

# The Ability Connection

Fall 2025

*A Newsletter by the Trumbull County Board of Developmental Disabilities*

## Jungle Terry at Fairhaven School

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the amazing Jungle Terry for bringing his fun, interactive animal show to Fairhaven School!

Our students were absolutely thrilled to get up close with such a unique variety of animals. The experience wasn't just exciting—it was educational, too. Jungle Terry's engaging presentation helped our students learn about wildlife, sparked curiosity, and encouraged empathy for living creatures.

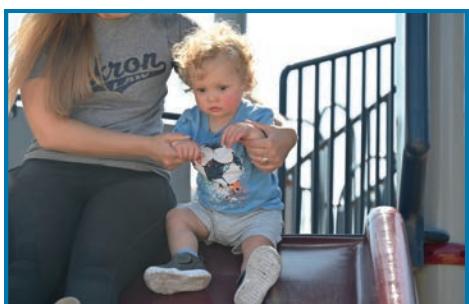


## Early Intervention Playdate

A big thank you to all the families who joined us for our Early Intervention Playdate at Waddell Park in Niles on September 18th! It was a beautiful day filled with smiles, laughter, and connection. Children had the chance to explore, play, and interact with peers in a fun, supportive environment while parents and caregivers connected with one another and our Early Intervention team.

For more information about Early Intervention services, contact our team:

[LisaCasassa@tcbdd.org](mailto:LisaCasassa@tcbdd.org) / 330-652-5811



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# Superintendent's Message



Each September, we take time to recognize and celebrate Direct Support Professional (DSP) Awareness Week. This annual celebration is an opportunity to honor the extraordinary dedication, professionalism, and compassion of the Direct Support Professionals who work every day to support and empower individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Trumbull County Board of Developmental Disabilities (TCBDD) sees firsthand the difference DSPs make in the lives of the people we serve. Their work is not just a job, it is a passion, established in commitment, respect, and advocacy. Whether they are assisting with daily routines, supporting individuals at work, participating in their local community, or providing encouragement to pursue personal goals, DSPs are essential partners in building inclusive and meaningful lives.

Direct Support Professionals embody patience, empathy, and kindness in all that they do. They play an invaluable role in ensuring that individuals with developmental disabilities are supported to live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives. Their efforts extend beyond meeting daily needs; they foster relationships, open doors to opportunities, and help people discover their strengths and potential.

We recognize that the work of a DSP can be challenging, but it is also deeply impactful. For the families of those we serve, DSPs provide peace of mind knowing that their loved ones are supported by caring and capable professionals. For individuals with developmental disabilities, DSPs are role models, advocates, and trusted allies.

On behalf of the Trumbull County Board of Developmental Disabilities, I extend my deepest gratitude to all Direct Support Professionals. Your commitment and compassion do not go unnoticed, and your work is the foundation of the support system we strive to provide in Trumbull County.

Please join us in celebrating Direct Support Professional Awareness Week by taking a moment to thank a DSP for their dedication and for the countless ways they make a positive difference every day.

With appreciation,

*Edward J. Stark*

Superintendent,  
Trumbull County Board of Developmental Disabilities



# VOICE Picnic at Boardman Park

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, individuals from the VOICE program gathered at Boardman Park for a day of learning, laughter, and connection. The event that was held in partnership with the Mahoning County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Trumbull County Board of Developmental Disabilities brought together participants, staff, and supporters for a shared celebration of self-advocacy.

VOICE, which stands for Valued Options, Independence, Choices, and Education, empowers individuals with developmental disabilities to build confidence and speak up for themselves while forming strong community bonds. The picnic offered the perfect setting for these values to come to life.

Attendees enjoyed a delicious lunch, meaningful conversations about self-advocacy, and a karaoke session that had everyone smiling and singing along. It was a wonderful reminder of the power of community and the importance of giving every voice the opportunity to be heard.



## Smoke the Bus Event

In August, our Transportation Department was proud to partner with the Howland Fire Department and our staff for a hands-on training session that brought safety planning to life.

During the training, school bus scenarios were simulated with smoke and a rollover, where staff practiced evacuating students, including those in specialized safety seating under real-world conditions. Our transportation team, bus drivers, and aides joined firefighters in small teams to drill response steps together. The goal was to build confidence, coordination, and a shared understanding of how best to respond when every second counts.

Staff saw firsthand what challenges could occur and practiced adaptations for individuals with different mobility needs or seating configurations.

We are grateful to all who took part for their dedication and courage. Together, we made our community stronger.



# Celebrating Abilities

On the beautiful evening of August 9<sup>th</sup> at Eastwood Field, our community came together in a powerful way to celebrate inclusion, respect, and abilities. The 4th Annual Ability Walk & Roll was a heartwarming success, with over 1,600 guests in attendance and more than 500 enthusiastic volunteers helping make the night unforgettable.



Scan to view the event video.



This event continues to grow not only in size, but in spirit — a true reflection of how our tri-county collaboration is building stronger, more inclusive communities. It stands as a testament to the shared commitment across our region to uplift and support individuals of all abilities.

The evening was packed with joy and activities for all ages, including a celebratory lap around Eastwood Field, where guests were cheered on by volunteers and given a truly special “Field of Dreams” experience — complete with high-fives from players from both the Mahoning Valley Scrappers and the West Virginia Black Bears.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who attended, volunteered, and supported this meaningful event. Your participation reminds us that when people with developmental disabilities are included and supported, our communities become stronger, more compassionate, and more united. Thank you for making this year's Ability Walk & Roll a resounding success. We can't wait to see you again next year!



We have much to celebrate! Fairhaven Foundation is now Abilities Unite Foundation of the Mahoning Valley. Their mission will remain committed to enriching the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities, but with greater reach and impact. They will now be supporting individuals eligible for services through Trumbull, Mahoning, and Columbiana County Boards of Developmental Disabilities.

Abilities Unite lives their mission by creating meaningful opportunities, providing resources, and promoting community awareness to enrich the lives of those we serve. In the last 4 years they have provided free community experiences to over 12,000 thousand individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in the Mahoning Valley. Their community experiences and events help to address social isolation by creating welcoming and accessible environments for individuals and families to meet new friends and enjoy fun activities.

For more information about their work, visit: [www.abilitiesunite.org](http://www.abilitiesunite.org)



# Mobile Response Stabilization Services

We are excited to share information about MRSS — Mobile Response & Stabilization Services, a program offered through Alta Care Group that provides immediate, on-site behavioral health support for youth and families in crisis.

On April 21, 2025, Governor DeWine announced the statewide, regional expansion of Mobile Response & Stabilization Services. As part of this initiative, Alta Care Group was selected as the Region 7 Provider of MRSS in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties.

In addition, beginning September 2, 2025, Alta partnered with the Region 11 Provider, OhioGuidestone, to serve as the MRSS responding provider for Columbiana County on weekdays from 8 AM to 8 PM. Alta also selected Coleman Health Services to serve as the MRSS responding provider for Trumbull County during the same weekday hours. Together, regional MRSS providers ensure 24/7 availability to respond to youth in crisis across each county of coverage.

What is MRSS?	MRSS is a team of licensed clinicians and support staff who can respond within about 60 minutes to emotional or behavioral crises wherever the youth is located (home, school, etc.). They offer short-term support aimed at stabilizing the situation, connecting families to ongoing services, and helping reduce risk.
Who is MRSS for?	MRSS is for anyone going through a behavioral situation under the age of 18, as well as everyone involved including families and school staff. For families, Alta's MRSS team can help de-escalate situations in homes and school staff can use MRSS to de-escalate situations on site as well as receive continued support when necessary.
Intake/Diagnostic Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Escalating emotional or behavioral issues</li><li>Mental health issues</li><li>Addiction and substance abuse</li><li>Physical and emotional trauma</li><li>School truancy</li><li>Running away from home</li><li>Parent/child or caregiver/child conflicts</li><li>Grief</li><li>Suicidal ideation</li></ul>

For more information regarding Mobile Response & Stabilization Services, visit [www.altacaregroup.org/mrss/](http://www.altacaregroup.org/mrss/).

Call 988 to Request MRSS. In-person response is available 24/7 in Mahoning and Trumbull Counties and weekdays from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. in Columbiana County. Crisis support is always available by dialing 988.

# The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Arc Family Advocacy Conference

Our team was excited to attend the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Advocacy Conference, hosted by The Arc of Ohio Northeast Branch. This important event brings together individuals, professionals, and advocates to learn about the latest updates in services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities.

As a proud sponsor, the Trumbull County Board of Developmental Disabilities values the opportunity to engage with the community, hear from experts, and stay informed on the ever-evolving landscape of disability services. Events like these strengthen our commitment to advocacy, collaboration, and delivering high-quality supports to those we serve.

We thank The Arc of Ohio NE for continuing to lead these vital conversations and for creating a space where voices are heard and families are empowered.



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Return Service Requested