

Alex West

Employment Navigator-Community Facilitator

February 2018

All people, regardless of disability, deserve the opportunity for a full life in their community where they can live, learn, work and play alongside each other through all stages of life. People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities need varying degrees of support to reach personal goals and establish a sense of satisfaction with their lives. The mission of the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities is to establish quality supports that are focused on the individual, providing opportunities for informed choices and achievement of desired choices. Every person has abilities, skills and talents to enrich the community and the people around them. We envision a time when every person with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities has an opportunity to explore and interact in the wonderful communities in Jefferson County. We look forward to connecting with Jefferson County businesses, organizations, agencies and residents, showing the many benefits of *Community Membership*.

For the month of February I've connected with the following:

On **February 1st**, I met with Leanna Lulla, the *Career Development Coordinator*, at the Eastern Gateway Community College; we discussed the possibilities of future endeavors. Leanna is a forward thinking professional, looking for various opportunities for all potential attendees of Eastern Gateway. In other counties in Ohio, Community Colleges are connected and collaborative with their Board of Developmental Disabilities agencies; we are looking to see how we can create that opportunity for the people we service in Jefferson County.

On **February 2nd**, I attended the *Family and Children First Council (FCFC)*, at the Jefferson County Educational Service Center, they're a partnership of state and local government, community and family organizations working on enhancing the well-being of Ohio's children and families by building community capacity, coordinating systems and services, and engaging families. This opportunity has been very beneficial and has afforded us the opportunity of making connections and building a network of "friends" that we can count on in the future.

On **February 5th**, today I met with *Advocacy Advisory Board* of Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Self-Advocacy is about people with disabilities speaking up for themselves. A person with developmental disability may call upon the support of other, but the individual is entitled to be in control of and direct his or her own resources. The purpose of self-advocacy is to exercise the right to make like decisions without unnecessary influence of control by others. Tammy Cain is the facilitator of the Jefferson County self-advocacy groups (adult and youth); we met to support her initiatives and assist in overall progression of the group.

On **February 5th**, I met with Jeff Oblak, *Director of Special Education*, at the Jefferson County Educational Service Center; we discussed the specifics of both of our positions. Jeff is familiar with the history and progression of transition youth services in Jefferson County and I look forward to working with him; he is a member of the *Core Working Group* of the Jefferson County Multi-Agency Transition Youth Team, established earlier this year.

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On **February 6th**, I met with Judy Owing, Director of *Prime Time Senior Center*, and the Primetime Advisory Board, the Primetime Advisory Board meets once a month to discuss the current and future plans of the center and to solicit any insight that could benefit the center. In my opinion the Prime Time Senior Center is a real gem to Jefferson County.

On **February 7th**, I met with the Special Educators at *Edison Jr and Sr High School*; it was a follow-up visit with educators and an opportunity to meet with the students. Ron Ferrell, *Intervention Specialist*, has done a wonderful job of connecting with his students and parents; he has referred several students who will be participating in Summer Youth Work Programs this summer.

On **February 8th**, I met with Rachel Bodo, Principal of the *School of Bright Promise (SBP)*, and her staff, *Intervention Specialist: Ryan Finney, Lori Trikones and Rich Foglia*; it was a great opportunity for us to connect, as we work toward increasing *Community Membership* awareness. Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities has housed several opportunities under the umbrella of *Community Membership*: community integrated employment, volunteering/internships, and social engagement. The SBP educates and services some of more severe disabled students and these students won't participate in community integrated employment, however, they will be able to participate in community volunteering, social engagement, and learning how their unique qualities can influence the community they live in.

Today, I also met with JCBDD *Special Olympic Coordinator*, Jane Bodo, to discuss future possibilities for our State Championship Basketball team, the *Jefferson County STARS*; we hope that they can begin to play their home games in the five local school districts' high or middle school gyms in Jefferson County.

On **February 9th**, I was a guest of Kate Sedgmer, Executive Director for the *United Way*, at the *Rotary Club* meeting, it was very enjoyable time. The Rotary Club is worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provide humanitarian service. In my role as the Community Facilitator, I endeavor to educate and build awareness of our expanding services, in order to create opportunities for future employment, volunteering opportunities, and internship partnerships; we must get to know our businesses and leaders in "our community."

On **February 13th**, I attended training; *Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD]*, this training was a Northeast Ohio Regional Pilot Project, an opportunity for participants to gain additional insight supporting transition youth and adults with ASD: Building Awareness, Using Tools and Accessing Resources. Autism is a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction. This training was part 2 of a 4 part series on Autism Professional Development, this session focused on *Communication*. Each session in the series builds on information from previous sessions to assist the participant to develop a comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting individuals with ASD.

On **February 14th**, I attended an Employment Intake meeting at Steubenville High School with Sean Ragsdale, representative for *Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD)*, a 16 year

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old male student and his family. The young man was referred through our office to begin the process toward Community Integrated Employment. The meeting was an opportunity for the participant and his family to learn the details of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) mapped out for the student and procedures following this step. This student will participate in the Summer Youth Work Programs for 5 week to learn job readiness training, other attributes of what is appropriate as a potential employee as he moves toward community employment.

On **February 14th**, I attended the Steubenville chapter of the *Business Network International* (BNI) group meeting, this group is an American franchised networking organization; members meet to discuss business techniques, strategies and support each other's businesses by sharing referrals. This particular organization was very well organized, I enjoyed its structure and mission, and down the road as we expand our employment network this may be a very beneficial association.

On **February 15th**, the Parent Support Group met, this is a group that was initiated by Tammy Cain, *Service and Support Administrator/ Self-Advocacy Facilitator* for JCBDD and Rachel Bodo, *Principal* of the School of Bright Promise; this group was established in effort to connect with the parents of the students who attend School of Bright Promise. This has been a wonderful opportunity to connect with parents to answer any questions and to provide information that will assist their children's' transition into community membership.

On **February 16th**, I attended the *Pathfinders Award* ceremony at Steubenville High School; this ceremony recognizes African American individuals during Black History month. The recipients of the Pathfinder Award are chosen based upon their contribution to education or humanitarian service.

On **February 20th**, I attended the *Kiwanis* meeting; a guest of Tom Timmons, the Vice President for *WesBanco*, this was a very dynamic group. The Kiwanis Club is an international, coeducational service club that focuses on strengthening communities enabling its youth and adult leaders to serve their communities through its Service Leadership Programs.

On **February 22nd**, today the *Jefferson County Multi-Agency County Transition Youth Team*, "Core Working Group" met for the first time; this group will meet monthly to address and determine measurable outcomes to eliminating the identified barriers. This group was formulated to improve the transition services for the youth of Jefferson County. We discussed the flow of the group, establishing a quick reference guide for the Jefferson County agencies and organizations of the team, which will be distributed later to participants, parents and community locations. We split into working groups to address the two largest identified barriers: Transportation and Poverty.

On **February 23rd** I attended IEP meetings at the invitation of the *School of Bright Promise* and Edison Local School District; this was an opportunity for me to discuss with students and parents the possibilities available for their child now and when they are ready to make the transition from school into Community Membership.

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On **February 28th**, I attended IEP meeting at the invitation of the *School of Bright Promise* and the Indian Creek School District; once again this was an opportunity for me to discuss with students and parents the possibilities available for their child and when they are ready to make the transition from school into Community Membership.