



# The ALL-STAR Newsletter

March 2021

Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Issue 29

## Jefferson County BDD

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### How Are We Doing?

Take Our Survey and Provide Your Feedback at  
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## DD Awareness Month Observed for March

The Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities is observing Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month by highlighting its many services.

Changes have occurred over the past few years but JCBDD continues to focus on children and adults in other ways. Superintendent Michael Zinno is proud of what has been achieved in the wake of adult privatization and COVID-19, saying the board and its staff will continue onward with quality services.

“Despite being what could be described as the most difficult time in our program history, we have moved forward and continued to support our provider network, employees, individuals, families, and our community. I am proud that our program continues to be both a provider and administrator of DD services,” Zinno said.

JCBDD has remained on course despite the obstacles posed by COVID in 2020 but was looking forward to meeting challenges that lie ahead. Officials will continue to focus on improving community integration, supporting our private provider network, improving the services available to individuals served, expanding housing options for people served and increasing community employment opportunities for people served.

“To accomplish these important initiatives will take the entire DD community,” he added. “That includes the county board, the private provider network and the community at large. I challenge everyone to move the dial forward to support individuals with special needs and their families.”

### Early Intervention

Early Intervention Supervisor Neysa Rogers said 75 children are served and EI coordinates services for a total of 96 youngsters. Ten employees and three evaluators work with the youth, be it special instruction by a developmental specialist or physical, occupational or speech therapy. EI also includes state vision and hearing consultants

to aid as needed. Rogers added that COVID has impacted how EI provides services but officials still forge ahead to give clients quality care.

“Our clients went from in-home to all virtual to what I call a ‘hybrid method,’” she commented. “We see some children in home and others whose family doesn’t want in-home services, we see them virtually. We have learned the art of technology and are very versed on Zoom, Facebook Messenger and video chatting.”

She noted that representatives follow protocols set up by her and the Jefferson County Health Department using Centers for Disease Control and Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 guidelines so in-home visits can be performed safely until restrictions are lifted by the state Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) and ODH.

### School of Bright Promise

School of Bright Promise Principal Jane Bodo said 78 students from preschool to age 22 gain an education with the help of about 60 teachers, aides and staff members.

“We are operating on a hybrid schedule for our students attending face to face, but we offer a fully remote option for those parents choosing to keep their children home due to COVID,” Bodo added. “We are offering in-person therapy for our fully remote students, as well.”

She said classrooms are grouped into pods to reduce exposure to others and the school has implemented new disinfecting protocols throughout the day, plus school-wide activities are done within the pods rather than as one large group. Meanwhile, the school reported a 3-percent decrease in youth ages 3-11 due to students aging out of the program and the impact of COVID.

### Shaffer Plaza

Shaffer Plaza provides residential living for adults with developmental disabilities. It operates 24 hours, seven days a week and serves 27

residents in three facilities with nine occupants per home. Fifty staff members offer continuous care while also giving individuals a sense of independence. Like other areas, Shaffer Plaza has been impacted by COVID by remaining at home with limited outings into the community. Residential Manager Natalie Baird oversees the complex and officials said once all residents and staff receive their vaccinations, plans are to resume day programming.

### Community Services

Alex “Cookie” West, employment and community navigator, assists in the planning, coordinating and monitoring of employment-related supported to job seekers with developmental disabilities in their local community. She assists students aged 14-22 in their transition from high school to adulthood and provides employment-related services for adults, plus she is the JCBDD’s community liaison. Throughout the year, she serves between 100-150 students and about 20 adults.

West works along with Community Employment Service (CES) specialists Renee Pastre-Hanlin and Angela Loppe-Goodrich, and as employment navigator she works directly with school district personnel to assist special education students to transition into adulthood and become a community member. As community navigator, she informs, educates and partners with the organization, agencies and community at large to raise awareness and foster community inclusion for people with disabilities. COVID altered some plans, such as visiting school districts and engaging with students in person. Opportunities became available after the first semester but she modified services with interactive videos and encouraging families and caregivers to connect through digital platforms. Her most recent venture was the Student Empowerment Tour’s

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(SET's) Donuts and Dreams event where she and representatives of CES and Eastern Gateway Community College provided treats to students and gave virtual presentations on opportunities after high school. Last year, SET visited five high schools to speak with transition students about self-advocacy and determination, employment options, post-secondary education and workforce certification and licensures services and supports. Additionally, West and the Multi-Agency Transition Youth Team met monthly to discuss best practice methods for helping students transition into adulthood more smoothly.

Meanwhile, CES provides people with disabilities job opportunities in the community to enhance their social, emotional and vocational needs. Pastre-Hanlin said 23 individuals are successful employed and summer youth career exploration and work experi-

ence programs are eyed for this summer to put students ages 14-22 to work. Pastre-Hanlin said they also work with individuals on job coaching, community-based assessments, permit tutoring and job development. CES also focuses on such key areas as work adjustment, pre-employment transition services and travel training.

"Our services continued during COVID. We conducted our business virtually and over the phone and continued to stay in touch with our employers and individuals," Pastre-Hanlin said. "All individuals who experienced layoffs due to COVID have returned to work."

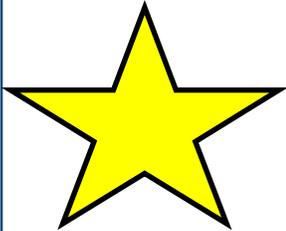
She noted that the summer youth work experience programs will occur for two to four weeks and include students ages 16-22 with pre-employment transition services and career exploration for pupils ages 14 - 16. CES secures individuals work in local busi-

nesses and also operates the cafeteria at the School of Bright Promise, where two people work as cafeteria aides.

**Service and Support Administration**

Darlene Perko, director of consumer supports for the service and support administration, said the SSA includes a staff of 11 people who serve 209 individuals through eligibility determination, plan development and monitoring of services, waiver development and monitoring, assistance in finding available services and residential placement when need is determined. Services are still provided despite COVID and most monitoring and plan meetings are done via virtual or telephone discussion. Perko added that SSA also helps provide individuals and group settings with PPE.

*Getting to Know You...*



*Rod Johnson*

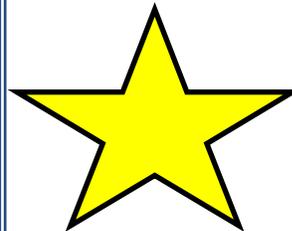


Rod Johnson has come a long way to call the Ohio Valley home.

The Mississippi native has lived in Steubenville for roughly five years and loves the community. Johnson is also the proud father of 1 1/2-year-old son, Legend, enjoys gaming and is a diehard Philadelphia Eagles fan. He is also good-natured and makes sure to check on and help any neighbors in need.

That constitution spills over into his work at Shaffer Plaza, where he has served as a residential aide for the past two years. His colleagues say he makes the workplace brighter with his smile and silliness while Johnson said he just loves to have fun.

"I love the clients and seeing them happy and the smiles on their faces," he concluded. "My favorite thing is to make people smile and laugh. It's the little things in life."



*Nicholle Vandine*



There are two things to know about Nicholle Vandine: she loves music and loves to dance.

Nicholle has become well known for her megawatt smile and joyful nature. She has family in the Wintersville area including grandmother Carol Vandine, aunt Donnetta Campbell and a brother, Nicholas, and has resided at Shaffer Plaza for nearly a year. She's also had plenty to grin about since celebrating her 18th birthday in October.

She loves all types of music, especially country, and enjoys listening to Brantley Gilbert each morning. Nicholle can be seen bopping along to her favorite tunes and also likes unicorns, coloring and playing games. Residential aide Mary Sines said Nicholle is very much a people person.

"I can't wait to take her to concerts," said Sines. "She is the biggest social butterfly and she loves everybody."