

MONTHLY



# MURRAY RIDGE COURIER

DEC 2023



Our great staff in attendance at this year's Agency InService Day

## 2023 Agency In-Service

This past October 27th, Murray Ridge staff gathered at Lorain County Community College for our Annual Agency In-Service. This event is a great opportunity for our staff to get together and acknowledge one another's accomplishments throughout the year!



Special guest speaker **Dr. James Knight**



HR Coordinator **Kim Metevia** entertaining the crowd during a break

## Celebrating All of Our Staff's Hard Work

Our agency staff is spread across multiple locations throughout Lorain County, so it's a rare opportunity for all of us to come together in a single space. At our annual Agency In-Service Day, our staff, along with some special guests, was able to gather at the Spitzer Conference Center and the Stocker Arts Center at the Lorain County Community College where they enjoyed a group lunch, informational programs, a special guest keynote speaker, awards presentations, and more. Thank you, Murray Ridge Staff, for all of your hard work throughout 2023!



# Volunteer of the Year Award Presented to North Pointe Ballet

In order to commemorate the life of a woman who personified the spirit of helping people, the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities established The Marilyn Hupfer Volunteer of the Year Award more than seventeen years ago. We were pleased to present this year's Volunteer of the Year Award to North Pointe Ballet.

The partnership between North Pointe Ballet and Murray Ridge School was established in the fall of 2018, when six Murray Ridge student dancers joined NPB for its production of *The Nutcracker*. The program, entitled "A Chance to Dance," allowed Murray Ridge students to work with the



North Pointe Ballet Development Director **Elizabeth Radachi**, North Pointe Ballet Assistant Director **Melaina McConnell**, Superintendent **Amber Fisher**, and North Pointe Ballet Executive Artistic Director **Janet Strukely-Dziak**

trained staff at North Pointe Ballet to learn dance fundamentals and perform in a full-length theatrical production. The peer modeling provided by North Pointe Ballet student dancers was particularly beneficial, as each performer with special needs was paired with a neurotypical dance student, to the benefit of all involved.

For the past 6 years, Murray Ridge students have

been blessed by on-site programs from North Pointe Ballet, as well as participating in productions of *The Nutcracker*, *Peter Pan*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Beauty and The Beast*. Classroom Supervisor Stacie Starr drives home the impact in stating "Over and over again, I have been able to witness parents cry tears of joy and an entire cast embrace the Murray Ridge students during their special performances". We are forever thankful to North Pointe Ballet for helping to create diversity and equity in the arts by addressing and removing barriers for underrepresented communities.

## C.A.R.E.S. Award Presented to Tom Mangan

The Murray Ridge C.A.R.E.S. Award stands for Community, Awareness, Recognition, Education, and Service, and we were pleased to present the 2023 C.A.R.E.S. Award to Tom Mangan.

From 1990 until earlier this year, Mr. Mangan provided legal representation to Murray Ridge under our contract with the Lorain County Prosecutor's Office. Until her retirement in 2004, Tom worked closely with former superintendent Ellen Payner, who held him in very high esteem. She would often recount stories about Tom assisting with the resolution of important issues, while also lightening the stress with his loyalty and good humor.

Superintendent Amber Fisher, who worked with Tom for nearly 35 years, delivered a heartfelt commendation of his work with the agency over the decades. Through his many experiences with us over the years, Tom developed a strong understanding of the intricacies of the DD system and

our complex services, and this made him priceless and irreplaceable. Tom was consistently responsive; he would often show up in-person to help the very same day a matter was brought to his attention. Additionally, no problem was ever too small or too tough for Tom. He did an exemplary job of helping us through countless issues that were often very complicated, serious or sensitive.

Tom cares about our agency; he cares about our staff and the people we serve. Tom is a Raiders fan and is interested in the activities of our consumers, and he would often acknowledge our dedication and hard work at the most stressful of times.

The award presentation concluded with words from Jared Smith, president of the Lorain County Township Association, which also received much appreciated legal counsel from Mr. Mangan for many years.



Superintendent **Amber Fisher**, 2023 C.A.R.E.S. Award recipient **Tom Mangan**, and Lorain County Township Association President **Jared Smith**

Tom is the personification of what our C.A.R.E.S. Award stands for. Thank you, Tom, for your many years of dedication to those we serve!



## SSA Holds Tech Fair

Recently, the SSA Department hosted a Technology Fair to help consumers and families learn about different assistive and remote technology options. Attendees were given the opportunity to test out various devices and listen to success stories from a parent advocate to help them understand how technology can help them live a more independent life. Consumers even had the opportunity to win devices like Echo Dots, an iPad, and an Apple Watch! Vendors included **Safe in Home**, **Angel Sense**, **Project Lifesaver**, **TruCare Provider Services**, and **Orcam**. We would like to thank all the vendors and the parent advocate for their assistance in making this event so successful. We would also like to thank Valley of The Eagles for allowing us to host the event at its venue. This opportunity was made possible by the **Myrtle's Endowment Fund** and the **Community Foundation of Lorain County**.



Pictured left, left to right: Provider Compliance Specialists **Natalie Skiba** and **Brianna Vargo-Monschein**

Pictured above: Providers meet to discuss assistive technology solutions



## “Brew it Smooth” Creators and OCALICON 2023

In November, the creators of Brew It Smooth Café had the opportunity to present at **OCALICONLINE 2023: The Premier Autism and Disabilities Conference**. Colleagues from across the nation and around the world got to learn how the Murray Ridge High School team, consisting of (pictured above, left to right) Intervention Specialist **Kristin Dickerhoff**, Intervention Specialist **Taylor Blascak**, Speech Therapist **Jennifer Hakko**, and Occupational Therapist **Jamie Novak**, developed and implemented a fully functional, student-run café to teach vocational skills and help transition students into the workforce. Thank you, ladies, for representing our school and community at one of the highest levels in our field!



## Perfect Attendance

Congratulations to the following staff members for perfect attendance from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023

- John Bender
- Jason Keiser
- Mary Shimer
- Kathleen Bevaque
- Sherry Lacko Chutes
- Jeffrey Squires
- Jennifer Bishop
- Mark McIlwaine
- Bonnie Ulich
- Victoria Delossantos
- Erin Meyer
- James Ward
- Robert Hokes
- Bonniejo Minnich
- Doug Johnson
- Stephen Osundina

## 30 Years of Service

Congratulations to the staff members pictured below for 30 years of service!



Supported Employment Director **Jodi Denes**, Vocational Placement Specialist **Karen Pando** (30 Year Award Recipient), and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**

## Years of Service Awards

The following staff members reached years of service milestones in 2023:

### 5 Years of Service

- Allyson Coleman
- Tori Delossantos
- Bre Hedges
- Amy Muriello
- Rachael Oser
- Jared Smith

### 10 Years of Service

- Ciarra Barbee
- Deanna Bennett
- Jordan Brown
- Amber Fitzgerald
- Young Killinger
- Marcin Oleksy
- Wesley Partin

### 10 Years (continued)

- Tyler Robinson
- Shawn Silvis
- Aaron Simmons
- Cindy White
- Sharri Wilson

### 15 Years of Service

- Christine Ash
- Lisa Brigadier
- Debbie Campbell
- Kristin Dickerhoff
- Sheila Harness
- Rich Williams

### 20 Years of Service

- Sheila Amerla
- Judy Hartung
- Bea Krieg
- Kristen Marunski
- Margo Mordarski

### 20 Years (continued)

- Dave Renfrow
- Larry Schuman
- Bonnie Ulich
- Elizabeth Vodraska
- BJ Winkelman

### 25 Years of Service

- Brian Chutes
- Elizabeth Hampton
- Shawna Livingston
- Gary Lyons
- Kim Ohl
- Amanda Orosz
- Stephen Osundina
- Starr Price
- Barb Reynolds
- Tina Robbins
- Mary Shimer
- Debi Streibel



Habilitation Manager **Kristen Johnson**, Adult Program Instructor **Yokita Thomas** (30 Year Award Recipient), and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**



Education Director **Dann Swift**, School Secretary **Lilly Tapia** (30 Year Award Recipient), and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**



LOVC Director **Cindy White**, Adult Program Instructor **Jason Keiser** (30 Year Award Recipient), and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**



Business Director **Greg Westgate**, Purchasing Agent **Betty Truhlar** (30 Year Award Recipient), and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**



# 35 YEARS OF SERVICE RECIPIENTS



EOVC Director **Judy Hartung**, Habilitation Manager **Jill Camp**, and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**

## Jill Camp

Jill joined Murray Ridge in 1987 as a camp counselor and wore many hats throughout our agency before moving to the EOVC in 2021. Regarding the impact on her life of working here, Jill says, "My life has been impacted by a kind of love that most people will not experience in their lives." Outside of work, Jill likes hiking, going for walks, reading, traveling, and playing 'work acceptable pranks' on **Judy Hartung**. Lastly, she loves spending time with friends, family, and, of course, her husband, Jeff, whom she met at Murray Ridge.

## Lydia Hawkinberry

Lydia joined the Murray Ridge team more than 35 years ago in June of 1988 at our Meister Road Home, and has worked in various roles throughout the agency. For the last 25 years, Lydia has been primarily assigned as the LPN at Murray Ridge School, which she calls the "most amazing place". Lydia has one son, and is currently raising her great nephew. In her personal time, Lydia enjoys shopping, vacationing in Florida, spending time with family, and playing in her flower beds. She plans to retire on July 31st of 2025.



Nursing Director **Anita Graham**, LPN **Lydia Hawkinberry**, and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**

## Kathy Justy: 40 Years of Service



Vocational and Transportation Services Director **Jeff Miller**, Time Study Technician **Kathy Justy**, and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**

**Kathy Justy** joined Murray Ridge in September of 1983. She first worked at the school as the Material Resource Clerk, and has held many different positions throughout our agency in the years since. In 2008, she transferred to her current position as the Time Study Technician, a job that she loves for its diversity and interaction with our consumers. Kathy says that working with our consumers has changed her life. She says they are the heart of Murray Ridge, and finds them to be gentle, kind and compassionate. When she eventually retires, Kathy would like to continue to work in her gardens, possibly to work part time in some position at Murray Ridge, and even volunteer at a nearby horse rescue. She would also like to enjoy bird watching even more than she already does, and has an aspiration of someday seeing a great gray owl.

Congratulations on 40 years, Kathy!



# Weather-Related Announcements Reminder

The information below reflects what Fox 8 confirmed last year. Fox 8 has not responded to our attempts to verify the information for the upcoming season. You will be notified if we learn that there will be any changes.

Murray Ridge program closing information will be available on TV station Fox 8, on the Fox 8 website (fox8.com), and on radio stations WEOL 930 AM and WOBL 1320 AM, as it has in the past.

There will be two separate listings for Murray Ridge Center:

- Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers
- Murray Ridge School

For the past several years, Fox 8 has displayed information on the status of our Adult Activities Centers as described below:

- On fox8.com, the information has been under the 'Daycare' tab in the School Closings section.
- On Channel 8, information about the status of our Adult Activities Centers has scrolled from left to right beneath the School Closings information at the very bottom of the television screen under 'Daycare.' These listings are in alphabetical order by county; however, no county names will be listed due to the limitations of Fox 8's computer systems. Therefore, if you choose to use the TV to determine the status of the Adult Centers, you must continue to monitor that 'Daycare' listing until it has run a complete cycle.

**NOTE:** You can also sign up with Fox 8 to receive text alerts on Murray Ridge School and Adult Activities Centers closings. To do so, click on 'Closing Text Alerts' in the School Closings section of the Fox 8 website.

Parents and caregivers of school students should disregard the "Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers" listing, and follow only the listing for "Murray Ridge School." Conversely, adult consumers who attend our Opportunity/Vocational Centers and their parents/caregivers should disregard the "Murray Ridge School" listing, and follow only the listing for "Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers."

If "Open - No Transportation" follows the announcement for "Murray Ridge—Adult Activities Centers," parents/caregivers are welcome to transport adult consumers to their day service sites. Regular programming will be provided. Consumers should be dropped off no earlier than 8:30 a.m. and must be picked up by 3:45 p.m.

In the event of bad weather, the decision to transport individuals to Murray Ridge Center will be based on the ability of our buses to travel safely on city and county roads. Regardless of whether or not transportation is available through Murray Ridge Center, if our Opportunity/Vocational Centers are open, but there is an individual concern about the weather, adult consumers should feel free to stay home. Likewise, parents/caregivers of Murray Ridge School students who have individual concerns regarding the weather should feel free to keep their children at home, even if school is in session.

Please be aware that transportation to enclave sites is generally available even if transportation to the Opportunity/Vocational Centers is cancelled. Murray Ridge Center does not broadcast the status of enclave transportation on the television or radio. Consumers should assume that enclave transportation will be available unless they receive a phone call from a member of our Supported Employment Department.

First Student bus company can be reached at 288-2222.

## Nominations Sought for Exceptional Service Awards

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 Kevin Naughton, Community Education/Volunteer Director. Please 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. If you have any questions, contact Kevin at (440) 329-3734 or [kevin@murrayridgecenter.org](mailto:kevin@murrayridgecenter.org)

## Boardroom Briefing

The Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities convened at 6:30 p.m. on November 20, 2023

Board member Ryan Egbertson gave an update on the Special Olympics Program, and Director of Educational Services Dann Swift gave a report on the Murray Ridge School Wellness Committee. The Board passed a resolution authorizing for public release a draft of its 2024 Strategic Plan, and gave notice of a public forum on this report to be held on December 14, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. at the Board's Administration Building, 1091 Infirmity Rd., Elyria, Ohio; a copy of the Draft 2024 Strategic Plan can be accessed at [www.murrayridgecenter.org](http://www.murrayridgecenter.org) or by calling (440) 329-3734. The Board approved a resolution to request that the County Auditor certify the availability of funds needed to pay the non-federal share of Medicaid services in 2024. Superintendent Fisher reported on several recent donations, including the proceeds of Cleveland Clinic's Avon Hospital & Richland E. Jacobs Health Center 5K Run/1 Mile Walk fundraiser, totaling more than \$10,000.00; a \$10,000.00 donation to the Friends of Murray Ridge in memory of Steve Slutzker, a lifetime participant in Murray Ridge programs; and donations totaling \$18,000.00 for the Murray Ridge Special Olympics Program from the Amherst American Legion Post 118 (\$6,000.00) and the Nordson Corporation (\$12,000.00).

## Now Hiring!

### Direct Support Professionals (Home Setting)

We have openings available for full-time, part-time, and PRN (as-needed) positions to care for residents of our Meister Road Home. Hours vary based on position and/or assignment.

### Direct Support Professionals (Adult Program Setting)

We have openings available for full-time, part-time, and PRN (as-needed) positions to serve participants in our Adult Program. Hours are generally during the day.

### Lifeguard (Full-time 9-month)

We have an opening for a full-time (9-month) Lifeguard that will function also as a classroom aide at Murray Ridge School.

## FEATURED positions

### Licensed Practical Nurse

We have openings for part-time, full-time, and PRN Licensed Practical Nurses.

### Murray Ridge School Teacher

We have openings for full-time and PRN (as-needed) teachers at Murray Ridge School.



### School Aide

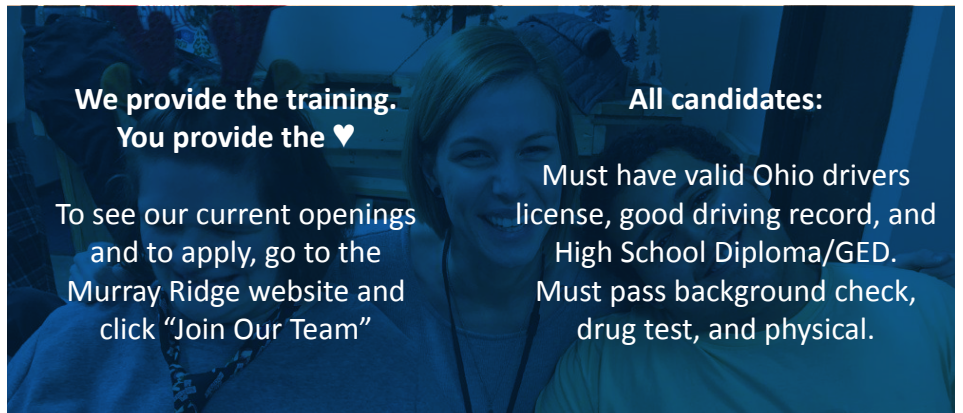
We have openings for PRN (as-needed) and Full-time (9-month) School Aides at Murray Ridge School.

**We provide the training.  
You provide the ♥**

To see our current openings and to apply, go to the Murray Ridge website and click "Join Our Team"

### All candidates:

Must have valid Ohio drivers license, good driving record, and High School Diploma/GED.  
Must pass background check, drug test, and physical.



[www.murrayridgecenter.org](http://www.murrayridgecenter.org)



Lorain County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities

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Photo of the Month: Visit our Murray Ridge School Facebook page to see pictures from our Thanksgiving Turkey Trot! Pictured at the starting line, from left to right: Physical Therapist **Ann Pecsok**, **Jayden Nagy**, **Ja'Quan Warren**, **Chris Fowler**, **Brady Bella**, **Nick Green**, **Jonas Bennett**, Personal Aide **Emily Lippincott**, and Occupational Therapist **Jamie Novak**.

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