



MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT

BRIAN W. GREEN

Superintendent Brian Green explains how the national labor shortage is affecting the developmental disabilities field.

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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

Over the past several years, we have shared in this magazine and I have shared in editorial features in the Miami Valley Today about the shortage of Direct Support Professionals (DSP) in our field. It has been a growing concern over the last decade, but now with a national labor shortage, the situation has become a true crisis.

I do not often speak in extremes or for dramatic effect, however, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that we recruit new workers. Independent DSPs and the provider agencies who employ DSPs have been working diligently to ensure the health and safety of those we support. We work closely with these providers on each and every case to find creative ways to ensure that health and safety with the number of DSPs at work in our county. Creativity and an "all-hands-on-deck" mentality have resulted in solutions such as increased remote supports (video/technology monitoring) instead of in-person supports, and Riverside SSAs (case workers) providing coverage when DSPs are unavailable or SSAs helping with grocery trips and doctor visits when DSPs would normally provide and bill for that service. These are not ideal solutions, as there are state and federal rules in place to separate our services from the direct care providers. However, our commitment to the people we serve in Miami County is unwavering and we will not compromise on ensuring their needs are met.

My plea to you – our friends and neighbors in Miami County – is that you examine your life and those around you to see if you or anyone you know might be interested in becoming a DSP. The 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. Regardless of your preference, we can certainly use all the help we can get.

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 Relations Coordinator Jan Wintrow at 937-440-3090, and she can walk you through every step of the process. Thank you again for your amazing support, Miami County.



Brian W. Green
Superintendent

Goal: Bring a Smile to a Child's Face *(cover story)*

John Straw has always had interests and hobbies. But when Christina O'Dell, a Direct Support Manager for CRSI, found some painted rocks and re-hid them, inviting friends to find them ... well, John was one who sought and found, and he was hooked.



John painting rocks



For John, it is not just the seeking of rocks with interesting shapes, or the painting of them, though he likes to do both of those things. In fact, John always has his eye out for a great rock and good paint colors.

But what John really likes, he says, "Is to see the looks on children's faces when they find them!" So, John places a lot of rocks in parks and neighborhoods with play areas for children. Christy, who has known John for over 20 years, says, "He really loves children."

John likes to actually witness a child find a rock. But even if he doesn't, with the smile he hopes it brings, it is his own version of a random act of kindness.



John recently coached children in the fine art of finding, cleaning, painting and placing rocks. On an outing with Riverside's Community Connections Facilitator Julia Williams, John shared his skills with a few young ones. Now they, too, can bring smiles to people's faces with an unexpected rock "gift."



Direct Support Professionals

What exactly is a Direct Support Professional? Once considered "caregivers," Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) work directly with people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities to assist them in leading self-directed lives and help them contribute to their communities. DSPs may assist with activities of daily living, if needed, and they encourage attitudes and behaviors that enhance community inclusion. A DSP also acts as an advocate in communicating the needs, self-expression and goals of the people they support.

Benefits of Becoming a DSP:

- Many job opportunities
- Free training
- Flexible schedules
- Choose your own career path
- New friendships
- The feeling of doing good

What You Need to Become a DSP:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Have a High School Diploma or GED
- Have an acceptable background check



For general information and help:

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Provider Agency Spotlight



Our work of supporting individuals as they define what it means for them to have a "good life" is full of exciting choices and endless opportunities. For some, having daily activities with friends in the community is important. For others, having a job and the independence of earned income is a goal. Thus we partner with state agencies like Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities and local service provider partners to create meaningful experiences for everyone.

RT Industries is one of those local partners. RT Industries is a non-profit 501(c)3 provider of Adult Day and Employment services. They support more than 150 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and over 40 school-aged students each year within Miami and neighboring counties, and have over 80 partnerships with local businesses. These relationships are mutually beneficial by helping businesses with recruitment and retention of employees and securing employment for people. People are matched based on personal strengths and the employer's needs. RT Industries promotes community membership and connection. Their goal, as is ours, is to help those served reach their maximum potential through a variety of supports.

Community Support

Troy Fire Department Donates Bike Helmets

As you may know, Riverside's Community Connections Department teaches "life skills" to many of the people we serve. Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety are two of the skills taught. Riders must wear a bicycle helmet, but don't always have their own. Thus a big THANK YOU to the Troy Fire Department for their recent donation of several bike helmets to us! These new helmets will ensure the safety and protection of our participants as they learn to navigate their communities.



Kiwanis Club of Troy Makes Donation

At a recent Kiwanis Club of Troy meeting, we were surprised with the news that Riverside was chosen as the recipient of the club's monthly donation to a local nonprofit. Riverside Community Awareness & Opportunities Director Melissa Nichols was in attendance and accepted a \$250 check on our behalf. We are fortunate for the continued support of the Kiwanis organization, from their encouragement and help starting an Aktion Club in 2016, as well as for their other generous donations to us.

Teen Leadership Troy Makes Donation

We are grateful to Teen Leadership Troy's 2021 class for awarding us a Troy Foundation Project GIFT grant for \$420. Teens who attended the Teen Leadership Troy program reviewed grant applications submitted by agencies from all over the community and had to determine how to allocate \$5,000 to fulfill the many requests they received. Riverside was fortunate to be one of the many groups who received funds. The Troy Foundation grant will be used to help us purchase a new scoreboard for our gym.



Special Olympics

Special Olympics Powerlifting Tournament

On June 26, Riverside's gym was once again filled with people, fun and excitement! Thirty-three athletes from Champaign, Hamilton, Madison, Mercer, Miami and Montgomery Counties gathered in our gym and competed in bench and deadlift events before a big crowd of supporters. Congratulations to all 12 Miami County athletes, who took home 11 gold, 8 silver and 3 bronze medals! Special thanks to head coach Mark Higgins and "Heroes for Warriors" volunteers from Complete Fitness, as well as helpers from Ohio Veterans Outdoors and Gem City Rollers.



Special Skills Golf Camp 2021

We were fortunate to be offered the opportunity to participate in the Special Skills Golf Invitational at Wedgewood Golf and Country Club in Powell, Ohio, on June 1. The experience allowed several athletes to learn new skills from PGA of America Teaching Pros. In addition, the Miami County Special Olympics golf team has been practicing hard every Monday morning at Homestead Golf Course in Tipp City. Some will go on to Regionals and then to the State Golf Tournament. Meadow Links & Golf Academy will be the September setting for this golf season capper. State Gold winners earn a chance to attend the World Golf Tournament. Good luck, golfers!





Braxton

Early Intervention Update

Early Intervention (EI) is a statewide coordinated system providing services to families with children birth to their third birthday who have developmental delays. EI is a home- and community-based collaboration where Riverside staff and state hearing, vision and early childhood mental health partners support EI families in Miami County.

During the COVID-19 quarantine, EI began using virtual visits to support children and their families. Progress and outcomes were achieved with remote visits, which was surprising to some. "Our staff's coaching practices grew along with families' confidence in their abilities to help their children develop new skills," said Riverside EI Director Kathy Greenawalt-Cherry.

"Virtual visits worked out better than we expected," she said. However, with restrictions now lifted, the Early Intervention team is back out in the community visiting families in their homes, and some parents are glad. "I like it better in person so that they can work with us better. Braxton is making progress," said Katelyn Miron and Jeffery Franklin.

Remote visits will, however, remain a part of the EI service delivery options available to local families. "While our staff and the families we support have been excited to meet in person, we realize some families prefer virtual visits or may want an occasional virtual visit for scheduling or other reasons. Therefore, Riverside EI will continue to offer virtual visits, or a mix of in-person and virtual visits according to each family's preferences." Greenawalt-Cherry said.

Hybrid Craft Night a Hit

June's Craft Night was a first attempt by volunteer Chrissi Douglas at conducting a hybrid activity that included in-person and at-home options. It was enjoyed by all as participants made really cool Fourth of July decorations using pool noodles, ribbon and other craft supplies. A big thank you to volunteer Chrissi for her work in preparing the kits and leading the class!



Fun with Friends

Community Connections' popular "Night Out with Friends" programming has morphed into what may one day be even more popular--"Fun with Friends." A trip to Fairfield Commons (left) provided friends an opportunity for shopping, girl-talk and laughter.



The group on the right chose a Kings Island trip, and enjoyed perfect weather, theme park food and thrilling rides! Fun was had by all!





Inside this Issue

Summer 2021

Sometimes a small thing, like a found painted stone left behind by a kind person, can be a smile-making surprise. John Straw shows us how he spreads joy throughout his community.