



MurrayRidgeCenter  
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

# The Murray Ridge Courier

May 2011

## Murray Ridge Support Group Helps Consumers Give Lorain County A Special Thank You Note On Earth Day

Since 1970, on what has commonly become known as "Earth Day", individuals and organizations across the United States and the world have taken the time to focus on the importance of their roles as stewards of our planet. This year, the non-profit Murray Ridge Support Group made it possible for a group of Murray Ridge consumers to participate in the event in a manner that will deliver environmental dividends to the citizens of Lorain County for many years to come.

It all began when Murray Ridge Support Group member Andrea Elek came up with the idea of enabling consumers to participate in Earth Day activities in conjunction with a Metro Parks outing. Elek, who serves as secretary for the Murray Ridge Support Group, contacted Lorain County Metro Parks ranger Chris Grame at the Wellington Reservation for suggestions and guidance. Grame was not only receptive but enthusiastic, and graciously gave of his time and expertise to the Earth Day project.

Ranger Grame, whose responsibilities include being the Conservation Supervisor for the Lorain County Metro Parks, quickly responded to Elek's inquiry. "I was somewhat familiar with Murray Ridge and, thinking of the easiest and most effective methods of planting, I suggested they purchase cuttings often referred to as tree stakes, but not to be confused with the stabilization rods required with the planting of some trees," said Grame. On Grame's advice, the support group purchased 50 Elderberry (*sambucus nigra*) cuttings and 50 Silky Dogwood (*cornus amomum*) cuttings for just slightly more than \$100.00.



**Pictured here left to right are:**  
**Ranger Chris Grame,**  
**Debbie Griffea, Mike Telloni, Larry**  
**Schumann, John Hanshumaker,**  
**and Barbara Kingsboro**

News of this special outing spread fast, and soon 27 consumers from the Elyria, Lorain and Oberlin Work/Activity Centers and attendant staff were on their way to the 550-acre Wellington Reservation, which is a cooperative effort between the Metro Parks and the Village of Wellington.

The Lorain County Metro Parks (Lorain County Metropolitan Park District) was created in 1957 by the Lorain County Probate Court, under the authority of Ohio's Park District Law of 1917. Beginning with the donation of Mill Hollow in 1958, the system has grown to 22 sites totaling more than 6,500 acres. A jewel in the extensive Lorain County Metro Parks network, the Wellington Reservation not only features more than four miles of paved and crushed stone

trails meandering through grassland fields and wetland habitats, but also offers visitors the opportunity to sail and fish on a 21-acre lake formed by the Wellington South Reservoir.

Grame, who joined the Lorain County Metro Parks in 1994, joined the Earth Day group in Wellington. He explained that the kind of cuttings, or "tree stakes," that the support group obtained for consumers was designed to be directly thrust into the ground without any digging or special preparation. "These two-foot long stakes are particularly effective for berry shrub and small tree plantings; they require almost no special attention and should be sprouting leaves in the first weeks of May. The Silky Dogwood and Elderberry respond favorably to the kind of soil and water conditions that your group placed them in." In addition to being integral to the current ecosystem at the Wellington Reservoir, Grame noted that the 100 cuttings, "while not capable of achieving great heights, are significant guards against excess soil erosion." He added that he could think of no better way to recognize the spirit of Earth Day than the effort put forth by this group of Murray Ridge Consumers.

*Continued . . .*



**Earth Day** was founded by former Wisconsin governor and United States Senator Gaylord Nelson, and was intended to inspire awareness and appreciation for the Earth's natural environment. The first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970 and is now celebrated globally with an entire week of activities focused on environmental issues and solutions. Nelson (1916-2005) was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1995.

For staff member Larry Schuman, a Workshop Specialist II at the Lorain Work/Activity Center, the day held special significance as he remembered his first participation in Earth Day festivities more than 30 years ago.

"As I drove out to Wellington Reservoir with a paratransit full of eager consumers and passed the Lorain County Joint Vocational School, I suddenly recalled being a 16- or 17-year-old high school student on my class Earth Day outing. We planted hundreds of pine tree saplings near the reservoir that day; trees that I saw again on this outing."

Schuman mused that a lot has changed in the more than three decades since that first experience, but that change has also brought him new insights. "As we proceeded to plant those 100 stakes, I thought about how lucky I was to participate in this event again, so many years later, with Murray Ridge consumers. In my opinion, Murray Ridge consumers are individuals who very much relish life; they simultaneously rely on us and teach us about the necessity of nurturing any given life. And I was particularly happy that together, as Murray Ridge staff and Murray Ridge consumers, we were doing something that could benefit the community at large, the community that supports our mission of helping others." In that sense, the efforts of these 27 consumers and staffers during Earth Week 2011 accomplished two things. They met the goal of heightened awareness of our role in stewardship of the environment, and they reflected, in a uniquely viable and tangible manner, the essence of the agency's stated goal for 2011: *"Responding to those we serve and speaking with those who make that help possible."*

And all of this was made possible by the energy and consistent backing of the Murray Ridge Support Group (MRSG), which has been providing support for families impacted by developmental disabilities and generating resources for special projects and events that are beneficial to individuals with developmental disabilities since 1989.

Murray Ridge Center would like to extend our sincere thanks to the members of MRSG for the countless hours and dollars they've spent supporting Lorain County citizens with developmental disabilities, on Earth Day and every other day of the year.

## "Breaking Down Barriers" Wrestling Spectacle Brings Donation to Friends of Murray Ridge

On the evening of Saturday, April 9, 386 individuals witnessed a special Mega Championship Wrestling fundraising event that featured a winning performance by Elyria Work/Activity Center Program Specialist James Nagy, in his adopted wrestling persona of "Mad Dog Manson."

Nagy, who has been performing on the local wrestling entertainment circuit for more than a decade, first approached the MRC Board with the fundraising idea in the summer of 2010. Many consumers are fans of the local wrestling performances and they enjoyed meeting many of the wrestlers and making signs in support of "Mad Dog" in the weeks leading up to the event.

On the appointed night, no one was left disappointed as 19 wrestlers put on a two-and-one-half-hour show at the Field House of Lorain County Community College. "It was a raging success," said Nagy. "It went beyond the evening, in that many consumers at the Work/Activity Centers enjoyed all the build up and performance hoopla that preceded the event. The guys were really great about coming out and spending time with consumers, and I think they broke down some of their own barriers by learning more about those we serve. That we could raise nearly \$1,300 for the Friends of Murray Ridge made each and every one of us, and especially Jeff Traxler, the promoter/owner of Mega Championship Wrestling, very proud."



**Jim Nagy gets "belted" by Amber Fisher.**

Nagy said he was surprised that he ended up the victor in the final bout of the evening that featured him in an epic encounter with titleholder "Shawn Blaze." His fans, on the other hand, never doubted that Jim "Mad Dog Manson" Nagy would prove himself to be the real champ of "Mega Championship Wrestling" that night.



**Board member, Dan White, accepts donation.**



## Lorain County Labor Agency Breakfast

Pictured here are Kevin Stitak, Executive Director of the Lorain County Labor Agency, and Superintendent Amber Fisher following Dr. Fisher's April 12th powerpoint presentation on Murray Ridge Center. Dr. Fisher's presentation focused on MRC and its role as both a provider of services and an employer in the community, and outlined challenges facing the organization.



## Basketball Free Throw Contest at School

The Knights of Columbus sponsored their Annual Basketball Free Throw Contest at Murray Ridge School on April 15th. The students and staff alike had a great time, which was evident from all the smiles. This was a fun way to get fit, have fun and share some memories.



Pictured here is Alexis Throckmorton trying her hand at basketball.

## Jerry Vessalo Honored as The Marilyn Hupfer Volunteer of the Year

Although he couldn't attend the April 20th Volunteer Reception to receive the honor, Jerry Vessalo, the 2011 Marilyn Hupfer Volunteer of the Year, has attended countless other meetings over the course of his 13 consecutive years as a volunteer member of the Murray Ridge Housing Corporation (MRHC).

Mr. Vessalo has served as chairperson of MRHC for 11 of those 13 years, and he has been described as "a tremendous leader devoted to the success of MRHC, leading the Board selflessly with humor and joy."

Since its inception in 1992, the MRHC has been committed to the goal of ensuring the availability of community-based living arrangements for eligible Lorain County citizens with developmental disabilities. Collectively, the 22 homes owned by MRHC provide safe and affordable housing for more than 80 individuals with developmental disabilities in traditional neighborhoods throughout Lorain County.

As the owner of Midwest Siding in Elyria, Mr. Vessalo's expertise in housing has been invaluable. As a volunteer who cherishes his role in helping individuals with developmental disabilities, he personifies the service-to-others commitment that Mrs. Hupfer so memorably exhibited during her time with Murray Ridge Center.

Congratulations, Jerry, and to all the volunteers that give their free time and their full hearts to the mission of Murray Ridge Center.



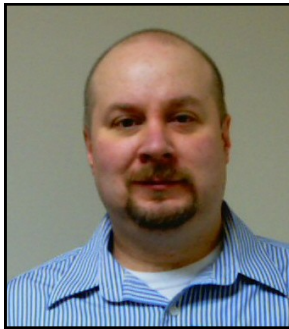
Steve Ross, Murray Ridge Housing Corporation Board Member, accepts the Marilyn Hupfer Volunteer of the Year Award on behalf of Jerry Vessalo from Superintendent Fisher.



Jeff Neal presents special award to Donald Gramer for his many years of service on the MRC Human Rights Committee at the Volunteer Reception.

## New Director of Nursing Services

Kevin Eye, RN/BSN, joined Murray Ridge in February as the new Director of Nursing Services. Kevin graduated from the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University in 1994. His background includes multi-site nursing management responsibilities in retirement communities as well as hospice and palliative care program management. Kevin also spent more than three years as a health care facilities inspector for the Ohio Department of Health. Kevin and his wife, Julie, are the proud parents of Ashton, their 10-month-old son.



## New Group Home Program Manager

Hillary A. Tanner has been promoted to the position of supervisor at the East Ninth Street Group Home. She started her new assignment on April 24, 2011.

Hillary has been with the Murray Ridge Center since 2007 and is committed to making the East Ninth Street site a setting

where residents feel at home, are provided with the very best of care, and are encouraged to be independent in every way they can be.



**Editor's note:** From time to time, Kevin will have a column that comments and reflects on health topics of interest to the readers of the Courier. It will be called **"Eye On Health"**.

## BOARD ROOM BRIEFING

### The Lorain County Board of DD convened at 12:30 p.m. on April 29, 2011:

Board member Jane Spiegelberg, Ph.D. presented a report of the Cap/Fee Exceptions Committee. Dr. Spiegelberg explained that the committee considered the question of what to charge residential providers that send residents to the MRS Summer Camp (an income-based tuition charge applies to families of campers who reside with family members). In light of this review, Dr. Spiegelberg recommended a charge of \$32.97 per day if we provide transportation to and from camp, and \$22.85 per day if the residential provider supplies the transportation. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Fisher and John Bonko, Director of Business, updated the Board on the status of the agency's 2010-2016 Base Financial Projections. Dr. Fisher noted that the anticipated increase in State waiver match allocation (of about \$292,000/year) beginning in FY 2012 would be partially offset by trends in waiver service utilization. Mr. Bonko explained that the Tangible Personal Property Tax (TPPT) hold harmless, that was originally to be eliminated over the course of seven years, will now be eliminated in just three years, resulting in an annual loss of \$1.6 million much sooner than earlier reported. Mr. Bonko also informed the Board that "Help Me Grow" will be impacted by a 24.3% reduction to the original FY 2011 award amount. Dr. Fisher then emphasized that financial sustainability is the key consideration. Changes to our projections will result in a loss of more than \$150,000 per year as compared to our previous projections, due mostly to the loss of State dollars. The accelerated loss of TPPT hold harmless dollars will make sustainability considerations more imminent. It is noteworthy that recent decisions to eliminate various positions through attrition are reflected in the current financial forecast. In other business, a Title XX Policy revision and a new policy on Administrative Resolution of Complaints For Early Intervention were unanimously approved by the Board.



## Activities & Events

- 5/1—5/4—Special Olympic Tennis Area Qualifier for State Summer Games in Canton
- 5/2—Murray Ridge School Classes resume
- 5/3—Preschool classes resume
- 5/5—Murray Ridge Support Group meeting, 4:15 p.m., Elyria Work/Activity Center, 1095 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 5/7—Special Olympics Area Qualifier for State Summer Games in Wickliffe and Wooster
- 5/11—Murray Ridge School Senior Play, 10:00 a.m., Once Upon A Time
- 5/12—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:30—6:30 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria
- 5/13—Murray Ridge School Senior Prom, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
- 5/15—Open House & Dedication Ceremony for the Harold West Home, 3:00—5:00 p.m., a Murray Ridge Housing Corporation Home
- 5/18—LCBDD Finance Committee meeting , 12:00 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road, Elyria
- 5/20—Special Olympics (Lorain County School Districts), Ely Stadium, track & field events
- 5/20—Murray Ridge Support Group Dance, 7:00 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria
- 5/23—Caring Hearts Memorial Service, 4:00 p.m., Elyria Work/Activity Center, 1095 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 5/25—Family Support Parent Committee meeting , 6:30 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 5/26—Early Intervention Playgroup, 5:30—6:30 p.m., Murray Ridge School, 9750 Murray Ridge Road in Elyria
- 5/27—LCBDD Meeting, 12:30 p.m., Administration Bldg., 1091 Infirmary Road in Elyria
- 5/30—Agency Closed in Observance of Memorial Day



## Lunch Menu

Cost Per Day: Youth = \$2.80 Adults = \$2.90

**May 16 - 20**  
**June 6 - 10**  
**June 27 - July 1**

**Monday-** Salisbury Steak w/Gravy, Scaloped Potatoes, Corn, Peaches, Cookie

**Tuesday-** Turkey or Bologna with 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

**May 23 - 27**  
**June 13 - 17**  
**July 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

**May 30 - June 3**  
**June 20 - 24**  
**July 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**  
1091 Infirmary Road  
Elyria, OH 44035

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### **Caring Hearts Memorial Service**

A special service will be held on May 23, 2011, at the Elyria Work/Activity Center at 4:00 p.m. to honor the memory of Murray Ridge Center consumers that have passed away. Families of the departed are invited to attend and share their personal recollections. The Caring Hearts Group, coordinated by Nancy Seighman, has been sponsoring this event since 1993. For more information contact Pam Sebastian @ 284-2720.

### **Further News You Might Use...**

We are often in receipt of information from external sources concerning 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 at 440-324-2366.

### **"Exceptional Service Award" Nominations Sought by Board**

If you are a consumer, parent, guardian, sibling or other relative, or a community member and would like to participate in recognizing a Murray Ridge Center employee whose work efforts reflect remarkable dedication in meeting the needs of Murray Ridge consumers, you are encouraged to nominate those staff members who, in your opinion, have made significant contributions to the lives of those we serve. The nominating criteria are purposefully wide to reflect the diversity of staff duties and contributions, but in general, the nominees will reflect a standard of service that exceeds, *in the opinion of the one making the nomination*, the already high standard of service set by the agency.

Nominations for this award should be submitted to Tim Donohue, Director of Communications ([tdonohue@murrayridgecenter.org](mailto:tdonohue@murrayridgecenter.org)). When making a nomination, it is requested that you write a brief narrative (of at least one paragraph), outlining your reasons for nominating the employee.

All nominations will be forwarded to the Board for selection at its discretion.

If you have any questions, contact Tim Donohue, Director of Communications, at 440-329-3734.