



# The ALL-STAR Newsletter

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Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Issue 8

**Jefferson County  
BDD**

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**In This Edition:**

**\*A Message from the  
Superintendent**

**\*Community  
Partnerships Benefit  
Families, Students**

**\*Calendar of Events**

## *A Message from the Superintendent*

### **New Beginnings for Jefferson County BDD**

The start of another school year always feels like a new beginning, and for the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities that unquestionably is the case this year.

The School of Bright Promise has a new pilot program with the Edison Local School District which places one of our teachers into that district. The program is designed to take our expertise in behavior and socialization skills development to Edison to create strategies that support children at risk of not developing to their full potential. We are excited about the possibilities and look forward to analyzing the program over the next year.

Additionally, Jane Bodo has been named the new principal to lead our school and our entire staff supports and welcomes her to her new role.

School nurse Suzie Corso will also be retiring after nearly 30 years of service with our program and as

a coach for Special Olympics. What she has done for our program and the individuals we serve is incalculable. Suzie is being replaced by Jonni Ritchie, and we welcome Jonni to our team.

We are also well on our way to privatizing our Jeffco Services. With the retirement of manager Connie Giamos, Jeffco will now be headed by chief executive officer Tracey Thomas.

Tracey will continue to lead Jeffco Services down the path of privatization. Our program is thankful for Connie's 40-plus years of service and her impact is indescribable. We look forward to working with Tracey and other private adult service providers to create choices for the individuals we serve.

As our board shifts from being the direct care provider for adults, we have developed a plan to reallocate

our assets and resources into Early Intervention. Our new Early Intervention team, which is led by Neysa Rogers, is in the beginning stages of delivering quality services to children and families of birth to three years old.

Over the past five years, many instrumental and influential employees have retired from our program and I thank each and every one of them. To honor our program's 50 years of service and the employees who have retired, we are working on a virtual wall of honor. We will be publicizing our history and the instrumental people who have made our program what it is today.

It is a new beginning for the JCBDD, whether it is a new school year or a milestone of 50 years, we will continue to develop programs and resources to meet the needs of the individuals we serve.

## **Community Partnerships Benefit Families, Students**

Programs and partnerships are being developed through the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities to strengthen families and benefit special needs students upon graduation.

Cookie West, employment navigator and community facilitator for JCBDD, said two new partnerships have been formed to better serve people with disabilities.

JCBDD is joining forces with the Corporation of Appalachian Development (COAD)'s Strengthening Families program, which is designed to provide a system of supports linking early education, providers and community-based organizations with resources to increase and enhance protective factors within our communities. The five protective factors include parental resilience, social connections,

knowledge of parent and child development, concrete support in times of need and social and emotional competence of children. To that end, six Strengthening Families Learning Network sessions are being held for local childcare providers and agencies to discuss ways they could enhance services and support families.

"The purpose is to try to build support that parents need to meet the needs of their families and ensure the wellness of their children," West said.

During the gathering, the agencies will look at their strengths and weaknesses, infuse the protective factors framework and discuss what they are doing as an agency to provide resources for families. She added that it would also help eliminate an overlap of like services from

agencies and build a more efficient network to support families.

"We ultimately want the families to feel supported and to encourage other agencies and organizations in the community to realize some people don't have the necessary tools to move into that place of stability. We need to think long-term and maybe have support groups to help them be consistent."

She added that early intervention is key since children as young as preschool-aged are coming to school with needs or trauma and facing issues such as the opioid crisis in their lives, but the program serves to help parents, grandparents and guardians cope with the situation. West was introduced to the method during an Ohio

**(Continued as PARTNERSHIPS)**

# PARTNERSHIPS (Continued from Front)

Family and Children First Council meeting with a COAD representative.

“My goal is to see how we can truly help a person as a whole so people can maximize their potential and reach families earlier,” she commented.

For more information about the Strengthening Families session, contact West at (740) 264-7176, Extension 2118.

Another collaboration has been forged with Eastern Gateway Community College for the Student Empowerment Tour (SET), which includes members of both organizations travelling to county schools and speaking to special needs students about developing their potential in a post-secondary setting.

West said the tour would occur this fall with follow-up visits next spring and she will be joined by JCBDD Community Employment Services Specialists Renee Pastre and Angela Goodrich as well as EGCC Recruiter Cristen Tarquinio, school Director of Career Development Lisa Ward, Career Development Coordinator Leanna Lulla, Upward Bound representative Tracey Yaich and Director of Student Support Services Dawn Gombar.

“We will be in schools speaking with transition students in seventh to ninth grades about careers and giving them options to transition into: employment or post-secondary education and employment,” West explained.

She said students may not understand what a job interest they have may entail, such as gaining certifications to boost their chances of earning higher wages. The program will enable those pupils to ask questions and receive answers from officials.

“We will tour in the fall with a follow-up tour in the spring and students can see if there is more interest in the information we have given them,” West added.

She plans to speak with special education coordinators in the school districts and schedule dates and times to visit schools and hopes to reach all of the schools in Jefferson County.

“Our main focus [through JCBDD] was employment, but I’ve had questions from parents about post-secondary opportunities. I met with EGCC officials and it was a great opportunity to open up options for those students,” she added. “A lot of students don’t know what they are interested in, so there will be community employment specialists from the BDD and representatives from EGCC’s Career Services discussing student life and opportunities to find what would be the best match with their skills. We will also have someone from the Upward Bound program, which recruits first-generation college students. We are very excited to have these different minds and this encourages students to look at their future in a different way.”

Meanwhile, West said the ongoing Multi-

Agency Transition Youth Team formed this past year is still thriving and a core group of roughly 15-25 agency representatives, parents and schools were looking at short-term and long-term goals to enhance the inclusion of special needs individuals into mainstream society.

“We are still moving forward after eight months and setting short-term and long-term goals and developing a plan to help with the inclusion pathway through community partnership,” she continued. “We have a great group of minds that have been really digging deep into these issues.”

Participants range from school districts and a parent to employment vendors, as well as such agencies as the Jefferson County Department of Job and Family Services and Family Recovery Center.

Short-term goals include placing bus stop signs in the community to aid special needs people with grant funds awarded to cover the costs. Another plan is to work with the Jefferson County Community Action Council’s Ohio Means Jobs mobile one-stop kiosk, which will be available at schools and libraries to link individuals with local agencies and provide resources they may need. Additionally, long-term ideas include connecting with the community about the overall perception of poverty and conducting a training session to show how society could be more empathetic and supportive.

## Calendar of Events

Sept. 1: Toronto Arts & Crafts Festival (Shaffer)

Sept. 2: Jeff J. Cruze Concert @ Weirton Event Center/Toronto Arts Festival (A); Labor Day Cookout (B)

Sept. 3: **LABOR DAY (NO SCHOOL)**; Labor Day Picnics (Shaffer A & C)

Sept. 4: God’s Choice Church Party (A); Trampoline Park (B); Movie @ AMC Theater (C); Prime Time Senior Citizens Center Advisory Board Meeting (Employment Navigator/Community Facilitator)

Sept. 5: Bowling @ Steel Valley Lanes (Shaffer B & C); Urban Mission Ministries/United Prevention Partnership Mtgs. (EN/CF)

Sept. 6: Free Concert Weirton/Steubenville Farmer’s Market (A); Pizza Night (B); OMEGA Transportation Stakeholders/Business Professional Women Mtgs. (EN/CF)

Sept. 7: Brooke County Fair (A); First Fridays on Fourth Street Steubenville (B & C); Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities/Family & Children First Council Mtg. (EN/CF)

Sept. 8: Ride to Lake/ Brooke County Fair (A); Resident’s Choice (C)

Sept. 9: Pleasant Hill School Open House/ Brooke County Fair (A); Van Ride (C)

Sept. 10, Resident’s Choice (B)

Sept. 11: Safety Mtg. (SBP); Movie Night (A); Movies @ AMC Theater (B); Movies & Popcorn @ Home (C) ; JCBDD Leadership Team/ Kiwanis Mtgs. (EN/CF)

Sept. 12: Bowling @ SVL (B & C); Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce Coffee & Connections (EN/CF)

Sept. 13: Human Rights Mtg. (SBP); Steubenville Farmer’s Market (A); Drive to Cabela’s (B); Free Concert– Weirton (A& C); Urban Mission Jobs for Life (EN/CF)

Sept. 14: School of Bright Promise Visit/ Special Educators’ Coordinators Mtg. @ JCESC (EN/CF); Hancock County Old Time Fair (A); Popcorn & Movies @ Home (B); Karaoke Night (C)

Sept. 15: Hidden Treasure Flea Market (A); Robinson Twp. Fall Festival (B); Sally Buffalo Days (C)

Sept. 16: Walk @ Indian Creek High School (A); Fall Craft (B); Make Your Own Sundae (C)

Sept. 17: Peer Leadership Mtg. (SBP); Walk at Local Park (A&C); Indian Creek Middle School Visit (EN/CF)

Sept. 18: God’s Choice Church Party (A&C); Trampoline Park (B); Eastern Gateway SET

Mtg. (EN/CF)

Sept. 19, Bowling at SVL (Shaffer); ICHS Visit/Strengthening Families Network Session 2 Mtg. (EN/CF)

Sept. 20: JCBDD Board Mtg. (SBP); Free Concert in Weirton (A&C); Steubenville Farmer’s Market (A); Toronto High School Visit (EN/CF)

Sept. 21: Walk @ Track or Mall (B); Indian Creek Football Game (C) ; Steubenville High School Visit (EN/CF)

Sept. 22: Concert @ Weirton Event Center (A); Buddy Walk @ Jim Woods Park (B&C)

Sept. 23: Game Night (A); Resident’s Choice (C)

Sept. 24, Resident Council Mtg. (Shaffer)

Sept. 25, Movies @ Home (A); Movies @ AMC Theater (B&C)

Sept. 26, Ride to Mar Ta Lee (A); Bowling @ SVL (B&C)

Sept. 27, Free Concert @ Weirton/Steubenville Farmer’s Market (A); Staff Choice (B)

Sept. 28, Fishing @ Friendship Park (A); Fall Foliage Ride (B); Big Red Football Game (C)

Sept. 29, Craft Night (A); Barnesville Pumpkin Festival/Watts Center for History & Arts (B)

Sept. 30, Movie Night (A); Feed the Ducks @ Friendship Park (C)