

Americans With Disabilities Act- 18 Years and Counting On You

Eighteen years ago, on July 26, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law. That Act was a promise to Americans with disabilities that their talents and contributions would not be undervalued.

To put the basis for the passage of the Act into context, one must consider certain historical events of the 1970s and '80s in the disability rights struggle. All of these efforts demonstrated that persons with disabilities had both the ability and the desire to participate fully in American life, but were often unable to do so due to physical and attitudinal barriers.

The campaign by persons with disabilities for full participation in American society led to the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Education For All Handicapped Children Act of 1974 (renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). While the Acts of 1973 and 1974 barred discrimination under programs receiving federal assistance and guaranteed students with disabilities a free appropriate public education, they did not address such things as employment or physical access to public accommodations.

This was addressed when, drawing from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (for coverage and enforcement) and from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (for what constitutes discrimination), the ADA expanded the scope of protection to prohibit the discrimination of persons with disabilities in the areas of employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications. By providing protection in these important areas, the ADA helps to ensure that the estimated 53 million Americans with disabilities are not prevented from participating in our society.

While passage of the ADA has certainly improved access to employment and public facilities, there is still room for improvement. People's attitudes and knowledge of disabilities can sometimes be tougher to change than a building. "It was hard before the ADA because people underestimated persons with disabilities and facilities weren't easily accessible," says **Bev Monteleone**, Murray Ridge Center employee who was born with cerebral palsy. After graduating from Lincoln West High School in 1978, Bev attended college for awhile. Eventually, however, she was forced to stop attending due to the difficulties in transportation

and accessibility to the facilities constructed prior to passage of the 1990 law.

When she was younger, people referred to Monteleone as "crippled" and discouraged her from doing many of the things her peers were doing. "It's not that they don't care," says Monteleone of the public, "it's just that they aren't educated about disabilities or the needs of persons with disabilities. I used to get angry about it, but now I try to educate people."

Despite her challenges early on, Monteleone went on to prove her capabilities with a successful career at Murray Ridge Center. But she still strives to educate others who may not understand the abilities and challenges of persons with disabilities.

Toward this end, Monteleone is involved in disability outreach activities through her church. She helps her church

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2008 Transition Ceremony



Lorain County Board of MRDD President **Michelle L. Hunt**, above right, presents a well-earned diploma to Murray Ridge School senior **Paul Kropp** at the 2008 Transition (Commencement) ceremony. Kropp was one of 10 Murray Ridge School graduates.

Americans with Disabilities Act

to identify and address unmet needs of and barriers to accessibility faced by persons with disabilities within her own church community. In addition, she educates fellow parishioners about common misconceptions concerning persons with disabilities, physical /architectural barriers that confront persons with disabilities and "etiquette" for interacting with persons with disabilities.

Clearly, although it's been nearly two decades since passage of the ADA, its intention is still often unrecognized, making the advocacy efforts of people like Bev all the more relevant.

The fact is, we would all be better advocates if we had a greater awareness of what the Americans with Disabilities Act actually says. The essence of the law is encapsulated in five distinct points, or titles.

Title I of the ADA prohibits employers from discriminating against qualified job applicants and workers who are or who become disabled. The law covers all aspects of employment, including the application process, hiring, compensation, advancement and any other term, condition or privilege. The ADA applies to businesses with 15 or more employees and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is charged with enforcement of the ADA.

Title II of the Act prohibits state and local governments from discriminating against persons with disabilities in their programs and activities. It also sets forth the applicable structural accessibility requirements for public entities.

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Title III mandates that private enterprises that provide public accommodations and services (e.g., hotels, restaurants, transit systems, etc.) shall not deny goods, services or programs to people with disabilities. It also sets forth the applicable structural accessibility requirements for private entities.

Through Title IV telecommunications devices and services are made available for persons with hearing and speech impairments. These regulations codify the mandatory minimum standards telephone companies must maintain to be in compliance with the ADA.

Title V addresses miscellaneous provisions that relate to the construction and application of the ADA, such as alternative dispute resolution.

The ADA has gone a long way in giving persons with disabilities equal opportunities with regards to employment, access to public accommodations and telecommunications. But in order to maximize its value to those whom it is designed to benefit, it is important that the language, significance and purpose of the ADA are continually communicated. Through understanding and outreach activities such as Monteleone's, and perhaps your own, people may more fully embrace this law, which ultimately has the power to benefit not just a few, but all of us.

R.I.C.H.E.S.

The R.I.C.H.E.S. Committee would like to announce their 2008 summer promotions.



"Think Green." The R.I.C.H.E.S. Committee will award \$25 to the first five individuals who submit an ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY suggestion between July and August.

Departmental contest. The R.I.C.H.E.S. Committee will provide a free pizza party to the department that submits the most eligible suggestions between July and August.

If anyone has any questions they may submit them to the R.I.C.H.E.S. Coordinator, Emily Ramos, at the SSA office or to any of the R.I.C.H.E.S. Committee members Lisa Tramontana (LWAC), Barb Reynolds (OWAC), Mike Narvaez (EWAC), Tracy Dunlap (SSA), Barb Kidney (MRS) and Valerie Deptula (EI)).

Summer Camp



Murray Ridge School student **Ryan Wren** plays sounds on a keyboard after finishing a Chinese lantern project during International Week at Summer Camp. Students learned about the music, food and traditions of various cultures.



Happy 232nd Birthday, America!

This July 4, as you prepare to celebrate America's 232nd birthday, you may be interested to know a few fun facts about this important day. For instance, did you know that there were approximately 2.5 million people living in the colonies when the Declaration of Independence was signed? And speaking of independence, there are 11 places in the United States with the word "Independence" in them. *Wherever* they may be living, approximately 74 million Americans participated in a Fourth of July barbeque in 2006. In New York City, locals participate in the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest on Coney Island. And whether it is on Coney Island or Kelley's Island, it is estimated that 150 million hot dogs will be consumed on this one day. However *you* plan to recognize this very important holiday, we at Murray Ridge Center wish all Lorain County citizens a happy Independence Day. Happy birthday America!



Life is a Picnic

Murray Ridge Center staff and consumers kicked up their heels recently at the Oberlin Work Activity Center's Annual Picnic. With activities in every room, the sound of upbeat music in the halls, and the smell of hot dogs filling the air, one couldn't help but have a grand time.



Pictured above: **Wendy and Bob Challen** take a break from the fun to smile for the camera.

New Positions Announced



Beatrice Partin has recently accepted a position as Workshop Specialist 2 in Community Employment. Previously she was a Workshop Aide at the Oberlin Work Activity Center.



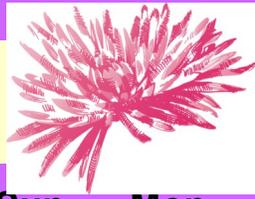
Previously a Group Home Aide/Housekeeper at Liberty Lane Home, **Jennifer Ward** will now be a Workshop Aide at the Elyria Work Activity Center.



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.

—The Editor



July 2008

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

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Activities & Events

- 7/4—Agency closed in observance of Independence Day!
- 7/10—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:00-6:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 S. Murray Ridge Road, Elyria
- 7/10—Sheffield/Sheffield Lake Community Days Parade, time TBA
- 7/13—Amherst Old Time Jamboree Parade, 12:00 p.m.
- 7/15—LCBMRDD Meeting, Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmiry Road, Elyria, 7:30 p.m.
- 7/18—Murray Ridge Support Group Dance, Murray Ridge School, 7:00 p.m.
- 7/18-7/20—Lorain Port Fest
- 7/23—Annual Early Intervention Picnic, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School
- 7/24—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:00-6:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School



Lunch Menus

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

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July 14—18
August 4—8

June 30—July 4
July 21—25
August 11—15

July 7—11
July 28—August 1
August 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

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

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



Score!

On Wednesday June 4, the Murray Ridge Center Special Olympics Soccer Team hosted a tournament on their home field against the Lake County and the Geauga County Teams. Murray Ridge was victorious over both teams with scores of 9-5 over Lake County and 4-3 over Geauga County. Go Raiders!



Pictured above: Murray ridge Raider **Eric Johnson** keeps the ball away from an opposing player.

Pictured right: Murray Ridge Goalie **Tony Daniels** kicks the ball back into play after preventing a goal.



I Love a Parade!

Each summer, thousands of Americans across the nation brave the crowds and heat to listen to rhythmic drum beats and to admire the many colorful and creative floats in their local parades. Murray Ridge Center staff and consumers also love these exciting, festive events and will be participating in many Lorain County parades throughout the summer months. If you'd like to know which parades we'll be participating in, call the Community Education & Volunteer Manager at (440) 329-3734.



Pictured above: Staff at the Oberlin Work Activity Center entertain consumers before the work day begins with a short parade in honor of Memorial Day.

BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

The Lorain County Board of MR/DD convened at 7:30 p.m. on June 17.

Superintendent Fisher distributed Board Member Reference Manuals recently compiled by the Ohio Association of County Boards of MRDD (OACB). Dr. Fisher informed the Board that 2009 OACB membership dues would again remain the same, but that the date of this year's annual conference would be October 27 - October 29, which is significantly earlier than in the past. Dr. Fisher advised the Board that she anticipated a key topic at this year's conference would be state and national trends that emphasize usage of the term "developmental disabilities," and elimination of the phrase "mental retardation" from the names of organizations dedicated to the needs of people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. After extended discussion, it was the Board's unanimous opinion that Dr. Fisher should express the Board's desire to retain the phrase "mental retardation" for a variety of reasons. In other business, Al Sprague, the Director of Residential Service & Support Administration, updated the Board on the quarterly Family Support allocations, indicating that the group was clearly meeting goals set under its revised funding formula. The Board unanimously approved the requested 3rd Quarter budget, and complimented Mr. Sprague and the Family Support Committee on their diligence and effectiveness. Tom Forhan, Director of Human Resources, updated the Board on the agency's Recruitment Incentive Plan, whereby staff members are rewarded for assisting HR by referring qualified candidates for hard-to-fill positions. Mr. Forhan emphasized that the incentives are incremental in relation to the referred individuals' successful tenure at the agency, and are pertinent to very few job openings. 2008/2009 calendars for Murray Ridge School and other Board programs were approved. Preliminary arrangements for the Board's Strategic Planning Retreat on August 01 and 02, 2008 were discussed.



Lorain County Board of Mental Retardation
& Developmental Disabilities

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Elyria, OH 44035

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Visit our Web site
www.loraincountymrdd.org

Save the Date!

It's the Annual Early Intervention Picnic!

This July 23, Murray Ridge School will host the Annual Early Intervention Picnic. Children currently in the program, as well as alumni of the program, will delight in the antics of a clown, be dazzled by the creativity of balloon art, and thrill in the excitement of the many games provided. If you would like more information, call Val Deptula at (440) 329-3760.



Pictured left: Murray Ridge Center employee **Aggie Busser** prepares for the many parades that Murray Ridge staff volunteers will be participating in this summer.