

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

A message from the superintendent

As we end the 2020-2021 school year, it's fitting to reflect and thank all who have made it a success.

Since September, children and staff of the Board's early childhood education and school programs have attended class in-person, except for an extended winter break due to a spike in coronavirus cases. Some families have chosen to maintain services virtually for the year, while others opted for a hybrid model, with children receiving both in-person and virtual services.

It has not been easy, but wow, has our staff performed well. Imagine providing in-person services all day and then shifting online for the children who were not there physically. We so appreciate staff's creativity and ability to pivot, learning both new technologies and approaches. At the same time, our support staff, including our transportation team, performed at exceptional levels. They adapted to other duties when school was cancelled, and all the while maintained a focus on safety with daily sanitization of buses and other protective measures.

We are equally proud of the continued efforts of our service coordination staff. Staying in contact with those we serve, changing individual service plans and adapting to new state rules in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has not been easy. Our service coordinators, MUI, intake and administrative and maintenance staffs have persevered and maintained services, while at the same time supporting people with vaccine scheduling, distribution of personal protective equipment, help with testing protocols, assistance with food and medical needs, facility modifications and many, many acts of kindness no one ever knows about.

Kudos to our information technology staff, too, for making this all possible. Just consider the detail required to update software, provide laptops, maintain HIPAA compliance and cyber security for the hundreds of employees who needed to shift from in-person to virtual services. Many of us depended on guidance from IT staff as we learned new tech skills and moved our meetings online.

All of these successes would not have been possible without the partnership of family members, who were right there with us. Many family members had to become teachers at home, master new tech skills and juggle changing schedules while maintaining their own employment or other responsibilities. We sincerely appreciate the cooperation and support; working together helps to ensure that all individuals and families served by FCBDD can thrive.

Again, thank you. Though COVID-19 is still with us, we can and should take a moment to look back on all we've accomplished. We are very appreciative and hopeful that this summer will offer more opportunities to relax and celebrate how far we have come.

Jed Morison, Superintendent/CEO



The Early Childhood Education Family Center has hosted some end-of-year activities with families.

For retiring West Central school staff, work was a joy



Nancy Sommer



Donna Tracy

Together, they spent more than 75 years in classrooms and on playgrounds, in therapy rooms and on the pool deck, helping Franklin County children with developmental disabilities thrive.

Two long-time staff members at West Central School and Transition Services – teaching assistant Donna Tracy and physical therapist Nancy Sommer – are retiring after the end of this school year.

"I have loved every minute," Tracy said. "And when a student smiles? Oh, my. You just feel so good. This work has been very rewarding."

Tracy first became a regular presence at West Central as a parent and volunteer. Her daughter, Amy, who has Down syndrome, attended the school and Tracy often stuck around after bringing Amy to class so that she could lend a hand during pool time.

Story continued on page 2

For retiring school staff, work was a joy (continued from page 1)

“Someone asked me if I wanted to get paid for all that I was doing,” Tracy said, smiling at the memory. “I said sure, and I was hired on Feb. 19th, 1981. The time has flown.”

She and Sommer, who first worked as a physical therapist in large, state-run centers for Ohioans with developmental disabilities, have witnessed a dramatic evolution in public policy and attitudes. At Orient, Gallipolis and the Columbus Developmental Center, Sommer recalls crowded dormitories, sweltering temperatures and little expectation of privacy or choice. Cages and leather restraints still were in use.

“That was the world then,” said Sommer, who started at West Central in 1986. “All these years later, it’s such a huge difference. I’ve seen a lot of changes – a lot of great changes.”

West Central also shifted during their careers, from a K-12 school for students served by FCBDD to one that provides a transition-focused curriculum for teens and

young adults ages 14 to 22. “When I first came here, we were in the building all the time,” Tracy said. “But getting kids out makes the community more aware. And when we’re out, people just light up.”

Such experiences are welcome contrasts to the painful stares and comments Tracy and her daughter, now 51, sometimes endured. “But I thought to myself back then, ‘I’m going to take her everywhere I can,’” Tracy said. “And now Amy is there for me. I lost my husband five years ago, and she’s my rock.”

West Central Principal Maryalice Turner described Tracy as a “fearless advocate” for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Sommer “is a dedicated professional who looks at obstacles as challenges, and always rises to find solutions to meet others’ needs. Her positive attitude and approach are infectious.”

Together, Turner said, the two have made powerful contributions to the well-being of many, many young people.

Microenterprise labs nurture new employment opportunities

At first, the process seemed daunting. Chad Schoen stared at the stacks of pallets and wasn’t sure he could see possibilities – either for himself or the wood.

“I was a little nervous about it,” Schoen said. “But I’ve learned a lot. Now I love being here, and I love my job.”

After years of vocational and behavioral struggles, the 28-year-old has found success in a new microenterprise skills lab through the Work and Community Services program at the Goodwill Learning Center. Schoen has learned to make stained and finished tables, desks, stools, storage crates and other items out of recycled wood.

The process has given him a sense of peace and purpose he hadn’t felt in other work settings, which he often found distressing.

“Chad had been one of our more resistant individuals. He didn’t want to be here,” said Curtis Hendricks, Work Services program manager. “But we brought him back and he’s just become a tremendous role model. It’s all about finding what you’re passionate about.”

Schoen, who receives FCBDD services, had watched his father work with wood but hadn’t experimented much himself. He now has some tools of his own, thanks to a microenterprise grant through the Harry C. Moores Foundation that aims to help with materials and start-up costs for people who want to start their own businesses.

Schoen is building up his inventory and hopes to sell his wood products online and in pop-up stores through his own microenterprise. He even has a budding interest in expanding his math and reading skills so that he can work more independently.

“They’re going to help him learn how to market his wood products, and he’s looking forward to that,” said Melanie Domyan of APSI (Advocacy & Protective Services Inc.), the provider of guardianship services for Schoen. “I’m really proud of how he’s doing.”



Chad Schoen hopes to market and sell storage crates and other wood products he makes in Goodwill’s microenterprise lab.

Over the past year, Goodwill has created four new skill labs, including carpentry, bike repair, technology and fabric production. The goal is for people with developmental disabilities and other barriers to be able to build skills based on their individual learning styles, passions and choices.

“There are some individuals who might not want to be out in the community, or they might want to have their own business,” Hendricks said. “Microenterprise gives that opportunity.”

Schoen said he loves working alone, with his hands. “I don’t like crowds,” he said. “Here, my main focus is on me.” He said he finally feels as if good things are happening for him.

“It’s through his dedication and hard work,” Hendricks said. “This is giving him a little bit of ownership, a little bit of swag. But it’s earned swag.”

Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

Dorcas Sharp, a long-time dispatcher in the Transportation Department, wrapped up her FCBDD career at the end of May. Her friendly manner showed even on the paperwork she filed announcing her departure: Next to the word “Retiring,” she drew a smiley face. “Dorcas has been awesome – one of the kindest persons one will ever know and a great staff member all these years,” FCBDD Superintendent and CEO Jed Morison said. We wish her all the best in retirement.





West Central School instructor assistant Patrice Sorenson also is retiring at the end of the school year. “Patrice has been great,” Morison said. “She’s been in our school program for many years and has been so supportive of the students.” Congratulations, and best of luck in retirement.

Career Milestones

35 years

Andrea Stonebraker

30 years

Amy Magginis

25 years

Jodi Zill

20 years

Renee Aukerman



A shout out to the bus crew

The wheels on the bus can’t just go ‘round and ‘round. They have to know where to go and who to pick up, and they need to be right on time.

Brian Parks, information specialist and routing manager in the FCBDD Transportation Department, created this fun illustration to honor drivers and assistants for Ohio’s Bus Staff Appreciation Day. The image was displayed on the department’s electronic board, greeting drivers and assistants as they returned from their routes.

“They’ve had a pretty rough year considering all the moving around we’ve done to them, and they’ve handled it well,” Transportation Director Bill Ryan said.



Art show, school year draw to a colorful close

All year long, Early Childhood Education Director Becky Love has been impressed by the many ways staff members make sure that learning remains fun and effective – whether in person or online, from behind masks or at a distance.

So of course they found a way, despite the pandemic, to continue the 26th annual Early Childhood Learning Community Art Show. The usually-indoor event moved outside and morphed into a successful drive-through experience.



One class made lanterns for the art show to represent the brightness of friendships made this year.

Love calls such adaptations the “diamonds in the rough” discovered during the past several months, as FCBDD and the Early Childhood Education Partnership worked with families to safely serve young children. Staff “have reached out to families more, and in more ways, than ever,” Love said. “There will be many things done that will be tools for us moving forward.”

Attendance steadily grew throughout the year, and Love expects that most families will be comfortable allowing their children to return for the next school year.

The art show on May 7 was an end-of-the-year hit, with children showing off their canvas art pieces, lighted lanterns, collages and giant sculptures. Early Childhood program staff members stood under tents to greet families and hand out keepsakes.

The rain came, but it wasn’t too much of a bother. Rainbows soon followed.

FCBDD to observe Juneteenth with holiday, training



Franklin County will observe a new paid holiday this month for Juneteenth, a commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States.

Commissioners and other board-governed county agencies adopted resolutions last year that swapped out Columbus Day for Juneteenth (June 19). Advocates say that while the designation is long overdue, it offers an opportunity to educate more Americans about both emancipation history and the nation's ongoing struggle with race.

Tonya Johnson, an FCBDD service coordinator, helped to lead a department "town hall" discussion on racism and racial inequality last spring that included a focus on the significance of Juneteenth for Black Americans.

"When Independence Day was created, we were not free," Johnson said. "I'm from Akron and I remember as a kid there was one part of town that had a Juneteenth celebration every year, so I grew up with that awareness. But there are not many places here that do those celebrations."

Juneteenth marks the day in 1865 that Union soldiers announced to Black slaves in Galveston, Texas, that they

were free. By then, the Emancipation Proclamation had been in effect for two years.

"My role is to reach out to others who might not be a person of color and to say, 'Hey, this is something we should all be celebrating,'" said Nick Shaffer, an FCBDD service coordinator who majored in history and who has been involved in the efforts of the agency's Equity Committee.

"This is an opportunity and part of the amazing times we're living in," Shaffer said. "We're being forced to have these conversations, and it's wonderful."

Franklin County Commissioner Kevin Boyce has said it's "fair and right" for the county to remove a holiday – Columbus Day -- controversial for its one-sided view and replace it with an observance that is inclusive and timely.

Johnson said the service coordination town hall was held last year on Juneteenth to address the emotional toll on Black staff members who were deeply affected by the death of George Floyd and others. "This trauma over and over again is taxing," she said.

Because Juneteenth falls on a Saturday this year, the county holiday is June 18. On June 17, the FCBDD HR Training Center plans to host a virtual presentation on Juneteenth.

The next issue of Dateline will be the July/ August issue printed in late July.

Dateline

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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.

June 2021

- 10 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Self-Advocate Advisory Council meeting via Zoom 10 a.m.
- 10 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 \(Zoom\)](#)
- 18 Juneteenth celebrated – all county facilities closed

July 2021

- 5 Independence Day celebrated - all county facilities closed.
- 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. via Zoom. 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.

CONGRATULATIONS!

2021

Graduating Class

West Central School



Tribute to our graduates

Members of the West Central Class of 2021 walked and wheeled across the stage in a gym we had hoped would be full of smiling, crying and cheering families. But for the second year in a row, the coronavirus pandemic altered the traditions of this special time.

It did not, however, diminish any of the pride we take in the accomplishments of our graduates. Students persevered through shifting periods of remote and in-person learning, hybrid approaches and a changed community landscape. Still they kept to their work building the skills they need to transition to adult life.

“We’ve all learned so much,” said Jill Hicks, transition resources specialist at West Central. “If anything, COVID allowed us to take more steps to really get creative, to think outside the box.”

That spirit extended to graduation activities. Though health precautions prevented a community ceremony,

Hicks and others arranged for students to don caps and gowns, cross the stage in front of a few family members or teachers, and to pose for photographs.

Each graduate was recorded receiving his or her certificate. Families also were given copies of the professionally-produced graduation video, which includes slide shows and comments from school leaders, and personalized Class of 2021 yard signs.

“This is a big deal,” Hicks said. “It just means a lot, especially for families, to have the opportunity to get the graduation experience all students should have.”

Best wishes to the Class of 2021 from everyone at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. We know that whatever you do, your contributions will make our community better for all.

Congratulations 2021 West Central graduates!

Ryan Alimo

Columbus City Schools



Ryan has an engaging, outgoing personality that allows him to make friends just about everywhere he goes. He’s very sociable and loves to sit and have conversations. Ryan also enjoys singing and is a big fan of the musical movie *Mamma Mia!* Exploring the community is important to Ryan, and he’s especially fond of the library. During his time at West Central, Ryan has been a great volunteer at a variety

of sites, including the Columbus Metropolitan Library Distribution Center, LifeCare Alliance Meals-on-Wheels, St. Luke’s Church, Mount Carmel hospital and Goodwill. We wish him good luck in his next adventures at all R friends, where he’ll surely make many more new friends!

Brandon Armstead

South-Western City Schools

In his three years at West Central, Brandon managed to steal lots of hearts. He might seem quiet, but he’s definitely more suave than shy. Brandon finds plenty of ways to capture attention, and his smile and laughter light up the room. Brandon is a music fan and loves group activities that allow him to be with his peers. He worked hard on any task presented to him and always got the job done. Community exploration, spending time outdoors and swimming were favorite activities at West Central. Brandon’s sweet smile will be missed and we wish him all the best.



Julia Allendar

Reynoldsburg City Schools



Julia is a sweet and loving student who has brought much joy to everyone at West Central. She adores her time at school, especially when people sing and read to her. She also enjoys quiet time on her mat and is happy listening to music. Julia likes to hum and loves it when her classmates hum back. Other students are always excited to see Julia and frequently check on her. She’ll be deeply missed, but we are so pleased to celebrate with Julia and her family as she starts the next chapter of her life!

Kaylee 'Kiki' Burket

South-Western City Schools

Kiki has attended West Central since she was a young child, which means that many of our staff members had the pleasure of watching her grow up. She leaves a smile in our hearts. Kiki is a kind, affectionate young woman who loves a shoulder to lean on. Although she tends to keep to herself, her giggle can fill a room with laughter. Among her top West Central activities were riding the trike and sitting on the bench swing with a friend. But given a choice, Kiki might give all that up for a little extra time in the warm-water pool with some of her favorite pool staff. Good luck, Kiki. West Central will miss you.



Christopher Chenault

Hilliard City Schools

Chris is popular among the staff and his peers at West Central. He has such an infectious smile and is always willing to share it. Behind that grin is an engaging, fun-loving personality that makes it easy for Chris to enjoy social events. He likes being active, and really enjoyed swimming and riding the adaptive trike. Chris also is a big Ohio State fan and is fond of music. He made wonderful progress at West Central and does a great job identifying numbers and letters. Have fun at all R friends, Chris. We'll miss your smiling face!



Stephon Draper

Hilliard City Schools

Stephon loves being around people and goes above and beyond to be helpful to all. He's known at West Central as an extremely social, friendly young man. He has many interests, including cooking, swimming and watching videos on YouTube. Stephon also loves getting out and about in the community. He enjoyed going to volunteer worksites such as Mount Carmel hospital, the Library Distribution Center, LifeCare Alliance's Meals-on-Wheels program, St. Luke's Church, Goodwill and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective. A sports fan, Stephon likes participating in athletics with his peers and basketball is a favorite. Best of luck, Stephon. You'll be missed!



Adam Eggenburg

South-Western City Schools

Adam is a fun and enthusiastic young man. He loves school, enjoys interacting with his peers and attended choir classes and concerts at Central Crossing High School. Adam also has a really good sense of humor. He loves to go shopping, out for a meal or snack, spending time at the Columbus Zoo and walks in the park. Everyone at Central Crossing will miss Adam greatly. He's been a joy in class, and his smile is contagious. Best wishes to Adam as he moves on to adult services.



Kareem Jackson

Reynoldsburg City Schools

Kind, helpful and well-mannered, Kareem loves exploring the community with his classmates. He has been West Central's go-to person when it comes to learning about different places that have shut down or new places that opened. He remembers everything and is chock-full of knowledge. Kareem is also very artistic and loves crafting, painting and coloring. He enjoys Special Olympics, dancing, listening to music, swimming and books – anything about space really grabs his interest. We will miss Kareem very much, and look forward to hearing about his growth in the community program he chooses to be a part of after his time here at school.



Trent 'TJ' Mamula

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools

Trent, known to many as TJ, is a very happy young man with lots of energy. He has super-cute dimples that instantly appear when he smiles. TJ has made many friends at West Central, as everyone loves TJ and TJ loves the attention. He uses switches to play games, uses the can crusher and shredder, and is able to activate various types of equipment. While we'll miss TJ, we wish him many fun years at the Northeast adult program.



Daneisha McAlmonte

Whitehall City Schools

Daneisha is very outgoing and has the best sense of humor. She loves a good joke and loves to laugh. A big music fan, Daneisha also loves a good dance party. She relished her role as the cashier – aka the "muscle" – at our school store. Daneisha has enjoyed participating in all kinds of activities at West Central and liked to get out and explore the community. She happily volunteered at job sites such as Lucky's Market, LifeCare Alliance's Meals-on-Wheels program, Mount Carmel hospital, Goodwill, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective and Columbus Diaper Bank. Good luck in your future adventures, Daneisha. We'll miss you!



Ksannet 'Cici' Ogbai

Columbus City Schools

Friendly and inquisitive, CiCi is a pleasant young woman who loves watching other people engage in activities. She is very detail-oriented and enjoys both vocational and home-life activities, plus math and reading on the academics side. Watching videos of babies on YouTube and participating in crafts are favorite leisurely pastimes



for CiCi. She does a good job engaging in a variety of tasks and seeing them to completion. As her school career ends, new opportunities are opening up for CiCi, who hopefully will be able to participate fully in the community and obtain employment that allows her to contribute. Those who meet her will be fortunate. Best of luck, Cici – we'll miss seeing your smile.

Melat Solomon

Reynoldsburg City Schools

Melat is well known for her engaging spirit and independent attitude. She spent her school career with the county board, attending the Early Childhood Education program, former Northeast school and West Central. Melat is a joy to be around and will be deeply missed. She's also a people-watcher who loves to dance, and enjoys color-sorting and housekeeping tasks. She was fond of her time with her physical therapist and liked listening to music as she rode the adaptive trike around the building. It has been wonderful for the school community to witness Melat's growth, and to be a part of her journey to adulthood and the next chapter. Good luck, Melat!



Sharona 'Ashley' Tanyhill - Columbus City Schools



Ashley is a strong-willed young woman who knows what she wants and does a good job advocating for herself. She enjoys working in the classroom as well as in the community, and really enjoyed being part of a crew that volunteered in the nutritional services department at Mount Carmel Grove City hospital. Ashley's other interests include grocery shopping, dancing, listening to music, puzzles, food and outings. A well-known fashionista at West Central, Ashley has a large collection of hats and she loves wearing them. All at West Central – and especially your classroom staff Loretta, Kathy and Dale -- wish you the very best, Ashley, and lots of luck in the future!

Ryan Ware

Hilliard City Schools



Ryan loves interacting with others and is always eager to give out smiles and high fives. He has a great sense of humor, which puts a smile on everyone's face. Ryan enjoys swimming, swinging and listening to music. He really excels in physical activities and always looked forward to getting out and exploring the community. Ryan likes walking to and jumping

around the skating rink, and he was fond of one-on-one time with his physical therapist. We'll miss seeing you in all your hats, Ryan! Good luck in all you do.

Olivia Wolf

Columbus City Schools

A sweet and independent young woman, Olivia has made great strides in her time at West Central. Her incredible art piece is displayed at the front entrance, and many recall her magical hand-bell performance during the holiday programs. Olivia has been active in Special Olympics, swimming, art and music programs. She worked diligently to develop her transition skills. Olivia volunteered at many community sites, including the Children's Theatre, Lucky's Market and LifeCare Alliance's Meals-on-Wheels. Though we'll miss her bright smile and joyful giggles, we're excited for her and expect great things as she moves on to new adventures at all R friends. Congratulations, Olivia!



**Congrats to our
2021 graduates!**

Congratulations to our 2021 graduates!!

Seniors, we really worked to make your year special and help your family with your academic, therapy and transition needs. We have so enjoyed having you as a part of the West Central family. It has been a pleasure to share your smiles and watch you learn and grow.

Dr. Maryalice Turner, West Central principal



Stephon Draper is all smiles as he poses for a graduation picture.



Ryan Alimo shows off his school picture.

When he started at West Central, he was like, "I'm not not going, I'm not going, I'm not going." And then he met Miss Donna (Tracy), and it was, "This is be best place to be!" West Central was a great environment for Ryan. I would highly recommend it because students get more opportunities to explore the community and work on job skills. Ryan really enjoyed his time there.

Sheila Alimo, mom of graduate Ryan Alimo

Extraordinary "Me"

Yes, you have special needs,
And remember your needs are special
but, you are like the rest.
You are not a special student
Just one, striving to do your best.
Others must be sensitive, on some days
You will stumble,
But know you are only human,
strong and will not crumble.
So, never let these special needs
be only what you and others see,
You have preferences, interests,
needs and strengths
So, consider yourself an extraordinary "me."

*Congratulations graduates
as you transition
to adulthood!*

Written by:

*Karen Smith, Psychology Assistant
and
Deb Viney, Curriculum Supervisor*

When we think about graduation, often people consider it the end of something. But there is another word that is used to commemorate this time: commencement. That's the word I prefer, because it means this is really the beginning of a new and exciting time in our graduates' lives. They will miss West Central and we will miss them, but the excitement of moving on to the next step, this beginning of adulthood, is special.

Jed Morison, FCBDD Superintendent/CEO



As a parent of a special-needs kid, it's just one of those things – you never envision that you'll see them in a cap and gown. We're very fortunate to live in a world now where these experiences are possible, and are available to all. I feel blessed that Olivia is alive during these times. And things are only going to get better for her and for other children with disabilities. It's now about identifying their strengths and finding what they can do, not what they can't. The staff at West Central understands that. They're warm, friendly and all her teachers contributed to the focus on Olivia's transition. And you can't go wrong with the pool!

John Wolf, dad of graduate Olivia Wolf



Olivia Wolf

Many of our students have been in school or a program almost since birth. So it's been a comfortable environment. Now they're leaving to transition to adult programs, and while we try to make it seamless, it can be an uneasy time. You don't want to deny or look past that they have a disability, but they are like typical students. They have interests, they have needs, they strive. They're just like everybody else trying to make it through. And they can!

Deb Viney, West Central curriculum supervisor



Chris looked forward to every day at West Central. We were really, really sad when it was time to leave. He was there from when he just turned 6, to when he was 21, so that's all he knew. He has progressed a lot – more than anyone thought he would. He's now in a new program, seems really happy and has already made friends. West Central was instrumental in making that happen the way it did. Sending Chris to West Central is the best decision we ever made – they have great people.

Bridget Chenault, mom of graduate Christopher Chenault



Chris Chenault



Sharona Tanyhill



Kiki Burket



Kareem Jackson



Melat Solomon



TJ Mamula



Daneisha McAlmonte



Brandon Armstead



Stephon Draper



Cici Ogbai



Ryan Ware



Adam Eggenburg



Julia Allendar