



**INSPIRE. EMPOWER. SUPPORT.**

*Report*

**SUMMER 2022**

## *Carrie's Corner*

### **Relationships with Erie County Community**

Relationships are more important than ever! Relationships build strong and resilient communities. They are the underpinning of trust and partnerships. At the Erie County Board we value each and every relationship and know that building and sustaining strong relationships leads to success, new opportunities and growth for our entire community.

Relationships are the foundation of the work we do each day. We are constantly working to strengthen our relationship with:

- Individuals and families from birth throughout the life span.
- Our local agency and independent providers who provide front line care to those we support.
- Our community social service agencies such as Erie County Job and Family Services, Erie County Courts, Erie County Family and Children First, Erie County Board of Mental Health, Erie County Health Department, Serving our Seniors, City of Sandusky, Erie County Sheriff, Sandusky and Perkins Police, all of our seven school districts, and many others.
- Local businesses and community agencies such as OHgo, Sandusky Mall, Cinemark Theater, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Sports Force Parks, Erie MetroParks, Mesenburg Creative Catering, and others.
- Local, state and federal officials such as our County Commissioners, Erie County Auditor, Erie County Prosecutor & Erie County Public Defender, State and Federal legislators.

We will continue to nurture our current relationships and partnerships and always look to build new ones. Prioritizing relationships is essential to maintaining partnerships, promoting the growth and development of our community, and helping us survive the difficult times that challenge us all.

*Thank you for supporting us so we may continue to serve those with developmental disabilities.*



# Swim Classes at the Norwalk Rec

The goals of the Help Me Grow Home Visiting and Early Intervention programs include ensuring that newborns, infants, and toddlers who live in Erie County have the best possible start in life, including supporting pregnant mothers as well. The Help Me Grow program recognized an unmet need in water safety and swimming education. According to the CDC, drowning is the number 1 cause of death for children under the age of four. Due to Erie County having miles of waterfront, the staff began to problem solve how they could contribute to increased knowledge of water safety for young children and their families in our community.



In 2021, the staff of the Help Me Grow program wrote a grant application to the Hogrefe Foundation's For Love With Love Charity and were awarded a very generous amount of \$5,000. With these funds, the program has been able to support water safety and swim instruction to toddlers ages 2-3 and their families. Water safety classes have begun at the Norwalk Recreational Facility and will continue throughout the summer for those participating in the Help Me Grow program.

# Building Partnerships With Art

Since January of 2018, the Erie County Board of Developmental Disabilities has collaborated with Erie MetroParks to bring the community and the individuals we serve together with art and creativity. Art in the Park is a free monthly program that provides an instructed art lesson by a local artist who shares their craft. Fifteen spaces are reserved for individuals from the community, and fifteen spaces are reserved for individuals served by the Board. Art in the Park gives individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunity to be creative in a community atmosphere where they can build relationships based on shared interests. It also gives local artists the opportunity to promote their business to community members. The goal of this collaboration is to increase awareness, kindness, acceptance, and inclusivity, which we have seen grow within this program over the past four years.

Following a two-year hiatus due to COVID, Art in the Park is thriving again with full attendance. A generous grant from The Michelle Wightman/Karrie Wieber Charitable Foundation in the amount of \$4000 for the year 2022/23 will sustain Art in the Park, providing necessary supplies and artists' fees. The Art in the Park program is held once a month on a Thursday evening at Erie Metroparks, Osborn Park in Huron, Ohio. Class starts at 6pm and ends around 8pm. Community members can register online on the Erie MetroParks website and Board members can register through our registration line.



# Grow-Getters Get Busy at Hancock Street Community Garden

Summer is here, and for many that means spending time in our yard gardening.

The Erie County Board is partnering with the Erie County Health Department on their "Creating Healthy Communities" project to revitalize the Hancock Street Community Garden.

Individuals that we serve, called the "Grow Getters", will be gifted their own part of the garden, uncover new skills through hands on learning, and enjoy the bounty of the many vegetables grown. The "Grow Getters" will participate in many events throughout the summer to include music in the garden, a tasty "pick"-nic, "grounded" mindfulness, and lots of learning about plants and critters.

Gardening provides an array of benefits. Being outside reduces stress, builds self-esteem, and has even been shown to help our brain function! Don't forget the biggest benefit... the amazingly fresh fruits and veggies you were able to grow!



# Did You Know?

In October 2010, President Barack Obama signed legislation to replace the term “mental retardation” with the term “intellectual disability.” This change was in response to strong advocacy efforts by those with developmental disabilities that no longer wanted to be referred to as mentally retarded. In response to this request by those that we serve, all 88 county boards in the state of Ohio removed the MR (Mental Retardation) from their name. We have been officially renamed the Erie County Board of DD (Developmental Disabilities) since that time.

To us here at the Board and for those that we serve, this marks an important part of our evolution of supporting the rights of people with developmental disabilities.

## Ice Haulers Partnership a Home Run

The Erie County Board of Developmental Disabilities partnered with Sports Force Parks and the Sandusky Bay Ice Haulers to host a Board of DD Night for anyone who reserved a complimentary ticket through the Board’s registration line. Individuals, families, staff, and others in the community came out to the park to watch their local baseball team.

We had such a fun night watching the Ice Haulers play! The Sandusky Bay Ice Haulers reigned victorious over the Muskegon Clippers after a nine inning regulation finish with a final score of 9-3.

If you have the chance to catch a game this summer, it is definitely worth the time!



## Employee Spotlight: What is Your Why?

### Board Employees share why they love what they do

*“Honestly, after having worked for the Board for 32 years, after a couple of years in, I couldn’t see myself anywhere else. I love helping the families get services through the board and working with them. At the end of the day, when someone is found eligible and can receive services, I know my hand was involved in that outcome.”*

-Sharon Sberna, Individual & Family Support Specialist

*“Working at the Board gives me the opportunity to give back to the community that has given so much to me and my family. I have loved getting to know both the staff and those we support at the Board – I am inspired everyday!”*

-Carolyn Wiseman, Receptionist

*“I have met the best people in the time I have worked for the Erie County Board of DD. My co-workers are knowledgeable and compassionate people, and I have learned so much from them. Families are willing to open up their lives, share their concerns, and allow us to celebrate their children’s successes with them. As I am approaching 35 years total as a social worker, and almost 22 years at the Board of DD, I tell people all the time, “it’s the place I was always meant to be.””*

-Julie Geiger, Help Me Grow Service Coordinator



**Sharon Sberna**  
IFS Specialist



**Carolyn Wiseman**  
Receptionist



**Julie Geiger**  
HMG Coordinator



# Erie County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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**BOARD MEMBERS:** David Danhoff, *President*  
Eric Kibler, *Vice President* | Stacie Schmid, *Secretary*  
Mark Harrington | Katelyn Miller | 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



## Come find us at:

- *Stars and Stripes: Downtown Sandusky, July 4 9am-4pm*
- *Touch-A-Truck: Paper District Marina, August 2 4-7pm*
- *Erie County Fair Kids' Day: Erie County Fairground, August 10 10am-2pm*
- *Perkins Back To School Event: Perkins Middle/High School Campus, August 18 5-7pm*
- *Sandusky Streets: Central Avenue, August 20 9am-3pm*
- *Cedar Point Trick-or-Treat, Date TBD*
- *Deck the Mall! Santa's Workshop at the Sandusky Mall, December 3 9am-noon*

## 2022 Building Bridges Awards

Nominations for our annual Building Bridges Awards are now open! If you or someone you know has made significant contributions to people with developmental disabilities in Erie County, nominate them using the QR code.

