

## Down syndrome organization focuses on adult literacy

When it came to reading, Ethan Boerner didn't make a lot of progress in school. "It just seemed so hard," said Boerner, who has Down syndrome. "I wasn't interested."

He never really got the chance to discover whether he might have been more successful as an older student. His educational programs moved along, and Boerner – like many others with developmental disabilities – reached adulthood without having mastered basic reading skills.

But thanks to a pilot adult-literacy effort through the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio, the 31-year-old Reynoldsburg resident is quickly gaining ground. "We don't have a magic bullet program, but we're diving in," said Rachel Heiber of DSACO. "We're leaning in to the idea that our adults should have access to this kind of support with licensed educators."

Boerner, a member of the Self-Advocate Advisory Council for the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, is an eager participant in the literacy program. He was among nine enrollees when it began in February, and now is one of six adults continuing with a reading tutor this summer.

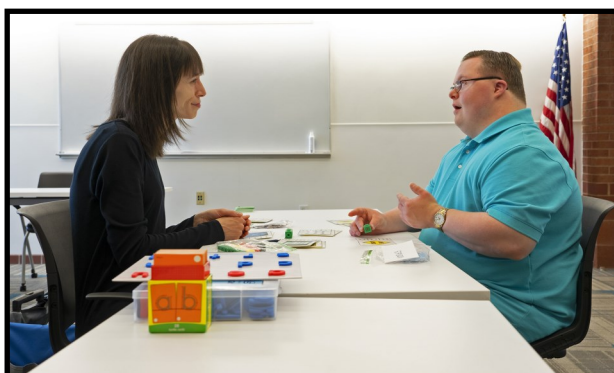
"He's read some books, which is amazing," said Ed Boerner, Ethan's dad. "We tried when he was in school, but he never took to it. Now he's really excited. The first thing you want with learning something new is the desire – and Ethan's got it."

DSACO President and CEO Kari Jones said no other area programs focus on literacy for adults with developmental disabilities. And yet, she said, equipping them with resources to improve reading skills can lead to increased independence, greater employment opportunities and better quality of life.

"For some, reading support is stopping even before they reach the end of their school years," said Heiber, the adult literacy specialist at DSACO. "It's stopping as soon as they hit a classroom and someone says, 'We're switching to job skills now.' And job skills are so important – there's nothing wrong with that. But people need to read, too."

Though much smaller, the adult literacy program is similar in structure to Learning Aid Ohio. That program, funded by the state and administered by DSACO, subsidizes the cost of tutors and aides for students with disabilities. Since November 2020, more than 2,500 students have been served.

DSACO is the sole sponsor for the adult literacy program. Its future scope, including whether it expands to people with other developmental disabilities, depends on additional revenue sources.



Ethan Boerner meets regularly with tutor Carla Harper, left. "He's doing great," Harper said.

"It is such a brave thing for adults to step forward and say they want to be part of this," Heiber said. "Depending on funding, we'd love to be able to honor that. I think it's fair to say there would be many families other than ours who would be interested."

Outcomes so far look promising. All pilot participants met or surpassed at least one of their goals; nearly 80 percent reached or surpassed 14 out of 18 goals. All of the adult learners, and nearly all parents and caregivers, said they would recommend the program.

To be able to read a book, street sign or menu is life changing, Ethan Boerner said. "I've wanted to do this for a while," he said. "And I want to keep doing it."

To find out more, go to [www.dsacoliteracy.com](http://www.dsacoliteracy.com)

## West Central Principal Dr. Maryalice Turner to retire

When she learned that the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities was looking to hire a leader for its West Central School, Dr. Maryalice Turner first thought about the distance between the West Side of Columbus and her home in rural Athens County.

But the more she considered the possibilities, the less the miles seemed to matter.

“When would I ever get an opportunity like this again?” she asked herself. “I wanted to go for it. And I have loved this job.”

Turner is retiring in August after about five years at the helm of West Central, a unique transition program for teen and young-adult students with developmental disabilities. She arrived at West Central a year after the school had shifted its focus to helping older students and their families prepare for the transition to adult life and services.

“It was sort of like taking this ball of clay and turning it into something,” Turner said. “The staff is really dedicated. It’s so encouraging to see how hard they work, how far they’re willing to go, to help our kids and parents.”

She said she’s proud of the many improvements made at West Central in recent years, especially in the areas of curriculum, individual education plans and use of technology. Classrooms are now aligned as teams, making it easier for staff members to share resources and partner on lessons. West Central also has a new smart apartment, a personal robot and dedicated spaces for all therapies.

“Dr. Turner’s leadership, with the support of her staff, has resulted in numerous advancements at West Central, which is not easy during a pandemic,” said FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison. “Updates to the school facility, increased awareness and recruitment of students, and strengthened transitional services are just some of the initiatives and successes over the past five years.”

Most West Central students have significant developmental disabilities. They leave with a discovery profile that families, service providers and employers can use as a guide to the student’s interests, needs and abilities. “The whole process is so effective and helpful for families,” Turner said. “The best thing we can give them is that bridge they need when crossing over to the adult world.”



Turner’s husband is living with a long-term illness that, she said, prompted her to “re-evaluate my path.” She’s uncertain of future plans but for now hopes to enjoy more time at home and with family.

“Being innovative and individualized is our hallmark at West Central,” Turner said. “It has been good work.”

## Spotlight on Franklin County Special Olympics

### Flyers athlete brings home a load of gold



**Powerlifter Kevin Cantrell and his coach Kevin Do.**

It would be pretty tough to overstate the success Kevin Cantrell enjoyed as he represented Ohio and Franklin County Special Olympics during the USA Games in Orlando.

Cantrell, a 34-year-old powerlifting athlete who lives in Gahanna, brought home three gold medals (deadlift, bench press, overall), met Tim Tebow, won praise from Arnold Schwarzenegger, and was featured on ESPN’s Sports Center. Oh, and he also was asked for his autograph.

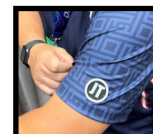
“It was fun to see him have a bit of celebrity status down there,” said Ryan Phillips, director of Recreation, Special Olympics and Aquatics at FCBDD. “It was a huge deal. And honestly, it couldn’t happen to a nicer guy.”

Cantrell lifted just over 500 pounds, less than his personal best of 525 but enough to win. Observers were in awe of his style and intensity – Cantrell is tall but weighs less than 200 pounds. “I use my powerlifting experiences as reminders that I’ve been in difficult circumstances and I’m strong enough to pick myself back up and push forward,” he said.

It was the first trip to the national competition for Cantrell, and he loved the entire experience. “To be honest with you, it was the most wonderful time of my life,” he said.

The USA Games were held in June, followed soon after by the Ohio Summer Games. Others representing Franklin County Special Olympics in Orlando include: Anna Milligan, unified volleyball partner, bronze medal on all-female team that competed against co-ed teams; Jack Held and Malcolm Hardy, intercollegiate unified basketball athletes, bronze medal; Kevin Do, powerlifting head coach, three golds for Cantrell.

Phillips coached the unified soccer team to a silver medal. Members wore a “JT” patch on their sleeves for Josiah Tanga, a Franklin County athlete who had been chosen for the team but passed away in January. Also on the unified soccer team were athlete Aaron Elman and partners Kayla Kauzlarich, Tucker Phillips and Noah Dulay.



# Good For You

## Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

We're grateful to Laura Mongold for all her good work in our Early Childhood Education program. After 15 years with FCBDD, including serving as an ECE assistant director, Laura recently moved to Colorado. "She took the home-based work from paper to digital," ECE Director Becky Love said. "That was a huge accomplishment. Laura has so much energy, and she's a great researcher. We'll miss her." We wish you all the best, Laura. And congrats to our next assistant director in ECE, Megan Middleton.



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We appreciate the efforts of staff at the Hattie Larlham agency, who coordinate with FCBDD to operate the summer Transition to Work employment exploration program for Franklin County students with developmental disabilities.

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Thanks to Chris Martin and the IT Department for updating the board room to allow for hybrid meetings. Whatever the "new normal" brings, we're ready.

Special thanks to Morgan Stanley for sponsorship of a golf tournament to benefit Franklin County Special Olympics. Go Flyers!

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Congrats to Craig Derksen of the IT Department for giving the gift of music to many in central Ohio. Craig is a member of InCommon, an a cappella singing group that provides free concerts.



# Career Milestones

### 35 Years

Brian Parks

### 30 Years

Gretchen Brooks  
Paula Ross

### 25 Years

Pamela Harvey

### 20 Years

Debra Aljebay  
Gretchen Uhl

### 15 Years

Sharron Alston  
Heather Buchwald  
Megan Christy  
Charles Dawson  
Adrienne Harvey  
Portia Hines  
Evelyn Smith

### 10 Years

Lindsay Amato  
Kathryn Gauron  
Delia McDonough  
Patrick Murphy  
Mary Wheeler

### 5 Years

Joseph Becker  
Kathleen Bowerman  
Jaimie Brangham  
Monique Jackson-Brown  
Lauren Keller  
Leslie Lindsay  
Jane Pickens  
Cassandra Pinkard  
Bridget Tompkins

## Blood drive returns to FCBDD

After a brief hiatus due to the COVID pandemic, the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities will again host an American Red Cross blood drive this summer.

The organization will be in the training room at 2879 Johnstown Rd. from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. on July 26.

To schedule an appointment, go to [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org) and use the sponsor code FCBDD.

Those planning to donate also can streamline the process by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass](http://RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass) to complete pre-donation reading and health history questions on the day of your appointment.

FCBDD's Mary Martin (ext. 5801) and Jeff Baird (ext. 5951) also can help with questions.



## Down syndrome biobank has new collection process

The DownSyndrome Achieves (DSA) biobank is now offering at-home services to families willing to donate biological samples for use in medical research projects.

"We've partnered with a third-party phlebotomy company to collect blood samples in participants' homes," said Lito Ramirez, CEO of DownSyndrome Achieves and the parent of a teen with Down syndrome. "This will make participation much, much easier by eliminating travel and disruptions to schedules."

The biobank stores blood, saliva and tissue samples of people with Down syndrome and their families for use by researchers in need of biospecimens. The main focus is to support projects that will lead to improvements in the life and health of people with Down syndrome.

At present, Ramirez said, DSAchieves is supporting research into keratoconus dystrophy, an eye disease that is prevalent in people with Down syndrome and also on the rise in other populations. For more information, go to [dsachieves.org](http://dsachieves.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.**

## July, 2022

20 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 Link \(Zoom\)](#)

28 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.

## August, 2022

22,23 ECE and School staff returns - Staff Preparation/ Development Days.

24 First day of classes at West Central School.

24,25,26 ECE Program Service Days – Parent Visitation (No Transportation).

29 First day of classes, ECE - please consult program schedule.

# 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**

**The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities does not discriminate in employment or services on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, or disability.**

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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)

# Registration open for Heinzerling golf outing

Resident families, corporate partners, community organizations and other supporters are invited to take part in the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Heinzerling Community Golf Classic.

The event is back in person this year, and will be held on Sept. 12 at Heritage Golf Club in Hilliard. Friends and organizations can put together a foursome to play, or support the event through sponsorship opportunities, Heinzerling organizers said.

Registration begins at 11 a.m.; shotgun start is at 1 p.m.; a reception with dinner, awards and a raffle is at 6 p.m.



All proceeds from the golf outing help to fund important quality-of-life programs for Heinzerling residents. That includes educational field trips, recreational activities and special adaptive-equipment needs.

To register or become a sponsor, or for more information, to go

[www.heinzgolf.givesmart.com](http://www.heinzgolf.givesmart.com)

# Online activities free throughout the year

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is continuing its partnership with We Thrive Together, a nonprofit organization that offers an array of online programming for people served by Ohio county boards.

FCBDD has extended its countywide subscription so that all We Thrive Together programs are free to Franklin County residents until the end of the year. 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](mailto:Alyssa@WeThriveTogether.org)

or by phone at 866-584-5640

After registering, participants receive a link to join the program. Organizers say there are tons of activities to choose from to help people “talk, laugh, play, sweat and connect” safely and easily online.

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.

We Thrive also features online activities such as cooking and exercise classes, games, discussion forums and even virtual tours.



**WE THRIVE TOGETHER**