

## Attitudes, Ideas and Opportunities Make a Successful Combination

With an infectious grin and a friendly, "can-do" attitude, it is easy to like **Jesse Frisch**. This 21 year old North Ridgeville High School graduate's philosophy about life is "I just need the chance and I'll do it." After leaving the walls of his alma mater, Frisch knew he needed to plan for his future, and he took this same positive attitude with him on his quest for his first job.

As anyone who has ever held a job knows, *getting* a job can be a difficult task, and especially so in today's job market. For someone with both a developmental and a physical disability, this same difficult task may seem nearly impossible. But then "impossible" is a concept that Frisch chooses to ignore. "I wanted a job, and I was going to keep trying until I got one," says Frisch matter-of-factly. Frisch, who is legally blind, faced an obstacle many of us could never fully understand-he actually *could not see* the work to be performed. Regardless of this seeming obstacle, he was determined to join the workforce. He knew, however, that he needed some assistance with job placement, so the Cleveland Sight Center referred him to Murray Ridge Center.

In December 2007, Frisch began a three-week training program at Murray Ridge Center with a mobile cleaning enclave. Because he can't see, he was unsure how he would be able to clean tables and vacuum floors. He even practiced at home, but could not be certain that his work was thorough. Then, Murray Ridge Job Coach **Mark Naelitz** had an idea that changed everything: since Frisch was used to "feeling" his way around, this adaption could be used as a strength in training, rather than as a deficit.

Naelitz taught Frisch how to "map out" the area of a room to be mopped or vacuumed. He would first walk the perimeter to measure how many steps it would take him to walk from one end of the room to the other and to get a feel for the shape of the room. From this, he knew approximately how many "laps" would be required to thoroughly clean the floor. The table-top cleaning technique was much the same. This method proved to be very successful for Frisch, who is proud of his quality of work. "It may take me three or four times longer to clean than someone else, but when I'm done, I know I did it right," smiles Frisch.



***Murray Ridge Community Employment consumer Jesse Frisch proudly stands by his work station at a local Marshall's Department store.***

It would take several months before an appropriate job could be developed, but, in October 2008, Frisch got the chance he had been waiting for. Marshalls Department Store in Avon, Ohio needed an employee who could open boxes of clothing and sort them for pricing and display. The store manager was so impressed by Frisch's enthusiasm, that he decided to give him a chance, despite the perceived limitations for performing such a job. "While he showed the potential to be a good worker, the supervisor was mostly impressed by Jesse's utter determination to succeed. I think that, more than anything else, is what convinced the supervisor to hire him," said Naelitz.

Naelitz said that the same "feel" technique used to train Frisch for janitorial duties was applied to his training at Marshalls. "I showed Jesse how to take the items out of the box and to grab one end of the item with one of his hands. Then he was to search for key things on the item, such as a collar or a zipper to indicate whether it was pants or shirts, etc. Once he's determined what the item is, he is able to place the item on the appropriate table. The Marshalls staff have been tremendously supportive of Jesse and have actively found ways to accommodate his disabilities."

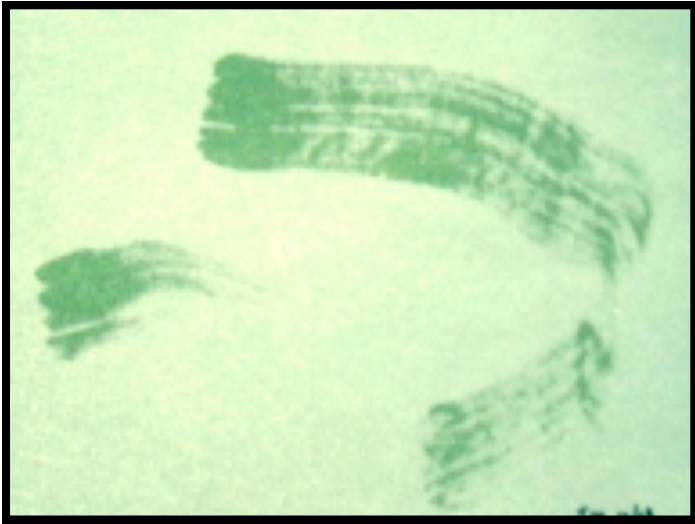
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# The Art of the Matter

For centuries visual artists have poured their energies into drawings, paintings, sculptures and a variety of other creative mediums to express their emotions and to interpret the world around them. Some of these artists have found great acclaim from their works, while others perhaps simply found an outlet in which to express themselves. The latter is precisely what Murray Ridge School Behavior Support Specialist **Bridget Novak** encourages students in crisis to do.

In order to help frustrated students deal with their emotions in a healthy way, Novak began encouraging them to create "Anger Art." With paint donated by Cleveland Painting, Novak began working with students in the Chill Zone, a quiet room away from busy classrooms where students can relax and regain their composure. When students are in crisis, Novak guides them toward paper that is already taped to the wall.

Explains Novak, "I assist the students by providing them with paint, brushes and paper. We shake the containers of paint, which in and of itself can meet sensory needs for some students. I open the container and the student is assisted in dipping the brush. Once they get started, it is plain to see the calming effect on the students when they begin to apply the paint."



***A crisis masterpiece hangs on the wall of the Chill Zone.***

According to Novak, the students begin to focus on the paint colors, the textures and the brushing, and the entire process seems to help them to "switch gears into a calmer state." "Almost always, art therapy at Murray Ridge School deescalates target behaviors," she says.

Rather than disposing of the art once the crisis has ended and the student is calm, Novak recruited the help of an art student from Oberlin College to mat the more than 20 pieces of Anger Art that now grace the walls of the Chill Zone. At the end of the school year, Novak intends to



***Heavy brushstrokes reveal the emotions experienced by students as they create their "Anger Art." Once these feelings have been expressed, the students tend to feel calmer.***

send the artwork home for the students' families to enjoy. "I may enter some things in the Elyria Art Walk exhibit, with written permission from families, of course. And I'd be more than happy to travel with the art and speak."

Novak says that when you look at the art you can see the frustration and increased energy in the heavy brushstrokes and smeared colors. But in the end, the students have expressed themselves and then have something tangible to enjoy. Only time will tell if these young artists will find the acclaim of a Renoir or a Picasso, but there is little doubt that they have all found a beautiful way to express themselves.

## Attitudes...

*Continued from page 1*

Murray Ridge Vocational Placement Specialist **Shawn Hatcher** mirrors the sentiment about Marshalls. "Marshalls has always been supportive of people with disabilities. They have carved out opportunities for several of our clients over the years. They're very socially-conscious. And when you have an employee like Jesse, it's a win-win situation."

Certainly, inventive training techniques and workplace support have played an important role in Frisch's employment success. But there is no doubt that, more than any other single factor, it is his sheer determination to become part of the workforce and to contribute to his community, that has been his greatest ally on his road to success.

## Cats in Hats



***Students in Miss Kristin's pre-school class don the famous hat worn by an even more famous cat as they learn about the magical world of Dr. Seuss.***

## 2009 Annual Action Plan

The Lorain County Board of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities has recently passed its Annual Program and Expenditures Plan with unanimous approval. This plan, which marks the fourth year of a five-year strategic plan, highlights agency activities and achievements in 2008, and provides the framework for agency goals for 2009. If you would like to receive a copy of this document, please contact Racheal Seibert at 329-3734.

## April is National Autism Awareness Month

April is National Autism Awareness Month and is a perfect time for individuals to educate themselves about this developmental disability that, according to the Centers for Disease Control, affects approximately one in every 150 American children. Symptoms typically begin before the age of three and are characterized by impaired development in communication, social interaction and behavior.

As part of an on-going effort to share information about autism education, Murray Ridge School teachers and staff recently presented their innovative model for Autism education at the "Building on Strengths Autism Conference." This method, the Ziggurat Model, focuses on positive behavioral interventions and supports, and is designed to encourage collaboration between teachers, School administrators and caregivers.

If you would like to learn more about autism, or about the Ziggurat Model, contact Lenora Oeffering at 329-3760. If you are a parent of a current Murray Ridge student with Autism, please join us at the Autism Awareness Family Fun Night on Thursday, April 30 from 5:30—7:00 p.m. at the Murray Ridge School, 9750 South Murray Ridge Road in Elyria.

## The Gift of Friendship

With modern technology it can be easy to form friendships with people in other cities—or even in other countries—with a few clicks on a keyboard. However, for persons with developmental and physical disabilities, the use of a computer can be challenging. So in the fall of 2008, **Cheryl Bieri**, a teacher from Murray Ridge School, began a traditional pen-and-paper "pen pal" program for her students, enabling them to exchange letters and drawings with students attending Summit Academy. Through this activity these students have formed new friendships through the art of the written word, and have discovered that they have more commonalities with other children than differences.

Recently, the Murray Ridge School students had the opportunity to meet their pen pals face-to-face. Between playing games of catch and reading books together, the students were able to engage in mutually-enjoyed activities with the people they had previously only known through words and pictures. Through this activity, the students are able to share ideas and laughs, and have received one of the greatest gifts of all: friendship. "My students truly seem to enjoy corresponding with their pen pals, and plan to continue doing so next year. We are even planning to meet them for a picnic this April," said Miss Bieri. This program has been the beginning of some beautiful friendships, indeed.



***Murray Ridge School pen pals Logan Balko, Zachary Grimmett and Joe Farina.***



## Family Fun Fair and Safety Fest

It's officially spring, and after months of bundling up and shoveling snow, most everyone is ready to get out of the house for some springtime activity.

We at Murray Ridge Center invite you to help us greet the new season at our 8th Annual Family Fun Fair. The day's events will include food, games, raffle prizes, face-painting, tips from local health and safety personnel, a birds of prey show and other exciting entertainment. Information booths from other local agencies will also be there to showcase various services and resources available in Lorain County.

This free event takes place:

**Saturday, April 25, 2009  
11:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.  
Murray Ridge School  
9750 Murray Ridge Road,  
Elyria.**



## Thanks From the Murray Ridge Support Group

The Murray Ridge Support Group would like to extend a sincere "thank you" to all who joined them for the Annual Spaghetti Dinner on March 14. The group would also like to thank the AmVets Post 55 In Sheffield Lake for its generous donation of the food and the facility. The event was a great success and raised more than \$3,500 to go toward programs and activities for Lorain County citizens with developmental disabilities.



## April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, child abuse affects nearly 900,000 American children annually. Developmental disabilities are among the consequences of child abuse, so during the month of April, Murray Ridge is supporting the community education efforts of the Lorain County Community Collaborative on Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention. Throughout the month, pinwheels will be placed throughout the county representing cases of reported child abuse. In addition, the 4th Annual Child Abuse Awareness Conference will be held Wednesday, April 15th from 7:45 a.m.—5:00 p.m. at the Lorain County Community College. Among topics discussed will be Shaken Baby Syndrome, Human Trafficking and Internet Crimes. If you would like more information on these important activities, please contact Heather Knoble at 329-3760.

## BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

### The Lorain County Board of MR/DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on March 27, 2009:

Dr. Fisher presented an overview of pre-school programs operating in our area, including cost and payment schedules. For the 2009/2010 school year, Dr. Fisher recommended a charge of \$5.00 per day for typically developing pre-schoolers, with the additional charge of \$7.50 per day if agency transportation services are accessed. It was further suggested that charges be billed in quarterly installments. The Board unanimously approved these recommendations. The Board also examined issues impacting school district utilization of Murray Ridge for preschoolers with IEPs. After discussion, a motion was made to charge Lorain County school districts \$7,500 for preschoolers with special needs in the 2009/2010 school year. The resolution passed unanimously. In other business, Al Sprague, the Director of Residential Service & Support Administration, updated the Board on quarterly Family Support allocations, and the Board unanimously approved the requested Second Quarter budget. Racheal Seibert, Manager of Community Education and Volunteers, presented an overview of the efforts being undertaken to make the agency's website more informative and user-friendly. Pamela Sebastian, Director of Adult Services, updated the Board on a committee she has assembled to analyze factors associated with consumer satisfaction with day services. Ms. Sebastian will report back to the Board as the analysis progresses. Finally, Superintendent Fisher led a discussion on changes in the funding environment that have occurred since 2003, when the agency passed a policy prohibiting concurrent use of Family Support Services and enrollment on the Level 1 waiver. After considering factors currently impacting both the agency and the families we serve, the Board unanimously agreed to rescind that policy.



# April 2009

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

## Activities & Events

- 4/6—Murray Ridge Support Group Meeting, 4:15 p.m., Elyria Work Activity Center, 1095 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 4/9—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:00-6:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School
- 4/10—Agency Closed in Observance of Good Friday
- 4/13—4/17—Murray Ridge School Closed for Spring Break. Classes resume April 20.
- 4/16—LCBMRDD Finance Committee meeting, 12:00 p.m., Elyria Work Activity Center
- 4/17—Murray Ridge Support Group dance, 7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 S. Murray Ridge Road, Elyria
- 4/20—Family Support Parent Committee meeting, 6:30 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road
- 4/23—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:00-6:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School
- 4/24—LCBMRDD Meeting, 12:30 p.m. Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 4/25—Murray Ridge Center Family Fun Fair & Safety Fest, 11 a.m.—2 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 S. Murray Ridge Road, Elyria



## Lunch Menus

Cost Per Day: Youth = \$2.65, Adults = \$2.70

March 30-April 3

April 20-24

May 11-15

**Monday-** Salisbury Steak w/Gravy, Scaloped Potatoes, Corn, Peaches, Cookie

**Tuesday-** Ham & Cheese on Wheat Bread, Peas & Carrots, Pears, Nutri-Grain Bar

**Wednesday-** Meat Lasagna, Green Beans, Tossed Salad w/Low fat Dressing, Wheat Bread, Cookie

**Thursday-** Pepperoni & Cheese Pizza, Tossed Salad w/Low fat Dressing, Banana, Nutri-Grain Bar

**Friday-** Fish Patty, French Fries, Cole Slaw, Apple Slices, Wheat Bread, Cookie

April 6-10

April 27-May 1

May 18-22

**Monday-** Ham, Wheat Bread, Rice Pilaf, Diced Carrots w/Herbs, Applesauce

**Tuesday-** Hamburger on a Bun, Potato Wedges, Corn, Crushed Pineapple, Cookie

**Wednesday-** Chicken Patty w/Gravy, Au Gratin Potatoes, Green Beans, Fruit, Wheat Bread, Cookie

**Thursday-** Pepperoni & Cheese Pizza, Tossed Salad w/Low fat Dressing, Banana, Nutri-Grain Bar

**Friday-** Macaroni & Cheese, Cooked Carrots, Diced Pears, Cookie



April 13-17

May 4-8

May 25-29

**Monday-** Chicken Patty on a Bun, Potato Rounds, Corn, Crushed Pineapple, Cookie

**Tuesday-** Meat Lasagna, Tossed Salad w/Low fat Dressing, Diced Peaches, Nutri-Grain Bar

**Wednesday-** Rigatoni w/Meatballs, Green Beans, Tossed Salad w/Low fat Dressing, Wheat Bread, Cookie

**Thursday-** Pepperoni & Cheese Pizza, Tossed Salad w/Low fat Dressing, Fresh Fruit, Nutri-Grain Bar

**Friday-** Meat/Cheese Burrito, Spanish Rice, Cole Slaw, Applesauce

Lorain County Board of Mental Retardation  
& Developmental Disabilities

Murray Ridge Center  
1091 Infirmary Road  
Elyria, OH 44035

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[www.loraincountymrdd.org](http://www.loraincountymrdd.org)

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If you have a news item that you would like to include in the Murray Ridge Courier, please email relevant photos, stories or event information to Racheal Seibert at  
[rseibert@loraincountymrdd.org](mailto:rseibert@loraincountymrdd.org).

Submissions are due by the 20th of each month for the following month's newsletter.



### Further News You Might Use...



We are often in receipt of information from external sources on offerings designed for people with MR/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 Albert Sprague, Director of Residential Service & Support Administration. You may reach him by telephone at 440-324-2366.

### Did You Know?

As any young child will tell you, Easter is on its way. But, as you are decorating eggs and buying chocolate bunnies, you may be interested in a few fun facts from [infoplease.com](http://infoplease.com) that your children *may not* know:



- Approximately 90 million chocolate bunnies are produced each year.
- According to 76% of Americans, bunnies should be eaten ears first.
- Each Easter, Americans buy more than 700 million Peeps shaped like chicks. Yellow is the most popular color.
- Americans consume 16 billion jellybeans at Easter. Cherry is the preferred flavor for 20% of children.
- Candy is a relatively recent Easter tradition, with chocolate eggs first made in Europe in the early 1800s.

**Happy Easter!**