

PRSRK STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FAIRFIELD, OH
PERMIT NO. 160

TOGETHER
we are the
COMMUNITY

August 2007
Issue 2
Volume 1

a newsletter about Butler County Board of MRDD programs, supports and staff

*Upcoming
Events*

Ride and Silent Auction

Friends of Citizens with Disabilities is hosting a Benefit Motorcycle Ride and Silent Auction on Saturday, **September 8**. The ride starts at noon from the Tri-County Harley Davidson store on Route 4, and ends at the city of Fairfield's Village on the Green, where a silent auction will be held.

Fishing for Friends

The second annual Fishing for Friends event will be held Sunday, **September 9** from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Lake Lyndsay in Hamilton.

Rumble in the Jungle Dance

The Rumble in the Jungle Dance, sponsored by GE, will be held Wednesday, **September 12** at Tori's Station from 6-8:30 p.m.

Annual Arc Picnic

The annual Butler County Arc Picnic will take place Sunday, **September 16** from 3-7 p.m. at Camp Campbell Guard in Hamilton.

Together we are the Community is edited by Wendy Planicka, Butler County MRDD's Communications Coordinator. Send story ideas or other suggestions via email to wendyp@butlermrdd.org or call 513-867-5962. For accessibility issues or concerns, contact Karen Whalen, Director of Quality Assurance and Medicaid Services, at 513-867-5671 or email her at karenw@butlermrdd.org

Butler County Board of
Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities
155 Donald Drive
Fairfield, OH 45014
Address Service Requested

What's new on the web

Want to hear more news about Butler County MRDD? Looking for the board meeting agenda?



Want more information about a provider? Interested in finding out more about the board's strategic plan? Go online to: www.butlermrdd.org.



James Henrie presented a Butler County Board of MRDD success story to the Fairfield Kiwanis. He is pictured with Kiwanis member Holly Foster.

TOGETHER
we are the
COMMUNITY

a newsletter about Butler County Board of MRDD programs, supports and staff

August 2007
Issue 2
Volume 1

Creating friendships that last a lifetime

Every other Thursday, Martha Nuckols from West Chester gets together with her friend Debbie Wilson from Hamilton, and they go do something fun. They do different things each visit. They've gone shopping and they've gotten their nails done.

"My friendship with Debbie means so much to me," Martha said. "She's a very warm and caring person. Her smile means the world to me, and I know how much it means to her that I am there for her. I listen to her and I let her talk."

Martha and Debbie got to be friends after Martha retired last June. Martha called Cathy Howell, the Community Resource Coordinator for the Butler County Board of MRDD, and told her that she wanted to volunteer. Soon Martha started a reading program at the Middletown Center, teaching adults to read. Cathy then paired her up with Debbie.

"At first Debbie said she wanted to do some volunteering work. I thought I would be picking her up and taking her to the hospital to work. But then she changed her mind. You have to be flexible. Debbie decided she just wanted to go out and have fun, and I told her that I like to have fun too," Martha said.

At the start of their friendship, Martha had to stop herself from mothering Debbie, or from seeing herself as

a "volunteer" for her.

"I am not her mother. I knew from the beginning that if I was going to be Debbie's friend then I couldn't tell her what I think she should or should not do, or if she should be doing something a particular way. As soon as I got



Friends Martha Nuckols and Debbie Wilson go out together every other Thursday. They recently went to a salon and had their nails done together.

myself into that attitude, our friendship really started to blossom," Martha said.

Debbie says that Martha is someone to have a good time with.

"She's someone to laugh with and talk to. She listens to me. When I'm sad she makes me happy. And she doesn't judge," Debbie said. The pair have had many memories together. They have gone on numerous shopping trips and have had special lunches. Whenever they get together, Martha asks Debbie what she wants to do, and within reason, they go do it.

"You have to listen with your heart," Martha said. "Being a volunteer for someone in the MRDD program does not mean that you're there because you have to be there. You're there because you want to be there, and you're there as a friend. Your friendship has nothing to do with MRDD. It's a friendship between two people, two hearts."

*Are you interested in volunteering?
Look inside to learn how.*

Butler County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities
Supporting individuals to successfully live, work and learn in their community



In June, consumers from the Middletown Center donated knitted hats to the Middletown Regional Hospital. The consumers made the “cozy caps” using a knitting loom. The caps were donated to the hospital’s cancer treatment unit, to be used by people undergoing chemotherapy treatment. The knitting class, taught by Jackie Burkhalter, is offered twice daily at the Middletown Center and is very popular. Pictured from left to right is Alex Talkers, a nurse aide at the hospital, along with Robyn E. Riley, Michael Herrlein, Daniel Boone, and Jenny Nuckols.

Thank you Dr. Johnson!

Dr. Ben Johnson, a dentist from Middletown, has volunteered his time to offer free dental examinations at two Butler County MRDD adult centers. He has visited the Middletown Center and Hamilton Center. “Dr. Johnson is giving us the gift of free examinations,” said Diane Vasiliadis, Director of the Butler County Dental Care Program. “Identification and diagnosis of oral diseases is the first and vital phase of the dental treatment process.”

Dental care in Butler County is not readily available for individuals served by the Butler County Board of MRDD due to a lack of willing dentists, Vasiliadis said.

The Butler County Dental Care Program assists individuals and their families in locating a dentist or oral surgeon who can provide appropriate dental care. Services provided by the Dental Care Program are free.



Dr. Ben Johnson

How to become a volunteer

The Butler County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is committed to improving the quality of life of those served. We rely on our volunteers to help us do so. The ultimate goal of the agency is to provide the means for each individual with developmental disabilities to realize his or her potential. We do this by helping each person acquire skills and build relationships among citizens and neighbors in Butler County.

“We believe that everyone has gifts and strengths to be used to help one another,” said Cathy Howell, Community Resource Coordinator. Ms. Howell is responsible for the recruitment, screening and orientation of volunteers.

Volunteers are needed in various capacities. A volunteer could serve:

- * In classroom activities.
- * At recreational activities such as swimming, physical fitness, crafts, bowling, gardening, music, sporting events, art and enrichment opportunities.
- * Through self-help activities such as feeding, communication, good grooming and social awareness.
- * With office assistance (mailings, filings, and clerical duties.)
- * At special events and field trips.
- * Through production assistance at adult centers.
- * In special friendships.
- * By making and repairing adaptive equipment.
- * In teaching basic computer skills.
- * By sewing adaptive clothing.

To begin volunteering with the agency, an application and background check must be completed. Ms. Howell interviews volunteers and places them in the program which best meets their needs as a volunteer.

To contact Ms. Howell for a volunteer application, call 513-867-5962 ext. 22.

We’re saying goodbye to seven dedicated employees and good friends

This year’s retirees have a combined 139 years of service to the Butler County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. We thank them for their service and wish them the very best in their retirement.



Charlie Brewer, Mechanic, retired with 13 years of service. His last day was June 29.



Stormie Lupo, Early Intervention Assistant, retired with 11 years of service. Her last day was July 30.

Carol Buckner, Customized Program Coordinator, is retiring with 20 years of service. Her last day is August 31.



Becky Schroeder, Transportation Coordinator, retired with seven years of service. Her last day was July 31.



Sharon Frederick, Adult Services Director, is retiring with 29 years of service. Her last day is August 31.

Margaret Stath, Nurse, is retiring with 24 years of service. Her last day is August 31.



Pat Jackson, Trainer at Middletown Center, retired with almost 35 years of service. Her last day was June 29.



You will all be missed!

Individuals and families have free choice of provider at any time

This spring, a provider offering residential services to individuals with mental retardation and/or developmental disabilities suddenly went out of business. The 65 consumers served by that provider had to seek a new provider quickly.

“During the process of those 65 families selecting new providers, we were surprised to find out that many individuals and families didn’t know that they could get a new provider whenever they wanted to,” said Karen Whalen, Director of Quality Assurance and Medicaid Services.

Consumers have the right to choose a provider for any services that are Medicaid funded. That includes services accessed using Level 1 or Individual Options waivers, Supported Living or Individual Budgets. Services might include: homemaker/personal care, respite, social work, specialized equipment, environmental adaptations, transportation, supported employment and day habilitation.

Medicaid funded services must be provided by a provider certified through the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Individuals and their families can choose any provider in the state of Ohio. They are not limited to Butler County. Individuals can mix and match services and providers as they see fit, and may choose one provider or several providers.

A consumer’s rights and responsibilities

- You decide who will be your provider.
- You and your provider should be committed to working together.
- You should feel free to talk with your support coordinator and/or provider about any issue or concerns.
- You have a right to ask for a change of provider.

Individuals may select any agency or individual currently certified to provide the service needed or they may identify a person they’d like to use as a provider and ask that person to become a certified provider.

To help individuals and families through the process of selecting a new provider, the Butler County Board of MRDD created a “Provider Selection Guide.”

“The guide helps individuals and families understand when they might want to consider selecting a new provider and it outlines how to do it,” Ms. Whalen said.

An individual’s support coordinator can also assist with the provider selection process. The support coordinators can help an individual access the ODMRDD web site to identify eligible providers, can help set up and attend interviews and can help draft questions for the provider. The support coordinator can not select a provider.

The “Provider Selection Guide” is on the Butler County MRDD’s web site at www.butlermrdd.org. To find a list of providers in Ohio, go to the Ohio Department of MRDD’s web site at www.odmrdd.state.oh.us. From the home page, click on “Provider Search” under the “Find It Fast” links.

Mark your calendars!

The Butler County Board of MRDD is hosting a Provider Fair on October 16 at Miami University Hamilton’s Wilks Center, from 1-7 p.m.

At the fair, families will have a chance to learn about the different providers offering services to individuals.

Providers from all aspects of support including residential, day habilitation, supported employment and transportation will have information available at the fair.

A letter from the PAC chairman



Hello, I was asked to introduce myself and explain the activities that the Friends of Citizens with Disabilities is doing to help MRDD.

First, a little about myself. My name is Doug Schaefferkoetter and my wife, Arelis, my daughter, Brittany, and myself live in Hamilton. I became involved in efforts to help MRDD because I know that this is an outstanding organization dedicated to helping our citizens with special needs. I have personally experienced their help with my daughter Brittany and believe that all persons have an obligation to support their community. So, I gladly accepted a request to act as chairman of “Friends of Citizens with Disabilities” as my way of supporting MRDD. As chairman, I will let you know that we are in need of volunteers to help in our efforts and that any support given is greatly appreciated. We cannot succeed without your participation.

We have already accomplished one event, the annual flower sale, and have two more activities planned to raise funds this year. The funds that are raised will assist in passage of a future MRDD levy. The flower sale was a big success that raised over \$1,600 and we are hopeful that our next two events, a Benefit Motorcycle Ride for MRDD and a Silent Auction, will raise even greater amounts. Both of these events are scheduled to happen on September 8 and are part of the City of Fairfield’s “September Dayz”. The Benefit Motorcycle Ride is being organized by Bob Morris and is supported by Tri-County Harley Davidson of Fairfield, the Butler County Sheriff’s Department, and the City of Fairfield Parks and Recreation Department. The ride will depart from Tri-County Harley Davidson at noon and last approximately one hour, and will end at Village Green Park in Fairfield. The Butler County Sheriff’s Department has graciously offered to provide the escort for the riders. After the ride has finished, a silent auction will be held with persons bidding on different assortments of baskets filled with gifts. Wendy Planicka is organizing the silent auction so we really appreciate both her and Bob efforts to make these events happen. However, as I previously stated, they need your help to ensure success. I would ask that anyone who is able to volunteer contact Wendy Planicka at (513) 867-5962 ext. 21 or email her at wendyp@butlermrdd.org and offer your services in any manner possible.

Lastly, I want to personally say THANKS to all in advance for the support shown and to be shown to help us—your efforts are appreciated.

Very Respectfully

Douglas J. Schaefferkoetter
Chairman
Friends of Citizens with Disabilities

Benefit Motorcycle Ride and Silent Auction

Mark your calendars! Saturday, September 8, Friends of Citizens with Disabilities is hosting a Benefit Motorcycle Ride and Silent Auction.

The ride will start at noon sharp, leaving from the Tri-County Harley Davidson store, located at 5960 Route 4. The bikes will travel through Butler and Hamilton Counties and will arrive at the City of Fairfield’s Village on the Green (located at the corner of Pleasant Avenue and Nilles Road) at approximately 1 p.m. The ride will be escorted by the Butler County Sheriff’s Department.

Friends of Citizens with Disabilities were invited by the City of Fairfield to join in on Fairfield’s “September Dayz” event happening the same weekend.

Starting at 1 p.m. at Village on the Green the group will host a silent auction. Baskets with varying cash values will be auctioned off.

The Friends of Citizens with Disabilities committee raises money and awareness for levy efforts of the Butler County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. The Benefit Motorcycle Ride is replacing the Walk, Shop, and Roll held in past years.

For more information about the ride or the auction, call 513-867-5962.



In her own words: Writer wins essay contest

My name is Jessi Hutson. I love to write and help others with a smile. I graduated from Hamilton High in 2002. I'm adopted from Calcutta, India! I have a great family and friends that mean the world to me. I have Cerebral Palsy (CP) but I don't let that get in my way. I work for things I want in my life. I play Special Olympics basketball and softball through the Orthopedic Recreation Program. I'm nuts about the Cincinnati Reds and Bengals. My high school years were the best. I love to be a part of someone's life and make a difference. Most of all I like to make people smile. I love to help others. I was very excited when I heard that Joe Nuxhall wanted to build a gym for the Special Olympic athletes. I helped raised money for the Joe Nuxhall gym. It's a great feeling to help others. I have been helped by many people through Butler County MRDD. Leanne Bowling, Theresa Baumgartner, and Cathy Howell along with many others have helped me to feel included and to fit in.



Jessie Hutson

Accessibility for All in Cincinnati sponsored an essay contest to celebrate the 17th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I wrote an essay saying what an important impact the ADA has made in my life. I felt it was important to get my words out there. I want people to know that every-

one should be treated equally. I sent my essay to them and I won 2nd place!

On Thursday, July 26, 2007, there was a celebration of the signing of the ADA in Piatt Park in downtown Cincinnati. I was asked to share my essay with all of the people who had come to celebrate the ADA. I felt excited that day to share my essay. ~ Submitted by Jessi Hutson

Jessie's award-winning essay

The Americans With Disabilities Act has helped many people in our country including my friends and myself. I am one of many with a disability mine is called cerebral palsy. No matter how limited my body is I've always been one to go for anything I put my mind to! I know "I can." It may take me longer but at least I will know I didn't give up. I'm truly blessed by this law.

Without this law, I believe myself and others with disabilities would feel left out.

In my childhood, I felt left out a lot but that didn't stop me from living. When people said "I wouldn't" or "she can't", my mom was able to say "she will" or "she can" just by this law. People didn't believe I would ever be able to walk, talk, even go to schools (like my older brother) and be in regular classes. I was able to fight and prove to others they were wrong about me. Now I can be proud to say "I did" and that "I will" keep on going.

I was placed in class room with the best friends with other disabilities in high school. With this law in mind we each had the rights to our own regular classes. We faced normal kids and had to have the courage to jump right in and join them. Then we would have some special times together to show us that we were not alone. Each year we would have a walk and roll-a-thon to raise money for our class. My last year was with my best friend. We both had a different disability. I would walk and push him in a wheelchair - we did 40 laps. To all of us in that class we were equal. I graduated with a diploma and was on the Gold Honor Roll.

The Americans With Disabilities Act allows everyone with a disability to be equal in their own way. I say to all those with a disability don't let your disability get in the way of your dreams. Live it up!

Use the Americans With Disabilities Act for all the good things this law can do for you. You have nothing to be ashamed of, be proud of who you are. Don't be afraid, have courage in yourself and get out there and show others what you can do. All we have to do is believe in ourselves. Always remember there are others out there with disabilities and that you are not alone. No matter what, no one deserves to be made fun of and finally last but not least Do Not Give Up.

Inspirational woman sings with her hands and her heart

At the end of April, I had the opportunity to volunteer with the Women of Faith Conference in Columbus, Ohio. As one of the Volunteer Hosts, I escorted the talent back and forth from their green room and the arena floor.

On the last day I met Lisa Smith when I escorted her and her mother to the arena concourse to sign autographs. Lisa is 32 years old and lives in Aubrey, Texas with her parents Randy and Vicki Smith. She travels the country with Women of Faith Conferences doing sign language during select songs. Lisa also has Down Syndrome.

Lisa began signing in the summer of 2000. Her mother says that Lisa "wanted to sing for God but didn't have the vocals to do it." So she sings with "her hands and her heart."

She first began her fame in February 2005 when she signed spontaneously with her favorite singer, Sandi Patty, on stage at the Women of Faith National Conference. Since 2005 she has shared the stage with Kathy Troccoli, Larnelle Harris, Sheila Walsh, the WoF Worship Team, BeBe Winans, Sandi Patty, and Avalon.

She has signed at weddings, a funeral, and church events/services around Texas and Oklahoma. She's done various fundraisers, including a concert by herself in Tennessee and a fundraiser for the Best Buddies organization in Dallas raising \$150,000.

Lisa has also been invited to sign at the opening and closing ceremonies for Best Buddies International Leadership Conference 2007. She's also participated in a community event with Sandy Patti in Indiana. She signs at two to three churches or events monthly and this year she is scheduled for nine Women of Faith Conferences.

This sounds like a full schedule for anyone, and because her mom still works full-time right now, this is all she can handle.

What is amazing about these accomplishments is that Lisa only had an hour and a half lesson from the local high school Sign Language teacher. With just a little help from her mom, she taught herself the other signs, using sign languages books, a dictionary; a thesaurus, and the internet. She signs En-

glish, which means she signs every word. By signing English, it helps her understand the song and makes it easy for others to follow along with her.

Her mother said, "It just amazes me how she can do it...and when she truly understands the meaning of the song is when Lisa's passion is seen by those who have experienced her worshipping in song."

Watching Lisa is truly a joy. You can see the passion as she sings; just taking one look at her face you can see that she loves what she does. She involves her body, facial expressions, and the other artists on stage. Those that watch her are touched by her signing.

While escorting her from the arena floor, many conference attendees stopped to shake her hand or called to her from across a few aisles to say "Thanks Lisa! You did a great job!" When signing autographs, Lisa had a long line of fans happy to see her and many stated that she was an inspiration.

Signing is Lisa's livelihood and career. As the Butler County Board of MRDD looks to self-determination and person centered plans, Lisa is a wonderful example of what one can do with a dream, determination and passion.

~Submitted by Lisa Owens, Support Coordinator



Lisa Owens with Lisa Smith and her mother Vicki.