



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



Admin Spotlight

## Message from the Superintendent

By Marianne Mader, Superintendent

Summer is coming upon us... finally! It is always with mixed feelings we say goodbye to students and school staff for the summer. They certainly bring excitement and joy to each day. But then again, it is pleasantly quiet without them here! I am often asked what does Holmes DD do over the summer? Often there are new high school graduates looking for what to do now that they have graduated. Our SSAs work with these students and their families to learn what they would like to do next. Are they interested in finding a job in the community? Do they want to attend an adult day program? Or do they have something else in mind? The SSA, individual and family explore all options

available and come up with a plan. On a year-round basis, SSAs respond to individuals and family's needs, adjust ISPs to meet new needs, link to necessary services, and protect health and welfare. Our Early Childhood Department staff continue year-round with their important job of supporting families as they teach their young child to grow and develop. Always there with advice, suggestions, and emotional support, our staff are challenging parents to see their child's possibilities. The Community Supports Department has a full array of activities planned for the summer...swimming, mini-golf, pickleball, swimming and softball to name a few. They are also

working with community partners to increase opportunities for people with special needs in a variety of community events. Truly bringing home our vision of A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS. And, so many other tasks continue over the summer. The library is still open, we are paying bills, policies are being reviewed and updated, buses are being maintained, and facility projects are being completed. So yes, it's quieter here but at the same time, it's just as busy if not busier. Sort of like your own summer. We take advantage of the pleasant weather to get things done we couldn't do at other times of the year. May your summer, be like ours, relaxing and productive!

Education Spotlight

## School Graduation, Awards Ceremony, & End of Year Picnic

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

Students, families, and staff came together on Friday, May 29, in the HCBDD Pavilion to celebrate our students and especially our four graduating seniors. It was a bright and cheerful day as students were recognized for their hard work and achievements throughout the school year. Awards were presented for attendance, reading, writing, math, strength, and endurance. Each teacher had the opportunity to honor their students.

Mr. Grant read *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* by Dr. Seuss, adding a special touch to the celebration. Ms. Kelly and Mr. Grant presented Certificates of Completion to each graduate and shared heartfelt memories that made the moment even more meaningful.

After the ceremony, everyone enjoyed a relaxed picnic lunch organized by the Community Supports department. We are so proud of our graduating seniors and wish them and their families happiness and success in all that lies ahead.



HR Update



## Staff Changes: Farewell, Lori, Janet, Allyson, and Merri

By *Curtis Goehring, HR/Business Director*

As warmer temperatures usher in summer and another school year comes to a close, Holmes DD will also say goodbye to several long-serving staff members who are moving on to retirement or to work elsewhere.

Lori Frank began her career in the classroom as a Teacher's Assistant before spending the last 16 years scheduling appointments, coordinating with dentists, and managing the dental clinic. Running a dental office requires dedication, organization, and steady leadership—qualities Lori demonstrated every day. Under her guidance, the clinic thrived, and she consistently did an outstanding job. Lori's last day of employment will be in August.

Also retiring is Janet Crilow, who has served the Board for over 25 years. Janet has worked in multiple roles, including in the Adult Program, as a bus aide, and most recently as a Teacher's Assistant for the past nine years. She is a hardworking, caring individual who has always shown genuine commitment to the people she served. Known for her warm smile, positive attitude, and welcoming personality, Janet will be greatly missed when she steps away at the end of the school year.

In April the Board said goodbye to Allyson Crider, who resigned to return to work for a previous employer. We are grateful that she plans to continue supporting us as a Substitute Teacher's Assistant as her schedule allows. During her four years as a full-time staff member, Allyson did excellent work in the classroom, and we look forward to her continued contributions in a substitute role.

And finally, Merri Pycraft left at the end of the school year. In her 25 years of employment, she has worked as both a classroom teacher and an adaptive physical educator. She spent a career shaping lives and building relationships with the families and individuals that attended our program. We wish her well and all the very best in her next professional endeavor.



Education Spotlight

## Ending on a High Note!

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

The fourth and final quarter of the 2025–26 school year flew by! It is hard to believe the year has already come to an end.

This quarter, several staff members and parents took part in the OCALI Lifeskills for Adulthood Framework (OLAF) Project. Our program received \$1,750 in grant funding to support this work. The project is helping create a new tool from ODEW that will give students and families more support with life skills at earlier grade levels. We are proud that our school was the first county board school program in Ohio to join this project. We look forward to continuing this work with OCALI to help students build

skills for life after graduation.

Students also enjoyed many fun learning activities to wrap up the school year! These included trash pick-up on the Trail, a fun run, a bowling trip with West Holmes Middle School students, and a Glow Show art event with GentleBrook.

As we say goodbye to the school year, we are excited for our Summer Enrichment program, which runs June 8–25. We are also looking forward to welcoming new and returning students back to HCBDD on Tuesday, August 25. Until then, we wish all our families a safe, fun, and relaxing summer!





Community Supports Spotlight  
**Upcoming Events**  
 By Sharon Allison, *Community Supports Director*

**\* 🏌️ Adapted Mini Golf**  
 June 8 | 4:00–5:00 PM  
 Country Acres, Berlin

**\* ☕ Mom’s Meet Coffee Hour**  
 June 17 | 9:30 AM  
 Ginger House

**\* 🧑‍👦 Mom’s Meet on the Playground**  
 July 8th | 10:00 AM  
 Holmes County Board of DD

**\* 🏊 Sensory–Friendly Swimming**  
 July 7, 14, 21 | 12:00 – 3:00 pm  
 Crissey Memorial Pool

**\* 🧑‍👦 Mom’s Meet on the Playground**  
 July 22 | 10:00 AM  
 Holmes County Board of DD

**\* 🏊 Adapted Swimming Lessons**  
 July 27–29 | 6:15 – 7:00 pm  
 Crissey Memorial Pool

**? QUESTION ABOUT EVENTS CALL SHARON ALLISON  
 330-674-8045 EXT. 229, NAOMI WEAVER EXT. 252**



SSA Update

**The Role of a Service and Support Administrator (SSA) When Transitioning from High School**

By Mimi Lawhead, *SSA Director*

When a student with developmental disabilities approaches graduation, families often ask, “What happens next?” A Service and Support Administrator (SSA) from the County Board of Developmental Disabilities serves as a primary point of contact during this important transition. SSAs help individuals and families plan for life after high school by developing the Ohio Individual Service Plan (ISP), connecting individuals to adult services, and identifying opportunities for employment, community involvement, and independent living.

Students with developmental disabilities who may need support with daily living, employment, or community participation may qualify for services through the County Board. Getting connected early allows students and families to explore options, build skills, and make informed choices before graduation. After graduation, services shift from school-based supports to adult services focused on independence and community life.

The Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities has one SSA assigned to support transition-aged youth (ages 14–22). Breana Mackey works closely with local school districts to identify students who may qualify for services. This early connection helps build relationships and ensures that individuals have access to opportunities such as pre-employment transition services.

- Key roles of an SSA during high school transition include:
- Attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to support future planning and ensure awareness of available options
  - Assisting with employment navigation, including job readiness, vocational training, and employment-first opportunities
  - Coordinating services and connecting individuals with community resources for housing, transportation, and social activities
  - Supporting service and provider selection and monitoring service quality
  - Providing guidance to families on benefits, long-term planning, and options such as supported decision-making or guardianship
  - Ensuring health and safety needs are identified and addressed

Every student’s path looks different. Some individuals may transition into competitive employment, while others may explore adult day programs, volunteer opportunities, or community-based activities that match their goals and interests.

If you have a loved one who is currently in school and may qualify for County Board services, you can request that your child’s school connect you with Breana Mackey. She can attend IEP meetings and help begin planning for a successful transition to adulthood.



Community Supports Spotlight

# Special Olympics Update

By Cindy Boals, Community Employment & Advocacy Worker

On May 29–31, the Holmes County Special Olympics team competed in the Ohio SO Summer Games, held at The Ohio State University facilities! All 16 of our athletes saw huge success, and the weather couldn't have been more perfect. Our eight bowlers competed at the Columbus Square Bowling Palace and brought home three bronze, one silver, and two gold medals! Meanwhile, the eight track and field athletes competed at Jesse Owens Stadium, earning one bronze, one silver, and one gold medal. Governor DeWine even made a surprise appearance at the track stadium and awarded medals to some of the athletes, including Andrew! The entire team had a blast at the opening ceremony and then it was off to the Olympic Village where they enjoyed shopping, games, dancing, and karaoke.

It was an unforgettable weekend filled with hard work, incredible achievements, and lasting memories for the entire Holmes County team.

Our Athletes/Leaders got to give back the weekend of the Annual Spring Festival. Some helped with setting up and serving food on Friday evening, while some handed out water and ribbons to the many runners who participated in the 5K run early Saturday morning. The Athletes enjoy having the chance to give awards as much as when they receive them. They know how hard you need to practice to achieve your goals.

If you have not checked out our Special Olympics Ohio-Holmes County Bucks Facebook page, now is an exciting time to start. You will get to see what these Amazing Athletes have achieved.





## Early Intervention Feature Gardening & Flowers Playgroup Blossoms with Learning and Fun

By Monique Jacobs, Early Childhood Director

On May 4, the Holmes County Early Childhood Department hosted a fun and educational Gardening & Flowers themed playgroup that encouraged families to explore the joys of gardening together. Through hands-on activities, children experienced the beauty of nature while building important early developmental skills.

Planting flowers with young children—especially from birth to age five—offers many developmental benefits. Gardening provides valuable sensory experiences, encourages language development, strengthens fine motor skills, and promotes healthy outdoor activity. It also supports emotional well-being while fostering a lifelong appreciation for nature.



Families who attended were encouraged to continue gardening activities at home by planting flowers, vegetables, or small gardens together. These simple activities create meaningful learning experiences and lasting family memories throughout the growing season.

### Benefits of Gardening for Young Children:

- **Sensory Development:** Children explore soft petals, textured leaves, floral scents, and vibrant colors that help stimulate developing senses.
- **Language Growth:** Gardening creates natural opportunities to build vocabulary by describing colors, shapes, textures, and even insects visiting the flowers.
- **Motor Skill Development:** Digging, scooping soil, watering plants, and planting seeds helps to strengthen coordination and hand muscles.
- **Cognitive Learning:** Children observe how sunlight and water help plants grow, introducing early science concepts and cause-and-effect learning.
- **Emotional Well-Being:** Time outdoors and the calming garden environment helps to reduce stress and uplift moods for both children and caregivers.

### Join Us for More Summer Playgroups!

Families with children under 5 years old are invited to continue the summer fun at upcoming playgroups hosted by the Holmes County Early Childhood Department.

#### Upcoming Dates:

July 6

August 3

**Time:** 10:00–11:00 a.m.

**Location:** HCBDD Playground

Come enjoy engaging outdoor play, hands-on activities, and opportunities to connect with other families in the community!

### Event Spotlight

## Spring Festival 2026

The 48<sup>th</sup> annual HCAHC Spring Festival and Benefit Auction was held May 8–9 on the grounds of the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Hundreds of volunteers and donations from local businesses contributed to another successful event. There was delicious food, beautiful handmade quilts and crafts, a wide variety of furniture, many silent auction items, scrumptious baked goods, spirited volleyball, lively music, exciting children’s games, and a spectacular raffle plus more! While the weather was not great Friday evening or early Saturday, the sun came out so everyone could have an enjoyable time. The proceeds raised are used to support families who have children with a developmental disability, agency providers in Holmes County, Holmes County Special Olympics, Mothers Club, pavilion upkeep and more.



Day Services Provider Feature

## Message from Gentlebrook

GentleBrook is a place where everyone can find their place and purpose. Our adult day service empowers each person to achieve their fullest potential. In May we visited Walnut Creek Farm and Hershberger. We had so much fun feeding the animals while driving through Walnut Creek Farm! We also enjoyed much time outside on the nice days going on walks and taking countryside drives, celebrated Cinco De Mayo, participated in Everybody Plays with HCBDD, made beautiful projects to display around our day habilitation, and participated in the Glow Show display with the HCBDD school.

We celebrated Ric Brown's retirement at GentleBrook Holmes County on May 26, 2026. June is another fun filled month for us. On 6/17/26, Mayor Hoffee and Holmes County Commissioners will be joining us for a meet and greet, the Holmes County Bookmobile will start visiting us on a monthly basis, we are hosting an outdoor Carnival, and have many other events and activities planned. GentleBrook strives to be person centered to ensure everyone's needs are met so they can live their best lives while participating in our program. GentleBrook is currently hiring direct support professionals and drivers. Please contact Luella Byler (234) 364-8010 for more information.



Day Services Provider Feature

## Message from Sacred Ground

Sacred Ground continues to be filled with growth, friendship, service, and enjoying the outdoors whenever the weather allows. Participants remain active in the community through volunteer opportunities with our continued partnership with Mission Thrift. Throughout each activity, participants demonstrate kindness, teamwork, and a strong willingness to help others. Even with changing weather, we continue to make the most of opportunities to enjoy outdoor games and activities. Participants have also been working in the gardens, taking pride in preparing, planting, and caring for each stage of growth. Our Mobile Coffee Unit stays busy with outings in the community and our coffee drive-thru events. These experiences allow participants to practice customer service, communication, and

teamwork skills while building connections within the community. Connect with us so you know where you can find us. Our monthly Respite Night continues to provide fun and fellowship through activities like Trivia Night, where participants enjoy friendly competition, teamwork, and lots of laughter while testing their knowledge on a variety of topics. Our summer months are scheduled. Respite nights are open to anyone w/ IDD and their families in the community. One of the greatest highlights at Sacred Ground is the continued strengthening of friendships within the program and warmly welcoming new individuals into the community. It is encouraging to see participants support one another, build meaningful connections, and create a positive and inclusive environment for everyone.



HOLMES COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

8001 TOWNSHIP ROAD 574

HOLMESVILLE, OH 44633

### Upcoming Events and Important Dates:

- \* **Summer Enrichment Program**  
June 8<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>
- \* **Adapted Mini Golf**  
June 8 | 4:00-5:00 PM  
Country Acres, Berlin
- \* **Mom's Meet Coffee Hour**  
June 17 | 9:30 AM  
Ginger House
- \* **Mom's Meet on the Playground**  
July 8<sup>th</sup> | 10:00 AM  
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- \* **Sensory-Friendly Swimming**  
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### 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**

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**The mission of the Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities**

**is to support individuals in living meaningful lives.**