



# The ALL-STAR Newsletter

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Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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## Jefferson County BDD

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## Superintendent's Message:

# Working Together at an Unprecedented Time

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family doing well.

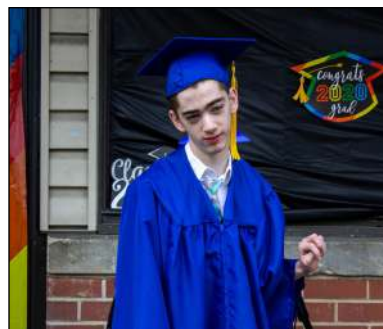
What an unbelievable change of status, for not only our program but society as a whole. I remain hopeful we will return to some sense of normalcy. From our program's point of view, please see the enclosed article that describes how our board has continued to serve. Not one part of our program is the same, but I am proud

of our staff, administration and board for making the best of an unprecedented time.

Our biggest challenge has been Shaffer Plaza. Maintaining the health and safety of not only the residents but our employees has been a constant focus. I can't say enough for our front-line staff at Shaffer. You are CHAMPIONS! To our direct service professionals, administrators, nurs-

ing, Q's and school-age staff who helped out, you have shown remarkable teamwork and I am grateful for your work during a stressful time. While we are not through the woods yet, let's remain focused on proper hygiene and cleaning to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

This time will pass. Let's be patient and diligent as we go through this together.



## Hats Off to the Class of 2020!

The School of Bright Promise has graduated four members of the Class of 2020 and the faculty, staff and administration could not be more proud. Pictured are, clockwise from top left, Dale McCoy, Cheyenne Hooper, Jason Markja and Isaiah Tingler.

## JCBDD Aids Students, Residents during Pandemic

The Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities took prompt action during the mandated shutdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic, but extra measures have been necessary to support students and residents with special needs.

Those individuals face a greater health risks from the virus and officials made sure they have been served in the com-

forts of home as the shutdown remains in effect. From the closure of the School of Bright Promise to more precautions taken at Shaffer Plaza Apartments, leaders say every effort helps in protecting those in their charge.

School of Bright Promise Principal Jane Bodo said teachers and therapists created packets which were delivered to each

student's home while teachers have continued to reach out with weekly contact.

"We have a variety of ways they are using to communicate such as phone, email, Facebook, the Remind app and text," Bodo said. "Many teachers have also set up websites for their students to track progress and post videos

**(Continued as PANDEMIC)**

through Google Classroom. Much like our day-to-day in the physical classroom, not all learning mediums work for all of our students so the teachers have done a great job getting creative and tailoring to what each student needs.”

The transition has not been without its challenges, but resources have been used to make it smoother as time goes on. She continued that some students have adapted to the change while others still struggle with the major changes to their regular routine. Technology has been another factor since not all students either have access or may not respond to it. In those cases, Bodo said teachers and therapists have adapted materials to suit those pupils.

“The only advice that I would give the parent or guardian of a special needs child is to try and establish a consistent routine at home. Our students thrive on predictability and consistency at school, and while this was a very abrupt and huge change for them, they will eventually respond to a predictable routine.”

She added that the shutdown has impacted everyone and the school staff misses the students, but the current issue will only make them stronger in the future.

“This has been a huge change for all of us—staff and students alike,” she commented. “However, we have learned that with necessity being the mother of invention, we now have even more tools to help serve our students. When we are back together in the future, we can add our new tools to our existing toolboxes to improve on what we have done in the past.”

Meanwhile, the Early Intervention program has completely moved onto virtual visits and phone conversations between the specialists and 119 families and children they serve. Those efforts helped the EI program gain mention in a recent article posted on the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities website. Sarah Mattioli, EI service coordinator, was interviewed in the article, “EI Uses Video Conferencing to Support Families,” for the Good News Corner on the DODD site which was published on April 21. In it, Mattioli discussed how beneficial the technology has been for EI representatives to communicate with families, adding that the children and their parents were receptive to the format.

EI Supervisor Neysa Rodgers added that home visits were stopped on March 12 by order of the ODH, launching contact into virtual mode. While the staff had some experience with the technology, it had not been fully implemented into every component.

“I was challenging at first, but we are now able to proceed forward in every aspect with our process and even do services with providers. My staff is open-minded and we are doing whatever it takes to accommodate each family,” she commented.

Like the school, families have been met with issues involving technology if they reside in remote areas of the county. Officials still make phone calls and Rodgers said everyone

had to get acclimated to the new temporary method of EI services. She recommended that parents and guardians maintain a routine to benefit the children.

“Our children have very unique needs, so we are available for any specific questions or even consultation for our families or anyone in need for that matter. If they require assistance, they can call or text their service coordinator or primary service provider,” she said, adding that EI is still taking referrals and it does not need to be a doctor or agency.

Shaffer Plaza Residential Manager Natalie Baird said steps have been taken to protect the 23 residents living at the complex as well as its staff.

“We have implemented many procedures and protocols to assure the health and safety of both our residents and direct care professionals. We have followed CDC, Ohio Department of Health and Department of Developmental Disabilities guidelines,” Baird added. “Some residents are able to communicate with their families through Facetime and other are speaking to their loved ones through direct phone calls to their houses.”

**“I am extremely proud of our program and our provider network as we continue to serve during a difficult situation. This time will pass and I am looking forward to the day we can return to normal and use what we have learned during this pandemic. Something good will come from this unprecedented time.”**

**—Superintendent Mike Zinno**

Staff also provide photos to family members for holidays and other occasions, but due to residents no longer attending day programming they now utilize the Jeffco Center and School of Bright Promise playground for recreational activities, plus they take leisurely rides for fresh air.

“Our staff has been creative with ways to keep our residents engaged. We have five School of Bright Promise employees helping Shaffer Plaza with cleaning,

cooking, laundry and in-house leisure activities, which has been a tremendous help and we appreciate them.”

Only one person is designated to acquire supplies such as snacks to ensure residents have what they want, while necessary doctor’s appointments are done via teleconference. Baird said the transition mostly has been a smooth one and a majority of the residents have adapted extremely well.

“We have received an enormous amount of support from our program as a whole. [JCBDD Superintendent Mike Zinno] checks in with us every day to make sure we have what we need and our direct care staff and management team is making sure that we help our residents get through this to the best of our ability,” Baird noted. “This is uncharted territory for everyone, and keeping our residents and direct care professionals healthy and safe is our No. 1 priority.”

Zinno praised the work of the staff amid the pandemic.

“I am extremely proud of our program and our provider network as we continue to serve during a difficult situation. In particular, I can’t thank enough the employees that are working at Shaffer Plaza and our residential providers. They are on the frontlines of the pandemic and are champions. This time will pass and I am looking forward to the day we can return to normal and use what we have learned during this pandemic. Something good will come from this unprecedented time,” Zinno concluded.