



## MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT

BY BRIAN GREEN

In a time of change, uncertainty and division, Superintendent Brian Green draws on Riverside's hopeful roots and encourages everyone to come together and continue to make Miami County an inclusive community.

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people with developmental  
disabilities to live, work and  
play as full members of our  
community.

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## SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

It is safe to say 2020 has proven to be a challenging year. I do not think anyone could have predicted how quickly our world could come to a halt as it did when the coronavirus hit. In a matter of days, businesses and schools closed, and the world scrambled to navigate life with a heavy reliance on technology.

The virus was not the only thing that shook us. Several incidents of racial injustice grabbed our nation's collective attention in a very short time. The outcry for justice and equality took center stage for a conversation that was long overdue, and which will continue as we work to heal our country.

For some of us, these occurrences created significant upheaval in our daily lives. For others, there have been moderate adjustments. No matter how we are affected, there are some things we all have in common. One of those is our need for hope.

Riverside's roots are based in hope. In fact, it is literally where we started. In 1952, a group of parents in Miami County knew without a doubt their children with disabilities could learn even though there were no options to educate them in Miami County. They started what used to be known as Riverside School, which evolved into Riverside/Miami County Board of Developmental Disabilities 15 years later. Their hope and belief in a better life for their 8 children was what grew into the services and supports we provide to more than 1,000 people in Miami County today.

That same hope will get us through to the next better day. As an organization, we have used this time to find innovative ways to support people with disabilities and their families, while supporting our local provider partners who work on the front lines providing direct care services in the homes of hundreds of our friends, neighbors and family members who need them. By doing virtual meetings and home visits, hosting Zoom activities and parties, sharing positive stories, delivering food, necessities and activity kits, we lean into our hope of a brighter day.

We are also working to learn and grow more in doing our part to build a more diverse and inclusive community. Our leadership is exploring ways to ensure our processes and practices are fair and inclusive and celebrate the wonderful things each person's differences offer. Our roots again ring true with the message of equality and inclusivity because it is what we have worked to create in the lives of those we serve. It only makes sense that we pause and reflect on ways we can ensure we are honoring that message as an organization and in our communities.



A blue ink handwritten signature that reads "Brian W. Green".

Brian W. Green  
Superintendent



## A NEW NORMAL IN EI

The "new normal." We've all heard it. As a result of COVID-19, this new normal set in and brought with it many changes, and our services were no exception. Because the majority of our services are community-based, we had to quickly determine how to continue to deliver quality services to people with developmental disabilities while ensuring their health, as well as that of our staff, provider partners and community.

The transition from in-person to virtual services was new territory for us and required a drastic change in our way of thinking, especially for our Early Intervention (EI) services for children ages birth-2. Based in each family's home and community, EI services typically depend on in-person visits between our staff and the families we serve as our EI team provides support to help parents/guardians and their child's development.

So how do you deliver these services virtually? That was a dilemma our EI team faced, but it was one they ultimately overcame with the help of the families we serve. Despite a couple bumps in the beginning, our EI team noticed that not only were virtual services working, they were thriving. They're going so well in fact, we sat down with several families receiving our EI services and asked them what they thought about the change.

### How was your first virtual visit?

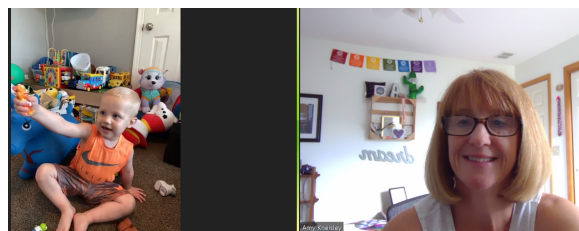
**Kelli Freeling:** It went great! I was able to flip my camera back and forth to have face-to-face conversations with Amy (Kneisley) as well as let her watch my child interact and play. It worked really well with our schedule, too.

**Caroline Doolittle:** I was thankful we were able to continue therapy even though it's not the same as having Penny in person.

**Holly Williams:** We were excited. We'd seen such progress with Caroline, we wanted to continue with therapy in any way we could. Also, since Caroline has chronic medical needs, we were grateful our team was willing to put so much effort into virtual visits because it ultimately kept Caroline healthy and safe.



Caroline and son Henry, 2



Elliott Freeling, 2, and Riverside Developmental Specialist Amy Kneisley

### How has the EI team helped you through these changes?

**Kelli:** Amy is amazing! She's sent us videos, suggestions and websites to use. I love this as it's always a reference for us later. We feel so fortunate for everything we've received through Riverside for our boys.

**Caroline:** We've been able to talk through issues and come up with new strategies to help Henry. The team has communicated well and are easy to schedule with.

**Holly:** Our team has been our biggest cheerleaders and have always made us feel comfortable and confident caring for Caroline's developmental needs.

### How do you feel about virtual visits now?

**Kelli:** I love that Riverside offered this. When so many things were changing, it was nice to know we would still work towards progress for our son. We're in the vital learning years with our son, and it gives us peace knowing we aren't getting set back just because we can't physically be in the same room.

**Caroline:** We've gotten more comfortable for sure, and now I have a special sensory-friendly activity that's keeps Henry busy and engaged in the Zoom call.

**Holly:** I was really overwhelmed with the thought of how isolating would affect Caroline's progress, but because of virtual visits, I constantly felt encouraged with the tools and problem solving our team provided. We love them!



Riverside Physical Therapist Penny Hines, Amy Kneisley & the Williams family

For more about Riverside Early Intervention services, please visit [www.riversidedd.org/early-intervention](http://www.riversidedd.org/early-intervention).

## Finding the Silver Lining

COVID-19 turned our world upside down. Our services, including service coordination and Community Connections activities, went virtual. Special Olympics canceled seasons. Provider agencies like RT Industries and Capabilities temporarily closed their Adult Day programs while agencies like Total Homecare Solutions, BLESS and CRSI faced staff shortages as the number of those requiring in-home support increased.

In the midst of it all, families were separated, plans postponed and many struggled to stay positive. It was a challenging time, but not all hope was lost. After some time had passed, people started to find silver linings to the stay-at-home order. Soon, the positivity caught on and more people began looking for ways to make the most of the situation. In fact, our staff heard so many positive stories, we launched a Facebook campaign titled, "Silver Linings," in response, encouraging those we serve and our staff to share their bright spots. Here are just a few of the stories we received:



### Andrea

Using skills she learned in Adventures in Advocacy, Andrea contacted neighbors when she needed help. She says, "I learned to use the app Nextdoor when I needed help fixing something in my apartment. Several people helped. It was nice."



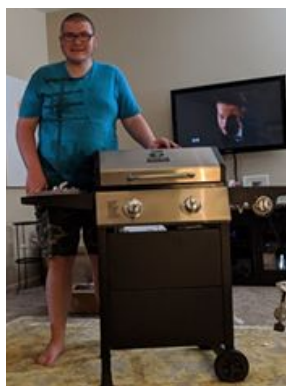
### Angela

As someone who loves being outside, Angela took the time away from work to enjoy the outdoors. She rode her bike around town and even tried horseback riding for the first time. She said she had a blast and can't wait to do it again!



### Paula

Paula and her provider, Hope, were a puzzle-making machine, assembling more than 10 puzzles by June 12. Once done, they framed the puzzles for Paula to hang around her house. Paula and Hope also enjoyed the nice weather and participated in our virtual scavenger hunt.



### Brian

Brian has been saving his money so he could buy his own grill, and he reached his goal just in time for the Memorial Day weekend. He and some of his friends celebrated by cooking out in the backyard, with Brian providing the hamburgers.



### Crystal

Crystal decided to embrace her crafty side and created this beautiful spring hat which she plans to hang from her front door. She also practiced some great money managing skills, purchasing the supplies she needed for just \$3.



### Tony & Chuck

Brothers Tony (left) and Chuck (below) learned all kinds of new things while at home. Tony realized he enjoys putting together puzzles. He also cleaned out some of his clothes and plans on donating them to the local VA.



### Shelby

Shelby didn't let the extra time at home keep her from showing off her dancing skills as she sang her favorite song, "Baby Shark." You can see a video of Shelby singing on the Riverside Facebook page.



Chuck learned he likes playing darts and walking to the local park when the weather is nice. With help from his provider, Diane, Chuck also made his own face mask, which he wears whenever he visits the store and doctor's office.



## Stay Connected. Stay Positive.

Inspired by those we serve, our staff tried to stay positive and encourage one another. As a result, we noticed positive outcomes that were happening. Even though there were challenges, there were plenty of silver linings to encourage us. We asked our staff to share their positive experiences during the stay-at-home order, and here are what a few said in response:

### Amy Shank, Community Connections Facilitator

"I've enjoyed everything we've done on Zoom. It's been a learning curve, but we all have taken on the challenge and conquered it. I can see continuing with a lot of the activities after COVID, because we're seeing people that can't necessarily make it to our building for activities for one reason or another. I was surprised to see folks who have never been to our activities before join us on Zoom. It's always fun to see new faces."

### Jay Via, Facilities Manager

"Our job is very different working in our building that sees 0-12 people working here at any given time, when we are used to 50+ staff in-house. This has helped us to speed through many jobs and catch up on some projects we have been wanting to do when less staff are present."

### Adventures in Advocacy



### YouTube videos: Joy's Dog Grooming (left) and Julie's Deep Breathing (right)



### Regional Advocacy June Meeting



### Julie Williams, Community Connections Facilitator

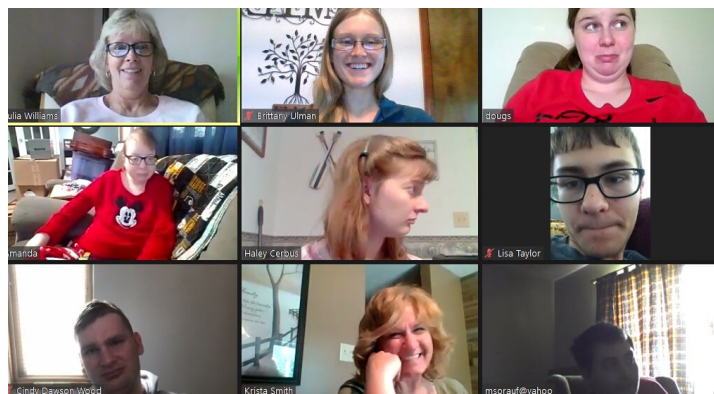
"Our job is to get folks out in the community but the community was basically shutdown, so it made it difficult to continue our job in any normal fashion. We had to figure out ways to keep folks connected and involved."

We have more time to connect with people on a more personal basis. We've also met new people and seen old friends we hadn't seen in a while. I also learned new skills I wouldn't have otherwise. When the team suggested we make videos to educate and engage people, I didn't think I could. Turns out, I really enjoy it and learned quite a bit."

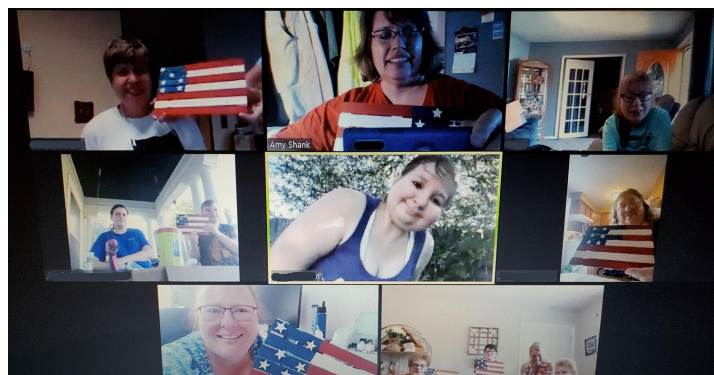
### Joy Starry, Community Connections Facilitator

"The one thing that stands out for me is that it has given Tonya York a chance to teach us sign language and she seems so excited to get to do it! I don't know if we would have gotten as many to come if it wasn't a Zoom class."

### Julie's Music Fun



### That's Sew Crafty



Visit our Facebook page for pictures of our activities. You can also watch videos from our CC Team by visiting our YouTube page or website at [www.riversidedd.org/videos](http://www.riversidedd.org/videos).

## SERVICES SPOTLIGHT: FUNDING & SSA SUPPORT

Creating a person's Individual Service Plan (ISP) involves a lot of planning and teamwork from the person, their family and provider staff, as well as their Service & Support Administrator (SSA or case manager) and other County Board staff.

Not only must the plan best suit the person and their life goals, it also needs to ensure their physical, mental and social well-being. SSAs also need to know what funding the person receives and the cost of the service(s) they are requesting.

However, in a field where state-regulated rules are always changing, this can be difficult for individual SSAs to manage for everyone on their caseloads. To assist SSAs with this process, Riverside Medicaid Manager Dawn Spitler and Funding Specialist Kyley Vest provide crucial information needed when developing a person's ISP.

Dawn and Kyley help SSAs stay informed about individuals' budgets and the cost of services. They also act as liaisons between SSAs and service providers by maintaining regular contact with provider staff, reviewing documents for fiscal accuracy, identifying any problems with funding and providing technical assistance to providers.

Though they may not have as much direct interaction with those we serve, Dawn and Kyley provide crucial support when creating a person's ISP and budget. Their input has been especially important with the recent COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on funding and services. Because of the shutdown, more of those we serve are home and need support, requiring our staff to work together and find creative ways to best meet each person's needs. With help from Dawn and Kyley, SSAs and providers can ensure the health of those we serve—both financial and physical.



Dawn Spitler (left) and Kyley Vest (right)

## DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL (DSP) SPOTLIGHT

*Like other front line workers, Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) work to ensure the health of the people they support. But unlike others on the front lines, DSPs and their work is not as widely recognized. We want to change that, so we're partnering with our provider partners to showcase local DSPs and their dedication to people with developmental disabilities.*



### Kyle Casey, Independent DSP

Nominated By: Riverside SSA Nicole Adkins and Provider Referral & Linkage Resource Support Coordinator Janice Thebert

- **How long have you been a provider? What made you want to enter this field?**

Three years, but I've been involved with the County Board for about 10 years. I volunteered with Riverside and Special Olympics in high school and was a part of SibShops with my brother. My mom is also an Independent Provider, so the job just seemed like a natural fit.

- **How would you describe your job? What do you love most about it?**

I'm really big into the "You're the boss," mentality, so I'm basically just there to help them discover what they like to do. There's never a normal day. I'm a spontaneous person, so I like

the freedom it gives me to decide my own schedule. I support 6 people right now, and they're all awesome and unique. I'm kind of jealous of how confident they are. They speak their minds so easily, they're just so comfortable with who they are. I wish I could live like that.

- **How do you like to spend your free time?**

I have 2 kids and a wife, and we like to be outside, hiking, swimming, just relaxing and enjoying nature together as a family. I also love cooking, and surprisingly, I like to clean my house. I've also been involved with the Edison Community Theatre for about two years and am an avid reader, especially the Artemis Fowl series.

*Interested in becoming a DSP? Contact us at [info@riversidedd.org](mailto:info@riversidedd.org) or visit our website at [riversidedd.org/providers](http://riversidedd.org/providers).*



## #InThisTogether

In March, Gov. DeWine ordered all Adult Day Services (ADS) to close, and the results were felt by all of our provider partners. Agencies providing ADS services, like RT Industries (RTI), closed due to COVID-19 while in-home providers like Total Homecare Solutions (THS) were short-staffed due to more people requiring in-home support.

As the County Board, we worked with our provider partners to anticipate and fill gaps in staffing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). DSPs from agencies like RTI took on temporary roles with other providers to deliver in-home services. This allowed services to continue and the well-being of those we serve to remain a top priority. It also gave us the chance to show what it means to be in this together.

### RTI & THS Team Up

The following DSPs from RTI provided in-home services for THS, pictured left to right: Angie Knapp, Bobbi Oaks Weisenbarger, Brandy Stahl, Chelsea Mumford, Hannah Ryan and Kelsie Henderson.



### Amanda Huff: Going Above & Beyond

Selfless. Caring. Dedicated. Those are just some of the words Amanda Huff's friends use to describe her. Amanda, a DSP at provider agency BLESS, has had a difficult year, enduring several personal tragedies recently. In spite of these trials, Amanda continues to go above and beyond for the people she supports.

According to BLESS Program Director Nicole Gardner, "Amanda is amazing. She's been through a lot the past 6 months, but has always shown up with a smile. She's dedicated and always manages to put her individuals first."



A friend of Amanda's agrees, adding, "Amanda is an exceptional person inside and out. She's one of the most dependable, caring and trustworthy people that I've ever had the privilege to meet."

## Thebert Returns to County Board

Janice Thebert has been involved with Riverside for years now, serving in a variety of positions at our agency and WestCON. WestCON, or West Central Ohio Network, is a Council of Governments (COG) that supports 12 county boards of developmental disabilities, including Riverside, and their provider partners. As the Provider Resources Coordinator, Janice would serve as a liaison between Riverside and our provider partner.



Janice first joined Riverside in 2011 as a Service & Support Administrator (SSA or case manager), a role she held until 2015 when she accepted a position at WestCON as the Provider Resources Coordinator.

In January 2020, Thebert returned to the Riverside team and accepted the position of Provider Referral & Linkage Resource Support Coordinator. This role serves within our Quality & Innovations (QI) Department and is part of our efforts to support our provider partners and ensure they have access to the resources they need to deliver quality services to people with developmental disabilities.

As a Provider Support Coordinator, Thebert performs many of the same roles she did at WestCON, but instead of being contracted through the COG, she is employed directly through Riverside. As a result, Riverside is now able to take funds that were used to finance Thebert's position through WestCON and reallocate them to benefit our other services.

Thebert has always had tremendous respect for providers and has enjoyed supporting them over the years. Her job duties include linking the people we serve with providers who best meet their needs, monitoring services delivered to ensure quality outcomes and individual satisfaction. She also helps independent DSPs through the certification and application process. For more about Thebert's role and the relationship between Riverside and our provider partners, visit [www.riversidedd.org](http://www.riversidedd.org).

## TPD Capt. McKinney Replaces TCPD Chief Burris on Riverside Board

As a member of the Riverside Board, Tipp City Police Chief Eric Burris provided great leadership, including helping fellow Board member Mandy Via and our agency in purchasing safety belts that help first responders identify people with disabilities in crisis situations.

Unfortunately, Chief Burris had to step down from the Board in June 2020. We were saddened to see him go, but we are grateful for our relationship with Chief Burris and his department, and we look forward to a continued partnership.



We are also grateful to have found another local law enforcement leader to fill Chief Burris' position. During our June Board meeting, we welcomed Troy Police Captain Shawn McKinney, who will take over as Troy Police Chief in August.

Through our partnership with local law enforcement, Captain McKinney is familiar with our agency. In response to Captain McKinney's swearing in, Riverside Superintendent shared, "I believe Captain McKinney will provide an invaluable perspective to our Board, and I am happy to welcome him to our team."