

Couple Brings Language to Life

Recently, Murray Ridge Language Development Specialist **Kathy Beatty** and her colleague and husband, Occupational Therapist **Chris Beatty**, were asked to present their methods for teaching communication at the 2010 ASHA national conference in Las Vegas, NV. A 135,000 member organization for speech and language professionals, ASHA's mission is to make effective communication accessible for all. But with so many members whose work focuses on effective communication, what is it that makes this duo stand out? The answer is two-fold.

First, this couple, who met in college, truly works as a team. "We decided a long time ago that we were going to find a way to work together. We were both passionate about helping people, so we had to find a way to blend Chris' knowledge of science and technology with my skills in language and communication. We are definitely a team. Because we love what we do and are also married, we never leave our work at work. We live it," said Kathy. As the couple explains, Chris is the expert when it comes to making the actual devices accessible to the students. For example, if a student can only move his or her head, then Chris creates a device that enables the student to use his or her head to pick the words on the AAC device screen. For kids with limited muscle control or other physical disabilities, this is crucial. Kathy helps the students to learn and use the words that enable them to best express themselves. Without either of their contributions, the students would have a far more difficult time communicating effectively.

In addition to their tireless team efforts and complimentary skills, there is also the unique program they've developed to teach and encourage Murray Ridge students to communicate. Their program, titled "Having Some Fun: Social Groups that Promote Communication Among AAC Users," focuses on fun and real-life peer interactions as a motivation for utilizing Augmentative and Alternative Communication, or AAC, devices. This method was born out of the work they do with small groups of same-gender peer students. In these groups Chris and Kathy strive to teach and encourage their non-verbal students not only to use their AAC devices, but also to learn and love the art of communication by encouraging the students to choose conversation topics and their "own words" for their meetings.

"Typically, when the devices are being used in a classroom or formal setting, the students are using them to answer questions or to relay information about topics that, while important, aren't necessarily interesting to them. If they aren't interested in what is being discussed, they aren't as moti-



Chris Beatty and **Kathy Beatty** smile as they discuss their approach to helping people to communicate.

vated to participate," said Kathy. She further explains that even the language that is used in a formal setting differs from what is used in a social setting and that the students are much more enthusiastic about communicating if they are using more casual words.

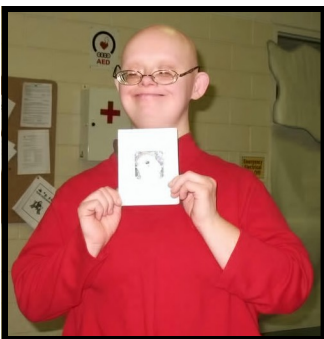
"Chris and I wanted to get the kids excited about using their devices—about *communicating*," said Kathy. Thus, the boys' and girls' groups are designed for the members to talk about real life topics of interest and the devices are programmed so that the kids get to choose the sound of their "voice" and the words they wish to use. With Kathy's guidance, a topic is chosen for the next meeting. The students then have two weeks to consider the words they wish to have accessible to them for that discussion. These words are then programmed into their AACs and on the day of the meeting, they are encouraged to take the lead in the discussion, rather than have staff lead the discussion. "The whole interaction is spontaneous and

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All I Want for Christmas....

It seems that scarcely before pounds of turkey, stuffing and mashed potatoes are digested from a lovingly-prepared Thanksgiving meal, many begin a four-week long ritual of fighting for parking spaces at over-heated shopping malls in hopes of getting that "perfect gift" for loved ones. But before you break out those credit cards, remember that sometimes what people really want for the holidays can't be found in stores. Here are just a few things that consumers throughout Murray Ridge are wishing for this holiday season:



"I want to eat ham! And I like to spend time with my brother and four sisters. But I would like cds and new clothes, too."

—Wendy Smitkowski

"We like Christmas because we get to spend time together. We can just sit and look at our pretty tree. It's not about presents." —Bob and Wendy Challen

"I want to drink coffee and decorate the tree. I also like snow. I hope it snows for Christmas." —Dave Brill

"I want to see my family. We have a lot of fun together." —Kari Dolan

"I love to decorate and I like Christmas parties!"

—Connie Skaggs



"I'd like to keep working. And I'd like to watch the Browns win a game." —Tom Altman

"I want to eat cookies. And I want a shirt." —Mike Vitae

"I want a watch so I know when to go to work." —Andrea Frcka

"I want to watch the parade on tv." —Terry Meagher

"I want to bake cookies with my family. I like presents, too. I make a list, but I don't know what I want yet"

—Tracey McClune



"I want to buy presents for people." —Jeff Rodes

"Christmas isn't about us. It's about doing things for other people. I want to do things for other people." —Charles Johnson, Jr.

So whether it's a shirt, a cd player, seeing a favorite sports team win, or baking cookies with loved ones, we each enjoy receiving different gifts for the holidays. Whatever tangible, or intangible, gift you wish to find this holiday, we at Murray Ridge Center wish all Lorain County residents a happy holiday season!

Couple...

...continued from page 1

fun and so much more natural. With these linguistic accommodations, they talk to each other the way real peers talk to each other. The vocabulary is more natural and they don't necessarily wait their turn to talk. Just like a *real conversation*," said Kathy. She explains that the kids are having a lot of fun and are enthusiastic about using their AAC devices. "They talk because they want to, not just because it's an academic exercise," said Kathy.

As evidenced in a video of a peer group in action, it seems clear from the faces of the students that the Beattys' method is effective, as the youngsters actively utilize their AAC devices without prompting. That alone would certainly make an interesting and important educational presentation to other communication professionals. But perhaps more compelling is the obvious enjoyment the students seem to be getting out of their interactions with peers. The smiles and laughs speak volumes about their enjoyment of communicating with one another.

We may say of the "Beatty team" that they have "the gift of gab," "a way with words," or are masters in "the art of communication." However you put it, there is no doubt that the method they use to enable Murray Ridge students to communicate with one another spells "success" in any language.



Support the Raiders!

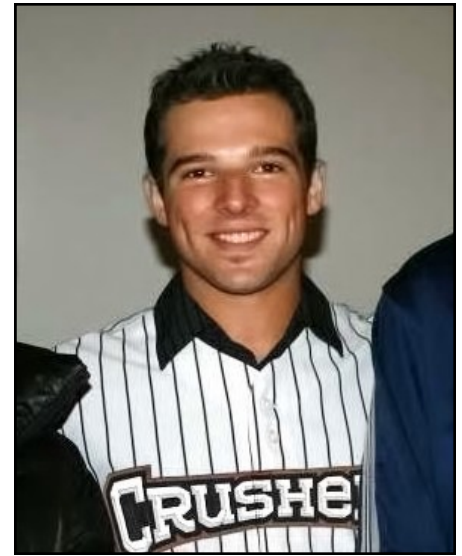
Come cheer for the Murray Ridge Raiders Basketball Teams at the Murray Ridge School as they gear up for another exciting season!

Home games this season are as follows:

- 12/12/09—Team 1 vs. Stark Public, 12:30 p.m.
- 12/16/09—Team 2 vs. Cuyahoga, 5:30 p.m.
- 12/16/09—Team 3 vs. Cuyahoga, 6:30 p.m.
- 12/22/09—Lady Raiders vs. Summit Ladys, 6:00 p.m.
- 1/5/10—Team 3 vs. Elyria Vipers, 5:30 p.m.
- 1/11/10—Team 2 vs. Erie, 6:00 p.m.
- 1/11/10—Team 1 vs. Erie, 7:00 p.m.
- 1/13/10—Lady Raiders vs. Geauga, 5:30 p.m.
- 1/23/10—Team 1 vs. Cuyahoga, 10:00 a.m.
- 1/25/10—Lady Raiders vs. Sandusky, 5:45 p.m.
- 1/26/10—Team 2 vs. Geauga, 5:30 p.m.
- 1/26/10—Team 3 vs. Geauga, 6:30 p.m.
- 1/28/10—Lady Raiders vs. Stark, 6:00 p.m.
- 2/1/10—Team 1 vs. Summit, 6:00 p.m.
- 2/1/10—Team 2 vs. Huron, 7:00 p.m.
- 2/3/10—Team 3 vs. Ashland, 6:00 p.m.
- 2/8/10—Team 3 vs. Wayne, 6:00 p.m.
- 2/9/10—Lady Raiders vs. Medina, 5:00 p.m.
- 2/10/10—Team 2 vs. Lake, 6:30 p.m.
- 2/20/10—Team 1 vs. Stark, 11:00 a.m.

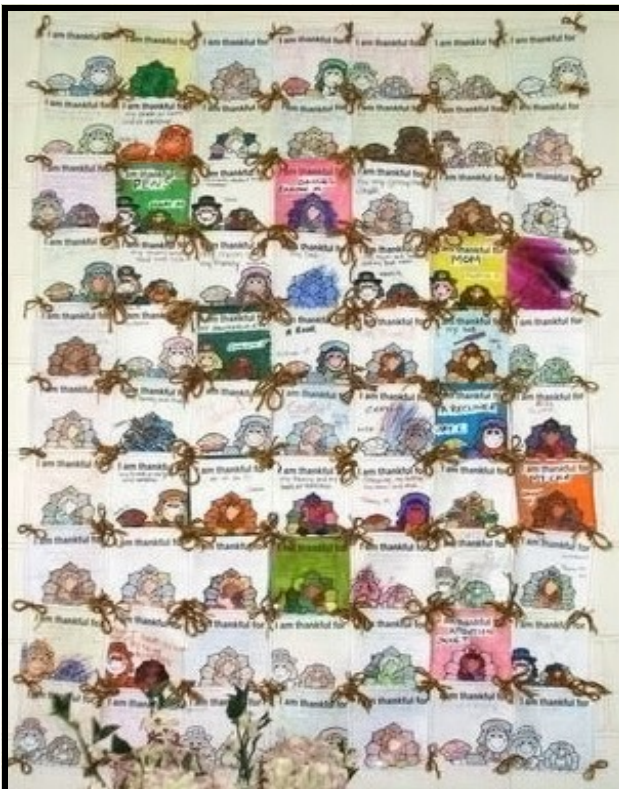
Special Olympics Banquet

Recently more than 300 athletes, coaches, family members and volunteers gathered together to celebrate the accomplishments and sportsmanship of Murray Ridge Special Olympians. In a keynote address to the crowd, Lake Erie Crushers outfielder Arden McWilliams advised the athletes to simply relax and do their best when competing, a philosophy that seemed to work well for a team that won the Frontier League championship in its inaugural year. Following his presentation, McWilliams distributed awards and signed autographs for an enthusiastic audience. While many of our athletes had a successful year, including a state championship by basketball Team 1, they each seemed to understand McWilliam's message that doing one's best is far more valuable than any medal.



Arden McWilliams

Thanksgiving Quilt



The holidays are a time when many of us consider the things in our lives that are the most meaningful to us. Each year at the Oberlin Work/Activity Center, consumers participate in a Thanksgiving art project. This year, staff member **Tammy Stanley** suggested that interested consumers create a "Thanksgiving Quilt." Consumers were each given a square sheet of paper on which they were encouraged to write or draw what they were most thankful for. Such expressions of thanks included thanks for having a home, good health, a book and, as one consumer stated, "Mom."

Once the "quilt" panels were completed, Stanley punched holes around the edges and tied them together with string. Once all the panels were connected the quilt was hung on the wall so that consumers and staff could admire the collective expression of "thanks."

The project was a creative way for consumers to use their art and communication skills in a collaborative way, while also thinking about what is most important to them.



Important Weather-Related Announcements



Murray Ridge program closing information will be available on TV station Fox 8, on the Fox 8 website fox8.com, and on radio stations WEOL 930 AM and WOBL 1320 AM, as it has in the past. **However, rather than the listing "Lorain County Board of MR/DD," there will be two separate listings for Murray Ridge Center:**

- **Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers**
- **Murray Ridge School**

Parents and caregivers of school students should disregard the "Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers" listing, and follow only the listing for "Murray Ridge School." Conversely, adult consumers and their parents/caregivers should disregard the "Murray Ridge School" listing, and follow only the listing for "Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers." Staff outside of the School, Residential, and Adult programs should report to work unless Murray Ridge School and Adult Activities Centers are listed as "Closed."

If "Open—No Transportation" follows the announcement for "Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers," parents/caregivers are welcome to transport adult consumers to their day service sites. Regular programming will be provided. Consumers should be dropped off no earlier than 8:30 a.m. and must be picked up by 3:45 p.m.

In the event of bad weather, the decision to transport individuals to Murray Ridge Center will be based primarily on the ability of our busses to travel safely on city and county roads. Regardless of whether or not transportation is available through Murray Ridge Center, if our Adult Activities Centers are open, but there is an individual concern about the weather, adult consumers should feel free to stay home. Likewise, parents/caregivers of Murray Ridge School students who have individual concerns regarding the weather should feel free to keep their child at home.

Please be aware that transportation to enclave sites is generally available even if transportation to the Adult Activities Centers is cancelled. Murray Ridge Center does not broadcast the status of enclave trans-

BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

The Lorain County Board of DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on November 20, 2009:

Superintendent Fisher informed the Board that the renewal of the agency's health insurance plan for 2010 amounted to a 7.58% increase in cost, which is lower than previously projected. The Board unanimously approved the renewal. Board member Henry Patterson announced that an additional Special Olympics basketball team will be added due to increased interest. He further noted that there were 180 active Murray Ridge athletes, and that the duplicated number of participants on all of the various Murray Ridge Special Olympics teams in 2009 was 360. In other business, the Board unanimously approved the 2010 operating budget. The Board also unanimously voted for Murray Ridge Delegate, Board President Michelle Hunt, to vote "yes" on all four resolutions being presented at the Ohio Association of County Boards of DD annual meeting on December 2. Additionally, the Board unanimously approved the renewal of its annual agreement with the Prosecutor's office for representation, as well as two changes to the agency's Holiday and Holiday Pay policy. Finally, Director of Educational Services Dann Swift reported that currently Murray Ridge Preschool has up to three units of funding available to it from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Mr. Swift stated further that ODE has agreed to continue to set aside funds for three units during a transitional year for the Preschool.



December 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 	5
6	7	8	9 	10 	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 	19
20	21 	22	23	24	25 	26
27 	28	29	30	31	Jan. 1 	

Activities & Events

- 12/4—Murray Ridge Support Group dance, 7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria
- 12/9—Family Support Parent Committee meeting, 6:00 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 12/10—LCBDD Finance Committee meeting, 12:00 p.m., Administration Building, 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 12/10—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:45--7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School
- 12/10—Murray Ridge Support Group meeting, 6:00 p.m., Elyria Work/Activity Center, 1095 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 12/18—LCBDD Meeting, 12:30 p.m. Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 12/21—1/3—Murray Ridge School Winter Break; Classes Resume 1/4/10; Preschool Classes Resume 1/5/10**
- 12/25—Agency Closed in Observance of Christmas**
- 12/28-12/31—Program Closing Days**
- 1/1/10—Agency Closed in Observance of New Year's Day; Agency Re-opens 1/4/10**



Lunch Menus

Cost Per Day: Youth = \$2.75, Adults = \$2.70

December 7-11

December 28—January 1

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

December 14-18

January 4-January 8

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



November 30-December 4

December 21-25

January 11-15

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
Developmental Disabilities

Murray Ridge Center
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Elyria, OH 44035

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www.murrayridgecenter.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@murrayridgecenter.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 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.

"Special Needs Solutions For All Ages—Full Spectrum Planning"

An educational program presented by the Murray Ridge Support Group for consumers, parents, guardians, caregivers and Murray Ridge Center staff.

Thursday, December 10, 2009
7:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Elyria Work Activity Center
1095 Infirmary Road
Elyria, OH 4035

Presenter Michael Kren will discuss special needs trust direction, Social Security and benefit education, financial planning services, asset and trust management, trust finding options, guardianship and alternatives and continuity of care.

Refreshments will be served. For more information, please contact George Gedid at 440-284-2720.

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities has approved two credit hours for staff CEU's.