



# The ALL-STAR Newsletter

June 2021

Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Issue 31

## Jefferson County BDD

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### How Are We Doing?

Take Our Survey and Provide Your Feedback at  
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### In This Edition:

*\*JCBDD Focusing on Public School Integration*

*\*Earth Day Contest*

*\*Getting to Know You*

## JCBDD Focusing on Public School Integration

Henry Hill will enter the first grade in the Indian Creek Local School District this fall, and that is the goal of the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Henry, who is on the autism spectrum, attended the School of Bright Promise for two years and is a prime example of the JCBDD's vision to integrate students back into the public school system. Teachers said the six-year-old Wintersville boy was shy at first but eventually flourished in the classroom. He is practically a savant when it comes to knowing states, their capitals and countries on a map and his personality shines when he talks about any related topic.

When asked what he liked about school, he responded, "Everything at all." He said he made friends and was excited to go into the first grade.

His father, Eric, said Henry was diagnosed at age 2 ½ and attended HeadStart and Stanton Elementary before going to Bright Promise.

"He's just a happy-go-lucky kid. He's a joy," Eric said. "I'm proud of him moving on for schooling. He started talking at age 4 and it brought him out really quick."

In addition to geography, Eric said Henry loves writing and spelling and has enjoyed going to school.

"[The School of Bright Promise] has been really good to us. They've been extremely helpful to us and anything we need. I'm just excited to see him continuing on with his life."

Preschool teacher Jenna Joyce recalled how shy Henry was when he first started at the school, but overtime his personality began to shine. He worked in small groups and completed hands-on activities.

"He was not very talkative but he was smart. As the year went on, he came out of his little shell and now he's awesome. He really blossomed over the summer when he came back. I'm proud of him," she said. "I loved watching his personality grow."

Kindergarten teacher Hope



**Henry Hill is moving on from the School of Bright Promise and making his place in the public school system. He is a prime example of the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities' vision to integrate more children at a younger age so they obtain a traditional education.**

Bullard called him a "geography whiz" who wants to visit the many places he recognizes around the world. She plays a YouTube video with a song about the states, and with a pointer Henry follows along, barely skipping a beat as he indicates each place from Alabama to Wyoming with the fast-paced tune. He then identifies a map of countries from Brazil to Russia and follows sight words and letters with skill. His love of geography even extended to naming butterflies nurtured from caterpillars in the classroom, and he gave three the monikers called three of them New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

"He's good at reading," she added. "He loves school and he loves to follow directions. He waits patiently and gets very excited about learning new things. We're going to miss him."

SBP Principal Jane Bodo said the school's teachers and therapists provide individualized instruction and therapy to assist each student.

"The hope is that through these concentrated interventions, our students can make up some ground to prepare them for a return to public school," Bodo said. "We do not

always have students that are able to return to public school so when we do, it is a very special celebration."

She added that each child is different in their unique challenges and the teachers and therapists target those areas of development so the student will be successful in a traditional setting.

"It is bittersweet to see our students leave us. We become so attached to them and their families. We watch our students grow and make huge gains, but we also realize that it is time for them to spread their wings and move on."

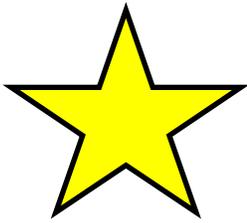
Superintendent Michael Zinno said JCBDD has long collaborated with school districts and the vision would ensure that children are prepared for integration much sooner.

"Our mission is to work with school districts to have a common goal of helping students at an earlier age. Our school needs to become younger," Zinno said. "I see it as kids being placed at the School of Bright Promise for a period of time, but the target goal is to get them integrated into the public school system. We want to have a goal so we're serving appropriately and at the youngest possible age."



The School of Bright Promise celebrated Earth Day with a door decorating contest for students. Pupils worked with teachers and aides to design eye-catching décor and 11 doors were judged on their creativity. In the end, Nanette Neary's class placed first with their BEE-autiful backdrop, pictured here with students Anthony Rohal and Amari Wilson, and will receive a cookie cake as a reward. Second place went to Lori Trihone's class, pictured here with students Tatum Deem, Marshall Smith and Elliot Higgins. Third place featured two doors with Amber Scott's before addressing the importance of recycling and Amanda Baker's after depicting a bottle reused as a birdfeeder. Baker's students, Maddox Smith, Ruby Walls and Marques Schifman are pictured with their design.

## Getting to Know You...



**Rebecca  
Riffee**



Caring comes as a second nature to Rebecca Riffee, whether it is through her work, her volunteerism or her family.

It has been a constant in her more than 20 years as a residential aide at Shaffer Plaza, as well as her 15-plus years as a volunteer with the Region 9 Special Olympics in Jefferson County, but she also can be counted as a devoted daughter, mother and grandmother. The Steubenville resident finds simple rewards in the smiles and joy of the people she helps and gleefully grins when discussing her family.

"I had a friend, Chrissy DeMarco, who worked at the School of Bright Promise and mentioned [the job] to me," Riffee said. "She said I would do very well."

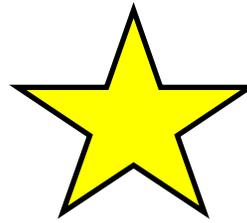
DeMarco was right, and two decades later Riffee is still delighting in the experience.

"I love how every individual says things that brighten your day," she said. "They are so happy, and when they do something they are so excited."

She carries that same joy when she talks about her family, which includes twin daughters Juliane Brumbaugh and Jacquelyn Riffee and grandchildren Madalyn, William and baby Edie, as well as her mother, Elizabeth Murphy.

Riffee said she has faced challenges but takes each day as it comes.

"I've been very busy, but I've loved every minute of it."



**Crystal  
Thompson**



Crystal Thompson loves a lot of things—animals, kids, shopping and the Pittsburgh Pirates.

She is a self-described "Gabes-oholic" and loves purchasing book bags to keychains whenever she gets the chance. Crystal has been settling into Shaffer Plaza over the past month and said she is enjoying her new home.

"I love it," she said. "I love the people here and the staff are doll babies. I love it here, I'm happy here and that's all that matters."

She was born in Philadelphia, Pa., and moved to North Carolina before finally settling in Steubenville at age 7. Thompson speaks lovingly of her mother Elizabeth Doyle, who recently passed away, and also has two brothers, two nephews and a niece.

"[My mother] is my angel, and no matter where she is she's with me," she said.

While this is her first time on her own, she hopes to hold a job in the future but helps out at Shaffer by folding laundry and performing regular chores. Thompson also counts drawing pictures and coloring among her hobbies but admits shopping is her absolute favorite.

"I'm a shopaholic. I like keychains, wallets and book bags," she noted, saying she prefers spending time at Gabe's.

But Crystal is most excited about making new friends and learning to be more independent. Put quite simply, she loves just about everything.