

## Abilities Shine When Ms. Wheelchairs Visit

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### Branching OUT

We could not wait to tell you about all the great partnerships, events and activities that happened in March! So, we are issuing this special edition of our Ambassador newsletter, called 'Branching Out,' to talk about all our community growth!

### Our Goal is 'Green'

If you have not yet given us your e-mail address, there is no better time than the present! You can receive publications (like this newsletter) and other information the "green" way. You can help save money and save trees! Please send us your name and e-mail address to: support@knoxmrdd.com.



Ms. Wheelchair USA,  
Beryl Holzback

Ms. Wheelchair Ohio, Shari Lynn Cooper, and Ms. Wheelchair USA, Beryl Holzback, spoke to nearly 800 Knox County 4th, 5th and 6th grade students through MRDD's Understanding U-niversity event at the Kenyon Athletic Center, March 10 through the 12.

Holzback and Cooper helped the students participating in the Understanding U-niversity event understand that individuals with disabilities are not that different than the students are.

"We all have something unique to contribute to society," said Holzback. "Treat everyone with respect and don't assume just because someone has a disability that they are less of a person."

Holzback, 46, who was born with a congenital spinal cord deformity, is a recent breast cancer survivor and a graduate from Arizona State University. She is employed by Circuit City.

Ms. Wheelchair USA provides Holzback the opportunity to celebrate the abilities and successful accomplishments of all women with disabilities. Since being crowned Ms. Wheelchair USA, she has been traveling the United States doing motivational speaking engagements and celebrity appearances. Her passion is promoting cancer and breast health awareness for disabled women.

"Nothing is impossible if you



Ms. Wheelchair Ohio,  
Shari Lynn Cooper

put your mind to it," says Holzback. Cooper, whose participation was sponsored through the Knox County chapter of People First of Ohio, was also very excited to have the opportunity to educate children about the many abilities people have, regardless of disability.

"Children are our future," said Cooper. "And the earlier they understand about persons with disabilities, the more accepting they will be when their peers have a disability in their classroom or in a community setting."

Cooper, who was born with Cerebral Palsy, has a degree in Disability Intervention Services from Sinclair Community College and serves as Secretary for the Developmental Disabilities Council. She helped students come away with knowledge of what challenges a person with a disability faces every day.

Many of the students stated that speaking with the Ms. Wheelchair ladies was their favorite part of the event. "My favorite station is meeting Ms. Wheelchair," said McKenzie of Twin Oaks. "She is very nice and... disability people can do anything other people can do."

# Partnering with Individuals

## In the News

(MRDD Awareness Month)

March 3: "Kerr named MRDD Volunteer of the Year"

March 5: "Knox County Special Olympics Team"

March 5: "Creative Foundations open house/craft sale"

March 6: "MRDD Board Meeting Wednesday"

March 6: "Commissioners Meet"

March 11: Letters to the Editor, RE: MRDD Awareness Month, Ernie Fischer

March 14: "Students visit Ohio Statehouse"

March 14: "MRDD receives statewide award"

March 18: "Celebrity Omelet Dinner to be Thursday"

March 18: "After Hours features New Hope Industries"

March 19: "Disabilities can't stop the joy of performing"

March 20: "Chefs flip over omelet dinner"

March 21: "Career Center board hears reports from special needs department"

March 21: "Support Easter Seals"

March 25: Letters to the Editor, RE: Bob Ready's retirement, Richard Schwartz

March 31: "Students Learn about disabilities at Understanding University"

## MRDD/MVDC Luncheon:

### Kicking off a Month Full of Awareness

As the saying goes, 'the best way to a person's heart is through their stomach.' In that spirit, the Knox County Board of MRDD in partnership with the Mount Vernon Developmental Center reached out to Knox County community leaders through an MRDD Awareness Month Kickoff Luncheon. An event designed to encourage community leaders to raise public awareness of the many abilities people have, regardless of disability. The luncheon, held March 2nd in the Great Room of the MVDC administration building, was an opportunity to



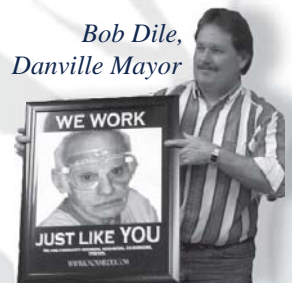
discuss the achievements of the MRDD community and encourage the community's continuing support of individuals with disabilities in living healthy, safe, quality lives. About ninety (90) people were in attendance at the luncheon that featured booths of MRDD providers displaying their products and services. The event was highlighted by guest speakers Margaret Ann Ruhl, State Representative; Teresa Bemiller, Knox County Commissioner; Heather Fowler and Valerie Hawk from Kroger and Sadie Hunter and John Gillespie from People First of Ohio.

Mount Vernon Mayor Richard Mavis and Jill Plichta

## Knox County Pledges its Support: Proclamations Across Knox County

This year, four (4) cities in Knox County signed proclamations declaring March as MRDD Awareness Month and encouraging their communities to acknowledge the contribution of people with disabilities. Mt. Vernon, Centerburg, Fredericktown and Danville mayors and the Knox County Commissioners all signed proclamations in the presence of individuals with disabilities and providers in their community. The Knox County Board of MRDD has traditionally done the signing of proclamations in Mt. Vernon with the Mayor and Commissioners, but this year the County Board recognized the importance of bringing awareness efforts to other areas of the county where people with disabilities live, work, go to school and play. Bradley Porter presented the Mayor of Fredericktown, Roger Reed, with an awareness

poster that said "We Work, Just Like You: We are community members, coworkers, neighbors, friends." Porter told the mayor about the four jobs he works every week. Tami Grogg, another individual, told about the day service programs she attends. These provide her with the opportunity to socialize, work with crafts and learn new skills. She also told of how she had shaved her hair off in honor of a friend's mother who had cancer. Mayor Reed commended her for doing that for another. Each of



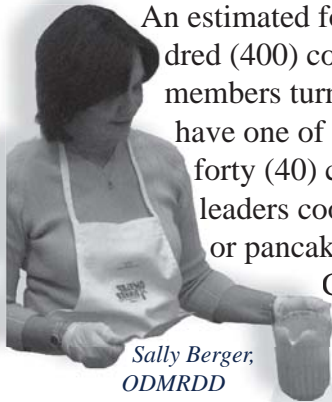
these events are opportunities to bring together community leaders and individuals with disabilities to begin a dialogue.

Tami Grogg, Sally Draper, Fredericktown Mayor Roger Reed (seated) and Brad Porter



# and the Community

## Collaboration Spotlight: Celebrity Omelet Dinner



Sally Berger,  
ODMRDD

An estimated four hundred (400) community members turned out to have one of more than forty (40) community leaders cook them an omelet or pancake at the largest Celebrity Omelet (& Pancake) Dinner to date. Part of the proceeds



Pam Coffing,  
Mark Kohlman,  
Jessie Marlow,  
Lisa Tharp & Jim Workman

Grow; Jenny Highnam, Knox County Educational Service Center; James Workman, Knox County Board of MRDD; Dennis Eggerton,



Nancy Gregg,  
Educational Service Center

New Hope Industries, Inc.; Austin Swallow, Hospice of Knox County; Richard Mavis, Mayor of Mount Vernon; Chris Johnson, WNZR's Morning Thing; Ashley Rouse, WNZR's Afternoon Drive; Dodie Melvin, Mental Health America; Angie Muston, Knox



County Board of MRDD; Jen Margaret Odenweller, United Ann Ruhl, Way of Knox County State Rep. Inc.; Jonette Curry, Knox County Auditor; Sally Berger, Ohio Department of MRDD; Nancy Gregg, Knox County ESC; Dawn Joiner, Midwest Services.

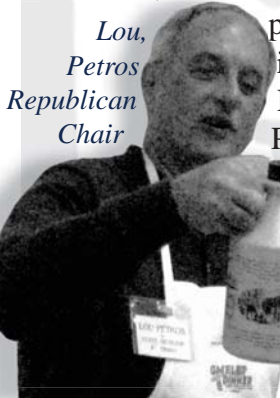
The event was made possible through a dedicated staff of volunteers and the generous donations of Wayne Grange 262, AirTran, Lannings, Smithislers, Tim Hortons, Easter Seals, Long John Silvers, People First of Ohio, Double G Maple Syrup, McDonalds and Taco Bell.



Allen Stockberger,  
Commissioner

Centerburg; Diane Ramey, Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging; Bob Wise, Teresa Bemiller, and Allen Stockberger, Knox County Commissioners; Mike Hillier, Mount Vernon City Council; Adam Taylor, WMVO/

Owner of Knoxpages.com; Connie Hatley, Knox County Educational Service Center; Karin Zuckerman, Easter Seals Central and Southeast Ohio; Margaret Ann Ruhl, State Representative; Jason E. Booth, Knox Metropolitan Housing Authority; Chip McConville, Knox County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney; Cheryl Splain, Mount Vernon News; Kay Benick, Help Me



Lou Petros,  
Republican Chair

Proseccing Attorney; Cheryl Splain, Mount Vernon News; Kay Benick, Help Me

Harry & Elaine Hillier of Wayne Grange 262 (left) donated the proceeds to MRDD's Steve Oster for Special Olympics and CIMKC



## I Understand Highlights from Twin Oaks' Thank You Cards



"I use to think having a disability was bad, now I have experienced it." - Paige,

"Now I know they (people with disabilities) can do the same things in a different way." - Jenna

"I learned that you can still achieve the same thing that other people can." - Taylor

"The Understanding U program really opened my eyes of how hard it is to have a disability." - Peeri

"A really cool thing I learned is that people with disabilities can still do things that we can, but it's harder for them and it takes more time." - Tatum

"I now understand how it feels to be in a wheelchair, blind, or not being able to use your hands. The thing I learned is how hard it is to go over bumps in a wheelchair." - Lexi

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# Partnering with Individuals

## I Understand

Highlights from Twin Oaks' Thank You Cards

*"I learned the names of different disabilities."*

- Megan

*"I learned that if you have a disability and you need help ask for help don't be afraid"* - Kristal

*"I learned how hard it is to walk up and down the stairs with a cast on my leg."* - Alexis

*"I learned that it's sometimes hard to have a disability."* - Cynthia

*"...it is not very nice laughing and staring because disability people can do anything other people can do."*

- McKenzie

*"My favorite part was the sign language because now I know what my cousin feels like."*

- Katelyn

*"I now know how people bowl with disabilities."*

- Cameron

*"People with disabilities have to do things that are very hard."* - Kayla

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## Understanding U-niversity: Reaching Out to Knox County's Youth

The Knox County Board of MRDD in partnership with Fine Productions, conducted the community's first ever Understanding U-niversity event at the Kenyon Athletic Center March 10 - 12.

Nearly eight hundred (800) elementary 4th, 5th and 6th grade students from Fredericktown, Dan Emmett, Columbia, Wiggin Street, Danville and Twin Oaks attended this three day event designed to help students understand and accept individuals with disabilities.

Students attended up to eleven of the event's twenty stations that offered disability related activities from learning common words in sign language to bowling, golfing or painting with a simulated disability. Each of the booths were designed to help the students understand that although individuals with disabilities may look differently, may do things differently or may use equipment that they have never seen before, they are just people, like everyone else.

"We thought the program was great and very worthwhile," said Fredericktown teacher Shelly Laslo. "Our kids really enjoyed it."

Other teachers had similar comments, "I was in awe of the hard work put into this event. I was skeptical going in, but it was very well organized and the kids LOVED IT. The timing was perfect at each station so the kids were never bored, and it was very hands on." While another teacher simply exclaimed, "Absolutely the most amazing thing we have done all



Mariah, T.O.

year!!!!!"

Twin Oaks elementary graciously wrote The Knox County Board of MRDD thank you cards that praised the event, told of their favorite parts and also what they learned. A rewarding part of reading these cards was seeing that almost all the students put the person before the disability saying 'people with disabilities' instead of 'a disabled person.' Language frames the way we think about each other and this reveals that these students are now in the right frame of mind to be accepting of individuals with disabilities.

Many of the students will be happy to know that they, more than likely, will be returning next year. The Knox County Board of MRDD hopes to provide a similar event each year as part of their ongoing awareness efforts.

The event was made possible through the support of many community agencies and volunteers. Also the sponsorship of Knox Community Hospital, Mount Vernon Nazarene University, New Hope Industries, Concepts in Community Living, Creative Foundations, SIMCOR, People First of Ohio, Wal-Mart, the Kenyon College Athletic Center and Domino's Pizza.

For more information about this event or upcoming events visit: [www.knoxmrdd.com](http://www.knoxmrdd.com), e-mail: [aperry@knoxmrdd.com](mailto:aperry@knoxmrdd.com) or call 740-263-1034.



Ethan, T.O.

# and the Community



## *I Understand*

Highlights from Twin Oaks' Thank You Cards

*"I learned a lot, but I mostly learned about people in wheelchairs... I also learned about people with autism."  
- Olivia*

*"I learned it is hard to work a wheelchair."  
- Anthony*

*"One thing I learned was that people with disabilities have trouble doing some things..." - Mariah*

*"I learned how people with disabilities do things."  
-Austin*

*"I learned that people with disabilities need to ask for help when they need it."  
- James*

*"I learned that people with disabilities probably have a hard time doing putt-putt."  
- Austin*

*"I learned that for people with disabilities it is hard to do the things we do."  
- Kylee*

*"I liked learning about people with disabilities so when I get older now I can help people with disabilities."  
- Morgan*



# Partnering with Individuals

## Awareness

### On Stage

*(People First Hosts Play)*

People First of Ohio in partnership with Creative Foundations and MTVArts found a unique way to honor MRDD Awareness month. Attendees to the "Self-Advocates on a Mission, No Time for Intermission" play were treated to a dancing, clapping, foot-stomping, sing-along good time, but more importantly than that, they were witness to individuals with disabilities realizing their own potential. The talent and variety show provided an opportunity for personality and style to shine as each individual became a theatre star for one night. In a true variety show format of several short unique skits, the audience was invited to participate in the joy, the hope, the sadness, the love and the silliness of the actors. Each individual gave an energetic and passionate performance that left the viewer with, in addition to a smile, a simple message, 'we are just like you!'

### *Creative Endeavors:*

#### *Creative Foundations Holds Open House & Craft Sale*

The location of the Creative Foundations Adult Day Service program, on Main Street in Mount Vernon, provides a unique opportunity to partner with the community and promote awareness and acceptance of individuals with disabilities. Located in the heart of downtown Mount Vernon, individuals cannot help but be a part of the community; shopping at local businesses, eating at area restaurants, and being a visible part of the daily activities of the community.

This March, Creative Foundations opened their doors to the community twice, holding both an open house and a craft sale. Creative Foundation's day-long open house invited the public to come in and learn more about their Adult Day Service program and the services they provide to individuals with disabilities. As an

Adult Day Program, Creative Foundations helps individuals with disabilities learn and practice skills important to their daily living such as; social skills, self-advocacy, and money management. Community members that participated in this event were treated to a catered lunch, a slideshow DVD of the many interests and activities of the individuals that spend their days with Creative, and a demonstration by the karate instructor that provides weekly lessons.

The Creative Foundation's Craft Sale allowed individuals in Creative's program the opportunity to show off their artistic abilities and earn some money. The public was welcomed into the Adult Day Program facility where they were able to purchase hand-made paintings, jewelry, magnets and seasonal craft items.

### *A New Day at New Hope:*

#### *New Hope Industries Hosts Business After Hours*

New Hope Industries, a Knox County Adult Day Service and Supported Employment provider, was the site of March's Business After Hours. Business After Hours is a Knox County Chamber of Commerce event that encourages the community and local businesses to visit and learn more about the products, services, and the community contribution of other businesses. It is also an opportunity for local businesses and the public to network and exchange ideas and information. New Hope Industries (NHI) opened its doors to more than fifty (50) community members that were treated to refreshments and received tours of the NHI facilities. NHI performs packaging, light assembly, shredding, collating, mailing, salvage and janitorial services. Its products include wood picnic tables, rubber floor mats and corn



hole games. Participants in this event learned about the many

contracts with local industries that NHI is completing work for including SANO, AMG, Ariel, Heating & Cooling, JeldWen and International Paper. A few of these contracts were set up so that participants could see the type of assembly individuals with disabilities are working on every day. One lucky participant was even given a door prize, a NHI corn hole set.

This Business After Hours event provided NHI with an important opportunity to make the community and local businesses aware of what individuals with disabilities can do (and are doing) every day.

# and the Community

## April - Get Aware:

### Autism Awareness Month

April is Autism Awareness Month, an important opportunity to learn more about autism, the fastest growing developmental disability.

In the 1970s, this neurological disorder affected an estimated one (1) in ten thousand (10,000) children, now one (1) child out of every one hundred and fifty (150) born will develop autism spectrum disorder (ASD). That is a child every thirty minutes in America.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. Individuals with autism vary widely in terms of intelligence and behavior. They may have difficulty relating to others, miss social cues, have trouble forming relationships and suffer from sensory overload. The very nature of their disorder makes it hard for them to understand how others feel. All individuals with ASD demonstrate:

1) deficits in social interaction, 2) deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication, and 3) repetitive behaviors or interests. In addition, they will often have unusual responses to sensory experiences, such as certain sounds or the way objects look. Each of these symptoms runs the gamut from mild to severe. Children with milder forms of autism, such as Asperger's, in spite of deficits in other areas, often can be very intelligent.

Parents are usually the first to see the signs that their child may not be following the typical patterns of child development. In some children, problems may be apparent from birth. The infant may be unresponsive to people or may focus intently on one item for long periods of time. In most cases, a child's problems in communication and social skills become

more noticeable as the child lags further behind other children the same age. In other cases, there is a plateau, or leveling off of progress, so that the difference between the child with autism and other children the same age becomes more noticeable. Oftentimes between 12 and 36 months old, the differences in the way the child reacts to people and other unusual behaviors become apparent.

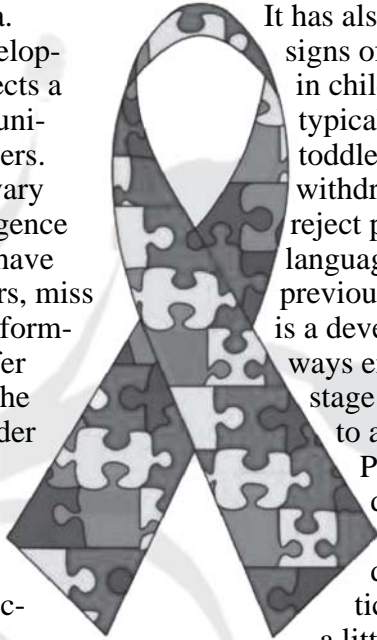
It has also been reported that the first signs of ASD have happened suddenly in children who had been developing typically: an affectionate, babbling toddler can suddenly become silent, withdrawn, self-abusive, start to reject people, act strangely, and lose language and social skills they had previously acquired. Because Autism is a developmental disability it will always emerge in the "developmental" stage of life, which is from birth up to age twenty-one.

Pediatricians, family physicians, daycare providers, teachers, and parents may initially dismiss signs of ASD, optimistically thinking the child is just a little "slow" and will "catch up."

The typical time from a parent's initial concern about their child's development until diagnosis is one year. This year is often a year that is a lost opportunity for early intervention. Many studies now suggest that autism may be recognized within the first year of a child's life.

The cause of autism is unknown and although certain factors may increase risk, it affects all nationalities and all socioeconomic classes indiscriminately.

If you have concerns about your child's development, contact your pediatrician and request a developmental screening. Developmental screenings are now recommended for all children by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Early intervention has been proven to be crucial to positive outcomes for most children.



## Early Indicators (Autism Spectrum Disorder)

- Does not babble by one year old
- Does not point, or make meaningful gestures by age one
- Does not speak one word by 16 months
- Does not combine two words by 2 years old
- Does not respond to name
- Loses language or social skills
- Avoids eye contact
- Resists attention and/or affection
- Doesn't seem to know how to play with toys
- Excessively lines up toys or other objects
- Is attached to one particular toy or object
- Doesn't smile
- At times seems to be hearing impaired
- Seldom seeks comfort
- Often has odd repetitive motions such as rocking or hand "flapping"
- Oblivious to extreme cold or pain
- Highly sensitive to common sensations

## ***Get Involved!***

*Agencies like Inter-church, United Way, Hope Now, Habitat for Humanity and the Humane Society require hundreds of volunteer hours each year to continue to provide their services that are essential to keeping our community strong. As the economic challenges our community faces affect all of us, think about your abilities and how you can give an hour, a day or more to help others. What you receive will be well worth your effort. You will support these vital programs and build lasting community connections!*

## ***Achievement Scoop***

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### **Ms. Wheelchair Ohio: Danielle Brown**



Knox County's own Danielle Brown from Danville won this year's Ms. Wheelchair Ohio. Brown, 25, competed against individuals with disabilities from across the state for the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant's Ms. Ohio crown. As part of her responsibilities as Ms. Wheelchair Ohio 2009, Brown will spend the year speaking at events across Ohio advocating for awareness and accessibility for all individuals with disabilities.

She will have the opportunity to travel, visiting advocacy groups, making public appearances and conducting radio, print and TV interviews.

Ms. Brown recently graduated from the Knox County Career Center where she received a degree in Computer Office Technology. She is the treasurer of the Knox County Aktion Club, a Kiwanis sponsored club for adult individuals with disabilities to learn leadership through community service. She also models clothing for the local Fashion Bug and has participated in Special Olympics, winning gold and silver medals in swimming. She is currently seeking sponsors to help her compete in the national Ms. Wheelchair America pageant taking place this August in South Dakota.

For more information visit:  
[www.MsWheelchairOhio09.com](http://www.MsWheelchairOhio09.com) or e-mail [MsWheelchairOhio09@gmail.com](mailto:MsWheelchairOhio09@gmail.com)