



MurrayRidgeCenter  
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

# The Murray Ridge Courier

June 2015

## Murray Ridge School Celebrates the Class of 2015

On May 28, 2015, friends, family members, caregivers, and Murray Ridge Center staff bid farewell to four graduating seniors during its annual transition ceremony at Murray Ridge School.

Murray Ridge School Commencement 2015 began with a prelude by music teacher Lissa Lopez and a welcome by Director of Educational Services Dann Swift as he introduced the transferring students, Mark Axford, Mark Dolan, Robert "Bobby" Gajdos, and Jacob Patterson.

The Murray Ridge Choraleers sang "You Are My Sunshine," and then Superintendent Fisher took the podium to speak to the graduates and their families, caregivers, and teachers.

"You have reason to be extremely proud of what you have accomplished. During your years at Murray Ridge School, you have worked hard, learned much, mastered many skills, and achieved many victories. Parents, grandparents, siblings, supporters, and caregivers - today we honor your commitment. Your daily nurturing, encouragement, and assistance enabled today's achievement and will foster the confidence necessary for continued growth. We share in your joy as your loved one now embarks upon the transition into adulthood."

Dr. Tom Jama, Superintendent elect for Elyria City Schools, was the guest speaker at the ceremony. Dr. Jama spoke of his career, and how the characteristics of each student have and will continue to make an impact in the community. He also brought Elyria hats for all the graduates, and invited each man and his family to an Elyria High School football game next season.

"I'm meeting you on a very special occasion," Jama said. "But it is clear to me that you four have truly inspired the people around you. Gentleman, you are at a



Bobby, Jacob, Mark, and Mark get ready for the ceremony.

milestone in your lives. Your character has been shaped and you are ready for new challenges."

Dr. Jama concluded his speech with an inspirational reminder for the graduates and those in attendance. "Continue to find the wonder in the world as seen through a child's eye."

Director of Vocational and Transportation Services Jeff Miller added his own encouraging words to each senior, quoting Ralph

Waldo Emerson, "What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you."

Following the keynote address, Board President Michelle Hunt and Board Members Kurt Koepf, Bob Gajdos, and Dan White presented each graduate with a diploma. Finally, the fourteenth annual David Elasser Spirit Award was presented to Jacob Patterson by Kathy Oblak, mother of David Elasser, a previous student at Murray Ridge School who passed away 13 years ago.

The ceremony ended with Dann Swift wishing the seniors best of luck in the future, and thanking them for their hard work and dedication as students at Murray Ridge School.

The festive afternoon concluded with a luncheon provided by the Murray Ridge Support Group for all graduates, their families and friends, and staff members.

Best of luck to our 2015 graduates!



Dr. Tom Jama delivers his speech.



It's official! The graduates are handed their diplomas. Above, left: Mark Dolan and Board Member Kurt Koepf. Above, middle: Jacob Patterson receives his diploma from Board Member, Dan White. Below, left: Mark Axford proudly poses. Below, middle: Bobby Gajdos receives his diploma from his grandfather—and Board Member—Bob Gajdos. Above, right: Board Members Kurt Koepf and Dan White, Board President, Michelle Hunt, Superintendent Amber Fisher, and Director of Educational Services, Dann Swift, smile after the transition ceremony.

# The Class of 2015



**Mark Axford** is an amazing young man who, during his years at Murray Ridge School (MRS), has been involved in many activities including CREW and Boy Scouts. He has had roles in several school productions and worked on the sets as well. Mark enjoys learning about nature and outdoor activities. Upon graduation, Mark plans to work at the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center.

**Mark Dolan** is a fun-loving, social young man. At MRS, he has been involved in many events and activities including CREW, and jobs both within the school and in the community. He has also participated in Boy Scouts and school plays. Mark especially enjoys school dances, Scout parties, and music. After he graduates, Mark plans to work at the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center.



**Bobby Gajdos** is a wonderful person with an amazing smile and limitless energy. He has been active in many activities at MRS. Bobby has volunteered at 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest Food Bank, been a member of the Boy Scouts, and worked school jobs on the CREW. Bobby enjoys computer activities and being with his family. Bobby plans to work at the Lorain Opportunity/Vocational Center after graduation.

**Jacob Patterson** is a wonderful young man who enjoys a wide array of activities and events. He has been a member of the Boy Scouts, a member of the Crew, and he has been a featured act in the Murray Ridge Talent Shows. Jacob loves trains and outdoor activities such as camping and fishing. After graduation, Jacob plans to work at the Oberlin Opportunity/Vocational Center.



## Lorain High School ROTC Group Donates to Murray Ridge

Representatives from the Lorain High School ROTC Organization donated a check for \$500 to Friends of Murray Ridge at the Board Meeting on May 29.

The funds were raised through the ROTC group's Bowling For Murray Ridge fundraiser, held May 16 at Rebman Recreation in Lorain. This event, held in conjunction with the Friends of Murray Ridge's Car Raffle, was a service learning project for the young cadets.

Thank you, Lorain High School ROTC, for this very generous donation!



ROTC cadets Danielle Price, Aaron Clayton, and Dania Alvarado present Board Member Kurt Koepp with the funds raised through their Service Learning project.



Steve Slutzker pulled the winning ticket from Jim Firment at Rebman Recreation.

## The Friends of Murray Ridge Car Raffle was a huge success!

Thank you to all who helped make this event a huge success! Murray Ridge staff raised more than \$13,000 for Friends of Murray Ridge through this fundraiser!

The winner of the 2014 Chevy Sonic, which was donated by Joe Firment Chevrolet in Avon, was Thomas Swierz of Amherst!

## The Murray Ridge 500!

On May 23, Murray Ridge School students competed in the annual Murray Ridge 500. Students and staff enjoyed creating and racing their cars. This year, special guests Spiderman and Super Woman from Super Heroes to Kids in Ohio—a nonprofit organization that makes costumed visits to local children's hospitals, charitable organizations, and special needs centers—were on-hand to interact with students and staff!

Congratulations to all our MRS racers! And thank you to Super Heroes to Kids in Ohio and all the parents, staff, and caregivers who came out to cheer on the participants!

Below: Andrea Stout (aide), Makenzie Dvorscak, Aiden Harper, Sandra Lisso, Aneesa Shakur, Sydney Anderson (aide) Owen Richardson, and Marra Board get ready!



Above, Danny Bader gets ready for the big race!



## Meet Me in Paris at Murray Ridge School Prom

On May 8, Murray Ridge School held its annual Prom.

This year's theme was Meet Me In Paris! Prom was attended by more than 250 people, there to celebrate the graduating seniors in this year's class, who were all crowned king.

Staff spent weeks after school decorating the gymnasium for the big event, and attendees were astonished to see the transformation; they even constructed an 18' replica of the Eiffel Tower that students and guests could walk in and around, imagining themselves in Paris!

A delicious catered dinner was provided to all attendees. Additionally, a professional photographer was on-hand to take photos to mark the occasion, with a photo booth donated for candid shots. A DJ provided music and entertainment! These professionals donated their services to the school, and all funds for the Prom were raised through donations to the school, and by staff through bake sales, t-shirt sales, and various raffles and dining events held throughout the school year.

**Thank you to all who helped make this year's Prom a huge success!**



Above, Mark Axford gets crowned king! Below, Alyssa and Matthew Maraldo and their parents.

## Murray Ridge School Students Participate in the 35th Annual Lorain County Special Olympics



Above: Sean McCaffery, Sam DiCello, Gus McKee, Teacher Julie Peterson, Tyler Rudolchick, Emily Gessner with her dad Mr. Gessner, aide Stephen Prior, and aide Sandy Schreur smile at Ely Stadium. Right: Jaden Hayes, Steven Fosdick, Lorenzo Cooke, and Mark Axford hold the Murray Ridge School banner for the parade.



On May 19th, 39 Murray Ridge School students participated in the 35th Annual Lorain County Special Olympics competition at Ely Stadium in Elyria in a wide range of activities, including the opening ceremony, races, softball throw, and standing long jump.

Fifteen school districts throughout Lorain County competed in the games, and hundreds of parents, teachers, friends, and caregivers came out to show their support for the amazing athletes. Murray

Ridge is a proud participant each year in this event where children with developmental disabilities can showcase their exceptional athletic ability.

We commend all the athletes that competed in the games, with special congratulations to our Murray Ridge School students who, once again, represented us well.

## Sharing The Warmth

Janice Didominico, an adult program participant who attends the Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center, created 12 lap blankets and shawls that the EOVC delivered to the Elyria Wesleyan Village nursing home.

The ladies were so happy and moved to tears for such a kind gift that Janice had brought to them. Janice was equally excited to make these women happy. She is working on more blankets that we will deliver during the Holiday season! Thank you for sharing your special talent with the residents of Elyria Wesleyan!



Janice poses with a few residents at Elyria Wesleyan Village Nursing Home after visiting and gifting her handmade blankets.



## Murray Ridge School Donates Supplies During Pet Pride Month

Murray Ridge School students and staff had the honor of giving back to those in need during Pet Pride Month.

The Parma Animal Shelter came to visit Murray Ridge School. While there, they were presented with \$165 worth of pet food that was purchased with money raised by our students.

To add to the animal fun, Murray Ridge School teacher Megan Brown brought her rescue dog, OB, in for a demonstration on how to safely approach a dog. OB was formerly a resident of Parma Animal Shelter.

Thank you to Parma Animal Shelter and Megan for making this day a fun and informative event! And thank you to the Murray Ridge School students for their generous donation!



Student Luis Massas interacts with OB and learns ways to approach a dog.



## Staff Create New Shredding Jobs at the EOVC

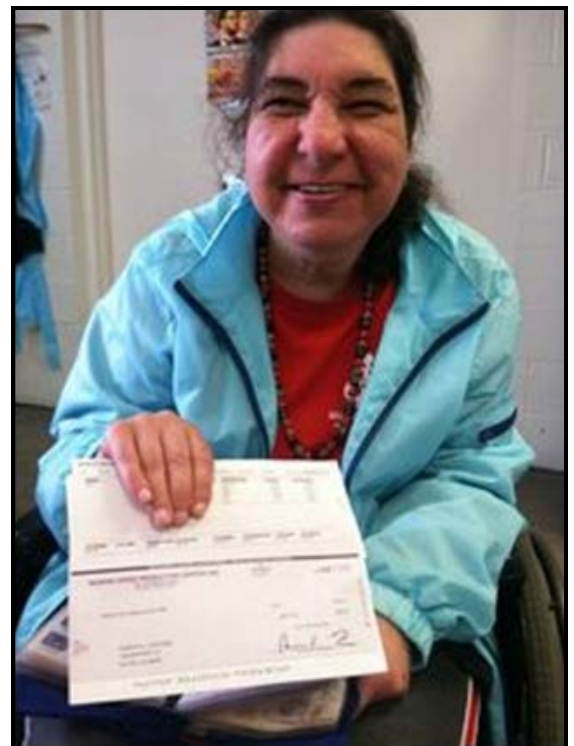
Murray Ridge Center is committed to assisting those we serve in finding meaningful employment. For Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center attendee Ron Phillips, this commitment by EOVC staff led him to a new job doing something he loves to do!

Staff from the EOVC were made aware that Ron had an affinity for shredding papers and magazines; unfortunately these shreds weren't making it into a recycle bin! The staff was then tasked with how to redirect this behavior.

Don Rochon, Program Specialist for Murray Ridge Center, came up with the idea to have EOVC staff collect their papers to be shredded. Don escorted Ron around to pick up the papers, while simultaneously teaching Ron what could be shredded, how it was to be shredded, and where to put the shreds. Ron already had the actions down (shredding and stuffing), he just needed to be shown a situation where the actions were beneficial.

Area G staff member Jenn Hall heard about this exercise and had the idea to get several other consumers involved. Jenn trained these individuals in how to shred documents, and to set it up to be a paying job for those program participants!

Several consumers are now performing the job! The staff at the EOVC have truly shown their dedication to those we serve, and their willingness to go the extra mile for our program participants. And, Ron and all the consumers now working this job have learned valuable skills, and can take pride in their work - and their paychecks. Thank you to all those who provided valuable input to create a rewarding workplace experience for Ron and his co-workers!



Left: Ron Phillips smiles as he works at his new shredding job at the EOVC. Above, EOVC attendee Roberta Whitesel proudly shows off her paycheck!



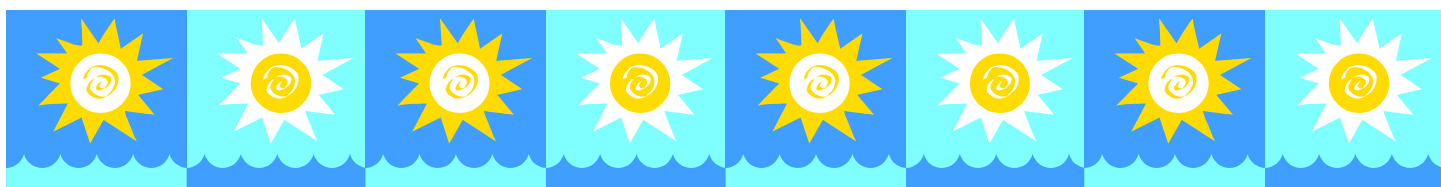
# June 2015

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

	1	2	3	4	5 	6
7	8	9 	School Day Camp			13
14	15	16	17	18	19 	20 
	School Day Camp					
21	22	23	24 	25	26 	27
	School Day Camp					
28	29	30				
	School Day Camp					

## Activities & Events

- 6/5 - Last day of school for Murray Ridge School
- 6/9 - Murray Ridge Support Group meeting, 4:15 p.m., Elyria Opportunity/Vocational Center, 1095 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 6/10 - 7/2 - Murray Ridge School Day Camp
- 6/19 - LCBDD Finance Committee meeting, 12:00 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 6/19 - Murray Ridge Support Group Dance, 7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria
- 6/20 - Avon Duck Tape Festival
- 6/24 - Family Support Parent Committee meeting, 6:30 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 6/26 - Regular Meeting of the Board and Ethics Council, 12:30 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria



### BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

**The Lorain County Board of DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on May 30, 2014:**

Lieutenant Colonel Dennis Owen and three members of the Lorain High School ROTC program presented Friends of Murray Ridge with a \$500.00 donation from its Bowling for Murray Ridge event held in May. Director of Business John Bonko presented the tax budget; the Board unanimously approved. The Board approved revisions to four policies: *Fees for Services to Eligible Individuals*, *Family Support Services*, *Behavior Support*, and *Smoking Policy*. Additionally, the Board approved two new Board policies: *Non-Medicaid Adult Services* and *Privacy and Confidentiality/HIPAA*. Superintendent Amber Fisher provided an update on the residential transition, including the progress on moving individuals from Board-operated licensed group homes to supported living settings. In other news, the Murray Ridge Support Group will hold **it's last dance for the summer on June 19; it's next meeting will be held on June 9, and no more meetings will be held until September.**

Lorain County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities

**Murray Ridge Center**  
1091 Infirmary Road  
Elyria, OH 44035

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Permit No. 146  
Elyria, OH 44035



### **Inclusive Playground FREE Admission!**

Visit the Lorain County Metro Parks Inclusive Playground! Free at this time, the unique playground incorporates water play (shut down for season), structured play, and natural play environments. People of all ages and abilities will be able to use the area and enjoy the play features. Stop in and visit today!

47160 Hollstein Drive,  
Amherst, Ohio  
(440) 984-3470



### **Exceptional Service Award**

Do you know a Murray Ridge employee whose work efforts reflect remarkable dedication and have significantly contributed to the well being of people with developmental disabilities? Nominate that employee for an Exceptional Service Award! If you are a community member; consumer; or parent, guardian, sibling or other relative of a Murray Ridge program participant, submit your nomination to Jennifer Judkins, Public Relations/Volunteer Director. Include a brief paragraph outlining your reasons for nominating the employee. All nominations will be forwarded to the Board for consideration. The Board presents Exceptional Service Awards on a quarterly basis at regular scheduled meetings, usually held on the last Friday of each month at 12:30 p.m. in the Board Room. If you have any questions, contact Jenn Judkins at 440-329-3734 or [jjudkins@murrayridgecenter.org](mailto:jjudkins@murrayridgecenter.org).