

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness and Prevention Month: One Family's Story

Recently, Ohio Governor Ted Strickland designated the month of September as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness and Prevention Month. The purpose of this month is "to promote awareness of prenatal exposure to alcohol, to increase compassion for those individuals so affected, to minimize further effects, and to ensure healthier communities across this great state in the future."

Two people who truly understand the challenges faced by children and families affected by FASDs are Lorain County residents, Angelique and Karl Yost. After becoming foster parents for the first time 23 years ago, the Yosts dedicated themselves to what Angelique describes as "one of the most rewarding experiences of my life." Many children would become part of this family for various periods of time over the first several years. But then, 11 years after that first child, a child would enter their lives who would steal their hearts. "He was so tiny," said Angelique, "he only weighed two pounds when he was born and he fit into the palm of my hand. My mother came to the hospital to see him one day and didn't even notice that I was holding him in my hand because she was looking for a normal-sized baby!" This tiny child was named Timmy.

Timmy had many health problems early on, and even "flatlined" after birth and had to be resuscitated. When she brought him home from the hospital, Angelique said she had to feed him with an eye-dropper every 10-15 minutes. He was not diagnosed with having FAS, though Angelique believes he suffered from it. The doctor did recommend that they seek Early Intervention (EI) services for him to address potential developmental delays resulting from his premature birth. This is when the Yosts first came to Murray Ridge Center.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, or FASDs, is a term used to describe the many adverse effects that may occur in a child whose mother consumed alcohol during pregnancy. It includes such conditions as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE), Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND) and Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD). According to the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, FASDs are irreversible, lifelong conditions that affect all aspects of a child's life. Prenatal exposure to alcohol is the leading cause of preventable birth defects, mental retardation, learning disabilities, attention deficits and behavior disorders; and 23 % of



Angelique Yost, left, talks about her experience as a foster parent of children with special needs. Pictured with Murray Ridge Early Intervention Specialist Kathy Bevaque, middle and Aaliyah Yost

women have reported drinking alcohol during their first trimester of pregnancy, the most vulnerable time for a developing fetus.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that one in every 100 babies born in Ohio suffers physical, mental or developmental disabilities because of his or her mother's decision to drink during pregnancy. In Lorain County, many turn to Murray Ridge for help.

Murray Ridge EI Specialist, **Kathy Bevaque**, has been working with the Yost family since 2000. "Timmy had been in the program for a couple of years before I began working with him," said Bevaque. "It is so great to see how well he's done since those early days."

As FAS Awareness efforts were beginning around this same time, Angelique began educating herself about the condition. In the meantime, Timmy would be the first

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foster child that the Yosts would adopt. Angelique fully believes that the EI services helped Timmy through the many challenges he faced in those early years. Angelique smiles as she says that Timmy, who recently turned 12, was able to enter into typically-developing classrooms in large part, she believes, because of the EI services he received. Now, she says proudly, "he is even on the Honor Roll!"

A few years later, and several foster children later, the Yosts would receive another call. This time, it would be a set of newborn twins, a boy and a girl, who weighed four pounds each and who suffered feeding and respiratory problems, among other issues. These twins, Joshua and Becky, were formally diagnosed with FAS. The Yosts knew they wanted to adopt the twins, but the mother was reluctant to relinquish custody initially. After many discussions and some investigation, the Yosts learned that the biological mother of Joshua and Becky was the same woman who had given birth to their adopted son Timmy four years earlier. Once the mother learned that the Yosts were the ones caring for her other child, she agreed to relinquish custody of both children.

As soon as she was able, Angelique enrolled Joshua and Becky into the EI program at Murray Ridge. "After what Kathy and the EI program did to help Timmy, I wanted to make sure that Joshua and Becky got the same kind of help, especially because of what I had learned about FAS. They were going to have a lot of challenges. And I only wanted to work with Murray Ridge. Kathy knows my kids and is great with them. I trust her, and that isn't an easy thing for me to say," said Angelique. She says that it has been a very difficult road for the twins, and that they still suffer a variety of FAS-related complications. For example, Becky has visual impairments, Joshua has allergies and they both have short-term memory issues and other FAS effects. The twins, now in the second grade, have been mainstreamed into public school classes and are both now able to read but, said Angelique, "They will always need help."

The Yosts would again foster several more children, many of whom they would enroll into the Murray Ridge EI program, before meeting the fourth child they would adopt. Another premature baby, Christian, was born four years ago. His biological mother was addicted to drugs and was beaten by her husband while pregnant with Christian. While not diagnosed with FAS, Christian, too, was enrolled into the Murray Ridge EI program for possible developmental delays, and the Yosts legally adopted him when he was one-and-a-half-years-old.

A couple of years later, Christian's biological mother would give birth to a girl, Aaliyah, who would suffer

from multiple health problems. Aaliyah had a heart problem, is visually impaired and was diagnosed with "failure to thrive." Aaliyah was not diagnosed with FAS initially because of her head size. One common sign of FAS is microcephaly, or a smaller than normal head size. However, by now Angelique had become well-informed about FAS and the signs and she pushed for a more thorough diagnosis. The doctors then found a benign mass on the right side of Aaliyah's brain, which was causing her head to grow faster than normal, something that, according to Angelique, has only been documented five times worldwide. Once this was known and the other FAS signs were recognized, Aaliyah was diagnosed with FAS. Aaliyah, who will be three in November, is currently enrolled in the Murray Ridge EI program. According to Bevaque, she only began walking a few months ago. "She still struggles to stand up and her coordination isn't strong, but she tries really hard. She's a great kid," smiles Bevaque. Aaliyah is the fifth child to legally join the Yost family.

While their health issues have been many, the Yost children are not the only ones to have to overcome them. Earlier this year, Angelique suffered a health crisis, herself, as she had a liver transplant. And yet, through the serious operation and intense recovery, her main focus was on the well-being of her children. "I called Angelique right after her surgery to see when I could come to visit, and all she wanted to talk about on the phone was making sure the kids would continue to receive their services while she was recovering," said Bevaque.

This dedication to the welfare of her children extends to all children, and she advocates on behalf of children who suffer from FAS. She regularly tells her story to participants in the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Classes provided through the Lorain County Health District with help from Murray Ridge Center EI staff. When asked what advice she would offer to parents or caregivers of children with FAS she considers the question for a moment and then answers, "I would tell them to be patient and to never give up on them. And be consistent with what they do with them. It will be hard, so it is important to learn what resources are available, like the Murray Ridge EI program. Kathy has done such a wonderful job helping my children in their development. I don't know what I would have done without the program."



If you would like to receive The Murray Ridge Courier via email, contact Racheal Seibert at 329-3734 or email her at rseibert@murrayridgecenter.org. You may also sign up on our website at www.murrayridgecenter.org.

Annual Transportation Safety Instruction

Murray Ridge Center wants your ride into our program sites to be a safe one. These are guidelines that both adults, children and their caregivers should be aware of when utilizing transportation services provided by Murray Ridge Center.

WAITING FOR THE BUS

- Be 5 minutes early. Wait for the bus at least 10 feet from the road.
- Dress properly - winter clothing, hats, mittens, and boots will help keep you warm in the winter.
- Watch for the bus' red lights.
- Wait until the bus has stopped and door opens before stepping into the roadway.
- Wait for the driver to signal to cross. Cross at least 10 feet in front of the bus.
- Use the handrail when stepping onto the bus.
- If you use a wheelchair, it must be equipped with a functioning seat belt. The wheels should lock as well. Store all belongings in a backpack so nothing gets dropped.

BUS SEAT SAFETY RULES

- Follow all of the driver's instructions.
- Speak softly so the driver will not be distracted. At railroad crossings, be quiet.
- Stay seated until your stop and keep the aisle clear.
- Never put head, arms or hands out of the window.
- Never do anything to distract the driver.
- Keep aisles clear and free of tripping hazards.
- Never throw things on the bus or out the windows.
- Tell the driver or monitor if you are being bullied.
- If there is an emergency, listen to the driver and follow instructions.
- Do not eat on the bus as this could present a choking hazard.

GETTING OFF THE BUS AT HOME

- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least ten feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road, until you can turn around and see the driver.
- Make sure that the driver can see you.
- Wait for the signal from the driver before beginning to cross.
- When the driver signals, walk across the road, keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.
- Do not cross the center line of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.
- Stay away from the bus' rear wheels at all times. If you drop something near the bus, leave it. If you leave something on the bus, never return to get it. The driver may not see you come back and start to move the bus. If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver before you pick it up so he/she know where you are.

Many of our consumers are also able to travel about the community through the use of public transportation. We want your trips to be safe ones!

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

- When you enter or leave a vehicle, watch for slippery or uneven pavement and other hazards that could cause you to fall.
- Have your LCT ID, bus fare, ticket, or pass ready to avoid losing your balance while looking for it.
- Do not carry too many packages – always leave a free hand to grab a railing.
- Allow extra time to cross streets, especially in bad weather.
- If it's dark outside, wear light-colored or reflective clothing.
- Do not talk to strangers. If you are being bothered by someone, tell the driver immediately.
- If you use a stop assistance card, remember to show it to the driver as you board the bus.
- Most LCT stops are not sheltered. Dress appropriately for the winter weather, and utilize sunscreen in the summer. Whether you are in a bus, car, or van – **ALWAYS WEAR YOUR SEATBELT IF THE VEHICLE IS EQUIPPED WITH ONE**

Old Time Fun



Staff, consumers and family members had a good old time representing Murray Ridge Center at the Amherst Old Time Jamboree Parade. Pictured left to right, top to bottom: Cindy White, Sam Hem-bree, Terri Camp, Sarah Ward, Joshua Fleming, Beth Myers, Diane Krogg, Rich Haase, Benji Lewis, D'Rhonda Fleming, Jason Woodyard, Jason Woodyard, Jr., Candace Moore, Kathy Duncan, David Helton, Ian Woodyard, Gavin Woodyard and MaryLynn Woodyard.

Happy Birthday North Ridgeville!

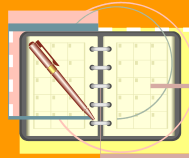


Twenty-six consumers, staff and family members celebrated the 200th anniversary of the North Ridgeville Corn Festival by walking in the parade.

Pictured left to right, top to bottom: Tom Zbydnowski, Leroy Keen, Tina Tucker, DJ Overall, Sally Gordon, Mike Kovacic, Steven Cruz, Shari Reitenbach, Tim Quisenberry, Tracy Brown, James Peters, Jennifer Rodriguez, Tracey Carroll, Charles Garn, Mike Urban, Juanita Young, Charles Johnson, Jr., Carol Anderson and Ryan Eliason.

Special thanks go to OWAC staff Tammy Stanley, Eric Gilbert, Rich Trexler and Kevin Chutes, as well as consumers in Area 3 for their creative and festive ear of corn (pictured above on top of the van) in honor of North Ridgeville! Thanks also go to LWAC staff and consumers for their terrific glitter signs!

Save the Date



The 10th Annual Ohio Adult Sibling Conference will be held November 5-6 at the Marriott Airport Hotel. This annual conference is designed to give adult siblings of people with developmental disabilities an opportunity to share information, ideas and family experiences. This year's topics include Siblings as Care Providers in a Medicaid Environment, Siblings of People with Autism, Role of Siblings During Transition Periods, Understanding and Building the Sibling Relationship and Self-advocacy Activities for Siblings with a Disability.

The registration fee is \$85 and includes meals and materials. Registration can be completed online at www.ohiosibs.com, or you may fax your forms to Dr. Tom Fish at 614-292-3727.

For more information, contact Racheal Seibert at (440) 329-3734.

Murray Ridge Annual In-service November 5, 2010!

The annual employee In-service promises to be an entertaining and educational day for all. This year's In-service will be held at DeLuca's Place in the Park and will include a variety of presentations on topics ranging from critical thinking to healthy living. Then, keynote speaker Bruce Boguski will tell us "How to Do The Impossible."

BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

The Lorain County Board of DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on August 27, 2010:



Jeff Miller, Director of Vocational and Transportation Services, presented the official 2010-2011 Murray Ridge School Bus Stop listing for Board approval. The Board unanimously approved the 2010-2011 bus stops. He also requested that the Board approve permitting the superintendent or designee to relocate or designate subsequent bus stops. The Board unanimously approved this request. Superintendent Fisher then requested that the Board approve additional Level 1 Waiver enrollments for the purpose of refinancing and in-home supports expansion. The Board unanimously approved additional Level One waiver enrollments. Dr. Fisher also requested that the Board approve changes to the Adult Services menu with respect to criteria for participation in therapy and evening and weekend recreation provided by Murray Ridge Adult Services. The Board unanimously approved the changes to the Adult Services menu. In other business, Superintendent Fisher identified follow-up activities related to various strategic conclusions reached at recent sessions for developing the 2011-2015 strategic plan. Dr. Fisher also reminded the Board of the upcoming Murray Ridge Golf Classic to be held on Monday, September 20 at Avon Oaks Country Club. Those interested in golfing or attending the dinner/auction should leave a message for Tim Donohue at 440-567-0876.



September 2010

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Activities & Events

9/1—Murray Ridge Preschool Open House, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road, Elyria

9/2—Murray Ridge Support Group meeting, 4:15 p.m., Elyria Work/Activity Center, 1095 Infirmary Road in Elyria

9/6—Agency Closed for Labor Day

9/7—Murray Ridge Preschool Begins

9/9—Murray Ridge School Open House

9/9—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:30—6:30 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria

9/14—Family Support Parent Committee meeting, 6:30 p.m., Administration Bldg, 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria

9/16—LCBDD Finance Committee meeting, 12:00 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria

9/17—Murray Ridge Support Group dance, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road, Elyria

9/18—Team 1 to Compete in Special Olympics State Softball Tournament, Coontz Rec. Ctr, Oregon, OH, 9:00 a.m.

9/23—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:30—6:30 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria

9/24—LCBDD Meeting, 12:30 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road in Elyria

9/26—Greater Cleveland Team Bowling Tournament, 12:00 p.m., Freeway Lanes, Wickliffe, OH

9/26—Woolly Bear Parade, 1:30 p.m.



Lunch Menus

Cost Per Day: Youth = \$2.80, Adults = \$2.80

September 6-10

September 27—October 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

-September 13-17

October 4-8

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



August 30-September 3

September 20-24

October 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

Visit our Web site
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.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Classes

"Triumph Through the Challenges of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder"

Learn about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and how to best work with those affected in order to help them reach their fullest potential.

This course is for caregivers and those who work with individuals that may have had prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs.

Sessions are free and are offered from 6:00-9:00 p.m. on:

- **September 7**
- **September 14**
- **September 21**
- **September 28**

For more information visit www.loraincountyhealth.com/fasdcourse or call the Lorain County General Health District at 322-6367.