

Warren County Dreams

December 2022

A Word from Our Superintendent



It is hard to believe that 2022 is almost over, but I am looking forward to 2023! As we reflect on the past year, we are happy that we were able to hold all of our in-person agency events again. The *Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Open House and Provider Fair*, *Egg Hunt*, *Things That Go!*, and *Family Fun Day* were all held in 2022.

Looking forward to 2023, we will have our Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Accreditation review in February. All county boards of developmental disabilities (CBDDs) are required to be accredited by DODD. Our current three-year accreditation (which is the maximum) expires in April 2023. We will be ready to show DODD all of the great things we are doing in

Warren County.

The CBDDs throughout Ohio continue to work with our trade association, as well as the trade associations of providers and DODD regarding the upcoming state budget. As mentioned in previous newsletters, we have a shortage of providers right now. This shortage of providers became worse because of the pandemic. We are working with these other groups and agencies to promote additional funding in the state budget for Direct Support Professional (DSP) wage increases. Our system is competing with other companies outside our system for workers. If we can provide better wages, it could help our providers with hiring and retaining quality employees.

We are in the process of updating our website, in order to make it more efficient and user friendly. Our goal is for anyone who gets on our website to be able to find exactly what they are looking for and maybe more. Thank you for your patience as the website is being updated. We think you will enjoy the new version when it is completed.

As we approach the end of this year, I hope you all have a safe, relaxing holiday season. 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 other WCBDD employee with whom you work. We also always have someone on call 24 hours a day in cases of emergencies, including evenings, weekends and holidays. If you have an emergency, 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!

WCBDD celebrates Direct Support Professionals with 4th annual Appreciation Dinner

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held its 4th annual Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Appreciation Dinner on September 15, 2022, to honor and celebrate the many contributions made by DSPs towards enhancing the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

DSPs assist people with developmental disabilities in leading lives that are more independent, productive, and integrated, thereby enabling them to fully participate in their communities.

“The work of the DSP does not go unnoticed,” said WCBDD Provider Development Coordinator, Lindsay Graves. “The work they do needs to be celebrated,” she added.

Graves is one of two WCBDD employees whose primary responsibility is to ensure DSPs are supported and equipped with the resources necessary to support those they serve. Such responsibilities include training, certification, recruitment, billing, and the annual DSP Appreciation Dinner, referred to by Graves as one of the best parts of her job.

Over 100 DSPs attended the rock-and-roll themed appreciation dinner, entitled: “DSPs Rock,” organized by Graves and her colleague, Angela Brinker. The evening boasted rock star decorations, a selfie station, agency swag, gift card door prizes, and dinner and dessert prepared by Shoelaces Catering. Additionally, both WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel, and Ohio Provider Resources Association (OPRA) Operations Director, Scott Marks, offered sentiments on the integral role DSPs play in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

September 11 – 17, 2022, marked Direct Support Professional Appreciation Week. Throughout the week WCBDD extended its gratitude and acknowledgement toward DSPs, topped off with the DSP Appreciation Dinner. “I love honoring and recognizing the DSPs in Warren County and hope that they felt seen not only this week, but each and every day,” beamed Graves. “Warren County DSPs really do rock!”



Pictured: WCBDD Provider Development Coordinators, Lindsay Graves (left), and Angie Brinker (right)



WCBDD's *Family Fun Day* wraps up the summer season

On Saturday, September 17, 2022, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) wrapped up the summer season by celebrating its annual *Family Fun Day*. With radiant sunny weather and an excellent turn out, there was no shortage of family or fun on this day!

For thirteen years, *Family Fun Day* has served as a free outreach event intended to raise community awareness of individuals with developmental disabilities. Held at the Miracle League Baseball Field in Springboro, individuals, friends, and families of all ages and abilities joined together to enjoy the festivities facilitated by WCBDD staff and community volunteers. While children demonstrated their best sportsmanship in a Miracle League baseball game, *Family Fun Day* attendees engaged in a wide range of entertainment.

The Mason Girl Scouts Troop 49753 manned the craft table with colorful sand art. Key Behavior Services administered temporary tattoos. DJ James of MonsterBeatz played party favorites like “*The Cupid Shuffle*” as YMCA Zumba Instructor, Holly Morgan, joined by Lebanon High School students, engaged in some free-style dancing. Additional offerings included: face painting, caricatures, carnival games, a dunk tank, hot dogs, and the Special Neat Treats Ice Cream truck. Lastly, attendees had the opportunity to be dazzled by a special magic show, presented by Illusionist, Jake Lindsay.

Described as “so much fun” and “well done”, the 13th annual *Family Fun Day* conjured up magical moments and memories among children, families, and community members alike.



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (left) and HR/CR Director, Bill Caplinger (right)



Voices Speaking Out advocacy group attends Synergy Conference in Sandusky, OH

Voices Speaking Out is a self-advocacy group comprised of adults receiving services and supports from the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD). The group meets monthly to discuss topics that encourage self-direction and independence. Additionally, the group participates in quarterly community service projects and attends varied trainings and conferences in an effort to further develop their leadership skills. In early October, twelve members of Voices Speaking Out continued their leadership development by attending the 2022 Synergy Conference at the Kalahari Resort in Sandusky, Ohio.

Synergy is a three-day conference that creates opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and growth, by uniting individuals with developmental disabilities with those who serve in the DD field. The

conference provides hands-on, interactive, and high energy sessions that provoke new ways of thinking and ultimately, promotes change. Over 800 people attended this year's conference.

The Voices Speaking Out members were privileged to have access to a wide variety of information and resources. Such topics included breaking down barriers, the benefits of technology, money management, self-direction, and much more. The members listened to a number of keynote speakers that included a NASA Mechanical Engineer born without arms and legs, and a college freshman who made history as the first person with Down Syndrome to play in an NCAA or NJCAA college football game. The members also enjoyed participating in break-out sessions that included acting improvisation, painting, and swing dancing!

This year was the first year Voices Speaking Out attended Synergy without member, Rachel Rice, whose unfortunate passing occurred over the summer. Rachel was the embodiment of what it was to be an advocate. In honor of Rachel's memory, advocacy members and staff wore t-shirts with a quote Rachel once said, "They said I couldn't do it, so I showed them."



Pictured: Advocate, Annee Martin speaks in a break-out group at the Synergy Conference



Pictured: Voices Speaking Out advocacy group



Pictured: Advocate, Aaron Bowman speaks in a break-out group at the Synergy Conference

Enrolled individual attributes growth to supportive employer and WCBDD

Nineteen-year-old Jared Jordan has received services from the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) since 2008. This past spring, Jared graduated from Lebanon High School with a 3.4 GPA. He is now a freshman at Sinclair Community College in Mason, where he studies Business Management. When not in class, Jared works part-time at the Lebanon Kroger as a bagger, and most recently, a cashier. In late September, Jared was selected by his manager to represent the Lebanon store in a "best bagger" competition, located at the Kroger Headquarters downtown. Though Jared did not win the title, the support from his employer, and his personal growth are worth much more.

“They help me out a lot,” said Jared. “You have these nice people that you’re working with, even the store manager is the nicest guy in the world!” Jared works 15 hours each week with Kroger, and believes his experience with Kroger has helped improve his social skills. “I think it’s the environment and the people I work with,” Jared explained. “The interaction helps my socialization out. I am able to communicate a lot better. Kroger has helped me so much. They should be recognized,” Jared added.



When Jared was diagnosed with Autism and ADHD in 2008, he began the rigorous regimen of speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and more. Throughout his childhood and adolescence, Jared developed his skills and abilities with help from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital (CCH), Applied Behavioral Services, the Warren County Educational Service Center (WCESC), Lebanon City Schools, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), and of course, Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD).

“WCBDD has done an outstanding job in helping our family,” said Jared’s father, Scott Jordan. Jared’s family attributes his successful earning of a High School Diploma, to the WCBDD Transition team. Both the WCBDD Transition team and OOD worked hand-in-hand in securing Jared’s first job at Creeches Landscaping, as well as his current job with Kroger. Additionally, both WCBDD and OOD were instrumental in coordinating Jared’s Driver’s Education through the Capabilities Driving Program.

Jared obtained his driver’s license in 2020, and uses his jet black 2019 Ford Fusion to drive to and from work and class, and the occasional food run. “The other day I went to the Breakfast Club all by myself,” Jared proudly said. When asked how he would advise his peers who are reluctant to drive, Jared said, “Go slow, take your time, it’s going to come second nature to you.” He added, “In due time you will get better, and you will start to understand the aspects of driving.”

Moving forward, Jared will continue to work diligently on his personal and professional growth. “I’m focusing on my business degree, but I want to see what I can do to help the community out,” Jared said. He concluded, “I want to continue to be more independent and better prepared for the future.”

All-staff In-Service held in person for first time in three years

On October 21, 2022, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held its Annual Agency In-Service in person for the first time in three years! The day consisted of agency updates, upcoming 2023 plans, cardio drumming, team building activities, presentations on nutrition, health, and wellness, with award presentations sprinkled throughout.

In addition to celebrating employee service anniversaries, new hires, and employees with perfect attendance, staff and community members alike were awarded for demonstrating exemplary services to the agency. Congratulations to the following award recipients:

Green Hat Award – Brenda Neeley, Service Coordinator

Extraordinary Employer Award – TJ Maxx, Harper’s Point

Friends of DD Award – Dan Hill, John Gamble of Go Concepts, Inc., Cathy Thomas, and the Warren County Health District

Dave Farmer Award – Nick Vrettos

Creativity Award – Cheri Cummings, Community Connections Coordinator

Above & Beyond Award – Marlana Goans, Service Coordinator

Advocacy Award – Rachel Rice

Superintendent Award – Ellen Hudson, Advocacy Coordinator, and Priscilla Hahn, Operations Division Secretary



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (left), and Superintendent Award recipient, Priscilla Hahn (right)



Pictured: HR/CR Director, Bill Caplinger (left), Superintendent Award recipient, Ellen Hudson (center), and WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (right)



Pictured: WCBDD Superintendent, Megan Manuel (left), and Friends of DD Award recipient, Duane Stansbury from the Warren County Health District (right)

Trunk-or-Treat

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) was thrilled to host its 7th annual *Trunk-or-Treat* on October 24, 2022. Held in the Warren C. Young Center parking lot, the event showcased a wide variety of vehicles, extravagantly decorated by agency staff, local providers, and members of the community. Included in the assortment of vehicles, were approximately 35 customized and themed Jeeps, compliments of the Jeep Lifestyle group.

The Jeep Lifestyle is a Facebook group for Jeep owners and enthusiasts to connect with each other and share upcoming Jeep events. “That’s when plans to get together are made,” said group member, Karen Corwin. “It’s really a community. Most of us attend several car-shows through the year, and tons of special events like this one,” Corwin added.

The group learned of WCBDD’s *Trunk-or-Treat* event while interacting with an enrolled individual and her provider at a local hamburger establishment. “She instantly fell in love with the Jeeps,” Corwin

chuckled. “She and her provider mentioned to us about bringing the Jeeps to the event because she believed her friends there would love the Jeeps too.” Shortly after, Jeep Lifestyle member John Pierson, also known as Clown of Clowns-House Graphics, reached out to WCBDD on behalf of the group, and reserved their spots for the event.

“We attend a lot of events throughout the year, but very few do we leave with hearts as full as we did the other night,” gushed Corwin. “Watching their faces light up when they see the jeeps is every reason we create themes for our Jeeps, and decorate them like we do.” Corwin added, “With so much negativity in this world, it’s just nice to be somewhere we can make people smile and watch them love our Jeeps as much as we do!”

The 7th annual *Trunk-or-Treat* was enjoyed by nearly 500 guests.



Gard Defense facilitates self-defense training to individuals with disabilities

On November 7, 2022, twelve individuals enrolled in services with Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD), participated in an in-depth self-defense class provided by Gard Defense Solutions, a self-defense training company that specializes in law enforcement tactics, subject control, corporate active violence, and women’s self-defense. Participants received hands-on training from full-time Police Officers, Dan Dean and Kevin Watson, who are also co-founders of Gard Defense Solutions.

“Our goal is to educate, encourage, and empower,” said Officer Dean. “Watching someone become empowered and inspired is an amazing feeling,” he added. “We encourage people to always try to be just a little bit better version of themselves each day.”

In addition to the hands-on training, participants learned how to evaluate their environment for potential dangers, and how to identify and respond to those with ill-intentions; a valuable lesson to a population vulnerable to abuse.

“I was initially intimidated,” Officer Dean admits, referring to his first time facilitating a group of individuals with disabilities. “I first got involved with the Careers with Peers group, followed by the annual agency in-service, and most recently, the self-advocacy group.” Officer Dean stated, “I had not had many close interactions with the DD population. I don’t ever want someone to feel that I am talking down to them, or making someone feel less than, so I was very cautious in the things I said. I’ve come to

love teaching individuals with developmental disabilities because they pay really close attention and ask atypical questions.” He added, “It requires me as an instructor to know what I’m talking about and think on my feet.”

Enrolled individual and WCBDD Advocacy Assistant, Claire Ginn, participated in the self-defense training, and would encourage others to do the same. “My favorite part was doing the punching,” Ginn giggled. “I felt it was a good experience with fighting back.” Ginn shared that if put in a threatening situation, she would know what to do. “I would call for help,” Ginn proudly stated. She added she would also take preventive measures, to avoid such situations. “Definitely don’t go places by yourself, go with a group.” She concluded by saying, “trust your gut.”



WCBDD holiday drive-thru is enjoyed by enrolled children and their families

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) Early Childhood Division was pleased to host its holiday “drive-thru” on Saturday, December 3, 2022. The *Breakfast from Santa’s Elves* drive-thru invited families of children birth to age six to drive through winter wonder lane, and visit with WCBDD staff while in their vehicles. This is the third year the drive-thru has been offered as a safe and fun way to connect with families.



As vehicles arrived at the entrance of the Milo H. Banta Center, they were met with the friendly faces of the WCBDD Early Childhood Division. Families were served soothing beverages and delicious donut holes as they listened to carols sung by the Voices of Warren County, a choir comprised of adults with disabilities.

The WCBDD holiday drive-thru was thoroughly enjoyed by the over forty families in attendance. A soft stuffed animal friend, donated by the Milford PetSmart, became a favorite among families, as was a storybook for the family to share.

One family whose son receives services, extended their gratitude saying, “It is so nice to have these resources for us to participate in. The fact that he got juice, donuts, a book, and an adorable stuffed animal, meant the world to him! The family added, “He picked the owl/bird and carried it around all day, and went to bed with it!”

