

The View From The

Ridge



MurrayRidgeCenter
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

A Message From The Superintendent



As we embark upon what will be a very important year, I wish to thank all of those who have supported and will continue to support the mission of Murray Ridge Center. It takes many individuals working together and, in fact, the entire community to provide the supports, oppor-

tunities and environments necessary to enable people with developmental disabilities to live, work and play within their communities. In turn, people with developmental disabilities have so much to teach and to give back as they enjoy and contribute to community life.

First and foremost, I would like to express gratitude to those who it is our mission to serve: Lorain County children and adults with developmental disabilities and the families of these individuals. It is an incredible pleasure to work with and learn from you, and you are why our staff – many of whom have dedicated decades of service to Murray Ridge – remains so energized and committed. A majority of our adult program participants reside with family caregivers and, whether or not they care for a loved one with a developmental disability at home, family members are so important in the lives of Murray Ridge program participants. Thank you for all that you do; your partnership is very much needed and appreciated, and your support is critical to our success.

Many sustained and new successes were achieved at Murray Ridge in 2012. Our team of experts in the Early Intervention Department continued to use the latest methods to support and stimulate the development of infants and toddlers with (or at risk for) delays, while responding to growth in the number of children referred for services. Murray Ridge School continued to operate with a steady enrollment of students from throughout Lorain County, and a staff with seemingly limitless energy, creativity and commitment to optimizing the student experience.

Within the Adult Program, 2012 brought such achievements as expanded opportunities for community employment and volunteer work, new venues for showcasing and celebrating consumer art work, and advancement of the MOVE Program – a system designed to help people with mobility limitations to stand, sit and walk while participating in activities of daily living. Last year, within its six group homes, Murray Ridge maintained its record of outstanding State surveys and, more importantly, its outstanding service to residents. Additionally, through our Family Support Program and Service & Support Administration Department, Murray Ridge coordinated and provided funding for residential services and in-home family supports for more than 1,000 individuals.

The accomplishments of Murray Ridge are a direct result of the collective contributions of an incredibly dedicated, talented and enthusiastic staff.

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The agencies and businesses that contributed through partnerships with Murray Ridge, in 2012, to the well-being of people with developmental disabilities are too numerous to address individually in this message. As the new year begins, we are very excited about a project of the Lorain County Metro Parks, which will incorporate an inclusive play area and general sensory room at its new site in Amherst – I encourage all friends of Murray Ridge to explore and support this project, which will enable people with disabilities to access and thoroughly enjoy community spaces with their families, friends and fellow citizens.

For their collaborative work to address the needs of eligible children, we are grateful to those involved with the Integrated Services Partnership, which includes Lorain County Children's Services, the Juvenile Court, the ADAS Board, the Lorain County Board of Mental Health, and the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Murray Ridge Center). The many individual providers and agencies working diligently in Lorain County to support both children and adults with developmental disabilities are very deeply appreciated for their commitment and countless, on-going achievements coinciding with our mission.

A very special 'thank you' goes also to the 100 local businesses that contract for Murray Ridge Production Center (MRPC) to do work in our day centers or at job sites throughout the county, and that directly employ people with developmental disabilities. While MRPC customers and local employers frequently compliment us on the reliability and high quality work produced by people with developmental disabilities, we must return the compliment by congratulating them on the priceless and life-changing opportunities that they provide. In 2012, the importance of these opportunities was reinforced

through Ohio's Employment First Initiative, a challenge to create more community-based jobs for people with developmental disabilities.

As for sustained success, **the single most important challenge for 2013 is the passage of an issue that will appear on the May 07, 2013 ballot (Issue 1), a 1.6875 mills levy to replace the existing 1.6875 mills levy that will expire after December 31, 2013.** This levy currently accounts for approximately one fourth of the agency's revenue, and more than one fourth of the programs of Murray Ridge Center will be impacted if the levy fails because local levy dollars are used to pull down (provide match money for) federal dollars.

The programs that are most dependent on local dollars are those that help children during important stages of development. Passage of Issue 1 will mean preservation of essential services for Lorain County children and adults with developmental disabilities.

I am confident that, with energetic and continued team work by those committed to the mission of Murray Ridge Center, we will have another successful year. I wish you all a very happy and healthy 2013!

Amber Fisher
Superintendent

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



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.

age, and Murray 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!

Family Turns to Murray Ridge Center After Difficult Diagnosis

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.



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

"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 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.

"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.

Exceptional Service at Murray Ridge Center

On Friday, January 25, the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities awarded its quarterly Exceptional Service Award to Lorain Opportunity/Vocational Center employee, Gloria Henline.

Gloria has been working at MRC for 19 years. She provides vocational skills training to individuals with a wide range of abilities. Gloria provides side-by-side training, makes visual models, and solicits the creation of mechanical jigs and fixtures to help consumers with significant limitations perform vocational tasks.

In a nomination letter submitted by the parent of a consumer, Gloria was described as someone who understands how to work with all people, particularly those on the autism spectrum and others with challenging behaviors. Gloria's supervisor, Terri Camp, describes her as patient and kind, and one who can help individuals form appropriate and

positive relationships with others.

In accepting her award, Gloria thanked the LCBDD for the honor, and ended her short speech by saying "I'm just doing my job...and I love my job."



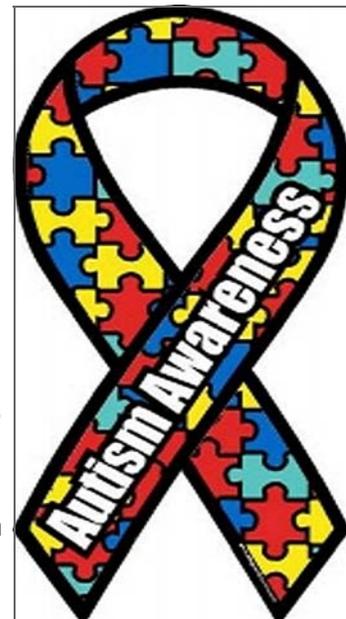
Gloria accepts the Quarterly Exceptional Service Award from Board Member Dan White, with Supervisor Terri Camp, at the Board Meeting on January 25.

April is Autism Awareness Month

Join Murray Ridge Center as we observe April as National Autism Awareness Month. 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!



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

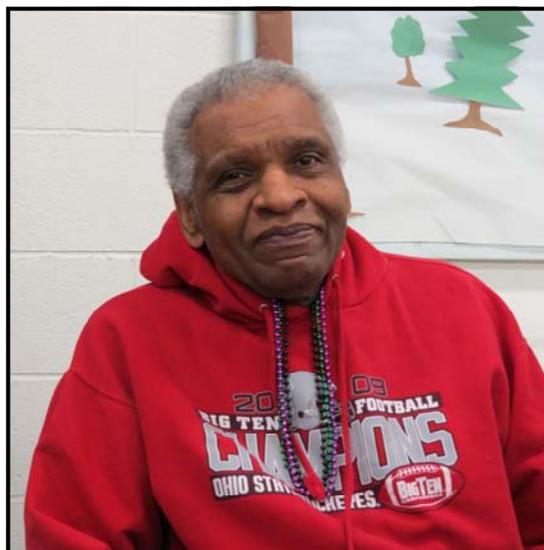
The Murray Ridge Center motto "Helping People...for a Lifetime" is understood well by county residents who have benefitted from the programs of Murray Ridge, and their families.

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 OOVV 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



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

funding that allows James to live – happily – in his new home.

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.

Lorain County Board of
Developmental Disabilities

Murray Ridge Center
1091 Infirmary Road
Elyria, OH 44035

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