

Dateline

November 2025

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

Families invited to celebrate 'Wheelchair Wizard' Carl Mulberry

The tag-along bicycle that David Kaplan ordered online wasn't what he hoped. The more he looked at it, the more he knew it needed serious work before it could keep his son safe, upright and rolling along.

"I kind of had the idea, but I didn't have the expertise," Kaplan said. So like thousands of other Ohio families over the past 50 years, he turned to Carl Mulberry.

"Carl just embraced the whole project," Kaplan said. "Together, we converted this to a tag-along bike that had a wheelchair seat. When you got to the place you wanted to go, you could unfasten it, and it was kind of like his wheelchair. Carl had the pieces and the parts and the knowledge to make the dream come true."

That deep well of dedication and know-how will be missed when Mulberry, longtime owner of the former Columbus Medical Equipment (now National Seating & Mobility), retires at the end of the year, said parent Amanda Lynch.

She's inviting former and current customers to a gathering on December 2 to celebrate and thank Mulberry for all he has done for people with disabilities. Her 23-year-old daughter is one of his biggest fans.

"Isis is deaf-blind. She doesn't sense things the way other people do," Lynch said. "But I realized one day when Carl was working on her chair that Isis was looking at him, doing her quiet-alert thing. She was just cooing. I thought, 'Oh my gosh—they're connecting.'"

Mulberry, one of the nation's first technicians to gain professional certification for adaptive seating, was a pioneer in working with space-grade foam and plywood. He's happiest when he's able to craft a custom seat that allows a child to sit comfortably.



"I love my clients," Mulberry said. "The hugs I get from moms when kids feel better...just to feel better and not have pain in their bones and skin. This has been a wonderful business."

At 76, he finally is ready to sleep a little more and spend more time with grandchildren. He's grateful for the memories, including those of the bike he modified for the Kaplans more than 15 years ago. "Those were the kinds of things I loved doing," Mulberry said. "A project where I had to come up with an idea to make it possible, and make it better."



Retirement celebration for Carl Mulberry

3 to 6 p.m., December 2
Northwood-High Building
2231 N. High St.

Scan QR code for details
and to RSVP



Guardianship Service Board seeks help with holiday gifts

The Franklin County Guardianship Service Board (GSB) is again asking the public to help with its Holiday Wish List gift drive to ensure each client receives at least one gift this year.



The GSB serves as the guardian of last resort to about 500 people each year who have intellectual disabilities, mental impairments, or are medically fragile. Many don't have family or friend support, and most receive no more than \$50 a month for discretionary spending on hygiene products, clothing, snacks, entertainment and other items and activities.

Organizers say clients look forward to the gift drive all year. Gifts can be purchased online for delivery to the agency's office. Donors also can contact the GSB to drop off newly purchased items and gift cards. For information and details, visit:

<https://guardian.franklincountyohio.gov/post/2025-holiday-wishlist>

Franklin County DD celebrates 2025 Star Award winners

Self-advocates and direct support professionals, family members, volunteers and more were honored during this year's Community Star Awards. About 300 people gathered at the Boat House at Confluence Park for the annual event, which also serves as fundraiser benefiting the Citizens Committee for Persons with DD.

"The Community Star Awards celebrate the very best of Franklin County DD," said self-advocate and Special Olympics athlete Nikei Tyler, who co-hosted the event with Ryan Phillips, Franklin County DD Director of Communications, Advocacy and Community Relations.

Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager said the community "is fortunate to have so many inspiring people to recognize," as well as partnerships with outstanding organizations that help Franklin County DD succeed.

Four of those partners—ARC Voyagers, Creative Housing, Goodwill Columbus, and the Ohio State University Nisonger Center—were again sponsors for the Star Awards.

This year's celebration also included a special video tribute to the Family Spotlight winners: Loreece Ferguson, her granddaughter Miracle Latham, and direct-support professional Sha Higginbotham.

View the video here: <http://bit.ly/4oBDVGH>



Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager and Transportation Staff award winner Emma Snailham



Geneve Blackwell of Blue Spectrum is awarded in the category Person Served / Self-Advocate



Blue Spectrum provided entertainment for the evening



Deb Cargill is awarded in the category of School Staff



Miracle Latham, Sha Higginbotham, and Loreece Ferguson, Family Spotlight winners, also were featured in a video



Franklin County DD Board President Dean Fadel and co-hosts Nikei Tyler and Ryan Phillips share heartfelt words of congratulations



Self-Advocate Samantha Perry is honored with a star award and celebrates with friends



Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager awards Administrative Staff Julie Williams



Richard & Alice Black, celebrated as our Volunteer & Good Neighbor award winners



MCR Medical is awarded Community Star Award in the Employer category



Ryan Phillips and Billy are happy to celebrate all of the award winners

Special thanks to Jim DeCamp, photographer for the event



Special Olympics staff and athlete Nikei Tyler celebrate with longtime volunteers Richard & Alice Black



Award winner in the Direct Support Professional category, Augustine Mulai and Adnan



Pathways to Independence of Columbus is awarded Community Star Award in the Provider Organization category



Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager and Kevin Yuhas, Service Coordination Staff award winner



Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager celebrates with Donna Newell, Direct Support Professional award winner



Early Childhood staff celebrate Pam Harvey awarded in the Early Childhood category



Superintendent/CEO Dot Yeager congratulates Pam Harvey, Early Childhood Staff award winner



Brutus Buckeye hopes for a Community Star Award for himself one day.

Perspective: Lots to like at Synergy Ohio

This year was my second time at the Synergy conference, and my experience has been great.

I attended some sessions about advocacy, and I've learned so much on how to advocate for myself. I also learned a lot about how to be more independent in my daily life routine.

Staying in the Kalahari hotel was fun and it was easy for me to get around the conference in my wheelchair. Being able to do stuff with my mom was great, too. I got to play in the arcade afterward and eat at the restaurants.

There was so much helpful information. I got some resources on independence and remote supports, and finding out more about activities through We Thrive Together was awesome.

Synergy is awesome because people with disabilities come from all over Ohio to learn how to be advocates for themselves and in their communities.



Maxwell Damron is a self-advocate and Franklin County Special Olympics athlete. He was among an estimated 900 people at the Synergy Ohio conference this October.

State to hold town halls on new assessment tools

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and Deloitte Consulting will host two virtual town hall meetings in November to provide updates and answer questions about new assessment tools.

The "interRAI" assessment will replace the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Profile (ODDP) and the Acuity Assessment Instrument (AAI).

The changes are part of state's Waiver Modernization Project, which aims to simplify processes related to funding, rate setting and establishing individual budgets for Medicaid waivers.

Town hall meetings are planned for Nov. 7 and 12, and are open to people receiving services, families, providers and county boards. To register or for more information, visit [DODD's Waiver Modernization page](#).

Good For You

Notable achievements in the Franklin County DD community

Thanks to Holly Jones of the Wellness Project at the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities for leading a fun session on stress reduction at our latest Self-Advocacy Council meeting. Love those relaxation tips.



Two of the DD community's most dedicated advocates were recognized during this year's Synergy conference for their longstanding service: Dana Charlton, executive director of the Ohio Self Determination Association, and Carolyn Knight, who is retiring as executive director of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council. Each has more than 50 years in the field. Heartfelt thanks and congratulations to Carolyn and Dana.



Franklin County Special Olympics athletes, coaches, friends and family members celebrated the 2025 sports year at the annual banquet. Great job, and go Flyers!

Dateline

The Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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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



Career Milestones

20 Years
Farrah Langlois

10 Years
Timika Brockington
Javonne Wood



Calendar

November, 2025

- 4 Election Day.
- 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>
- 11 Veteran's Day - all county facilities closed.
- 12 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 Community Survey Focus Group, 2879 Johnstown Road. For details, please contact Ryan Phillips at ryan.phillips@fcbdd.org.
- 20 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.
- 20 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>
- 24-26 ECE teacher work days - classes closed.
- 26 West Central School records day - classes closed.
- 27 Thanksgiving Day - all county facilities closed.
- 28 Thanksgiving Recess - Early Childhood and school classes and offices of the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities closed.