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He noted that community isolation and segregation has occurred through residential and day service settings, but times are changing and integration will be the new norm. Federal mandates dictate that BDD's have until 2024 to privatize services for adult consumers to get them more fully integrated into society. Efforts have already gotten underway to shift from a center-based operation to a more community-based system. Officials said the primary mission is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the individuals served and the new lodging is long-term. The occupants will live as a family unit and pay rent to EOHC while also working and/or attending day service programming and leading normal lives just like everyone else. Moreover, Consumer Support Services, which was created by county natives Dan and Chris Swickard, will be the main provider and is based in at least a dozen counties statewide. Finally, he said the home will be maintained by people or organizations and there is a contract with Jeffco to oversee the lawn.

"We have a new provider coming to staff the homes and CSS is in more than 14 counties," he commented. "It is a well-respected organization in Ohio and will have an office near the Goodwill in Wintersville. Dan Swickard and his son Chris are from Toronto and have a vested interest in Jefferson County. It's a bit of a homecoming for them and we're excited to welcome them back to Jefferson County."

Dan Swickard, who serves as CEO, said son Chris is president of the operation and they are happy to return to their roots.

"I'm pleased to be back there," he said. "I started teaching at the School of Bright Promise and was there for five or six years, and then I was in Edison and Harrison Hills before starting the company. CSS is a company that takes care of 750 people in Ohio and we're in 19 counties. We provide residential supports to children and adults, but mostly the adults."

Swickard added that Chris will oversee the new operation in Wintersville and staff were being trained with a goal of starting in January.

Meanwhile, a third home will be eyed in the community but no timeline has been given as to when it would be filled. A final site will be constructed with the final grant and those plans are also preliminary.

"We received \$208,000 to build our first fully accessible, four-bedroom home," Zinno said. "This fully accessible home will be for individuals in wheelchairs who can be better served living in the community."

He was grateful to DODD leaders for the funding and said they will make a significant difference in improving lodging for special needs adults seeking more independence.

In addition to downsizing residents at Shaffer, the Jeffco Production and Training centers have worked to partner with community groups and businesses to provide more work and recreational opportunities. Zinno said the new housing will give individuals with disabilities another chance for inclusion by residing in a local neighborhood. He also asks the public and community leaders to welcome the individuals as they make their way into mainstream society.



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For Immediate Release

JCBDD Awarded Nearly \$600K in Housing Grants

STEUBENVILLE-Plans to create new housing for disabled residents in Jefferson County have gained nearly \$600,000 in grant funding from the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DoDD).

Officials with the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities will receive up to \$598,000 from the Community Capital Assistance Program, which provides financing to county boards and non-profit organizations for the purchase, construction and/or renovation of community housing for persons with special needs. The DoDD's Capital Housing Office is responsible for the program and three grants for up to \$130,000 each, or a total of \$390,000, will be used to acquire homes with another \$208,000 to help construct fully accessible lodging to better serve consumers. Local officials said it will provide more independence to developmentally disabled individuals and also help JCBDD meet federal mandates for privatized services.

JCBDD Superintendent Michael Zinno learned of the awards this fall and said two houses were already purchased in Wintersville and Mingo Junction. Plans are to place three occupants at each site this winter, after which a third house will be acquired and a fourth site will be built. The latter project would be the first such undertaking since the formation of the Shaffer Plaza Apartments in 1980.

"I am excited," Zinno said. "Two homes have been purchased in Wintersville and Mingo. There will be three people in each and we're slated to fill them on Feb. 1."

He applied for the funding in June and received a quick response for approval on the construction grant. While the board will be responsible for building the final site, the structure itself will be owned by the Eastern Ohio Housing Corporation, a non-profit agency. Zinno said the project was just the beginning of a long-term plan to improve community living for the people JCBDD serves. About 21 individuals presently live in six of the seven homes throughout the county, but their conditions are a concern and he wanted to acquire the funds to provide updated lodging.

"Our housing in the county needs to be improved and this is the first step," he added. "Over the next five years, we hope to make an impact with more appropriate housing with better homes in better neighborhoods. These are going to be smaller style family homes with four people or less. They will not be clustered together but sprinkled throughout the county."

He added there was a housing shortage in Jefferson County when considering the Shaffer Plaza residents. The facility is a three-home operation with 10 people per home, while it was established for individuals with high needs. Nursing, occupational and physical therapy and direct care are set up to operate like a nursing home, but over the years individuals have been placed at the site partly because available housing was lacking. As a result, individuals have lived at Shaffer but did not require the extensive care, leading federal and state officials to encourage and even mandate that more appropriate housing be developed.

"We are working on downsizing Shaffer Plaza," Zinno continued, saying the facility used to have 33 residents but currently stands at 29. "There are individuals at Shaffer who don't need 24-hour nursing service and can live in the community. The optimal number we'd like to see at Shaffer is 21 and everyone can have their own bedroom."

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