

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

Robots ready to lend a hand in Franklin County

Starting this month, personal robots will be rolling around two sites in Franklin County as part of a technology pilot through the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.

The temi robots are about 3 feet tall and look a little like Segways with iPads. One is headed to a community home whose residents receive services from the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the other will be based at FCBDD's West Central School.

Eight more are being deployed to five other Ohio counties for use in homes, schools, intermediate-care facilities, a developmental center and employment site.

"We're so excited," said Sara Eppard, Ohio director for the support-services provider Dungarvin. "The folks that we support are getting more and more tech-savvy, as most of us are. I think it's going to be a really good match."

The temi robot assigned to Dungarvin will make itself useful at a Columbus-area ranch house shared by two men, Eppard said. West Central Principal Maryalice Turner said she can envision their robot helping students with in-school jobs, communication goals and more.

"It's going to be up to us to discover what it can do for us," said Jack Brownley, FCBDD director of schools and special services.

The pilot aligns with the state's Technology First initiative and ongoing efforts to increase the use of innovative technologies across the services spectrum, said Stacy Collins of DODD's Division of Policy and Strategic Direction.

"We really want to pilot them, test them, see if they can be helpful to people with developmental disabilities," Collins said of the robots. "Can they help meet the needs of families, providers and DSPs? We're excited to find out."

The state's partner for the 12-month, \$105,000 project is Connected Living, a Massachusetts-based company with experience providing technology services for the aging population. Connected Living doesn't manufacture the temi robot but will help with set up, training and ongoing consultation.

The Alexa-enabled devices have immense capabilities. With built-in smart display, motion sensors and facial recognition, temi robots can answer questions, respond to commands, play music, stream videos, follow people around or go where they're told.

No one envisions robots replacing human support systems; the hope is that they can enhance safety and independence.

"Both of the guys in the home get nearly 24-7 support, but they do have some alone time," Eppard said. "And I feel like they probably have more capabilities. The robot just might help."



Public input sought for FCBDD strategic plan

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities will conduct a public hearing at 4 p.m. Dec. 6 to gather comments on the agency's Annual Action/Strategic Plan.

The public also can weigh in on the use of federal funding provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

As Franklin County continues to grow, so does the need for support services for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

The board uses the plan to guide agency priorities in areas such as early intervention and education, community-based programs, employment, transportation, recreation and more.

"We invite anyone to comment on plans for the future," Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said. "We have a long-term plan as well, but of course, some years there may be more changes than others."

The draft plan, which board members consider for approval in January, will be available on fcbdd.org later this month. To request a copy, call 614-342-5950 or email amy.magginis@fcbdd.org

The public hearing will be held virtually, via Zoom. To connect to the hearing, call 1-929-205-6099 or click on to link below:

[FCBDD Public Hearing/ Zoom Link](#)

Mother strives to keep services, stability for daughter

If she could, Rowena Gonzales would fund a mobile hospital in her native Philippines and use it to reach families who can't afford care for children born with developmental disabilities.

"We could go all over and see who needs help," she said.

Gonzales knows that in poor countries, the quest for care and support for people with serious disabilities can be a matter of life and death. She fought long and hard to keep her own family from experiencing a similar struggle.

"There are systems in place, but nothing like it is here," said Gonzales, whose 27-year-old daughter, Jackylyn Siglos Gonzales, was born with a set of birth defects known as CHARGE syndrome. "If what we have in Franklin County is a 100, it would be a 2."

Ten years ago this fall, a Cleveland immigration judge granted Gonzales lawful permanent-residence status for humanitarian reasons due to Jackie's condition. The decision saved Gonzales from either taking her family to the Philippines, where Jackie – a U.S. citizen by birth -- might not have survived, or losing custody of her child to adoptive or institutional care in the United States.

Jackie's service coordinator at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities was among those who wrote a letter to immigration officials explaining that Jackie's extensive medical needs were unlikely to be met in her parents' community.

"Life is so hard there," said Gonzales' friend, Chat Padriga.

Gonzales became a proud U.S. citizen in 2019. Her younger daughter, Jaimelyn, is now studying to become a nurse. Both Jackie and Jaimelyn were born after their parents were brought to Ohio to work as performers during the AmeriFlora international floral exhibition in 1992.

"She's completely blind now; that's a part of the syndrome," Gonzales said of Jackie, who also relies on a feeding tube and has severe cognitive impairment.

Her needs are sometimes overwhelming: Since losing all her vision, Jackie has become even more attached to her mother and isn't tolerating her day-program environment. Gonzales recently had to reduce her job hours and is becoming certified to provide more of Jackie's care.

"She is a very strong woman," said Gonzales' friend Herminia Carbon. "She stays in control."

Gonzales is grateful for Jackie's FCBDD services and works to help those less fortunate. "If I am blessed here, I share," she said. "That's our culture."



Jackie is blind now and likes to be close to her mom.



U.S. District Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Preston Deavers, left, congratulated Gonzales after her naturalization ceremony in federal court.

Columbus athlete, advocate takes on new role at Special Olympics Ohio



Liz Beu

Liz Beu, a six-sport athlete and longtime self-advocate, has joined Special Olympics Ohio as the organization's first Athlete Leader in the new Unified Champion Schools program in Columbus.

Beu, a Columbus native, said she's excited about the opportunity and considers it her "dream job" in every way. She's happy that her love and knowledge of sports will be put to good use, helping other students thrive.

Special Olympics Ohio is thrilled to have her, too, as it works to build on existing programs and develop socially inclusive environments for young students in Columbus-area schools.

"Instead of having a traditional Special Olympics-based model, our goal is to bring everybody together," said Kristi Peters, manager of the Unified Champion Schools program.

The program aims to help schools join typical elementary students and students with developmental disabilities through unified playgrounds, before- and after-school fitness clubs, inclusion assemblies, unified clubs, sports and more.

Beu has an associate degree in sports and fitness management from Columbus State Community College, is a former fitness assistant at the North YMCA and is a statewide Project STIR (Steps Toward Independence and Responsibility) trainer.

She says that training others with disabilities to speak up has changed her life, helping her to be more assertive and less shy.

Beu loves Ohio State football and basketball, outdoor activities and watching ESPN. She's also crazy about the color blue. Almost everything in her apartment, including the couch, chairs and carpet, are in shades of her favorite color.

"We know she will be an incredible asset to Special Olympics Ohio, and we can't wait to see the impact she will have on us all," said Jessica Stewart, President/CEO.

Services spotlight

Caring for kids and families, one smile at a time

At 10 years old, Diego Solis climbed into a dentist's chair and had a tooth filled for the first time. He doesn't recall being upset or frightened. In fact, the memory is a happy one.

"I loved it," he said. "Everything went great."

Solis soon decided he'd like to fix teeth, too. He stuck to that childhood dream and became a pediatric dentist, leaving his native Panama for a residency in Puerto Rico and, after connecting with an Ohio State University professor there, landing a fellowship at OSU.

The next stop for "Dr. Diego," as Solis is known to his young patients and their families, was the Johnstown Road Dental Clinic.

That was 18 years ago and he's never looked back.

"We've been working nonstop ever since," Solis said. "I feel very fortunate. We're one of the few programs in the United States with a full-scale dental clinic in a preschool."

The clinic, a part of the OSU Nisonger Center, is housed in the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Early Childhood Education and Family Center. Nisonger provides an array of programs and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including dental care. FCBDD partners with Nisonger and helps to fund the busy clinic.

Former Nisonger Dental Services Director Dr. Edward Sterling first

championed the effort, Solis said. "He felt that care for this population was an unmet need. He had the vision. But without the support of FCBDD, we wouldn't be here."

The clinic handles more than 3,800 appointments each year, many of them to low-income and immigrant families. A sliding-fee scale guarantees that no child, with or without disabilities, is denied care based on ability to pay.

That social-mission nature suits Solis. "My heart is not in private practice," he said. "My heart is in community service. For some families, we are their only option."

Dr. Stephen Beetstra, dental program director at Nisonger, said the Johnstown Road clinic is in great hands as Solis develops the program further. A recent gift of \$30,000 from the kiDDS Foundation will go toward needed supplies and equipment upgrades to help ensure the best care.

"We at the Nisonger Center are truly blessed to have a dedicated provider like Diego Solis," Beetstra said. "His career focuses on improving the lives of pediatric patients who have limited access to oral health services and he is a positive role model to patients, coworkers, residents and students."

In the clinic, Solis and his staff often sing to their young patients. He happily speaks Spanish when providing care for Hispanic families. "I'm kind of like a kid at heart, too," he said. "It's not only fixing teeth. It's

touching the lives of children and their families."

Solis returns to Panama most every year, and his family occasionally visits him. "For them, it was an honor for me to be able to come here," he said.

In his spare time, Solis enjoys bonsai, the Japanese art of growing ornamental, artificially dwarfed trees and shrubs. He's used to being both creative and patient – with his hobby and at work.

While many young children breeze in and out of the clinic as happily as Solis did as a child, others protest. Sometimes loudly. They need help moving past their fear.

"We have our bag of tricks," Solis said, smiling. "And, we have laughing gas."



Dr. Diego said the clinic has a great staff. From left, Erica Robles, Stacey Stevens, Gloria Caicedo, and Dr. Diego Solis.

Children Services in need of holiday gifts for kids

Franklin County Children Services is now collecting gifts and donations for Holiday Wish, a long-running community program that works to fulfill wish-lists for thousands of youth under agency care.

Donors can contribute cash, sponsor one or more children and shop from their wish-lists, hold a toy drive or contribute new, unwrapped toys and gifts of their choice.



For details, call 614-275-2525, go to childrenservices.franklincountyohio.gov or email fccsholidaywish@fccs.us

Mount-Campbell remembered for service to ARC Industries

As an engineering professor at Ohio State University, Clark Mount-Campbell once answered a call for help with work-flow problems at ARC West. He stuck around for nearly 40 more years.

Mount-Campbell began serving on the ARC board in 1982 and remained until he died on Sept. 25. He knew that people with developmental disabilities have much to contribute, and he wanted to support their success.

"Clark was engaging, always prepared, and extremely supportive," ARC Industries CEO Bob Gaston said. "He had a good sense of humor and he challenged us sometimes. His was a life well-lived."

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.

November 2021

- 11 Veteran's Day - all facilities closed.
- 17 Family Support meeting, via Zoom, 10:00 a.m.
Meeting is open to all family members.
[Family Support Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)
- 18 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board committee meeting at 1:00 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, Ohio. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.
- 18 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 2:00 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 \(Zoom\)](#)
- 25 Happy Thanksgiving!
- 26 Thanksgiving Break - all facilities closed

Dateline

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

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www.fcbdd.org

Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

We're happy to congratulate Romana Mutai, a Columbus direct-support professional who recently won the first "DSP of the Year" award from the Ohio Alliance of Direct Support Professionals. Mutai was honored for providing quick, life-saving care when a woman unexpectedly gave birth at a home. Bethany Toledo, OADSP executive director, said Mutai's actions inspired the creation of the award. "We absolutely had to honor her," Toledo said. Mutai said that, no matter what her day brings, she holds to a guiding principle: "I just think about how I would want someone to treat me. And that's what I do."



Thanks to the FCBDD Self-Advocate Advisory Council and to Dana Charlton, executive director of the Ohio Self-Determination Association (OSDA) for a great presentation through the FCBDD Training Center. FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison facilitated the September panel, which included self-advocates Christine Brown, Jennifer Cunningham and Marci Straughter. Participants learned a lot about efforts to expand and support self-determination awareness, training and advocacy throughout Ohio. "I continue to work to make sure everyone's voice is heard," said Brown, a longtime leader in the movement. "Nothing about us without us!"

Congrats to our Franklin County Flyers for an awesome annual sports banquet. The carnival-themed celebration was held outside this year at the FCBDD building on Johnstown Road. Thanks to all the athletes and families who joined us; we especially appreciate all the volunteers who kept things running smoothly. There was plenty of food, music, fun, photos, gifts and even a caricature artist.



Career Milestones

15 Years

Marriane Bobo
Nancy Rinehart

5 Years

Micah Dennis
Hanna Mihok
Brandon Grandominico
Brian Davis