

# HIGHLAND COUNTY BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES NEWSLETTER

## SUMMER 2023



Welcome to Summer 2023! I saw a sign the other day which read "Someone should give summer a speeding ticket." It is so true! As we are working on this publication, we are also working on the upcoming start of a new preschool year. Make sure you read our Preschool News article for all the upcoming events. We cannot wait to see these little ones back at Hills and Dales. Another exciting focus has been looking at technology to assist some of our adults to live as independently as possible throughout our community. A rising star in adapting technology to meet his own needs is Travis Sexton. Travis's partnership with us and with the wonderful organization, May-We-Help, has enabled him to hit those bike trails with his friends. Organizations such as this are invaluable in assisting folks to live, work and play throughout our community.

Highlighting dreams coming true, KAMP Dovetail had another very successful year with a special ribbon cutting for the new horse barn located at Rocky Fork Lake. To even imagine all the work that made this a possibility is mind blowing. The residents of Highland County, local and state officials, and the volunteers of KAMP Dovetail working together to make this build happen is nothing short of miraculous. This just shows the "can do" attitude of Highland County and the "Rock Star" that Linda Allen really is!

Enjoy our newsletter,

Deb Buccilla, Superintendent



### Mission Statement

Ensuring effective systems are available to assist people in achieving their life goals.

### Vision Statement

Enhancing the quality of life in our community – one person at a time.

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# Ready To Hit The Bike Trails!



Meet Travis Sexton. Travis currently receives services through the Highland County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Travis has big goals for himself and it is very important to him to continue his independence and desire to explore his community and interests outside of his wheelchair. Travis knows the long-term prognosis of his disability and the importance of continued movement while he still has the ability. Travis reached out to his Service and Support Administrator (SSA) at the Highland County Board of DD, Jacklyn Thacker, to talk about his hopes and dreams of kayaking, going biking and snow tubing. He said biking was at the top of his wish list!

As we often discover, there were barriers that Travis faced in the desire to meet his goal....how could he propel a bike when he doesn't have use of his legs to peddle and the bike may be cost prohibitive. The team found a bike that potentially met his need but was still not exactly what he could use and was nearly \$2000.00!

Travis's SSA linked him to May-We-Help. According to their website, May-We-Help is a non-profit consisting of 75 volunteer engineers, industrial designers, inventors, welders, woodworkers, seamstresses, doctors, occupational and physical therapists who come together to design, build and deliver custom devices at no cost. They take an ordinary item and make it extraordinary! Travis travelled to Cincinnati to meet with an engineer from May-We-Help so they could determine Travis' needs and although the SSA linked Travis to May-We-Help, there were still barriers. A bike would still need to be obtained before they could assist. Travis quickly received a call from May-We-Help that a bike had been donated to be used for Travis. The bike has now been modified so that Travis can hand peddle while being attached to another bike to assist in leading or it can independently be peddled with his hands. A huge thank you to May-We-Help. Travis is ready to hit some bike trails!

As mentioned above, Travis connected with his Service and Support Administrator at the Highland County Board of DD to help. A Service and Support Administrator (SSA) is a person who works for a County Board of DD and is assigned to a person with a disability to act as the primary or main point of coordination for identified services and supports. The SSA is a troubleshooter, problem-solver and an advocate.

SSAs work with each eligible person and their team to assist in meeting identified needs based on a person-centered approach. Some of the services include:

- Establishing an individual's eligibility
- Assessing individual needs for services
- Developing person-centered service plans
- Establishing budgets for services based on assessed needs
- Assisting individuals in choosing providers through the free choice of provider process
- Monitoring services for quality and outcomes
- Maintaining rights, reporting major unusual incidents and processing complaints
- Ensuring coordination between service providers in the county
- Ensuring individuals have a designated person to advocate for them
- Assisting individual in community connections and obtaining community employment

The Highland County Board of Developmental Disabilities Service and Support Administration (SSA) department is committed to ensuring all eligible Highland County residents with developmental disabilities receive services that enhance the quality of their lives while promoting individual choice.

# KAMP Dovetail Celebrates New Equestrian Barn

KAMP Dovetail celebrated their new equestrian horse barn with a ribbon cutting on Tuesday, June 20. KAMP (Kids And Motivated People) Dovetail is a volunteer run summer camp sponsored by Supplementary Assistance to The Handicapped (S.A.T.H.) a non-profit organization. The camp is for children with disabilities in Highland and surrounding counties of Ohio. The ribbon cutting was held near the new equestrian horse barn located at 9800 North Shore Drive in Hillsboro.

The camp is held at the Rocky Fork Lake State Park in Highland County. Each child who visits the camp is teamed with their very own camp volunteer. You will notice that the word volunteer is used instead of counselor. That is because everyone at the camp is exactly that. A volunteer! None of the workers at the camp are paid for their time. Each and every person is there solely for the purpose of ensuring that the campers enjoy their week at camp. Volunteer staff work diligently all year long to secure donations of cash and supplies from area merchants and individuals. The combination of an all-volunteer staff and their yearlong fund-raising campaigns allows the experience at a fraction of the cost charged by similar camps. The camp has been operating in this fashion for over 30 years.

Each year the camp staff selects a theme that the camp will operate under for that year. The 2023 theme was "KAMP Dovetail-The Musical Week". Please visit the KAMP Dovetail website at: [www.kampdovetail.org](http://www.kampdovetail.org) for more information.





# Highland County Wildcats

Highland County had 18 athletes compete at the 2023 Summer Games, which was held from June 23<sup>rd</sup> through June 25<sup>th</sup> at The Ohio State University. The athletes represented Highland County very well and we were very proud of them giving their best in their events. Overall, our group brought home 4 gold, 5 silver and 6 bronze medals!

The Wildcats continue to have Bocce Tournaments on Monday, with 24 bocce players competing this year.

Eight Wildcat athletes participated in the Special Skill Invitational Soccer Camp held on July 6<sup>th</sup>.



# Summer Youth Work Program

Local teens learned the value of hard work at the 2023 Summer Youth Work Program.

This program, which is coordinated through the Highland County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Community First Department in conjunction with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), offer youth between the ages of 14 and 20 a chance to earn minimum wage while performing jobs in the area. Local businesses have agreed to host teens who learn job skills with the aid of a job coach and businesses can benefit from getting extra help during the summertime at no cost to them.

This year the program was held May 30 to June 30<sup>th</sup> with 18 students participating. The program took place at the Highland County YMCA, Star Cinemas Movie Theater, Ponderosa Steakhouse, The Elks Golf Course and Highland County Senior Citizen Center.

Each week, youth not only earned money but learned responsibilities to guide them as working adults. They learned skills that they can use as job experience when applying for future positions. Some of the skills that were taught included maintenance, pulling weeds, painting, clearing debris and cleaning tasks such as sweeping, mopping and sterilizing restrooms.

This is valuable information to assist these students after the program and continue when they start their job search after graduation. HCBDD also offers Pre-Employment transition services and Job Development services and these services combined with Summer Youth help youth in our county to be more successful in future careers. It was another successful year and thank you to our local businesses that participated.







Summer is flying by and school will be starting before we know it! Hills and Dales Preschool is preparing for another fun year with our returning students as well as new students. Students attending preschool at Hills and Dales benefit from learning activities and experiences. We offer an inclusive preschool setting where students with and without special needs work together to form friendships and learn from one another. Each of our four classrooms have one teacher and two paraprofessionals. We also have a sensory room with two staff members who give sensory breaks daily to students who need them. In addition, various therapies (speech, occupational, and physical) are provided by the public schools to the students who need them.

Over the course of the 2023-2024 school year, enrolled students will have the opportunity to participate in classroom activities, school-wide events, and field trips. Field trips taken this past school year include Karnes Orchard, Forgotten Way Farm and Corn Maze, Mighty Children's Museum, Family Traditions Animal Adventure, and Hamilton Farms. In addition, our graduating preschool students also went to visit a kindergarten classroom. Hills and Dales Preschool also hosts various family events throughout the school year including an open house, two family nights, and other extraordinary events.

Hills and Dales Preschool will begin using the Assessment , Evaluation and Program Systems (AEPS) curriculum and A Little Spot social-emotional curriculum this school year. In addition, we are switching to a new screening tool (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) which will provide our staff with more information about individual students so that we can better serve them.

The preschool staff at Hills and Dales will return mid-August to prepare for the return of students. The students will start school during the third week of August and attend Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, staff take time for lesson planning, prepping materials, cleaning, and trainings/meetings.

# Autism Diagnosis Education Project (ADEP) reaches a milestone!

Autism diagnosis can be a jungle, but we're here to make the trek through the woods with you!

The ADEP (Autism Diagnostic Education Project) Program is celebrating its first full year of serving the communities of Fayette and Highland Counties. To date, 56 children have been referred to this program. We have been able to provide a medical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder for 29 children of those who have gone through the rigorous testing protocol. The ADEP Program is overseen by OCAI, and it is a program that operates across 55 of Ohio's counties.

We are proud to celebrate the enormous success of this program as we look back on the past year. Sylvia Call, Autism Services Coordinator for both Fayette County Board of Disabilities and Highland County Board of Disabilities, has taken the lead on this initiative. She completes the DSM-V Parent Interviews with our families as well as the ADOS Autism Evaluations for each child who goes through the ADEP Program, and she also attends the diagnostic visit with our Medical Partner, Dr. Lenora Fitton of ABC Pediatrics.

Sylvia presented on the ADEP Program at the OACB Conference held in Columbus, Ohio this past March, and she has also been asked to present on how she runs her ADEP Program for the Ohio Early Intervention Seminar in the fall of 2023. Sylvia and Dr. Fitton are the heart and soul of this program, and the two of them are passionate about the work they do and the advocacy they show for these children and their families. We love that having these two dedicated, knowledgeable professionals ensures that the families who go through our ADEP Program are provided with the very highest levels of support and care as they navigate through the forest of the autism diagnosis process and find themselves walking along a well-worn path with a couple of wonderful friends by their side.





# Assistant Superintendent Earns Ohio School Boards Association STAR Award

Bret Malone, Assistant Superintendent of the Fayette and Highland County Boards of DD has many years of service in the public school system. The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) recognized Bret as a STAR (Service, Training, Aptitude and Recognition) Award recipient of the 2023 OSBA Training Award. His commitment towards public education and his role as a school board member were celebrated at the Southwest Region Spring Conference held on March 9, 2023. In 2023, only 29 of the over 3,400 members of the board members received the honor.



Bret is a valued part of the team in both Fayette and Highland County. Under his role as Assistant Superintendent, Bret serves as both the Education Director and Operations Director, overseeing the operations of the Fayette Progressive Preschool and the Hills and Dales Preschool.

Congratulations goes to Bret for his continued commitment to the education of our children. This recognition is well deserved!



## Advocates Enjoy Picnic With Peers

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, People First of Highland County had a great turnout for their picnic. The group is getting new and younger members to join the local chapter and is growing bigger and stronger, filling up with younger minds! Special thanks to the SSA Department for helping with the picnic.

People First holds monthly meetings at 24 Exchange in Hillsboro. If you are interested in joining the local chapter, contact Nathan Boatman for more information at 937-403-1968.

