

# Dateline

November 2024

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

## Register by Nov. 18 for Project STIR training



Franklin County DD and the Ohio Self Determination Association invite self-advocates to attend a three-day Project STIR Leadership training, taught by and for people with disabilities.

Project STIR (Steps Toward Independence and Responsibility) helps people learn to speak up, connect, empower themselves and others, plan for the future and take more control over their lives. This year's training takes place Dec. 10-12 at the Marriott Columbus Northwest.

"It's a life-changing experience," said Marci Straughter, a self-advocate who has been involved with Project STIR since 2011. "It opens up a lot of doors for you. It's taught me how to speak up for myself, and learn my rights and responsibilities."

In 2022, Straughter became the first person with developmental disabilities to serve as a member of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Franklin County DD is helping to cover the \$700 fee so that county residents can attend the training at a reduced rate. The registration fee also can be paid through SELF and Level 1 Medicaid waivers with authorization. Participants with disabilities are encouraged to bring an ally to take part in the training with them at no additional cost.

For the discount rate, Franklin County residents must register by Nov. 18 at: <https://forms.office.com/r/3HGWP7NtKK>

Questions? Email [crystal.schneider@fcbdd.org](mailto:crystal.schneider@fcbdd.org)

## Help the Guardianship Service Board fulfill wish lists

The Franklin County Guardianship Service Board (GSB) is turning to the public for help providing holiday gifts to a record number of clients.

Each year, the GSB promotes a Holiday Wish List gift drive to make sure that everyone served by the board receives at least one gift during the holiday season. "We have finally reached 500 clients this year, so our need is the highest it's ever been," said Aimee Somerville, GSB outreach coordinator.

The GSB serves as the guardian of last resort to people with people who have intellectual disabilities, mental impairments, dual diagnoses, or are medically fragile. Some don't have family or friend support and look forward to the gift drive all year, Somerville said.

Simple gifts bring big smiles and positive memories, as most clients receive just \$35 to \$50 a month for discretionary spending on hygiene products, clothing, snacks, entertainment and other items and activities.

Gifts for the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Holiday Wish List Gift Drive can be purchased online through Amazon or Target for delivery to the agency's office:

<https://a.co/17vMGzx>

<https://www.target.com/gift-registry/gift/gsb-2024-wishlist>

Donors also can email [guardianshipserviceboard@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:guardianshipserviceboard@franklincountyohio.gov) to coordinate a drop off of newly purchased items and gift cards. GSB staff members wrap and deliver the gifts.



# Franklin County DD community honors Star Award winners

Nearly 400 people gathered on October 16 for the Community Star Awards, an annual celebration of people and organizations whose advocacy and contributions make them champions in the Franklin County DD community.

The event – a fundraiser benefiting the Citizens Committee for Persons with DD – featured a new setting, hosts and entertainment. Held at the Hilton Polaris, the Blue Spectrum Band performed. Self-advocate and Special Olympian Nikei Tyler teamed up with Ryan Phillips, Franklin County DD Director of Communications, Advocacy and Community Relations, to cohost.



“When you put that many incredible people in the same room, the stories are humbling,” Phillips said. “It’s amazing how much great work is being done.”

Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager congratulated the Star Award winners and also paid tribute to board members Marie Crawford and John Bickley, who are leaving the board in January after 12 years of service.

The 2024 Star Awards sponsors were ARC Industries, Creative Housing, Goodwill Columbus and the Ohio State University Nisonger Center.



Co-hosts Nikei Tyler and Ryan Phillips



Monica Wangler (center) Community Star award winner for Volunteer/Good Neighbor



Mariann Brush (center) Community Star Award winner for Direct Support Professional



Jane Taylor, Community Star Award winner for Self-Advocate/Person Served



Darla Hodo, Community Star Award for Transportation Staff



Dale Pugh, Community Star Award for School Staff



Self-Advocate Christine Brown, Board Secretary Marci Straughter and President/CEO of Creative Housing, Inc. Critty Buenconsejo



Pam & Mike Doles - Community Star Award winners for Parent/Family Member with Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager and Board Secretary Marci Straughter



Carol Beverage - Community Star Award winner for Early Childhood staff

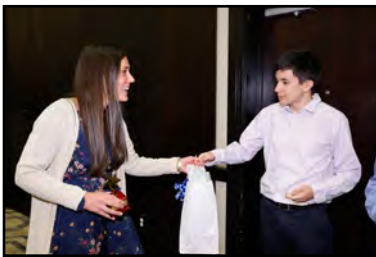


Service Coordination staff members Karin Crabbe and Anne Russell



Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager, Debbie New - Community Star Award winner for Administrative/Supervisory Staff and Board Vice President Samuel Davis

# BLUE SPECTRUM



*Stephanie Perez, Community Star Award winner for Service Coordination staff, congratulated by young person*



*Columbus Zoo & Aquarium, Community Star Award winner for Employer. North America Head Keeper Josh Keller, zoo employee Aidan with Crispix congratulated by Board Vice President Samuel Davis and Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager.*



*Early Childhood staff shenanigans!*



*Community Star winner for Provider Organization Upreach, LLC - Congratulations!*

## Good For You

*Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community*

We're super grateful to all the Liberty Mutual Insurance employees who took part in a Build-a-Wheelchair event, resulting in the donation of 18 new Drive models for use by people served by Franklin County DD. A big shoutout to Max Damron, our ambassador for the event, and to Jim Franke in maintenance for the pickup and delivery.



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Thanks to the MJB Foundation for purchasing a beautiful wagon for one of our families, making it much easier for a young child and his mom to explore their neighborhood safely! Founded in memory of Meghan Joy Brochowski, who attended our Early Childhood program, the MJB Foundation helps families by providing or sharing the cost of items such as bicycles, iPads, hearing aids and standers.

Congrats to our wonderful Special Olympics staff, who celebrated the hard work and accomplishments of our Flyers athletes – plus the dedication of volunteer coaches – during the annual Sports Banquet. Good people, good food, and even a little dancing!



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Prompt action and quick thinking by Service Coordination and Community Engagement Supervisor Anne Russell recently helped to secure life-saving medical attention for a staff member. So glad you were there, Anne.

## Career Milestones

**35 Years**  
Jennifer Crawford

**30 Years**  
Albert Bain

**20 Years**  
Kevin Jones

**15 Years**  
Wendy Kornell

**5 Years**  
Ellen Baker  
Javean Douglas  
Andrea Goodwin  
Trevor Stone  
Pamela Waite  
Trisha Young



# DSP honored for service, dedication to disability community

When it comes to navigating activities and challenges of daily life – whether big, small or somewhere in between – Chris Melvin knows he can count on Amadou Sow to help him succeed.

“Amadou’s title is Direct Support Professional, but he’s so much more,” Melvin said. To him and his roommate, Wallace Peck, Sow is a friend, role model, counselor, nurse, taxi driver, personal shopper and fishing buddy. “And the list goes on,” Melvin said.

Sow recently was named the 2024 Direct Support Professional (DSP) of the year by the Ohio Alliance of Direct Support Professionals and by the Ohio Provider Resource Association. Both Melvin, who nominated him, and Sow’s colleagues at the nonprofit provider agency Open Door Columbus say they are grateful for his dedication and example.

“Amadou is amazing,” said Open Door CEO Becky Sharp.



A native of Guinea in West Africa, Sow has been working as a DSP since 2003. “To be in this field, you have to be a nice person, and you have to be very patient,” he said. “The job is not easy, but if you love it, you will adapt and learn. And I have.”

Sow said he simply treats the people he serves as he would want to be treated. That means making sure Melvin, Peck and others can be a part of their communities and advocate for themselves. “What is important to me is for them to be able to participate in life,” Sow said. “I want them to be happy.”

Peck, an artist whose work is represented by Open Door, loves being a part of Sow’s life, too. “We’re a family,” he said. “We help each other.”

## Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

**Marie Crawford**, President

To contact the Board President by e-mail:  
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**Marci Straughter**, Secretary

**John Bickley**

**Dean Fadel**

**Michael Underwood**

**Karen Wilkins**

Superintendent/CEO **Dot Yeager**

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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)



## Calendar

### November, 2024

- 5 Election Day.
- 11 Veteran’s Day, all county facilities closed.
- 13 Family Support meeting via Zoom at Noon (12 p.m.)  
Meeting is open to all family members.  
**FCBDD Family Support Link:**  
<https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>
- 21 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 Franklin County Board of Developmental Board committee meetings and regular board meeting.  
Board meeting to begin at **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>
- 28 Thanksgiving Day - all county facilities closed.
- 29 Thanksgiving Recess - Early Childhood and school classes and offices of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities closed.

