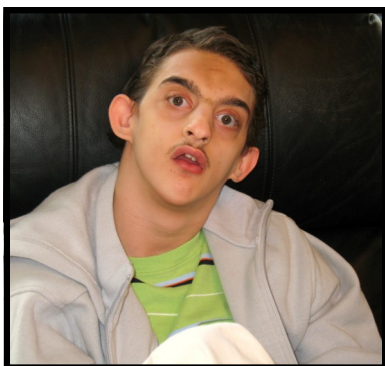


## A Year in the Life

Each year, high school seniors across the country graduate and continue on to the next phase of their lives. Whether that phase includes college, work or some other pursuit, the first year of post-high-school adulthood can be challenging. And yet, it also provides young adults with many opportunities to learn who they are and what they are capable of. This is no less true for 2008 Murray Ridge School graduate Addison Jacob Grimmert.

A. J., as he is called, graduated from Murray Ridge School in June 2008. Like many other graduating seniors, he had to decide what he wanted to do post high school. After spending his senior year participating in the Transition program at the School, which enables seniors to job shadow and experience post high school job and habilitation opportunities, A.J. opted to attend the Lorain Work/Activity Center (LWAC).

A.J. was one of two children in the Grimmert family born with Wolf-Hirschhorn syndrome. More commonly known as 4p-minus, this disorder is an extremely rare genetic disorder that affects fetal growth and may result in developmental disabilities, seizures, heart defects and other physical issues. These disabilities can make even seemingly simple activities extremely difficult. However, at LWAC A.J. has been able to work on important areas for which he needed help, such as self-care and community integration.



**A. J. Grimmert**

LWAC staff describe A.J. as a charming and kind young man who has met his first year in the adult world with a great deal of grace and enthusiasm. While A.J. chose not to focus on vocational training opportunities during his first year at LWAC, much of his year has been spent focusing on training in adaptive skills. He receives mobility training from staff, receives physical therapy, and participates in walking, recreation and arts and crafts programs.

Workshop Aide **Fernando Perez** works very closely with A.J. on these skills. A.J. visibly perks up when



**A. J. Grimmert with Lorain Work Activity Center employee Brenda Thompson.**

Perez walks up to him and gives him a friendly pat on the back. "How are you doing, A.J.?" grins Perez. "A.J. is a great person, and he tries very hard." says Perez. "He helps me with laundry and dishes. He also helps me deliver the mail to staff. He's always willing to do whatever he can, he just needs some help."

This help generally comes in the form of hand-over-hand assistance, which means staff guide A.J.'s hands through the steps involved in any given task. In addition to helping with tasks throughout LWAC, A.J. has also been able to learn to do some self-care tasks independently such as feeding himself. Prior to coming to LWAC, A.J. needed someone else to feed him due to fine motor control difficulties. However, with a special adaptive spoon and some dedicated staff, A.J. is now able to manage this task all on his own.

According to **Brenda Thompson**, Workshop Specialist 2, a typical day involves helping Fernando with various tasks around LWAC, working on his self-care skills, putting puzzles together and, perhaps his favorite activity, listening to

*Continued on page 2...*

# Murray Ridge School 2009 Commencement Ceremony



***Murray Ridge Center Board President Michelle L. Hunt congratulates graduate Josh Johnson at the 2009 Commencement ceremony.***

On June 2, 2009 Bradley Hairston, Josh Johnson, Eric Riser, Jr., and Mitchell Valentine began the transition from their childhood academic years into the adult world of work. Three of the four graduates plan to attend one of the three Work/Activity Centers at Murray Ridge for vocational training. One student plans to attend the Lucy Idol Center.

Superintendent Amber Fisher encouraged the graduates to reflect on their many achievements as they look to the future. The Murray Ridge Choraleers then set the tone for the remainder of the ceremony by singing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." This message of having and obtaining dreams was followed by keynote speaker Judge Thomas J. Elwell, Jr., Lorain Municipal Judge, who delivered the commencement address. "While some people look at graduation as an end to their academic years, the ceremony itself is called 'commencement,' which means 'beginning,' " said Elwell. "Today may very well be the end of your academic careers, but it is the beginning of the next phase of your lives," he added. His speech was both touching and motivating, and he left the graduates with some well-received advice, "Set goals. In fact, set high goals for yourselves, and then work as hard as you must in order to achieve them."

Following Judge Elwell's address was the presentation of certificates by Board President Michelle L. Hunt, and the Eighth Annual David Elsasser Spirit Award, which is given each year to a deserving student with an interest in sports.

This year's award was presented to Erick Riser, Jr., by Kathy Oblak, mother of David Elsasser who passed away several years ago.

Murray Ridge School Director of Educational Services, Dann Swift, concluded the ceremony by congratulating the students on their many years of hard work and wishing them well as they enter the world anew as adults.



***Lorain Municipal Judge Thomas J. Elwell, Jr., delivers the commencement address.***

## A Day...

*Continued from page 1*

people on the phone. When LWAC staff from other departments call A.J.'s area, he smiles and gets very excited. With some assistance from his staff, he is able to hold the phone to his ear and listen to their friendly greetings. "A.J. loves the telephone. He can't really respond because of his speech challenges, but he's a *great* listener! He is such a sweet person and really loves people," says Thompson.

Thompson says that another significant accomplishment for A.J. this year is the fact that he's going away for summer camp. The camp is a week-long, overnight camping experience at Echoing Hills. "This will be the first time A.J. has ever been away from home for this long," says Thompson, clearly impressed with A.J.'s progress.

While he is certainly not ready to rest on his laurels, overall, A.J. seems to have navigated the trials of the first year of adulthood well. And everyone who knows him looks forward to seeing just what he'll accomplish next.



## You Say Tomāto, I Say Tomāto



***Oberlin Work/Activity Center consumers (l-r) Mike Jarrett, Josh Rand, Shasta Knarr and Margaret Cordova proudly show their thriving vegetable garden.***

Even when there is a lull in the work day, consumers at the Oberlin Work/Activity Center are eagerly seeking new things to do. So, Murray Ridge staff decided that a garden project might be a fun way for consumers to learn as well as fill some down time. So, participants busily got their hands dirty tilling soil, planting vegetables and watering their ever-growing tomato, lettuce, cucumber, squash and zucchini plants. They look forward to harvesting their crop at the end of the season and having a salad party to celebrate their hard work.

## Stopping to Smell the Flowers



Recently, Murray Ridge Center employees **Margaret Barnes** and **Celeste McKissick** were having lunch at Lorenzo's Pizzeria in Oberlin and struck up a conversation with an employee from Green Circle Growers, Inc. Barnes and McKissick must have made quite the impression when it came to talking about Murray Ridge, as Green Circle Growers donated 15 hanging flower baskets to the East College Home in Oberlin to help beautify the home for the summer months! Our sincere thanks go out to Green Circle Growers, Inc. for the wonderful and thoughtful gift, as well as to our very dedicated and positive employees!

## Celebrating Different Cultures

The Lorain Work/Activity Center recently celebrated cultural diversity in conjunction with the Lorain International Festival. To learn more about the ways people all over the world live, they engaged in a number of enjoyable and educational activities.

The Center looked like a world market with work areas decorated by consumers to represent different countries. From China to Ghana to the Caribbean, the Center was a virtual globe full of everything from home-made Chinese hats to hand-drawn castles. Other festivities included a potluck lunch where staff prepared popular foods from different countries, educational talks about various cultures, and entertaining performances from a bagpipe player and Celtic dancers.

The week was fun for all and provided the opportunity for participants to gain a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, people from all cultures.



***Lorain Work/Activity consumers (l-r) Michael Fuller, Leslie Cirilo, Donna Wolf and Doreen Alaska don their Chinese-inspired hats and pose in front of a giant Chinese take-out box.***

## Summer Volunteer Opportunities

Calling all volunteers! As you gear up for all of those picnics and barbeques this summer, you may be interested in having a little fun while at the same time helping to educate the community about Murray Ridge Center. There are several community events this year throughout Lorain County and Murray Ridge needs volunteers to help staff booths and participate in parades. If you are interested in representing Murray Ridge at any of the following events, please contact Racheal Seibert, Community Education & Volunteer Manager, at (440) 329-3734.

- Sheffield/Sheffield Lake Community Days Parade—Thursday, July 16
- Amherst Old Time Jamboree Festival Parade—Sunday, July 12
- North Ridgeville Corn Festival Parade—Sunday, August 9
- Oberlin Family Fun Fair Booth—August 1
- Lorain County Fair Booth—August 24-30



## New Faces in Murray Ridge Places



**Tyler Abbey** joins the South Professor Home as a Group Home Aide. Tyler is a graduate of Wellington High School and is currently working on a degree in Special Education.



**Shannon Gibson** joins the Meister Road Home as a Group Home Aide. Shannon is a graduate of Olmsted Falls High School and the University of Akron. She previously worked for the Cuyahoga County Board of MRDD. She has a son and a stepdaughter, and she enjoys roller blading, soccer and gardening.



**Kim Williams** joins the Elyria Work/Activity Center as a Workshop specialist 2. He is a graduate of North Ridgeville High School and the Polaris Career Center. He and his wife have two sons and a daughter. He enjoys golf, fishing and leading bible study classes.

## BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

**The Lorain County Board of MR/DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on June 26, 2009:**



Superintendent Fisher presented an overview of benefits that the agency has received through its membership in the Northeast Ohio Network (NEON) including interest on funds that otherwise would be unavailable to the Board. Dr. Fisher also updated the Board on the passage of Senate Bill 79 which will strike the words "mental retardation" from the Department and Board names, noting that the legislation also contained an amendment that will allow agencies to use up promotional materials created before the legislation was passed. Dr. Fisher also cautioned the Board about short-and long-term losses of revenue as the state deficit had ballooned to \$3.2 billion and all departments are being impacted. Potential negative consequences on the agency are numerous and may include reduction or even elimination of county board subsidies from the Ohio Department of MRDD, as well as significant losses of funding from the Ohio Department of Education. Dr. Fisher did note, however, that it appeared that there may be a partial but permanent fix to the Tangible Personal Property Tax phase-out (which would ultimately cost the agency approximately 1.6M/year in revenue loss). In other business, Al Sprague Director of Residential Service & Support Administration gave an overview of the Family Support Services including how and when funds are dispersed. He also presented a budget for the third quarter allocations, which was unanimously accepted by the Board. Dann Swift, Director of Educational Services gave a brief presentation of a new awards ceremony that recognizes Murray Ridge students in a number of areas. Swift noted that the inaugural ceremony was a success, and plans are to make this an annual event that parents and guardians can attend.





# July 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 	

## Activities & Events

- 7/3—Agency Closed in Observance of Independence Day**
- 7/6—Murray Ridge Support Group Meeting, 4:15 p.m., Elyria Work Activity Center, 1095 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 7/6—Family Support Parent Committee meeting, 6:30 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road
- 7/9—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:00-6:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School
- 7/12—Amherst Old Time Jamboree Festival Parade
- 7/16—Sheffield Lake Community Days Parade
- 7/17—Murray Ridge Support Group dance, 7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 S. Murray Ridge Road, Elyria
- 7/23—LCBMRDD Finance Committee meeting, 12:00 p.m., Administration Building, 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 7/23—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:00-6:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School
- 7/31—LCBMRDD Meeting, 12:30 p.m. Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria



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**July 13-17**  
**August 3-7**

**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

## Lunch Menus

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

**June 29-July 3**  
**July 20-24**  
**August 10-14**

**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



**July 6-10**  
**July 27-31**  
**August 17-21**

**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

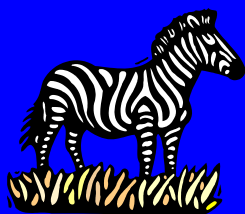
Lorain County Board of Mental Retardation  
& Developmental Disabilities

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## Early Intervention Zoo Trip

The Murray Ridge Center Early Intervention department has scheduled a trip to the Cleveland Zoo on July 15, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. One free ticket will be available for each two-year-old child, and additional tickets may be purchased at the gate. July 15 is also Lorain County Day at the Zoo and all tickets are discounted for Lorain County residents. For more information, contact the Early Intervention department at 440-284-3655.



## 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.

## Summer Camp Fun



***Murray Ridge School student Taylor Brown displays her tie-dye masterpiece during Summer Camp.***