

National Autism Awareness Month

April is National Autism Awareness Month and is a perfect opportunity for people to educate themselves about this developmental disability. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that in 2007, approximately one in every 150 American children were affected by autism. Nearly one in 94 boys is affected. Murray Ridge School Supervisor **Lenora Oefering** notes that the symptoms associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, or ASD, generally begin before the age of three and last throughout a person's lifetime. According to the Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—Fourth Edition, Autistic Spectrum Disorders are developmental disorders characterized by impaired development in communication, social interaction and behavior.

Indicators of ASD are usually apparent before a child's third birthday. In some children, signs show within the first few months of life; in others, the signs more gradually manifest themselves. Parents are often the first to notice the traits of an ASD, with up to 1/2 of parents noticing a problem before their child's first birthday.

Because of the increase in the number of students with autism at Murray Ridge School, the school began an Autism Program in 2004. Our teachers participate in special training in order to provide the best services to these individuals so that they have the opportunity to succeed both academically and behaviorally. Says Oefering, "the autism services currently provided to Murray Ridge School students include six designated classrooms

which serve six students each." The classroom structure incorporates pictures, schedules, organized work systems and assistive technology.

Communication skills are typically a significant challenge for people with ASD. According to the CDC, while some people may have relatively good verbal skills, approximately 40% of children with ASD do not talk at all. Those who do speak may use language in atypical ways. For example, some children will simply repeat what others say, a condition called echolalia. The repeated words might be said right away or at a later time. Others may be unable to initiate or participate in a reciprocal conversation. They may further experience difficulty understanding tone of voice, body language or gestures.

Many of us have moments of discomfort in social situations. But for persons with ASD, normal social interactions and behaviors that occur during a person's development prove especially difficult. For example, as children grow and develop, they often learn to interact with others through imitation. Children with ASD may not do this. Further, they may fail to make eye contact and may have difficulties understanding facial expressions and feelings of others. The lack of similar or empathetic exchanges of expression with others makes social interaction challenging.

Unusual behaviors are also common for people with ASD. While many of us are creatures of habit, routine can be particularly important for people with ASD. Even a seemingly insignificant deviation from the normal routine can be quite upsetting. According to Oefering, people with ASD may have difficulty regulating

their behavior and emotional responses. Unusual responses to sensory stimulation, such as touch, smell, sound or sight, whether it be a hypersensitivity (overdeveloped sensitivity) or hyposensitivity (underdeveloped sensitivity) is also a common characteristic.

Says Oefering, "clearly, autism is a complex disorder, and no two persons with an ASD will exhibit the exact same symptoms. However, Autism Awareness Month is a golden opportunity for all of us to learn more and to participate in expanding the opportunities of the population we have the privilege to serve."



If you are interested in learning more about autism and the autism services provided by Murray Ridge School, Oefering said that there will be an in-service on Wednesday, April 29 from 4:00-5:30 p.m. Please keep an eye out for informational fliers from the School. "It's a mini-in-service designed for parents or community members who are interested in an overview of autism and Murray Ridge services."

Dinner and a Show



Pictured above, back row: **Michael Diedrick, Keith Hupfer**
Front row: **Rosa Santiago, Gretchen Abbey**



Pictured above: **Tom Altman**



Pictured above: **Kista Atkins**



Members of the Murray Ridge Center singing group, The Choraleers, performed for the Elyria Work Activity Center Seniors Group in late March. The Seniors, in turn, provided a lunch for the musical group. Led by Director **Danielle Musat**, the group currently has 15 dedicated members who practice every Friday for an hour and a half, and who give approximately 20 performances to community groups each year. Their next performances will be on Tuesday, April 22 at 11:30 a.m. for the Oberlin Work Activity Center Senior Group, and on Friday, April 25 at 10:15 a.m. for the Lorain Work Activity Center Senior Group.

Agency Welcomes New Board President



Lorain County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board member **Michelle L. Hunt** was recently elected as the new Board President. Hunt has been a member of the Board since September 2006, a year and a half after her son Landon entered the Early Intervention program at Murray Ridge School.

Hunt may very well be Murray Ridge Center's greatest advocate, spending much of her time engaged in Board activities or volunteering at the School. "Murray Ridge Center saved our lives. When Landon was an infant, I was told he would never talk, and now he's thriving. Joining the Board of Murray Ridge was really my way of saying 'thanks' and giving back to an agency that has given my family so much."

Pictured left: Lorain County Board of MRDD President **Michelle Hunt** with sons **William** (left) and **Landon** (right).

Staff Members Write Grants on Behalf of Murray Ridge School Students



Pictured above: **Kim Antush**

For the last few months, Speech Therapists **Kim Antush**, **Kathy Beatty** and **Karen McKenzie** have been working diligently on behalf of students at Murray Ridge School. Many of our students require the assistance of communication devices to express their needs, thoughts or feelings. However, such equipment is expensive, and often the equipment available is not a good match for the child's needs. So, Antush, Beatty and McKenzie, with assistance from Occupational Therapist **Chris Beatty**, initiated the arduous task of writing speech technology grant applications for communications equipment. This specialized request process is time-consuming and rigorous, but the reward for the students is tremendous. Ultimately, the equipment becomes the property of the students. So far, nearly \$30,000 in communications equipment for 13 children has been received as a result of the grant applications. Says Kathy Beatty, Speech



Pictured above: **Kathy Beatty**

Therapist at Murray Ridge Center for three years, "it is so wonderful to help provide these children with the means to communicate, and it is a privilege to work with a team of people so dedicated to making that happen."



Pictured above: **Karen McKenzie**

Spaghetti Dinner



Saturday, April 26, 2008

5 to 7 pm

Murray Ridge School

9750 Murray Ridge Road, Elyria



Tickets Available at the Door

Adults \$8

Consumers & Kids 6-12 \$5

Ages 5 & Under Eat **FREE**

**Delicious Homemade
Sauce & Desserts**



Sponsored by Murray Ridge Support Group

Hippity-Hoppity Easter's On Its Way



Elyria Work Activity Center Senior **Marilyn Kandel** enjoys the fun of an Easter egg hunt.



April 2008

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 	25	26 
27	28	29	30 			



Murray Ridge Center

4/24—Early Intervention Play-group, 5:00-6:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School

4/26—Murray Ridge Support Group Spaghetti Dinner, Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road, 5:00—7:00 p.m.

4/30—Volunteer Appreciation Reception, Elyria Work Activity Center, 1095 Infirmary Road, Elyria, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

"I can no other answer make, but, thanks, and thanks."

—Shakespeare

Many thanks to our volunteers!

BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

The Lorain County Board of MR/DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on March 14:



Superintendent Fisher introduced the 2008 "Help Me Grow" interagency agreement and it was unanimously approved by the Board. Dr. Fisher also recapped the successful passage of the agency's levy issue on March 4. She noted that this renewal issue passed with an impressive 63 percent of all votes cast. She cautioned, however, that since this was a renewal rather than a replacement, the Board and agency would need to very carefully consider budget constraints over the next few years. She added that this would be a significant topic as the agency reviews the strategic plan this year. In other business, Al Sprague, Director of Residential SSA presented a revised update on Family Support Services. He proposed a slightly modified allocations formula that will enable the Family Support Committee to more closely match allocations to budgeted funds. Director of Operations William Flecher also addressed the Board, stating that the newly constructed Service and Support Administration Building passed all inspections on February 26, and that the building was staffed and in full operation on Monday, March 3.

Child Abuse Prevention Begins With Awareness

In addition to being Autism Awareness Month, April is also National Child Abuse Awareness Month. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, child abuse affects nearly 900,000 children in the U.S. annually. While most of us undoubtedly do not like to think about the tragedy of child abuse, we are not powerless. There are preventative measures that each of us can take, such as volunteering your time with a vulnerable child or parent, and supporting local prevention programs. Also, learning the signs of abuse and reporting suspected abuse can make all the difference in the life of an abused child.

If you would like to learn more and support your local activities, you may be interested in the following event:

- *Stop Child Abuse "One Step at a Time"*, Family Fun Day, Saturday, April 26 from 10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. Held at Lorain County Community College. Includes 3K Walk or 5K Run. For more information call (440) 204-4287.

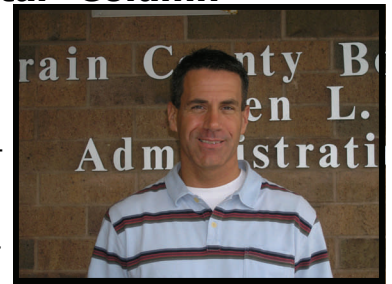
***"Let us not look back in anger or
forward in fear, but around in
awareness."
—James Thurber***

Autism Awareness Community Event

Join others in Lorain, Cuyahoga, Medina and other northeast Ohio counties for Rock the Puzzle. The evening will consist of six bands and will include the unveiling of two new wines for autism from Grand River Cellars. Rock the Puzzle will take place at the House of Blues Cleveland on Saturday, April 26, 2008. Tickets are \$100.00 each. Tickets include all entertainment, a variety of hors d'oeuvres, two drink tickets and two wine tasting tickets. All proceeds from 2008's Rock the Puzzle will stay local to the Northeast Ohio area to help those affected by autism in our own communities through Northeast Ohio Autism Group.

The "Incidental" Column

As you may recall, all Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs) require an investigation, and there are two types of investigations: *Protocol* and *Non-Protocol*. Last month I began discussing Protocol investigations and promised this month to explain the three possible *findings* of a Protocol



John Syrowski

Investigation, as well as discuss Non-Protocol investigations.

For MUIs requiring a Protocol investigation, the possible findings are:

- **"Substantiated"**—This means there is a preponderance of evidence that the alleged incident did, in fact, occur.
- **"Unsubstantiated/Insufficient Evidence"**—There is insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation. Either there is not a preponderance of the evidence to support the allegation, or there is conflicting evidence.
- **"Unsubstantiated/Unfounded"**—The allegations are unfounded. The evidence supports a finding that the alleged finding did not or could not have occurred.

The MUI categories that require a Non-Protocol investigation are: Attempted Suicide, Non-Suspicious or Natural Death, Missing Individual, Known Injury, Unknown Injury, Law Enforcement, Medical Emergency, Unapproved Behavior Support and Unscheduled Hospitalization.

When conducting a Non-Protocol investigation, the Investigative Agent (IA) will review the Incident Report and initiate the investigation by taking the following steps:

- Determine if the MUI is properly coded
- Review relevant documents
- Interview witnesses
- Maintain a summary of each interview conducted
- Identify the cause and contributing factors to the incident
- Review past related incidents
- Verify that preventive measures have been implemented
- In the case of a death, contact the Coroner's office.

The MUIs that meet Non-Protocol criteria do not require a finding. However, since they are still classified as MUIs, the reports are submitted to the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMMRDD) and, in all cases, prevention plans are written to avoid recurrence.

I hope that this has given you a better picture of the investigative process. Whether Protocol or Non-Protocol, the emphasis of an investigation is always on the health and safety of the consumer.

Incidentally,
John

Lorain County Board of Mental Retardation
& Developmental Disabilities

Murray Ridge Center
1091 Infirmary Road
Elyria, OH 44035

Standard Presort
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 146
Elyria, OH 44035

Visit our Web site
www.loraincountymrdd.org

Lunch Menus for Murray Ridge Center

Cost Per Day: Youth = \$2.55, Adults = \$2.55

March 31-April 4

April 21—25

May 12—16

June 2—6

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 7-11

April 28—May 2

May 19—23

June 9—13

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/Lowfat Dressing, Fresh Fruit, Nutri-Grain Bar

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

April 14-18

May 5—9

May 26—30

June 16—20

Monday- Salisbury Steak w/Gravy, Scalloped 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