



MurrayRidgeCenter
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

The View From The **RIDGE**

Lorain County Board of
Developmental Disabilities
Winter Quarterly



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

2023 Agency **In-Service**

On 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**

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!



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

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 July of 2023, Mr. Mangan provided legal representation to Murray Ridge Center under a 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. She said, "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. Magan 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!

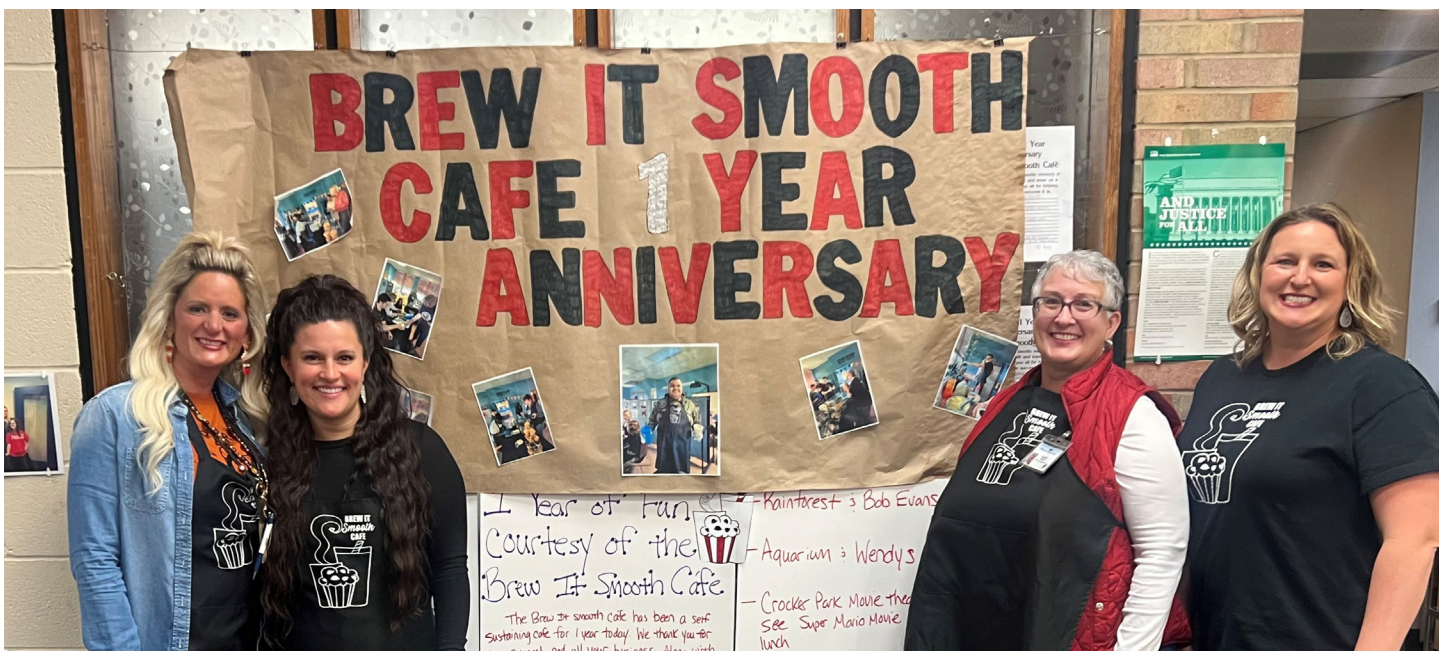
SSA Holds Tech Fair

In October, 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 of 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!

HOLIDAY FUN AT MURRAY RIDGE



Pictured, left to right: **Jonah Griffore**, **Robert Serrano**, **Ryan Brown**, and Adult Program Instructor **Rick Rovere** with the perfect Christmas tree at LOVC



Seated, left to right: **Tim Young**, EOVC Director **Judy Hartung**, **Sandra Tite**, and **Austin Carpenter** play a game of Uno



Left to Right: OOV Adult Program participants **Judy Armstrong**, **Mary Gressler**, and **Brittany Brlas** at the Amherst Diner



Meister Manager **Stephen Osundina** and resident **Robert Gajdos** looking festive at the Meister Christmas party



SANTA CLAUS VISITS MURRAY RIDGE SCHOOL

Be sure to visit the Murray Ridge School Facebook page for more pictures from Santa's visit!

Pictured with Santa, top left: **Marvelous Seymore**

Bottom left: **Alianna Meads**

Below: **Calvin Kaminski**



EARLY INTERVENTION AT THE MIX-OFF

Our Early Intervention (EI) Department participated in the 22nd annual Zero-Proof Mix-Off! The event took place on Thursday, December 14th at LCCC's Stocker Center and was held to promote safe driving and responsible alcohol use. Our EI team entered with its "Buddy's Brew", a Buddy the Elf themed maple-flavored cold brew coffee with a whipped topping, salt, and syrup drizzle. It didn't win, unfortunately, but everyone had a wonderful time!

Pictured, left to right: **Ashley Balasko, Jen Doseck, Kim Ohl, Amber Bowers, Mel Liddy, Heather Knoble.**

Brew it Smooth visits The County Commissioners' Office

Our Murray Ridge School coffee shop and vocational program, the Brew It Smooth Café, was invited to set up and serve its drinks and snacks at the Lorain County Commissioners meeting this past December. It was exciting for our students to be able to showcase their vocational skills in yet another location in Lorain County, and we are excited that the visit was so successful that the Brew It Smooth Café was asked to return to the meetings on a regular basis. You can see pictures from the December visit on our Murray Ridge School Facebook page. We at Murray Ridge are grateful and fortunate to have so much community support for our endeavors to bring work experience and job training to the senior students at Murray Ridge School.



Barista extraordinaire **Brady Bella!**



Pictured, left to right: Speech Therapist **Jennifer Hakko**, **Nick Green**, Lorain County Drug Task Force Captain **Richard Bosley**, **Cameron Conn**, Wellington Fire Chief **Mike Weatherbee**, **Jenny Sislowski**, Elyria Police Chief **Bill Pelko**, **Brady Bella**, and Lorain County Sheriff Office Captain **Robert Vansant**

EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AWARD PRESENTED



Superintendent **Amber Fisher**, Service and Support Administrator **Jen Bishop**, LCBDD Board Member **Becky Cornman**

The most recent recipient of our Exceptional Service Award was **Jen Bishop**, a Service and Support Administrator. "She did not give up and put in the extra effort to assist us," wrote Jen's nominator **Nancy Golinski** in her nomination letter, "and for that I will forever be grateful." Thank you, Jen, for your strong dedication to those you serve!

Do you know a Murray Ridge staff member who has gone "above and beyond"? If so, please submit your nomination to Kevin Naughton, Director of Communications, at (440) 329-3734 or at kevin@murrayridgecenter.org.

GENEROUS DONATION

On December 11, 2023, American Legion Post 30 in Lorain graciously presented Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center (LOVC) with a check for \$1,000. These funds are earmarked for Community Connections, enabling Adult Program participants to partake in fun activities in their community. The Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center is very appreciative of the generosity of American Legion Post 30!

Pictured, left to right: LOVC Director **Cindy Castro-White** and Adult Services Director **Gary Lyons** with American Legion Post 30 veterans **Jeremiah Garza** (Post Commander), **Richard Brant**, and **Cheryl McElroy**.



JESSE FRISCH'S ANNUAL F.A.P.L. SANTA DONATION

In December, **Jesse Frisch**, an Adult Program participant at our Elyria Opportunity and Vocational Center, organized a special Christmas project. Dressed as Santa Claus, Jesse visited several Murray Ridge Center buildings and collected \$272.00 for the Friendship Animal Protective League in Elyria! And as an added bonus, while Jesse was at the animal shelter delivering his donation, he delighted a young boy who thought the real Santa was visiting to check on the animals! Jesse has collected donations for the Friendship Animal Protection League for quite a few Christmas seasons now, and we'll be excited to see him continue the tradition into the future! Lastly, be sure to visit our Facebook page to see Jesse dressed as Santa.



Jesse Frisch dressed as Santa



Pictured, left to right: **Saundra Kilgore** and **Kista Atkins**, with several members of the church standing behind them

OOVC Knits & Donates Mats, Hats, & Scarves

In December, during their monthly volunteering at LaGrange Global Methodist Church, Adult Program participants from our Oberlin Opportunity and Vocational Center helped prepare knitted cold weather items as part of the church's Mats Matters program. They helped process plastic bags so they could be knitted into sleeping mats, and knitted hats and scarves for donation to the Valor House and the Salvation Army. Thanks to a joint effort by program participants and staff, thirteen hats were donated. Congratulations to everyone for helping put together this generous donation!

Lorain County Board of
Developmental Disabilities

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Photo of the Winter: Students and staff performing "The Grinch" for Murray Ridge School's Holiday Storybook Showcase! Left to right: **Susan Rundell** as the Grinch, **Anellys Ortiz Lebron**, Personal Aide **Castiel Wheaton** behind **Becky Diar**, Classroom Aide **Khloe Smiddy** behind **Sheila Harness**, **Adriel Neal**, Substitute Teacher **Glenn Mittler**, **Mathew McKinney**. Visit our Facebook page to see more pictures!

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