

Dateline

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"Helping people to live, learn and work in our community"

For roommates, new hobby creates purls of happiness

Even before they picked up their first knitting needles or tugged at a skein of yarn, Destiny Hawkins and Peggy Bergados already were on track for success at their new hobby.

"They have such motivation," said Kristen McKenna, their knitting instructor. "These two are amazing."

McKenna, who regularly teaches through a craft-classes enterprise in Westerville called Inspiring U, often works with beginners. But she hadn't before tailored her knitting lessons to students with disabilities.

As it turned out, the biggest snag was the difficulty Hawkins and Bergados could face getting to the lesson site. So McKenna visits the two roommates at their apartment, where they now cast on, knit and purl with ease.

"I used to watch my mom and my aunts do it when I was young, but because I had partial vision, I didn't think I could," said Bergados, 68, who is blind. "But with Kristen, I can."



Knitting instructor Kristen McKenna and Destiny Hawkins start a new project.

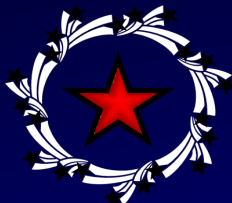
See **KNITTING** on page 2

State budget includes DSP wage increase

Ohio's two-year operating budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year features several new provisions affecting the developmental disabilities community, including higher wages for the direct-support professional (DSP) workforce.

Gov. Mike DeWine signed the budget bill on July 4. Following are some of the actions that affect people with developmental disabilities, their families and support staff:

- The statewide average hourly wage for DSPs working in Ohio's developmental disabilities waiver system is set to increase to \$18 an hour starting on Jan. 1, 2024, and to \$19 an hour beginning July 1, 2024. County boards are contributing significantly to the initiative, which requires wage-verification measures to ensure that the higher wages are being paid to DSPs. The Franklin County Board of Developmental expects to allocate \$9.7 million annually for the increase.
- The DSP quarterly retention payments program now will end on Dec. 31, 2023, instead of June 30, 2025, as originally planned. Money for the retention program is instead shifting to the hourly wage increase.
- The Ohio Department of Medicaid will be permitted to draft rules that, depending on eligibility and circumstances, allow parents to act as paid caregivers for their minor children.
- Ohio can extend the upper age limit for its Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities program so that people are able to work past the age of 65 if they wish and still keep Medicaid coverage.
- Effective July 1, 2025, county commissioners and/or probate judges in all 88 counties are to ensure that initial appointments to their county board of developmental disabilities include at least one person eligible for board services.



**** SAVE THE DATE ****

Salute to Jed Morison and Pandemic Heroes

October 25, 2023 - 6:30 p.m. at Villa Milano

(more details to be announced)

Knitting *(continued from page 1)*

McKenna jokes that she's simply an in-person YouTube video, there to provide guidance or help fix a goof now and then. "Everything we do is based on their talent, not mine," McKenna said. "I had taught Destiny two lessons at Inspiring U. Peggy had crocheted a little as a child, so she had the feel of the yarn. She can feel the stitches. She and I sat down, and that very day she was knitting. It was wonderful."

Experts say knitting can be therapeutic, fueling senses of relaxation, optimism and accomplishment. "To knit against a pattern and have it actually turn out to be something is exciting," said McKenna, who works in corporate marketing and didn't take up knitting until she was past 50.



Kristen McKenna says Peggy Bergados, who is blind, has a great feel for knitting.



Destiny shows off her hand-made mittens.

Bergados loves arriving at the "end product," having created an item of beauty from yarn, skill and an idea.

For a long time, Hawkins had felt intrigued every time she saw someone knitting. She liked to picture herself doing it, too, crafting baby booties, hats and mittens for others. Working around her disability was just a matter of patience, practice and having the right teacher.

"I want to let people with disabilities know that they can do what they want," said Hawkins, 34. "I'm proud that I've been able to do this, and Peggy, too, even though she is blind. It's like this is all an inspiration."

Social group offered for LGBTQIA+ people with developmental disabilities

A new social group has been formed to support people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and receive services through the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

The LGBTQIA+ group kicked off in June during Pride month and will meet on the first Thursday of each month at the FCBDD Service Coordination offices, 1600 Watermark Dr.

"This offers a safe space for people to come together," said FCBDD service coordinator Jamie Fox. She and a colleague in Service Coordination, Karie Griffin, are facilitating the group along with Sean Patterson, the agency's DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) coordinator.

The aim is for meetings to be peer led, with guidance from the organizers. Ensuring that the environment is positive and welcoming is paramount, Patterson said, as some people might not feel supported at home, at work or the larger community. "We had our first gathering, and it was a lot of fun," he said. "And as people loosen up and understand that they're not going to be judged, it will only get better."

Fox said organizers will seek input from participants on their expectations. Outings, speakers, and discussions on relevant issues – such as healthy relationships – are possibilities.



The original PRIDE flag appeared in 1978 as a symbol of hope. Each color stands for something.

Individuals or families interested in learning more or attending a meeting should contact their FCBDD service coordinator or email DEI@fcbdd.org

FCBDD free internet offer ends soon

People who receive services from the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities and have Level 1, IO or SELF Medicaid waivers still can receive reimbursement for a year of home internet service if they give remote support a try.

To be eligible, the person must commit to a trial run of remote-support services for at least eight hours a week for at least 60 days. Applications for the incentive are being accepted now through Sept. 30, 2023.

Remote support uses assistive technology to allow an off-site service provider to monitor and respond to health, safety and other needs using live, two-way communication – just like Skype or FaceTime – so that people can communicate with providers as needed.

Advocates say it can increase privacy, reduce demand for on-site staff and, in some cases, improve overnight monitoring of medical conditions such as seizure activity.

For more information, contact your service coordinator or email remotesupport@fcbdd.org

Name change a joyful step in personal journey

Even as a young child, Marcie wrestled with what felt like a terrible mismatch. Her clothes were wrong, her name was wrong, and she was certain she was supposed to be a sister, not a brother.

"I just always knew," she said. "I am not a male. I am female."

But as a person with developmental disabilities, including blindness and speech impairment, Marcie had an especially difficult time advocating for herself. Now 59, she also has faced significant illness throughout her life.

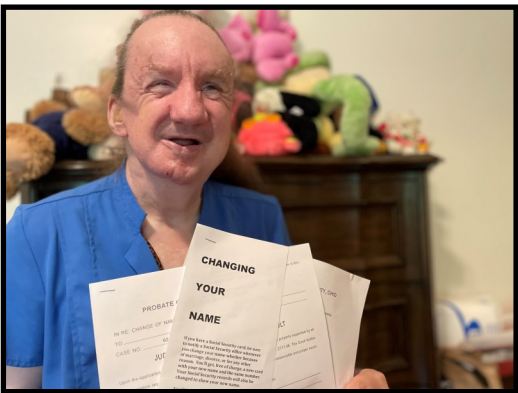
"I'm not saying it was bad, but it was difficult," Marcie said.

Still, she always held fast to what she knew to be true about herself and in June the Franklin County Probate Court approved her request to change her name from Mark to Marcie. *Dateline* is not using her last name because Marcie worries about harassment and discrimination against transgender people.

"A friend said I should make it close to my former name," she said of her new legal name. "So I dropped the K and added C-I-E, and I love it. I'm so happy."

Marcie wears her hair long and favors loose, comfortable skirts. She said she is grateful for the acceptance and support of her service providers, therapists, friends and service coordinator at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Linda Pannell. Marcie's guardian, local attorney Erin Sanford, also is supportive and worked with Marcie on the court process.

"It was her idea to get it done," said Sanford, who has been Marcie's guardian since 2014. "We've talked about it for a couple years now. She worked with her counselor, and it's been a team decision that her name change would be a positive change for her."



Marcie was thrilled to receive official notification of her name change.

Marcie seems to be thriving as she feels freer to be herself. "She's comfortable, and she wants to share her story," Sanford said. "It's a very positive story. It helps her to grow and have confidence. There's strength there – and resilience."

Marcie hopes that by discussing her experience, she can be helpful to others. "They'll know they're not crazy. It's real. At 5 years old I would dress like a girl."

Not long ago, Marcie's sister found a letter Marcie wrote that had been tucked away in a file for years. In it, Marcie had tried to explain that she was transgender and a woman, "in heart and mind." Though the discovery came late, Marcie was delighted and relieved at the reaction.

"We talked and we talked and we talked," Marcie said, smiling. "And she said, 'I've always wanted a sister.'"

Franklin County Special Olympics goes big at Summer Games

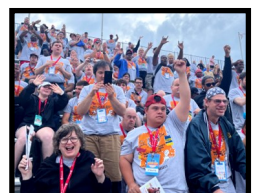
The Flyers had a great time competing at the Special Olympics Ohio State Summer Games, sending our largest-ever delegation to represent the Franklin County Special Olympics program.

Our athletes took home a lot of hardware, but as Director Ryan Phillips says, that's not necessarily the most important measure. Fun, friendship, love, support, effort and education all were in abundance.

Collectively, volunteers and volunteer coaches put in nearly 2,500 hours to help make sure our athletes had everything they needed for a safe and successful weekend, Phillips said. "It's truly amazing to think how much goes into it," he said.

According to Special Olympics Ohio, the 53rd Summer Games gathering included more than 2,250 athletes and Unified partners, 89 local community-based programs and more than 450 coaches.

The Flyers had 163 athletes and coaches competing in six sports. Five of our athletes' artworks were featured on the Opening Ceremonies t-shirt.



Special Olympics volunteering a true family affair

To fulfill a requirement for her high-school service project, Monica Wangler hit on a way to combine community service with her love of sports. “I was a multi-sport athlete,” she said. “I thought, well, if I can do service and sports at the same time, I’m in.”

Some 30 years later, she’s still all in as a volunteer coach with Franklin County Special Olympics. And so are several members of her family, including most of her siblings, her daughter, a niece and brother-in-law. “And we have no plans to stop,” said Wangler, who grew up the oldest of six children in the Lubbers family. “We’re actually trying to convince another sibling to join us.”

Ryan Phillips, director of Special Olympics, Community Recreation and Aquatics at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, said the Lubbers family commitment and tenure is nothing short of amazing. “It seems like the longer that people volunteer with us, the more they begin to build their lives around the schedule,” he said. “It’s pretty cool.”

Anna Milligan was inspired by her sister’s experience and hasn’t looked back. She just hit her 20th year and is as enthusiastic as ever. “I started right after college and I was like, this is a happy place. It’s total positivity,” Milligan said. “I got so much out of the conversations – really filling my bucket while filling theirs.”

When Milligan and Wangler had children, they brought them to practices and games, too. “Some of the athletes would really enjoy pushing the kids in a stroller. It was so nice,” Wangler said. “I was just telling my husband how amazing it is that one program can offer so much family for us all.”

Of course, the Lubbers siblings also have watched plenty of Flyers athletes grow up. Wangler has been coaching Colton Showalter in swimming since he was “a little tyke,” she said. “Now he likes to point out my gray hair. I tell him he’s been around to make it that way.”

Milligan said she gets goosebumps – and a few happy tears – when she talks about the effect that Special Olympics has had on her 15-year-old daughter Charlotte, also known as Charlie. “Her life goals are surrounded by this,” Milligan said. “She wants to be a special education teacher, and I am so proud.”

And even if Charlie winds up in a different career, “she’s still found something that has such enormous meaning, and is shaping her as a human being,” Milligan said. “She’s finding and giving joy.”



Coaching for the Flyers is all in the family for Ellen Lubbers (front); Anna Milligan, Charlie Milligan and Monica Wangler (L to R, second row); and Chris Lubbers and Chuck Milligan (L to R, back row).

New program offers literacy tutoring for adults

Ohio adults with developmental disabilities who graduated from high school in 2020, 2021 or 2022 can enroll in a newly expanded tutoring program to help improve their reading, writing and communication skills.

The effort, called Adult Literacy Ohio, began last year as a pilot through the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio. It recently received a grant from the state to expand reach to people with other types of developmental disabilities.

The program provides funding for participants to spend on tutors and services. Organizers say that improved literacy can boost independence, employment opportunities and quality of life.

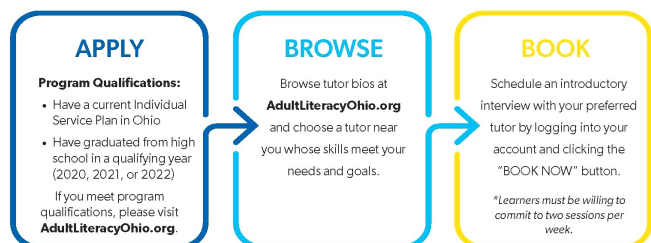
For details, go to www.adultliteracyohio.org or email info@adultliteracyohio.org



1:1 Literacy Learning Support for Adults with Developmental Disabilities



How it Works

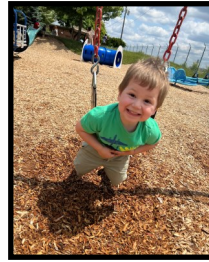


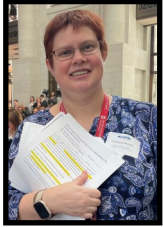
Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community



Thanks to all the staff members who made the return of our Early Childhood and West Central summer centers such a success. We know that families appreciate having a safe, fun and high-quality summer activity for their children, teens and young adults.





Congratulations to Christine Brown, a member of the Franklin County Self-Advocate Advisory Council, for her years of advocacy on behalf of workers with disabilities. The new biennial budget enables the state to extend the upper age limit for the Medicaid Buy-in for Workers with Disabilities program, allowing workers with disabilities to work past age 65 without losing Medicaid coverage.

Thanks to Morgan Stanley and our other generous supporters for sponsoring the Franklin County Special Olympics 23rd annual Golf Classic. This event helps our awesome athletes and volunteers all year long!



(left to right) Paul Chenderlin, Jack Brownley, Rob Williams and Travis Sherick enjoyed time on the course as a foursome.



Board member Samuel Davis (left) and Jack Brownley (right) supported the Special Olympics event.

We appreciate the work of the Hattie Larlham agency, our partner in the summer Transition to Work program. This effort gives teens and young adults with developmental disabilities the opportunity to explore and try out a variety of community job settings.

Tech Ambassadors host wrap-up celebration

The Ohio Tech Ambassadors gathered at the Statehouse recently to celebrate the work and success of the program.

Since 2021, Tech Ambassadors from all over the state have held events and provided peer-to-peer mentoring to show people with developmental disabilities how assistive technology can be used to boost independence and enhance their day-to-day lives.



Ohio Tech Ambassadors gathered for a celebration at the Statehouse.

The project is expected to move to a new phase as state and county boards continue to promote the use of technology and remote support services.

Marci Straughter, a member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities who also served as a Tech Ambassador for central Ohio, said remote support has given her much more time to herself. "I don't feel scared to stay by myself, and I used to be scared," she said.

Robert Shuemak, a Tech Ambassador from Cincinnati, said assistive and adaptive technology has helped him accomplish so much. "I was around when tech wasn't really available, especially to people who were visually impaired," he said. "Thank god for technology and speech-activated software. These technologies have allowed me to get a college degree, and to work for Hamilton County DD as an advocate."

Career Milestones

35 Years

Michael Butchko

30 Years

Brigida Alcaraz
Darla Hodo

25 Years

Toby Paine

20 Years

Jacqueline Batts
April Brehob
Linda Masterson
Haley Simpson
Melissa Wickham

15 Years

Beth Droese
Christie Fletcher
Ann Guthrie
Dale Pugh
Megan Sheumaker
Robin White

10 Years

Adrienne Bridges
Ashley Horne
Abbie Lawhorn
Fred Mounts

5 Years

Bintou Bah
Jeannie Chai
Gregory Coble
Maria Goedel
Andrew Heckman
Jennifer Moore
Kaitlyn Schumacher

Calendar

July 2023

- 19 Family Support meeting via Zoom. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details. 10 a.m. <https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>
- 20 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.
- 27 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, and via Zoom for the public. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details. Noon (12 p.m.) <https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>

August 2023

- 18 Central Ohio Self-Determination meeting, 2879 Johnstown Road, 10 a.m.
- 20 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.
- 21,22 ECE and School staff returns - Staff Preparation/ Development Days.
- 23 First day of classes at West Central School.
- 23,24,25 ECE Program Service Days – Parent Visitation (No Transportation).
- 28 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.

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

Carl Scott **Amy Magginis** **Rita Price**
Jennifer Cunningham **Carla Maynard**

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

Register now to attend Tech Summit 2023

People with disabilities, families and community partners are invited to learn about assistive technology options during the annual Tech Summit event here in central Ohio.

Held in partnership with the Ohio State University Nisonger Center, Assistive Technology of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, the summit is set for Aug. 11 at the Marriott Columbus OSU, 3100 Olentangy River Rd.

From smart home and assistive technologies to independent transportation options, the event offers participants many ways to learn how current and emerging technology can help people with developmental disabilities live more independently. Attendees also can talk to experts and with people who are using tech devices.

This year's keynote will be delivered by Tony Gentry of Virginia Commonwealth University. His topic is "Smart-Homes to Support Functional Independence."

Visit go.osu.edu/TechSummit for details and to register. For questions, email Jordan Wagner at

Jordan.Wagner@osumc.edu



Free program links adults to health resources

Central Ohio adults with any type of disability can sign up for a new, free health program that offers connections to medical and health-related services and resources in their communities.

The LinkAGES program, offered through the Ohio Disability and Health Partnership and the Ohio State University Nisonger Center, is open to people with disabilities who are 18 and older and live in Franklin, Delaware, Fairfield, Pickaway, Madison, Licking and Union counties.

Participants do not have to be served by other disability programs or agencies to be eligible, or have a formal diagnosis. "We're just trying to help the population as is," said OSU's Lauren Hackenberg. "We can be a resource for people who don't have, or qualify for, Medicaid waivers."

LinkAGES helps people find accessible resources such as transportation, health screenings, primary care, dental options and more, she said.

To sign up, go to <https://go.osu.edu/odhpinterestsurvey> or contact the LinkAGES coordinator at linkages@osumc.edu or call 614-685-9323