



INSPIRE. EMPOWER. SUPPORT.

Report

SUMMER 2021

WEEK OF KINDNESS 2021



Continuing to be inspired by the 2017 Week of Service that celebrated the 50th anniversary of County Boards, our agency set out to give back to the community that supports us with a new yearly initiative: *Our Great Giveback, Week of Kindness 2021*.

Each year in July, the Erie County Board of Developmental Disabilities will choose local avenues that allow us to spread kindness and thank our community. This year we partnered with both Sports Force Parks and Cinemark Theatre for public events. Sports Force Parks hosted an ECBDD Night at the Sandusky Bay Ice Haulers game. This included complimentary tickets and the Erie Bucks, Special Olympics softball team, was recognized on the field alongside the Ice Hauler athletes. Together with Cinemark, we offered a sensory-friendly showing of *The Boss Baby: Family Business* with 140 free seats available.

ECBDD staff also spent time volunteering at Second Harvest Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity ReStore, the Erie County Dog Warden and with the OHgo bookmobiles and senior food box deliveries.

Top L to R: ECBDD Volunteers at Second Harvest Food Bank, an OHgo Bookmobile at MacArthur Park and the Habitat for Humanity ReStore. Bottom L to R: ECBDD staff at Cinemark Stadium, at the Erie County Dog Warden and Sandusky Bay Ice Haulers stand with Erie Buck athletes for the National Anthem.





Assistive Technology in Action

Meet Michelle! She lives by herself but has Direct Support Professionals working with her daily to physically assist her with meeting her needs. Michelle utilizes assistive technology to remain as independent as possible in her home and to minimize the time Direct Support Professionals are scheduled to work with her.

During the night, when she is not in her wheelchair, she needs someone with her to assist her with responding to an emergency if one were to arise. But, not during the day when she is in her wheelchair, as long as she can rely on her assistive technology.

She has an automatic door opener and a Personal Emergency Response System (PERS) button and bracelet that all stay with her whenever she is home by herself.

The technology Michelle utilizes is simple, but it plays a mighty role in her life. "If I didn't have it, it would cause me to have more staff for my safety." Michelle's time by herself is very important to her. "If I wasn't able to be alone, it wouldn't be good for my mental health and it wouldn't be good for everyone around me."

She also has a cell phone that is linked to a handsfree Bluetooth device and a text messaging app on her computer that allows her to connect with family and friends without depending on someone else. Greater independence is just a simple piece of equipment away for many people. And, for Michelle, it really is as simple as the click of a button.



THE ROLE OF A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST IN EARLY INTERVENTION

Are you worried that your 2-year-old is not using more than 50 words? Do you have concerns with how your child eats, making routine mealtimes a challenge? Is your 1-year-old not saying "mama" and "dada" yet? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, your child may benefit from a free developmental evaluation through our Erie County Early Intervention Program, for children from birth to age 3.

Our Speech-Language Pathologist, Teresa McDermond, is part of our Early Intervention team and she assists families whose children have communication and feeding needs. Children learn best from the most important people in their lives (parents/caregivers, siblings) and in their natural environment (home, playground, grocery store). Therefore, our Speech-Language Pathologist travels to a child's natural environment and partners with families to identify specific strategies to support a child's speech/language and feeding development. She will help you implement these strategies during your everyday routines, including play time, mealtime, reading books together, grocery shopping, etc. For example, she can visit your family during lunch time and can help your child learn to request what they like to eat and drink. As active participants, families learn meaningful strategies to practice with their child on a daily basis which will greatly enhance the child's new skills.

If you have any questions or concerns about your infant or toddler's speech and language development or if you are interested in referring your child to the Erie County Early Intervention for a free developmental evaluation to see if your family may benefit from services:



CALL 1-800-755-GROW



FOR EVENTS & UPDATES FOLLOW US



UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST 11: Kids Day @ the Erie County Fair

SEPTEMBER 18: Walk to End Alzheimer's @ Shoreline Park

OCTOBER 14: Building Bridges Awards Banquet @ Mesenburg Hall, Huron

DECEMBER 4: Drive-Thru Santa @ Erie County Board of DD



Accepting Nominations Now!
 Visit our website or Facebook page for a nomination form.



Sincerest thanks to both David Stuck and Howard Collins for their years of service as Board members and a warm welcome to our newest Board members, Eric Kibler and Tracey Susana.



Carrie's Corner

It is summertime in Ohio! The sunshine and green grass makes us smile and makes each day beautiful. Here at the Erie County Board of Developmental Disabilities (ECBDD) we are working hard to support individuals with developmental disabilities and reconnecting with our community, providers and partners.

The developmental disabilities industry is challenged by the workforce shortage, like many others. We have had small challenges over the years, but the future looks to be more challenging as the labor shortage is all around us. We must look to be creative and resourceful in ways we have not had to in the past. There is not a magic answer, nor a one size fits all answer to this workforce shortage. We are up to the challenge and will do our very best to be creative and resourceful with the limited resources available at this time.

In the next six months here are some of the initiatives we will be working on:

- Preparing to transition to a statewide Individual Service Plan (ISP) called Ohio ISP. This change is being led by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities.
- Returning to offering face-to-face home visit and group experiences for the youngest we serve, those birth to age three.
- Expanding community engagement and participation opportunities for those we serve.
- Expanding community employment and volunteer opportunities for those we serve.
- Supporting provider partners with recruitment and retention of staff.

I am so proud of our hardworking and talented staff, providers and partners. We will continue to work hard for those who use our supports and partner with our community for a better future for all.





Open Monday through Friday | 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM
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BOARD MEMBERS:

John Hoty, *Vice President* | Stacie Schmid, *Secretary*
David Danhoff | Mark Harrington | Eric Kibler | Tracey Susana

Mission: To inspire, empower and support individuals and their families.

Vision: Individuals will achieve personal success.

Values: Integrity and Trust | Mutual Respect | Equality
Collaboration and Teamwork | Personal Responsibility



The Impact of Direct Support Professionals: A Family's Testimony

Dennis Horan and his wife Alice Roehrs are long-time Erie County residents. Their daughter, Emma, has received supports from ECBDD through her lifespan. Emma is on an Individual Options Waiver, which is a good fit for people who may need a variety of services or a lot of help in their home. Below, Dennis shares their personal testimony of how important direct support professionals have been in their lives.

Emma received an IO Waiver approximately fifteen years ago. She continued to live with us while she completed high school and then began to work at Goodwill as a Data Entry Clerk. Alice was her Medicaid provider during this period and she had a couple of independent providers for activities outside our home.

Alice and I were responsible for all her needs from helping with homework to toileting and bathing from taking her to medical appointments to traveling together on vacations. The only times we were apart were when we were working. It was a very limiting situation for all of us in spite of the waiver.

In 2012 we decided to encourage Emma to move out of our home and to live as independently as possible. Alice and I felt she should have the best opportunity to adjust to life without us before it was forced on her by our demise. She rented a house with one roommate through the Erie County division of the Huron County Family Initiative. We selected Partners in Community to provide residential services for them and Sandusky Transit System to provide transportation.

Emma actually made a pretty quick and successful transition. She was already skilled with a computer and had used a radio and small TV for several years. We got her a cell phone and she quickly learned to use it to keep in touch with us. Her independence has increased over the years. She has gained both technical and social skills which would not have happened if she had continued living with us. It could not have happened without the supports provided through the IO Waiver, the Erie County Board of DD and her Partners In Community staff.

Emma now shares a home with two adult women. They have staff from dinner time through breakfast most days. Emma, as much independence and maturity as she has gained, cannot fully take care of herself. She needs help dressing, undressing and bathing. She sleeps with knee immobilizers and casts on her feet so she cannot get out of bed without help. She is not able to either put on or take off her Ankle-Foot-Orthotics and can't walk without them. She is not able to do her activities of daily living, including cooking, without her staff. So she is still a full time job, just not for us.

We still spend a lot of time with her: every Sunday afternoon and a day a week for exercise. Plus appointments, events and occasional vacations. Yet we are free to pursue our own lives. We both have clubs and meetings now. We can go out for dinner without it being a production. We have taken several month-long vacations. During these absences we talk with Emma on her cell phone most every day. A couple of years ago we bought a small recreational vehicle. It's usually just for Alice and I but we have taken Emma along a number of times. Most of our time on those trips is spent taking care of Emma. It's a great reminder of the freedom Emma's IO Waiver has given us! We now live almost like a regular couple.

Without the years of services and supports, Emma never would have grown into the young woman that she has. Alice and I never could have had the rich full life that we have. We are not poor, but we would have long ago exhausted our resources paying for staff, transportation and Emma's other expenses.

If we lost those services and supports, the same situation would ensue. We would quickly go through our resources and Emma would probably have to move back in with us. Certainly it wouldn't be the end of the world, but it would just as certainly be a setback for Alice and I and a disaster for Emma.