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

Families celebrate a milestone move

Over the years, Amy Kirk and Rachel Barezinsky have happily attended a boatload of showers to celebrate engagements, weddings and new babies. But until recently, neither woman had been the star of the show.

"And they deserve to be," said Rachel's dad, Greg Barezinsky.

So friends and family members decided to host showers for both Amy and Rachel as they prepared to move into an apartment together and live on their own for the first time. The step is huge – one that, as parents of adults with developmental disabilities know, comes mixed with joy and anxiety.

Amy, 43, has a job at Goodwill and had always commuted to work and other activities from her family home. Rachel, 32, works at a dental office and did the same. Rachel didn't have disabilities until she suffered a brain injury at age 17 after a man fired a gun at the car she was riding in with friends, striking her in the head. Though her recovery has been nothing short of amazing, she has some paralysis on one side and struggles with her short-term memory.

"For 15 years, I felt that there was no safer place for Rachel than here with us," her dad said. "And that's how we approached it. And then it got to where I thought, 'Wait. Are we holding her back?'"

Amy and her family also had begun to think about the need for her to become even more independent. Rachel wanted to know that she can thrive on her own. "It's time," she said. "I feel like I have all the right people in place. I'm ready."

The roommates, who didn't know each other previously, had time to become acquainted and are settling into a duplex owned by the local nonprofit organization Creative Housing. They both received lots of housewarming gifts at their showers and look forward to decorating.

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Rachel Barezinsky gathered with family and friends for an outdoor meal during her shower.



Amy Kirk is all smiles as she prepares to cut the cake during her housewarming shower.

Now a county official, Commissioner Crawley returns to FCBDD

Franklin County Commissioner Erica Crawley paid a visit to the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities and received a cute – and colorful – welcome from children in the Early Childhood Education and Family Center.

"Omigosh, that made my day," Crawley said as children held a banner that they had decorated for her. "Thank you! I love it."



Franklin County Commissioner Erica Crawley is greeted by students and staff at the FCBDD Early Childhood Education and Family Center.

Crawley, who was chosen this summer to carry out the remainder of former Commissioner Marilyn Brown's term, had been serving her East Side community in the Ohio House of Representatives. She also visited FCBDD soon after her election as a state representative.

"She's been very supportive of early childhood intervention programs and clearly has a strong understanding of their importance," said FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison. "We're just delighted that she came out."

Crawley has cited several priorities for her work as commissioner, including addressing housing issues and reducing infant mortality through efforts such as Celebrate One, a program also supported by FCBDD.

She met with Morison to discuss board operations and services before touring the early childhood center. Crawley will have to run for re-election next year to secure a four-year term as commissioner.

FCBDD welcomes new board member

Samuel Davis, a Hilliard area resident and parent of two children with disabilities, has been appointed to the board of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Davis, 40, is a Corporate Technology Director within Nationwide's Executive Leadership Cabinet. He succeeds former board member Renee Stein, who took a seat on the board in 2009 and stepped down in January after reaching the limit of three, four-year terms. Like Stein, Davis fulfills a state requirement that developmental disabilities boards include a parent with at least one child eligible for board services.

"I live the life. I'm very excited about this opportunity, and I think it's going to be tremendous," Davis said. "This is the only board that I've pursued and tried to become a part of. It means that much."

He and his wife, Jessica, have a 14-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son. Davis said Mattilyn Rose has Potocki-Lupski syndrome, a chromosomal duplication that can affect developmental milestones. Kendric Xavier is on the autism spectrum.

Both attend Hilliard schools and are doing well, Davis said.

A Cincinnati native, Davis is a graduate of Xavier University and previously worked for the state, including the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. He is an active volunteer in the central Ohio community, serving as an advocate and ambassador for Easterseals, community board member for COSI, commissioner for the Columbus Good Sport Golf Club Association and IT advisory board member for Columbus Downtown High School and the STEM Industry Council (SiNC).

Davis also volunteers for the Make-a-Wish Foundation, Ronald McDonald House and Habitat for Humanity. His hobbies include golf, chess, billiards and volunteerism.

Davis said he looks forward to learning more about FCBDD and issues important to the developmental disabilities community. "I'll be listening, learning and observing," he said. "I'll be a good sponge, yet a greater advocate."



*New FCBDD board member
Samuel Davis*

Combined Charitable Campaign now underway

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is aiming to defend its title as charity champ among county agencies during the Franklin County Combined Charitable Campaign, which kicked off last month and runs through October.



This year's FCBDD campaign is being led by Early Childhood Education Director Becky Love and our agency goal is \$57,200. Franklin County Recorder Danny O'Connor is heading up the overall county campaign, called "Franklin County Cares," with a goal of \$266,754.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted existing inequities and new challenges affecting our fellow Franklin County residents," O'Connor said in a message to county employees. "The funds we raise will help provide our community members with essential services like medical care, eldercare, nutrition assistance, affordable housing, youth programming and animal welfare initiatives."

At FCBDD, each department has a designated campaign coordinator who can help with information and paper pledge forms if needed. Online pledges are encouraged and all employees have access to the ePledge site, which has a searchable pdf of the campaign resource guide and an alphabetical listing of more than 250 participating charities to choose from.

Look for occasional emails from Love and her team with updates, videos and drawings for prizes.

Families celebrate a milestone move

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"Amy's kind of quiet, and Rachel's not," Amy's mom, Debbie Kirk, said with a smile. "We're hoping they balance each other out."

Amy's sister, Kellie Stinson, said the family is beyond excited. "Amy's been to so many of our wedding and baby showers – all the life milestones, she celebrates with us," she said during Amy's celebration. "We wanted this for her."

Rachel and Amy now will have the same FCBDD service coordinator, Corrina Hyde. Though everything is falling into place with the home and service providers, the journey has been a long one, with no shortage of pandemic-related snags and delays.

"For me, this has been such a bright spot after all these difficult months," Hyde said. "Both families are so supportive; both of these ladies are bright and happy people. And once they're on their own, they're still not alone. The support will be there."

Drue Barezinsky, Rachel's stepmom, said Rachel has approached the big move as she does most everything in life – with cheer and optimism. "She has the most positive spirit," Drue said, refusing to be bitter even about the man who shot her. "She'll say, 'He's in prison, and I don't want to hate anybody. I just figure I still have this wonderful life.'"

Workers with disabilities find sweet success at waffle company

When Stacie Skinner decided to launch a gluten-free waffle company, she knew the product had to taste good. But she didn't think money should be the only other measure of success.

"I knew that I wanted a purpose for my business," Skinner said. "I just didn't know what it was."

She discovered the answer at the same time she found a production kitchen for Lopaus Point waffles, named after her hometown on the coast of Maine. Skinner set up shop inside the county-owned building that houses the Goodwill Learning Center in Groveport, a space that not only suited her immediate needs but also allowed her to provide job opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

"It was an awesome decision, the best for so many reasons," she said. "There's something so grounding about this. We make sure everyone's treated with dignity here. We're all the same."

Brandon Crudup, 32, has been working in the Lopaus Point kitchen for about a year and is thrilled to be part of a thriving operation. "I love it. They're friendly here and I like this structure," Crudup said. "I do dishes, labeling, packing – the only thing I don't do is make the waffles."

He does, however, eat them – and so does a growing legion of Lopaus Point fans. The thick, gluten-free toaster waffles – made in small batches with organic fruit and no added sugars -- have been featured on *The View* and by other media, and are available online and in groceries such as Whole Foods and Giant Eagle Market District.

The success and location of Lopaus Point means that Goodwill has an on-site vocational partner willing to let potential workers test the waters, said Tiffany Martin, the Learning Center director. "Because of the relationship, we can try some folks who haven't been successful in a community job yet," she said. "They can be in an integrated environment, and try it."

About one in five Lopaus Point workers has a developmental disability, Skinner said. Crudup is a star. "Just from an employment standpoint, he's exceptional," she said. "He's responsible and a pleasure to be around. He thinks ahead and he's optimistic – that's a quality I look for in anyone."

Crudup said he feels proud of his work accomplishments. "I've stuck with this," he said. "I had a few ups and downs, but now I'm on the straight and narrow."

He was especially pleased the day he caught a labeling error on the "best by" date, helping the small business avoid a costly error. "You're a huge asset, Brandon," Martin told him.

When Crudup leaves work, he often turns to Skinner and makes the half-a-heart symbol with his hands. "I give him the other half," Skinner said. "That's just how we roll."



Lopaus Point founder Stacie Skinner said having workers with different abilities makes her business better.



Brandon Crudup loves working at Lopaus Point waffles. He recommends chocolate chip and pumpkin spice.

Boundless offering health care with a disability focus

One of central Ohio's largest disability-services organizations has expanded its programming to include more options for primary and preventative health care, including dental and behavioral-health services.



From left, Dr. Cindy Rispin, Boundless Health medical director; Anna Wuerth, Boundless Health executive director; and Renee Stein, Boundless director of program sales and outreach, greet visitors during a Boundless Health open house.

Boundless Health aims to function as a hub of person-centered care for people and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities. That means addressing the snags that people with disabilities sometimes come across in accessing care, said Anna Wuerth, executive director of Boundless Health.

"Too often, the physical and mental health needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are overlooked because of the challenges that exist in traditional health care settings," Wuerth said. "Our goal is to expand access to these services so that no matter what challenge an individual is facing, they can receive the care they deserve."

Boundless Health is to begin seeing patients on its Worthington campus this fall. People interested in making an appointment for primary or dental care can call Boundless now at 1-800-409-2729 and put their names on a list for scheduling, or go to iamboundless.org for more information.

Later next year, Boundless Health plans to add pharmacy services at the same site.

DSP champions advocacy, independence for people with disabilities



DSP Alique Yardley and Kate Hoogeveen enjoy an afternoon at the Park of Roses.

As a direct-support professional, Alique Yardley is often approached by people who want to comment on her job, especially when she's in a public setting with someone she supports.

"People come up and say, 'It takes a special person to do what you do,'" Yardley said, smiling. "I don't understand that. Because if you've had kids, or a brother or sister, or anyone you love – it's the same thing."

That outlook is so much of what makes Yardley an excellent DSP, the Hoogeveen family believes. Yardley started at Goodwill Columbus earlier this year and has been working with 44-year-old Kate Hoogeveen, a Westerville resident who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair.

Kate is intelligent, opinionated and wants to call her own shots. Yardley instantly grasped all that.

"We'd had quite a few changes before Alique," said Jackie Hoogeveen, Kate's mom. "People quitting, people going to another job. Most of them have been great. But there was just something about Alique. The first time Alique came in, Kate felt so comfortable."

Yardley took time to focus on Kate's speech, which is affected by her condition. "The more you're with Kate and talk to her, the easier it is," Jackie said.

Kate is an active community volunteer, loves animals and shopping and participating in 5K races with her brother Eric, one of her four younger siblings. "He works to better his time while he's pushing her," Yardley said. "Eric and Kate fly."

She sees Kate as a strong self-advocate, striving to make sure that she and others with disabilities are treated with dignity and respect.

When she's out shopping, Kate tries to help people understand that she can make her own choices. She and Yardley also urge more businesses and community spaces to offer appropriate, private hygiene areas. "Once I was taken to a nursing home to change me," Kate said. "That was not OK."

Yardley, who had previously worked in the disabilities field, said returning this year "fit like an old glove. I got lucky, because folks like Kate make it easy."

Down syndrome organization promotes biobank

People with Down syndrome and their families can help support research into the genetic condition through DownSyndrome Achieves, a Dublin-based nonprofit organization that sponsors a centralized biobank.

The biobank, now based at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, stores blood, saliva and tissue samples for use in research projects, said Lito Ramirez, CEO of DownSyndrome Achieves and the parent of a 14-year-old son with Down syndrome.

Ramirez is a former member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities who has long pushed for more attention and investment into Down syndrome research.

"Historically, the community has never had a research anchor," Ramirez said. "A Down syndrome biobank had never existed as they do for cystic fibrosis, breast cancer, all sorts of things. We've had a lack of infrastructure for researchers to tap into."

And yet, Ramirez said, scientists say that access to biospecimens is their top need. "There are smaller collections at universities; our samples are open and available to any researcher who wants to make life better for people with Down syndrome," he said.

The DSA biobank is now supporting a National Institutes of Health research project and several others are in the pipeline, Ramirez said. Such work could lead to breakthroughs about conditions associated with Down syndrome – why heart problems and Alzheimer's are common, for example, or why solid-tumor cancers are rare, he said.

For information about donating biological samples, making a financial contribution or to learn more, go to dsachieves.org



Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and the Dublin-based advocacy organization DownSyndrome Achieves work together on a biobank to provide biological samples for research.

Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

Congratulations to our awesome bus drivers, bus assistants, teachers, instructor assistants and other Transportation, Early Childhood and West Central staff members for getting the school year off to a smooth and safe start.

Thanks to all who are helping to coordinate the Combined Charitable Campaign. We appreciate the efforts of Early Childhood Education Director Becky Love, campaign chair; her team members Laura Billingham, Sarah Gillilan, Mary Martin and Debbie New.

CCC Department Coordinators

Joe Becker, Collaboratives
 Kelly Bowers, West Central
 Mike Boyce, Maintenance
 Jack Brownley, Schools & Special Services
 Randy Cuenot, Psychology
 Silicia Hedges, Service Coordination
 Amy Kulow, Transportation
 Todd Lilley, HR
 Larry Macintosh, Administrative Services
 Anna Osgard, Administration
 Jennifer Schueneman, Fiscal
 Travis Sherick, IT
 Gretchen Uhl, ECEFC

Career Milestones

20 Years

Silicia Hedges
Lee Childs
Rita Hopson
Anne Tipton

15Years

Karen Reynolds
Monica Klein

10 Years

Allison Zuhosky
Michele Gallagher

5 Years

Jillian Barrick
Torrey Seaton
Tina Myers
Curtis Mahnick
Chelsi Davis



A salute to Direct Support Professionals

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week was observed Sept. 12-18, and many people with disabilities, their families, provider agencies and FCBDD staff took time to give thanks for the service, care and compassion shown by DSPs. The following tribute was written by FCBDD service coordinator Job Ombati, a former DSP with MRCS and Open Door who joined FCBDD last year:

As a former DSP, allow me a few moments to say something about this important group of people during Direct Support Professional Recognition Week. I worked as a DSP from 2007-2009 and 2016-2020. From my experience, I can tell you that doing the job well requires patience, kindness, and above all, love.

DSPs provide service and care to people with developmental disabilities and, by so doing, act as advocates, caregivers, guides, and mentors. DSPs are so many things to the clients that they support. When the pandemic hit, health workers were hailed as heroes – which they are. But less was said of the DSPs. As for me, a former DSP, I put all DSPs and health workers and teachers in the same class: Heroes. As of this day, my wife, Ruth, is a DSP and she loves it.



FCBDD Service Coordinator Job Ombati said his wife, Ruth, is a wonderful DSP.

She and so many others support the sick, the vulnerable and our children. When other professionals stayed away from their offices during the pandemic, these people continued working and, in so doing, risked their lives to serve others. Because DSPs are so important, our nation should make policies that elevate this profession, making sure that they are paid well, properly trained and supported. I believe that if we support them, they will stay in this field and therefore improve the living standard of people with disabilities.

DSPs, health care workers and teachers are truly the glue that holds our society together – the real heart and soul of our support system. Thank you for all you do and continue to do.

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.

October 2021

- 3 Columbus Buddy Walk held by the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio 2021 Columbus Buddy Walk. For details please go to dsaco.net.
- 15 Staff Preparation/Development Day for Early Childhood Department, West Central School and Transportation Department, classes closed.
- 28 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board committee meeting at 4:00 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, Ohio. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.
- 28 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 \(Zoom\)](#)

- 31 Happy Halloween!

Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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

Superintendent/CEO **Jed W. Morison**

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www.fcbdd.org

Families, advocates prepare for Buddy Walk

The Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio is ready for the 2021 Columbus Buddy Walk on Oct. 3 with both in-person and virtual Walk Your Way options.

The signature fundraiser took place entirely online last year due to the pandemic, but is back on with COVID-19 protocols that are regularly updated, organizers say.

Masks are requested for all attendees who are not vaccinated.

The Columbus Buddy Walk is the nation's second-largest, with more than 14,000 at the 2019 walk. Money raised helps to fund support and resource groups, education, awareness, fitness and social opportunities, legislative advocacy and more.

Online registration is preferred and closes for individuals and teams at noon Oct. 1. For details about the event, which starts at 9 a.m. at Fortress Obetz, 2015 Recreation Trail, go to dsaco.net



The Columbus Buddy Walk is among the nation's largest.

Registration open for Ohio SIBS conference

Ohio SIBS is again hosting an in-person annual conference, "Reconnecting," in November.

The event marks the 20th annual conference for the organization, which serves as a unified voice and partner for Ohio adult siblings of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

SIBS – Special Initiatives by Brothers and Sisters – provides advocacy, education, leadership and supports to help improve public policy and enhance quality of life for siblings and their families.

The conference takes place from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Nov. 6 at the Embassy Suites Dublin. To learn more or to register, go to ohiosibs.org

