

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

## FCBDD board chooses officers, welcomes new member

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities elected a new president and welcomed a history-making member during its organizational meeting in January.

Michael Underwood, an attorney and partner with Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, is serving as president of the board this year. Underwood also was recently re-appointed to his second four-year term.

"Mike has been an outstanding board member and we look forward to his service as president," FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said. "His insights from a legal perspective are always very helpful."

Marie Crawford, parent advocate and the parent of two adult children receiving FCBDD services, is again vice president. Bill Wilkins, a former state budget director and OhioHealth executive who has an adult son served by the board, was elected secretary and also chairs the finance committee. Past president is Beth Savage, an accountant for PriceWaterhouseCoopers, LLP. Savage has two children, one of whom is eligible for board services.

New board member Marci Straughter, a leader in Ohio's self-advocate community, attended her first meeting and board retreat in January, becoming the first person to receive board services and help lead the agency.

Board member Samuel Davis chairs the ethics committee for 2022 and board member John Bickley chairs the human resources committee.



*Michael Underwood,  
Board President*

## Cornelius "Chubby" Oatis: Embracing the power of possibility

As a world-class athlete in the Paralympic sport of boccia, Cornelius "Chubby" Oatis knows plenty of ways to keep busy and active. Still, when he lost his day job during the pandemic, Oatis never considered stepping away from the working world.



*Cornelius "Chubby" Oatis*

"I feel that with a job, you have chances," he said. "You have chances to share your story, to meet new friends. That's what happened to me."

Oatis had spent 11 years with Columbus Recreation and Parks as a youth counselor providing tutoring and activity coaching. It suited his interests and felt like family, so he grieved a little when he was laid off. Then he set about finding the next thing.

"There's always a plan B and a plan Z," Oatis said. "You might not always like Z, but eventually, you'll get there."

Oatis started a similar job at the YMCA last month. Robinson Dunham, his service coordinator at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, said Oatis is a "go-getter" who sought job-development assistance from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities last year even before his job ended.

"He's so cool in my eyes," said Dunham, who has known Oatis for more than a decade and admired him just as long. "He's solution oriented, with an enthusiastic and inquisitive spirit that serves him well."

Oatis is settling into his new job as the state's Employment First initiative celebrates its tenth year. Former Ohio Gov. John Kasich launched the initiative in March 2012, signifying a major policy shift away from what had often been the default option of sheltered-workshop employment. Today, public agencies and support providers strive to make community jobs the first choice for people with developmental disabilities who want to work.

## DD Awareness and Advocacy Event returns to Statehouse

This year's Developmental Disabilities Awareness and Advocacy Day takes place on March 2, with both virtual viewing and in-person events at the Ohio Statehouse.

Speakers include Kim Hauck, director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities; Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council Chairman and Cincinnati City Councilman Kevin Flynn; a self-advocates panel; and performances by central Ohio musician Zayne Harshaw.

Adaptive technology demonstrations will be available in the Thomas Worthington room; participants who requested meetings with legislators will network at the Statehouse, Riffe Center or online.

Awareness and Advocacy Day is held annually in March during National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, which was first proclaimed by President Ronald Reagan in 1987. The deinstitutionalization movement of the 1970s and 1980s had helped create a groundwork for social change and self-advocacy, and in his proclamation, Reagan called on all Americans to provide the "encouragement and opportunities" necessary for people with developmental disabilities to reach their potential.



Thirty-five years later, there has been much positive change, and far more people with disabilities live and work in their communities. Awareness and Advocacy Day provides an important forum for people with developmental disabilities and their supporters to speak to policymakers and push for continued progress.

This year's theme in Ohio encourages people with disabilities and supporters to "Be the Change" you want to see in the world. Registration for in-person attendance is limited; go to [ddc.ohio.gov](http://ddc.ohio.gov)

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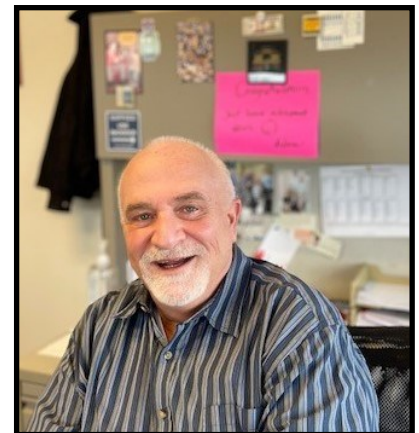
## Mark Johnson wraps up 30 happy years in FCBDD Service Coordination Department

For the first several years of his working life, Mark Johnson mostly learned what he didn't want to do. He kept up the search and eventually landed a job with the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, where he gladly stayed for three decades.

"If you're fortunate, you find something that fits your personality," Johnson said. "I am a fortunate man."

Johnson, 60, is retiring at the end of March after 30 years in the Service Coordination Department. He saw the department grow from just 30 "case managers," as they were known at the time, to the agency's largest, with a staff of more than 250. Along the way, people with disabilities left developmental centers, intermediate-care facilities and county schools for homes, jobs and classrooms in their communities.

"Back when I started, it was pretty much old-school social work – food, clothing, shelter," Johnson said. Now, service coordinators connect people to support that goes far beyond the basics. "One of our guys just got to go to Nashville," he said. "He went to Sun Studios and sang into the microphone Elvis sang into."



*Service Coordination Assistant  
Director Mark Johnson*

Johnson, a self-described "people person," said he feels most proud of having had a hand in hiring so many of the current Service Coordination staff members. His approach to management has remained straightforward. "When you're presented with a problem, the first thing you should ask yourself is, 'What is the right thing to do?'" he said. "I haven't always been successful with that approach, but I've tried. I'm an optimist at heart."

Aileen Burnside, a long-time service coordinator, said she has always respected Johnson's viewpoint. "I tend to go out on a limb, and he has to play devil's advocate sometimes," she said with a laugh. "I'll give the house away. He stops me."

FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said Johnson has always been "an awesome and fun person to have on staff," with a positive outlook and good sense of humor. "His work ethic and ability to partner with others has resulted in solutions to some very complex problems," Morison said. "Mark will be missed."

Johnson is a big fan of music, especially The Beatles, and of dogs, especially dachshunds. Both interests likely will figure into his retirement. So far, he and his wife haven't made any grand plans. "I'm going to retire on March 31, and I have plans for exactly one day," he said. "I'm going to wake up on April 1 and go to the Marvel exhibit at COSI."

# Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month: Two views on inclusion

*Each March, advocates work together to raise awareness about the many ways people with and without developmental disabilities come together to form strong, welcoming and diverse communities. The following essays from two perspectives – a senior citizen who has developmental disabilities and a church striving to be neighborly to everyone – help show how inclusion benefits us all.*

## Community garden yields a bumper crop of friendship



*Yani Hardy, a participant in Goodwill's Adult Day Services program, shows off some of the vegetables she helped harvest with members of Gahanna Community Congregational Church.*

Late in the 2020 growing season, Gahanna Community Congregational Church (GC3) established a community garden with the intent of donating the harvest to Gahanna Residents in Need (GRIN), our local food pantry. We considered our first year a huge success, donating about 100 pounds of produce.

As we moved into the 2021 season, we realized our project had the potential to grow. But that was only part of the idea. The larger idea was to nurture relationships within the community, so that we could become a partner, resource and all-around good neighbor. Our vision was to be a place where people could gather to feel they belonged, and where they could connect with others.

One of our long-time members began talking about her work with Goodwill and we realized immediately there were great opportunities there. Their volunteer work would be a huge help to us, and we could spend time with them working, sharing, teaching and just living in the community together. The exchange seemed wonderful for everyone.

And it is! Our Goodwill volunteers helped us to harvest more than 1,300 pounds of fresh produce, which we donated to the pantry. Their work played an important role in this accomplishment.

During the time we have spent together we have planted seeds, watered, weeded and harvested peppers, tomatoes, squash, Swiss chard, onions, radishes and more. On rainy days that were too hot to be out, we stayed indoors and played board games.

Goodwill has brought us opportunities. An afternoon of indoor games brought out about 10 of our senior members who might not otherwise have the opportunity for exercise and physical activity. We all enjoyed getting to know each other a bit better.

Now that the growing season is over, we host our Goodwill partners for games, crafts and other activities. We value our relationship. And as spring comes, we will again move outdoors and work -- together -- in the garden.



*Participants in Goodwill's Adult Day Services program help out in the Gahanna Community Congregational Church garden and get a lesson in growing peas.*

## New community job and friends lead to sense of belonging

First of all my name is Stephen Segal. In April 2020, on Easter Sunday, my mom passed away. I had moved out of her house in July that year and was staying with a friend of hers until the end of December 2020.

Then in January 2021 I moved into a community apartment in Upper Arlington close to Giant Eagle, where I have worked for four years. And God has a purpose for everything, because there is a Wendy's right around the corner, and I started going there and hanging out.

I met friends there and they are like my adopted brothers and sisters and my Upper Arlington Golden Bears adopted family. They are loving and caring toward me when I am hurting on the inside. Or when I'm depressed, they know how to cheer me up.

I do something brand new now, too. I also work at Wendy's. I clean the walk, do the dishes, take out the garbage, roll up the baked potatoes and also do the dining room. I really love working with my Golden Bears adopted family and they are glad to have me around. They told me I am one of the best workers.

I feel very special. Upper Arlington is a friendly and nice community to live in.



*Stephen Segal*

# **Former executive finds rewarding job behind the wheel**

After 10 years of retirement, Jeff Birr was bored. But not so bored that he wanted to return to the corporate “rat race” that had left him exhausted, stressed and in poor health.

The former vice president at a tech company recently became a part-time bus driver for the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. His days now feature more smiles than headaches, and he’s helping to fill one of the community’s most in-demand jobs.

“It’s to the point where some employers are almost willing to get into bidding wars for drivers,” said Bill Ryan, FCBDD transportation director. “Ever since the pandemic hit, everyone has struggled.”

Non-traditional workers such as Birr could play an important role in addressing some of the labor shortage. “Anybody who’s retired and looking for something part-time, those are the folks we like to hire,” Ryan said. “People want to do something with meaning. They want to feel like they’re contributing. And here, they are.”

Birr, a 66-year-old grandfather, said he found his way to FCBDD on the recommendation of a neighbor who had previously served on the FCBDD board. The more she “talked it up,” the more inclined he was to check for job openings, Birr said:

### **Had you ever driven a bus?**

Nope. The training department here is really great. I had to learn everything new. So much more goes into this than people realize. I feel like I’ve been through midterms, exams, oral arguments – it’s a lot. I’ve got my CDL (commercial drivers license) now.

### **You said you feel like you have a lot of responsibility, but it’s a different kind of responsibility.**

It’s very complicated to hook up a wheelchair in a bus. Regular bus drivers don’t have to do that. There are people here who make sure that all happens, and happens safely. At the end of the day, we’ve got to look out for these kids. Some of them are diabetic; some have seizures. They don’t communicate easily. I have to care for them, and I do. It’s so cool to pick up 10 kids and they get to know you, you get to know them.

### **You’re probably meeting several new colleagues, too.**

It’s cool to talk to the other drivers and hear their approaches. Some of them have been doing this for many years. I enjoy them and I’m learning a lot.

### **Fun fact?**

I went to high school and college in Montreal.

### **You probably speak French.**

Oui.

### **What does your wife think of your second career?**

She drove for London schools in the 80s, so she’s excited. She’s packing my lunch again and getting my clothes ready.



**Jeff Birr, Bus Driver**

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## **Oatis: Embracing the power of possibility** **(continued from page 1)**

“I didn’t want to go to a workshop because I felt in my situation, I could help youth,” said Oatis, 36. “I could not only tell them, but show them, what’s possible.”

Oatis has cerebral palsy, which affects his mobility and speech. He’s also a top-ranked U.S. boccia player and has traveled around the world, including China and Ireland and Brazil, in international competition. Boccia is akin to the Italian sport bocce, but modified for people who use wheelchairs.

Tournaments and travel are expensive, however, and Oatis seeks donations to cover costs beyond his and his family’s reach. Fundraising can be tough, but he takes that effort in stride, too. “I love for people to be more aware of the sport,” he said.

Oatis enjoys his new colleagues at the YMCA Gahanna / John E. Bickley branch and is glad to have landed a position where he can help others. “Work is really important. It’s not just because of the pay, but for self-esteem, too,” said Kris Hausser, senior vocational rehabilitation counselor at OOD. “Hopefully this is a job he’ll be able to stay at for many years.”

# Good For You

## Notable achievements in the FCBDD community



Best wishes to Keith Ogle of the Transportation Department, who retired at the end of January after a little more than 31 years with FCBDD. Keith managed the storeroom, helped with deliveries and so much more. He also secured and distributed massive amounts of personal-protective equipment during the pandemic. Thanks, Keith!

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Columbus Business First has named West Central School nurse Debbie Charles one of its 2022 "Healthcare Heroes" for her hard work and care during the pandemic. The business journal will feature Debbie and others in stories throughout the year. Way to represent school nurses, Debbie!



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Congratulations to Erin Scott, daughter of print shop manager Carl Scott, for her recent recognition by YWCA Columbus. Erin, co-founder and co-executive director of the Ohio Women's Alliance, is among three "Women on the Rise" honorees who will be celebrated this spring alongside the YWCA's "Women of Achievement" recipients.

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The ice and snowstorms in early February gave us even more reasons to appreciate our hard-working transportation and maintenance staffs, who kept an eye on our buildings and properties and safely navigated unplowed roads when services resumed. Thanks to Brian Parks for communicating with everyone through Everbridge.

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Kudos to Service Coordination Supervisor Farrah Langlois for her recent presentation to Kim Hauck, director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, about the important work of the Joint Council for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism (JCIDEA). Farrah said the council intends to be a resource to all 88 counties in the state.



# Career Milestones

25 Years  
Brian McCoy

15 Years  
Billy Evoy

10 Years  
Elizabeth Youngman

5 Years  
Ashley Edwards

We're grateful to state Sen. Hearcel Craig for his recent visit to discuss workforce shortages and the need for better wages in the direct-support industry. Those issues are crucial for workers, provider agencies and the people we serve. Pictured from left to right: Larry Macintosh, Sara Eppard, Senator Craig, Jed Morison, and Erich Bittner.



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Our Training Center, coordinated by the HR Department, continues to schedule excellent sessions. We especially appreciated the powerful, insightful presentation by Early Childhood staff members Amy Frick, Denise Henkel, Branka Grozdic, Jessica Bennett and Safiatou Balde, all of whom are parents of children with disabilities. Thanks to Teresa Johnson for leading the discussion.

# Help struggling families by giving to Operation Feed



The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is again encouraging employees to contribute this month to Operation Feed, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective's biggest fundraiser.

FCBDD has long been an important supporter of the annual campaign and is one of the top public-agency donors in Franklin County.

"Every dollar allows us to provide three meals," said Tiffany Priest, corporate engagement manager at Mid-Ohio. "Unfortunately, with inflation and prices rising, our efficiency has gone down a bit. But we can still stretch a dollar pretty far, and do a lot."

Every day, Mid-Ohio provides enough food for 189,000 meals to people in need across its 20-county service area. More than 47,000 of families served last year were new, meaning they had never before used a food pantry.

Officials say the pandemic has increased demand for food by nearly 25 percent.

FCBDD is not collecting food items this year. To help, employees can choose from the following options:

- ◆ Visit the Franklin County Operation Feed page at <https://give.mofc.org/franklincounty> to donate by credit card. Use the pull-down menu to select FCBDD as your agency.
- ◆ Send a contribution (sealed, please) to Mandy Holland in administration. Checks should be made out to the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, with Operation Feed noted on the memo line.
- ◆ Contact Jennifer Schueneman, FCBDD controller, if you want to make a one-time payroll deduction. Send her an email with the amount, and please note Operation Feed in the subject line of your message. Deductions are expected to be made on April 22.

# 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.**

## March 2022

- 2 Developmental Disability Awareness and Advocacy Day at the Statehouse, 10:00 a.m.
- 10 Self-Advocate Advisory Council meeting via Zoom at 10 a.m.
- 16 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 Zoom Link](#)
- 17 Happy St. Patrick's Day!
- 20 World Down Syndrome Day Celebration at Polaris Fashion Place. For more information, go to [www.dsaco.net](http://www.dsaco.net) or call (614) 263-6020.
- 31 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board Finance and Human Resources & Ethics Committees meeting, 2879 Johnstown Rd., 4 p.m.
- 31 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 5 p.m. via Zoom. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details. Click on the following link to connect:

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

## Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

**Michael Underwood**, President  
**Marie Crawford**, Vice President  
**William W. Wilkins**, Secretary  
**John Bickley**  
**Samuel Davis**  
**Beth Savage**  
**Marci Straughter**

Superintendent/CEO **Jed W. Morison**

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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)

## DODD offers resources on trauma-informed care

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities now has a web page dedicated to trauma-informed care to help practitioners, facilities, agencies and others learn more about the importance of the approach.

Experts say trauma-informed care looks at how the events, experiences and effects of trauma often have adverse and lasting effects on physical, social and emotional well-being. Understanding those effects can help keep people from being seen as defective or blameworthy for behaviors that arise from traumatic environments.

For the past several years, Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities have been working to expand trauma-informed care practices across the state.

"It's exciting to see a renewed promotion of brain and body health in the Trauma Informed Care section of DODD's website," said Angela Ray, FCBDD director of psychology. "Lives of FCBDD staff and those we serve can be improved with this information. FCBDD psychology staff use trauma-informed and responsive care principles in our daily work."

According to a 2014 study cited by the state, one out of every three children and adults with developmental disabilities will experience abuse. And more than 90 percent of the time, that abuse is inflicted by a person charged with protecting and supporting them.

People with developmental disabilities also face high risk of trauma because they are often dependent on others for care; have been taught to comply with authority figures; face communication or mobility impairments; have cognitive or processing delays that might keep them from understanding abusive situations; or have signs of abuse wrongly attributed to their disabilities.

To find out more, click on the following link: [Trauma Informed Care](#) or go to the DODD website at: <https://dodd.ohio.gov/about-us/our-programs/resource-trauma-informed-care>

*Franklin County Public Health officials made great use of our Northeast center, partnering with FCBDD and ARC Industries to host a COVID-19 vaccine clinic on multiple dates in February. There are plenty of opportunities throughout the county to get first, second and booster doses.*

