

The View From The

Ridge



MurrayRidgeCenter
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

Murray Ridge Center's Annual In-Service

On October 26, the staff of Murray Ridge Center came together to celebrate the men and women who work tirelessly each and every day in our school, Early Intervention Department, Adult Services programs, group homes, Service and Support Administration area, and administrative and support roles.

Superintendent Amber Fisher delivered the annual address, thanking each department of MRC for its efforts throughout the year, stating "It is our responsibility to do the very best we can, every day, to assist people with developmental disabilities to live safe, comfortable, fulfilling, and productive lives. Year after year, no matter what the challenges, I find that each department of the agency fulfills this responsibility admirably." After highlighting their successes, each department was asked to stand and be recognized.

Special recognition was given to individuals who - during the prior year - reached the benchmark of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 years of dedication and service to our Murray Ridge consumers. Also recognized were some 100 staff members who contributed hundreds of volunteer hours, in addition to their regular duties throughout the year, to support the mission of Murray Ridge; and employees who had perfect attendance from October 1, 2011, through September 30, 2012. Congratulations to our amazing Murray Ridge staff!

Other notable moments included presentations of the annual C.A.R.E.S. award and the R.I.C.H.E.S. Program.

C.A.R.E.S. stands for Community Awareness, Recog-

niton, Education and Service. Every year, a C.A.R.E.S. award is presented in recognition of an individual or organization that has gone above and beyond the call of duty in helping people with developmental disabilities. This year's recipient was the Lorain County Metro Parks, which was honored for its integration into the design of its new Amherst site of a general sensory room and inclusive play area. The playground will feature items such as adaptive swings, a sand pit, a fishing pond, a splash park, a tent village, and many other structures that will allow individuals with and without disabilities to play together in the community. We were honored to welcome current Director Jim Zeimnik, Assistant Director Jennifer Bracken, and former Director Dan Martin - who's vision and perseverance made this area possible - as they accepted the award on behalf of the Lorain County Metro Parks.



C.A.R.E.S. award winners from the Lorain County Metro Parks (l-r, Dan Martin, Jennifer Bracken, and Jim Ziemnik).

R.I.C.H.E.S. awards are presented throughout the year, with the Diamond Award presented at the In-Service. This year there was no Diamond Award winner, as most entries received by the committee came in late June and it typically takes about a year to process the winning submission.

Three staff members were, however, recognized for their great ideas, one of which the committee hopes will win Diamond in 2013.

Betty Hall of the Murray Ridge Production Center submitted an idea regarding the consumer-designed greeting cards being created in the Murray Ridge Opportunity and Vocational Centers (OVCs). Her idea was to highlight the person behind the design and will not only give the designer a sense of pride in his/her artwork, but will also give the recipient of the card a better understanding of our agency.

The second submission came from Kathy Justy. Kathy's idea showed a great deal of awareness of and concern for our consumers and staff alike. Kathy researched the benefits of adding painted crosswalk designations between the EOVC and our Administration Building. Many of us travel between those buildings on a daily basis and, by adding the crosswalks, we can enhance safety.

The third submission was from Larry Schuman, who submitted an idea to place emergency signs in agency vehicles used to transport consumers. The signs would provide general information to emergency responders from the community about how to interact with people with developmental disabilities. Not all of our consumers are verbal, and many get agitated and fearful in an unexpected situation. To an outsider trying to help, these responses can easily be misunderstood.

Murray Ridge would like to thank all of our staff members for their outstanding work throughout the year. As Superintendent Fisher noted, "We are committed to doing our best on behalf of those we serve. One needn't look long distances to be truly amazed about what we've been able to achieve and sustain."

Throughout the past year...

Early Intervention:

- All EI Specialists completed training in Responsive Teaching through Case Western Reserve University
- Reduced travel expenses every year for the past four years
- Saw a 9% increase in enrolment this past year

Murray Ridge School:

- Has provided numerous tours for local businesspeople and Lorain County political figures
- Remains one of the largest DD schools in Ohio
- Had its Girl Scout troop featured in Ohio Magazine in June

Adult Opportunity/Vocational Centers (OVCs):

- Developed a Creative Art Program through which consumers can showcase art internally and within the community
- Initiated at all three OVCs a MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Via Education) Program designed to help individuals develop their abilities to stand, sit, and walk

Community Employment:

- Runs 19 enclave sites which employ more than 200 individuals per week
- Works with 100 local businesses to provide work for more than 600 Murray Ridge individuals with developmental disabilities

Residential staff:

- Completed renovations at the Liberty Lane and Meister Road homes to improve accessibility and resident quality of life
- Received perfect licensure surveys at the Academy Court, Liberty Lane, South Professor, and Meister Road homes

Service and Support Administration/ Investigative Agents/Family Support Coordinator:

- Impacted more than 1,000 eligible individuals and their families
- Created efficiencies and took leadership roles in raising funds for worthy causes

Administrative Departments:

- Produced record-breaking coverage in local and state media
- Completed numerous and ambitious projects

Art Appreciation Event at EOVC Showcases Murray Ridge Talent

Art is all around us, and opinions on art can vary from person to person. But regardless of opinion or taste, all can show appreciation for the time, effort, and talent required to create an artistic piece.

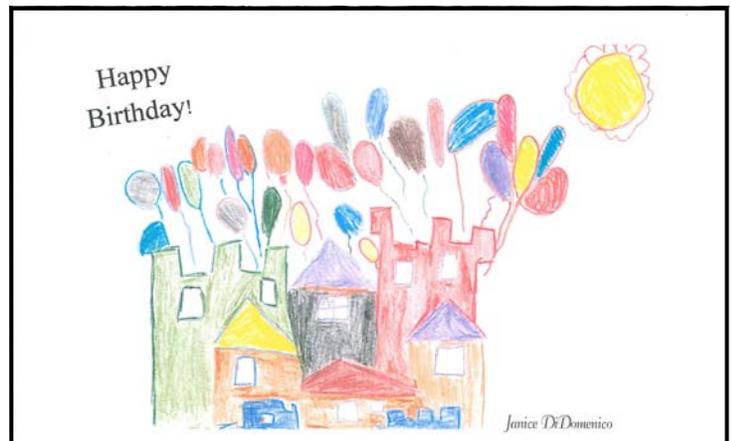
For these reasons, the Murray Ridge Center Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center (EOVC) decided to bring its budding artists together for an evening of food, fun, and fine arts.

The EOVC's Evening of Art Appreciation was the trial run of what is hoped will be an annual and growing event. On Thursday, September 27, consumers and staff from the EOVC gathered for an evening reception that allowed everyone, including family and special guests, to walk the halls and peruse the amazing artwork created by program participants.

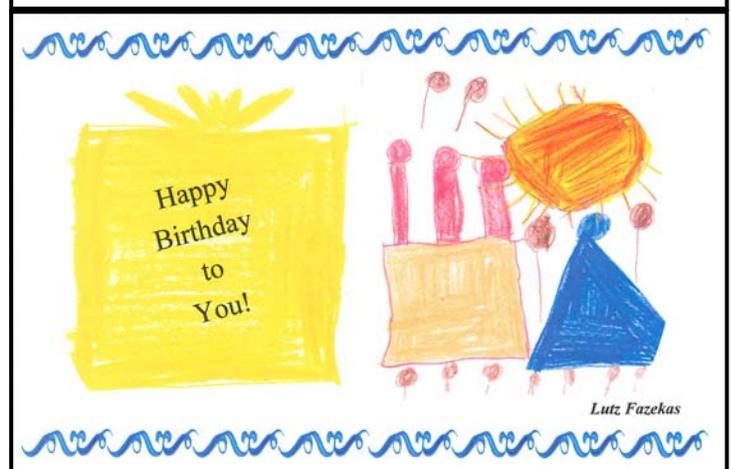
The event tied in with an annual contest whereby consumers are invited to design birthday cards that will be delivered to staff and others throughout the year. The top three card designs are selected at each OVC by both program participants and staff, and each artist whose card is picked is recognized with a certificate of appreciation for his/her work.

A big "thank you" to all the EOVC staff who contributed time and effort to making this inaugural Evening of Art Appreciation a huge success, especially EOVC secretary Betty Hall, who spent countless hours planning and executing the event. "Betty did an excellent job identifying the talent of the consumers and framing the artwork with the right colors to bring out the pictures," said Director of Adult Services Pam Sebastian.

Thank you, Betty! And thank you to all who came to support our Murray Ridge artists.



Winning card (above) created by Janice DiDomenico, an EOVC attendee since 1979. Below, 2nd place card winner, created by Lutz Fazekas, an attendee since 2004.



3rd place winner Kista Atkins (card pictured below) has attended the EOVC since 1982; honorable mention (left) winning card created by Casey West.



Cards made by Murray Ridge Center can be ordered by contacting Trina Albrecht at (440) 284-2720.

Murray Ridge Center Honors our Direct Care Professionals

September is a stand-out month for many reasons; the weather gets cooler, kids go back to school, football season begins.

But for the more than three million professionals employed in direct care, September also brings a very important week of recognition. National Direct Support Professionals Week honors all direct care workers from September 9-15.

Direct care professionals play a critical role in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. These men and women devote themselves to the health, well-being, and happiness of those served.

Murray Ridge Center employs hundreds of direct care professionals in our adult Opportunity/Vocational Centers located in Elyria, Lorain, and Oberlin; at our school; and in our six group homes. Their responsibilities range from assisting with basic activities such as eating, bathing, dressing and mobility, to providing assistance with skill development and daily tasks such as cooking.

While direct care professionals certainly deserve a week to be honored for all they do, at Murray Ridge Center, we celebrate our staff year round.

Murray Ridge Center is proud to honor many direct support professionals through its quarterly Exceptional Service Award. The Exceptional Service Award is presented to Murray Ridge employees whose work shows remarkable dedication and exceeds the already high expectations in meeting the needs of those we serve. Staff are chosen on the basis of nomination letters submitted to the administration, many from the individuals who directly benefit from the excellent care given by the nominees.

The second quarter winner, Joaquin Page, was nominated by four Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center attendees who were asked to speak at the award ceremony.

In one letter, consumer Jeremy Foster noted "I have liked Joaquin from the first second I met him. He's

very friendly and loves talking to people and making new friends. The most important part is that he does countless service hours and volunteers his time."

Other letters noted his dedication to the people he serves, his willingness to work one-on-one with any consumer, and his rapport with other staff members. "The best part of my job is working with the consumers...my interaction with them," Joaquin said. "We have a good time; they talk to me, and I love to listen. And, I love my co-workers. They make me love coming to work."

And coming to work is exactly what Joaquin Page has been doing for almost seven years. When he first started at Murray Ridge, it was because he was looking for something different. Now, he can't imagine ever switching careers, or working for a different agency.

"When I first started, I saw that I could have a chance to help people... It makes me happy to see them working, earning money, being happy. Murray Ridge provides excellent opportunities for our consumers.



Nominators stand with Joaquin at the Award Ceremony (l-r: Shari Reitenbach, winner Joaquin Page, Jeremy Foster, and James Peters).

The consumers actually get out in the community and work, which builds great socialization skills for them.”

“I absolutely love Murray Ridge and all the people I work with,” Joaquin continued. “I’ve learned a lot from the consumers as they’ve learned a lot from me. We teach each other something every day.”

Joaquin is just one of the many direct care professionals honored this September. These professionals help individuals with developmental disabilities live, work, and stay active within communities all over the United States. While the significance of their contributions is sometimes overlooked, direct care professionals enable millions of individuals the chance to live the lives they choose.

“A lot of people get into this field not knowing what they’re getting into,” Joaquin explained about himself and other direct care professionals. “It’s not a piece of cake. It’s a challenging job. Our consumers will push, and it’s the responsibility of the direct care

professional to keep them moving in the right direction. The people who stay in this field do so because they love their job. I know I’ll benefit just as much as the people I work with benefit. And...the longer you do it, the easier it gets.”

This “all guts, no glory” attitude is the mantra of so many direct care professionals who are focused on assisting those who need the most help, who work to make someone else’s life a little easier, a little happier, and a lot more satisfying.

Murray Ridge congratulates Joaquin on winning the Exceptional Service Award, and acknowledges all direct care professionals who work in this challenging – but rewarding – field.

This September, and all year round, thank the direct care professionals of Murray Ridge Center for all they do, and will continue to do, to achieve our mission of helping people...for a lifetime.



Joaquin shakes hands with Board Member Dan White as he accepts the second quarter 2012 Exceptional Service Award at the LCBDD board meeting on August 31.

The Murray Ridge Choraleers are Back!

Murray Ridge Center is proud to announce that the Murray Ridge Choraleers are back in action!

The Choraleers have become a popular performing group for churches, civic clubs, and special events throughout the county. Through singing and entertaining, the Murray Ridge Choraleers provide insight into Lorain County citizens with developmental disabilities and the programs available at Murray Ridge.

The Choraleers are getting ready for the Holiday Season! If you are interested in booking a performance, please contact Tina Tucker, at the Oberlin Opportunity/Vocational Center (440) 774-7400.



Lorain County Board of
Developmental Disabilities

Murray Ridge Center
1091 Infirmary Road
Elyria, OH 44035

Standard Presort
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 146
Elyria, OH 44035

Visit our Web site
www.murrayridgecenter.org



MurrayRidgeCenter
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

Superintendent

Amber L. Fisher, Dr. P.H.

Board Members

Michelle L. Hunt, President
Kurt Koepf, Vice-President
Robert Gajdos, Secretary
Keith L. Boey
Henry Patterson, Jr., Esq.
Vassie Scott
Daniel White