

Warren County Dreams

October 2023

A Word from Our Superintendent



Fall has arrived, and as you will see when you continue to read through our newsletter, we have had a busy summer! I'm sorry to see the summer go, but I'm also looking forward to the cooler weather and the upcoming holidays.

Every year in September, we get to celebrate a group of people who are critical to the success of the developmental disabilities system – Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Across the United States, September 10 – 16, 2023 was Direct Support Professional Recognition Week. On September 13, we held a DSP Appreciation Dinner for Warren County DSPs, where they received t-shirts, a gift, raffle prizes, dinner, and a magic show, all for free! For DSPs who weren't able to make it, we provided donuts and coffee the next morning, also with the free t-shirt and gift. We are so fortunate to have the relationships we do with providers in Warren County. We are grateful that they are here to support people with developmental disabilities to enhance their lives by providing them with much needed services.

Because DSPs are so important to our system, we were very happy that the state budget was approved with additional funding to support increases for DSP wages. The Governor and state legislators added money to the state budget, and then the 88 county boards of developmental disabilities added additional money to increase the average wages of DSPs. As of January 1, 2024, the average wage of a DSP across the state will be \$18 per hour, and as of July 1, 2024, the average wage of a DSP across the state will be \$19 per hour. While this is progress, we are hopeful there will be continued support for adjustments to help with the DSP workforce shortage. We are grateful for the additional funding.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month! There are a couple of really great stories in this newsletter regarding people we serve and their employment experiences. If you are looking for employees at your business, and you would like more information about hiring someone we support, please feel free to reach out to our Community Employment Manager, Angela Dean at angela.dean@warrencountydd.org or (513) 228-6481. You can explain to her what kind of employee you are looking for, ask her questions about our process, and/or find out if we have the perfect person just waiting for you!

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!

Specialized trainings enhance safety awareness for individuals with disabilities

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) remains steadfast in its efforts to

connect individuals with developmental disabilities with services and resources that will enhance their day-to-day living. Included in these efforts are offerings of specialized trainings to further develop the skills and knowledge of the individuals and the world around them.

On Thursday, June 8, 2023, WCBDD offered for the first time ever, a hands-on Fire Extinguisher Training to individuals enrolled in services. The training was led by Quali-Fire Protection Services Inc. President, Mike Gross. Participants learned how to identify the different types of fire extinguishers, as well as different types of fires, and how they are caused. Additionally, participants learned about the P.A.S.S. Method (Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep), and even had the opportunity to apply what they learned by extinguishing a live fire!



Pictured: Advocate, Kelley Castle learns how to operate a fire extinguisher



Pictured: Fire Extinguisher Trainer, Mike Gross (center), and members of Voices Speaking Out



Pictured: Advocate, Chris Tekulve extinguishes his first fire

On Tuesday, June 13, WCBDD was pleased to host a Substance Abuse Safety and Awareness Training at a combined meeting between the Careers with Peers Council and the Voices Speaking Out Advocacy group. The training was sponsored and facilitated by the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Warren County, an organization comprised of compassionate and experienced community partners who strive to decrease substance use/misuse rates among youth and adults in Warren County through prevention education and community outreach.

The evening's training included presentations from Talbert House Prevention Services, the Warren County Drug Task Force, SAFE on Main, and Warren County Safe Communities. In addition to food, interactive games, and prizes, participants were educated on medication use/misuse, factors of high-risk alcohol use, the dangers of smoking, vaping, and marijuana use, and the importance of internet safety.



Pictured: Talbert House Community Prevention Provider, Katie Wolfe, presents to the group



Pictured: An interactive game provided at the Substance Abuse Safety & Awareness Training



Pictured: SAFE on Main Community Prevention Coordinator, Roy Lutz, presents on internet safety

Enrolled individual takes pride in her independence and career

Thirty-three-year-old Lauren Robertson has received services from the Warren County Board of



Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) since 2008. Lauren has lived on her own for the past two years in a beautiful condo in Mason where she enjoys cooking, watching Law & Order, and painting in her sunroom. She has also been employed with TJ Maxx since 2017, and will be celebrating her six-year anniversary this October. Lauren takes great pride in her independence, as well as sustaining her employment with TJ Maxx, an employer she attributes to building her confidence.

“They show you how to do stuff and figure out a way for you to do it easier,” Lauren shared. As she relaxes on her sunroom porch, Lauren proudly lists her work responsibilities as a Backroom Associate for the South Lebanon TJ Maxx. Lauren’s responsibilities include unboxing and organizing merchandise and clothing, including purses and shoes. Additionally, Lauren is responsible for placing sensors on items to prevent theft, and covering employee breaks in the fitting rooms. “The TJ Maxx staff is very supportive and check on you throughout the day,” Lauren added.

Lauren secured her employment with TJ Maxx by utilizing Job Development services through WCBDD, a service funded partly by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Job Development is a beneficial service that pairs a job seeker with an Employment Developer, who will then assist the job seeker in obtaining employment. The Employment Developer will meet with the job seeker on a regular basis not only to search and apply for jobs, but also to prepare for job interviews. Additionally, the Employment Developer can serve as an advocate to the job seeker when discussing reasonable accommodations with employers. It was because of this service that TJ Maxx became aware of how best to support Lauren in the event she were to have a seizure on the job. “The managers are really understanding because they know I have health problems,” Lauren explained. “They genuinely care and treat people with respect.”

TJ Maxx Store Manager, Glen Blessing has worked with Lauren for the past year and has taken notice of the impact Lauren has on the TJ Maxx team. “Lauren is always positive! Her positive attitude impacts the rest of the people she works with. That adds so much value,” expressed Blessing. “I can always tell she’s proud and happy to be working here each day she comes in,” Blessing continued. “She’s always willing to be a contributor to whatever we are trying to do, she’s eager to learn new things, and she is a great example of her commitment to her work schedule. She has a great commitment to her job.”



When asked how she would advise businesses in working with employees with disabilities, Lauren suggested that businesses should first identify the employee’s abilities, then provide simple step-by-step instructions on how to complete their task. Lastly, Lauren recommended the employer pair a co-worker with the employee to serve as a mentor, which can help build their confidence. Blessing advised

that employers should “be willing to challenge people to find out what their limitations are.” “Never put anyone in a box,” encouraged Blessing. “I’ve learned that when you put limitations on people before you really know them, you actually discover they can do more than you thought they were capable of doing.”

Today, Lauren continues to be grateful to TJ Maxx for their support, and hopes to learn new jobs so that



they may depend on her even more in the future. In the meantime, Lauren will continue to grow her list of recipes in her hand-made recipe book, and further develop her professional growth. Last July, Lauren attended her first Careers with Peers Council, a professional networking group of individuals with disabilities served by WCBDD. The group met at Two Cities Pizza and discussed the importance of networking, building professional relationships, and how best to communicate with supervisors, a skill that Lauren now appears to have down pat.

WCBDD boasts a robust summer quarter of integration & outreach

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD), provides services and supports to over 2,400 people in Warren County who have developmental disabilities, through Early Intervention, Community Resources, Employment Services, Social, Recreational, Residential, Service Coordination, and other programs. An additional part of providing quality services and supports is offering a variety of opportunities for integration and outreach within the community.



On May 20, 2023, WCBDD attended the Cincinnati Cougars Women’s Football game at Lakota East High School to cheer on WCBDD Service Coordinator, Susan Meyer, whose team graciously dedicated their opening game to Developmental Disabilities



Awareness. In addition to the Warren County Wildcat Cheerleaders performing a special half-time show, and soloist Tammy Kendig singing the National Anthem, WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel, performed a special act of her own, by opening the game with a coin toss. Manuel’s coin toss act proved prosperous as the Cougars won the game 14 to 6.

“The Cincinnati Cougars appreciate all the support from WCBDD,” exclaimed Meyer. “We were able to have a successful inaugural home opener,” she added. We greatly appreciate all the staff, individuals, and providers of Warren County who came out to support us.”

On the weekend of June 24th and June 25th, over 2,250 athletes and Unified partners competed in the Special Olympics Ohio Summer State Games at The Ohio State University, including nine Warren County athletes. The group competed in events such as 100-meter races, shot put, softball throw, and bowling.



WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel, who also serves as the Chairperson of Special Olympics Ohio, was in attendance and offered words of encouragement and support to athletes at the Opening Ceremonies.

Additional support and encouragement came from none other than Ohio Governor Mike DeWine who even

posed for a picture with one of the Warren County athletes. Also in attendance, included enrolled individual and 2022 Special Olympics USA Games competitor, David Werner, who presented awards at the pre-banquet for sponsors. The Special Olympics Summer State Games were a great success as Warren County athletes, Kelly Crabtree and Nathan Smith won in their respective events.



On July 13th, WCBDD attended the Lebanon Optimist Club monthly lunch meeting for the purpose of educating the group on the many services and supports WCBDD has to offer. The Lebanon Optimist Club consists of community members from all walks of life who possess a passion in serving the youth of Lebanon, and whose mission is to help youth reach their fullest potential. With a mission in assisting individuals with disabilities and their families to achieve what is important to them, WCBDD found a kindred spirit in the group.

Another local group that WCBDD was proud to engage with this summer was SAFE on Main, a non-profit organization that provides comprehensive services to Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Human Trafficking Survivors including crisis shelter, court advocacy, therapy, and support groups. WCBDD participated in the SAFE on Main 3rd annual Stroll for Kindness event held at Armco Park. The event included a variety of community organizations and businesses offering fun and engaging activities to help wrap up SAFE on Main's Summer Prevention in the Park Series.



The WCBDD Community Relations team partnered with the Voices Speaking Out (VSO) Advocacy group to share information and resources of services,

but more importantly, to craft and color with kids for a great cause!

Lastly, on August 1st, VSO attended Clearcreek Township's National Night Out at Patricia Allyn Park located in Springboro. Group members manned the information booth that included WCBDD information and resources, advocacy information, giveaway items, and crafts. Clearcreek Township's 19th annual National Night Out is an excellent opportunity for the community to meet with Police Officers, Fire and EMS personnel, and Warren County agencies to better form relationships in crime and drug prevention, and to ensure the safety and well-being of children in the community.



From sporting events to outreach events, WCBDD did not fall short of a robust summer quarter.

Kings Island Summer Transition Program continues to thrive after 28 years

On Wednesday, August 2, 2023, Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) staff and leadership joined WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel, to tour the WCBDD Kings Island Summer



Pictured: WCBDD Community Employment Specialist, Gwen McIntire

Transition Program. Thanks to a successful partnership between WCBDD and Kings Island, the Summer Transition Program provides youth with valuable paid work experience to better prepare them for the transition from school to adulthood.

The tour was led by WCBDD Community Employment Specialist, Gwen McIntire, who developed the program twenty-eight years ago, along with her trusted colleague and friend, retired WCBDD Transition Specialist, Jef Bengal. Both ladies were instrumental in expanding the Kings Island program to what it is today.

“It’s a great place because we are there for five days,” said McIntire. “They learn team work, they learn to help each other without doing the job for them, they work with different people every day. It teaches them to work with different personalities.”

Each year, up to eight students work as Kings Island Stocking Associates five days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Responsibilities include inflating basketballs, supplying games, and stocking and merchandising, all within a warehouse setting.

Time spent in this program allows students to gain skills necessary to leave school with confidence. Areas addressed include: social skills, work skills, public safety, self-advocacy, independent thinking, decision-making skills, and activities for daily living. The development of the skills listed through programming and real-life experiences, improve the students’ overall independence.



Pictured: Summer Transition students prepare for another day’s work

“You will see the student learn to do things that you didn’t think they could do,” stated McIntire. “Their personality will change, they will become independent, they will become strong. This is a good program for your child to become successful in the community,” urges McIntire.

Kings Island continues to be a champion of not only youth with disabilities, but adults as well. Last year’s Transition students, Mason McCart and Mateo Moore were asked to stay on independently at the end of the season in a new warehouse position. Mason even won “Associate of Pre-Season” due to his “I’m Ready” attitude, and willingness to take on any task that’s requested of him. In addition, WCBDD enrolled individual, Amanda Schrichten, obtained her employment with Kings Island independently. She was recognized for providing excellent customer service and was awarded a gift card from Coca Cola!

WCBDD is immensely grateful for its nearly three decade-long partnership with Kings Island, and encourages students and adults alike to consider Kings Island as a great place to gain valuable work experience.

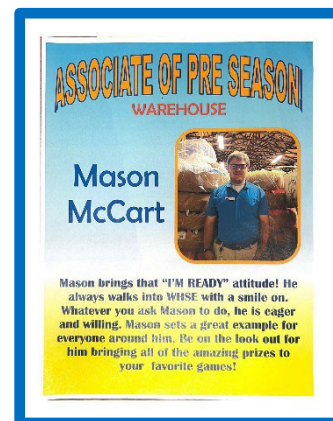
For more information regarding the WCBDD Transition Program, please contact Brittany Conner at brittany.conner@warrencountydd.org or (513) 228-6469.



Pictured: Food & Beverage Associate,
Amanda Schrichten is all smiles



Pictured: WCBDD leadership and staff, join
Superintendent, Megan Manuel (center) for a
photo with the Summer Transition Stock Crew



Pictured: Warehouse Associate, Mason
McCart won "Associate of Pre-Season"

Early Childhood News

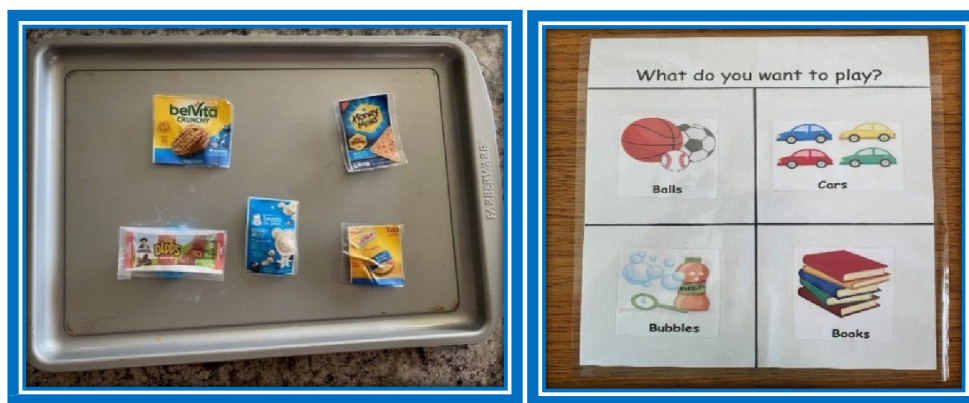
The Early Childhood Team at the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) provides support and services to families and their children under age six who are enrolled in services through WCBDD. They provide Early Intervention services, socialization events and parent/caregiver educational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

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 under 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 a 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

capacity of the family to support the child during everyday life. Check out this quarter's focus of **Early Intervention in Action** – *Helping with Augmentative-Alternative Communication (AAC)*:

Augmentative-Alternative Communication (AAC) is a multimodal way to supplement (augment) or replace (alternative) an individual's natural speech to facilitate effective communication. There are many reasons individuals would use AAC, particularly if spoken language is not getting all of their communication needs met. Research has shown that access to AAC as early as 16 months of age promotes overall communication skills in individuals with developmental disabilities. The biggest myth associated with AAC is that it will prevent individuals from talking. Research shows that access to AAC will increase speech production in a majority of users. By decreasing the demand and pressure to speak, children are shown to increase verbal output. AAC also gives more opportunities to learn/understand language, decreases frustration, supports play and literacy development, enhances cognitive skills, promotes turn-taking development, and increases social engagement. Types of AAC include: visual aids, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), communication boards/books (PODD), speech-generating devices, switches, and sign language. The pictures below illustrate examples of simple choice cards.

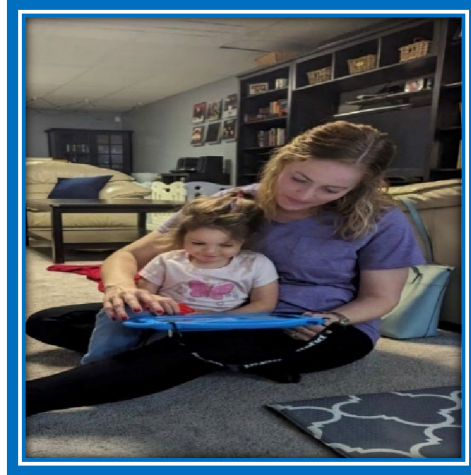


Over the past few months, WCBDD and WCESC worked together to implement a trial-use program of iPads and apps that can be used to help support children and their families with communication. In state fiscal years 2022 and 2023, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were provided to Early Intervention programs through each county to support a variety of early intervention efforts, including use of technology. The WCESC was able to use the funds to purchase four iPads, downloaded with apps that were then provided to WCBDD Speech and Language Pathologists (SLP). Those iPads are used as loaners for families who may consider this option for their child and family. The iPad is loaned to families for a duration of time to allow an opportunity for the family to explore the programs before purchasing their own, or with the help from WCBDD Family Supports funds.

Additionally, WCBDD funded the purchase of a communication application for each SLP's agency- issued iPad in an effort to enhance their knowledge of the application, and share demonstrations with the family prior to registering them for a trial loaner iPad. Though this process is in the early stages of the rollout, the Early Childhood team is excited about the collaborations and having the ability to support children and families in this way!



Pictured: A child and mother use the simple choice board for snack time. He picked yogurt bites, yum!



Pictured: WCBDD Speech & Language Pathologist, Mary Wilson demonstrates for a family how to operate a communication application on the iPad

Upcoming Socialization Opportunities:

In-Person Playgroup Opportunity!

The Early Childhood team is thrilled to be back in person and offering playgroups to children enrolled in WCBDD services ages birth to three and their parent/caregiver. Although the last few years have been challenging to safely maintain group, the team is grateful to be back and steady. This quarter's sessions are still open; however, space is limited and registration is required by Friday, October 13th. To register, please email Carolyn.bogenschutz@warrencountydd.org



Please refer to the flyer below for more details:



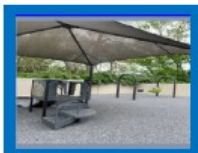
WCBDD
Early Childhood Playgroup
Milo H Banta Center
410 South East Street
Lebanon, OH 45036



Children enrolled in WCBDD services ages birth to 3 and their parent/caregiver are invited to attend our Tuesday morning playgroup beginning Tuesday, September 12, through November 14, 2023
****Space is limited and registration is required****

Playgroup information:

- WCBDD Playgroup each Tuesday (within the WCBDD calendar) from 10:30—11:30 AM
- 4th Quarter dates: Tuesday September 12, 19; October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; November 7, 14
- Activities such as story time, crafts, and song time
- Food/drinks are not permitted on the playground or in classroom
- 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, October 13, 2023 (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: October 13, 2023



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.)
- **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, as well as the educators and agencies who provide services to them.)

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

WCBDD wraps up the summer season with dual vehicle expos and *Family Fun Day*

On Saturday, August 19, 2023, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held its annual “*Things That...Go!*” event in the parking lot of the Warren C. Young Center. The free community event was enjoyed by up to 200 guests who had the opportunity to view up close, a variety of community, commercial, and specialty vehicles.

“The disability board always does such nice events,” said a parent. “I feel so thankful for them because it’s the only time I go to things not stressed out, and feel normal.”

This event would not have been possible without the following businesses and organizations who donated their time, resources, expertise, and vehicles:

Turtlecreek Fire Department, Special Neat Treats, Warren County Facilities, Warren County Sheriff’s Office, Lil’ Bloom Truck, Cincinnati Reds, Lebanon City Schools, Ohio Department of Transportation, Voices Speaking Out, National Porsche Club of America, Lebanon Public Library, Leisz Farms, Koenig Equipment, Ohio State Highway Patrol, Warren County Community Services Inc., Warren County Health District, Talbert House Prevention Services, SAFE on Main, and the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition.



Following “*Things That...Go!*” was a special Jeep Show at Billie’s Burgers organized by the Jeep Lifestyle Group. More than 30 extravagantly customized Jeeps were on display to raise money for the Warren County Special Olympics program. The fundraiser accrued a total of \$1,007.50! WCBDD extends its

gratitude to the Jeep Lifestyle Group for not only their fundraising efforts, but for bringing to light, the lives of those with developmental disabilities!



With temperate sunny weather and excellent company, there was plenty of fun to be shared at WCBDD's 14th annual *Family Fun Day*, held on Saturday, September 9, 2023 at the Miracle League Field in Springboro. *Family Fun Day* serves as a free outreach event intended to raise community awareness of individuals with developmental disabilities.

This year's event supplied a variety of offerings including the musical stylings of Monster Beatz DJ's (equipped with plenty of great tunes and bubbles), a skee-ball machine, balloon darts, dunk tank, basketball toss, face painting, and caricature art, all provided by A&S Party Rentals. Also included were a ring toss, crafts, food and beverage, ice cream from the Special Neat Treats ice cream truck, and a few animal friends provided by the Next Generation Livestock Club, PetPALS. All food, beverage, and entertainment were entirely free to those in attendance.

