



Celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month



MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT

BRIAN W. GREEN

Superintendent Brian Green explains how the critical shortage of Direct Support Professionals is affecting services in Miami County.

FALL 2021

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

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Superintendent's Corner

In our last issue, I shared how our system is suffering due to a lack of enough Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who provide a wide array of services to people with developmental disabilities. I gave examples of how our own Riverside staff are filling in on caregiving shifts at individuals' homes, when those shifts would normally be filled by a service provider partner agency or independent provider staff.

In this update, I would like to share that the problem has grown since our last newsletter, with more of our team filling these critical needs. At first, we sent in a few of our Service and Support Administrators (SSAs, or case workers) to fill in on a few shifts. Now, we not only have several SSAs now taking on as much as 24 extra hours each week and some working weekends, but we have decided to repurpose an entire department to help address this need for the short-term future.

Many of you are familiar with our Community Connections Team (formerly our Recreation Department). This team facilitates a variety of activities such as dances, field trips, movie nights and craft parties, in addition to our Special Olympics program. As this team was planning to schedule their next set of activities and events, we realized the importance of those activities paled in comparison to ensuring that the people we serve are bathed, fed and taken to medical appointments.

So, the Community Connections Team met with SSA Managers and determined to set aside a majority of their weekly hours to fill critical needs in the homes of those we serve. This means that the Community Connections Team cannot fill a schedule of activities for at least November and December, and there will also be no Special Olympics basketball or cheerleading season this year. While this is likely to disappoint many of our regular participants, we hope that everyone will understand.

In the meantime, if you could help us continue to find potential candidates to fill the DSP positions, we would greatly appreciate it. To reiterate what I shared in my last column, DSP job options are incredibly flexible, and many DSPs provide just a few hours of support once or twice a week to one or two people with simple tasks such as grocery shopping, errands or recreational activities. Some DSPs specialize in a service, such as being a "payee" and helping with personal finances, or in transportation by providing rides. All of this can be a part-time position to earn extra money, and a rewarding option for college students or retirees. Others are full-time DSPs and serve people with greater needs.

If you or someone you know would be interested in exploring the many options and opportunities to become a Direct Support Professional and support people with developmental disabilities, we welcome you to call our Provider Support Coordinator Jan Wintrow at 937-440-3090, and she can walk you through every step of the process.



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

Brian W. Green
Superintendent

A Good Life May Include: *Work*

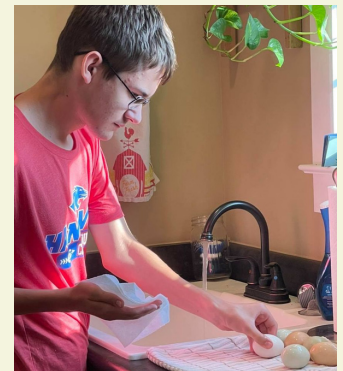
(cover story)

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, which celebrates the many and varied contributions of people with disabilities to America's workplaces and economy. Many of the people we serve enjoy working and earning a paycheck. Some have part-time jobs, some have full-time jobs, some work in supervised groups through local disability employment service providers, and some even start their own businesses! Here's a look at four hard-working people we serve.

Ethan Via is a young man nearing an employable age who chose to try running his own business as a better fit for him at this time than other opportunities for employment. A suggestion from his mom that the family's laying chickens could become a basis for an egg business and an opportunity to learn employment skills was all it took. Ethan embraced the idea. He named his business "Ethan's Eggscellent Eggs" and designed his business logo all in one day. Soon Ethan and his mom started his Facebook page and quickly began to gain followers. According to his mom, "It was an amazing and emotional experience to meet new customers that gave him the opportunity to practice his skills when delivering eggs. It was a great reminder that there are kind and genuine people in our community. After the first few sales, Ethan began to truly understand his business and that he is the owner and operator. Ethan now has the framework and we are working on time management. He works on math skills when counting eggs, totaling a sale and collecting money. He readily completes his tasks, takes time to talk to customers and remembers details about repeat customers. Each package of eggs comes with a handwritten thank you note as well."

"For months, I've been doing great by collecting, washing and delivering eggs," Ethan said. "I'll explain about the three things about eggs. First, I collect eggs from the chicken coops. Next, I wash and dry eggs to put in containers. Lastly, I deliver eggs to everyone that needs an egg delivery. My egg business is still great and especially AWESOME! Thank you, customers for purchasing eggs from Ethan's Eggscellent Eggs."

Ethan's mom added, "We cannot thank our customers enough for allowing Ethan the opportunity to build social skills and develop the framework for employment. A supportive and inclusive community are vital to the success of employment and we are thankful for our Miami County community members and Riverside."



Ethan cleaning eggs

Megan Kendell was one of the first people who came to mind when Riverside was approached with the idea of helping to find kennel workers for the Miami County Animal Shelter. Megan is known for her love of animals and has turned out to be a star employee at the shelter.



Megan at work

"Megan fits in so well here. She has a young person's mentality, she's full of energy, fun and full of love for the animals," said Animal Shelter Manager Rob Craft. "She loves the dogs but her absolute passion is the cats."

He explains that the first thing she does each shift is to check out the cats. Then she gets to work cleaning out the dog kennels, and afterward, she goes to the cat room, gets them out and plays with them until it's her time to go home. "She makes sure she tells me that she kissed them all so they can sleep good at night. She's an absolute sweetheart," Rob said.

Rob's story lines up with Megan's account. When asked about her favorite part of her job, she said, "One word: kittens! They are always climbing on top of me and giving me kisses!" Her dad said the job is a match made in heaven. "I've never seen her happier. She's just joyful, always happy now and has a spring in her step."

When she isn't working, Megan enjoys playing with her cats (Tigger and Rocky), rabbit (Matthew), and dogs (Lily and Piper). She also enjoys playing Pokemon and spending time at RT Industries' Adult Day Program.



A Good Life May Include: *Work*

(cover story continued)

Stefan Lemmon has varied interests. He likes to paint, write, travel, and he takes art lessons. These interests were shared when he completed a LifeCourse trajectory worksheet, and his wishes were respected when his parents encouraged him to seek employment. With the help of his SSA Rebekah Holly and job coaches, Stefan achieved his goal. Stefan has flourished at Dayton Children's Hospital, performing various jobs, persisting during COVID-19 and making friends.

While an artist at heart, Stefan has become a successful employee: the attention to detail required for art serves him well at work. "Stefan has truly found the career that fits his skills," said Stefan's job coach. "When doing food preparation, especially in a hospital, details matter. Foods must be portioned and prepared correctly every time. Stefan's focus when working with food and the cleanup afterward makes him an asset to a hospital cafeteria."

His supervisor at Dayton Children's said, "Stefan has been employed at Dayton Children's Hospital Department of Dietetics & Nutrition since June 2017. Since that time, he has helped us with a variety of job duties including dish room, sanitation, cafeteria stock and food preparation. Stefan rarely calls off work and he performs his job duties in a consistent, careful manner. Most importantly, he is polite and respectful of others. Stefan is well liked by his co-workers and is known for sharing his artwork, his handwritten letters and his retirement speeches with us all. He has enriched our work environment and we are fortunate to have him on our team."



Stefan

Karen Hill has worked at RTI since graduating from school many years ago.

"She enjoys the community jobs in a supported environment, and seeing her friends at work. They joke around and have fun, but Karen is a faithful and dedicated worker," said Brenda, a direct support professional with whom Karen lives in an Ohio Shared Living arrangement.



Karen

Currently, Karen works at Nitto in Piqua through RT Group Employment Supports, sorting car parts, among other assignments. She has been at Nitto for about three years, having previously worked at SEW. According to her supervisor, "Karen loves her job. She loves making money, but I think the thing she likes the most is the people she gets to work with each day. They have a lot of fun but still get the work done. I also believe she enjoys the consistency of getting up to go to work. She works about 20 hours a week." She went on to say, "Working is good for Karen's self-esteem. I think it brings her a sense of purpose and makes her feel good that she gets up every day and goes to work like everyone else."

When asked what are the benefits of Karen working, besides the fact that she is performing a necessary task and doing it well, her supervisor added, "I think the benefit of Karen working is ultimately for Karen. But those around her that get the opportunity to see her and connect with her benefit from Karen working as well. She is an amazing human being, and the more people who get to interact with her, the better."

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed 31 years ago, and took America a step closer to embracing the founding principles of liberty, justice, dignity and equality for all. "For more than 60 million disabled Americans, the ADA is much more than just a law. It provides a vital source of opportunity and self-sufficiency, allows for increased economic participation, and serves as a powerful shield against discrimination in the workplace. National Disability Employment Awareness Month is a chance for us to celebrate workers with disabilities and recommit ourselves to dismantling barriers to access and inclusion in the workplace." --Joseph R. Biden, September 20, 2021 "Presidential Actions."

Direct Support Professionals

DSP Appreciation Food Truck Dinner

You often hear about the extremely important role that Direct Support Professionals play in the lives of people who have disabilities. Riverside hosted something special for these hard-working professionals with a Food Truck dinner for all DSPs in Miami County on September 15 in celebration of Direct Support Professionals Week.



We  DSPs!



Who doesn't love a night where dinner is on the house and cooked by someone else?

Thank you, DSPs! We appreciate you!

Provider Agency Spotlight



Established in 2007, THS has become a leader in remote support technology and implementation. Remote Support Services are often used when a person can be supervised and assisted with technology, to increase independence in their home in the least intrusive manner possible. Remote Support Services are a customized network of sensors chosen by an individual and/or their guardian that meets their needs. The sensors report to a centralized hub in the home which transmits data to the cloud. That information is continuously viewed by THS support specialists. THS says, "Once a plan is in place, our monitors know how to react in case of an alert. A call tree is also put in place to ensure someone is there to receive the data and make the necessary calls. We believe Remote Supports Services are a great way to increase independence of the individual, save money and ensure health and safety!" Below are some ways in which Remote Support Services ensure health and safety:

- Open/close sensors for doors and windows
- Motion detection
- Emergency buttons for immediate assistance
- Seat occupancy sensors
- Temperature sensors for home or stove
- Carbon monoxide sensor
- Water sensors alert for excessive water in the home; monitor bath and sink usage.
- Humidity levels (furnace problems)
- Activity sensors

The system is not for all individuals with developmental disabilities, of course, but it can provide oversight for an individual and ensure prompt in-person attention if needed, while allowing the individual to enjoy a high degree of independent living.

Community Support

Non-Profit Night Supports Miami County Special Olympics



A recent non-profit night fundraiser for Special Olympics hosted by the Leaf & Vine and Power 107.1 was a success, raising \$790 for our local athletes. We extend a special thanks not only to the Leaf & Vine and Power 107.1, but also to Bodega Market for donating cookies and brownies to sell, as well as Troy Fish & Game who made a \$200 donation to the event. Thank you to all who came out to support the fundraiser!



Volunteers Lend a Hand



It has not been easy to get to Riverside for the last couple of months due to the road construction, but nine volunteers from the St. John the Baptist Catholic Church's youth group paid us a visit in August to complete a couple of clean-up projects. One group tackled cleaning and disinfecting our tables and chairs in the gym, while another spent time cleaning the furniture and windows in our courtyard.

A few days later, another group of nine spent 1.5 hours organizing some news clips for a history binder for us. In all, we had 18 volunteers donate 27 man-hours. A big thank you to these students and their advisors for helping us spruce up!

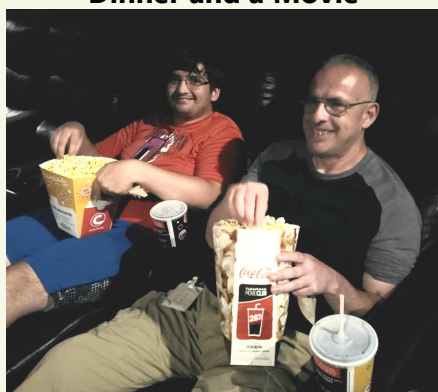
Thank you!



Community Connections

"Fun with Friends" is a popular new activity offered by our Community Connections Department that allows people we serve to choose what they'd like to do and with whom, and where they would like to go. The activities require scheduling, and everyone pays their own way, but the fun is definitely a group affair! Our Community Connections Facilitators make arrangements and take the friends where they want to go. Adventures from the last few weeks include:

Dinner and a Movie



Tyler and Billy

Miami County Fair Visit



Aiden and Stephen

Axe Throwing



Lisa and Jenna

Special Olympics



Chris Jackson

After weeks of practice and competition, four Miami County Special Olympics golfers and their volunteer partners made it to the State Finals at Meadow Links & Golf Academy in Cincinnati on September 25. They competed against several other Ohio counties and did a great job.

Chris Jackson and his partner Jim Snipes brought home the GOLD. For Chris, the victory was especially sweet: he had not been able to go to a state tournament in six years. Last year he qualified and was supposed to go, but his grandfather passed away just before the event and he had to miss it. To finally go this year and win the gold was truly a special moment. The tournament was also Jim's first time at state, and you can see by his smile that it was an exciting moment for him, too.



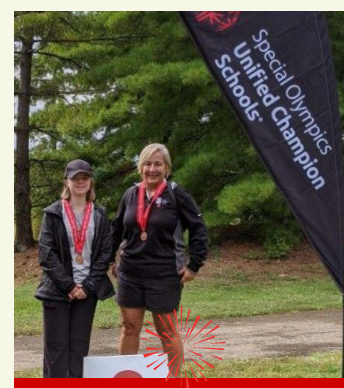
Tommy Luna



Tommy Cramer

Tommy Cramer and Tommy Luna each brought home a Silver medal. Tommy Cramer was only one stroke behind the gold medal winner in a very close match. Angela Hess brought home the Bronze.

Congratulations to all of our 2021 golfers, and thank you to our volunteer partners who made this season possible!



Angela Hess



Inside this Issue

Fall 2021

Work is important to many people. As we celebrate October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we feature four individuals who are enjoying their own employment journeys.