

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

Self-advocates, families share concerns with legislators

From wages for direct-support professionals to Medicaid to supported decision-making, advocates spoke out on issues important to the disability community during Legislative Advocacy Day.

"I've been writing lots of notes here about the issues raised," Ohio House Minority Leader Allison Russo told the crowd.

She and several other central Ohio legislators – Sen. Hearcel Craig, Sen. Andrew Brenner, Rep. Dontavius Jarrells, and Sen. Bill DeMora – joined the Franklin County DD Self-Advocate Advisory Council and the Ohio Self Determination Association for the biennial event, held April 4 at the Columbus Metropolitan Library in Downtown Columbus.

Organizer and self-advocate Christine Brown said it was great to hear so many people share their concerns with policymakers during the state's biennial budget process. Though the latest version of the budget does not include an increase in the Medicaid rates that support those wages, pay for direct-support professionals (DSPs) remains a focus.



"Without them, we can't live our lives," self-advocate Nick Comstock said. "We can't come to events such as these."

Rates were raised in the previous budget, but the cost of living has soared, and many DSPs struggle, advocates said. Kelly Sadler told legislators she lives with her adult son because her DSP pay is too low to afford her own home. "I love my job – I get such reward from working with the people," she said. "But I need monetary reward to live."



Advocates urged approval of a supported decision-making statute, the elimination of subminimum wages for people with disabilities, and the elimination of the so-called marriage penalty for people with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income.

Brown also is pushing to raise the unearned income limit for workers with disabilities who rely on Medicaid.

"We have much to talk about," Craig said. "I appreciate your advocacy, and for holding us accountable for what we do."

2025 Community Star Awards: Save the date and nominate

Do you know someone whose accomplishments or service to the Franklin County DD community are extraordinary?
If so, please consider nominating that person for recognition during our 2025 Community Star Awards.

Inside this issue of *Dateline* is a nomination form with several categories, including self-advocates, direct-support professionals, Franklin County DD staff members and more.

For an online nomination form, go to:

<https://fcbdd.org/community-star-awards-nomination/>

Stay tuned for details, and save the date for the event:
Wednesday evening, Oct. 8 at the Boathouse at Confluence Park



Future service dogs learn to ride the bus

Franklin County DD recently hosted a Canine Companions volunteer-led puppy class so that the future service dogs could learn all about riding a school bus.

The 10-member class, known as Diamonds in the Ruff, did a great job navigating a very new experience: they boarded the bus, took the wheelchair lift up and down, and rode along patiently as driver Julie Maynard provided the twists and turns.

Puppy raiser Elaine May of the Buckeye Volunteer Chapter of Canine Companions said Maynard also shared lots of good information about driving, supporting children with disabilities, and handling the bus. Franklin County DD teacher Patti Sanial-Banrey, who works with Lion the facility dog at West Central School, organized the event.

Marty Marlatt started raising service dogs in 1989 and is now with number 31. "You come for the puppies, you stay for the people," she said with a smile.



Though leaving a dog is difficult, Marlatt said it's deeply fulfilling to see all the ways they go on to make a positive difference in the lives of people with disabilities. She recalled one mom who told her that after he was paired with a service dog, her son finally was able to manage typical outings such as church or the dentist without being upset and anxious.

"These are the things that keep us puppy raisers going," Marlatt said. "We see what all our hard work can do. We see results."



Inclusive playground opens at Blendon Woods Metro Park

Franklin County DD joined Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks to celebrate the grand opening of a new, inclusive playground at Blendon Woods Metro Park.

The space offers a wide range of play equipment for people of all ages and abilities, including those who use wheelchairs. It is fully fenced and has accessible picnic tables and shade structures.

Franklin County DD also provided funding for a universal changing table and hoist in the accessible restroom. Jessica Bennett of Jeremiah's Corner, who had encouraged Metro Parks to take up the project, said she feels "incredibly fortunate that metro Parks listened to my voice and saw the importance of building this inclusive playground."

Tim Moloney, Metro Parks executive director, said he hopes the \$1.5 million project provides opportunities for growth, development and lots of fun. "This is a space where nature and play unite, inviting everyone to connect, explore and grow together."

Families and groups can reserve the space from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and from 8 a.m. until noon on Saturdays. The playground is open to the public all day Sunday and Monday, after 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and after 12 p.m. on Saturday.

Email reservations@metroparks.net to reserve the playground.



Youth with disabilities invited to take part in livestock show

Breaking Boundaries, a unique and inclusive livestock experience for Ohio youth with developmental disabilities, is recruiting participants for this summer's Breaking Boundaries Pig Show at the Ohio State Fair.

The free event by the Ohio Pork Council and OH-Pigs Program pairs young people with developmental disabilities ages 9 to 22 with an experienced mentor. No prior livestock experience is necessary; the aim is to have fun, foster growth and confidence, and promote community, inclusion and new experiences for participants and their families.

The Pig Show is at 5 p.m. July 25 in the O'Neill Swine Barn at the state fair. To fill out an interest form, go to <http://bit.ly/3GeghbP> or email kmitchell@ohiopork.org



Autism: Facts key to acceptance and progress

As advocates celebrated Autism Acceptance Month in April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its prevalence findings to show that among 8-year-olds in the United States, an estimated 1 in 31 has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Franklin County DD encourages the public to keep up the action on two fronts: Help promote autism acceptance by supporting efforts to build a more inclusive, safe and supportive community; and help fight misinformation and misunderstanding by learning the facts on diagnosis, interventions and successes.

Organizations such as the Autism Society of America say increased incidence is not an epidemic. It's a reflection of improved screening and diagnosis, and a reason for investing in early, culturally responsive care so that people with autism are connected to the support they need to thrive.

Gahanna resident Zayne Harshaw, 29, was diagnosed with autism at age 4. Despite being told he'd never read or tie his shoes, he is now a successful blues guitarist and founder of the award-winning Blue Spectrum band.

"We have a band motto," says his father, Gene, a Franklin County DD board member. "The motto is: life is not to be viewed through the single lens of a diagnosis, but to be lived through the spectrum of potential, promise and purpose. That's our motto. So you don't let the diagnosis dictate your life."

To learn more about autism, visit: <https://autismsociety.org>
or <https://ocali.org/autism-center>



Donate to Operation Feed before May 16

Franklin County DD encourages community-wide support for Operation Feed as the campaign seeks to raise more than six million meals this spring.

The meal-raising challenge aims to ensure that people in need have access to healthy, nutritious foods, and is timed to help prepare for the summer months when school is out. The Mid-Ohio Food Collective, which saw a 13 percent jump in services last year, says it now faces funding cuts along with soaring demand.

All county government agencies are taking part in the 2025 Franklin County Operation Feed Campaign from April 7 to May 16. A \$10 donation can provide 25 meals.

To donate, go to
<https://give.mofc.org/FranklinCounty>
and select Franklin County Board of DD
as your team.

Franklin County DD staff also can donate via payroll deduction. Send an email to giving@fcbdd.org with the amount and write 'Operation Feed' in the subject line.

MID-OHIO FOOD COLLECTIVE
OPERATION
FEED
SMALL ACTS BIG IMPACT

Regional Tech Summit set for May 21

The Ohio Tech Ambassadors are hosting events all over Ohio to share how they use technology to be more independent and live their best lives.

They're here in Franklin County on May 21 with a Regional Tech Summit from 10 a.m. until noon at the Hilliard Library, 4500 Hickory Chase Way. Learn how tech can be used to help with cleaning, eating, money and mobility.

Register to attend in-person:
<https://ohiotechambassadors.org/events/>

Virtual event link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3118484571>



REGIONAL TECH SUMMIT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21ST | 10 A.M. - 12 P.M.

COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN LIBRARY: HILLIARD BRANCH
4500 HICKORY CHASE WAY, HILLIARD, OH 43026

Join us and learn how the Ohio Tech Ambassadors
use technology to live their best lives!

FEATURED TOPICS

Tech for Cleaning
Tech for Eating
Tech for Money
Tech for Mobility

Good For You

Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community



We appreciate the visit from Jo Hannah Ward, administrator of the Office for Exceptional Children at the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, who spent some time touring our Early Childhood Education & Family Center. And check out the student-made 'welcome' sign, which made its way to Jo Hannah's office wall.

Congrats to Open Door Columbus artists Chris Cole, Jessica Richards, Jackie Montgomery and Sharese Spencer, along with program director Claire Smith, for having their work celebrated and displayed at the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. Chris even got to personally present Gov. Mike DeWine with the portrait he painted last year. The state office space looks a lot brighter.

Thanks to the motorcycle, trike and car enthusiasts who brought some of their super-cool rides to the ViaQuest day and employment services program in Grove City. The music, dancing and smiles made for a fun parking-lot party.



Career Milestones

30 Years
Maggie Hart

25 Years
Danielle Norman

10 Years
Kate Taylor



Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Dean Fadel, President

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

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The following staff contribute to the monthly publication and distribution of *Dateline*:

Amy Magginis Rita Price

Jennifer Cunningham Carla Maynard

News releases, story ideas, and suggestions should be sent to:

Rita Price, Communications Coordinator
2879 Johnstown Road
Columbus, Ohio 43219
(614) 342-5161 FAX (614) 342-5001
e-mail: rita.price@fcbdd.org

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

www.fcbdd.org



Calendar

May, 2025

- 7 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>
- 8-9 Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB) Spring Conference Columbus Hilton - Downtown.
- 14 Franklin County DD Early Childhood Learning Community (ECLC) and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective Produce Drive Through at 4:30 p.m. at ECLC, **4141 Rudy Road**, Columbus, 43214. For more details, email Gretchen Uhl at gretchen.uhl@fcbdd.org
- 15 Franklin County DD Early Childhood Education (Johnstown Road) 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.
- 22 Franklin County DD Self-advocate Advisory Council, meets at 2879 Johnstown Road, 10 a.m. Contact Ryan Phillips for details: ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org OR by phone at 614-342-5984
- 22 Franklin County DD Board meeting, at 5 p.m. at 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus. Board committee meetings begin at 4 p.m. Please contact Amy Magginis at 614-342-5950 for details.
FCBDD Board Meeting Link:
<https://bit.ly/3JvZSUJ>
- 26 Memorial Day celebrated, all county facilities closed.
- 28 West Central Graduation, 1481 Town Street, Columbus at 6 p.m.
- 29 Last day of classes at West Central school and Early Childhood Education center-based programs.
- 30 Teacher work day, classes closed.

Franklin County DD ~ Community Star Awards Nomination Form

*Do you know someone who should be recognized
for extraordinary accomplishments or service supporting
individuals with developmental disabilities?*

If so, please take a moment to complete and return this nomination form. **Nominations will be accepted until Friday, May 30, 2025.** All nominations will be considered by an Award Committee, and winners in each category will be recognized at the Franklin County DD Community Star Awards Ceremony on **Wednesday, October 8, 2025.** ***Please submit this nomination to: Awards Committee, c/o Amy Magginis, 2879 Johnstown Road, Columbus, Ohio 43219.***

(PLEASE PRINT)

1. Name of Nominee: _____ Daytime Phone# _____
Home Address: _____

2. Please complete one nomination per form and check the category for which this person or organization is nominated. Nominees are not required to be staff members or affiliated with FCBDD.

☐ Person Receiving Services / Self-Advocate

☐ Parent/Family Member

☐ Early Childhood Staff

☐ School Staff

☐ Volunteer / Good Neighbor

☐ Provider Organization / Agency

☐ Transportation Staff

☐ Employer

☐ **Agency** Direct Support Professional

☐ **Independent** Direct Support Professional

☐ Service Coordination Department Staff

☐ Administrative Staff

3. Why should this nominee be recognized? _____

4. Please describe any other achievements or information regarding this person or organization to support this nomination: _____

Nominated by: (Please Print) _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone # _____ Work/Daytime Phone # _____

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