

## Warren County Dreams

June 2022

### A Word from Our Superintendent



Although I don't usually make my opening article in our quarterly newsletter personal, I hope you'll indulge me a little as I write this one. It is personal, yet still related. You see, on February 12, 2022, I lost the most amazing man I've ever known – my father, Jerry Manuel. That is very personal. However, it is related because my dad spent almost 50 years working in the developmental disabilities field. He was my role model and my mentor, in more ways than one.

My dad started out in education as a teacher, became a principal for the school at the county board of developmental disabilities in Marion County, and he eventually became the Superintendent. For most of my childhood, my dad worked at "MARCA", which is what the county board was known by in Marion. My dad was well-known in Marion, and everywhere we went, we always ran into someone who knew him.

In 1991, my dad was given the opportunity to work in Governor Voinovich's state cabinet as the Director of the (now) Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. At the time, I didn't realize what a huge responsibility that was. He served in this capacity for eight years, and tried to do all he could to make our state better for people with developmental disabilities.

After this, he retired for the first time. However, he couldn't stay away for long, and he came back as a consultant and worked with county boards and providers. He served as CEO for providers, Superintendent for county boards, and provided training and consulting upon request. Then he retired for a second time.

That is when he and my mom moved to South Carolina. At first, he stayed retired and decided "just" to volunteer with an organization that served people with developmental disabilities. My dad took his role in helping make the world a better place for people with developmental disabilities very seriously. I think that is why he couldn't say no when people kept asking him to help. So, he came out of retirement again.

My dad became the CEO of a provider organization that served people with developmental disabilities in South Carolina. He would often tell me how much better we had it in Ohio. Our system here is so much more progressive than the system down there. The amount of knowledge he was able to bring to them was so valuable to them, and even after having retired twice already, he couldn't say no when they asked him to lead their organization.

They often say when someone passes away, you learn things about that person you didn't know before. I'd like to think that I knew my dad pretty well. We were very close. Most people would even say I was his favorite child, and I of course, would agree with them. However, I too learned some things about him after he passed.

I knew my dad was a humble man. I knew that he took his role in this world as a good husband, father, grandfather and person very seriously. I also knew that he wanted to make the world better for people with disabilities. What I didn't really know, or maybe didn't think about, was how he did that. I realized

he worked to make direct impacts on our field through things like policy changes and addressing financial challenges, but I didn't realize how much he did indirectly as well, especially through his work with employees. By developing good quality employees in this field, he was multiplying his effect throughout the system.

One of my dad's colleagues shared with me that when my dad was the Director of DODD, he shared with this colleague his philosophy regarding employees and "catching people doing things right". He said he found it to be different from the usual perspective of trying to "catch people doing things wrong". This helped inspire his colleague to develop his own documented philosophy of leadership, based on this very principal, which he has used for over a decade now.

Another inspiring thing shared with me was from a coworker of my dad's in South Carolina. When I was talking to him, I could tell that my dad had made a strong impact on him, even though they had only worked together a few short years. After talking for several minutes, he said to me, "he was the best boss I ever had. He taught me so much." I remember being struck by the fact that at the age of 75, my dad was still so passionate about what he was doing and how he was leading other people, that someone would say something like that about him.

My dad was my mentor, my idol, my role model, and my hero. I always looked up to him, and I now feel like I have even more to look up to after hearing these stories. I feel so fortunate to have been able to watch what he did in his life and to have been able to learn from him. I am in awe of what he was able to accomplish. I don't think I will ever be able to live up to his legacy, but I appreciate that I get the opportunity to try.

I want to make this county, this state, this country, and this world better for people with developmental disabilities, just like my dad did. I thank my dad for setting that example and for reminding me how important every aspect of what we do is for people with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for indulging me and taking the time to read this article. 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](http://www.warrencountydd.org) or our Facebook page. Thank you for your support of the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities!

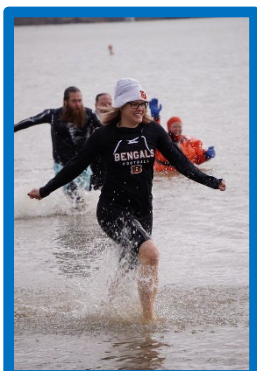
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### Warren County takes "plunge" in the name of Special Olympics

On Saturday, February 26, 2022, employees of the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD), united with enrolled individuals and community members to brave the frigid waters of Caesars Creek in the name of Special Olympics.

The Special Olympics Polar Plunge raises money to provide year-round sports training and competition, health education, and leadership programs for over 20,000 Special Olympics Ohio athletes. During the month of February, seven plunges were held in different areas across the state, including Caesar's Creek located in Warren County. Thanks to the active participation and generous donations in Warren County, over \$28,000 was raised in support of Special Olympics athletes.

Special Olympics Ohio offers athletes countless opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other athletes, and the community.



Pictured: WCBDD Early Childhood Manager, Kelly Brooks



Pictured: Group photo of WCBDD staff members, providers, and Superintendent, Megan Manuel



Pictured: WCBDD Community Integration Coordinator, Rhonda Schutte and a snowman

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### Advocacy group remains actively engaged in the community

The Voices Speaking Out is a self-advocacy group comprised of adults receiving services from the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD). Members meet monthly with the purpose of advocating independence and inclusion for those with disabilities. In addition to advocacy, the group actively seeks out ways to give back to their community. This past quarter has been highly productive for the advocates. Here are a few highlights:

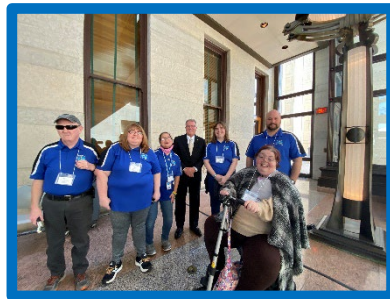
- Throughout the month of February, the advocates conducted a collection drive in an effort to assist families in need. The group successfully collected personal care and food items and donated them to the Kings Food Pantry.
- February 25<sup>th</sup>, the advocates were at the Manor House to support the Countryside YMCA's annual Gala.
- March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the advocates attended DD Awareness & Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus. In addition to listening to powerful speakers, the group had the opportunity to voice their own opinions with Senator Steve Wilson.
- March 15<sup>th</sup>, the advocates attended the WCBDD Open House. The group also participated in the Provider Fair by promoting WCBDD services, as well as advocacy.
- March 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>, the advocates attended the Morgan County Retreat at the Burr Oak Lodge. The retreat included discussions on topics like Supported Decision Making and Safe Social Media practices. The advocates also took advantage of the provided recreational activities such as hiking, Zumba, and cardio drumming.

- March 31<sup>st</sup>, the advocates showed their support by attending an Open House for Safe on Main, a shelter for people dealing with domestic abuse.
- April 4<sup>th</sup>, the advocates assisted in preparations for the Community Egg Hunt by filling eggs with candy and toys. The group completed two giant bags of eggs.
- April 12<sup>th</sup>, the advocates hosted an Open House of their own in an effort to celebrate their accomplishments and recruit new members. The festivities included delicious pizza and team building activities.
- April 30<sup>th</sup>, the advocates attended the Child Advocacy Center's annual gala at Hidden Valley Orchards.

The Voices Speaking Out advocacy group meets monthly at 6:00 p.m., on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at the Warren C. Young Center, located at 801 Drake Road in Lebanon. For more information about Voices Speaking Out, contact Advocacy Coordinator, Ellen Hudson at (513) 806-3778 or email [ellen.hudson@warrencountydd.org](mailto:ellen.hudson@warrencountydd.org)



Pictured: Advocacy members and Kings Food Pantry volunteers



Pictured: Advocacy members and Senator Steve Wilson



Pictured: Advocacy members fill eggs for the Community Egg Hunt

### WCBDD partners with web accessibility market leader, *accessiBe*.

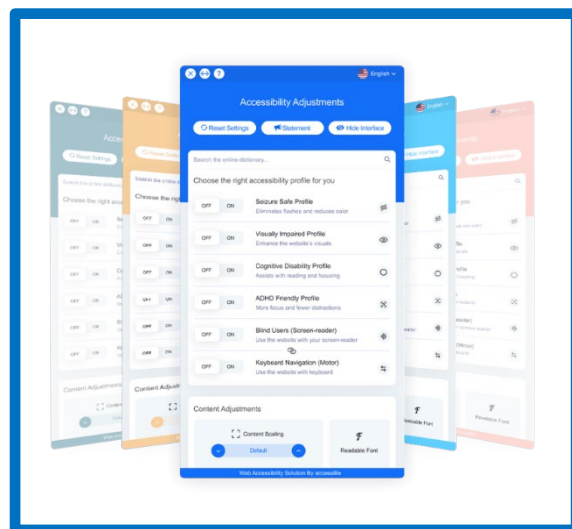
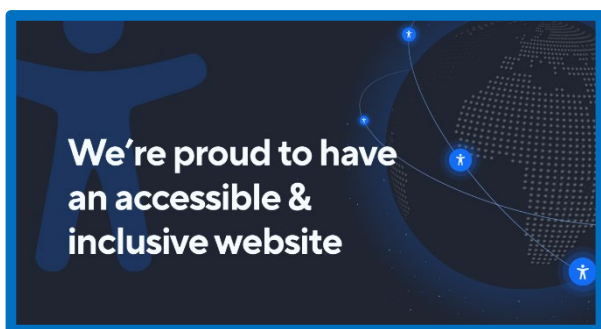
The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD), provides services and supports to over 2,000 people in Warren County who have developmental disabilities, through Early Intervention, Community Resources, Employment Services, Social, Recreational, Residential, Service Coordination, and other programs. An additional part of providing quality services and supports is providing an accessible and inclusive website that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In order to offer a more disability-friendly and accessible website, WCBDD is thrilled to announce a partnership with web accessibility market leader, *accessiBe*.

*accessiBe* is an AI-powered solution that provides users with easier accessibility while on the web. It uses smart, new technology to routinely convert a website into a fully compliant and easily navigable page, allowing its users to adjust and modify the features based on their specific need. With *accessiBe*,

users with visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), motor (moving), and cognitive (thinking) impairments, may enjoy a more accessible and inclusive online experience.

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities is proud to have partnered with *accessiBe* in an effort to utilize accessible technology to foster a more inclusive society to people with disabilities.

To use the new *accessiBe* feature, simply visit [www.warrencountydd.org](http://www.warrencountydd.org). The *accessiBe* icon can be located at the bottom right corner of the webpage. By clicking the icon, users will be prompted with *accessiBe*'s accessibility features. Users will then have the ability to select the accessibility profile that best meets their needs.



### Individuals with disabilities celebrated in honor of DD Awareness Month

On March 15, 2022, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) hosted two Open Houses at the Warren C. Young Center, in honor of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. This year's theme, "Why not us? It is us" was inspired by the Cincinnati Bengals and featured the stories of enrolled individuals, Darren White and David Werner, as they shared their personal goals, fumbles, touchdowns, and wins.



Presenter, Darrin White was born with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a genetic disorder characterized by progressive loss of muscle. Darrin learned of his disorder at age 4 when he had issues using the stairs. Though Darrin knew his mobility challenges would increase over time, this did not discourage him from pursuing his personal goals. Not only did Darrin earn a Bachelors Degree in Biological Science at Wright State



University, he also interned at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus and Wright Patterson Airforce Base.

In addition to his academic achievements, Darrin does data analytics (he did free-lance statistics for Miami University's Volleyball Team), and is a self-published author under the pen name, Owen Lee Grace. His book entitled: *The Wall*, was published in November 2021, and he received his first royalty check in February 2022. Darrin recently completed the manuscript for his next book, *The Willow*. As a devout Christian, Darrin enjoys writing about characters discovering their faith.

Presenter, David Werner was born without a disability, but suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury when he was 21 years old. As a result of his injury, David was in a coma for 31 days; his chance of survival, uncertain. Upon coming out of the coma, David remained in the hospital for 78 days. Doctors informed David that it was probable he would never walk again. The doubt displayed by doctors was soon replaced with hope, as a determined David proved to them that he indeed, would walk again.

During his journey to recovery, David utilized both physical and occupational therapy, as well as color therapy and photography. David's photography work has been submitted multiple times to Art & Soul, an Ohio art exhibit that celebrates artists with disabilities. David won "Best Composition" in 2010, and has also placed in the "Top 10" on four additional entries. Furthermore, David took Adaptive Riding Lessons from Cincinnati Therapeutic Riding and Horsemanship. What started out as therapy to improve David's balance, soon gave way to riding horses competitively.

Since 2015, David has competed in 8 State Special Olympics Equestrian Competitions. Last summer, David was notified that he had been selected to represent Ohio in the 2022 National Special Olympic Games in Orlando, Florida. More than 100 Ohio athletes will be competing at the USA Games this June, David included.

During the WCBDD Open House presentations, both David and Darrin were presented with a proclamation from Warren County officials, Commissioner Tom Grossman, and Judge Joseph Kirby, declaring the month of March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.



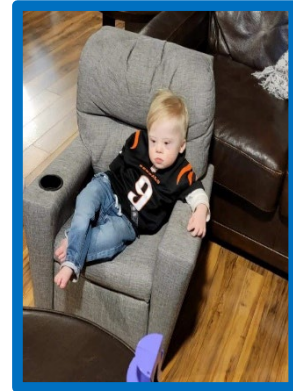
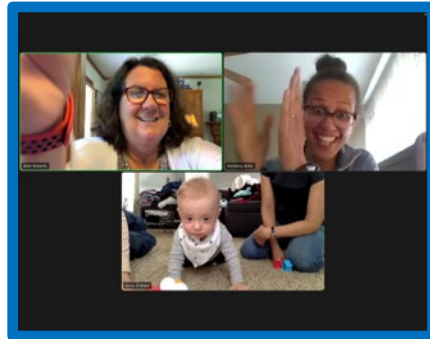
Pictured: Darrin White,(left)  
Commissioner Grossman, (center),  
and David Werner (right)

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## 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.

During the first quarter of 2022 (January- March), the collaborative Early Intervention team, which includes service providers from WCBDD and Early Intervention Service Coordinators from the Warren County Educational Service Center (WCESC), received **119** referrals for initial eligibility, provided **140** developmental evaluations and/or assessments and developed Individualized Family Service Plans for qualifying children. The EI Developmental Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists delivered **1,095** home or community visits during this period through both in-person and technology service delivery. The Early Intervention team continues to meet weekly via Zoom with all providers and service coordinators to discuss referrals, assign teams, schedule and meetings, and coach each other. Below are some great snapshots of children, families, and service providers starting out the new year!



### **Understanding the Unique Needs of Childcare for Enrolled Children, Families, and the Community**

In an effort to collect more information to support childcare, WCBDD will be offering a survey to families and childcare providers, to better understand the needs of families and the community. More details to come!

### **Software Launch**

WCBDD is pleased to announce the launch of a new software system called Brittco. This system will help Service Coordinators and Service Providers be more efficient in completing documentation, obtaining parent signatures for consents, developing Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP's), and maintaining a single child file. The system also eliminates the need to send documentation back and forth between agencies. WCBDD and WCESC are certain this system will continue to improve the "behind-the-scenes" process as services move forward through the year.

### **Upcoming Socialization Opportunities:**

#### ***In-Person Playgroup is Back!***

Children enrolled in WCBDD services ages birth to 3, and their parent/caregiver, are invited to attend Tuesday morning playgroup beginning on Tuesdays, May 3 – June 21, 2022.

Check out how to register here: [WCBDD Playgroup Flyer 2022 Q2.pdf](#)

## ***Social Saturday is Back!***

Children through age 5 who are enrolled in WCBDD services and their families, (siblings through age 5 may also attend) are invited to attend a playtime event at the Milo H. Banta Center!

Check out how to register here: [WCBDD May 21, 2022 Social Saturday.pdf](#)

### **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.)
- **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.)

For any questions or additional information regarding Early Childhood Services, please contact:

Kelly Brooks, MS

Early Childhood Manager

[Kelly.brooks@warrencountydd.org](mailto:Kelly.brooks@warrencountydd.org) or 513-228-6520

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## **Community Egg Hunt for children with disabilities: a hoppin' good time**

The Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held its annual community egg hunt for children with disabilities on Saturday, April 16, 2022 at the Miracle League Field in Springboro.

As families arrived, they were warmly greeted by WCBDD staff members. Children entering the event were immediately dazzled by large prize tables that boasted nearly 200 different eye-catching prizes. While anxiously waiting for the egg hunt to begin, children were provided the opportunity to create sand art and decorate bunny masks.

1,500 eggs filled with toys, candy, and prize tickets sprinkled the Miracle League Field in a sea of rainbow colors. Children participating in the egg hunt were released by age group out onto the field to collect their eggs. In a matter of minutes, the field was completely bare.

Described as a "great event" and "so much fun," the WCBDD community egg hunt was gratefully enjoyed by the over 100 children and their families in attendance.

In addition to providing a hoppin' good time, each family was offered the chance to get their picture taken with a very friendly and very fluff Easter Bunny.

"It was so exciting to be able to hold this event this year after a two-year hiatus because of the pandemic," said Megan Manuel, WCBDD Superintendent. "It was great to be able to see the children and their families back out there smiling, collecting eggs, and having a fun time!"





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### Enrolled individual earns award from Goodwill Easterseals



Jennifer Jurin receives services from the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD). Those who know and interact with Jennifer can all agree that she has experienced a tremendous amount of growth in the past few years. Jennifer's growth was recognized in February by her employer; Goodwill. Due to demonstrating exemplary efforts in accomplishing her personal goals, Jennifer has been selected as a recipient of the Goodwill Easterseals Miami Valley Employment Independence Award.

When Jennifer began her career at Goodwill 6 years ago, she was a participant in the enclave employment program. Though Jennifer was described as "shy" and often struggled, her store manager recognized a lot of untapped potential. Because of this, Jen was hired on as a regular employee in 2017. It was 5 years into Goodwill's Employment Support and Retention Program, that Jennifer truly began to grow her abilities and independence.

Jennifer has gone from simply hanging clothes in the store, to now, interacting with customers, handling donations, answering the phone, and running the cash register. Jennifer can now do everything in the store below a supervisory level.

Those close to Jennifer describe her as kind, receptive, and open to other perspectives. She has gone from having a lack of motivation to work, to being an exceptional employee. Additionally, Jennifer leads a fulfilling and independent life. She receives drop-in services at home, and engages in multiple recreational activities including dance team. She is a fantastic friend to others and she is in a loving and healthy relationship with another individual enrolled in DD services.

Jennifer's many accomplishments will be documented in a video and presented in July at the Frazee Music Center in Kettering, where she will receive her award.

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### WCBDD Service Coordinator retires after 21 years of service

On Friday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, the Warren County Board of Developmental Disabilities (WCBDD) held a retirement celebration for Service Coordinator, Teresa Banks, in the gymnasium of the Warren C. Young Center.



With cake, punch, and plenty of cat decorations, WCBDD leadership and staff recognized and honored Teresa for her 21 years of service to the board.

Teresa began her tenure with WCBDD in July of 2000. In addition to Service Coordination, Teresa worked in Quality Assurance. When this position was eliminated, Teresa returned to Service Coordination, specializing in the Transitional Developmental Disabilities Waiver.

Prior to working for the board, Teresa served as a social worker for facilities such as Bethany Lutheran Village, Otterbein Retirement Center, and Brookside Extended Care. Teresa earned a Bachelor of Arts from Miami University, as well as a Bachelors of Social Work from Capital University.

The legacy that Teresa leaves behind is that of a dedicated and reliable Service Coordinator, who has been instrumental in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities. Thank you, Teresa Banks, for your years of commitment and dedication to WCBDD!



Pictured: HR/CR Director William Caplinger, Teresa Banks, and Superintendent, Megan Manuel