

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



A Message from the Superintendent

With spring in the air, we at Murray Ridge find much to celebrate, even as Ohio's system of services for people with developmental disabilities faces unprecedented fiscal challenges. Let me begin by thanking the team of volunteers who assisted last month - National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month - by spreading the word about the significant contributions and valued roles played by people with developmental disabilities within the local community. **The amazing individuals who we serve truly inspire and energize us every day, and make us ever more motivated to plant the seeds of their success, even as we address substantial financial concerns.**



Dr. Amber Fisher, Superintendent

A thrilling recent achievement (featured on page 6), was the winning of the State **Championship by our Special Olympics Scarlet Basketball Team.** We are so proud of all of our athletes, and the many volunteers and coaches who enthusiastically support them. Check out the December issue of the Courier, which includes coverage of Coach Russ Moye (who in February led our basketball team to the championship) being named 2025 Special Olympics Coach of the Year!

Kudos also to those in our other adult-serving programs for their many achievements. As you may be aware, Murray Ridge directly provides adult day programs, supported employment services, and a residential facility; it also (through Service and Support Administration) plans, monitors and provides funding for most residential, recreational, vocational and adult day services provided by other organizations and Individual Providers to Lorain County residents with developmental disabilities. We cannot overstate our **gratitude to the providers/partners that deliver invaluable support** to those eligible for our services, and to the dozens of local businesses that support employment of those served by Murray Ridge Center.

Our gratitude goes also to the more than 1,000 local families who have partnered with developmental specialists in our Early Intervention Program during the last couple of years, to promote critical skill development by their children (ages 0-3) who have or are

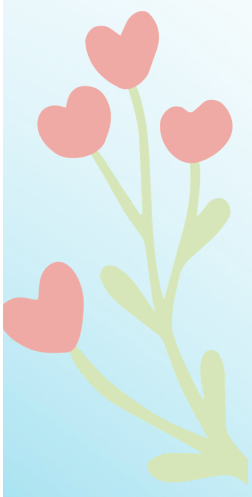
at substantial risk for developmental delays; a growing body of research shows the **significant future 'dividends' paid by receipt of Early Intervention**. A huge thank you also to the amazing achievers at Murray Ridge School, and to the incredible staff and family members who support the success of these students. Additionally, we are very grateful for the generosity of donors, including Mike's Kids and American Legion Post 118, whose recent contributions will in 2026 support the continuation of senior prom and summer camp for students of Murray Ridge School, despite our fiscal challenges.

Issue 11 will appear on the May 5th ballot. The issue is a 0.85 mills levy for Murray Ridge that, if passed, will cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$30 per year (8 cents a day). If passed, Issue 11 is expected to provide the minimum amount of funding needed to preserve the existing services provided and/or funded by Murray Ridge, and to address emergencies affecting eligible individuals (such as loss of aged family caregivers). Without the funding, Murray Ridge School will not operate after the 2026/2027 School Year, and across-the-board cuts to the other programs of Murray Ridge will be necessary; particularly vulnerable are programs that are funded almost entirely with local levy dollars, like Early Intervention. Murray Ridge has not requested an increase in taxpayer support for 13 years, despite significant inflation during that time period. The amount paid by local taxpayers has not changed since 2014, despite increases in property values, and significant increases to enrollment in some programs operated by Murray Ridge Center.

I look forward to another successful year ahead, and am forever grateful to all who support the mission of Murray Ridge Center, and the services it provides to more than 3,000 local residents with developmental disabilities.

-Amber Fisher

Murray Ridge School Student Kindness Club



CHOOSE
kindness

Pictured above, (l-r): Josiah Smith, Occupational Therapist Nicole Geen, Teacher Amy Muriello, Will Norris, and Jayden Steible at their Lemonade Stand fundraiser.



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April is...

NATIONAL AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH



Did you know that 1 in 31 children in the United States has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

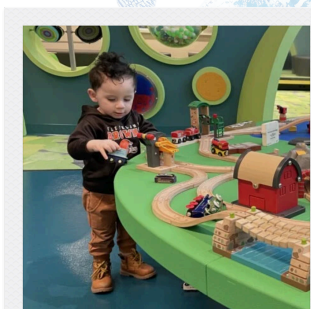
Murray Ridge Center serves more than 3000 people each year, including children and adults with ASD, through the following services:

- Early Intervention
- Murray Ridge School
- Adult Day Services
- Vocational Assistance
- Residential Supports
- Special Olympics
- Family Support
- Service and Support Administration
- Emergency Intervention

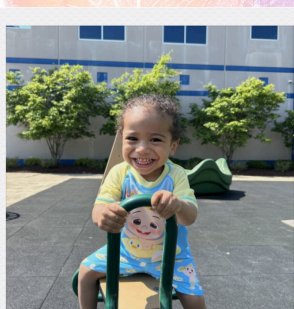


Early Intervention: Small Moments, Big Impact

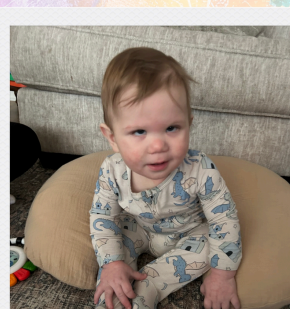
The first three years of life are a time of rapid brain development, making early support especially powerful. In Lorain County, Neighborhood Alliance determines eligibility for Early Intervention (EI) service, and coordinates services for eligible infants and toddlers (ages 0-3). Murray Ridge Center provides the hands-on support to EI recipients in Lorain County and their families. **Instead of separating interventions from daily routines, developmental specialists from Murray Ridge work alongside parents/caregivers during activities like playtime, meals, and outings – helping families to learn strategies they can use every day.** In 2025, Murray Ridge served 955 children through its EI Program.



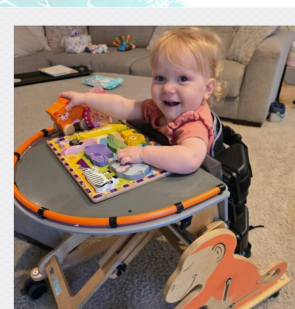
Pictured: Lincoln Tomlin playing at DiscoveryWorks in the Avon Lake Library



Pictured: Azai Rutherford at Amherst HealthPlex Inclusive Playground



Pictured: Harvey Holland receiving in-home services



Pictured: Hadlynn Mettler, using a stander from the Murray Ridge EI Lending Library

Consider some comments from Lorain County families about the EI Program:

"They made it easier to understand how to help (our son) in the strongest ways... There has been such improvement from not even being able to eat foods, to walking and then to speech. It made it so much easier for him to be included in family activities and not feel left out."

"She (the developmental specialist) has taken the time to help us understand autism, developmental delay and why I was doing interventions and utilizing techniques that didn't quite make sense."

"From crawling to walking. From babbling to saying 50+ words. From bottle to sippy cup. Not only did Ashley (the developmental specialist) and her team help (our son), but also she helped me through emotions and gave me tips/resources that I will forever remember."

Research shows that Early Intervention is critical in supporting the development of children with special needs. EI programs "are associated with significant improvements in cognitive, social, emotional and physical development, providing children with a foundation for future success."¹

¹ Perez, M. & Rios, N. (2024). The effectiveness of early intervention programs for children with special needs. *Journal of Literacy and Education*, 4, 14-18.

Murray Ridge School Students Bring Dinosaurs to Life Through Hands-On Research Project



Pictured above, left: Mathew McKinney; and right, Amy Muriello (Teacher), Jayden Steible, Micah Samms, Bentley Spooner, Jonas Bennett, Charlotte Bush, Shelly Marrero (personal aide), Anellys Ortiz Lebron, and Brooke Dales (school aide)

Middle School students at Murray Ridge School recently completed a hands-on Dinosaur Research Project that reflects the school's distinctive approach to special education. Murray Ridge School is adept in integrating academic standards, therapeutic services, and functional skill development into unified, meaningful learning experiences tailored to each student's abilities.

Guided by dedicated teachers and classroom aides, Middle School classrooms collaborated to research a selected dinosaur, exploring habitat, diet, and physical features. Students were assisted to organize their findings into reports, use communication devices to share information, and create detailed dioramas and models—activities designed not only to teach science content but also to strengthen fine-motor, communication, and problem-solving skills.

A hallmark of Murray Ridge's specialized programming is the seamless involvement of therapeutic staff. Occupational Therapists supported students with writing, cutting, gluing, and other motor tasks essential to building their models. Speech-Language Pathologists helped students prepare and deliver their presentations, ensuring every learner could participate meaningfully using their individual communication methods. A retired Elyria Schools Art Teacher provided additional creative expertise.

The project culminated in student presentations to peers and staff, giving learners the opportunity to practice expressive language and confidence-building skills in a supportive environment. This exemplifies the unique, collaborative, and highly individualized special education model at Murray Ridge School—one that empowers students with significant disabilities to engage deeply with academic content through hands-on, therapeutic learning experiences.



Pictured, front row (l-r): Robert Messenger, Vince Webb, Jonathan Torres, Jericho Bailey, Dorian Chaffin (seated), Head Coach Russell Moye; back row (l-r): Volunteer Coach Scott Gezzer, Ryan Brown, Ajonie' Glinsey, Ryan Eliason, Logan Yatson, Assistant Coach Tyler Robinson.

MRC Raiders Scarlet – Division II Special Olympics Basketball Champions!

All of Murray Ridge is beaming with pride! In late February, our own Murray Ridge Raiders Scarlet basketball team captured the Division II State Championship at the Special Olympics Ohio Winter Games in Columbus!

Our athletes displayed heart, determination, and unstoppable teamwork from start to finish. Whether it was tough defense, clutch shots, or pure team spirit, the Scarlet Raiders showed exactly what dedication and perseverance can achieve.

A huge round of applause goes to our incredible coaches, families, and supporters – your encouragement and commitment help create moments like this. Join us in celebrating our STATE CHAMPION RAIDERS!

Way to go, Scarlet team! MRC is so proud of you!

Murray Ridge Program Participants Find Special Ways to Give Back



Serving Up Smiles



Each week, MRC volunteers (like Abby Kisner, pictured above) from the Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center (LOVC) deliver meals to seniors in Amherst through the Amherst Office of Aging – what a wonderful way to support our community and brighten someone’s day!

Spreading Warmth



Pictured, l-r: DaeJon Hamlin, Melissa Glaze, Emilie Grosel, Robin Lute (Lake Pointe Receptionist) and Diane Pasa.

In February, LOVC Adult Program participants and staff donated new socks to Lake Pointe Medical Center residents. We’re so proud of our program participants for making a positive impact in the community!

Helping at Second Harvest



Pictured, l-r: Cameron Conn and Jonas Bennett

Murray Ridge School volunteers help repack shelf-stable food boxes for distribution at local food pantries throughout Lorain County. Their efforts help ensure individuals and families have reliable access to much-needed food.

Strumming Into National Guitar Day!



The Oberlin Opportunity and Vocational Center (OOVC) celebrated National Guitar Day with a fun sing-along led by Activity Aide Sherri Lhotsky. She even taught Corey Lademann (left) a few chords, and Corey quickly showed off his new skills!

Slice of Fun at Cozzeria Pizzeria!



Pictured, right (l-r): Cozzeria’s Rob Moore and LOVC’s Michael Telloni.

On February 25, Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center (LOVC) Adult Program participants visited Cozzeria Pizzeria in Elyria. Employee Rob Moore showed how he makes fresh dough, and participants got to make their own pizzas before enjoying a tasty lunch.

Thanks to Cozzeria for a fun and delicious experience!

Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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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 awards@murrayridgecenter.org or call Jen Ryan at 440-329-3734. 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.