



MurrayRidgeCenter
HELPING PEOPLE... FOR A LIFETIME

The Murray Ridge Courier

April 2013

Family Turns to Murray Ridge Center After Difficult Diagnosis



Amira and her mom, Laura, smile at the Lorain County Commissioners meeting in March.

For many parents, hearing their child's diagnosis is the start of a discovery process that will help them find answers to questions about future abilities, what to expect in terms of development, and how they can help their child work towards his or her fullest potential.

For Avon mom Laura Rouse, however, being told her daughter had Cri du Chat Syndrome was like being spoken to in a foreign language.

piece of a chromosome. The syndrome is extremely rare; it only occurs in an estimated 1 in 20,000 to 50,000 newborns, resulting in limited research and even more limited information on treatment and expectations for development.

But luckily for Laura and Ahmad, they had somewhere to turn.

"After a physical exam by a geneticist, the doctor gave us information, helped us set up appointments with other physicians, and she gave us a number to call for help," Laura said. "I'd never heard of Murray Ridge Center. I had absolutely no expectations. I didn't know what "help" was or how anybody could possibly help us."

Help arrived by way of Early Intervention Specialist Stephanie Bondra, and the Early Intervention Department at Murray Ridge Center.

Murray Ridge Center offers Early Intervention (EI) Services to children of Lorain County from birth to three years of age during their most critical developmental stages. The EI Department offers a wide range of therapeutic and educational activities designed to treat and/or educate infants and toddlers with developmental delays, or those who are at significant risk of having delays. EI Specialists work directly with and provide specialized instruction and supports for parents and caregivers in the home and other community settings, and offer ways for the child's development to be stimulated through active engagement in the family's daily routines. The Murray Ridge EI Program is funded almost entirely by local levy dollars.

Until Amira turned three in early March, her family received specialized instruction in the home from an EI Specialist two times a month. Her EI Specialist, Stephanie, provided Amira's family with strategies to use during their daily routine to stimulate her development.

"This was the very first time I've ever heard of such a thing!" Laura said. "There's little to no research. Not many people have it, and it's really not understood. Being told your child has something that no one has ever heard of? That's a hard thing to hear. With a disability like Down syndrome, at least we'd have a plan. At least we'd know where to go from there."

Not knowing what to expect, however, has worked out nicely for Laura, her husband Ahmad, and the couple's three other children; it has made every milestone that much more appreciated and important.

Amira Bahr was born as a set; she has a twin brother named Adam, along with older brother Omar and older sister Sarah. When Amira was just two weeks old, she was diagnosed with the rare disorder Cri du Chat. The syndrome is a result of Amira missing a

“Stephanie has taught me how Amira learns through interaction and play. I, in turn, taught that information to my husband, my children, my family, and even children within the neighborhood,” Laura explained. “Stephanie also taught Amira’s siblings how to play with her, so that she is always learning to her fullest potential. She taught us how to help her. Everyone from EI helped Amira reach so many goals over the last three years.”

Beyond her twice-monthly sessions, Laura also began taking Amira to the Early Intervention Playgroups – facilitated group play for children in Lorain County with developmental disabilities. At the EI playgroup, Amira was taught how to interact with peers, how to follow when someone else has the lead, and how to interact with a group of children, and with other adults.

“These little things mean SO much. When you don’t know when your child is going to hit a milestone, and they reach that goal, the feeling inside is overwhelming.”

The Murray Ridge Early Intervention Program has a profound impact on children and their families in Lorain County by identifying and addressing special needs during the crucial early years. Children like Amira have a greater chance of reaching their full

potential, and other family members are provided with valuable resources and information to help, heal, and comfort when there is nowhere else to turn.

“Amira has done so many things that we didn’t know if and when she ever would. And it’s all thanks to the Murray Ridge Early Intervention Specialists who have given our family care, love, and support. From them we’ve learned knowledge, we’ve learned courage, and we’ve gained hope for Amira’s future.”



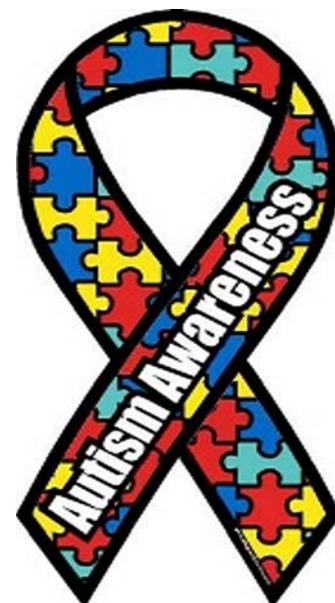
Amira smiles as she plays with her two brothers and sister in her family home. Her parents and siblings have been taught by Early Intervention how to play with and praise Amira.

April is Autism Awareness Month

Join Murray Ridge Center as we observe April as National Autism Awareness Month. According to the National Autism Society, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) affect 1 in every 88 births, and almost 1 in 70 boys. Autism affects individuals differently and to varying degrees, but the National Autism Society estimates that more than 1.5 million Americans are living with some effects of ASDs.

Autism is treatable, and early diagnosis and intervention can lead to significantly improved outcomes. Visit www.autism-society.org for more information or, to learn about programs and services offered by Murray Ridge School, contact Director of Educational Services Dann Swift, or Supervisors Joan Peterson or Lenora Oeftering at 329-3760.

Take time throughout the month of April to learn more about Autism Spectrum Disorders!



Lorain County Commissioners Proclaim March as “DD Awareness Month”

The Lorain County Commissioners adopted a resolution on March 6, 2013, declaring the month of March as “Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month” in Lorain County.

Three program participants accompanied Superintendent Amber Fisher to share their stories and to thank the Commissioners for their support

of the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities (LCBDD), more commonly known as Murray Ridge Center.

Laura Rouse, the parent of 3 year old Amira Bahr who previously attended the Early Intervention Program, praised Murray Ridge Center for its work with her daughter, thanking the specialists who helped her child reach crucial milestones, and saying “It’s all thanks to the Murray Ridge Early Intervention Specialists who have given our family care, love, and support.”

James McElya, who attends the Murray Ridge Elyria Opportunity and Vocational Center and resides in a group home operated by the LCBDD, talked about the services he’s received from Murray Ridge for more than 45 years. And Owen Richardson, a student at Murray Ridge School, used a talker to introduce himself, saying “My name is Owen and I love Murray Ridge School!.”

During the meeting, Dr. Fisher also highlighted the services that more than 2,000 Lorain county citizens with developmental disabilities received from Murray Ridge Center in 2012.

For example, the Early Intervention program served 712 children from birth to three years of age, and Murray



Pictured, l-r: classroom aide Beth Fetzer, Murray Ridge School student Owen Richardson, Early Intervention parent Laura Rouse and her daughter, Amira Bahr, Commissioner Lori Kokoski, Superintendent Amber Fisher, adult consumer James McElya, Commissioner Ted Kalo, and Commissioner Tom Williams.

Ridge School educated 142 students. Murray Ridge Center provided day services and/or work experience for 957 adults in one of the three Murray Ridge Opportunity/Vocational Centers, several community employment enclaves operated by the Murray Ridge Production Center, or in other locations throughout the community. Residential services were

provided to 431 individuals, many of whom require this care due to deceased parents and/or elderly family caregivers. Also in 2012, the Family Support program assisted 700 Lorain County families with the care of a relative with developmental disabilities.

Since 1979, agencies across the country have formally recognized the abilities of persons with Developmental Disabilities (DD) every March. Throughout the month, efforts were made to help the public become more aware of people with developmental disabilities, the accomplishments and potentials of these individuals, and the programs and services available to them. Ohio proudly participates in this tradition and Lorain County’s Murray Ridge Center is eager to support this effort.

Posters announcing DD Awareness Month were displayed in libraries, community buildings, and places of worship across Lorain County throughout the month of March.

Thank you to all who worked throughout the month of March - and all year long - to help educate the community about developmental disabilities, and encourage all to focus on *abilities* first!

A Lifetime of Services for Murray Ridge Center's James McElya

The Murray Ridge Center motto "Helping People...for a Lifetime" is understood well by county residents who have benefitted from the programs of Murray Ridge, and their families.

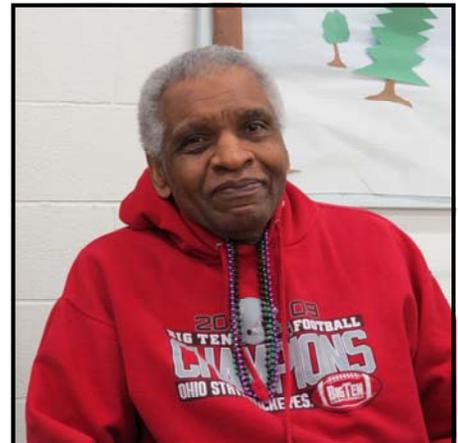
For consumer James McElya, his lifetime of services began even before the formal establishment of the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities, 45 years ago. While today's Murray Ridge Center is the Lorain County Board of DD, Murray Ridge existed before county boards of DD were officially created through House Bill 169 in 1967.

James first became involved with Murray Ridge at the age of 14 and was one of the first students at Murray Ridge School when it opened its doors in 1968. Later, James began attending the first Murray Ridge adult day center, which was built in Elyria. And at age 44, he transferred to the Oberlin Opportunity/Vocational Center when his family moved to that part of Lorain County. He continued at the OOVC for almost 20 years, and only moved back to the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center this past year when, last November, he moved into a Murray Ridge group home in Elyria.

Like the majority of adults with DD in Lorain County, James lived with his family for most of his life. After his father passed away at the age of 88, James required the assistance of Murray Ridge to live safely within the community.

Murray Ridge took action to coordinate a living arrangement that would ensure the availability of necessary supervision and health care, and provide

him with the comfort and safety he needed after leaving the family home. Currently, his residential services are funded through a Medicaid program, and local levy dollars are used to pull down the federal funding that allows James to live – happily – in his new home.



James McElya smiles during a break from his work at the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center.

The move has proven to be beneficial for James; he enjoys having housemates and participating in activities in the home and the community. He particularly likes eating pizza and watching western movies. James also likes to go bowling; and, although he is generally a quiet man, James can become rowdy when he watches basketball games with his housemates and staff, particularly when he sees his favorite team, the Cleveland Cavaliers.

While saddened by the loss of his father, James is content in his new home with his "new family."

And, for James and many other Lorain County citizens with developmental disabilities, with support from the community, the care and guidance he receives from Murray Ridge Center will continue to be there...for his lifetime.

Important DIRECT DEPOSIT Information

Attention Client-Employees

If you have Direct Deposit it is very important that you call the Client Payroll Office at 440.284.2720 **BEFORE** you close or change your bank account.



R.I.C.H.E.S. Presents Diamond Award to Murray Ridge

Recently, the 2013 R.I.C.H.E.S. committee had the honor of awarding its highest level award, the Diamond Award, to two Murray Ridge staff.

Betty Hall

The first Diamond Award was presented to Betty Hall, secretary for the Murray Ridge Production Center. Betty's idea was to add a picture and brief biographical statement to the consumer-designed cards which Dr. Fisher uses to acknowledge birthdays, holidays, and other special occasions. This addition not only gave our consumers a great sense of pride and satisfaction in their creations, but it also spawned a whole new artistic environment within the agency. Murray Ridge is now participating in several art shows throughout Lorain County, including a permanent display at the Mercy Health Campus in Amherst. Artwork has also become a part of the Opportunity/Vocational Center décor, and the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center has held numerous evening events to showcase the artwork as well as the artists.



Betty Hall proudly presents her Diamond Award in front of artwork created by an adult from the Murray Ridge Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center.

Larry Schuman

The second Diamond Award was presented to Larry Schuman, Adult Program Instructor at the Lorain Opportunity/Vocational Center. As a part of his job, Larry oftentimes transports consumers to and from events, outings, and to other agency facilities. Due to his on-

going work with our consumers, Larry knows that sometimes our consumers exhibit behaviors that are confusing to those not familiar with them. Couple this with the situations that can arise while traveling and voila! Larry's idea for the Emergency Vehicle Placard was born.

The placard provides information to emergency personnel regarding the individuals being transported: that they may not be able to verbally respond, may become frightened, and could possibly try to run away. The placard also gives an emergency contact number and directions to a folder located next to the driver's seat that contains vital information on the individuals being transported. Larry ensured that the signs were bright enough to get immediate attention and of a size and shape that would not block the driver's visibility.



Larry Schuman poses next to a Murray Ridge vehicle that displays the new information placards.

The R.I.C.H.E.S. Committee is honored to present these awards and congratulates Betty and Larry on their exceptional ideas that show concern for the welfare and personal satisfaction of our consumers at Murray Ridge Center; acknowledging these ideas is the driving force behind R.I.C.H.E.S.

A PRESCHOOL OPTION

The Murray Ridge Preschool Program offers students with a variety of developmental disabilities the advantages of in-room therapies, an array of state-of-the-art equipment, outstanding staff and an opportunity to learn alongside typically-developing peers.

Murray Ridge Preschool Offers:

- Individualized Speech, Occupational and Physical Therapy in the classroom
- An extensive collection of early childhood educational equipment
- Full-time nurse on site
- Behavior Support Services
- Music classes



- A well-rounded curriculum based on the Ohio Early Learning Content Standards
- Dynamic, ODE-certified staff
- Physical development through indoor/outdoor physical education classes
- Door-to-door transportation services

Did You Know...

The Murray Ridge preschool serves children with a wide range of developmental disabilities, from those with mild delays to those profoundly impacted, and Murray Ridge is a recognized leader in its comprehensive approach to teaching children with autism. The Preschool Program runs Tuesday through Friday. Children with disabilities must be referred to the Murray Ridge Preschool Program by their local school district. Applications for typically-developing children are available through Murray Ridge School (see below).

For More Information Contact:
Dann Swift
Director of Educational Services
Murray Ridge School
9750 Murray Ridge Road
Elyria, Oh 44035
440.329-3760
dswift@murrayridgecenter.org
www.murrayridgecenter.org





April 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 	5	6
Murray Ridge School Spring Break 4/9 - 4/13						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 	19	20 
21	22	23	24 	25	26 	27
28	29	30				

Activities & Events

- 4/1-4/8 - Murray Ridge Pre-school and School Closed for Spring Break
- 4/4 - Murray Ridge Support Group meeting, 4:15 p.m., Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center, 1095 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 4/13 - Family Support Parent Committee meeting, 12:00 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 4/18 - LCBDD Finance Committee meeting, 12:00 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 4/24 - Murray Ridge Center Volunteer Reception, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center, 1095 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 4/26 - Regular Meeting of the Board and Ethics Council, 12:30 p.m., Administration Building, 1091 Infirmary Rd in Elyria
- 4/26 - Murray Ridge Support Group Dance, 7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria

BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

The Lorain County Board of DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on March 22, 2013:

It was reported by Board member Dan White that the Board Award Committee has an Exceptional Service Award winner who will be honored at the next Board meeting. Superintendent Amber Fisher presented information on the Murray Ridge School preschool program; the Board approved a motion to retain - for the 2013/2014 school year - current rates charged for preschool to school districts and parents of typically developing children. The Board unanimously established the dollar amount that the Family Support Parent Committee is authorized to approve in the second quarter of 2013. Public Relations/Volunteer Director Jennifer Judkins reported that Murray Ridge was awarded an Ohio Public Images Award on March 11 for the 2012 Murray Ridge video, "Helping People...For a Lifetime."

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



Further News You Might Use...

We are often in receipt of information from external sources on offerings designed for people with DD. Some examples include summer camps and special interest classes. Many such offerings have an associated cost to the participant. Although we are not in a position to "vouch for" or promote such offerings, we recognize that these opportunities may be of interest to our consumers, their families and/or guardians. If you are interested in learning more about such consumer-oriented events and opportunities, please contact Jeff Neal, Director of Service & Support Administration at 440-324-2366.

—*The Editor*

Exceptional Service Award

Do you know a Murray Ridge employee whose work efforts reflect remarkable dedication and have significantly contributed to the well being of people with developmental disabilities? Nominate that employee for an Exceptional Service Award! If you are a community member; consumer; or parent, guardian, sibling or other relative of a Murray Ridge program participant, submit your nomination to Jennifer Judkins, Public Relations/Volunteer Director. Include a brief paragraph outlining your reasons for nominating the employee. All nominations will be forwarded to the Board for consideration. The Board presents Exceptional Service Awards on a quarterly basis at regular scheduled meetings, usually held on the last Friday of each month at 12:30 p.m. in the Board Room. If you have any questions, contact Jenn Judkins at 440-329-3734 or jjudkins@murrayridgecenter.org.