

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

## Students grow and explore in summer job program



**Kaled Soufi, 19, gained experience this summer at several different job sites, including The Dog Stop in Franklinton.**

Kaled Soufi cannot communicate verbally, so his family relies on his expressions and reactions. And there was never any mistaking how the 19-year-old felt about his experience in this summer's Transition to Work program.

"So happy," said his older sister, Sana. "He was super excited when we dropped him off in the morning, and at night, he was the one getting his backpack ready. It actually took a while for him to accept when it was over."

Transition to Work – known as TTW to families and staff – is an employment exploration program open to transition-age teens and young adults served by the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Coordinated by FCBDD and operated by the disability-service nonprofit Hattie Larlham, TTW is based at West Central School but takes place throughout the county.

Students get a chance to try a variety of community job settings, from restaurants and rec centers to doggie day cares, food pantries and more. Discovery specialists, many of them teachers during the school year, guide the students and keep families informed with regular messages and photos.

"We're assessing their interest in work, and their ability," said Jeff Judd, a Columbus teacher and father of an adult son with autism. "We create a 'discovery profile' for every student because every student is different. I come at this from a professional and a parent perspective, and I can tell you, it's a fantastic program."

Judd is the program's longest-serving discovery specialist, and he vows to sign up each summer "for as long as they'll have me. We have the best time."

Dozens of central Ohio businesses and nonprofit organizations participate, offering hands-on experience that helps students and families decide whether to aim for another year of TTW, a different type of program, or move on to community employment. Local businesses such as Rusty Bucket restaurants "have been so exceptional," said Laura Gregory of Hattie Larlham. "They make our students a real part of things. Experiences like this can really set them up for long-term success."

Kaled's mom, Maria Soufi, said she hopes more families learn about the benefits of TTW. "Watching videos of Kaled working in different settings, following Mr. Judd's instructions, and enjoying the praise when he completed a task, filled our hearts with joy and hope," she wrote in a message to program administrators.

She and her daughter, Sana, saw Kaled develop confidence. That, in turn, eases some of the anxiety they have felt about Kaled's transition from school to adulthood. "He showed that he can do it," Soufi said. "He has a future and we know he can do well."

## School programs ready for a careful start

Early-childhood and school programs of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities are resuming this month with continued safety measures in place to reduce risks from COVID-19.

"We are back to normal with an asterisk," said Jack Brownley, FCBDD director of schools and special services. "We'll still be following best practices for cleaning and sanitizing, keeping distance and masking all who are able."

Masks are required for all FCBDD employees, visitors and students, regardless of vaccination status. Exceptions will be made only when mask use is not feasible due to medical conditions or disability.

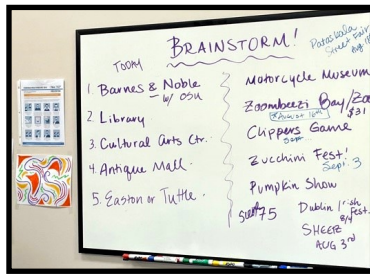
The highly contagious delta variant of the virus that causes COVID-19 has fueled a summer surge in cases, and public-health officials urge everyone eligible to get vaccinated. "We thought we'd be able to relax some of the safeguards by now," said Becky Love, FCBDD director of early childhood education. "But we can't."



# ARC hub is base for community exploration

The suggestion board in the new ARC community hub usually fills up fast. Participants in the STEP (Start Toward Emerging Possibilities) program have no trouble coming up with places to go, things to do and people to see.

“Ride a pontoon boat. Watch drag racing. Visit a bookstore. It’s fun to see what everyone chooses,” said Allie Nordman, STEP service administrator at ARC. “You can kind of go by your own whims.”



**STEP program participants have no trouble coming up with a list of places to go.**

ARC opened the hub in Grove City earlier this year as a pilot for a new model of community services, one that uses the site as something akin to a base camp or drop-in office for program participants, STEP staff and for homemaker-personal care employees providing supports in the area.

There are rooms for programming, planning, meetings or a quick lunch before heading to the next activity.

“The traditional model at the bigger buildings has been that people would spend the bulk of their day on that site. Generally speaking, they would go out for fairly limited amounts of time,” Nordman said. “With the STEP program, people are out in the community most of the time.”

If all continues to go well, ARC hopes to open additional hubs in other parts of the county, Nordman said.

Community specialist Audrey Platt loves brainstorming with participants about new places and areas to explore. “It works really well,” she said. “We have a lot of shared interests, which is great.”

On a recent summer afternoon, Platt and three STEP participants stopped to eat lunch at the hub, where they talked about recent trips and upcoming plans. Richard Furney got a big kick out of visiting an antique mall. “It’s a place where I could probably go back and spend a lot of money,” he said.

He also had fun at the Zoombezi water park, and was looking forward to a return visit to a ceramics class.

Several STEP participants, including Furney, had attended ARC workshops and programs for years. “It’s nice to be able to offer them something different,” Nordman said. “There are some who started with this one or two days a week and now have added more, they like it so much.”

*For more information about the hub, call Nordman at 614-897-9582 or email [Allison.Nordman@arcind.com](mailto:Allison.Nordman@arcind.com)*



**Richard Furney shows off some of his ceramics pieces during a lunch break at the new ARC community hub in Grove City.**

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## FCBDD families start the move to new OhioISP

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities has begun rolling out the new OhioISP for people whose current individual service plans have start dates in the autumn or later.

“The vision of this is that it will be an ongoing process,” said Lee Childs, FCBDD service coordination director. “It won’t just be an annual plan; it will be fluid throughout the year, so if people’s needs change, it will always be up to date.”

Franklin is the first of the state’s county boards to begin using the OhioISP, which standardizes the ISP format across Ohio. The transition is to be complete statewide by September 2023.

“Until now, we’ve had 88 county boards and hundreds of ICF providers that write their plans very differently, so it’s challenging for individuals who move from one county to another, or from one SSA (service and support administrator) to another,” said Kelly Mosley-Miller, a deputy director at the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. “It must be extremely difficult for families, but also for providers. Expectations are different. We wanted to standardize that.”

Though the format is becoming less variable, the plan itself is designed to be more personalized than ever, reflecting the uniqueness of each individual. State officials say the core idea is that people receiving services should be at the center of the planning process, making decisions about how they want to live their lives and guiding their support teams toward that vision. “The previous format did not always get to that depth, and maybe it didn’t gather all the right information,” Childs said. “I think this tool does draw that out, so that we can develop better plans to help people reach the best outcomes.”

Crystal Schneider, staff development training coordinator for the FCBDD Service Coordination Department, said the shift is a big one for families and for staff. “Our current plan has looked more at the deficits; this is focused on people’s strengths,” she said. “It’s a living document. We will likely see more revisions and changes and updates along the way.”



## DSP spotlight

# 'All you need is a little love to share'



**Brenda Gardner, a direct-service professional, offers fresh cucumbers during a recent outing to a Delaware farm.**

Most every day, Brenda Gardner sees or hears or does something that leaves her heart a little more full. "I enjoy the accomplishments of others," she said, smiling. "I like seeing them get to do things that lots of people might not give them a chance to try."

Gardner is a direct-support professional (DSP) at Hattie Larlham, a nonprofit disability-services organization that provides care and support to adults and children throughout Ohio. Colleagues say Gardner always seems to go above and beyond, whether taking art classes so that she can learn to teach others or putting much of her own life on hold to offer extra help during the pandemic.

"Brenda is a superstar," said Liz Jones, Hattie Larlham director of day programming in central Ohio. "She's done so much for our people. I'm just insanely proud to know her."

Gardner, who is 57 and has been in the disabilities field for about 12 years, said she knows how important her job is. Plus, she loves it:

### **Why did you become a DSP?**

I had been working in a warehouse for a good while. I was with one company for 20 years. The last time I got laid off, I said I didn't want to go back to that. I wanted to do something more meaningful.

### **You want people with disabilities to feel good about exploring the community, right? Colleagues say you're willing to give all sorts of activities a shot.**

Maybe I'm a little bit fearless. I'll take people pretty much anywhere! We love to go camping; we've also gone canoeing. We'll hike, visit a farm, study different cultures and try different restaurants. I'm a visual learner, so I taught myself a lot of arts and crafts. Now we can do projects. We have a lot of fun. I've really stepped outside my boundaries, too.

### **That all sounds wonderful. But you're supporting people with developmental disabilities, so folks are bound to hit some rough patches now and then.**

Oh, sure. People have bad days, and it can be difficult. I find ways to comfort them, to reassure, so that whatever is going on, they still can have the best day possible. All you need is a little love to share.

### **You're a tremendous advocate for disabilities community. Would you recommend the job of DSP?**

I would recommend it. It rewards you in so many ways, and that makes it worth it in the long run. The wages can be an issue; some people leave because they can't afford it. That hurts us. It makes pressure, because we are so needed. We need to find ways to make this work so that more people will come into this field. Lots of people are capable of doing it, and it's a great way to grow.



**Rita Murray, who receives services from FCBDD, said Brenda Gardner is a special friend.**

## FCBDD names new guardianship services board member

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities recently appointed Robert E. Ryan to replace Fred Cloppert on the Franklin County Guardianship Service Board. Ryan is to take his seat on the board in January, when Cloppert's four-year term ends.

Cloppert, a retired attorney and parent of two adult sons with developmental disabilities, said he was pleased to serve. "I thought I was doing something novel and worthwhile," he said. "You definitely see the need for it."

The guardianship service board was established by law in 2014 to help address problems with oversight and payment. Former Franklin County Probate Judge Robert G. Montgomery wanted to shift from an attorney-based model for guardianship to a social-services system.

The board's three governing members are appointed by the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board of Franklin County, by FCBDD and by the probate court. The board also employs staff members who provide services for adults who have been declared incompetent and have no other suitable guardian.

Ryan, president of Egan-Ryan Funeral Service, has an adult daughter with developmental disabilities. "Fred has done a great job as our representative, especially during this time of transition from Judge Montgomery to Judge (Jeffrey D.) Mackey," said FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison. "And Bob will be an excellent board member with his knowledge of probate and our services."



**Robert E. Ryan**

# Good For You

## Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

A big thanks to Columbus Crew SC for taking steps to accommodate adults and kids with sensory sensitivities. Sensory bags equipped with noise-canceling headphones, fidget tools, non-verbal cue cards and weighted lap pads are available to any guests who might feel overwhelmed by the sounds and sights at Lower.com Field, the new Crew stadium. Fans also can use a dedicated sensory room designed by medical professionals for those who need a quiet, more secure environment. Crew SC partnered with KultureCity, a nonprofit focused on sensory needs among people with "invisible" disabilities, such as autism, to make all stadium programs and events inclusive. A driver's license is requested to check out a sensory inclusion pack.

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Congratulations to FCBDD's Jeff Baird of the Information Technology department and Mary Martin in Early Childhood Education for organizing two Red Cross blood drives during the pandemic. The May effort collected 23 units of blood, which have the potential to save 69 lives. In July, donors at FCBDD gave 18 units, which could save 54 lives. Due to the recent surge of COVID cases, FCBDD will not host additional drives this year; staff still can give blood at Red Cross donation Centers. Thanks, Jeff and Mary.

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Best wishes to Nicholas Smith as he takes over for Anne Russell as editor of Service Coordination *Connection*, the long-running newsletter for FCBDD's largest department. Anne has been involved with the newsletter since its launch in 2008; she became editor in 2013. Nicholas draws from his history background and has written about the many achievements of people with disabilities. He welcomes contributions and suggestions for the service coordination newsletter and can be reached at [Nicholas.Smith@fcbdd.org](mailto:Nicholas.Smith@fcbdd.org).



# Career Milestones

### 40 years

Jeannie Brown  
Lynn Watkins

### 30 Years

Laura Tudor

### 25 Years

Tammie Brindza  
Kim O'Brien

### 20 Years

Kimberly Ardit  
Suzanne Gates  
Anita Milano-Gay  
Brian Turley

### 15 Years

Greig Brown  
Diane Capretta

### 10 Years

Claudia Simmons  
Benjamin Talbott  
Kelly Thompson

### 5 years

April De Los Reyes  
Barbara Kolson  
Ainsley Malone

# Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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- Marie Crawford**, Vice President
- Michael Underwood**, Secretary
- John Bickley**
- Linda Craig**
- Samuel Davis**
- William W. Wilkins**

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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.**

- 6 Labor Day – Early Childhood, School classes and offices of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities closed.
- 9 Self-Advocate Advisory Council via Zoom, 10 a.m.
- 15 Family Support meeting, via Zoom, 10:00 a.m. Meeting is open to all family members.  
[Family Support Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)
- 23 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board In-Service, Finance and Human Resources & Ethics Committees meeting, 2879 Johnstown Rd., 4 p.m.
- 23 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 5:00 p.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 \(Zoom\)](#)