

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

## New building, extended hours for Franklin County Provider Fair

The 2024 Franklin County Provider and Community Resource Fair is set for Wednesday, March 27, at the Ohio Expo Center and State Fairgrounds.

The event returns to the fairgrounds in a new building – Kasich Hall – and will be open three hours longer than in previous years: 11 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Organizers hope the additional time helps to accommodate family, work and school schedules so that even more people can attend. "It's a wonderful way to connect with the owners and staff of provider agencies," said Larry Macintosh, Director of Administrative Services and Support at the Franklin County board of Developmental Disabilities.

- Admission and parking are free; pedicab rides will be available.
- FCBDD service coordinators will be on site to assist.
- Kasich Hall is fully accessible and will be equipped with one universal changing table in a first-floor room.
- Food and drinks are available for purchase.
- Hundreds of providers and community resource organizations are expected to participate. Visitors can talk to vendors in person and learn about services such as remote support and the Ohio Shared Living Program.



Participants should plan on spending at least one hour at the event. Individuals and families receiving services can contact their service coordinator or reach out to Anne Watson at 614-342-5574 or [anne.watson@fcbdd.org](mailto:anne.watson@fcbdd.org); or Anne Russell at 614-342-5550 or [anne.russell@fcbdd.org](mailto:anne.russell@fcbdd.org).

## Polar Plunge a first for Franklin County wheelchair athlete

Max Damron didn't need much time to decide that he'd love to splash down in a pool of icy water on a chilly February day. Never mind that he uses a wheelchair and is prone to sinking.

More important, Damron said, is his reasoning: "I am a daredevil, I have a positive attitude, and I'm not afraid to try new things. And I love everything that my Special Olympics team has done for me."

Damron, 25, is set to become the first Franklin County Flyers wheelchair athlete to take the Columbus Polar Plunge on Feb. 10 at Lower.com field.

Ryan Phillips, Director of Special Olympics, Community Recreation & Aquatics at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, said Damron is pretty much fearless. His mom, however, wanted to make sure Phillips had a solid plan for quickly getting her son above the surface after his plunge.



"We're going to put some really quality safeguards in place," said Phillips, who also is a lifeguard. "Max can't wait. He's just so effervescent in his enthusiasm."

Making a bit of history while raising money for the Franklin County Special Olympics program is a point of pride for Damron, who competes in bocce and basketball skills for the Flyers. "When I heard that I could be the first athlete in a wheelchair to do the plunge, I was like, heck yeah," he said. "I know my coaches will have me safe and get me above water."

Damron enjoys promoting the Flyers and considers himself an ambassador for a program that has helped him become a vocal advocate for people with disabilities. "I want others to have the same opportunities as I do," he said.

To donate to Damron's fundraising page benefiting all Franklin County Special Olympics athletes, go to <https://give.soo.org/fundraiser/5145742>

## Anna Oscard retires; FCBDD welcomes new benefits coordinator



Anna Oscard retired at the end of January after spending 29 of her 31 years with the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities as the agency's in-house insurance coordinator.

"Believe it or not, I have bachelor's degrees in anthropology and philosophy – and most of the classes for accounting," Oscard said with a smile. "But I have enjoyed this. I learned a lot, and that helped me to help people."

Staying on top of frequent change was a big part of the job, she said. Insurance costs have risen over the years in both the private and public sectors, carriers often shift, and the Affordable Care Act has ushered in new rules and regulations. "I tried to provide as much information as possible, including a blog so that people could read and learn more," she said.

"Anna has always been ready for any challenge during the 21 years that we worked together – even tracking down handmade face masks in Amish country during the pandemic," FCBDD Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager said. "She consistently goes above and beyond."

Oscard also is a familiar voice to many central Ohio public radio fans as the host of *Toss the Feathers*, a Celtic music program airing Saturdays on WCBE 90.5 FM. She plans to continue producing the show from her home studio. "It's not just jigs and reels," said Oscard, whose husband, Doug, is a blues musician. "I don't limit myself."

She and her husband hope to do more traveling, including a long-awaited trip to Scotland. She's looking forward to time with family, friends, a young grandson and even the 29-year-old family turtle. "Now that I'll have time, I'm debating whether to get him a kiddie pool," she said.

Nicole Trocano succeeds Oscard as the new HR specialist-benefits coordinator, with an office in the Human Resources Department.

## FCBDD adds restroom with changing table; aims to fund others

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities is happy to report that the Johnstown Road building has been added to the Universal Changing Table Map created by the Inspired Access Foundation.

FCBDD has a newly remodeled family restroom that includes an adult-size, height-adjustable table and hoist. The restroom is open to the public.

The foundation's map is a great resource for families and people with mobility disabilities who need to find truly accessible bathrooms. To view the searchable changing table map, go to <http://tinyurl.com/2dkpmpxx>



FCBDD also hopes to help increase the number of universal changing tables throughout the Columbus area in 2024. The agency recently learned that it is expected to receive grant funding through the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities to help community organizations purchase changing tables.

Watch *Dateline* and follow FCBDD on social media for details about how organizations can apply for grant funding.

## First Medicaid provider rate increase takes effect; second set for July 1

Developmental disability service providers began billing at significantly higher Medicaid reimbursement rates on Jan. 1 and will see another increase on July 1.

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) said it expects the new rates to lead to higher wages for direct-support professionals throughout the state. Once the reimbursement rates are fully implemented, DODD said, the required provider data reporting should show that the average wage for DSPs in Ohio is at least \$18 per hour.

That hourly wage, however, is not mandatory. It is ultimately up to employers to decide how they use the higher rates, which will reflect a 38 percent increase after the second jump takes effect. "DODD strongly encourages providers to be transparent and communicate with DSPs about how increases are being used. DSPs should talk to their employers to understand what the increased reimbursement rates mean for them," the state said.

Ohio's current biennial budget invests an historic \$1.3 billion into provider rates to boost DSP wages and help stabilize the workforce. County boards also are providing funds for the initiative; the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities expects to allocate about \$9.7 million annually for the increase.

To read more from DODD on what the rate increases mean for DSPs, go to <http://tinyurl.com/mrxhsv88>

To read what the rates mean for providers, go to <http://tinyurl.com/5x2m4j8b>

## Good For You

### *Notable achievements in the FCBDD community*

Thanks to Service Coordination supervisor Nicholas Smith for the important presentation on "The Future is Now," a curriculum designed to help caregivers and their family members with a disability make plans for the future. And we appreciate all the many great presentations that are part of the ongoing HR Training Center at FCBDD!

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Shoutout to Crissy Conrad in Early Childhood Education for helping with a video that explains some of the wonderful work done by early-intervention specialists in the home-based program. To see Crissy in action, watch here: <http://tinyurl.com/mr3j9hwn>



## Career Milestones

### 20 Years

Jacqueline Garver  
Carla May

### 15 Years

Virginia Curtiss

### 5 Years

Julia Grant



## Central Ohio SDA to meet March 1 at Northside library

The Central Ohio Self Determination Association will host its next gathering from 10 a.m. to noon on March 1 at the Northside branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library, 1423 N. High St.

A newly revived of the Ohio Self Determination Association, the central Ohio group is open to self-advocates from Franklin, Delaware, Fairfield, Licking, Madison, Pickaway and Union counties. The March meeting will not include lunch.

Organizer Christine Brown said Ohio Medicaid representatives will be at the next meeting to discuss options for older workers (64 and above) who want to remain employed without losing Medicaid coverage.

During the January meeting, the group welcomed guests from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, Ohio Department of Transportation and GT Independence to talk about self-directed transportation. Many people who have Medicaid waivers through the developmental disabilities system can direct their own transportation by

using Uber, Lyft, cabs, public transit or even by hiring friends or relatives to drive them places.

People who want to know more should talk to their service coordinators because the option must be authorized in service plans, said Sarah Davies of GT Independence, a company that manages Ohio's self-directed transportation program. "It's really cool because it doesn't have to just be about work or appointments," she said. "It can just be, 'I have a need to be part of my community.'"

For more information about the Central Ohio SDA, email Brown at [Christine.Brown@osumc.edu](mailto:Christine.Brown@osumc.edu)



## Early Childhood staff hosts virtual events for families

Families, staff members and community partners are invited to take part in a series of online gatherings focused on a variety of early childhood topics, from educational advocacy to nutrition to autism.

Hosted by the Family Support Committee of the Early Childhood Education Partnership, the aim is to provide information, tools and tips to support parents and others caring for young children. Families also have opportunities to ask questions and engage with each other.

"Feedback from families who participate has been really positive; 100 percent said they're glad they were there," said Lauren Keller, audiologist in the Early Childhood Education program at the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

The idea for the gatherings, which usually take place every other month, stems from interviews with families during a summer retreat. "We asked, 'What more would you like from us?'" Keller said, and many responded that trainings, information sessions or workshops would be helpful.

Sessions run from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Two more are scheduled for this school year, on March 13 (nutrition) and May 8 (understanding/navigating autism).

**Meeting links and passcodes will be shared with school families and posted on FCBDD social media before the event.**



# Calendar

February, 2024

- 10 Polar Plunge at Lower.com field, 96 Columbus Crew Way, 9:30 a.m. Registration begins, Awards at 10:40 a.m. and approximately 11:00 a.m. Plunging begins!



- 15 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.
- 19 President's Day -- all county facilities closed.
- 22 Franklin County Board of Developmental Board meeting, 12:30 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

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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)



## Register now for DD Awareness and Advocacy Day

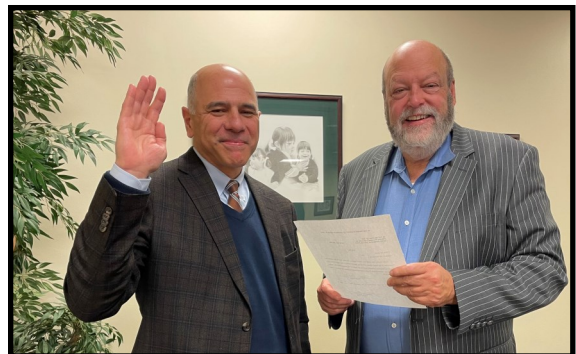
This year's Developmental Disability (DD) Awareness and Advocacy Day is set for March 24 at the Ohio Statehouse.

All participants, including care and support providers, must register for the event. Attendance is limited to 400 at the Statehouse; those who cannot attend in person can view the event online.

The annual event aims to educate and empower Ohioans with developmental disabilities, their family members and other community allies to come together on a single day to advocate policy issues that affect the lives of people with disabilities.

Participants also have the opportunity to sign up for online meetings with Ohio legislators.

DD Awareness and Advocacy Day is funded by a grant from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council. The 2024 grant recipient is LMK Advocacy. For information about the event or to register, go to <https://ddohio.wordpress.com>



**Franklin County Probate Judge Jeffrey D. Mackey, right, came to the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities to deliver the oath of office to new board member Dean Fadel. Fadel is returning to the board after previously serving three terms. New member Karen Wilkins also was sworn in last month.**