

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

James Leonard chosen to lead FCBDD Transportation Department

Though he has moved into the director's office, no one should be surprised to see James Leonard back in the garage now and then. Troubleshooting mechanical problems comes naturally to Leonard, who has been peering into engines since he was a teen.

"I just like doing it," he said. "It's the challenge of not letting the machine win."

Leonard, former bus compound supervisor for the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, was appointed director of the FCBDD Transportation Department in December. He replaces Bill Ryan, who retired after more than 30 years with the agency.

"I want to continue, to carry on, what Bill built here," Leonard said. "There might be a few things I tweak, but as for changes, not much. We have a great staff."

FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said Leonard has been "very effective" as supervisor and has a good rapport with colleagues. "He comes to this position with excellent credentials," Morison said.

Leonard first joined FCBDD in 1998, left to serve as a maintenance supervisor at the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), and returned to the county in 2016. He has always enjoyed working alongside fellow staff members. "I'm kind of hands-on," he said. "I like to let people know I'm not above them. I'll get out there with them."



**Transportation Director
James Leonard**

Always, he keeps up the focus on passengers. "The main objective is who we transport and why we transport them," he said.

Leonard grew up in Rockford, Alabama, a one-traffic light community of barely 400 people. He and his wife moved to Ohio in pursuit of opportunities that were often difficult for Black families to secure in the rural South. They later returned to Alabama, in hopes of continuing careers there, but not enough had changed. They came back to Ohio after four months.

Leonard and his extended family still own 300 acres around Rockford. "That's where I get my work ethic from," he said. "Farm labor."

Faith and family are cornerstones in Leonard's life, and he serves as an associate pastor at Greater St. Paul Church on the North Side. "My daughter got married in July," he said, smiling. "I walked her down the aisle, gave her away, and I performed the ceremony."

Ohio SIBS virtual conference geared toward all age groups

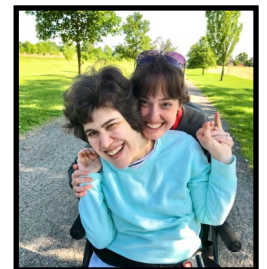
Ohio SIBS and Siblings with a Mission are teaming up to host a Virtual Sibling Conference on Jan. 6 and 7, with speakers and a sibling panel to share perspectives across the lifespan.

"We think it's really important to focus on the lifespan – not just the adult, not just the child," said Dianna Temple, executive director of Ohio SIBS. "It affects who your friends are, where you live and what you do, at all the life stages."

Ohio SIBS was among the first organizations of its kind to focus on the needs of adult siblings of people with developmental disabilities. Temple and others have been working to broaden its reach to younger siblings, launching a support initiative for those 7 to 12.

She also aims to pilot Sibshops – lively events for young siblings – in eight largely rural counties, where program access has been scant.

The relationship between Ohio SIBS and Siblings with a Mission is a natural fit, Temple said. "Their focus is a little bit more on children and teens, and they're trying to build more for adults," she said. Temple's older sister Jackie has developmental disabilities and the two are close. "She has always inspired me and supported me in everything I've done," Temple said. "She's my best friend."



**Ohio SIBS Executive
Director Dianna Temple
and her sister Jackie**

To register or learn more, go to www.ohiosibs.org

A New Year's note of gratitude from our superintendent

As we begin 2023, it seems an appropriate time to celebrate and give thanks for our achievements in 2022.

THANK YOU TO...

- ◇ All those we serve, and to families, for your cooperation and partnership as we worked through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ◇ Early Childhood, School and Transportation staff for continuing to provide high-quality, in-person services and for maintaining our 5-star rating from Step Up to Quality.
- ◇ Service Coordination staff for persevering through all the changes with the implementation of the new Ohio ISP (Individual Service Plan).
- ◇ The entire FCBDD staff for successfully renewing accreditation from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.
- ◇ Franklin County Commissioners for consistent support and for appointing a person who has a developmental disability to the Board for the first time in our 55-year history.
- ◇ Administrative staff for maintaining high-quality services within budget and on target with our commitment not to place a tax levy on the ballot until 2027 or 2028.
- ◇ Board members for consistent leadership, including significant funding to support direct service professionals and providers in Franklin County.
- ◇ OAPSE, OEA and our administration team for negotiating fair agreements to allow for continued staffing stability over the next three years.
- ◇ Community Star Award planners and, especially, this year's winners for the example you set.
- ◇ Our staff in the school district collaborative sites, for your excellent work serving as ambassadors to the school districts.
- ◇ Staff who contribute to our communication efforts, enhancing our presence on social media.
- ◇ All the providers for continuing to meet needs despite workforce shortages and the pandemic.
- ◇ Our Equity Committee for continued training and leadership, resulting in the establishment of a DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) Coordinator position to begin in 2023.
- ◇ More than 600 families and providers for connecting through the 'Connector' program to help individuals with staffing needs and workforce shortages.
- ◇ All partners for planning the expansion of the multi-system youth residential program at Kimberly Woods, to be effective in January 2023.
- ◇ Creative Housing and Service Coordination for implementing internet and remote support incentives and enrolling more into report support options.
- ◇ Special Olympics volunteers and staff for reestablishing sports competitions and special events like the Polar Plunge, golf fundraiser and annual banquet.
- ◇ All who have worked to establish 'The Future is Now' program in Franklin County to help adults and family members plan for their future.



Yes, there is much to be thankful for as we reflect on 2022. Thank you, Happy New Year and best wishes for another successful year in 2023.

Jed Morison

How the Parent Directed Program helps families

Burnout, sleep deprivation and off-the-chart feelings of guilt are some of the many challenges family caregivers face. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, approximately 39.8 million unpaid caregivers, or about 16.6 percent of Americans, provide care for adults with a disability or illness.

When first entering this role, it can be difficult to know where to start. As time goes on, many caregivers find support and learn lessons that make life easier. Boundless offers support for more than 1,000 of these Ohio families through our unique Parent Directed Program (PDP).

The program gives parents and guardians the freedom, flexibility and resources to provide care for their adult loved ones and get compensated for it. PDP relies on active family members to help manage the number of services needed in the home.

With PDP, parents and guardians are given the authority to:

- ◆ Recruit and handpick their direct-service and support staff to recommend for hire by Boundless.
- ◆ Direct the scheduling of staff in their home, allowing greater flexibility.

Tiffany Hanna, a special-education teacher whose 21-year-old daughter has severe cerebral palsy, said the key to their success with the PDP program stems from recruiting the right staff – and then embracing them as part of the family. “We’re so lucky we found a full-time person to be with her (Phoebe) for 15 years,” Hanna said. “If you want staff to stay, treat them well.”

The PDP program also gives parents and guardians the opportunity to hire other family members and friends. Not only are family members comfortable with staff, but their loved ones already know them, and they get paid for their care and compassion.

Kim Kelly has been a parent, guardian, provider and advocate for more than 30 years. Her 34-year-old son, Joe, has a rare condition known as GNAO1. He doesn’t speak and faces multiple medical problems.

Kelly created a book for staff that explains all the details about her son, including the family’s expectations and how to care for him properly. “You really are operating an institution in your home,” she said.

Securing the right care providers helps not only the person receiving services, but also those who love them. Working, caring for an adult child with special needs and tending to other family members takes a huge toll.

Hanna makes sure to carve out time for her beekeeping hobby. “It’s nice because when I go to a club meeting, we just focus on that one topic,” she said. “No one wants to talk about my kid or my job, and I’m just me.”

To read the full version of this article and to learn more about the PDP program, go to: <https://iamboundless.org/our-impact/lessons-learned-life-caregiver>



Tiffany directs care for her daughter, Phoebe, through the Boundless PDP program.

2-1-1 help line available all day, every day

LSS 211 Central Ohio wants to make sure Franklin County residents know that access to thousands of local programs and resources is just a phone call, text, web chat or click away.

LSS 211, formerly HandsOn Central Ohio, is an information and referral service that connects people to important community resources, including emergency food and shelter assistance. The service merged with Lutheran Social Services (LSS) and took on its new name a few years ago, just as the pandemic triggered widespread closures.

Executive Director Courtney Walker said LSS 211 is working to reconnect with the community and inform residents of the many ways to access the free, confidential service, which is available 24/7.

“As long as they get to us, we will assist them,” she said. “We also have two dedicated lines for professionals – social workers and agencies – to use to reach us.”

In addition to crisis and basic-needs resources, LSS 211 can help people find information on other types of social, educational, cultural, health, government and support services.

The service can be reached various ways:

- ⇒ Call 2-1-1 or 614-221-2255
- ⇒ Download the 211 Central Ohio app
- ⇒ Search online at lssnetworkofhope.org/211centralohio

For emergency help with food, call 614-341-2282 or text 614-702-7772 or chat online at lssnetworkofhope.org/211centralohio

Families urged to protect children from measles

In addition to continued cases of COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), the Columbus area also is experiencing a measles outbreak.

City and county public health officials are urging families to make sure all children ages 12 months and older are vaccinated against measles. The virus is extremely contagious and can be dangerous; about 1 in 5 unvaccinated people in the United States who get measles will be hospitalized.

“The good news is that measles is a vaccine-preventable disease,” Rebecca Love, Early Childhood Education director at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, told families in a recent letter.

Almost all of the local cases have been in people who do not have the measles mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, and more than half of those diagnosed locally are young children between the ages of 1 and 2. The vaccine is more than 90 percent effective.

To learn more or to get the vaccine, call your primary-care doctor or pediatrician. Local public health departments also have information and vaccine clinics:

Franklin County Public Health
(614) 525-3719
myfcph.org/measles

Columbus Public Health
(614) 645-8180
columbus.gov/measles



Measles

Measles can be dangerous, especially for children. Protect your child with a measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

Symptoms: Call your health care provider if you or your child has symptoms – and stay home and avoid having visitors until you see a doctor.

-  **FEVER**
-  **RUNNY NOSE, COUGH**
-  **RASH, RED EYES**

Graphics reproduced with permission from the California Department of Public Health, Immunization Branch.

Early Childhood center hosts Winter Wonderland

More than 300 people turned out to enjoy Winter Wonderland, a December celebration for families at the FCBDD Early Childhood Education and Family Center.

The gathering – with costumed characters, popcorn, a book giveaway and more – marked the first time since the COVID pandemic began that the center on Johnstown Road had hosted an in-person event for all classrooms and families.

“Everyone was so happy,” said Megan Middleton, an assistant director in the Early Childhood Education program at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities. “The kids wanted to walk around and stroll through again and again.”

The event left an impression even the next day. “Mommy,” 4-year-old Patrick said as he came to school the next morning, “I really had so much fun last night!”

ECE staff members and volunteers also held a free produce drive-thru the same evening. Working with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, more than 8,000 pounds of food was given away.



Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

Congratulations to State Rep. Allison Russo, Ohio House Minority Leader, on being named one of the 2022 legislators of the year by the Ohio Association of County Boards. FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison had the honor of presenting the award during the recent OACB convention.





Heartfelt thanks and happy trails to service coordinator Aileen Burnside, who retired at the end of December after 23 years with FCBDD. Aileen went above and beyond for those she served, especially during the pandemic. "I've never seen anyone more determined to go to bat for her individuals, and to seek out resources for them," said her supervisor, Nicholas Smith. We wish you a long and happy retirement, Aileen!

Congrats to Goodwill Columbus on receiving an innovative technology grant from the state. Director of Residential Services Jamie Kinzelman said Goodwill plans to use the funding to create technology hubs in about 35 homes. The devices will help residents and staff consolidate and track calendars, view shopping lists and meal plans, share notes, and connect with family and friends.

Thanks to FCBDD retiree Mary Smith and the other toy-making volunteers at the University Women's Club, an alumni group of the Ohio State University. They've been donating to our Early Childhood Program for more than 15 years, and recently dropped off 150 stuffed animals!



Career Milestones

20 Years

- Ethan Grant
- Jennifer Schueneman
- Scott Smith
- Melissa Wren

15Years

- Anita Brown
- Jessica Fisher
- Jeanie Kunkle

10 Years

- Quinten Wilson
- Kara Lehosit

5 Years

- Taylor Neundorfer

Polar Plunge warms the heart of long-time Special Olympics coach

After last year's brutally cold dip in Alum Creek, Laura DeWert felt more than ready to retire from the signature Special Olympics fundraiser. She even announced her intention. And then, a few weeks ago, she signed up for what will be her 16th Polar Plunge.

"Just like Tom Brady, I can't quite quit," she said.

DeWert is hooked on both her Franklin County Flyers volunteerism and her lifelong passion for inclusion. Though she now works for a finance company, she created her own "exceptional persons" major program in college, had a job in the disabilities field for a while, and has been a volunteer for 35 years.

What drew you to the disability community?

When I was in school, I always volunteered in the special ed classes. There was a gal named Amy who was blind. I'd go and read with her, and we got to be good friends. I learned a lot from her about the assumptions people make. She was my earliest example of, "Why are people separated?" When I see someone excluded, I just don't get it. We're all humans.

Describe what it's like to jump into an ice-cold body of water on a freezing winter day.

I love the event. And yes, it feels terrible! I've run into lakes and rivers, reservoirs, dunk tanks and pools. One year the pool collapsed, and they ended up spraying us with a fire hose. Another time, it was so cold there was almost 11 inches of ice in the pool, and they brought jackhammers. At times I've felt like my eyeballs truly were frozen.

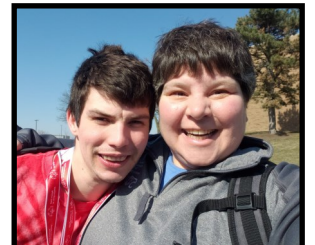
You and Flyers athlete Colton Showalter are a dynamic duo, right?

Colton is my partner for the Plunge. Over the years, we've been on the cover of newspapers, on TV, on social media. We've both said before that we're retiring. And then he's like, "Plunge, Plunge, Plunge..." We're raising lots of money, and it's for a good cause.

Sounds like you leave with more than goosebumps and sniffles.

People ask me why I do the things I do. Well, I am kind of selfish. This fills my cup. I love it.

The Polar Plunge is set for Feb. 11 at the Columbus Crew's Lower.com field. To join or support the Franklin County Special Olympics team, go to <https://give.soo.org/team/461412>



Franklin County Special Olympics athlete Colton Showalter and volunteer coach Laura DeWert are good friends and partners in the Polar Plunge.

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.

January, 2023

- 1 Happy New Year!
- 2 New Year's Day observed – all county facilities closed.
- 3 FCBDD Early Childhood and West Central classes resume.
- 16 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day observed -- all county facilities closed.
- 18 Family Support meeting, via Zoom, 10:00 a.m. Meeting is open to all family members.
[Family Support Meeting Link \(Zoom\)](#)
- 19 FCBDD Early Childhood Education and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective Produce Drive Through from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the ECEFC Bus Lane (accessed via Marilyn Lane). For more details, contact Sarah Gillilan at 614-342-5803.
- 26 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board In-Service, 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus.
- 26 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 4 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, Ohio, 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 \(Zoom\)](#)

Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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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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The following staff contribute to the monthly publication and distribution of *Dateline*:

Carl Scott **Amy Magginis** **Rita Price**
Jennifer Cunningham **Carolyn Earnhardt**

News releases, story ideas, and suggestions should be sent to:

Rita Price, Communications Coordinator
2879 Johnstown Road
Columbus, Ohio 43219
(614) 342-5161 FAX (614) 342-5001
e-mail: rita.price@fcbdd.org

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

www.fcbdd.org

Long-time advocate Mildred Blumenfeld remembered



Mildred "Millie" Blumenfeld, who championed the rights of people with developmental disabilities and their families for more than 50 years, died on Dec. 11 at the age of 98.

Blumenfeld started out advocating on behalf of her son Lee and soon found herself taking on battles both large and small.

She pushed for everything from better educational and housing opportunities for people with disabilities to air-conditioned county buses and improved fare in vending machines.

Blumenfeld served as a member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities from 1997-2009, and also took on leadership roles at ARC Industries and Franklin County Residential Services.

"She was certainly a pioneer, starting her efforts in the 1960s to improve services for people with developmental disabilities," FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison said. "Millie was a strong advocate and kept a lot of us on our toes. And she was very insightful, bringing good common sense to our discussions."

Blumenfeld's husband, Ted, passed away in May. Their work, oftentimes together, continues to affect thousands of people in the Franklin County community, Morison said.

FCBDD board member to co-host Ohio DD Talks podcast

Marci Straughter, a history-making member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, is joining Ohio DD Talks as a cohost.

The podcast from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council features stories and conversations with experts, people with developmental disabilities, families and other Ohioans on topics and issues that matter to the disability community. Straughter will host the program alongside advocate Nathan Turner.

Straughter was appointed to the FCBDD board in 2022 and is the first person with developmental disabilities to help lead the agency. Turner serves on the Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

"I wanted to do DD Talks because I want to help people," Straughter said. "There are a lot of opportunities and resources that people don't know about. There also are people who are underserved, people who don't know about their own disability."

All episodes can be found on the council's YouTube channel and on many audio streaming services. To learn more or subscribe, go to ddc.ohio.gov and click on the 'News & Media' tab.

