

The View From The Ridge



MurrayRidgeCenter
HELPING PEOPLE... FOR A LIFETIME

Murray Ridge Service and Support Administration (SSA) Staff Shows Support for Families in Many Ways

Troy Eppley's Birthday
4/10/2020



Murray Ridge Service and Support Administrator (SSA) **Natalie Ski-ba** shared a heartwarming story about a very special birthday treat for Sheffield Lake resident **Troy Eppley**.

On April 10, Troy's community turned out to drive by Troy's house to show their love for him on his 34th birthday. Not only did Natalie put together a PowerPoint of the celebration for Troy, she and her daughter took part in the celebration by making special birthday signs for the occasion (pictured left).

According to Natalie, who works with Troy and his family to coordinate various community supports, "Troy and his family make a wonderful team. He has limited verbal communication and uses some sign language. Troy loves bowling and swimming, and also enjoys using his iPad. He is typically always happy and a joy to be around!" Happy Belated Birthday, Troy!

SSA Continues Coordinating Much-Needed Services During Pandemic

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 months 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

—continued on page 7—

It's Graduation Time!



CJ Martin

Check out page 3 for more fun photos showing how Murray Ridge School honored this year's graduating class!

Murray Ridge Early Intervention Services Continue Through Use of Virtual Technology

Due to COVID-19, Murray Ridge's **Early Intervention (EI)** program has transitioned to a mode of 'tele-EI' to meet the needs of our families. EI provides services for parents with young children (aged birth-3) with disabilities or developmental delays, typically visits from specialists trained in child development.

"Initially there were many thoughts about 'how are we going to do this?' and 'how are families going to respond' but the results have been pleasantly surprising!," said Early Intervention Supervisor **Heather Knoble**. "Our staff and families are embracing a new way of delivering services. Many of our families have been engaging in virtual video visits with different platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams and FaceTime). Visits are done much as they normally would be done with Developmental Specialists using a coaching style with the parent," she said.

Through the 'tele-EI' approach, parents are able to report what their child is doing by showing or discussing strategies that they have been trying to help their child reach their goals. Developmental Specialists are then able to observe the child, offer feedback and brainstorm strategies with the caregiver.

"We've had some great success stories where families are coming up with new strategies on their own," Knoble said. "There has also been a little more opportunity to view a child during their routine or the goal they have been working on. For example, parents have been videotaping things like a child drinking or eating and sending it to the specialist for feedback. That's been a great tool to be able to share among our team for feedback as well."

Another popular option for visits has been through phone calls. EI staff have also been emailing or texting resources to families with handouts, videos and websites.

"In the grand scheme of things this is exactly what Early Intervention is supposed to look like," Knoble said. "We always strive to support a parent as their child's best teacher. This model really allows us to be coaches and increases the family's competency and confidence when engaging with their child."



Developmental Specialist **Shawna Livingston** (pictured above, right) talked to **Mariah Lamb**, mom of **Alexis Konst** (pictured above, left) about their experience with virtual visits. According to Shawna, "Alexis's mom indicated that in person visits are better but when it's that way she sometimes will sit back and let the specialist do the work. But now (with virtual visits) the interaction is 'on her.' Virtual EI is going well – mom has fun and is relaxed with EI visits because she and Alexis can have fun and play."

Congratulations Murray Ridge School Class of 2020!



A series of 'Drive By Commencements' were held in late May and early June during which Murray Ridge School staff visited the homes of the Class of 2020 to present certificates . . . and offer hearty congratulations!

Class of 2020 members pictured are:

Left: **Brynne Diedrick**

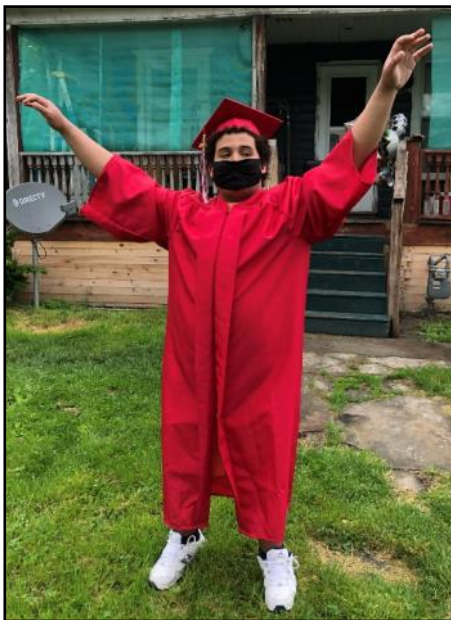
Below left: **Shawn Selmon**

Below center: **Matthew Mowcomber**

Below right: **Tiara Gilchrist**

Bottom left: **Addison Rodgers**

Bottom right: **Taysha Schultz**



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.

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

Murray Ridge School was physically closed during the COVID-19 Pandemic, but learning did continue thanks to the extensive efforts of school staff to keep connected to students and families.

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

"All teachers kept 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 was mailed home to their parents and guardians – and this approach worked well."

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

Among the important educational approaches used with Murray Ridge students that was maintained during the closure of the school was 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' talked about the 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 were not in school and that's why they had to wash their hands so much. These stories really helped students cope with the anxiety they were 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.



Virtual Yoga Classes Popular With Murray Ridge School Students and Families

One of the many creative uses of technology during the COVID-19 closure came from Murray Ridge School teacher **Samantha Polczynski** - affectionately known as '**Ms. Sam**' - who continued to teach yoga classes to her students online from her make-shift home yoga studio.

"I offered yoga class at school for my students. And I also teach yoga privately outside of school with independent clients. When school was cancelled I wanted to somehow continue this," said Ms. Sam. Word of her creative way to teach yoga during the closure quickly spread to the local media, leading to feature stories in the *Chronicle-Telegram* and on WKYC-TV3 . . . where she was nominated for the "#3Heroes" program.

According to Ms. Sam, the yoga classes she taught helped students regulate their emotions and become more aware of their bodies and minds. And, according to comments made to the media, the yoga classes were much appreciated by parents. "He (my son) perks up whenever he heard Ms. Sam's voice," one parent told Channel 3. "I was always worried about him being left out of things because he can't do those things, but she really made it a point to make sure he's involved in everything."



Murray Ridge Staff Create Homemade Masks for Meister Home



Murray Ridge Director of Nursing, **Kevin Eye** (pictured left top) transformed into 'The Tailor of North Royalton' recently as he made some homemade face masks to donate to Murray Ridge's Meister Road Home.

"I have zero sewing skills," he said, "So I figured out a non-sewing method to make reusable cloth masks using Stitch Witchery. I found a suitable template online and through trial and error, I have made 20 masks for Meister. I used material that I had around the home and used hair ties for the elastic."

Among the others in the agency who have also made masks is **Starr Price** (pictured below left) who is an Adult Program Instructor at the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center. Starr, an avid seamstress who attended the Virginia Marti School of Art and Design, and who has performed alterations on uniforms for the Murray Ridge Cheerleaders, created 42 colorful masks for the Meister Home.



"All of us here at Meister Road Home appreciate the time and creativity of everyone who has made masks," said Meister Administrator **Christine Ash**. "We also want to thank staff for continuing to make deliveries to us, make repairs to appliances, etc. We are very grateful for everyone's assistance with making sure the Meister residents' safety is first priority and would also like to thank everyone for their prayers."

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

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**.

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**.



Thank You, Meister Staff



A "Heroes Work Here" yard sign was recently delivered to the agency's Meister Road Home in Lorain as a special 'Thank You' to the staff there for their exceptional efforts providing care to the residents during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Lorain County Board of
Developmental Disabilities

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