



MurrayRidgeCenter  
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

# The View From The RIDGE

Lorain County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities  
Spring Quarterly

SPRING 2022

## April was Autism Acceptance Month!



Murray Ridge Center observed April as National Autism Acceptance Month!



### Two Great Ohio-Based Autism Resources:

Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence: [ocali.org](http://ocali.org)

- This Ohio organization offers educational internet modules and other resources for families, service providers, and individuals who want to better understand autism. Free for Ohio residents!
- Link to modules: [autisminternetmodules.org](http://autisminternetmodules.org)

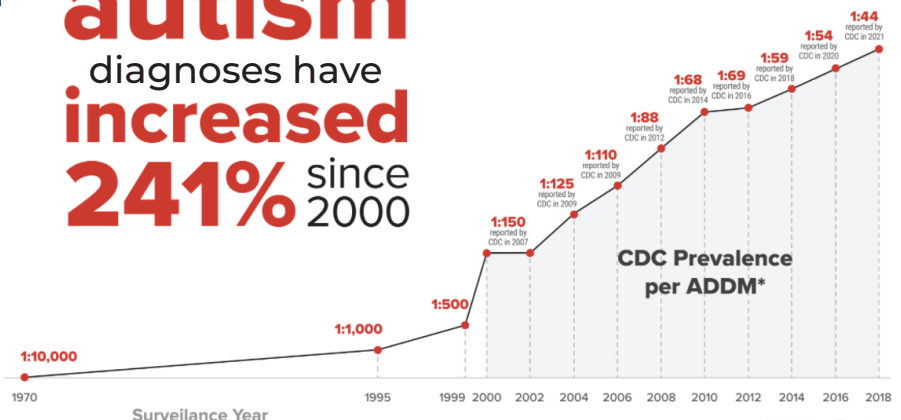
Milestones Autism Resources: [milestones.org](http://milestones.org)

- This East Cleveland organization provides educational tools for families and caregivers to help improve the lives of individuals with autism.

### Normalizing Neurodivergence

As of 2018, the CDC estimates that 1 in 44 children in the United States are diagnosed with autism. That's a roughly 22% increase from its 2016 estimate of 1 in 54. That increase correlates with improved methods of diagnosis. We're spotting autism traits faster, earlier, and more easily. Moreover, these figures show that autism is not a rare occurrence, but a normal and common part of our social reality. That's why autism acceptance and inclusion is so important: it's up to us to change and adapt our society to include people with autism.

**autism**  
diagnoses have  
**increased**  
**241%** since  
2000



\*ADDM (Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network)



# CHARLIE'S first words

## An Early Intervention Success Story

"Is my child developing typically?" Few questions fill a parent with more anxiety than this one. Two Lorain County parents were recently confronted by this very question, and with some help from Murray Ridge Center's Early Intervention Program, they were able to get the guidance and support they needed for their son at a critical stage of his early development.

**Charlie Elliot** was born on February 28th, 2019 in Philadelphia, and he was a healthy, if quiet, baby. He was so quiet, in fact, that his parents, **Emily** and **Scott**, were a little concerned.

"He was an extremely quiet child," recalls Emily. "When I say quiet, I mean as a baby, I just thought he was the most well-behaved thing. You didn't really hear much from him." The biggest cause for concern, she explains, was that "there wasn't much babbling."

Emily is a school psychologist, so Charlie's silence began to raise some red flags and was increasingly concerning to her. "He didn't hit the devel-

opmental milestones of saying his first words on time," she explains. "So, by the time he was 18 months, he was significantly behind."

While he was never formally diagnosed, speech therapists who worked with Charlie suspected that he had a form of apraxia of speech. An apraxia is a neurological disorder that inhibits or prevents the ability to perform an action on command, even if the individual understands and wants to perform it. Someone with an apraxia of speech may know exactly what he/she wants to say and how to say it, but be unable to get his/her vocal tract to make the sounds necessary to form the words.

Needless to say, this was quite difficult for Charlie and his parents, all of whom desperately wanted to break down the barrier to communication. "I knew he was struggling," Emily says. "I know he had so much to say and there was so much going on in his mind, so it was hard to see him struggle so much."



Charlie qualified for and started receiving Early Intervention services in Philadelphia in August of 2020, and when the family moved to Lorain County in December, he began working with Murray Ridge Center.

Charlie was paired with **Kim Ohl**, a Speech and Language Pathologist at Murray Ridge Center, who commenced bi-weekly virtual sessions with the family in March of 2021.

"I don't even know that he had more than five words at the time," recalls Kim about first meeting Charlie. Kim started working with both Charlie and Emily, coaching Emily on strategies to help Charlie practice speaking without discouraging or frustrating him. "The main approach," Kim explains, "is for the parents to have the strategies, so they're the ones who are really doing the work."

Of Kim's approach, Emily explains, "She would let [Charlie] lead the sessions and she would give me guidance on how to best support him." They would focus on specific sounds through repetition by putting items in a "sound box" to help Charlie practice. "For example, if we were working on the 'B' sound, I'd get a ball, a book, a bag, anything that started with a 'B' and put it in there."

Progress was slow at first, just isolated sounds



Charlie with his mother Emily, his Father Scott, and his baby sister Claire





and syllables - things like “wah”, “ruh”, etc. But it was progress, nonetheless.

“Then, in July of 2021, he kind of had this language explosion and all of a sudden he was saying full words,” Emily recalls, “He wasn’t using two or three word phrases yet, but he was using words, which was shocking.”

To say the least, the sudden progress was quite a relief for Emily and Scott. Charlie’s milestones were that much more special after all their hard work. “He said ‘mama’ on January 14th of 2021. He was almost two years old when he said ‘mama’ for the first time,” Emily beams. “I’ll never forget that day in my life.”

Emily says Charlie’s swift progress even surprised Kim: “I remember Kim went on vacation for two weeks, and when she came back she was like ‘Oh my goodness, he’s talking!’”

Charlie’s speaking has continued to improve, and Charlie’s mom and dad couldn’t be happier. “I’m completely blown away by the progress he’s made,” says Emily.

Charlie aged out of Murray Ridge’s Early Intervention Program on his third birthday in February, but Charlie has come so far that it may not be of any consequence. “We’re thinking he’s not even going to qualify for [specialized] services



Charlie hanging out with an Argentine Black and White Tegu lizard

anymore,” Emily says, relieved.

Charlie’s story is just one example of how important early intervention can be for a child with a developmental delay. “This is a great example of what happens when [a parent] puts in the work,” claims Kim, perhaps a bit modestly.

Kim’s impact on Charlie and his family is reflected in how Emily talks about her. “She’s just been

so wonderful to work with. I can’t help but gush about her,” she says. Charlie’s a big fan, too. “He loves her,” Emily says. “He asks for her on a weekly basis.”

“How far he came is kind of amazing to me, even having done this for eighteen years,” reflects Kim. It’s always nice to see when that happens. That’s why I do what I do.”



## ABOUT EARLY INTERVENTION

Our Early Intervention Program serves children from birth to three years of age. We serve families of children who have developmental delays or disabilities. We currently serve more than 400 children, and served 868 children in 2021.

Our Early Intervention Department staff provide specialized instruction to families that focuses on the development of strategies for them to use in promoting the development of their children in their own homes on a day to day basis.



# SPECIAL OLYMPICS AWARD BANQUET



**Congrats to  
all Special  
Olympians!**  
Enjoy these  
highlights!

## Honoring Our Winter 2019 - Winter 2022 Special Olympians

The 2022 Special Olympics Awards Banquet was held this past March 21st! More than 100 athletes were in attendance with their loved ones at the Spitzer Conference Center at Lorain County Community College, where they enjoyed a dinner prepared by the college's culinary arts program, a plethora of awards presentations, and more.



### Jeremy Foster's Invocation

Jeremy Foster delivered a moving invocation before the banquet's audience of 168 attendees.

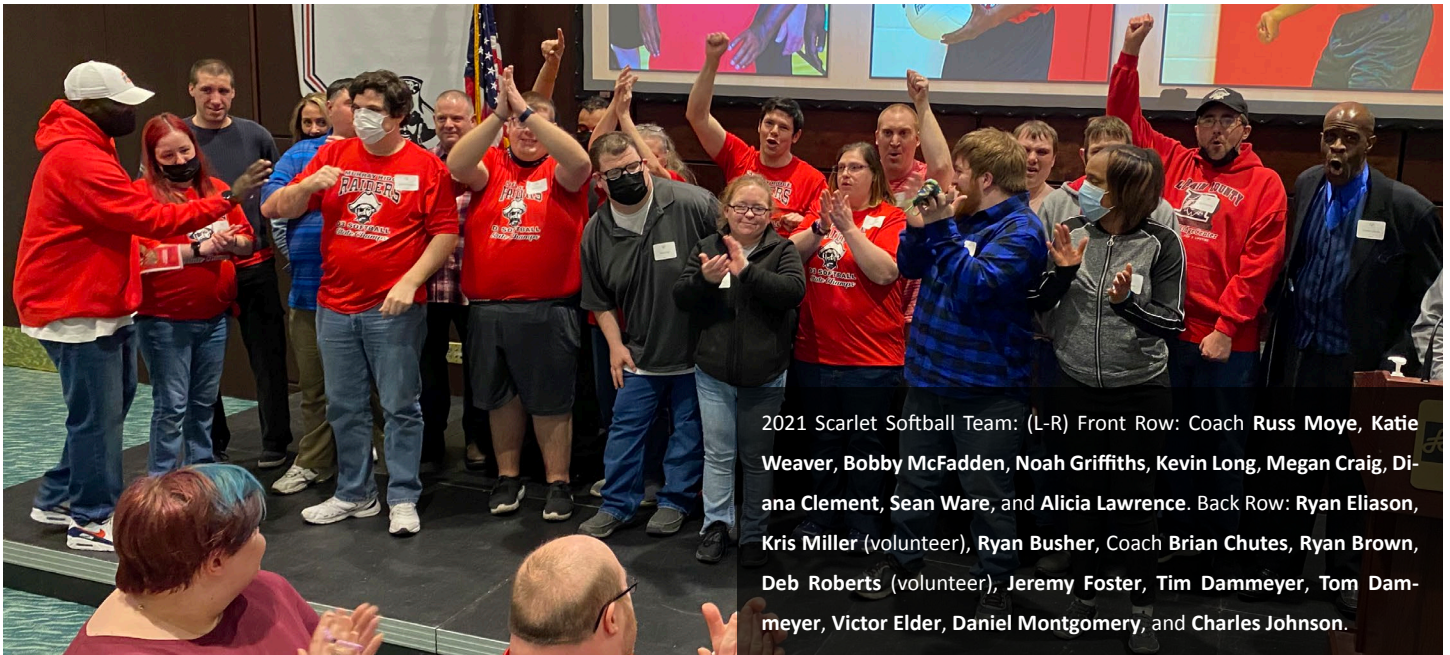


### Hall of Fame Inductees

Congratulations to Kurt Caris and Leroy Davis, the most recent inductees to the Murray Ridge Center Special Olympics Hall of Fame!







2021 Scarlet Softball Team: (L-R) Front Row: Coach **Russ Moye**, **Katie Weaver**, **Bobby McFadden**, **Noah Griffiths**, **Kevin Long**, **Megan Craig**, **Diana Clement**, **Sean Ware**, and **Alicia Lawrence**. Back Row: **Ryan Eliason**, **Kris Miller** (volunteer), **Ryan Busher**, Coach **Brian Chutes**, **Ryan Brown**, **Deb Roberts** (volunteer), **Jeremy Foster**, **Tim Dammeyer**, **Tom Dammeyer**, **Victor Elder**, **Daniel Montgomery**, and **Charles Johnson**.

## Banquet Recap:

In addition to congratulatory addresses from Special Olympics Coordinator **Shawn Hatcher** and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**, **Jeremy Foster** delivered a moving invocation. The keynote speaker at the event was **Kelly Gunther**, an Olympic speed skater with an inspiring story. Special recognition was given to **Kurt Caris** and **Leroy Davis**, the most recent Hall of Fame inductees, and the Murray Ridge Raiders Scarlet Team, the 2021 Softball State Champions. The ceremony also acknowledged community supporters, including **Casey Wolfe** at Amherst City Schools; Amherst Athletic Association; Rebman Recreation, Inc.; Shoreway Sports & Graphics; Indian Hollow Lakes Golf Course; and Sli-man's Sales & Service, Amherst.



**Shawn Hatcher** presenting Olympic speed skater **Kelly Gunther** with a special plaque of recognition



**Joseph Cechura** receiving his medal from Board Member **Becky Cornman** while **Diana Clement** waits to get hers from Board Member **Catherine Leimbach** (left)



**Charles Johnson** with Board Member **Becky Cornman**

## Awards

All athletes who participated in Special Olympics activities from Winter 2019 through Winter 2022 were recognized and given a medal for their efforts!



## EASTER VOLUNTEERING AT OVCS



This past February, **Elyria Parks and Recreation** enlisted the help of Murray Ridge program participants in preparing Easter Eggs for the City of Elyria's Annual Easter Egg Hunt! Volunteers from the Oberlin and Elyria Opportunity and Vocational Centers put together plastic eggs, which required delicate finger dexterity, color matching, and sorting skills.

Front row: **Marcella Davis**, **Amanda Spreng** (purple mask)  
Back row: **Annie Cirilo** (green top), **Shania Williams**, **Jaime Velez**, **Brione Monk**, Staff **Eva Torres**, **Annie Pugh**, **Abby Kisser**, **Yaletti Arroyo** (red mask)

## MEAL DELIVERIES

### Helping Our Community

The Amherst Office of Aging has a program that delivers fresh, hot meals to seniors, and Murray Ridge Center adult program participants have been volunteering in this effort. According to **Beth Wissinger**, an Adult Program Instructor at LOVC, volunteering in the meal delivery program helps Murray Ridge program participants build confidence and engage with their community. Their volunteer efforts are so appreciated that a number of the seniors in the program specifically ask for the Murray Ridge Center crew to deliver their meals to them! In addition to delivering meals, volunteers help pack the meals, bring seniors their newspapers, and do anything else they can to be helpful. By all accounts, the Murray Ridge crew loves having the opportunity to help people in need throughout its community.

**Hector Ortiz**, **Zuli Perez**, Amherst Office of Aging meal delivery program organizer **Carrie Adams**, and **Chelsie Jenkins**.



**Zuli Perez** delivering food to one of the sixty seniors enrolled in Amherst Office of Aging's meal delivery program! The program in Amherst delivers more than fifty meals every day.

## Nominations Sought for Exceptional Service Awards

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 Kevin Naughton, Community Education/Volunteer Director. Please 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. If you have any questions, contact Kevin at (440) 329-3734 or kevin@murrayridgecenter.org



# Now Hiring!

# FEATURED positions



### Direct Support Professionals (Home Setting)

We have openings available for permanent and PRN (as-needed) positions to care for residents of our Meister Road Home. Hours vary based on position and/or assignment.

### Service and Support Administrator (SSA)

We have openings for full-time Service and Support Administrators. Hours are generally during the day.

### SSA Data/Account Clerk

We are looking for a full-time SSA Data Clerk. Hours are generally during the day.

### Direct Support Professionals (Adult Program Setting)

We have openings available for PRN (as-needed) positions to care for participants in our Adult Program. Hours are generally during the day.

**We are looking for PRN (as-needed) Speech and Language Pathologists**

### Custodial/Maintenance Positions

We are looking for PRN (as-needed) custodial/maintenance help and two full-time Maintenance Technicians. Hours are generally during the day.

**We provide the training.  
You provide the ♥**

To see our current openings and to apply, go to the Murray Ridge website and click on "Opportunities"

**All candidates:**

Must have valid Ohio drivers license, good driving record, and High School Diploma/GED. Must pass background check, drug test, and physical.



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

**Photo of the Spring:** Alicia Lawrence enjoying  
a morning skate at Lorain's Skate World!

## Contact Us

Phone :  
440.3293734

Address :  
1091 Infirmary Road  
Elyria, OH 44035

Web & Email :  
[www.murrayridgecenter.org](http://www.murrayridgecenter.org)  
[kevin@murrayridgecenter.org](mailto:kevin@murrayridgecenter.org)

Be sure to follow us on Facebook!

