

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

Changing table grants making community more accessible

Before she finalized plans for her 17-year-old daughter to dress up princess-style at a Night to Shine prom, Shauna Wilson had question for the host church: "Do you have an adult changing table?"

The answer was a relief to Wilson and many others who attended the event at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church. "We had a crowd of 200, and at least 30 in wheelchairs," said Tonya Riedel, disability ministry director at the church. "It was wonderful that we had the ability to accommodate everyone."

Upper Arlington Lutheran is among 15 organizations and public venues to receive a grant from Franklin County DD to support the addition of universal changing tables in restrooms and changing areas. The agency awarded more than \$170,000 over the past year, resulting in the purchase of 23 tables.

"Public places that provide this option help make our community more inclusive for all," said Franklin County DD Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager. "We're thrilled that our grant program was a success."

Funding was provided by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities as part of a \$4.4 million effort to boost changing tables throughout the state.

"It means so much to go to an activity and not have to worry about how she'll go to the bathroom," said Wilson, whose daughter, Ella, uses a wheelchair. "She was all dressed up – a princess – for Night to Shine, and I wasn't going to have her sitting in a wet diaper."

Franklin County DD grants are supporting changing tables at various venues, from the Ohio Theatre to Dublin's Bridge Park to the OSU Schottenstein Center. A full list will be shared as projects are complete and open to the public.

To learn more, or for a searchable map of table locations in Ohio, visit <https://www.changingspacescampaign.com/ohio>



UPDATE on the 2025 Franklin County Provider Fair!

Due to widespread construction at the Ohio Expo Center, Franklin County DD will not host the annual Provider and Community Resource Fair this spring.

We expect our event to return, better than ever, in late August or early September.

Stay tuned for the date and details!



Self-advocates invited to celebrate DD Awareness Month

Whether you're an experienced self-advocate, new to the effort, or just interested in learning more, the Franklin County DD Self-Advocate Advisory Council would love to see you at its March meeting.

"March is DD Awareness Month, so we'll celebrate with some special activities," said Ryan Phillips, Director of Communications, Advocacy and Community Relations. "It would be great to have people share a few words about what inclusion means to them."

The council has been working to expand its membership and is open to all self-advocates receiving services from Franklin County DD.

The gathering is set for 10 a.m. to noon on March 13 at Franklin County DD, 2879 Johnstown Rd. A pizza lunch will be provided. To RSVP or for more information, email ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org

ARC Industries to open autism therapy clinic for children

ARC Industries is launching an autism therapy franchise in central Ohio, with the first clinic set to open in Whitehall this spring.

ARC Autism Services, LLC is the new subsidiary of ARC that will introduce a Success on the Spectrum (SOS) franchise. Founded by a parent and advocate in Houston, SOS specializes in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy for children with autism age 18 months to 18 years.



“For over 60 years, ARC’s mission has been to empower individuals with disabilities and help them realize their full potential,” said Bob Gaston, CEO of ARC Industries. “By launching the SOS franchise, we aim to increase access to top-quality ABA therapy, enabling children on the autism spectrum to thrive.”

ARC Autism Services will operate its clinic with a focus on personalized care plans, enhanced parent and community engagement, and advocacy for autism awareness, the organization said. The Whitehall clinic will offer ABA, speech and occupational therapies tailored to meet each child’s needs.

Amanda Smith, ARC Chief Services Officer, also will oversee SOS operations and lead the expansion of SOS clinics throughout the Midwest.

Families seeking more information can visit [Whitehall - Success on the Spectrum](https://www.whitehall-sos.com) or email whitehall@successonthespectrum.com

Register now for Best Buddies Friendship Walk in Columbus



Columbus is among dozens of sites around the globe hosting a Best Buddies Friendship Walk, a fundraiser and event that supports inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Money raised helps local programs empower people with developmental disabilities to form meaningful friendships with peers, secure jobs, improve communication and advocacy skills, and live more independently. Best Buddies also offers support to families as it strives to make the world more welcoming for people with developmental disabilities.

This year’s event is set for Saturday, April 26, at Boundless Health, 445 E. Dublin-Granville Rd. Check-in starts at 10:30 a.m., and the celebration lasts until 1 p.m.

Register at [Best Buddies Friendship Walk: Columbus](https://www.bestbuddies.org/registration)

Reminder

Local Legislative Advocacy Day set for April 4

Self-advocates, families and others in the central Ohio disability community are invited to attend the 2025 Legislative Advocacy Day, hosted by the Franklin County DD Self-Advocate Advisory Council and the Ohio Self Determination Association.

The event takes place every other year and offers an opportunity to meet central Ohio legislators and share concerns about issues affecting the disability community. Kim Hauck, director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, will present on the state’s biennial budget.

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, or for more information, please email ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org or call 614-342-5984.



Therapy dog making new friends at West Central School

Blondie isn't yet top dog at West Central School, but she's doing her best to ease into the job. The 5-year-old Labrador/golden retriever cross often works alongside Franklin County DD's veteran facility dog, Lion, who is set to retire later this spring.

West Central intervention specialist Patti Saniei-Banrey jokes that "Blondie is the little sister Lion never asked for."

The two look much alike but have different backgrounds: Lion is a trained service dog, while Blondie is a certified therapy dog approved to work in school settings. Like Lion, Blondie started out with Canine Companions, but she had a little trouble sticking with some of the commands. "She decided that being a service dog was not her passion," said Saniei-Banrey, who later adopted the younger dog. "She's a lover."



Blondie arrives at school eager for affection and attention. "She's very happy to greet everybody," Saniei-Banrey said, and enjoys taking part in the walking group activity. She's getting used to navigating around wheelchairs.

Lion makes it clear he's still the expert, and occasionally intercepts Blondie if he wants in on the action. But after seven years of facility-dog work at three different schools, the 9-year-old also likes to relax. "In the morning I'll say, 'Who's ready to go to work?' Half the time, Lion will go back to bed," Saniei-Banrey said.

Interest in facility and therapy dogs for schools is "really taking off," and Saniei-Banrey is proud of the work Lion and Blondie do. "We have a student whose family has put in an application for a service dog," she said. "That's spreading the word about the mission."

Flyers were freezin' for a reason at Polar Plunge

The polar part was never in doubt at this year's extra-chilly Columbus Polar Plunge, which featured a dedicated Freezin' Flyers team.

With help from their sponsor team, Encova, the Flyers Polar Plunge team raised more than \$34,000 to support Franklin County DD Special Olympics program. A record 10 athletes signed up, and seven staff members (Megan Bender, Tim Brock, Avery Charles, Andre Stonebreaker, Ryan Phillips, Kate Taylor, Jeff Pattison) and one board member (Katherine Kelly) joined the Flyers team.

Athlete Max Damron chose Disney as the theme, and athlete Aaron Elman carried the Law Enforcement torch to kick off the program.

Thanks to Ted Koontz in maintenance for transporting our adult-size changing table to the event, which made it much easier for one of our athletes to get into dry clothes after the plunge. Stephania Celli from Early Childhood also volunteered at the event, handing out towels to the plungers.

Credit for the great photos goes to Chuck of CM Play Photography.



Good For You

Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community

Big congrats to Flyers athlete Scott Smathers, who recently brought home three gold medals (backstroke, relay, freestyle) in the Special Olympics Regional Swim Meet! Scott is known for his hard work in the pool and out, as a dedicated member of ARC's group employment division. Scott says all those swim classes really paid off. Way to go, Scott!





Kudos to our friends in Cleveland on being named one of two finalist cities vying to land the 2030 Special Olympics USA Games. Host committee members are circulating a petition to show support for holding the Games in northeast Ohio, which would be the largest inclusive event in the region's history. More than 5,000 athletes and coaches are likely to attend, along with more than 125,000 family members and others. Click on the petition link below to support Cleveland's bid:

[2030 Special Olympics in The Land](#)

Career Milestones

30 Years
Therese Brady
Lora Rinehart

20 Years
Meredith Lawther-Merryman

10 Years
Artholia Heath
Gwynn Kinsel
Steven Yarnell

5 Years
Amber Geyer
Ted Koontz



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

www.fcbdd.org



Calendar

March, 2025

- 4 DD Awareness Month kick-off at the Statehouse. From 9 to 11 a.m. Registration for this event is now closed.
- 5 Franklin County DD 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>
- 13 Franklin County DD Self-Advocate Advisory Council, to meet at 2879 Johnstown Road, 10 a.m. Contact Ryan Phillips for details. ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org OR by phone at 614-342-5984
- 20 Franklin County DD 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 DD Board meeting, at 5 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus. Board in-service to begin at 4 p.m. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.

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

