

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

Franklin County DD welcomes board members, elects officers

Three people with deep experience in disability issues and advocacy are the newest members of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Franklin County Commissioners appointed Rebecca Swartz, Katherine Silver Kelly and Gene Harshaw to four-year terms on the agency board. They took their seats at the January meeting, where members also elected Dean Fadel board president and Marci Straughter as vice president.

Swartz has an adult daughter, Taylor, who receives services from Franklin County DD. Taylor is a graduate of West Central School and Transition Services and has been alongside her mom as an advocate, recently helping to raise community awareness about the need for universal changing tables in public restrooms.



Becky Swartz and Taylor

Swartz said she's excited to be a part of the board, "where my advocacy experience and knowledge as a special needs mother can be used for the greater good of Ohioans with disabilities." She is a Capital University graduate, account specialist at the Defense Logistics Agency and lives in the Hilliard area.

Kelly is a longtime coach with the Franklin County Special Olympics program. She is a law professor at the Ohio State University, former special education teacher and lives in the Beechwood neighborhood.



Katherine Silver Kelly

While her experience with Special Olympics has given her some insight into the agency's work, she's eager to learn and do more. Franklin County DD "has the awesome responsibility of being the bridge between the individuals and families it serves and the community," Kelly said. "Simply put, the support and services provided make it possible for individuals with developmental disabilities to thrive as part of the community."

Harshaw is an insurance consultant, volunteer and parent leader in the local autism community. The Gahanna resident also works closely with his son Zayne, an award-winning musician who launched the Blue Spectrum band. "For the past 25 years, I've been a part of the community, teaching my adult son how to advocate for himself," Harshaw said. "That transitioned into helping other parents."

Swartz and Kelly were appointed to replace longtime board members Marie Crawford and John Bickley, both of whom served the maximum three terms. Harshaw succeeds Samuel Davis, who left the board in January at the end of his term.



Gene Harshaw and Zayne

State asks for input on OhioISP

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities is seeking feedback on the OhioISP (Individual Service Plan), the standardized template now used for service plan documents in Franklin and all Ohio counties.

State officials say they want to build on OhioISP successes and work to make the processes better. "We recognize that no system is perfect, and there's always room for growth," the department said. "That's why DODD invites you to share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions to improve the OhioISP template and process."

People with developmental disabilities, families, providers, system professionals and others are invited to weigh in. To share your input:

Take a brief survey: Share your feedback based on your role in the system. Your input will directly inform updates to the OhioISP. Complete the survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q2XB6ZZ>

Join an in-person feedback session: Attend a session to discuss your suggestions directly with DODD and other participants. Register at this link for one of the remaining February sessions:

<http://reg.planetreg.com/E110103128131254>.

Longtime ECE staff member Laura Billingham retires

Laura Billingham, who first connected with Franklin County DD as a young volunteer then built a career in the Early Childhood Education program that spanned four decades, retired at the end of January.

She worked alongside former ECE director Rebecca Love, her good friend and former neighbor, as administrative assistant until Love retired at the end of 2023. "She just offered so much – she was my right hand," Love said. "But her loyalty extended beyond me. It went to this agency."

Billingham said it's been wonderful to watch the program grow from its beginnings in churches and school buildings to a thriving community partnership with both center- and home-based services. "Everybody's joyful," she said. "The environment has always been so friendly and helpful and inviting."

Throughout her long career, dependability and joy in helping staff have been Billingham's hallmarks, Franklin County DD Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager said. "Laura was especially instrumental in the first year of the COVID 19 pandemic, when we abruptly shifted to a part-virtual, part-in person classroom schedule," she said.

Billingham's own two daughters were peer models in the preschool; one became a speech pathologist and the other is a special education teacher. "Laura knows the work, she knows the community, and the community knows and respects her," Love said. "Trust was there. And that's probably the highest of gifts in a relationship, whether personal or professional."

Billingham plans to spend more time with her family but won't be a stranger. "We had fun, and I know that will continue," she said. "ECE is strong and has so many good people."



Save the date for legislative advocacy

The Franklin County DD Self-Advocate Advisory Council is hosting its 2025 Legislative Advocacy Day on Friday, April 4.

The event takes place every other year and offers an opportunity for people with developmental disabilities, their families and supporters to meet central Ohio legislators and share concerns about issues affecting the disability community.

This year's gathering is from 10 a.m. until noon April 4 at the Columbus Metropolitan Library, 96 S. Grant Ave. in Downtown Columbus. The building is accessible, and parking will be free. If additional accommodations are needed, please email ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org or call 614-342-5984.

Franklin County's event follows DD Awareness and Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse on March 4. In-person registration for that event is full; visit dohio.wordpress.com to sign up for online attendance.



Ohio rest areas slated for universal changing stations

The first of 29 planned universal changing stations at Ohio rest areas has opened in Fayette County, at both northbound and southbound rest areas in Jeffersonville.

Gov. Mike DeWine recently joined leaders from Changing Spaces Ohio, an organization that advocates for universal changing tables in public venues, for the ribbon cutting.



Another 17 universal changing stations are to open at other Ohio rest areas in 2025, and 10 more by the end of 2026.

"This will open doors to so many more people across our state who need a safe and dignified place to change while traveling," said Changing Spaces Ohio co-leaders Kim Kirkwood and Jennifer Corcoran.

"Our sons inspired our advocacy work, but by building partnerships across the state, countless more people will benefit. We are proud that Ohio is leading the nation in investments in universal changing tables and hope other states are inspired by our success."

Learn more:

<https://www.changingspacescampaign.com/ohio>

Next Chapter pens book that promotes self-advocacy

Next Chapter Book Club, a community-based literacy program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, has released an interactive, easy-to-read book that helps to promote self-advocacy.

What Do You Want on Your Pancakes? is a collection of eleven short stories and one play. All relate to one of the book's five themes, including decision-making, relationships and problem-solving. Activities for each story can be accessed via QR code.

"This is a book for everyone," said Desirea Doolin, executive director for Chapters Ahead Inc., the Columbus-based nonprofit that assists hundreds of Next Chapter Book Clubs in the United States, Canada and Australia. "Whether you're in a classroom and you want to work on these skills, whether you want to engage, or if you just want to read a good book – we hope that there's something for everyone."

Two years in the making, the book is a collaborative effort that aims to address what the authors say is a shortage of literature that addresses adult issues and experiences, yet is meaningful for readers of all levels. "We do have people with disabilities as the main characters, but the themes are universal," Doolin said.

Next Chapter was founded in 2002 by Tom Fish, who is retired after many years as a faculty member and administrator at the Ohio State University Nisonger Center. Fish authored several of the stories in *What Do You Want on Your Pancakes?*

The book is available from Barnes and Noble and Amazon.



Support Franklin County Special Olympics in the Polar Plunge

There's still time to make a donation to support Franklin County athletes and teams taking part in the 2025 Polar Plunge fundraising drive.

The annual cold-water plunge is set for Saturday, February 8, on Chase Plaza at Lower.com Field. Check in starts at 9:30 a.m. followed by the program and awards at 10:40 a.m., and the plunge around 11 a.m.

Money raised for the Freezin' Flyers benefits Franklin County Flyers Special Olympics athletes.

Give today at:

<https://support.soooh.org/goto/FreezinFlyers>



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- Greater empathy, compassion and understanding regarding differences

**COMMUNITY
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Where:
ECEFC
2879 Johnstown Road
Columbus, Ohio 43219



ECLC
4141 Rudy Road
Columbus, Ohio 43214



Hours of Operation:
Tuesday- Friday
AM: 8:30 - 11:40
PM: 12:50 - 4:00



www.fcdd.org/ece

For more information please call: 614-342-5801

Good For You

Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community

Thanks to everyone who helped our agency introduce our new logo – plus an easier way to say our name – by appearing in a new video. We have a lot of stars who did a great job showcasing the wonderful abilities and diversity of our community! If you haven't yet watched, you can view the video here:

<https://youtu.be/1loBfBqEVmE?feature=shared>



We love seeing so many advocates come out and make their voices heard at our newly expanded Franklin County DD Self-Advocacy meetings! Join us from 10 a.m. to noon on Thursday, March 13, at the administration building, 2879 Johnstown Rd.

Career Milestones

25 Years
Christy Ramin

20 Years
Dotti Ellingsworth

5 Years
Jason Justice
l'easha Lawrence



Hats off to Emily Castle, president of Franklin Imaging and a caregiver representative on the Franklin County Family and Children First Council, for her extraordinary generosity. When she heard that the Worthington Resource Pantry needed a new location, Emily worked out a deal on a lease and is giving the pantry half of Franklin Imaging's operations building. Way to serve the community, Emily! And thanks to the *Columbus Dispatch* for highlighting her kindness.



Worthington Resource Pantry

Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Dean Fadel, President

To contact the Board President by e-mail:
boardpresident@fcbdd.org

Marci Straughter, Vice President

Karen Wilkins, Secretary

Gene Harshaw

Katherine Silver Kelly

Becky Swartz

Michael Underwood

Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager

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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Information about Franklin County DD is always available on the internet at:

www.fcbdd.org



Calendar

February, 2025

- 4 Public Hearing on Franklin County DD's Annual Action Plan and IDEA at 5 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Rd. For a copy of the plan, please send request to amy.magginis@fcbdd.org. To connect to the hearing by phone, call 1-929-205-6099 or log onto Zoom and use meeting number 488 125 2353, passcode is fcbdd2020.

<https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>

- 17 President's Day -- all county facilities closed.
- 19,20 Charting the LifeCourse beginners workshop supported by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, the Family Resource network of Ohio and the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce. Registration required.
- 20 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.
- 27 Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board meeting, at 5 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus. Committees to meet at 4 p.m. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.

FCBDD Board Meeting Link:
<https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>