

Published by the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities  
"Helping people to live, learn and work in our community"

## Smart homes, assistive tech fostering independence

For the first time in his life, Shemar Likens knows how it feels to have the house to himself. And the 19-year-old enjoys it very much.

"He will turn his speaker on and crank up the music," said his mom, Susan Likens. "He'll be dancing, singing, mopping the floor – all at the same time."

Shemar has cerebral palsy, and until about a year ago, Likens could not imagine leaving him alone for even short amounts of time. "Shemar is not verbal and he has seizures," she said. "I have really bad anxiety about making sure he's safe."

But Likens also wants her son to fulfill his dream of living as independently as possible, and technology has become key in that pursuit.

Shemar is among approximately 2,600 Ohioans served by county boards of developmental disabilities, including about 220 in Franklin County, who now have some type of assistive technology or remote support as part of their services. So far, the Likens family has opted for fingerprint door locks that are easy for Shemar to use and in-house cameras that allow his provider agency, Ohio At Home Healthcare, to monitor for problems when the teen is by himself.

"It's pretty neat to see the things people have been able to do," said FCBDD service coordination supervisor Tim Voigt, who works with colleague Kim Goleb to increase tech awareness and support.



Shemar Likens, 19, is able to safely enjoy time on his own thanks to remote support.

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## Got questions about assistive technology? Ohio Tech Ambassadors can help

From now through June, five Ohio "Tech Ambassadors" are offering peer-to-peer mentoring and information sessions to help people with developmental disabilities learn how assistive technology can boost independence.

"Our technology ambassadors bring a lot of energy and ideas to the network, and they are excited to share how they use technology at home, school, at work and in the community," said George W. Myers, IT director for the Ross County Board of Developmental Disabilities and Tech Ambassador Network project leader.

Sessions are interactive and web-based, focusing on everything from remote supports to devices and technology that can help with medication dispensing, door locks, cooking and more.



Marci Straughter, Columbus area Tech Ambassador

"I want people to know that they can do it – they can try," said Marci Straughter, Tech Ambassador for the Columbus area. "Technology and being a tech ambassador has really changed my life."

Straughter also explains that Medicaid waivers cover many forms of tech support, and that it can increase not only independence, but also privacy by reducing some of the need for in-person support. "You get a little more freedom and relaxation," she said.

The Ohio Tech Ambassador Network is funded through a statewide grant through the Southern Ohio Council of Governments and reflects Ohio's efforts to promote technology for residents who live with some type of disability.

The other Tech Ambassadors are Robert Shuemak of Cincinnati, Nathan Turner of Holland in northwest Ohio, Tanner Huff of Ironton in southern Ohio, and Chris Cooley of Portsmouth in southeastern Ohio.

For more information, go to [ohiotechambassadors.org](http://ohiotechambassadors.org) or send an email to [info@ohiotechambassadors.org](mailto:info@ohiotechambassadors.org)

## Open Door one-to-one art program makes sure the painting goes on

Several times each week, Haleigh Richards loads her car with paint, paper, glass beads – even sequins, upon request – and delivers a cherished experience. Richards provides in-home assistance to people with developmental disabilities whose conditions have prevented them from safely attending group art programs during the pandemic.

“Most people are doing Zoom, and that was our plan originally, but I’m so glad we’re doing this,” said Richards, studio coordinator at the Open Door Art Studio & Gallery. “Being able to work with people directly is great.”

East Side resident Christopher Cole, 24, says painting at home during the past year has filled his heart, and helped him to feel less isolated. It also puts a little extra cash in his pocket. An art shopper in New York who followed Cole’s progress on Instagram eagerly purchased one of his pieces even before it was finished.

“I could be a famous star someday,” Cole said. “I love to create pictures.”

Operating out of a sprawling studio on Goodale Boulevard, Open Door is a division of the Columbus Center for Human Services, a nonprofit disability-services organization in Franklin County. CCHS executive director Becky Sharp said the agency opted to serve some people one-to-one after the COVID-19 outbreak prompted federal and state officials to allow flexibility in the delivery of some Medicaid waiver-funded day services.

“We’re seeing a lot of great outcomes,” Sharp said. “It’s not just painting.”

While some people are enjoying individual art instruction, others have worked on different projects, such as cooking skills. Improvements in emotional and behavioral well-being often follow.

“And families are getting more involved, too,” Sharp said. “One gentleman, his family got a studio set up for him in the garage. His mom was like, ‘Wow. His art is amazing.’ She’s seeing things she wouldn’t have seen.”

Open Door Director Sean Moore said the organization is fortunate to have a stable and dedicated workforce, which made it easier to adapt as needed. When day programs were completely shut down last year, for example, studio employees turned their space into a temporary child-care center so that colleagues in other parts of the organization could keep working as schools and day cares closed.

“It was a moment when we all came together as one,” Moore said. “All the staff are very proud, as well they should be.”

Cole looks forward to his time with Richards and hopes to learn new techniques. Prominent African-Americans, especially the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., are frequent subjects. Cole also enjoys painting outdoors. “I worked on the patio,” he said. “I felt happy.”

Richards, who moved to Columbus from the Dayton area to attend the Columbus College of Art & Design, is just as pleased. “I enjoy art-making,” she said. “I enjoy it even more when I get to help someone make something they’re proud of.”



*Christopher Cole, who receives in-home visits from Haleigh Richards of Open Door Art Studio & Gallery, shows off his latest work in progress.*

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## Self-Advocate takes a seat on Boundless board

I Am Boundless, one of central Ohio’s largest disability-services organizations, now has a person with a developmental disability serving on its board of trustees.

Columbus resident Marci Straughter began her tenure in January and is the first self-advocate to sit on the Boundless board. Straughter, 40, receives services from the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities and has long been involved in the self-determination movement, helping to train more than 100 others to speak up for themselves and become Ohio leaders through Project STIR (Steps Toward Independence and Responsibility).

“Diversity includes representation not in the historic manner of having parents of people with developmental disabilities, but in having people with developmental disabilities themselves at the table,” said Boundless CEO and President Patrick Maynard.

“Marci’s quite the networker and she’s a fantastic advocate. She’ll be the first, but she won’t be the last.”

Straughter said she’s thrilled for the opportunity to lend her voice.

“Some of the people on boards who don’t have disabilities don’t know what it’s like,” she said. “We’re living with it; we do know what it’s like on the inside. Why not have us help improve your organization?”

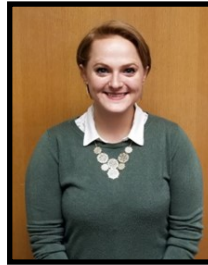
Straughter also has served on the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, is active in the Ohio Self-Determination Association and recently became an Ohio Tech Ambassador.



## Good For You

*Notable achievements in the FCBDD community*

Congratulations to Lizzie Jazwiec, who will graduate from the Ohio State University next month with a master's degree in social work. Lizzie began her field placement with the FCBDD Service Coordination Department in January 2020, shortly before the pandemic struck. Lizzie had to quickly adapt to an internship in which training, shadowing, meetings and most interactions took place remotely. She did a great job handling a most unexpected learning experience. Thanks, Lizzie!



Lizzie Jazwiec

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Five job-seekers graduated on March 11 from the ARC Industries PIECE Project, a skills-building program that helps participants prepare for community employment. Though the COVID-19 outbreak made for some challenges, the graduates worked hard and stuck to their goals. A big congratulations to Jason Miller, Haley Harkins, Nathaniel Howard, Zachary Ramin and Charles Radford.

## Career Milestones

**15 years**

Kimberly St John  
Tara Craig

**5 years**

Joshua Komives  
Torrie Nelson  
Jennifer Sunderland



## Smart homes, assistive tech fostering independence (continued from page 1)

Though the pandemic has suspended most in-person tech events, there are still opportunities for individuals and families to glimpse some of the possibilities. The Ohio State University Nisonger Center is offering a limited number of virtual, interactive tours of its new Smart Home Discovery Place, a one-bedroom apartment packed with innovative technologies.

Nisonger also is hosting the state's third annual Tech Summit focused on people with developmental disabilities, a virtual event set for July 22-23.

When families get the chance to see examples of assistive technology, "That can really help to alleviate concerns," Goleb said. "We want to get kids started early."

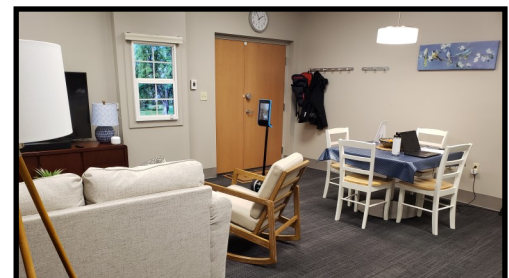
In-home cameras and remote monitoring tend to draw the most questions, but those are just a few of the options available. Nisonger's smart home, for example, also includes kitchen features such as movement-sensor shutoffs for stoves and step-by-step instructions for meal preparation.

"We do a lot of doorbells, locks, medication reminders and tasks that people need to do daily," said Adam Shoemaker of Total Homecare Solutions, a provider agency that donated technologies and services to Nisonger's smart home. "A lot of what's available now has been around for years, but there are some things coming out that will be able to do a lot more, like the ability to sense if someone fell, or detect changes in breathing."

Reducing the need for in-person assistance can help to address the direct-support workforce shortage, or improve well-being among people who become agitated around others. "That's been a great fit, because staff doesn't always have to be there," Shoemaker said.

Shemar's mom, Susan Likens, said efforts are now under way to see whether remote monitoring can serve up warnings about his health. "There's a noise that Shemar will make before he has a seizure," she said, which thankfully has become rare. "They're hoping to capture it, so they know if it's going to happen."

Shemar, a Grove City High School student, continues to make it clear he looks forward to a few hours each week without family or support staff under the same roof. Likens understands. "We all need some time to ourselves," she said.



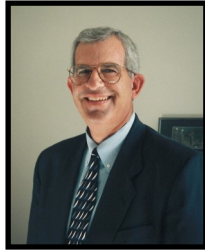
**To schedule a tour of Nisonger's Smart Home Discovery Place,  
please go to <https://go.osu.edu/nisongershdp> or click on the following link:  
[Nisonger's Smart Home Discovery Place](#)**

## In memoriam Don Harlow remembered

A former assistant superintendent at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is being recalled for decades of leadership that helped set the agency on a stable path for years to come. Don Harlow passed away on Feb. 9, 2021.

“Don was a terrific person, a trusted friend to many and one of the people who established the foundation for quality services here in Franklin County,” said Jed Morison, FCBDD Superintendent/CEO.

For more than 30 years, Don provided steady guidance for all early childhood, school and adult facility building projects. He helped to lead several departments and was responsible for agency finances, resulting in consistency of services for all his years with the board. Don retired in 2002.



Don Harlow

He is survived by his wife, Cathy, and sons Tony and Jason.



## Summer overnight camp available for teens and adults

A five-day retreat that offers outdoor activities for people with disabilities and respite opportunities for families and caregivers is accepting applications for summer sessions.

The “overnight staycations” program is hosted by Stepping Stones, a southwest Ohio-based nonprofit organization that provides educational and recreational services for adults and children with disabilities. Officials say COVID-19 safety modifications and precautions will be in place for the program, which is open to people ages 16 to 65.

Sessions cost \$700 and include fishing, archery and accessible hiking, along with bonfires, dance parties and talent shows in the evenings. Trained staff, lifeguards and nurses are on site.

Stepping Stones accepts payments made privately and from third-party funding sources, including family support services and the Level One, Individual Options and SELF Medicaid waivers. Registration deadline is April 16. For information about participant eligibility criteria or to register, go to [steppingstonessummer.org](http://steppingstonessummer.org) or call 513-965-5108.

## Dateline

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Information about the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is always available on the internet at:

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

## Calendar

**Editor's Note: The following calendar is tentative due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Call 614-342-5950 before attending any meeting to see if it is still scheduled.**

### April 2021

- 2 Staff Development Day for West Central School and Early Childhood Education
- 22 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 11:30 a.m. via Zoom. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details. Click on the following link to connect:

[FCBDD Board Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)

## Save the Date!

**The Community Star Awards will be held on Thursday, October 28th\* at Villa Milano, 1630 Schrock Road**

**Social hour will be from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Program begins promptly at 6:30 p.m.**

(\* plans are dependent on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic)



# FCBDD Community Star Awards Nomination Form



*Do you know someone who should be recognized for extraordinary accomplishments or service supporting individuals with developmental disabilities?*

If so, please take a moment to complete and return this nomination form. Nominations will be accepted until **Monday, June 14, 2021**. All nominations will be considered by an Award Committee, and winners in each category will be recognized at the FCBDD Community Star Awards Ceremony on **Thursday, October 28, 2021**. *Please submit this nomination to: Awards Committee, c/o Amy Maginis, 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, Ohio 43219.*

(PLEASE PRINT)

1. Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Please complete one nomination per form and check the category for which this person or organization is nominated. Nominees are not required to be staff members or affiliated with FCBDD.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persons Receiving Services/Self-Advocates | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Staff                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Family Member                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Staff                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Staff                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Service Professionals          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provider Organization                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Management/Supervisory Staff          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer/Good Neighbor                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Service Coordination Department Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employer                                  |  |

3. Why should this nominee be recognized? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please describe any other achievements or information regarding this person or organization to support this nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Nominated by: (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Work/Daytime Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

*"Helping people to live, learn and work in our community"*

