

Warren County Dreams

December 2023

A Word from Our Superintendent



As 2023 comes to an end, we reflect on everything that has happened this year, as well as everything we hope to accomplish in 2024.

This past year, we saw another historic state budget, which provided millions of dollars of additional funding for wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). DSPs are the people providing the direct services to people with developmental disabilities, in their homes, at their jobs, and in the community. We are grateful for the support from the state to recognize the important role DSPs play in the lives of the people we are supporting.

We held several agency events this year, like our Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Open House, Egg Hunt, Things That Go!, Family Fun Day, and Trunk or Treat. We also completed our accreditation review with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, resulting in the maximum three-year accreditation. We revamped our website, and we had three employees give a presentation at the annual convention of the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities regarding the new website. We also increased our enrollment in all service areas, as the number of people we are serving in Warren County is increasing each month.

In 2024, we look forward to the approval and implementation of our new three-year strategic plan. Our current strategic plan ends on December 31, 2023. Once the new plan is finalized and approved, it will be posted to our website, with annual updates regarding the achievement of goals.

We will continue to hold all of our agency events, as mentioned above. We expect the number of people served by us will continue to grow, so we are prepared to serve even more than the over 2,400 people we currently serve, next year. The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities has developed a workgroup to focus on Waiver Modernization, in an effort to simplify a complex system and allow better supports to people with developmental disabilities. I am pleased to have been asked to sit on this workgroup, and I am confident that we will work to develop positive changes for all stakeholders in the developmental disabilities system.

2024 will definitely be another important, busy year!

I want to thank all of you for your continued support throughout this year. We look forward to a wonderful 2024! I hope you all enjoy a safe, happy holiday season.

As always, if you need anything from us, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Service Coordinator, Early Childhood Primary Service Provider, Transition Coordinator, or call (513) 228-6400. In cases of emergencies, please call 1-800-800-6847. You can also check out our website at www.warrencountydd.org or our Facebook page. Thank you for your support of the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities!

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“Out of this world” providers celebrated at WCBDD DSP Appreciation Dinner

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held its 5th annual Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Appreciation Dinner on September 13, 2023, as a part of a week-long celebration to honor the countless contributions made by DSPs towards improving the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

DSPs assist individuals with developmental disabilities in leading lives that are more independent, productive, and integrated, thereby enabling them to fully participate in their communities. A DSP can be self-employed and work alone as an independent provider, or be employed by a provider agency where they work alongside other DSPs in residential, community, or vocational settings.

Up to 100 DSPs attended WCBDD’s outer space themed dinner, organized by the WCBDD Provider Development team. Upon entry into the Warren C. Young Center gymnasium, DSPs were greeted by the familiar faces of the WCBDD team, and the otherworldly intergalactic décor with the tagline, “DSPs are out of this world.” The festivities included low-hanging twinkling string lights, silly selfie stations, agency swag, door prizes assembled by WCBDD enrolled individuals, dinner and dessert prepared by Shoelaces catering, and a dazzling magic show performed by the award-winning Reed Sisters.

Additionally, WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel, and WCBDD Provider Development Coordinator, Lindsay Graves, discussed the important role DSPs play in the lives of people with disabilities. Both expressed their immense gratitude to DSPs for their continued contributions.

Offering parting sentiments, Graves encouraged DSPs to take a step back and evaluate the work they do each and every day. “I’m going to say it once, and I’m going to say it probably each and every year, that we are ever so proud of what you do in Warren County,” Graves said with sincerity. “We hope that you’re proud of yourselves, too.”



Pictured: WCBDD Provider Development Coordinator, Lindsay Graves, offers words of encouragement



WCBDD resources provide enrolled individuals opportunities for growth and independence

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) provides services and support to over 2,400 people in Warren County who have developmental disabilities. The mission of the board is supporting people with disabilities and their families to achieve what is important to them. Additionally, WCBDD offers a variety of resources that promote opportunities for growth and greater independence. Below are a few examples of resources and opportunities that were offered this past quarter:

- September 12th, the Careers with Peers Council hosted a presentation on Safety and Personal Awareness, led by Dan Dean of Gard Defense Solutions. Dean, who co-founded Gard Defense Solutions, is also a full-time police officer of seventeen years. The group discussed how best to identify first responders out of uniform, as well as individuals who may pose a potential threat. The group also had a discussion on safe driving practices, including an in-depth explanation of the Ohio Distracted Driving Law.
- September 27th, WCBDD hosted an Independent Living Workshop for adults enrolled in services. The workshop was led and facilitated by WCBDD Residential Options Coordinator, Lori Carr, accompanied by WCBDD Remote Supports and Assistive Technology Coordinator, Kellie Hampton, and WCBDD Service Coordinator, Alyssa Hartley. The Independent Living Workshop was created to offer information and resources to adults with disabilities who are interested in living on their own. The workshop offered participants insight on rental assistance resources, budgeting, understanding landlord expectations, how to be a responsible roommate/tenant, and how to identify the difference between want versus need. Additionally, the workshop provided participants with guidance on how to effectively utilize Remote Supports and Assistive Technology.
- September 28th, members of the Voices Speaking Out advocacy group received specialized CPR training facilitated by WCBDD Provider Development Coordinator, Angela Mason, and WCBDD Training and Development Coordinator, Keith Gabbard Jr. In addition to hands-on CPR demonstrations, the group learned how to appropriately respond in emergency situations including administering First Aid, operating an AED device, performing the Heimlich maneuver, and more.
- October 4th – 6th, nine members of Voices Speaking Out traveled to Sandusky, Ohio to participate in the 2023 Synergy Conference held at the Kalahari Resort. The Synergy Conference is designed to promote collaboration, innovation, and growth by uniting individuals with developmental disabilities with those who serve in the DD field. The conference included sessions on how to make effective human connections, understanding the impact of racism, self-direction, the importance of voting, and more. Participants also had the opportunity to hear from Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Director, Kimberly Hauck, as well as professional wrestler, Gregory Iron.



Pictured: Dan Dean of Gard Defense Solutions (center), and participants at the Careers with Peers Council Safety and Personal Awareness Training



Pictured: Voices Speaking Out advocacy members attend the Synergy Conference in Sandusky, Ohio



Pictured: WCBDD Service Coordinator, Alyssa Hartley (left), WCBDD Residential Options Coordinator, Lori Carr (center), and WCBDD Remote Supports and Assistive Technology Coordinator, Kellie Hampton (right)



Pictured: Advocate, Michael Yeamans (right), participates in a session at the Synergy Conference



Pictured: Advocacy members receive CPR Training led by WCBDD Provider Development Coordinator, Angela Mason and WCBDD Training and Development Coordinator, Keith Gabbard Jr.



Pictured: Advocates, Luke Marshall (right), and Hailey Friday (left), contribute to the graffiti wall at the Synergy Conference

Employees with disabilities highlighted in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is observed each October in an effort to recognize and celebrate the many contributions and accomplishments of workers with disabilities. Additionally, October is the time to recognize and highlight the importance of inclusive workplaces. The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) is fortunate to have developed and maintained positive partnerships with a variety of employers. In addition to supporting an inclusive workforce, employers can play a significant role in the successful growth and development of employees with disabilities.



For the past two years, Country Kitchen, located in Lebanon, has been the “work home” to 74-year-old, David Verge, a gentleman enrolled in WCBDD services. Known to many as a kind, loving, and patient man, David is known to the Country Kitchen staff as their go-to Dishwasher, and a two-time recipient of Employee of the Month. “David is always happy and always on time,” said Back of House Manager, Mike Baker. “He is a strong and reliable employee,” Baker added.

David secured his employment at Country Kitchen with the help from his provider, Highest Expectations CEO, Joan Stevens. “The Country Kitchen staff is very family-oriented and immediately took to David,” said Stevens. When assisting individuals with developmental disabilities in their job search, Stevens shared that you should “always look for that person that will be welcoming.”

At three days a week, David makes it his personal mission to ensure the Country Kitchen dishes are spotless during his six-hour shift. Recently, David had received a visit from a group of WCBDD employees during his shift at Country Kitchen. Though excited to see his visitors, David remained focused on his job duties, further demonstrating his commitment to his role at Country Kitchen.



WCBDD Service Coordinator, Julie Miller, assists David by identifying his current needs and connecting him with the resources and services available to meet those needs. “We are so proud of Dave,” Miller beamed, sharing that he continues to become more independent since beginning his employment.

When not working at Country Kitchen, David enjoys attending WCBDD Floor Hockey, volunteering at Matthew 25: Ministries, exploring community offerings such as the zoo and sporting events, and taking guitar lessons at Jeff’s Musical Gizmos in Downtown Lebanon. Regardless of his interests outside of employment, David remains firm in his belief that getting his job at Country Kitchen is the best thing that has happened to him.

Employment and a powerful support system were key factors that led Bradlee Brewer to his newfound sense of purpose and independence. Bradlee who is enrolled in services, benefitted from the assistance of WCBDD and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) to secure his position as a Garden Center Merchandiser at the Middletown Lowe’s.



OOD Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Todd Banks, assisted Bradlee in developing an individualized employment plan. When Bradlee’s primary job interest was that of a character at Kings Island’s annual Halloween Haunt, Banks gently urged him to consider alternative options. WCBDD Job Developer, Aaron Wyatt, assisted Bradlee with his job search, resume building, application submissions, and interview preparation. Once hired at Lowe’s, WCBDD Job Coach, Sarah Steele, helped Bradlee acclimate to his new work environment and learn his job responsibilities. This synergic support system paved the way to quality employment for Bradlee.

As a Garden Center Merchandiser, Bradlee enriches the Lowe's team with his unique talents and abilities. One attribute of Bradlee's that is consistently recognized by co-workers and customers alike, is his innate ability to connect with people. Bradlee's dedication and warmth has been praised by customers on numerous occasions. Employment with Lowe's represents far more than "just a job" for Bradlee. Employment signifies a necessary stepping stone for Bradlee to achieve greater independence. With a steady income, Bradlee's increased financial stability has enhanced his quality of life, enabling him to make decisions that matter most to him.

WCBDD employees and community members recognized at WCBDD annual In-Service

On October 18, 2023, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held its annual Agency In-Service. The day's agenda included agency updates, new hire introductions (and games), a spotlight feature on an individual served, a presentation by Austin Sandin, Executive Director of the United Way of Warren County, a presentation on Mindfulness, Awareness, and its relation to Adult Resiliency, led by WCBDD Developmental Specialist, Heather Ingram, and a special appearance from the Special Neat Treats Ice Cream Truck.

In addition to honoring employee service anniversaries and employees with perfect attendance, both agency employees and members of the community were awarded for demonstrating extraordinary services. Congratulations to the following award recipients:

Green Hat Award – Kellie Hampton, Remote Supports & Assistive Technology Coordinator

Extraordinary Employer Award – Warren County Facilities Department

Friends of DD Award – Abby Messer of the Young Life Group, Curt Bly of Mason High School, Champions Swim Program Instructors, Debby Newman and Trish Schoenlein, Ekua Wallace of Rainbow Home Care, Tennis Clinic organizer, Gerald Knobloch, the Jeep Lifestyle Group, Kyle Anderson of the City of Mason Fire Department, and Cardio Drumming Instructor, Sarah Mitchell

Dave Farmer Award – State Representative Scott Lipps

Creativity Award – Eddie Adkins, Transition Services Coordinator

Above & Beyond Award – Mandy Holmes, Data Specialist

Rachel Rice Advocacy Award – Luke Marshall

Superintendent Award – Gwen McIntire, Community Employment Specialist, and Patrick Poteet, Service Coordinator



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (left), and Superintendent Award recipient, Gwen McIntire (right)



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (left), and Rachel Rice Advocacy Award recipient, Luke Marshall (right)



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (left), and Superintendent Award recipient, Patrick Poteet (right)



Pictured: Green Hat Award recipient, Kellie Hampton (center), and the Good Life Facilitators



Pictured: Above & Beyond Award recipient, Mandy Holmes (left), and WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (right)



Pictured: Creativity Award recipient, Eddie Adkins (left), and WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (right)

WCBDD awards State Representative Lipps for his advocacy efforts in the DD field

On October 18, 2023, State Representative Scott Lipps was recognized by the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) as the recipient of the “Dave Farmer Award”. Presented by WCBDD

Superintendent, Megan Manuel, Representative Lipps accepted his award at WCBDD’s annual In-Service located in Lebanon, where he was honored for his advocacy efforts in the DD field.



The “Dave Farmer Award” was created in 2012 when a beloved WCBDD employee, passed away unexpectedly. Known to many as a dedicated family man and a role model for young men, Dave Famer was also a strong leader, and an advocate for individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the “Dave Farmer Award” is to recognize

someone who has emulated Dave's qualities through selfless acts and dedication to people with developmental disabilities. Such acts of selflessness and dedication to those with disabilities, Representative Lipps more than fits the bill.

Representative Lipps has devoted much of his life to public service and philanthropy. He has participated in many philanthropic organizations including Rotary, Optimist Club, Farm Bureau, the Masons, and Shriners. His public service career boasts sixteen years on Franklin City Council, eight of which he served as mayor, and he is currently serving his fourth term as State Representative, a position he has held since 2017. Throughout his terms, Representative Lipps has remained transparent in his priority of advocacy for people with developmental disabilities, including those working in the DD field.

During the FY2020-21 state budget process, Representative Lipps was a vocal advocate for raising the wages of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), and coordinated efforts between Ohio Assembly members to put additional state funds behind the DSP wage increase. These efforts resulted in a \$2 wage increase that went above and beyond the originally introduced budget. Thanks to Representative Lipps' continuous persistence, the last two state biennial budgets for FY2022-23 and FY2024-25, have reached historic levels regarding the funds allotted for people with developmental disabilities. Representative Lipps has also been heavily involved in state discussion on sub-minimum wage. While he considers both sides of the argument, Representative Lipps remains laser-focused on doing what is right for people with developmental disabilities.

In addition to earning the "Dave Farmer Award," Representative Lipps was named the recipient of the 2019 "Legislature of the Year Award" by the Ohio Association of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (OACB). Additionally, Representative Lipps has maintained an over twenty-year friendship with a gentleman enrolled in WCBDD services, proving that the compassion and devotion he has for individuals with disabilities, are no mere lip service.



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (left), presents Representative Scott Lipps (right), the "Dave Farmer Award"

Jeeps make a welcome return to WCBDD's annual Trunk-or-Treat

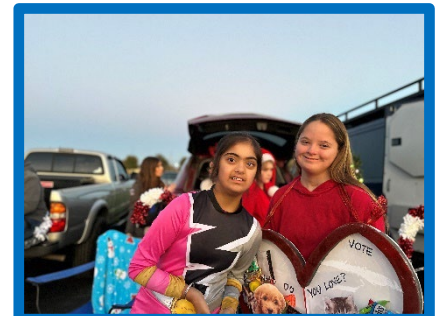
On October 23, 2023, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held its 8th annual *Trunk-or-Treat* in the parking lot of the Warren C. Young Center. Similar to last year, WCBDD was thrilled to showcase a variety of trunk displays provided by a number of independent providers and provider agencies, various girl scouts, WCBDD staff, and local organizations including: the Cincinnati Cougars Women's Football team, the Knights of Columbus, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, Leadership Warren County, and members of the Warren County 4H program, joined by their coaches and families.



Making a welcome return from last year's *Trunk-or-Treat*, were the dozens of customized and themed Jeeps, compliments of the Jeep Lifestyle Group.

The Jeep Lifestyle Group is a Facebook group for Jeep owners and enthusiasts to connect with each other and share upcoming Jeep events. The group learned of WCBDD's annual *Trunk-or-Treat* event when interacting with an enrolled individual and her provider at a local hamburger establishment last year. Enamored with the decorated Jeeps, the individual and her provider encouraged the group to reserve a spot for the event, to which the group enthusiastically obliged. In addition to participating in both the 7th and 8th annual *Trunk-or-Treat* events, the Jeep Lifestyle Group organized a special Jeep Show to raise money for the Warren County Special Olympics program. The event was held in August, and raised a total of \$1,007.50! The group was recently recognized as a recipient of the *Friends of DD Award* at WCBDD's Agency In-Service.

The WCBDD 8th annual Trunk-or-Treat event was enjoyed by over 500 participants.



Local DSP and WCBDD volunteer receive state recognition

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) is privileged to have an incredible variety of providers, provider agencies, and community volunteers who offer exceptional support,



services, and opportunities to individuals with developmental disabilities in Warren County. Recently, local Direct Support Professional (DSP), Michael Werner, and WCBDD volunteer, Dan Hill, received state recognition for their exemplary efforts towards improving the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Michael Werner was honored at the Ohio Provider Resource Association's (OPRA) Annual Awards, as the recipient of the Direct Support Professional Award, for creating Acclimate Wilderness Experiences, a popular Community Inclusion Program in Warren County. Acclimate exposes participants to different parks and historical sites where they can learn more about the community and the environment, while simultaneously building stamina and endurance. Werner structured the Acclimate schedule so that a new subject was introduced to participants on a weekly

Pictured: Michael Werner receives
OPRA's Direct Support Professional
Award

basis. Additionally, Michael implemented the “Leave no Trace” principles to his programming, which emphasizes the importance of protecting the environment.

A trial run of the program was offered from October 2022 to March 2023. The 35-week program launched in March of 2023. Since then, program participants have had the opportunity to see and experience the following:

- Observe the Bald Eagle and Great Blue Herons at Long Branch Farms
- Observe the Bared Owl, tadpoles, and salamanders at the Cincinnati Nature Center
- Volunteer at the Cincinnati Nature Center by removing an invasive species, garlic mustard
- Visit Glen Helen Nature Center and Cedar Bog to observe an over 400-year-old endangered species in Ohio, Pink Lady’s Slippers

The Acclimate Community Inclusion Program has been thoroughly enjoyed by participants as it allows them the opportunity to experience the wilderness, as well as nurture their health and well-being, all thanks to award-winning Direct Support Professional, Michael Werner.

Dan Hill was honored at the annual Special Olympics Ohio Awards Banquet as the recipient of the Volunteer of the Year Award. Hill was nominated by Debi Williams, Director of the Special Olympics Ohio Southwest Region, who praised Hill’s enthusiasm and willingness to assist with any job assigned to him, including those outside his designated region.

When assisting in any of the Special Olympics games, Hill is known and relied upon to ensure the event’s operation is run accurately and efficiently, and will even offer ways in which the event can run smoother the next year. Additionally, Hill is known for his positive rapport with the athletes. “Watching him interact with athletes is so great, it is apparent they both get a lot out of their friendship,” Williams shares in her nomination. She continues, “Dan has the biggest heart. He is a very hard worker who always stays until everything is picked up and put away. I can’t say enough about this great volunteer.”

Hill began his volunteer career with WCBDD when volunteering with his employer, the Turtlecreek Fire Department, at WCBDD’s “Things That Go” event in 2014. A few years later, Hill and his (then teen) son, volunteered with the Floor Hockey program at the Countryside YMCA. Though his son would later graduate and pursue a career, Hill remained a steady volunteer, and even increased his involvement.

Since then, Hill has volunteered at the Special Olympics Ohio Summer and Winter Games, as well as all larger regional events held throughout the state. In addition, Hill has volunteered his time at track practices, golf and softball tournaments, and regional basketball tournaments, and maintains an integral role in the Floor Hockey program. Due to his robust participation, Hill was recognized at the 2022 WCBDD Agency In-Service as a recipient of the “Friends of DD” Award.

In the past, Hill has confided that since embarking on his quest to serve, “I finally found my purpose,” referring to his involvement with Special Olympics. Given his continued commitment and dedication to working with athletes with developmental disabilities, there is no doubt that Dan Hill truly has found his purpose.



Pictured: Volunteer of the Year winner, Dan Hill (left), and Special Olympics Ohio Board Chair and WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (right)

Early Childhood News

The Early Childhood Team at the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) provides support and services to families and their children under age six who are enrolled in services through WCBDD. They provide Early Intervention services, socialization events, parent/caregiver educational opportunities, and support education for the community.

Early Childhood Programs are a part of the Community Resources Division. Early Intervention (EI) services make up the largest portion of Early Childhood services they provide. WCBDD collaborates with the Warren County Educational Service Center (WCESC) to provide an impartial initial and annual eligibility evaluation and/or assessment of strengths and needs for all children referred to Warren County EI, or "Part C" services and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The team also works together to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for the child and family.

WCBDD is the main provider of EI services for Warren County, providing service and/or support to approximately 400 children and families per month. EI services provided by WCBDD include Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, and Special Instruction, which is delivered by a Developmental Specialist. Team members can serve as Primary Service Providers (PSP) or Secondary Service Providers (SSP) to the child and family, or as part of the consultative team. All specialized services offered by the WCBDD are delivered in environments that are located in the family's normal daily routines. The IFSP team selects these natural environment locations at the time of IFSP development. The providers utilize methods of coaching with the family and caregivers to build the family's capacity to support the child during everyday life. Check out this quarter's focus of **Early Intervention in Action:**

What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention (EI) is a statewide system that provides coordinated Early Intervention Services to families of eligible children under the age of three with developmental delays or disabilities. EI is grounded in the philosophy that young children learn best from familiar people in familiar settings. Every family served in EI will have a local EI team. The team will consist of a service coordinator, service providers, and your family. The team's work will take place in your family's home, or other places your family spends time, (*in-person or via technology*) to develop a coordinated plan called an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The team members will work through the IFSP by utilizing your existing supports and resources, then building upon them to enhance your child's learning and development.

What can you expect during a visit?

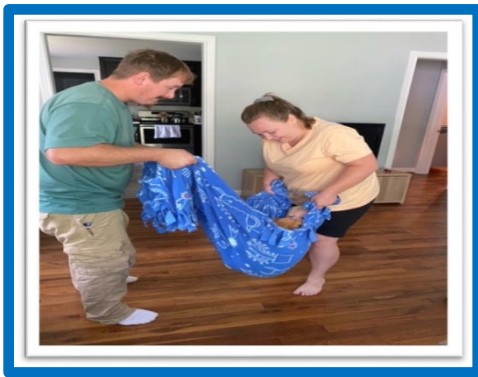
Every home or community visit is unique. A visit revolves around everyday activities and routines that your family participates in such as play time, snack time, or going to the bus stop. Your Primary Service Provider (PSP) or Secondary Service Provider (SSP) will use coaching during your visits.

What can you expect with coaching?

- 1.) PSP will demonstrate a technique, then have you try it.

- 2.) PSP will watch you play with your child, then provide feedback.
- 3.) PSP will work with you to identify an issue, then discuss potential solutions
- 4.) Based on your child and family needs, an SSP may be added to your child's service plan.

It is likely that your visits will have a little of each coaching element listed above. Your PSP/SSP will coach you and your family on strategies to help reach IFSP outcomes, and to address your family's priorities. A summary of progress will be noted during your visit, as well as a summary of the joint plan to try before your next scheduled visit. This will be reviewed with you prior to the PSP and/or SSP leaving the visit location. Home or community visits may be delivered in person, or via technology dependent upon current child and family needs, and/or best environmental delivery option. Visits should include the following: joint planning at the beginning, observation, action/practice, reflection, feedback, and joint planning at the end.



Pictured: Parents utilize coaching practices with their child during a visit



Pictured: Parent engages with her child using coaching practices during a visit



Pictured: PSP, Beth Roberts (left) and SSP, Margaret Cunningham (right), model techniques for a parent during a visit



Pictured: SSP, Margaret Cunningham, demonstrates for PSP, parent, and childcare providers

For more information, please visit the following links:

Short overview of EI: <https://ohioearlyintervention.org/what-is-ei>

What to expect in EI: <https://ohioearlyintervention.org/what-can-i-expect-in-ei>

Families connect at *Jingle Bell Rock-Out*

On Saturday, December 2, 2023, The WCBDD Early Childhood program was pleased to host a *Jingle Bell Rock-Out*, featuring the *Voices of Warren County Choir*. The event was held as a way for families of children birth to age six to relax and play while listening to their favorite holiday tunes.



Approximately 22 families, including 35 adults and 20 siblings, gleefully buzzed about the festively adorned Warren C. Young Center, as a menagerie of color changing inflatable characters illuminated the auditorium. The children and their families had the opportunity to engage and play with the WCBDD Early Childhood

team through sensory activities, toys, and bubbles!

Described as “fun” and the “best time”, The *Jingle Bell Rock-Out* featuring the *Voices of Warren County Choir* was immensely enjoyed by the children and families in attendance. Upon departure, each child was gifted a grab and go snack, a book, and an adorable stuffed animal friend, graciously donated by the Milford PetSmart.



Community Education and Collaboration

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) Early Childhood Division and the Warren County Educational Service Center (WCESC) Early Intervention/Help Me Grow, have had a long-standing relationship with the Warren County Early Learning Center's Head Start and Early Head Start



programs. For many years, the teams have worked side by side to support children and their families in both classrooms and homes. In August of 2023, the WCBDD Early Intervention team partnered with the WCESC team to provide a training to the Early Learning Centers Head Start team. In addition to great dialogue, questions, and relationship-building, the training offered

education on Ohio's early intervention systems, recognizing developmental concern, making a referral, and the evaluation and assessment process. The training also provided the Head Start team with guidance on their role in supporting intervention as they provide care and support to children and their parents.



Pictured: WCBDD Occupational Therapist, Anna Brock (left), and WCBDD Developmental Specialist, Margaret

In August and September of 2023, the WCBDD Early Childhood team provided a two-part training series focused on Sensory Processing, to the Early Learning Center's Head Start and Early Head Start teams. The first session, "Recognizing Sensory Processing Differences and what do about it," was led and facilitated by WCBDD Occupational Therapist, Anna Brock. The interactive first session was well-received by those in attendance. Participants had several weeks to apply the information and strategies gained from the first session, before returning for the second session, "Sensory Strategies: Brainstorming." WCBDD Occupational Therapist, Anna Brock, and WCBDD Developmental Specialist, Margaret Cunningham, facilitated the session's discussion on strategies that are and are not working. Both sessions proved to be wonderful collaborations for the purpose of supporting the children and families of Warren County.

Upcoming Socialization Opportunities:

In-Person Playgroup Opportunity!

The Early Childhood team is excited to offer playgroups for children enrolled in WCBDD services ages birth to three and their parent/caregiver. During the 60-minute group, parents/caregivers and their children have the opportunity to connect with one another while participating in a semi-structured playgroup that includes: outside play, story time, singing, and crafts. The sessions occur on Tuesdays and are led by WCBDD Developmental Specialists and the WCBDD Advocacy Coordinator. The sessions currently planned for 2024 are:

- Date: January 23rd – March 26th
- Date: April 30th – June 11th

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

➤ Date: July 16th – August 20th

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

➤ Date: September 17th – November 12th

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.



WCBDD
Early Childhood Playgroup
Milo H Banta Center
410 South East Street
Lebanon, OH 45036



Children enrolled in WCBDD services ages birth to 3 and their parent/caregiver are invited to attend our Tuesday morning playgroup beginning Tuesday, January 23 through March 26, 2024
****Space is limited and registration is required****

Playgroup information:

- WCBDD Playgroup each Tuesday (within the WCBDD calendar) from 10:00—11:00 AM
- 1st Quarter dates: Tuesday January 23, 30; February 6, 13, 27; March 5, 12, 19, 26
- Activities such as story time, crafts, and song time
- Water is permitted during playgroup, however, allowance for other food/drinks can be accommodated based on specific needs
- Due to space limitations, only 1 (one) parent/caregiver per family (Please contact us if there is a need for more than one caregiver)
- Maximum 8 (eight) parent/caregivers and 8 (eight) enrolled children per playgroup. Siblings under the age of 3 may also attend with the enrolled child and family, but must be registered prior
- Registration is required via email to: Carolyn.Bogenschutz@warrencountydd.org
- Deadline for registration: Wednesday, January 10, 2024 (based upon availability)
- We ask that you help us keep each other safe by not attending during times that anyone in your family may have possible signs of a contagious illness. A health and safety check will be sent to all playgroup participants within 24 hours prior to each playgroup



For more information or to register for our playgroup (based upon availability), please email:
Carolyn.Bogenschutz@warrencountydd.org
or call: 513-228-6487


Deadline for registration: January 10, 2024



****Please note that space is limited and registration is required by Wednesday, January 10, 2024.****

To register, please email carolyn.bogenschutz@warrencountydd.org

Sibshops 2024



It's Here. . .


Sibshops 2024

Just for brothers and sisters of kids with special needs!

DATES & TIMES:

Saturday, January 20, 10am-1pm
Saturday, July 13, 10am-1pm
Saturday, November 16, 10am-1pm
Location: Cincinnati Children's MOB
3430 Burnet Avenue
5th Floor Conference Room
Parking in garage behind building

Saturday, April 13, 10am-1pm
Location: Warren C Young Center




*Cost for April 13th session only will be covered by Warren Co. Board of DD for families who have a family member enrolled in WCBDD services.

At Sibshops, you can hang out with kids that know how you feel and have great fun!

Sibshops is for kids 8 to 12 years old.
Sibshops is affordable...only \$10*

Sibshops is a nationally acclaimed program. Our Sibshops provide peer support as well as support from professionals and volunteers from Cincinnati Children's. Each session is a carefully designed "event" which celebrates the many contributions made by brothers and sisters of kids with special needs. Sibshops acknowledges that being the brother or sister of a person with special needs is for some a good thing; others a not-so-good thing; and for many, somewhere in between. Sibshops reflects a belief that brothers and sisters have much to offer one another...if they are given a chance.

The Perlman Center is pleased to partner with Child Life of CCHMC, Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics and Warren County Board of DD to bring Sibshops to the Greater Cincinnati area.



Cincinnati Children's
changing the outcome together

To register, contact the Perlman Center
Phone: 513-636-4601
Email: perlmancenter@cchmc.org
Website: www.cincinnatichildrens.org/perlman

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At Sibshops, you can hang out with kids that know how you feel, and have great fun! Sibshops is intended for kids 8 to 12 years old and occur on Saturdays. The following sessions will be held at Cincinnati Children's MOB, located at 3430 Burnet Avenue, and will cost \$10:

- Date: January 20th Time: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Date: July 13th Time: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Date: November 16th Time: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

WCBDD has collaborated with Cincinnati Children's Hospital to support offering a Sibshops session in Warren County. The following session will be held at the Warren C. Young Center, located at 801 Drake Road in Lebanon, and will be free to siblings of individuals enrolled in WCBDD services.

- Date: April 13th Time: 10:00 a. m. to 1:00 p.m.

Resource Corner:

Here are a few websites and resources we encourage you to check out!

- **Ohio Early Intervention** - <https://ohioearlyintervention.org/> (Information about Ohio's Early Intervention System.)
- **Bold Beginning!** - <https://boldbeginning.ohio.gov/> (Ohio's early childhood programs and services for children)
- **Zero to Three** - <https://www.zerotothree.org/> (Information and resources on child development from birth to age three.)
- **Imagination Library** – <https://ohioimaginationlibrary.org/> (Sign up to have free children's books delivered to your home every month for children birth to age 5.)
- **OCALI** - <https://www.ocali.org/> (Information and resources to inspire change and promote access to opportunities for people with disabilities.)
- **Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities** - <https://www.ocecd.org/> (The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities in Ohio, educators and agencies who provide services to them.)
- **Ohio Department of Education and Workforce / Special Education** - <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education> (The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce is a diverse team of passionate, education-focused professionals responsible for overseeing and enhancing the quality of education for each of Ohio's 1.7 million students.)
- **Pause for Parents, Play for Kids** - <https://pauseforparents.org/> (is a 501c3 organization providing rest, support, connection and fun to special needs kids and their families.)

The Early Childhood Division is looking forward to providing even more support and services in 2024! For any questions or additional information regarding Early Childhood Services, please contact:

Kelly Brooks, MS
Early Childhood Manager
Kelly.brooks@warrencountydd.org or 513-228-6520

