

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

FCBDD welcomes first board member with developmental disabilities

When faced with a big decision, Marci Straughter always recalls advice from her mother. "Sort out the pros and cons," Straughter said. "Before she passed away, that's what she told me to do."

The northwest Columbus resident didn't need long to conclude that a history-making position on the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities was likely to be a good thing – both personally and for the local disability community. Straughter was appointed by the Franklin County Commissioners on Jan. 6 and is the first to receive board services and help lead the agency.

"I'm excited. I think being on the board is important, because who better to know how to serve people with disabilities than someone who has lived it?" Straughter said. "I want to help people understand what it's like for us every day – the struggles, the challenges, and also the brightness."

Straughter, 41, has long been active in the self-advocacy movement and has served on numerous councils and boards. As a trainer for the Ohio Self-Determination Association, she has taught many other people with developmental disabilities how to speak out and speak up for themselves.

"We, along with the commissioners, believe it is important to have a diverse board that includes the perspective and insight of those we serve," said Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison. "Marci has been a strong member of our self-advocate advisory council, is very involved in the community and is well-qualified. She'll be a great addition to the board."

Dana Charlton, executive director of the Ohio Self-Determination Association, said Straughter shows how much a person with developmental disabilities can accomplish "if they're just given the opportunity, the support and the encouragement."

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New board member Marci Straughter embraces technology to help her live as independently as possible in her northwest Columbus apartment. Columbus Dispatch photo.

For Straughter, being named to the FCBDD board means giving up her seat on the board of Boundless, a large disability-services organization that contracts with the county. She was proud of that accomplishment, too. "I decided that by being on the Franklin County board, I can be helping everyone they serve," she said. "I can spread my voice and help more people in my county, not just one agency."

Though Straughter's appointment is not a first among Ohio's 88 counties, just 12 or so have county board members who also are eligible for services. Morison said officials had been hoping for a while to make the recommendation but had to wait for an open seat that did not, by law, have to be filled by a family member in a specific category.

Commissioners also have re-appointed Michael Underwood, an attorney and partner with Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, to his second four-year term.

"Our board has members who have been very successful in business, government and technology, along with family members," Morison said. "We have a great mix and Marci complements it well. She brings the lived experience."

Dedication to caregiving spans three generations

When Jayne Collins came into his life more than 18 years ago, Barry Adams knew he'd found an especially kind and caring direct-support professional. He soon realized he'd found a family, too.

Collins, her daughter and granddaughter all are part of the support team for Adams, providing services in his home or spending time with him in friendship. The multi-generation DSPs work for Minamyler Residential Care Services, a Franklin-County based company that serves people with developmental disabilities.

"The three of them have hearts of gold," company founder Darla Minamyler said. "We're honored to have them as employees."

Collins and her daughter Jacki Frost already were working for Minamyler last fall when the state announced that it would temporarily waive the age requirement for DSPs and allow agencies to hire 16- and 17-year-olds so long as they work under supervision.

Minamyler jumped at the chance to employ Frost's teenage daughter Camryn. "We hired her on Tuesday after the Friday announcement," she said.

For Camryn, 17 and a student at Briggs High School, being a DSP came naturally. She's known Adams all her life. "I've always liked being around Barry. It was never uncomfortable or strange," she said. "I work with two clients in Gahanna, too, and I really enjoy it."

Together, Collins and her daughter Jacki Frost have more than 50 years of experience working with people who have disabilities. They say the culture and values at Minamyler Residential have been the best fit. "Of all the providers where I've worked, the thing that impressed me is the care and concern for the people they serve," Collins said. "And Darla's good to her staff. I've had two or three agencies reach out and offer me the moon and the stars. I wouldn't leave."

Minamyler said she pays above-average wages, offers good benefits and strives to create a positive, family-like environment – much as Collins, Frost and Camryn do for Adams and others. "The past few years of pandemic and reimbursement level challenges have really made our company owners, management and every single employee work extra hard and long," Minamyler said. "However, seeing the substantial benefits to the lives of those we serve is a big reward for working in the social services field."

Adams' West Side home – the only one he's ever known -- is clean and cozy, with a devoted dog and a bedroom decorated in his beloved superheroes. He also adores Collins' cooking. "This is my home, and I love it," the 57-year-old said. "I love you, Jayne!"

Frost has left the disabilities industry previously for better-paying jobs but said she always follows her heart back. "I made more at UPS just to scan a package, stick a sticker on it and put it on the conveyor," she said. "That's not right."

She and her family, along with public and private agencies across the state, support advocacy efforts to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates and wages so that more DSPs can stick with jobs that are important and fulfilling. "There are other people like us," Frost said. "We do this because we love it."



Camryn Frost, 17, is the third generation of her family to be a DSP. From left, Camryn's mom, Jacki Frost; grandmother Jayne Collins; Barry Adams; Camryn and Annie the dog.



Camryn Frost, the toddler with curls sitting between her grandmother and Barry Adams, has known him all her life.

FCBDD provides access to new online activities

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities has partnered with We Thrive Together, a nonprofit organization that offers an array of online programming, to provide exercise classes, cooking demonstrations, virtual trips, games and more.

FCBDD is paying for a countywide **We Thrive Together** subscription on a trial basis so that all programs are free to Franklin County residents. Online activities and programs can be accessed using a computer, tablet, Chromebook, smartphone or land-line telephone. We Thrive Together hosts events Monday through Saturday, starting at 10 a.m. and ending at about 9 p.m. **To see a full list, check out the website at WeThriveTogether.org and click on upcoming events.**

Registration for events can be completed at WeThriveTogether.org, by emailing Alyssa@WeThriveTogether.org or by phone at 866-584-5640. After registering, participants receive a link to join the program.

The Ohio Self Determination Association has been working with We Thrive Together to host weekly "Advocacy Wednesday" sessions, which will remain free across the state, said Dana Charlton, OSDA executive director.

FCBDD Flyers pay tribute to an extra special player

Josiah Tanga, an accomplished athlete and much-loved member of the Franklin County Special Olympics community, died unexpectedly last month at the age of 27.

Tanga was known for his ever-present smile, friendly personality and ability to excel at most sports, especially soccer. “He’d had the ball at his feet since he was little,” said Ryan Phillips, FCBDD Director of Special Olympics, Community Recreation and Aquatics. “In a small space, most of our coaches had no chance of taking it away from him.”

Tanga, a native of Cameroon, played joyfully. He represented the Franklin County Flyers on the Columbus Crew Unified Team, traveled to games in Orlando and San Jose, and had been chosen to represent Ohio in the 2022 USA Games unified soccer competition. “He had the smile, the energy and just a wonderfully positive attitude,” Phillips said. “With Josiah, you always got that, ‘Hey, I’m willing to give it a go.’”

Because health vulnerabilities are not uncommon among Special Olympians, Phillips and others have lost too many athletes over the years. Tanga, however, was young and seemingly healthy, so his sudden passing came as a shock to his family, coaches and fellow Flyers.

Tanga had a job at Fed Ex and was saving for a trip to visit family in central Africa next year, Phillips said. “My favorite stories were when he’d talk about Cameroon – about hearing the lions at night. He was so excited about going back.”

Phillips said Tanga’s family was appreciative of the services he received in Franklin County and excited about his potential. “They are just incredibly proud of all he’d done.”



FCBDD reducing the wait for waivers

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities plans to further shrink its waiting list for Medicaid waivers in 2022, enrolling dozens of people each quarter.

“We hope to be well under 100 by the end of the year,” said Lee Childs, director of the Service Coordination Department. “We’ve already gone from more than 10,000 to 700 or so.”

Waiting lists for the Medicaid waivers that pay for home- and community-based services had ballooned in Franklin and other counties over the years; at one point the state total approached 50,000 names. But the list was far from accurate, leading to the establishment of a “Fix the List” coalition that helped to craft new guidelines for determining eligibility.

In the past, families had been able to add names to the list on their own with little or no input from service coordinators. That led to prioritization problems, jurisdictional mistakes and, sometimes, years-long waits for people in need. “Some people didn’t even know they were on the list,” Childs said. “We had one person on the list who was living in Guam.”

FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison praised efforts by the state and agency staff to whittle the list and create fair, manageable processes for waiver enrollment. “There will always be someone waiting, but the goal is to get down to a point where we are always on top of it,” he said. “Our staff has done a great job identifying those with immediate and current needs.”

Take a Polar Plunge to support Franklin County Special Olympics

There’s still time to sign up for the chance to get very cold and very wet for a great cause. The 2022 Special Olympics Polar Plunge benefitting our Franklin County Flyers takes place Saturday, Feb. 5, at the beach at Alum Creek State Park.



Raising a minimum of \$75 gets participants a Special Olympics Ohio shirt and a green light to plunge. Flyers team members also receive a long-sleeve shirt.

Too chicken to immerse yourself in freezing water in the middle of winter? No problem; those who prefer to stay warm can just donate. The event also is free and open to observers and supporters.

For details about plunge times and to sign up, go to: <https://www.classy.org/campaign/2022-columbus-polar-plunge-r-for-special-olympics/c363082>

To donate to the Flyers or to find your favorite Flyer Polar Plunger, go to <https://www.classy.org/team/390842>

For questions, email Ryan Phillips at ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org

Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

Thanks to insurance coordinator Anna Oscar for helping with COVID-19 vaccine incentives. A large majority of our staff was eligible for both the \$50 and the \$1,000 payments.





Jill and temi pose for a selfie.

We appreciate the extra efforts by West Central staff members, notably transition coordinator Jill Hicks and fine arts specialist JR Ridgeway, to help discover uses for the temi personal robot FCBDD received as part of a state pilot project. Thanks for giving it a go!

A recent letter from a parent whose adult daughter passed away gave thanks for the service coordinators who provided consistent, dependable assistance for more than 20 years. We're grateful to have so many caring staff members here at FCBDD – their dedication changes lives.

Thanks to the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities for the recent 4 percent increase in Medicaid provider reimbursement rates, which took effect in January.

State Rep. Allison Russo of Upper Arlington has been elected to lead fellow Democrats in the Ohio House. Congratulations, Minority Leader Russo.

Thanks to Administrative and Support Services Director Larry Macintosh for working with Columbus Public Health and the Upper Arlington Fire Department to coordinate COVID-19 vaccines for people who are homebound.

Career Milestones

15 Years

Barbara Brown
Vicky Ulry



Dateline

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Information about the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is always available on the internet at:

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.

February 2022

- 2 Groundhog Day
- 5 Polar Plunge – Franklin County Special Olympics. Please contact Ryan Phillips for details at ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org or 614-342-5984.
- 14 Happy Valentine's Day!
- 21 Presidents' Day - all county facilities closed.
- 24 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Committee meeting to be held at 4:00 p.m. 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, 43219.
- 24 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 5:00 p.m. Public meeting via Zoom. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details. Click on the following link to connect:

[FCBDD Board Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)