



Dateline

December 2024

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

ARC boosts programming, and fun, with tech

In his physical therapy role, Wes Patton often leaned into technology to help motivate his patients. "People will try harder at a game than they will at traditional exercise," he said. "And there's research to back that up."

Patton keeps that thought at the forefront of his work as emerging tech consultant for ARC Industries, a local disability-service provider that has enhanced its tech programming through grants from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and the Columbus Foundation.

He and ARC staff members use motion-sensor video games, virtual-reality headsets, adaptive controllers, and even an AI-powered humanoid robot to engage people in fun activities that also have physical and cognitive benefits. "It's interesting stuff," Patton said. "I'm so glad I've found my way onto this path."

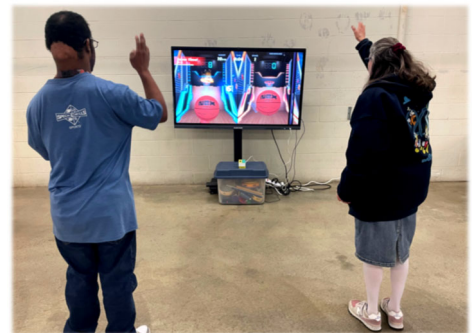
When assessments showed that many ARC adult day services participants were at risk of falls, Patton focused on tech options that encourage movement and quick reactions. Motion-sensor games can promote exercise by allowing people to virtually shoot baskets, hit a ball or run in place. "Anything we can do to get people out of their seats and moving is a good thing," he said.

Pepper the robot can engage in conversation, answer questions, dance, sing, and she has an interactive touch screen. "Pepper can provide cognitive recognition activities, which fits into our aging curriculum," said Amanda Smith, Chief Services Officer for ARC.

Tech activities also can take some pressure off busy staff members, Patton said. "When four or five people can play something at once, it gives staff time to do other things."

Franklin County DD board member Marci Straughter, a self-advocate who also serves as an Ohio Tech Ambassador, said tech is important for everyone.

Even people with very limited mobility are trying new activities at ARC. One young man was overjoyed to discover how much movement he could generate on screen. "The smile on his face?" Patton said. "I was so happy, too."



On a recent "Tech Tuesday" at ARC West, participants chat with Pepper the robot and play motion-sensor video games.

ARC received a grant from the Columbus Foundation to help purchase the humanoid robot, plus funding from the state's ADS (Adult Day Support) Quality Pilot for Pepper and a tech consultant.

First Franklin County DD Trunk or Treat a big hit



More than 400 people turned out for the first-ever Franklin County DD Trunk or Treat, an event that's likely to return next year.

"It was great to see so many people from so many different backgrounds," said Jeremy Pauley, who initiated the idea and served as a co-sponsor through his nonprofit organization, Developmental Assist. "Everyone was getting along, having fun, and hey – who doesn't like candy?"

Creative Housing | Creative Renovations also co-sponsored the accessible, disability-friendly Trunk or Treat, held outside the Franklin County DD administration building on Johnstown Road. Trunk or Treaters of all ages dressed up and visited the dozens of vehicles passing out candy, healthful treats and non-food items.

"I kept looking back and the line was getting longer and longer," Pauley said. "I thought it was great."



Ohio DD Council seeking survey participants

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council is calling on the disability community to weigh in on plans for the future.

The council's state plan public survey gathers input from people with developmental disabilities, their family members, and community stakeholders throughout the state to help guide its next five-year state plan for 2027-2031.

By taking part in the survey, people can focus on issues that matter most to them. Community voices are essential to improving independence and inclusion for Ohioans with DD.



The survey is available in English, Spanish and Somali, and is open through Dec. 31.

To take part, visit: <https://ddc.ohio.gov/home/news-and-events/all-news/oddc-five-year-state-plan-public-survey>

Columbus Zoo hosts sensory-friendly Santa event

The Columbus Zoo is hosting a sensory-friendly Santa experience from noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 8.

Visitors can meet Santa Claus in an environment designed for sensory comfort, with reduced sounds, decreased visual stimulation and much smaller crowds. Ticket availability for the event is limited; families are admitted every 15 minutes. Cost is \$5 per group, with a maximum of six people per group.

Sensory kits with noise-cancelling headphones, sunglasses, and fidget devices can be checked out for the day at no additional cost. Paid zoo admission is not required, but after the Santa event, guests can visit the zoo using their membership or paid admission.



To purchase tickets: [Sensory-Friendly Santa Experience | Columbus Zoo and Aquarium](#)

For accessibility resources at the zoo: [Accessibility | Columbus Zoo and Aquarium](#)

Best Buddies seeking Franklin County friendship matches



Best Buddies is recruiting participants to take part in a one-to-one friendship program for Franklin County adults with and without developmental disabilities.

Franklin County DD board members recently approved grant funding to renew the Best Buddies Citizens project, which aims to support at least 20 "buddy pairs" in the community. Because people with disabilities sometimes face a decline in social opportunities after leaving school, Best Buddies Citizens focuses on helping adults of all ages develop friendships and engage in public life.

"Being matched with Ashley has been great!" said Kelly, who joined Best Buddies Citizens when it launched in Franklin County in 2023. "I appreciate Ashley's sense of humor and her contagious positivity."

Participants must be over 18 and willing to commit to at least a one-year friendship. Buddy pairs are expected to get together in person at least once a month, and maintain weekly contact.

To learn more, contact ohio@bestbuddies.org or apply at <https://bestbuddies.org/join>

Good For You

Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community

Congratulations to Maddy Katz for receiving the Achievement Award at this year's Synergy conference. Maddy is a dedicated volunteer for many local organizations, and is especially passionate about food assistance. She helps pantries, organizes food drives and conducts food "rescues," delivering restaurant surplus to those in need. Way to go, Maddy!



Career Milestones

30 Years
Troy Gussler
Kevin Yuhas

20 Years
Amanda Dingess

10 Years
Nicole Bond
Craig Derksen

5 Years
Jamie McGee
Rebecca Shaheen
James Williams



Thanks to Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks and Jeremiah's Corner for giving our West Central School students the opportunity to try out the new inclusive playground at Blendon Woods Metro Park. There are double-wide ramps, a zip line, swings, spinners and more. We're looking forward to the official opening next spring!

The Franklin County Combined Charitable Campaign is making another big push for contributions on Giving Tuesday, which falls on December 3 this year. Thanks to all who have donated so far. Any Franklin County employee who hasn't yet given can visit the [ePledge](#) online portal.

We're grateful once again for the donation of warm outerwear from Coats 4 Children, a local nonprofit that distributes outerwear through schools and community organizations. The coats are a big help to families in need.



ECLC embraces rich tapestry of cultures

The Franklin County DD Early Childhood Learning Community (ECLC) celebrated the globe-spanning diversity of its students and families during International Night, an annual gathering that takes place in November just before Thanksgiving.

ECLC draws from an area near the Ohio State University known for its mix of cultures. The school has long had a photo-covered map of the world hanging by the entrance, and staff update it each year to mark the many different home countries of families whose children attend the program.

"Here, you literally have people from all over the world," said Teresa Johnson, an associate director in the Early Childhood Education program. "The amount of diversity is amazing – and wonderful."

Families from the Middle East, Far East, South Asia, Central and South America, and more brought food to share for a potluck dinner. Many children also wore traditional clothing.

Daniela Kallmann, a native of Mexico who teaches in the Head Start program at ECLC, looks forward to International Night all year. She helped recruit a mariachi band that provided lively entertainment and inspired young students to sing and dance. "I'm a person who likes to learn," Kallman with a smile. "And I learn so much from the kids here."



Calendar

December, 2024

- 4-6 OACB (Ohio Association of County Boards) Annual Convention at the Easton Hilton.
- 10-12 Project STIR training at the Marriott Columbus Northwest.
- 12 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 Self-Advocate Advisory Council at 10 a.m. 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus. For more details, contact Ryan Phillips (ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org) or by phone at 614-342-5984.
- 23 Winter Recess begins for Early Childhood Education center-based programs and West Central School. Classes resume Monday, January 6, 2025.
- 25 Merry Christmas!



Dateline

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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.

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www.fcbdd.org



Sign up for weather-related closure alerts

People with disabilities, their families, guardians and staff members can register for text alerts to be notified of Franklin County DD weather-related closings.



Messages also will be broadcast on local radio and television stations.

To register for text alerts, send an email to emergencyalerts@fcbdd.org and respond to the prompts. You will be asked to give your name, telephone text number and email address. You will receive registration instruction via email to activate emergency text alerts from Franklin County DD.

Note: If you have registered for text alerts previously, you do not need to do so again.

Even when Franklin DD facilities are closed, staff members are never out of reach. If a matter is urgent and requires an immediate response, the after-hours line at 614-464-2743 is always answered.

Self-advocates invited to December meeting

The Franklin County DD Self-Advocate Advisory Council is hosting its last meeting of the year at 10 a.m. Thursday, December 19.

The council has been working to expand its membership and reach, getting more people with developmental disabilities engaged in advocacy.

The December meeting, at Franklin County DD administrative offices at 2879 Johnstown Rd, includes a pizza party. For more information or to attend, email ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org by Monday, December 16.

Support the Freezin' Flyers in the 2025 Polar Plunge

The Franklin County Special Olympics program has launched its 2025 Polar Plunge fundraising drive, seeking donations, teams and brave jumpers for the annual cold-water plunge.

The event is set for Saturday, February 8, on Chase Plaza a Lower.com Field. Check-in starts at 9:30 a.m.; program and awards are at 10:40 a.m., with the plunge immediately following around 11 a.m.

Money raised for the Freezin' Flyers benefits Franklin County Flyers Special Olympics athletes. Supporters who raise \$100 receive an exclusive Flyers long-sleeve Polar Plunge t-shirt.

Join the team today at: <https://support.soo.org/goto/FreezinFlyers>