred Ground, and Gentle Brook. Mr. Grant's class performed Reader's Theatre at Millersburg Elementary, highlighting diverse communication styles and emphasizing our theme: EVERYONE BELONGS!

Across classrooms, learning has taken many creative forms. Ms. Jenna's class explored the four seasons and practiced sight words.

As we approach the final quarter of the school year, we are excited to continue learning, growing, and preparing for summer. Every day offers new opportunities for discovery!



HCAHC Feature

## Mother's Club News

...By *Naomi Weaver, Plain Community Liaison*

In January we had our Family Fun Pizza and Bingo Night. We had a great evening, with lots of families in attendance. There was a pizza dinner from East of Chicago, and finger foods brought in by the families. Thank you to all who brought food to share! As always, the Bingo game was lots of fun, with loads of white elephant gifts, again, brought in by the families. Thank you to all who participated!! This evening would not be possible without all of you who attend and bring your gifts to share. We also had our introduction to the new "Indoor Sports" by having the games set up in the gym for the evening. We had a lot of fun introducing these games to our individuals. We are excited about this new venture.

In February, we had the annual Couples Valentine's Dinner. It was a wonderful evening!! A full-course meal was catered by Byler's Barbeque, and the dessert was catered by

individual caterers. We had George Dennehy, "That Armless Guy," as our guest speaker. We had a very inspiring evening listening to his testimony, hearing him sing, and play a guitar with his feet. Yes, for those of you who were not here that evening, that is not a typo. He plays instruments with his feet and toes. It is quite amazing!!

In March we had two of our Indoor Sports events featuring cornhole, table tennis and bocce ball. It is so great to see our individuals' big "SMILES" as they get to play games and receive stamps for participating. We are seeing positive things as they learn to play a new game or compete in a game they already knew how to play. It has been a great way for them to learn new social skills as well. We are blessed to see how greatly this has impacted our individuals. If your individual would still like to join in, feel free to contact us at 330-674-8045.

HR Update

## Goodbyes, New Roles & Welcome New Staff

By *Curtis Goehring, HR/Business Director*



As we turned the page into 2026 and began a new year, the Board experienced some new beginnings and updates to our team's roster. In January, we were delighted to welcome two new staff members: **Breana Mackey** (SSA) and **Alexa Spencer** (Teacher Assistant). Each of them brings valuable experience and leadership from their previous roles, and we're truly excited to have them join our team and support the families we serve.

We also had some role changes among our existing staff. **Devon Fortune** transitioned into the newly created **Library Media Aide** position, approved by the Board of Trustees during the February meeting. Devon will oversee the Holmes DD Special Needs Library, managing book and material loans, returns, and inventory. His diligence and thoughtful approach to his work make him a good fit for this role.

With Devon's move, his former position of **Community Relations Worker** was modified slightly and renamed "**Community Support Worker**," and has now been filled by **Kim Miller**, a long-time Teacher Assistant in our School Program. Kim has led many of our community outings over the years, and we're thrilled she'll now be taking on those responsibilities full-time.

While we've had many positive changes to announce, there is also some bittersweet news to share. Two staff members—**Jacie Westover** (Front Desk Receptionist/Secretary) and **Rachel Morris** (SSA)—have resigned to accept positions closer to home. Reducing their daily commute was an important factor in their decisions. We are grateful for their dedication and service to the Holmes County Community and to the families we support, and we wish them both the very best in their next chapters of life.

# MOM





Community Supports Spotlight

# Bucks basketball Season Recap

By Cindy Boals, Community Employment & Advocacy Worker

It's hard to believe the basketball season is already over. The team had a total of 16 players this season, including 13 returning players and 3 new members. The team played a total of 7 Special Olympics games this season, along with 11 fun games against teams from our community. The Bucks competed in their regional tournament at the Cloverleaf Rec Center the first weekend of February. Although they lost their game against Coshocton County, everyone still had a great weekend together.

The Holmes County Special Olympics basketball team officially wrapped up their season on March 10 at West Holmes High School during the 29th Annual Community All-Star Game. This was an especially meaningful night, as Holmes County Special Olympics celebrated 50 years of basketball. Even more incredible, we had the opportunity to celebrate Dennis Hershberger and his 50th year

of playing basketball with the Holmes County Bucks. Dennis shared that in their first year, they didn't have uniforms and simply wore their own T-shirts and shorts for games. When asked who they played that first year, he mentioned Knox County and Tuscarawas County. Dennis also recalled several of the players and coaches he played alongside in those early years.

While the basketball season may be over, it's now time for our athletes to begin preparing for their State Summer Games competitions. Athletes will participate in bowling, running long jump, standing long jump, mini javelin, and walking and running events.

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in Holmes County Special Olympics, please contact the Holmes County Board of DD. They will connect you with our local co-coordinators, Cindy Boals or Rachel Day.





**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- \* **Cornhole, Table Tennis & Bocce**  
March 27th, from 6–8 pm  
At Lynn Hope Industires
  
- \* **Mothers’ Club Department Store Shopping in Canton**  
April 15th, from 7:30 am to 1:30 pm
  
- \* **Bowling at Spare Time Lanes**  
April 17th: from 5:30–7 pm
  
- \* **Mom’s Meet Coffee Hour at Blue Moon Bistro**  
April 29th, from 5:30 to 7 pm
  
- \* **HCAHC Spring Festival**  
May 8th & 9th  
At Holmes Board of DD

Community Supports Spotlight

**Egg Hunt & Sensory Friendly Carnival**

**By Sharon Allison, Community Supports Director**

On March 21, Holmes DD offered an inclusive Easter Egg Hunt at the fairgrounds, creating a fun and welcoming experience for everyone. Wheelchair-accessible hunting areas and smaller group sizes helped ensure that all individuals could participate comfortably and at their own pace. With help from many community organizations, this event also featured pictures with the Easter Bunny, brunch, a small animal petting area, face painting, and balloon animals—so much egg-cellent fun for all!

Following the egg hunt, Kissell Amusement Company offered a sensory-friendly hour at their Indoor Carnival. Attractions included slides, a fun house, a Ferris wheel, and much more. Everyone had a great time experiencing the rides with a smaller crowd and a quieter atmosphere.



**Sensory-Friendly Movie Lilo and Stitch**

**By Sharon Allison, Community Supports Director**

Holmes Center for the Arts hosted a special cinema screening of the movie Lilo and Stitch with adjusted conditions, lower volume, and the freedom to move and vocalize. This showing was designed for

Individuals with sensory sensitivities & special needs. Holmes DD staff and a large group of families enjoyed the relaxed movie atmosphere. Keep an eye out for more sensory-friendly movies from Holmes Center for the Arts.

Community Supports Spotlight

# Night To Shine Recap

By Sharon Allison, Community Supports Director

Night to Shine honored guests enjoyed an unforgettable evening filled with karaoke, games, and even limo rides that made everyone feel like a star. One of the highlights of the night was a surprise visit from Disney princesses, adding a little extra magic to an already incredible event. From shoe shining to hair styling, every detail helped make the evening feel special and full of sparkle.

A huge thank you to the 200+ volunteers, including many Holmes DD staff, who helped make this event possible. With 120 honored guests in attendance, the night was filled with laughter, connection, and unforgettable moments. Mark your calendars for the 2027 Night to Shine on Friday, February 12.



Everyone came dressed to impress at Grace Church, turning the night into a true celebration. The dance floor was full, the smiles were big, and the energy was contagious –proving it was a night to remember for all!





Early Intervention Feature

## Playgroup had a paws- itively great time!

By Monique Jacobs, Early Childhood Director

Playing with stuffed animals can help young children reach important developmental milestones. Through pretend play, children practice creating and using their imagination while caring for and talking to their plush friends. This type of play supports social and emotional growth and helps build communication skills, empathy, and creativity.



At the recent March playgroup hosted by the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities Early Childhood team, children were given the opportunity to adopt a soft, fuzzy friend to take home. Each child also received an adoption certificate to encourage them to care for their new companion as they continue to learn and grow.



All children aged 5 and under are invited to join the next Easter-themed playgroup on April 6th at 10:00 a.m. at the HCBDD. We hope to see you there!



SSA Update

## Your Service and Support Administrator (SSA) is your go-to person to navigate services!

By Mimi Lawhead, SSA Director

For individuals and families in Holmes County who are affected by a developmental disability, navigating services, support, and eligibility requirements can feel overwhelming. Knowing where to begin—and who to call—can make all the difference. That's where a Service and Support Administrator (SSA) comes in.

At the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Service and Support Administrators work alongside individuals and families to help them understand options, connect to resources, and build meaningful supports that promote independence, inclusion, and quality of life. Whether someone is just beginning their journey with the County Board or navigating a new chapter in life, an SSA provides consistent guidance and support every step of the way.

One of the most important roles of an SSA is helping individuals and families navigate the system of developmental disability services. SSAs work closely with individuals and their teams to develop a person-centered Ohio Individual Service Plan (OhioISP) that reflects the person's strengths, preferences, and goals. Based on that plan, SSAs help connect people to services that may include, but are not limited to:

- Housing and residential options
- Job coaching and employment services
- Adult day services
- Transportation
- Medicaid waiver services

SSAs collaborate with providers, agencies, and community partners to help ensure support is coordinated and truly meets the needs of the individual and their family. Life is full of transitions, and SSAs are there to help individuals and families navigate them. Whether transitioning from school to adult services, exploring new living arrangements, or addressing changing needs, SSAs provide guidance, planning, and continuity of support.

During times of crisis or unexpected challenges, an SSA can assist with planning and coordination to help protect health, safety, and stability. Families are never expected to manage difficult situations on their own. If you are looking for a new doctor, we can assist you with your search.

Individuals who qualify for services through the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities may request a Service and Support Administrator. Eligibility generally includes:

- Living in Holmes County
- Having evidence of a developmental disability, via medical records
- Completing an eligibility determination assessment

Families unsure about eligibility or needing assistance are encouraged to contact the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities for more information on Service and Support Administration.

Day Services Provider Feature

# Message from Gentlebrook

We have been working out over here at GentleBrook with new workout equipment, cornhole, bowling, yoga and dance class! Plus many more fun activities! With weather getting nicer we love to get laps in around the nature trail. Gentlebrook likes to get their hands dirty with fun science and sensory experiments, and work on their artist skills in craft class! We enjoy music time with daily gospel music, instruments and group sing along.



Day Services Provider Feature

# Message from Midwest

Despite the winter everyone has endured, Midwest Community still made things happen for our individuals the best we could. We went to the Akron Zoo, enjoyed each other's company at Jitters, and had a coin hunt for St Patty's Day!! Everyone is excited to see what Spring may hold for us!



Day Services Provider Feature

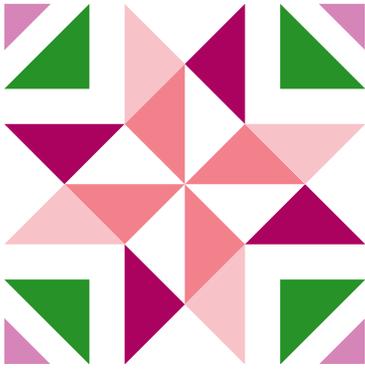
# Message from Sacred Ground

At Sacred Ground, we believe every individual deserves a place where they feel valued, supported, and encouraged to grow. Our adult day services are designed for adults with IDD to thrive through meaningful daily activities. Each day brings new opportunities to build life skills, learn new things, and enjoy time with friends in a welcoming and supportive environment. Participants engage in activities such as cooking and baking, playing games, and

new interests. We also believe in being an active part of the community by volunteering and learning about local businesses and places.

In addition, Sacred Ground offers respite nights for any adult with special needs, giving them a fun evening filled with games, snacks, themed activities, and laughter, while providing caregivers with a much-needed break. At Sacred Ground, we are more than a program—we are a community where friendships grow, confidence builds, and every person is celebrated for who they are.





**Donations accepted by:**

ALLEN & SUSAN BURKHOLDER (Jolene & Geneva)  
6119 TR 363  
MILLERSBURG, Ohio 44654  
330 893-3302

ANDREW & MIRIAM YODER (Justin)  
6440 SR 515  
MILLERSBURG, OHIO 44654  
330- 275-5336

DAVID & DOROTHY YODER (Carol & Marcus)  
2285 CR 58  
MILLERSBURG, OHIO 44654  
330-674-1694

NELSON & VERNA HERSHBERGER (Ray & Aaron)  
5925 CR 59  
MILLERSBURG, OHIO 44654  
330-275-3740

OWEN & CHRISTENA YODER (Aaron)  
2797 CR 160  
MILLERSBURG, OHIO 44654  
330-600-1702

LEROY & BARB YODER (Lorene)  
3649 TR 159  
SUGARCREEK, OHIO 44681  
330-893-3479

MARK & MARTHA RABER (Lena)  
3536 TR 184  
BAL TIC, OHIO 43804  
330-897-1019

Event Spotlight

**48<sup>th</sup> Annual HCAHC Spring Festival and Auction with Donation Drop-off Details**

The 48<sup>th</sup> annual HCAHC Benefit Auction and Spring Festival is just a few weeks away. Please tell your friends and family to come to the event, May 8-9, 2026. While the Benefit Auction/Spring Festival is held on the grounds of Holmes DD, all proceeds raised belong HCAHC (Holmes County Association for Handicapped Citizens). HCAHC Trustees determine how the money is spent.

Funding is used for grants to individuals/families for disability related needs, grants to agencies that support people with developmental disabilities, funding for Special Olympics, Mothers Club, Buddy Softball, etc. If you have a quilt to drop off for the auction, please make arrangements by contacting one of the families listed.

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2026**  
VIEWING OF AUCTION ITEMS  
BAKE SALE.....3 P.M. TO 10 P.M.  
SOUP & SANDWICHES...4:30 P.M. TO 11 P.M.  
ENTERTAINMENT.....6 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M.  
OPEN VOLLEYBALL.....6 P.M. TO MIDNIGHT

**SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2026**  
BREAKFAST.....7 A.M. TO 10 A.M.  
BAKE SALE.....7 A.M. TO SOLD OUT  
5K & DD FUN RUN.....8 A.M.  
CRAFT & FURNITURE AUCTION.....9 A.M.  
SILENT AUCTION.....9 A.M. TO NOON  
CHILDREN'S GAMES.....9 - 11 & 1 - 3  
CHICKEN BBQ.....10:30 A.M. TO SELL OUT  
QUILT AUCTION.....AFTER CRAFT AUCTION  
RAFFLE DRAWING.....NOON  
SPECIAL AUCTION.....12:30 P.M.  
**DELIVERY AVAILABLE FOR AUCTION ITEMS**



**Located at:**  
**Holmes County Training Center/  
Holmes County Board of DD**

8001 Township Road 574, Holmesville, OH: 4.5 miles north of Millersburg  
Information: 330-674-8045

Visit us on Facebook at: HCAHC Annual Spring Festival



HOLMES COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

8001 TOWNSHIP ROAD 574

HOLMESVILLE, OH 44633

### Upcoming Events and Important Dates:

- \* **Cornhole, Table Tennis & Bocce**  
March 27th, from 6-8 pm  
At Lynn Hope Industires
- \* **School Program Spring Break**  
March 30th - April 3rd
- \* **Good Friday - Offices closed**  
April 3rd
- \* **ECC Playgroup: Easter**  
Monday, April 6th, 10 - 11 am
- \* **Mothers' Club Department Store Shopping in Canton**  
April 15th, from 7:30 am to 1:30 pm
- \* **Bowling at Spare Time Lanes**  
April 17th from 5:30-7 pm
- \* **Mom's Meet Coffee Hour at Blue Moon Bistro**  
April 29th, from 5:30 to 7 pm
- \* **48th HCAHC Spring Festival**  
May 8th & 9th  
At Holmes Board of DD
- \* **Last Day of School Program**  
Monday, June 1st
- \* **Summer Enrichment Program**  
June 8<sup>th</sup> - 25th

### HOLMES COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES CONTACTS

**Marianne Mader, Superintendent**  
**Crystal Payne, Education Director**  
**Curtis Goehring, HR/Business Director**  
**Monique Jacobs, Early Childhood Director**  
**Mimi Lawhead, Service & Support Administration Director**  
**Sharon Allison, Community Supports Director**  
**8001 Township Road 574 Holmesville, OH 44633**  
**Phone: 330-674-8045 Fax:330-674-5182**

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