



The Safe Haven Way

Spring 2016

Honoring Our Donors . . . !



Madison Twp. Springfest 2016

Farmers and staff joined their Madison Twp. neighbors at the Springfest community festival on May 7. The Safe Haven booth featured plants and farmer-made crafts for sale, and close-up encounters with Jack and Lacy, our mini-horses.



PLANTS
\$2 each
\$5 for 3
\$10 for 7
\$20 for 15



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Pendleton Art Center Studio

Safe Haven Farms is fortunate to be located in an area that offers expansive farmland as well as proximity to the city of Middletown, a few short miles away. The farm has recently become a part of the Pendleton Art Center in downtown Middletown, a collection of art studios/galleries where the artists and entrepreneurs work, and on scheduled days welcome the public to their studios.

According to Stephanie Stier, the farm's director, having a studio at the center will provide an off-site opportunity for the individuals at Safe Haven to be involved in the city of Middletown's arts and business district. The studio will provide a showcase for the farmers' art work and offer resources, education, and events to expand awareness of autism and the farm among the Pendleton artists and the broader community. Safe Haven's agricultural program will be showcased as well with the farm supplying produce to the onsite Café. ☺



Advocacy Update: Responding to the CMS “COMMUNITY-BASED” Definition

In a recent issue of this newsletter, we told you about advocacy efforts in response to guidelines published in 2014 by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Those guidelines specified that the Medicaid funds they provide for services to the disabled, one of our residents' primary funding sources, can be allowed only if the programs/services are “community-based” (by CMS's definition.) Settings such as farms and those designed specifically to serve a group of disabled people living together would no longer have met the CMS definition of “community-based” and would risk losing funding under the 2014 guidelines.

The combined advocacy efforts of Safe Haven and Bittersweet parents and staff and many other advocates from around Ohio had several positive outcomes—one being that Ohio revised the language in their transition plan to CMS to not automatically classify autism-friendly “intentional” farmsteads as “isolating” or “outside the community.” Such settings might, however, be subject to “heightened scrutiny” whereby they must submit to inspection and document how they meet the CMS definition of “community-based.” Safe Haven and Bittersweet are working closely with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DoDD) and the Butler County DD to show CMS that our residents are in fact integrated into the nearby community life, consistent with each individual's desires and person-centered service plan. We are optimistic that CMS will accept this substantiation.

Here are some updates on recent actions that could continue to impact where persons with disabilities can live and work. Safe Haven parents, particularly Denny Rogers, Pam Lockwood, Gary Blevins, Mike Odioso, and Dan Norris, continue to monitor legislative actions and stand ready to lobby on both a state and federal level to ensure choice of services.

Denny Rogers, parent and board president, is working with the Coalition for Community Choice www.coalitionforcommunitychoice.org to amplify our voice across the country and preserve the rights of individuals with disabilities to choose where they live and work. As they state in their response to CMS, CCC “supports expanding, not limiting, home, community

and employment options based on individual experiences, choices and support needs, from a full array of options.” These options include intentional communities and farmsteads.

The CMS rules apply to residential and non-residential settings, including adult workshops and day programs that are funded by Medicaid waivers. Fortunately, the Ohio DoDD accepts the basic intentions of places such as Bittersweet and Safe Haven. In their March 28 issue of *Pipeline*, they stated that waiver determination about whether or not a setting meets [the characteristics for home and community-based services] should be “based upon the needs of the people receiving services there, as reflected in their person-centered plans.

Continued on page 6

“A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness” G. Jekyll

The old adage “bloom where you’re planted” rings true at Safe Haven Farms, especially its horticultural program which is growing as fast as bean sprout seedlings. Still very new, the planting curriculum has experienced a 450 percent increase in just one year (650 plants to nearly 3,000).

They are all lovingly cared for by the farmers and led by the newly greened thumb of Mike Rogers, Bittersweet farm specialist (shown right). Anyone spending time with Mike in the expanded plant house sees the pride and excitement in his eyes as he tends the crops with an intensity of an expectant father. “It is a little piece of heaven,” said Mike.

All plants start from seed and no chemicals are used in the growing process. When strong enough to leave the protection of the plant house, they are sold or placed in two of the farm’s large hoop houses and the outside 50 x 100 foot garden space.

Currently three teams of farmers rotate chores during the week days, accomplishing varied agricultural tasks such as watering, soil preparation, weeding and transplanting. Mike notes that the participants get a great sense of satisfaction as their efforts literally harvest results. “It’s amazing to have people with autism experience their work from planting to growing to harvesting,” said Mike. “They are so excited to watch the process of farm to table and cannot wait to eat the fresh vegetables.”

SHF clients are learning so much more than productive employment skills; they are integrating into the

community and making more human connections.

Beginning this year, the farmers will supply the nearby McMonigle farm with 1,000 seedlings for planting and harvesting. Other exciting developments include partnering with local restaurants whose chefs want to support the farm while offering chemical free local produce to their patrons. The Pendleton Art Center in Middletown is developing a community within community partnership with the farm in their downtown art space (see story, p. 2), and SHF produce may be on the menu at the

onsite gourmet café.



Word is spreading about the dog biscuits that are handmade by the Safe Haven farmers. They are being sold at several places near the farm including Divers Garden & Pet in Middletown and Peggy’s Produce in Madison Twp. The farmers make the dough, cut them out like cookies, and package them when they are cool from the oven.

Kroger Shoppers !

If you have been participating in the **Kroger Community Rewards Program**, you must renew your enrollment as of April 30 every year. A renewal message should display at the bottom of a recent Kroger receipt. Go online to www.kroger.com, sign in entering the email address and password you used when creating your account and follow the prompts. We currently have about **20** subscribers to the rewards program, which provides Safe Haven with a donation of around **\$200 per quarter**. If you are not enrolled, consider subscribing so we can do even better. You can easily create an account at www.kroger.com.

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Advocacy

Continued from page 3

It is not based upon the physical location of the setting, the size of the setting, or a prescribed duration or number of community-based activities.”

There has been other advocacy on the state level to push back against related CMS adult day service regulations. A strong resolution was introduced in a recent session of the Ohio General Assembly, in support of facility-based day programs such as Bittersweet’s day program at Safe Haven, training centers, and adult workshops. County DoDD run workshops are targeted for shutdown in a few short years, and in fact the workshop in Safe Haven’s home county is closing down mid-2017. HCR 21 was passed with overwhelming support by the Ohio House and is awaiting approval in the Ohio Senate. The resolution noted that these programs

serve many individuals with disabilities and that they are valued and chosen by these individuals and families. The resolution expressed concern that new CMS regulations will reduce opportunities and choices.

With the reduction in available day services and the continuing increase in the number of persons with autism who age out of their school programs at 22, there is no doubt that more, not fewer, residential and vocational options are needed. We continue to believe that farmsteads like Safe Haven are optimal “community-based” settings for persons who choose such a life style. We will continue to advocate passionately throughout Ohio and across the US to ensure that the right to choose is not restricted for individuals with disabilities. We are making progress in this fight, but there are more challenges ahead.

Welcome, Brandy, to the Safe Haven Family



Have you noticed a new person working in the barn with farmers and the horses? She is **Brandy Hinkle**, our new equestrian coordinator. Brandy has taken over the position held by Donna Farler, who has temporarily relocated to address family matters. Brandy worked with Donna at Safe Haven during her last semester at Miami University, where she completed her graduation project on equine therapy for individuals with autism. She graduated in December, 2015, with a bachelor's degree in kinesiology and fundamentals of biological research, focusing on how horse riding can positively impact the well-being and physical functioning of persons with autism. She has a vast knowledge of horses and has shown them for over 15 years.

No stranger to farm life, Brandy was raised on a 200 acre farm, where she helped with the cattle, hogs, sheep, goats and horses. She and her husband bought a section of her family farm and are proud to be the 6th generation living on the property!

Brandy says that her vision for the riding program is to have horse sponsors who will support the horses and sponsors for the riders who will allow more community riders to participate. Knowing that the expenses borne by families with autistic children can be considerable, she dreams of having the program fully funded so that no expense would be required from the families.

Community Riding Program Resumes in June



Open to people with autism, age 4 and up, there are 8 open slots. The cost is \$30.00 per one-hour lesson, which

includes 20-30 minutes riding time, as well as time forming relationships with the horses before and after riding. Contact Brandy at safehavenequine@gmail.com. She enjoys meeting new families and usually schedules informative tours after 5 pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Lessons will take place on Monday and Tuesday evenings.

Jack and Lacy, our mini-horses that one of the farmers lovingly refers to as "horse puppies," will be traveling into the community this summer and fall. They are great conversation starters and allow individuals who are afraid of horses a chance to get up close and personal with a couple of "puppies." On July 14 the farmers will accompany them to Linden Grove Schools



in Cincinnati. They will be at Horse Daze at Seabald Park on September 17. The minis will complete the year at the "Walk on for Autism" event at VOA Park in West Chester, benefiting the Safe Haven Farms equestrian program (see p. 8). Come see us!

We Grand Finale, times 2

Our second annual "Share the Love" benefit dinner supporting the mission and programs of Safe Haven Farms was greatly enjoyed at the Grand Finale on February 16. Join us again next year on **February 15, 2017** for another wonderful meal and decadent dessert.

Many thanks to our sponsors: First Financial Bank, Alliance Printing, Truepoint Wealth Counsel, Pamela Lockwood, M.D., Impact Autism, Meijer (West Chester), Fey Insurance Services, All Phase Electrical, Graydon Head & Ritchie LLP, Denny & Ann Rogers, Tom & Imogene O'Lenick, Barry Humphries, Sally & Peter Collins and Jim & Karen Guion.

Congratulations to our raffle prize winners: (1) Rocky Mountain Colorado condo escape — **Bobbi Thies** (2) Blue Ridge Mountains weekend stay at the Old Edwards Inn & Spa— **Scott Barbee** (3) a magical Cincinnati evening with dinner at McCormick & Schmicks and tickets to *Beauty & the Beast* at the Aronoff Center—**Mei Carpenter**.



Donna Farler (far left), daughter Rachel Farler, Ed and Ann Yanosik (equestrian volunteers) enjoy a festive evening at the Grand Finale



We have already lined up the first spectacular prize for next year's raffle, a stay in a condo in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

Your turn to live más?



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Healthcare for Adults with Autism

As autism research continues to offer glimpses into its causes and treatment options, more day-to-day issues confronting adults on the autism spectrum are becoming the subject of research. With the aging of the autism population, one such study seeks to document the experiences adults with autism encounter navigating the healthcare system to receive services.

Karen Kent, a doctoral student in Social Gerontology at Miami University and mother of a 17-year-old son with autism is conducting a dissertation research project about suitable healthcare access for adults on the autism spectrum. Very little actual research is available about what it is like for adults with autism to go to the doctor or dentist, and certainly Safe Haven parents have a wealth of stories to tell. She has interviewed a few Safe Haven parents and hopes to talk with more.

Her interviews are conveniently arranged for the autistic adult and caregiver and offer the added incentive of cash or a gift card for participation. If you wish to be part of this study or know someone who might, please contact Karen Kent at 513-319-7939 or kentke@miamioh.edu.



Save the Date

2016 Walk for Autism

The second ***“Walk On for Autism”*** to benefit Safe Haven Farms will be held on **Saturday, September 24, 2016** at the Voice of America Park in Butler County. This annual event supports our therapeutic horseback-riding program for participants of Safe Haven Farms and special riders with autism from the surrounding community. Details will be posted soon on our Facebook page and website www.safehavenfarms.org.

We are looking for an organization to serve as a Presenting Sponsor to anchor this event. The event will be referred to as **“Walk On for Autism for Safe Haven Farms, presented by ABC Company.”** For more details or information, please contact Leslie Odioso: 513-560-6376 or Leslie.Odioso@gmail.com.

Annual Open House-Arts & Crafts Sale

Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 15-16

Come visit Safe Haven Farms and spend a leisurely autumn day touring our facilities, visiting the animals and shopping our **Crafts & Christmas Boutique Sale.**

