

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

Best Buddies needs volunteers for Franklin County friendship matches

Best Buddies Citizens, a program that fosters friendships between adults with and without developmental disabilities, is seeking volunteers without disabilities to connect with Franklin County residents in need of a match.

"We have a lot of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities who are in our pipeline waiting for a one-to-one friendship," said Shannon Wilson, senior program manager for Best Buddies in Ohio.

Franklin County DD provides grant funding for the local Best Buddies Citizens initiative, which has a goal of making 20 Franklin County friendship matches this year.

While other Best Buddies friendship initiatives focus on people in elementary, middle and high schools and college, Best Buddies Citizens is for adults. The aim is to promote community inclusion for adults with developmental disabilities after school ends and at all stages of life.

"While friendships are important to all of us, adults with DD sometimes struggle to make those connections," said Ryan Phillips, Director of Communications, Advocacy and Community Relations at Franklin County DD.

"The Best Buddies Citizens program helps everyone feel a sense of belonging, whether they're out and about in the community or just hanging with a friend," Phillips said. "We're proud to support it."

Learn more about volunteering with Best Buddies Citizens:

visit <https://www.bestbuddies.org/ohio/get-involved/> or email ohio@bestbuddies.org



Winners announced for Community Star Awards on Oct. 8

Registration is open and winners have been selected for the 2025 Community Star Awards, an annual celebration of the Franklin County DD community and some of its most extraordinary people and partners.



Community Star Awards winner
Samantha Perry



Community Star Awards winner
Genene Blackwell

This year's Star Awards will recognize two self-advocates, **Genene Blackwell** and **Samantha Perry**, and include a special family spotlight: **Loreece Ferguson**, her granddaughter **Miracle Latham**, and direct support professional **Sha Higginbotham**.

The other winners and award categories are:

Augustine Mulia and Donna Newell, Direct Support Professionals; **Pam Harvey**, Early Childhood Staff; **Emma Snailham**, Transportation Staff; **Pathways to Independence of Central Ohio** (Stephanie Sanzo, President), Provider Organization; **Richard and Alice Black**, Volunteer/Good Neighbor; **Debra Cargill**, School Staff; **Julie Williams**, Administrative Staff; **Kevin Yuh**, Service Coordination Staff; **MCR Medical** (President Charlie Morrison and Vice President Wes Almond), Employer

The event is from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 8, at The Boathouse at Confluence Park, 679 W. Spring St. Entertainment is by the award-winning Blue Spectrum Band.

Cost is \$50 per person. The evening is sponsored by the Citizens Committee for Persons with Developmental Disabilities; all proceeds benefit the Committee.

Register online by Sept. 19 at <http://bit.ly/4fqYTVn> or complete the form inside this issue of *Dateline*.

ARC Industries rebrands as ARC Voyagers



To better reflect its evolving mission and broader array of services, ARC Industries has rebranded as ARC Voyagers.

The name change took effect in July and includes a new logo. “It also serves as a renewed promise to walk alongside individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as trusted guides, helping them navigate their journey toward independence, connection and possibility,” ARC said in a news release.

ARC has been supporting people with developmental disabilities for more than 60 years and was a program of Franklin County DD until 2019. ARC then became a separate organization, and ended workshop production and sub-minimum wage work.

ARC Voyagers serves the developmental disabilities community through workforce readiness, youth transition services, employment placement, community access programming, and non-medical transportation. ARC Voyagers also has a franchise partnership, operating a Success on the Spectrum (SOS) autism clinic in Whitehall for children 18 months to 18 years old.

All ARC platforms reflect the ARC Voyagers brand; the organization’s legal name remains ARC Industries Incorporated of Franklin County Ohio.

Petition seeks to create MSY Awareness Season

Franklin County DD parent and long-time advocate Mark Butler has launched a petition asking Ohio legislators to designate March 1 to May 31 as “MSY Awareness Season” to boost awareness and support for multi-system youth (MSY)

Multi-system youth are children and adolescents who require care across multiple systems, including mental health, developmental disabilities, education, child welfare, and sometimes juvenile justice. “For families like mine, the months of March, April, and May hold special meaning,” Butler says. “March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, April is Autism Acceptance Month, and May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

For multi-system youth and their families, these challenges do not exist in isolation. They overlap and define our daily lives.”

Ohio has made good progress in recent years providing opportunities for families to access services without having to surrender custody of their children, Butler said. He and his wife endured that heartbreak a decade ago in order to get help for their son.



Despite the accomplishments of programs such as OhioRISE, advocates say more work needs to be done to ensure all youth can thrive without unnecessary barriers or sacrifices.

Petition link: <https://chnq.it/mKJ9cxGHqw>

Visit the 2025 Franklin County Provider Fair on Sept. 2

The 2025 Franklin County Provider and Community Resource Fair takes place on Tuesday, Sept. 2, in Kasich Hall at the state fairgrounds.

This free, annual event makes it easy for people with disabilities, families and caregivers to connect in-person with service providers, community resource organizations and—new this year—employers.

Provider tables and booths feature color-coded Mylar balloons that designate the types of services the agency offers. A mobile smart apartment will be on site and open for tours, demonstrations and information about assistive technology and remote support.

- Provider Fair hours are 1 to 7 p.m., to accommodate various work schedules.
- Admission and parking (in front of Kasich Hall) are free; food and drinks can be purchased from Schmidt’s.
- Kasich Hall is fully accessible and will be equipped with a universal changing table.
- Visitors should plan on spending at least one hour. Individuals and families receiving services can contact their service coordinator or reach out to Anne Russell at 614-342-5550 or anne.russell@fcbdd.org for information.
- Providers who plan to participate and have questions should contact Joni Sparks at 614-342-5964 or joni.sparks@fcbdd.org

Perspective: Writing positivity

Recently someone asked why I don't write more about great things that happen. While it's true that I'm often pointing out things that aren't so great, the reason is pretty simple.

The bad, sad and negative things are anomalies – small blips in what is otherwise a happy life, one full of good people who are caring, committed to inclusion and striving to lead by example. The blips do get my attention, and I like to explore them in writing.

But back to the good stuff: My favorite people are those who try to include everyone, regardless of race or class, gender identity or sexual orientation, ability or disability. These forward thinkers look for opportunities to minimize the marginalization of folks. I'm so fortunate to know many people who are like this – dedicated to helping everyone feel that they belong and are not an afterthought.

Over the years, I have had some amazing supervisors who have really tried to help me, as an employee with a disability, know that I am part of the group and not on the sidelines. I can think of only one exception, long ago, and even that was a learning experience.

I also have learned a thing or two about reasonable accommodations and how important they are for helping a person feel like any other team member. To everyone who has made my life as rich and rewarding as it is, thank you.



We are all imperfect beings in an imperfect world. We all deserve a little grace. We're bound to get it wrong sometimes, as we can only truly know our own lived experiences, not what life is like for everyone else. But an outlook that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion can be a really good starting point.

Denise Blackburn-Smith was born with cerebral palsy and has been a Franklin County DD service coordinator for 17 years.

ECE Partnership Sustainability Day a big success

More than 320 early childhood professionals attended Franklin County DD's first Early Childhood Education Partnership Sustainability Day, a mission-focused event that also included a resource fair.

Held at Columbus State Community College, the gathering provided opportunities for partnership staff to get to know each other, explore community resources and to learn about the new mission statement and strategic plan.

Kathy Lawton, Director of Early Childhood Education at Franklin County DD, said the new strategic plan will guide partnership work for the next three to five years. "Our strategic plan unites all partnership staff with a common mission and vision," she said. "We recognize that we can accomplish so much more for families and children when we are working together!"

Franklin County DD Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager delivered an opening address, and Lawton gave an overview of the strategic plan. Each partnership organization explained its work and role in the partnership.

"After hearing the new mission statement and from the community partners it made me feel a part of something big," one staff member said.

Professionals attended from across the partnerships and contract sites, including CDCFC Head Start, Columbus City Schools, Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center, Easterseals, Franklin County Family and Children First Council, Nationwide Children's Hospital, the Ohio State University Nisonger Center, Childhood League Center, and YMCA of Central Ohio. More than two dozen community organizations took part in the resource fair.



OSU FOOTBALL PARKING -BENEFITING- SPECIAL OLYMPICS

WHEN: Every OSU home game

TIME: at least 4 hours before kick off
(perfect for tailgating!)

WHERE: 250 W. Dodridge St. 43202
(a 15 min. walk to the stadium)

COST: only \$20!

WHY? because 100% of donations support our Flyer athletes



Email Megan Bender at megan.bender@fcbdd.org with questions.

Good For You

Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week is September 7-13 this year, and there aren't enough ways to thank DSPs for all they do to support people with developmental disabilities—every day. Please join us in celebrating the DSPs you know!

Here at Franklin County DD, we're fortunate to have staff members who go above and beyond. Service Coordinator Mark Merriman did so in a big way after a person on his case load was arrested on an out-of-state warrant. Mark went to the court hearing, visited the jail and spoke with the public defender. He did not stop trying to help, even when no one would listen. And thank goodness: Mark's determination and advocacy led to the discovery that the warrant was in error, and for a different person.



Thanks to the Hilliard Division of Police and Norwich Township Fire Department for hosting another great Amazing Abilities Open House. It's so important for children and adults with disabilities to be able to interact with first responders, and to see fire trucks and police cars, in a safe setting.

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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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



Career Milestones

20 Years
Erin Bowlin
Carla Maynard
Brenda Mickey
Terri Thompson

15 Years
Amy Infante
Ta'mika McCluney

10 Years
Debra Cargill
Robin Fraley-Ridgeway

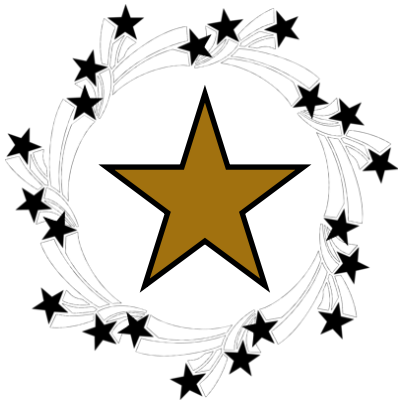
5 Years
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Calendar

September, 2025

- 1 Labor Day - all county facilities closed.
- 2 Franklin County DD Provider and Community Resource Fair at the Ohio State Fairgrounds, Kasich Hall. in the Ohio Expo Center from 1pm to 7pm. Parking is free. 717 E. 17th Avenue, Columbus.
- 3 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>
- 5 Early Childhood Education classes begin.
- 10 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
- 18 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.
- 18 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
- 25 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>



2025 COMMUNITY STAR AWARDS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025

**NEW LOCATION - The Boathouse at Confluence Park
679 W. Spring Street * Columbus * 43215
Social Hour (Cash Bar) • 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
Dinner & Awards • 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
\$50.00/ Person • \$500.00/ Table of Ten (10)**

Please join us for an opportunity to recognize some outstanding people who contribute to our community, to celebrate their achievements and visit with friends. The venue is fully accessible and there will be a universal changing table available.

2025 COMMUNITY STAR AWARDS

PLEASE REGISTER BY FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Name(s): _____ Address: _____

(Please Print)

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Garlic Grilled Chicken & Whipped Potatoes OR Sauteed Broccoli & Crispy Tofu (Vegetarian/Vegan)
 Please note other dietary needs (i.e. gluten-free, allergies etc.): _____

Enclosed is a check for **\$50.00** x per person to help support Citizens Committee for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. *Please do not send cash.*

Enclosed is **\$500.00** for a table of ten* (10) to help support Citizens Committee for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. *Please include the names of the ten (10) attendees for your table and their meal choice

I have accessibility or accommodation needs (please indicate): _____

You can register and pay online by using the QR Code:



or

Make checks payable to:
Citizens Committee for Persons with DD

Send via U.S. mail to:
2025 Community Star Awards
Attn: Beth Cimprich, ARC Industries
2780 Airport Drive, Suite 450,
Columbus OH 43219



COMMUNITY STAR AWARDS 2025 WINNERS

- 1. Genene Blackwell & Samantha Perry** **Self-Advocates/Persons Served**
- 2. Augustine Mulai & Donna Newell** **Direct Support Professionals**
- 3. Loreece Ferguson, Miracle Latham & Sha Higginbotham (DSP)** **Family Spotlight**
- 4. Pam Harvey** **Early Childhood Staff**
- 5. Emma Snailham** **Transportation Staff**
- 6. Pathways to Independence of Central Ohio; President Stephanie Sanzo** **Provider Organization**
- 7. Richard & Alice Black** **Volunteer/Good Neighbor**
- 8. Debra Cargill** **School Staff**
- 9. Julie Williams** **Administrative Staff**
- 10. Kevin Yuhas** **Service Coordination Staff**
- 11. MCR Medical** **Employer**
President Charlie Morrison
& Vice President Wes Almond

