



MurrayRidgeCenter  
HELPING PEOPLE... FOR A LIFETIME

# The Murray Ridge Courier

April 2020

## Murray Ridge: Coping With COVID-19

### SSA Continues Coordinating Much-Needed Services

The Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) have been assisting individuals, families and providers during the current state of emergency in Ohio. The SSAs have been reaching out to everyone on their caseloads to identify needs such as medication, medical care, cleaning and personal products, or supports in the home. Through these contacts SSAs have identified consumers who need a variety of supports. SSAs have provided the following supports over the past several weeks and will continue to provide them as needed:

- Picking up medication from the pharmacy
- Picking up personal and cleaning products from the store
- Calling, video chatting or FaceTiming with consumers throughout the day to walk through activities or just provide a familiar face
- Assisting consumers with connecting to their friends via technology
- Assisting consumers to set up regular call times with friends and family
- Setting up one-hour blocks to video chat with consumers in a family setting to allow the parents some respite
- Picking up and dropping off to consumers Girl Scout cookies that were ordered

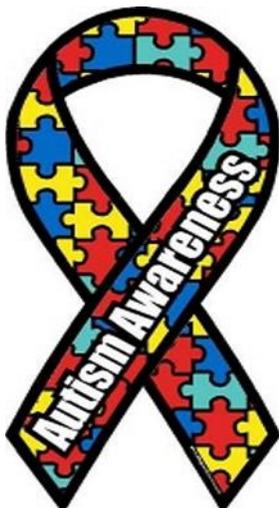
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### Program Status Update

*Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Murray Ridge Adult Day Centers continue to be CLOSED to program participants at this time. The Murray Ridge School continues to be CLOSED at this time. Updates on these closures will be communicated when known.*

*As you are likely aware, the Director of the Ohio Department of Health has issued a Stay at Home Order that extends through May 1, 2020. During the timeframe covered by the Stay at Home Order, the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities will continue to perform essential operations as a Human Service Organization, and you may contact us by phone with any specific concerns or questions. The phone numbers for all Agency programs/facilities (except the Meister Road Home) will be routed to a single line that will be staffed by a receptionist during regular business hours (between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, except on any holidays or Program Closing Days reflected on the Agency calendar). One phone number that may be used to connect with the receptionist on duty during regular business hours is the phone number for our Administrative Offices: (440) 329-3734. For emergencies outside of regular business hours, please call the Crisis Hotline at (440) 282-1131.*

## April is Autism Awareness Month



Please join Murray Ridge Center as we observe April as **National Autism Awareness Month**.

About 1 in 54 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from the Center for Disease Control's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.

ASD is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, and is more than four times more common among boys than among girls.

Autism is treatable, and early diagnosis and intervention can lead to significantly improved outcomes. Visit [nationalautismassociation.org](http://nationalautismassociation.org) for more information.

## **SSA Continues Coordinating Much- Needed Services (continued from Page 1)**

- Providing listings of free activities that consumers, families and providers may access from home
- Providing tools and activity charts to families and providers to assist consumers with structuring the day
- Providing information about food banks and assisting the families to pick up the food
- Through video chats, providing families with strategies and supports related to behavioral challenges
- Assisting providers to develop ways to explain the change to consumers
- Providing resources related to mental health and telemedicine
- Having conversations with consumers about COVID-19 and how to keep themselves safe
- Connecting families with providers
- Picking up equipment stored at the Day program and getting it to consumers/families
- Assisting consumers with applying for unemployment
- Assisting consumers with notifying Social Security about changes in income
- Working with providers to revise Individual Service Plans to adjust staffing levels in group settings
- Providing guidance and support to direct care staff in group settings who work with consumers experiencing difficulty with adjusting to the change in routine

## **Lorain County Mental Health, Addiction, and Recovery Services Board Provides Information About Disaster Distress Line**

According to the Mental Health, Addiction and Recovery Services (MHARS) Board of Lorain County, many people are experiencing stress and anxiety due to the coronavirus, and there is a great resource available nationally to help people cope with their emotional distress: the Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990. It is a 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster.

This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents in the United States and its territories. Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions to an event like the coronavirus.

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

## **Murray Ridge to Operate a Point of Distribution In the Case of Certain Emergencies**

In the event of a county-wide health emergency requiring the distribution of medicine or treatment, Murray Ridge Center, in conjunction with Lorain County Public Health, will operate a temporary Point of Distribution (POD) to provide medicine or treatments to consumers (people with developmental disabilities who have been determined eligible for services from the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities), and their immediate caregivers.

Family members who live in households with children and adults with developmental disabilities will be eligible to receive medication/treatment from the Murray Ridge Center closed POD. Caregivers assigned at the time of POD operation to work with individuals with developmental disabilities who do not live with family will also be eligible to receive medicine/treatment from the Murray Ridge Center POD for themselves and members of their immediate households.

Should the need to operate a Murray Ridge Center POD occur, specifics will be communicated on the Murray Ridge Center Facebook page, on our website, and/or through other local media and other communications.

## County Commissioners Recognize Murray Ridge During DD Awareness Month



In early March, the Lorain County Commissioners proclaimed March as **Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month** in Lorain County. Several representatives from Murray Ridge were present to discuss the various ways the agency supports them each and every day.

Pictured from left to right are: Murray Ridge School student **Tyrese Whitfield**, Commissioner **Sharon Sweda**, Murray Ridge Superintendent **Amber Fisher**, Murray Ridge program participant **Martha Lombeida**, Commissioner **Lori Kokoski**, program participant **Linda Wells** and Commissioner **Matt Lundy**.

## Exceptional Service Award

Do you know a Murray Ridge staff member whose work efforts reflect remarkable dedication and have significantly contributed to the well being of people with developmental disabilities? Nominate that staff member 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 Chris Vasco, Community Education/ Volunteer Director.

Include a brief paragraph outlining your reasons for nominating the staff member. All nominations will be forwarded to the Board for consideration. The Board presents Exceptional Service Awards on a quarterly basis. If you have any questions, contact Chris at (440) 329-3734 or [cvasco@murrayridgecenter.org](mailto:cvasco@murrayridgecenter.org)

## Cathie Leimbach Joins Murray Ridge Board



Vermilion resident **Cathie Leimbach** (right), President and Senior Consultant at Agon Leadership, is the newest member of the Murray Ridge Board. Shown during the swearing-in ceremony is Lorain County Probate Court Judge **James T. Walther**.

## Learning and Fun at Murray Ridge School - Before the Closure



**Top left:** A project funded by Donors Choose entitled "Technology for the Win" was funded for **Amy Daniels's** class. The class received two kids tablets to help students work on basic academic skills such as numbers, letters, shapes, colors, matching, etc., as well as fine motor skills.

**Top right:** Murray Ridge School had a very special guest visit with students -- **Travis**, who was available for adoption at the Friendship Animal Protective League. Therapists brought Travis in to help students from the classrooms of **Lindsay Bookshar** and **Ryanne Gelp** learn how to take care of animals and learn about the process of adoption.

**Below left:** Elyria Catholic basketball teams took part in a Hoops Shoot event at Murray Ridge School. A unique feature of this year's EC girls' team is the TWO sets of twins on the roster! Pictured are EC twins **Abby and Ally Winnen** (left and right), the **Griffin twins, Kaylie and Stephanie** (back) along with Murray Ridge School twins **Audrey and Penelope Dodge** (center).

**Below right:** Students from the classrooms of teachers **Nicole Myntti** and **Julie Maurer** collaborated to build sculptures out of marshmallows and spaghetti noodles. The students had a ton of fun!



## Learning and Fun 'at' Murray Ridge School - After the Closure



**Stephanie Jackson** from teacher **Laurie Davis's** class is pictured at home preparing for her online lesson.



Murray Ridge School may be physically closed during the COVID-19 Pandemic, but learning is continuing thanks to the extensive efforts of school staff to keep connected to students and families.

According to Director of Education **Dann Swift** there are many ways staff, families and students are using technological options to maintain communication and continue with the school's educational program.

"All teachers keep in touch with parents via regular phone calls, and the Remind phone app," Swift said. "In addition to using online options such as Google Classroom and Zoom, work for students to do is being mailed home to their parents and guardians – and this approach seems to be working well."

Swift pointed out that, because much of the school's curriculum is adapted for students, teachers are already used to changing lessons to make them work.

Among the important educational approaches used with Murray Ridge students that is being maintained during the closure of the school is the concept of 'social stories' developed by the school's speech department.

"What's going on in the world may be confusing to students, and these 'social stories' talk about these current events in story form," Swift said. "For example, one story might explain that there's a big sickness in the world, and that's why they're not in school and that's why they have to wash their hands so much. These stories really help students cope with the anxiety they may be feeling."

"These are difficult times, but we're doing whatever we can to work with students and their families to meet their needs," Swift said.



## Having a Meaningful Day during Ohio's Stay-at-Home Order

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) recently published some suggestions as to how those affected can best cope with the current stay-at-home order.

Offering someone a meaningful day means supporting people with developmental disabilities to explore their interests and how they are connected to other people through those interests.

A meaningful day is about self-empowerment, learning, and developing skills, with a goal of helping people realize who they are, what they are capable of, and how they can connect with other people.

Even under the stay-at-home order, a meaningful day made up of planned and purposeful opportunities is possible. An important thing to remember is that these experiences should be goals bigger than just filling time.

Being at home can still offer the opportunity to:

- explore new interests, hobbies, and ideas that have never been explored before, via the internet, streaming, phone calls, etc.;
- develop or maintain skills, abilities, and possible opportunities for supported or competitive jobs;
- explore or maintain skills, abilities, and possible interest in post-secondary educational opportunities or volunteer activities;
- experience virtual companionship with friends and peers;
- learn or develop new skills to support and increase independence;
- and find new skills or interests by creating a discovery journal, which can help people express thoughts and feelings, as well as find and define goals and ambitions.

The article also included a variety of more detailed suggestions through drop down menus labeled: Discover Meaningful Opportunities; Engage in Physical Activities; Try Art & Creative Projects; Explore New Interests and Virtual Opportunities.

To access this article and information in the various drop down suggestion menus, go to:

<https://dodd.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/dodd/about-us/resources/resource-meaningful-day-coronavirus>

## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Spring Series, Breaking Down Barriers Wrestling Fundraiser Cancelled

The four-week program on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), scheduled for late April, has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This important program, taught by Murray Ridge Developmental Specialist **Kathy Bevaque**, is usually held twice per year (spring and fall) - so stay tuned over the coming months for an announcement about the fall session dates.

In addition, the annual Breaking Down Barriers fundraiser for Murray Ridge Center, scheduled for early May, has also been cancelled — however, representatives from Mega Championship Wrestling have said that the 'show will go on' again in 2021. More details on this will be announced next spring.

## Countering the Loneliness of Social Distancing

A recent New York Times article by Jane E. Brody, entitled "Take Steps to Counter the Loneliness of Social Distancing," contained some valuable advice for everyone coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

According to Brody's article, former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said, "**Helping another person can be an incredibly powerful experience that not only forms a connection between people but also reaffirms to ourselves that we're bringing value to the world.** Reach out to your neighbors and ask how they're doing, how you can assist in a big or small way. Many people will be struggling during this crisis. They won't have the help they need, the income or emotional support to get through it."

Dr. Stacy Torres, a sociologist at the University of California, San Francisco, likewise, urged people to "do whatever you can do to connect with people while staying within recommended guidelines, like donating to soup kitchens not just money for the food but for the person who delivers it. We've got to do anything we can remotely."

Brody's article also quoted Michele Weiner-Davis, a relationship expert from Colorado as saying, "Offering to help others, reaching out, adopting the Buddhist perspective of focusing on the here and now, can inoculate a person against anxiety. If you do nothing else, 'Pick up the phone, call someone and ask how they're doing.'"

Dr. Torres advised: "**The old-fashioned telephone is very important. You can hear something in a person's voice that can't be detected in an email.**"

According to Dr. Murthy, "we're wired for human connection that can counter the damaging biological effects of stress and anxiety. Yet, face-to-face relationships have already been undermined by electronic 'conversations' during which human needs and feelings are less honestly conveyed. We may talk more to one another's answering machines than we do to each other."

Dr. Murthy also indicated that conversations needn't be long to have a positive impact. "It's not about finding more time, it's about making the time we have available better quality. Eliminate distractions when talking — no multitasking. **A five-minute conversation when you have someone's full attention can make a big difference to how a person feels**" he said. "The sound and tone of a person's voice provide rich input into how someone is doing."

*To read the entire story, go to: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/well/family/coronavirus-loneliness-isolation-social-distancing-elderly.html>*

### BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

**The Lorain County Board of DD's regular meeting, scheduled for March 30, 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Lorain County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities

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*Happy Easter  
from  
Murray Ridge Center!*



## News You Can Use

Two April resource fairs scheduled by Connecting for Kids (CFK) to highlight local providers and services for families who have a concern about their child, were recently postponed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Please check the CFK website for further event updates.

During the pandemic, CFK will be providing various other online resources for families and kids, including:

- Virtual Facebook Live Speaker Series (on topics such as, Disabilities and Distance Learning Dilemmas and Top 10 Tips to Help Your Child Focus at Home)
- Virtual Zoom Coffee and Chat: How to Survive When Everything is Upside-Down for Families of Children with Moderate-to-Severe Disabilities
- Music Therapy & More

For more information, go to  
[connectingforkids.com](http://connectingforkids.com)