

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

FCBDD to welcome two new board members

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities will seat two new board members at its meeting in January.

Dean Fadel and Karen Wilkins, both of whom have family members receiving services from the agency, have long been involved in the local disability community. They were appointed by Franklin County Probate Judge Jeffrey D. Mackey to replace Beth Savage and Bill Wilkins, who ended their terms on Dec. 31.

Karen Wilkins is the wife of Bill Wilkins. Fadel previously served three terms on the board, ending in 2020, and is eligible to serve again because more than a year has passed.

"There are so many great people who are part of the county board. And I was thrilled to see Dot named as Jed's successor," Fadel said, referring to Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager, who begins her new job this month after the retirement of Jed Morison.



Karen Wilkins

Thanks to his previous tenure and involvement, "I know what I'm getting into," Fadel said. "And if I can be of assistance, I am very happy to do that."

Fadel lives in the Blacklick area and is president and CEO of the Ohio Insurance Institute. He is close to his younger brother, Jeff, who has Down syndrome. Fadel has been active with the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio, Ohio SIBS, Best Buddies and is a past president of the Ohio Association of County Boards.

Wilkins is a Hilliard resident and has an adult son, Bill, with Down syndrome. She is the founder and owner of Knitting Temptations and has extensive experience with volunteerism and fundraising. She helped to establish both the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio and Very Special Arts Ohio (VSAO), and has managed three levy campaigns for Franklin County Children Services.

"The county board has been instrumental in Bill's development," Wilkins said, "so anything I can do to participate and say thank you is important to me."



Dean Fadel

Early Childhood Education program starts year with new leader

Dr. Kathy Lawton, an experienced educator with both professional and personal connections to central Ohio's disability and early intervention communities, has begun her new role as Director of Early Childhood Education at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

"I was really excited for the opportunity to make an impact at the county level," Lawton said when asked about why she sought the job with FCBDD. "I am a huge advocate of early intervention."

Before joining FCBDD, Lawton previously served as the Director of Early Childhood Education at the Ohio State University Nisonger Center, Assistant Professor of Special Education with OSU, Special Education Coordinator across all Upper Arlington school buildings, and, most recently, the Director of Burbank Early Childhood School (BECS) at Upper Arlington City Schools. She launched its first inclusive preschool model and significantly expanded the city's peer modeling program for young learners.

On a personal level, Lawton's family helped to found the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio (DSACO) to advocate for her brother and so many other families in the region. She remains active across Ohio on multiple statewide boards devoted to inclusion and early intervention.



Director of Early
Childhood Education
Kathy Lawton,
PhD, BCBA-D

See Lawton on page 2

Self-Advocate Council meets to celebrate holiday, honor Jed Morison

The Franklin County Self-Advocate Advisory Council gathered last month for a holiday party and sendoff for former FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Jed Morison, who retired at the end of December. Morison helped launch the council in 2010.

“Over all these years, he’s helped support self-advocacy and made sure there were ways to give choice,” said council member Christine Brown, who presented Morison with an Esdy Award on behalf of the Ohio Self Determination Association. The award goes to someone who strives to promote the principles of self-determination, either for themselves or others.

She also gave him an inscribed t-shirt and an apron. “I’m going to have to start cooking,” he said.

Council member Ethan Boerner told Morison that he’s been “a big part of my life,” and gave him a plaque commemorating Morison’s 54 years of public service. “Never underestimate the difference you’ve made and the lives you’ve touched,” it says.

Council members also were joined by Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Director Kim Hauck, former DODD Director Jeff Davis, Ohio Association of County Boards CEO Adam Herman, FCBDD board member Samuel Davis, FCBDD board President Michael Underwood, Ohio Developmental Disabilities Executive Director Carolyn Knight, Ohio Provider Resource Association Vice President Scott Marks, ARC Industries staff members and many others.



FCBDD Self-Advocate Advisory Council members



Amy Tracy



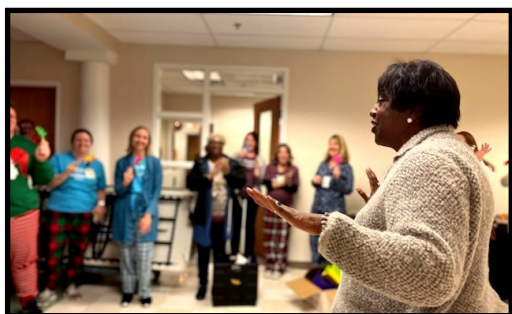
Ethan Boerner



Vaness Witcher



Christine Brown



Rebecca Love, who retired on Dec. 31, speaks to her staff on the last day of school before winter break. They had gathered for a clap-out to show their appreciation for all she has done during her 50 years with FCBDD as a speech pathologist, assistant director and longtime director of the Early Childhood Education program.

Lawton (cont'd from page 1)

Lawton received her PhD in Education from UCLA after earning degrees at Vanderbilt University in Special Education, Child Development, and Psychology as an Ingram Scholar.

“Kathy brings positive energy, confidence, curiosity, and a ‘big picture’ approach to her new role,” FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager said.

She replaces Rebecca Love, who retired at the end of 2023 after more than 50 years with the agency and three decades directing the Early Childhood Education program. “I know that I’m leaving things in very good hands,” Love said.

Lawton began working alongside Love this past fall. Lawton said she is impressed by the “many talented and dedicated staff at ECE” and has been “particularly touched by the difference that the ECE program makes for so many young lives and families across our community.”

Perspective on half a century of advocacy and progress

Jed Morison stepped down as Superintendent/CEO of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities on Dec. 31, 2023, after more than 54 years of public service. He wrote this to reflect on the tremendous progress made since he first began working in the developmental disabilities field.

54 years ago:

Educational services for children with disabilities were not mandated and often not provided. Today, services are required by law and most children are served in their neighborhood or specialized schools. Laws finally were passed at the federal and state levels in 1974-75 to mandate educational services for all children, regardless of disability.

Early childhood education services were not mandated for babies, toddlers and preschoolers with developmental delays. Today, early intervention and preschool services are mandated, with children and families receiving services at birth. Thankfully, it is now recognized that the greatest amount of brain development is in the first years of life, so intervention at a young age is very important.

Residential options for people with intellectual disabilities were limited to state-operated institutions, or large group homes. My first job assignment was to teach children at a school on the grounds of Columbus State Institute (now called Columbus Developmental Center). At the time, more than 2,000 people lived there. Today, most people are supported in their homes, whether that is their natural home, a home in the community with others, or an intermediate care facility in the community. Fewer than 100 people, all of whom have intensive needs, now live at Columbus Developmental Center.

People with disabilities had much shorter life spans. Those with certain disabilities, such as Down syndrome, might only live to their 30s. Today, thanks to advances in medical research and technology, people with disabilities are able to live healthier and longer lives.

Parents generally outlived their adult children with disabilities. Today, individuals with disabilities often survive their parents, or their parents' ability to provide care. The role of siblings or other family caregivers has become more important and common.

The system of care for people with developmental disabilities was under the direction of the Ohio Department of "Mental Hygiene and Correction" and County Boards of "Mental Retardation" were just two years old. Today, the 'R' word is gone and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities provides oversight, working in partnership with County Boards of Developmental Disabilities and providers to offer comprehensive, person-centered community based options for individuals and families.

Parents were working hard to establish community-based services for future generations. Today, parents and families are building on that success, continuing to advocate for improvements and options to guarantee the best for their loved ones.

Technology to support individuals with disabilities was limited. Today, options are plentiful, allowing for enhanced independence and safety. Motorized wheelchairs, remote supports, communication devices, security features with cameras and sensors, and adaptive devices for cars or vans are just some of the advances.

The Franklin County Board provided most services directly. Today, our community is enriched with services provided by the Board and many community organizations through public and private partnerships.

Thanks to the many individuals, family members, staff and others who have advocated for better services, we have made remarkable progress ensuring that people with disabilities are valued, contributing members of our communities. We are proud of how far we've come and look forward to all we have yet to do. -- Jed

*Jed with Special Olympian
Patty Bryant*



Woman with Tourette syndrome pens book to help others

Though she longed for fun and friends, Heather Hammel often spent her school days filled with dread.

"There are a lot of sounds and noises – and movements – that sometimes you just can't control," said Hammel, who has Tourette syndrome. "I got bullied all through school."

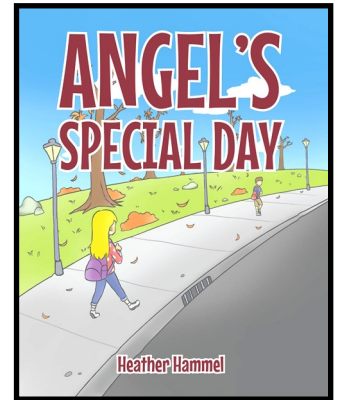
Now 36 and determined to help others, Hammel has written a book called *Angel's Special Day* about a young girl with Tourette syndrome who had begun to hate going to school. But life brightens for Angel when her family steps in to help other children understand her tics.

"By sharing my experiences, and what I went through, I'm trying to educate people about Tourette's and other disabilities," Hammel said. "People who don't know you might stare at you, give you dirty looks. I'm just trying to raise awareness."

According to the Tourette Association of America, the condition is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects children, adolescents and adults. It is characterized by sudden, involuntary movements or sounds called tics. The tics can range from mild to severe, and might wax and wane over time.

Common motor tics include eye blinking, head jerking and facial movements; common vocal tics are throat cleaning, sniffing and tongue clicking. Coprolalia, the involuntary utterance of socially unacceptable words and phrases, is relatively rare in people with Tourette and often doesn't persist, the association says.

Hammel's mother, Janice, said her daughter has made a lot of progress in the past few years and set her sights on writing a book. "I typed it for her, but the words are hers," Janice said. "She wanted to share some of her life because she felt there are things people could learn."



Heather Hammel

Angel's Special Day is an inspiring story, Janice said. "It speaks to a child being brave with their challenges, it speaks to being bullied, it speaks to parents working with their children to understand the problem and help others. I'm just really proud of her."

Heather said her journey also has included lots of physical and cognitive therapies. She's proud to have completed an 18-month certificate program at Columbus State Community College and hopes to find a job where she feels comfortable. She's devoted to her faith and family, loves scrapbooking, and considers herself "a shopaholic."

"She has some big goals, and that's great," said Anesia Johnson, a direct-support professional who works with Heather and is supporting her efforts to market her book.

Heather says she wants to educate people not only about Tourette syndrome, but about other conditions, too. "Disability is not inability," she said.

Angel's Special Day, published by Covenant Books, is available through bookstores or online from Apple iTunes, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble.

ECLC celebrates diversity of family heritage, culture

The Early Childhood Learning Community hosted its long running "International Night" celebration in November, highlighting the rich heritage of students and families.

Families from Central and South America, the Middle East, Far East and other global regions bring food to share, wear traditional clothing and take part in activities that showcase different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Darren Thompson, Assistant Director of Early Childhood Education at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, said staff members updated the school's push-pin dotted world map to mark the various home countries – at least 37 – of students and their families.

The celebration was launched about 30 years ago to embrace the multi-cultural dynamic at ECLC, which draws from a diverse area that includes many families connected to the Ohio State University.



Many families came to the celebration in traditional clothing.



Flag-making was a popular activity. The Lebanese flag has a cedar tree in the middle.

Good For You

Notable achievements in the FCBDD community

We appreciate the dedicated, efficient service of Tammy Fields, who retired at the end of 2023 after more than 24 years with the agency. Tammy did a great job as a supported living payment clerk in our Fiscal Department, and she was a wonderful colleague to many. Happy trails, Tammy!



Thanks to Gov. Mike DeWine and Lieutenant Gov. Jon Husted for issuing a proclamation recognizing Jed Morison, who retired as FCBDD Superintendent/CEO last month. And thanks to Kim Hauck, Director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, for personally delivering it. We're also grateful to the Franklin County Commissioners for their recent recognition of Jed's more than 50 years of public service.

Congratulations to all the Franklin County graduates, allies and supporters who attended the Project STIR leadership training last month in Columbus. FCBDD is proud to support this important program, which helps people with disabilities become strong leaders and advocates.

*Project STIR graduates, allies
& supporters*

Career Milestones

15 Years

Jennifer Hicks
Jennifer Hopkins

10 Years

Jodi Toth

5 Years

Laura Cummings
Laura Novak
Rachel Indurti



Staff spotlight

Teaching assistant Denise Henkel connects with families

Like many of the teaching assistants who have built rewarding careers at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Denise Henkel followed her child into the classroom.

Her adult daughter, Tiffany, has cerebral palsy. Henkel first visited the FCBDD Early Childhood Education and Family Center when Tiffany was little, and she remembers feeling deeply anxious about the tour.

"I thought it would be a scary place," Henkel said, smiling. "Of course it wasn't, and I was shocked at what I saw. I couldn't tell who was a peer and who had disabilities."

Both she and Tiffany quickly grew to love both the surroundings and the program. Henkel began serving as a substitute teaching assistant, and for the past 20 years has worked full-time at the FCBDD Early Childhood Learning Community on Rudy Road.

You work with very young children. Why do you enjoy that age group?

We have toddlers. With little ones, you can see so much growth at the end of the year. You think, 'Oh my gosh. They did so much, and I was a part of it.' It's wonderful.

As a parent of a person with a disability, you probably have a lot of insight into the experiences and emotions that families face.

I have had parents come in and say, 'I can't even say the words.' And all I can think to do is hold them. Whenever we have a family meeting, I sit on the side of the table with the parents, not across from them. I know how easy it is to feel like you're being judged, especially during those times when all you can do is make it through the day.



Denise Henkel

How is Tiffany doing?

She's great. She only has about 20 words, but she's a real social butterfly. We were able to get a walk-in tub for her, which is awesome. There are so many resources here in Franklin County.

You seem happy to have made a home at ECLC.

I live in Groveport and I really wasn't sure I wanted to drive that far to work. I decided to go for it and I love it here! We have families from so many different countries – it's like a little world here. The staff is close; we gather together for lunch every day. It's family.

Calendar

January, 2024

- 1 Happy New Year! All county facilities closed.
- 2 FCBDD early childhood and West Central classes resume.
- 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day -- all county facilities closed.
- 18 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.
- 24 Family Support meeting, Noon (12 p.m.) via Zoom. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details or click the following link to connect:
FCBDD Family Support Link:
<https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>
- 25 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Annual Organizational Board meeting and regular meeting, Noon (12 p.m.) at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.
FCBDD Board Meeting Link:
<https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>

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 **Dot Yeager**

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www.fcbdd.org



2024 Franklin County Provider & Community Resource Fair

**N Building
E Connections
W Balloons**

Save The Date!!

Wednesday, March 27th, 2024
11:00am- 7:00pm
The Kasich Building
17th Ave at I-71
The Ohio State Fairgrounds

Support Franklin County Special Olympics with a Polar Plunge

The Franklin County Flyers will be "Freezin' for a Reason" during this year's Special Olympics Ohio Polar Plunge fundraiser, which takes place on Feb. 10 at Lower.com Field.

Rather not jump into a pool of very cold water on a chilly winter day? You can still donate and help the Franklin County Special Olympics program fund activities throughout the year.

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 10, followed at 10:40 with the program, awards and costume contest. Plunging starts at 11 a.m.

To make a donation that supports the Flyers, go to:

<https://give.soooh.org/team/538411>

