

The View From The

Ridge



MurrayRidgeCenter
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

A Message From The Superintendent



2012 has finally arrived, and with it new challenges and opportunities! Many exciting accomplishments were made in 2011, and the focus in the coming year will be on pursuing new possibilities and furthering the positive developments of 2011, while continuing vigorously to lay the groundwork for financial sustainability.

For the more than 2,000 Lorain County citizens with developmental disabilities, pursuit of skills, quality of life and the ability to be engaged and contributing members of the community is paramount. Last year, Murray Ridge Center's creative and committed staff continued its track record of excellence, while taking exciting initiatives on behalf of individuals of all ages.

Our Early Intervention Specialists participated in extensive training, and have implemented the state of the art "responsive teaching model" which involves partnering with families to provide highly effective, on-going stimulation for infants and toddlers with developmental delays. In the meantime, the exceptional staff at Murray Ridge School continued to advance its functional life skills curriculum, while taking advantage of grant dollars available for community access, simulated home environments to complement instruction in daily living tasks, and the introduction of new technology into classrooms.

Community-based opportunities for adult program participants have been sustained and enhanced through the implementation of cost-effective responses to the elimination of public transportation routes on which many in our Com-

munity Employment program were dependent, and through the facilitation of new volunteer opportunities that enabled more than thirty adults with developmental disabilities to pursue their dreams while giving back to the community. Likewise, those attending our adult day centers continued to enjoy on-site vocational services, while experiencing numerous enhancements to leisure and learning programs. The focus of Murray Ridge Adult Services on the provision of enriching, customer-driven offerings and environments is reflected in the new name of our service sites – **Opportunity and Vocational Centers**.

In recognition of the critical importance of partnerships with family caregivers, particularly in light of imminent financial challenges, Murray Ridge Center continued to assist hundreds of families through its Family Support Program, while enrolling nearly 70 individuals on a Medicaid waiver program which can be used to provide home and community based services to individuals living with their families, and to pull in some federal funding for adult day services. Additionally, while continuing to provide planning and monitoring of services received by eligible individuals, our Service & Support Administration Department diligently researched and expanded the range of alternative services to which it refers and links both eligible and ineligible individuals seeking assistance to overcome limitations.

Finally, in 2011 Murray Ridge Center achieved a four-year Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities accreditation. This is the highest level of accreditation that a board of developmental disabilities can achieve for operational compliance, and it is a testimony to the competence and commitment of staff throughout the agency.

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The dedication and energy of our staff, the ongoing support of the community and the synergistic collaboration with those served and their family members lead me to feel encouraged and optimistic about our future. That said, funding cutbacks coupled with increased needs continue to be a primary concern. In 2011, following several years of decline in our state funding, Murray Ridge Center lost 45% of its remaining state subsidy. On July 1st, we saw the expiration of the federal stimulus program that had benefitted the agency significantly over the past two and a half years. Additionally in 2011, more than \$400,000 in on-going funding associated with the Tangible Personal Property Tax was eliminated. An additional \$400,000 will be eliminated this year, and another \$400,000 is scheduled to be phased out in 2013, resulting in a

reduction of at least \$1,200,000 annually by 2014.

As we begin the New Year together, I am confident that we will find ways to accomplish much in 2012, while continuing to take steps necessary to remain fiscally secure in the years ahead. It will be important to communicate broadly about the important work of Murray Ridge Center, and I invite each of you to learn more and help spread the word about our services. I am honored by the privilege of working with the incredible staff at Murray Ridge and our partners within the community to provide lifelong services to people with developmental disabilities.

Amber Fisher

Valued Volunteers

Murray Ridge appreciates our volunteers and the countless hours they dedicate to our consumers.

Two individuals, Rose Noll and her daughter, Jamey, have contributed many hours throughout the Murray Ridge Raiders' basketball season by volunteering through the Parent/Educator Team (PET) as concession stand workers. Rose, grandmother of Murray Ridge School student Chloe Breeding, has coordinated concession efforts by sending out volunteer sheets to all families and staff. Jamey, who is Chloe's aunt, has worked alongside her mother, as well. A big thank you to these individuals for their service and commitment to Murray Ridge!

Exceptional Staff at the LOVC

Helen Woods received the 4th quarter 2011 Exceptional Service Award on Friday, January 27. She was nominated by consumer Chris Tillman (with Helen, right), who has worked with her for the past three years at the Lorain Opportunity/Vocational Center (LOVC).

Helen has worked at Murray Ridge Center for 16 years. She enjoys the daily interactions with the consumers, and says seeing them laughing and having fun each day is the best part of her job. As Chris noted in his nomination letter, "She knows that everyone is equal and is valuable in the Lord's eyes."

When asked about her award, Helen said, "I certainly feel honored; it was an unbelievable shock. I feel proud that Chris said such nice things about me and that he appreciates the fact that I do care and want him to have the best life possible."

We appreciate you, too, Helen! Congratulations on receiving the Exceptional Service Award for the exceptional service and care you provide to Murray Ridge consumers every day.



Kathy Justy Named 2011 Outstanding Citizen City of Grafton Recognizes Murray Ridge Center Employee

Kathy Justy, Receiving/Inventory Clerk at Murray Ridge Center, was awarded the Grafton Village Right Track Award – 2011 Outstanding Citizen on December 2 at Grafton-Midview Public Library.

This honor, given by the Grafton Village Business Association, is awarded to an Outstanding Business, Organization, Citizen, and Youth who volunteer within the community to support and provide growth opportunities for the city and surrounding area. Nominations are sent to the Association by Grafton citizens.

Kathy was selected over four other nominees – including her own husband! – to receive this prestigious award. She has been involved in volunteer work for more than 10 years. In her positions as a volunteer firefighter, nationally registered advanced EMT, and a Lorain County fire/arson investigator, Kathy responds to homes or other locations to render emergency care. She has also applied for and received numerous grants that have helped Grafton Village purchase and maintain modern, up-to-date equipment. Additionally, Kathy works as an EMS and American Heart Association Basic Life Support (AHA BLS) instructor, where she has even taught MRC consumers in CPR and Emergency Medical Responder classes. “I find that teaching EMS and CPR is a way to share knowledge and skills with others,” Kathy said. “If even one life is saved by someone I’ve taught, then my work has not been in vain.”

Beyond her Grafton positions, Kathy and her husband also volunteer with the Lorain County Metro Parks as volunteer naturalists, where they monitor bald eagle nests for the State of Ohio. Kathy also volunteers at Murray Ridge. In her “spare” time, Kathy uses her knowledge as an Ohio State Master Gardener to teach gardening courses. And, as if that weren’t enough, she and her husband are members of the Carlisle Historical Society. “The only way I could give the amount of time required is because of the support of my husband Paul and close friends. When I felt I was near the end of my rope, they would pull me through. They would remind me about why I wanted



Right Track Award winners (l-r): Dave DiVencenzo and Jim Clark (Outstanding Organization - Grafton Hot Stove), Joel Large (Outstanding Business - GLW Broadband, Inc.), Kathy Justy (Outstanding Citizen), and Erin Keyse (Outstanding Youth).

to volunteer and that God had put me in this field for a reason.”

Not surprisingly, Kathy finds the biggest challenge with volunteering to be time management. Her volunteer positions require ongoing training, and she is on-call evenings and weekends as a volunteer firefighter and EMT. But this time commitment pales in comparison to the satisfaction she gets out of volunteering with so many organizations. “Knowing that I’ve made a difference in someone’s life, hoping that I’ve eased their fears at the time of fire, injury, or illness,” is Kathy’s favorite part of being a volunteer.

“I am humbled and honored to have been given this award,” Kathy said. “I feel that anyone who volunteers should be recognized. Time is one of our most precious gifts, and every volunteer gives of their time and talents.”

Congratulations to Kathy Justy on receiving the 2011 Outstanding Citizen Award!

Dancing Wheels Gets Students Moving at Murray Ridge School



Stephanie Jackson practices her dance moves.

Everybody can dance. Everybody should dance. Dancing is the best expression of the human spirit.

This is the philosophy behind Dancing Wheels, an organization dedicated to helping anyone learn to dance, regardless of their disability or mobility.

Dancing Wheels began in 1990 as the brain child of Mary Verdi-Fletcher, who was born with spina bifida and later went on to become the first professional wheelchair dancer in the

United States. Not only did she realize her life's dream, but Mary also changed the perception of who can be a dancer.

Dancing Wheels is a professional, physically integrated dance company uniting the talents of dancers both with and without disabilities. It is considered one of the premier arts and disabilities organizations in the United States. In addition to working with groups throughout Ohio, Dancing Wheels also offers lectured demonstrations to various businesses and organizations nationally and globally. In fact, Dancing Wheels company's inspirational mission has touched more than 4.5 million people through performances, school assemblies, residencies, and workshops. Millions more have enjoyed its artistry via appearances on CNN, Good Morning America, and the TV special "Christopher Reeve: A Celebration of Hope."

Now in its second year with Murray Ridge School, Dancing Wheels has enabled MRS students to showcase their talents, their abilities, and their desires to break out of the stereotypical "dancer" definition, and become something more.

The school's Dancing Wheels instructor, Emma Parker, has been with the organization for only two years. She has been dancing since age three, and received her Bachelor's degree from Ball State in psychology and dance. Emma is the organization's only instructional dance teacher, and will guide all eight of her dance groups over the next few months as they prepare for the Dare to be Different Gala on May 19. Each of her eight groups, including Murray Ridge School, will perform a dance created and taught by Emma.

"To me, it's a different way to communicate that everyone can do," Emma remarked when asked about Dancing Wheels. "There are no limitations."

Limitations are something Dancing Wheels has eliminated through its hands-on, student-focused classes. Each Tuesday, MRS students are gathered in the gymnasium where they spend 45 minutes creating movements, listening to instructor-led training, and participating in a dance party at the end, where students are encouraged to showcase their moves to other participants.

Murray Ridge Center is proud to be working with such an innovative organization, and looks forward to watching Murray Ridge School students blossom into confident and skilled dancers.



Dante Iglesias and his personal aide Mary Goodman dance to the music.

Autism 24/7

A Free Mini-Conference for Parents, Teachers, Physicians, and Anyone Interested in Learning More About Autism

Join Murray Ridge Center and professionals from around the state to learn more about Autism at Murray Ridge School.

Choose three 30-minute sessions from our team of Autism experts, including the State Support Team Region 2 Autism Coordinator Jennifer Heim.

When: April 19, 2012
5:00-7:00 p.m.

Where: Murray Ridge School
9750 Murray Ridge Road
Elyria, OH 44035

Session topics will include:

- Assistive technology
- Adapted equipment
- Transition to adulthood
- Simple and complex communication systems
- and many more!

A certificate of completion is available to attendees.

We Need Your Help!

Representatives from the **Lorain County Metro Parks** will be on-hand to answer questions and take suggestions on the outdoor play area at the new Mercy Recreation and Health Center in Amherst. Help the Metro Parks create a facility and play area useful and enjoyable for individuals with disabilities!



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Remember...April is National Autism Awareness Month

Contact Director of Education Dann Swift at 440-329-3760 for more information.

Lorain County Board of
Developmental Disabilities

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