

FCBDD kicks off new program to connect families and providers

Over the past 28 years, Kim Kelly has worked with more than 150 different disability-services providers – some for months or years, many only briefly -- to cover the 24-hour care her son needs. And Kelly is again looking to hire.

"The fact that you can't get providers right now is burning out a lot of families," she said. "I'm doing between six and eight overnights every month; Joe's dad is here pretty much around the clock. We know providers are out there, but reaching them is a problem."

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is hopeful that a pilot program launched this summer will make it easier for families to find certified home-and community-based providers interested in serving them. Dubbed "The Connector," the effort began in June and quickly drew responses.

"We know that finding providers is a consistent problem, and the workforce crisis has sort of exacerbated it," FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said. "We wanted to try something specific to Franklin County."

Although federal conflict-of-interest rules prohibit FCBDD staff from telling families which providers to choose, the county board can help link people with developmental disabilities to the agencies or independent providers best able to meet their needs.

To use The Connector, an individual, family member or guardian completes a profile of the person in need of services and submits it to FCBDD. Providers who want to be included in The Connector also fill out profiles.

Whenever FCBDD receives a request from a person in need of services, administrative staff member Joni Sparks sends the profile of the person looking for help to participating providers. Providers have seven days to express interest; families receive the list of responding providers (along with their profiles) and can then arrange interviews.

"I'm sure it's very frustrating for families and for counties, because agencies right now aren't taking on a lot of new cases due to staffing," said Sara Eppard, Ohio director for the support-services agency Dungarvin. "Sometimes I actually tell families, 'You might be better off going with an independent provider.' The question often is, 'How do we do that?' I think this could be really good for them."

Relatively low wages and high rates of employee turnover have long plagued the disability-services industry. Recruitment became even more difficult during the pandemic. "It's scary," Eppard said. "We are fortunate that we're a larger provider, but we are struggling financially because of overtime and other challenges."

FCBDD also is working to develop an online portal akin to The Connector that could be used by both families and providers. Previous efforts by FCBDD, including one patterned after Angie's List, didn't take off. And advocates say the state's online Provider Guide Plus isn't popular with all families.

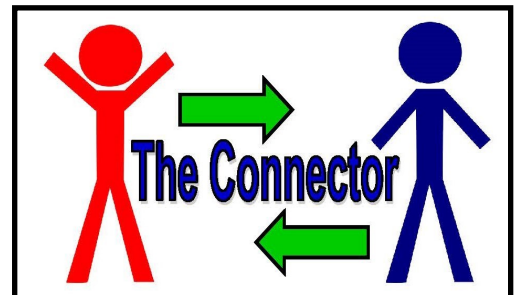


Joe Lavalle attended a Medicaid rally in 2017 with one of his aides.

Kelly, who also serves on a Workforce Crisis Task Force through the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, said many families are desperate for help. It can be especially difficult to obtain nurses and caregivers to serve people like her 33-year-old son, Joe Lavalle, whose needs are complex. She hopes that nursing services can be added to The Connector, too. "I think it's an awesome opportunity for people who are in need to have an easy way to connect," she said. "It's long overdue."

Kelly is a paid provider for Joe through the agency I Am Boundless, which allows her to schedule and manage his in-home care. "I'm always thinking of Joe, but I want to be helpful for others," said of her advocacy. "If I'm getting it done for him, I'm getting it done for everyone else like him."

**For information about The Connector,
email Joni Sparks at joni.sparks@fcbdd.org**



Collaborative classes bring FCBDD services to neighborhood schools

As a teenage swimming instructor at her local YMCA, Patti Saniel-Banrey always gravitated toward the children who needed the most help. She recalled that joy a few years later when she upended her initial college plans, scrapping industrial design for a career in special education.

The journey has been a happy one for the now-veteran teacher and for her students. "I love what I do," Saniel-Banrey said.

Inside a bright-and-cheerful classroom at Bolton Crossing Elementary School, she and her colleagues – including one with four legs and a cold nose – work with young students who also receive services from the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Saniel-Banrey heads up one of the 10 "collaborative classrooms" operated by FCBDD in partnership with South-Western and Reynoldsburg schools.



Makenna loves doing laps in the gym with Lion.

"There's a great need for kids to be in their neighborhood schools," Saniel-Banrey said. "But in some of those schools, they need to be in smaller settings where they get that one-on-one attention. We can offer that level of services."



Assistive tech devices can help students communicate with teachers and classmates.

In many ways, Saniel-Banrey's career has followed the shifts in educational settings and approaches for school-age children with developmental disabilities. She spent more than a decade at the Heinzerling residential community, then moved to FCBDD's West Central School, which has since become a transition-services program for teens and young adults. Two years ago, Saniel-Banrey began teaching at Bolton.

She and instructor assistants Shanon Mason and Mindy Stover, along with Lion the facility dog, tend a small class of students from kindergarten to third grade. Every feature of the room and every activity, from "sensory" science to walking or wheeling laps around the gym, aims to accommodate, educate and engage.

And the classroom is not tucked away; it's a fully integrated part of the school. "It's good for kids at all levels," Nicole Tyo, South-Western's director of special education, said of the collaborative model. "Our general education students see the students and interact, and they learn tolerance and patience and empathy – the things that make all of us well-rounded."

At the same time, Tyo said, "We're able to meet these students' needs in our building. We get the expertise of the staff from the Franklin County board, and our kids can be in the community they live in."

When it comes to enriching the lives of kids with significant developmental disabilities, Saniel-Banrey goes above and beyond, said Jack Brownley, FCBDD director of school-age programs. She even trained with Lion through Canine Companions for Independence and cares for him in her home.

"I've seen her in the classroom doing amazing things," Brownley said. "She has a gift."

Assistance available to help pay for internet

Families and people with developmental disabilities who struggle to afford internet access might be eligible for help, at least temporarily, from the federal Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.

The benefit provides a discount of up to \$50 per month toward broadband service for eligible households, and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop or tablet computer from participating providers. The program kicked off in May and will continue until the \$3.2 billion in federal funding runs out or six months after the Department of Health and Human Services declares an end to the coronavirus pandemic.

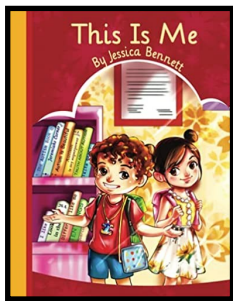
Creative Housing Inc., a local nonprofit that provides safe-and-affordable homes to Franklin County residents with disabilities, also has been working to garner state funding to provide WiFi connections in its homes. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid won't allow states to use Medicaid funding for internet services, even as part of a remote-support plan.

Cristy "Critt" Buenconsejo, Creative Housing president and CEO, said that can result in multiple internet providers for residents and staff in the same houses and apartment complexes. "Ultimately, we want to be able to show CMS that it makes sense to eliminate that redundancy," she said.

For details and eligibility on the federal broadband assistance program, go to [GetEmergencyBroadband.org](https://www.getemergencybroadband.org) or call 833-511-0311.

FCBDD staff spotlight

Jessica Bennett's books help kids embrace differences



As a teacher and parent of four biracial children, including a son with autism, Jessica Bennett strives to make sure students see themselves and their classmates in the books she presents. But finding early-learning material that reflects diversity in race, culture and abilities isn't always easy. So Bennett, a teacher in the Early Childhood Education and Family Center, has published her own.

Bennett wrote *This Is Me* about a boy with autism whose classmates are learning to understand his differences. She also wrote *YES, WE CAN!* to show that children of all abilities and backgrounds can aim to be whatever they want, from president to veterinarian to judge.



Bennett writes on behalf of her son and others with learning differences.

Your son 4-year-old son, Jeremiah, attends the FCBDD early-learning program on Johnstown Road. He's also the inspiration and title character for one of your books, right?

Yes. When Jeremiah was about 20 months, he was diagnosed with autism, and I had just started working here. I wasn't sad because he had autism; I was sad because of how the world might treat him. When he steps outside of this building, reality hits.

And Jeremiah has a twin sister, Harmony, who is developing typically and is enrolled as a peer.

It's great to see her read to him. The fact that she understands is really reassuring. When you have twins, they're supposed to be together. They're bonded. It's so beautiful – you can't teach that.



Jeremiah and his twin sister, Harmony, have a special relationship. Both attend ECEFC.

How have your family experiences affected your approach to teaching and writing?

My parents are from Puerto Rico; I was born in New York. My husband is African-American. Having biracial children, I think about these issues all the time. When I was a child and my mom and I would speak Spanish, the teacher would tell my mom to speak only English to me. I remember when my sister would speak Spanish in daycare, they would put her in a corner. I want all kids to be aware that no matter where they come from and where they are, they can be themselves. And they can be anything they want to be.

Why did you also publish *YES, WE CAN!* as a coloring book?

I wanted the kids to decide on how the characters look. If they want them to be purple, they can be!



Editor's note: Bennett's books are available for purchase on Amazon. She has lots of ideas and hopes to write more soon. For more information, go to www.jeremiahscorner.com

Franklin County Special Olympians picked for unified team

During an exclusive tour of the new Columbus Crew stadium, two Franklin County Flyers Special Olympians learned that they have been chosen to represent Ohio in the 2022 USA Games unified soccer competition.

"They were surprised", FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said. "They didn't know this was coming."

FCBDD Special Olympics Director Ryan Phillips also has been tapped as head coach for the team, which will include additional athletes from other Ohio counties and players who do not have developmental disabilities.

Congrats to Coach Ryan and to our athletes, Josiah Tanga and Aaron Elman, and to team partners Kayla Kauzlarich, Tucker Phillips and Noah Dulay.



FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison, Josiah Tanga, FCBDD Special Olympics Director Ryan Phillips and Aaron Elman at the new Crew Stadium.

FCBDD, Nisonger Center partnership boost behavioral support



With help from FCBDD and the OSU Nisonger Center, Nina Williams sees herself as a happy, successful person.

Nina Williams still cries sometimes when she thinks about all she's been through. But now, after years of trauma and struggle, Williams sheds mostly happy tears.

"I am a very successful person," she said, smiling. "And I am glad that I got help. I actually fear that if I didn't, I might be dead."

Williams said she's thriving in large part due to the intensive case management and behavior-support services she received through the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Ohio State University Nisonger Center. The agency and center have partnered for the past 20 years to better serve central Ohio, and in 2019 launched a "Co-Service Coordination" effort to help people such as Williams who have both developmental disabilities and complex behavioral challenges.

Many of those referred to the co-service program exhibit behaviors that could endanger themselves or others, or put them at risk of legal sanction or incarceration. Oftentimes, they can't hold onto relationships with family and friends, and aren't able to attend day programs or maintain community employment.

"A lot of our clients have been through a lot of trauma – they've had many different living situations," said Kelly Barnett, clinical program manager for Nisonger Behavior Support Services. "What our assessment is trying to do is figure out what needs aren't being met."

Working together, Nisonger and FCBDD service coordinators can develop person-centered plans that guide people to the services, support and care they need to attain safety, stability and a much-improved quality of life. They also can help ensure that direct-support professionals receive in-depth training.

"Our teams meet really regularly," Barnett said. "The plans have to be good, and they have to be easily understood. We want providers and others to be able to pick it up and understand how to help that person have their best day."

Williams, for example, needed more than a service plan that addressed her disabilities. She also had endured years of abuse, neglect, poverty and addiction. Williams drank, took drugs and lashed out. "I knew what I was doing was wrong, but sometimes you'll do anything to make the pain go away," she said.

Now, at age 30, she has her own apartment, a community job and the supportive services she needs. "I am proud of Nina," said FCBDD service coordinator Fatoumata Sow. "I'm proud of the way she handles things, the way she's willing to cooperate. She's doing great."

Williams is on a steady path and has "graduated" from the co-service effort. She said she has a boyfriend who treats her well, and she's saving for a trip to visit her sister in Colorado. She likes to dress in bright colors, like a rainbow, to reflect her newfound happiness.

"I would suggest to anyone that they get an advocate," she said. "There's lots of help available. It's nice to be a success story."

Power lifter shares his heart through art

Like so many of his fellow Special Olympians, Kevin Cantrell was pretty disappointed when the state Summer Games were again canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. "We really thought this year it would be okay," he said.

But Cantrell doesn't get too down. The Gahanna resident has no trouble keeping his hands and mind busy with his reading, writing, workouts, healthful cooking and competition-winning art. "Kevin Cantrell is a bit of a Renaissance man," said Ryan Phillips, director of Franklin County Special Olympics. "He truly is an inspiration."

Cantrell's Special Olympics canvas first won the organization's statewide art competition earlier this year, then recently was chosen to illustrate the cover of the Summer Games Reimagined program. While Cantrell, 33, is proud of those accomplishments, he also loves the fantasy-world paintings, drawings and stories he creates in his free time. "It's really cool stuff," said his mom, Debbie Cantrell.

He gives most efforts his all, whether it's his personal-best lift of 525 pounds (Cantrell calls it "the lift that changed my life") or his decision to expand his vocabulary by reading an entire dictionary.

Though his interests are varied, he said Special Olympics has in many ways been a thread that connects them all. "It's given me a lot of self-confidence," Cantrell said. "I know what it's like to win big, and I know what it's like to come up short. I can apply what I've learned to other areas of life."



Power lifter, writer and artist Kevin Cantrell is a man of many talents.

Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

We're grateful to Debby Ferguson and Barry Warren of the ARC Industries cleaning crew, whose quick action prevented a possible electrical fire at the FCBDD Johnstown Road building. Debby and Warren noticed a short in a light and alerted maintenance staff. Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison offered in-person thanks and "Good For You" awards. Nice job, Debby and Warren!



Service coordinator Aileen Burnside recently received the Ron Kozlowski Advocacy Award from APSI (Advocacy & Protective Services, Inc.) for lifetime achievement in advocacy for people with developmental disabilities. Supervisors who nominated Aileen for the award wrote that she has always gone above and beyond, from taking people to medical appointments to bike rides to holiday visits to see relatives. She held to that commitment during the pandemic. "No one deserves to be alone, especially not during this time," she told her supervisor. "I won't allow it." Thanks for your kindness and dedication, Aileen.





Congratulations to Larry Macintosh, Director of Administrative and Support Services, for being selected to receive the 2021 Ohio State University Nisonger Center Champion Award. The honor goes to a person who has made significant contributions to improving the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Thanks to Amy Kulow and the Transportation Department for helping the Franklin County Sheriff's Office enhance their safety procedures for people who use wheelchairs. After the sheriff's office leased a new van, Amy provided training so that deputies know how to properly secure a wheelchair in the vehicle during transport.



The National Down Syndrome Congress has named Jennifer Cunningham, clerical aide in the FCBDD Human Resources Department, the latest recipient of the Christian Pueschel Memorial Citizen Award. The honor, announced during the National Down Syndrome Congress' annual convention in June, recognizes a person with Down syndrome whose achievements, service and contributions have enhanced the value and dignity of people with Down syndrome and their families. "Jennifer sets a wonderful example," said FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison. "We are proud to have her on our staff." Way to go, Jenny!

Psychology assistant Karen Smith is retiring in August after 31 years of excellent work in our early-childhood and school-age programs. Since joining the agency in 1990, Karen served young people at multiple sites. "Her skills are wonderful," said Psychology Director Angela Ray. "Her ability to work with teams and with families, and to help them find their strengths, will be hard to replace." We wish you all the best, Karen.



Career Milestones

30 Years

Dionne Cox

25 Years

Dee Finnell
Anne Russell

20 Years

Kristin Coble
Laura Demaria
Sarah Gillilan
Terrie Little
Mary Martin
Cathy Miller
Carol Owens
Michaela Rodgers
Gretchen Shevelow
Davina Wilcox

15 Years

Carolyn Furr
Brian Hill
Lindsay Holt
Lisa Lewis
Sara McMullen
Ryan Mitchem
Jessica Robenstine
Emma Snailham
Holley Wiseman

10 Years

Erica Graff
Chelsea Henson
Elizabeth Hosler
Christine Hunter

5 Years

Carol Beverage
Katherine Bruns
Leslie Bullock
Ashley Chilton
Amy Dixon
Paula Duffy
Heather Fort
Branislava Grozdic
Mackenzie Hahn
Kristen Harman
Julie Haulund
Kristy Little
Kristen Speck
Courtney Urban
Kathleen Williams



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.

July 2021

- 21 Family Support meeting, 10 a.m. via Zoom. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details or click the following link to connect:
[Family Support Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)
- 22 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 11:30 a.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, Ohio and via Zoom for the public. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details. Click on the following link to connect:
[FCBDD Board Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)

August 2021

- 23,24 ECE and School staff returns - Staff Preparation/ Development Days.
- 25 First day of classes at West Central School.
- 25,26,27 ECE Program Service Days – Parent Visitation (No Transportation).
- 30 First day of classes, ECE - please consult program schedule.

Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Beth Savage, President
Marie Crawford, Vice President
Michael Underwood, Secretary
John Bickley
Linda Craig
William W. Wilkins

Superintendent/CEO **Jed W. Morison**

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities does not discriminate in employment or services on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, or disability.

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www.fcbdd.org

Franklin County commissioner named

Erica Crawley, a Columbus resident who had been serving her East Side community in the Ohio House of Representatives, is now a Franklin County commissioner.



Erica Crawley, new Franklin County Commissioner

The Franklin County Democratic Party Central Committee recently chose Rep. Crawley to carry out the final 18 months in the term of former Commissioner Marilyn Brown. Brown resigned in May, and Dawn Tyler Lee served on interim basis until the central committee voted on the next commissioner.

FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said Crawley quickly reached out to the agency after she was elected to the House. "We were delighted that she chose to come visit us," Morison said. "She's very supportive."

If Crawley wishes to continue as commissioner, she'll have to run in next year's primary and general election for a new four-year term.

2021 FCBDD Community Star Awards Postponed



The 2021 Community Star Awards ceremony, scheduled for October, 2021, has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The award ceremony has been held annually since 2003, to recognize individuals and organizations for extraordinary services that help to fulfill the mission of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Recognition is provided in fourteen categories, including individuals served, family members, staff in the field, volunteers, providers, etc. Generally 500-600 people are in attendance, which makes social distancing a challenge.

According to Jed Morison, Superintendent/CEO, "We will definitely reschedule the event - - it is one of our favorite times of the year as we share so many good examples of how the people are 'helping individuals to live, learn and work in our community'."

The reschedule date will be established when guidance from the health officials indicate it is safe.