



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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Steubenville, Ohio
43952
www.jcbdd.com

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***Getting to Know You**

JCBDD Joins “We Thrive Together” *Virtual Services Offered to Individuals across the County*

Individuals with intellectual and developmental needs now have access to virtual activities in a new endeavor through the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

JCBDD received a generous donation from Jeffco Services Inc. which created an opportunity to team up with We Thrive Together, a Cleveland-based nonprofit organization, to provide free virtual events to individuals, their families, providers, schools and other support systems across Jefferson County. We Thrive Together has hosted more than 9,000 events since the start of the COVID pandemic, including games, discussion groups and virtual trips and has since added on-demand, step-by-step technology trainings, an advocacy video hub, a health and wellness hub and more. Officials said it is an easy way to connect and supplement existing group activities and individuals in all 88 counties have participated in WTT programming over the past

year.

JCBDD Employment and Community Navigator Cookie West said the organization evolved following COVID with its digital

“We are intentional about discovering ways to give individuals with disabilities greater access to their community. Whether that connection is physically or virtually, we want to help individuals develop skills for greater independence and greater connections.”

**- Steve Pelton
Executive Director,
We Thrive Together**

event calendar and allows people to connect through social media and other services.

“There are activities they can do

each day at home and we the subscription provides access to tech-training tools, advocacy and video hubs and how-to services,” West said. “Every person connected through the board will have county-wide access.”

She continued that it benefits not only the people JCBDD serves, but also those who support them. Family members, providers and other support networks can also utilize the tech program themselves.

“We want people with disabilities to have the same access to their community as others do, whether it’s in person or virtually. This service can help people enhance their skills and empower them to try new things and navigate their community with greater confidence. One of the great features that We Thrive Together has for subscribers is the ability for individuals to learn at their own pace.”

(Continued as THRIVE)

“An Evening with Santa” on Dec. 15

Santa and Mrs. Claus are coming to town on Dec. 15 for some holiday fun at the Jeffco Center.

Special Connections, which is a collaboration between the Special Needs Parent Support Group in the Ohio Valley Facebook page, Crossroads Christian Church and Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities, is hosting “An Evening with Santa” from 6-8 p.m. at the center located at 256 John Scott Highway in Steubenville. Organizers said the free community event was created with individuals with disabilities in mind but all ages and abilities are welcome.

“It’s a free event with cookies,

milk and hot chocolate with Santa,” said Mindy Aleksiejczyk, founder of the Special Needs Parent Support Group page and JCBDD board member. “The kids can decorate cookies and take them home and we’ll have Christmas-themed activities and games.”

She added that participants may also take photos with Jolly Old St. Nick, receive a gift and watch a movie to get into the holiday spirit. Additionally, they can meet Mrs. Claus and some other yuletide friends will be on hand to greet spectators.

“This is open to all ages,” Aleksiejczyk added. “Last year, we

had Breakfast with Santa and about 100 people attended.”

Special Connections was formed to provide fun activities for special needs individuals and their families as well as to provide helpful resources. A calendar of events has been planned with the most recent being the second-annual Trunk or Treat and Fall Bash held last month, and now organizers are hoping for another strong turnout at the Christmas activity.

For more information about the event or other resources, go to the Special Connections or Special Needs Parent Support Group in the Ohio Valley Facebook pages.

Steve Pelton, executive director of WTT, said the program's mission is to reduce social isolation and loneliness of at-risk community members and help them learn new skills, stay connected, meet new people and make friends.

"WTT was launched in 2018 with a grant from the Cleveland Foundation with the goal of engaging people who have not been able to take advantage of social activities in their communities. Since the launch, WTT has hosted over 9,000 virtual events including exercise classes, games, educational presentations, virtual trips, arts and crafts, discussion groups and so much more," Pelton explained. "People participate individually or in groups using any internet-ready device. In October, WTT was selected by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities to oversee the Ohio Tech Ambassador to highlight how people use technology to live their best life, and by the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council to teach people how artificial intelligence can be used to help people

advocate for their needs and wants."

Pelton added that people across Ohio and a total of 19 states have been engaged in programming and more than 250 different friends join events each month, but that number continues to grow. He noted that it has been a proven benefit to all people.

"The U.S. Surgeon General's '2023 Advisory on the Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation' stated that the mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and even greater than that associated with obesity and physical inactivity," Pelton said.

"Anyone of any age or background can experience loneliness and isolation, but some groups are at higher risk than others. The studies find the highest prevalence for loneliness and isolation is among people with poor physical or mental health, disabilities, financial insecurity, those who live alone, single parents, as well as younger and older populations. We are here to make sure that no person with a disability must

suffer from social isolation or loneliness anymore."

More evening and weekend activities are being added while some in-person tech summits are also planned to expand the service's offerings.

"We are intentional about discovering ways to give individuals with disabilities greater access to their community. Whether that connection is physically or virtually, we want to help individuals develop skills for greater independence and greater connections," he said. "We encourage community members to check out the free resource. You can join the online programming either by telephone or any internet-ready device (computer, tablet, smartphone). Consider this your personal invitation to talk, laugh, play and connect from the comfort and safety of home."

For more information, go online to <https://wethrivetogether.org/jefferson-county> or visit www.jcbdd.com and search the "Services" section for the "We Thrive Together" link.



Neysa Rogers



One might say children play a big role in Neysa Rogers' life.

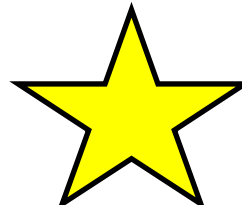
Not only is the Richmond resident the early intervention supervisor, but she is also a doting grandmother to three little ones.

She has been an integral part of the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities for the past nine years. The EI program currently serves 72 children ages newborn to 3 on individual family service plans (IFSP's) and coordinates services for another 15 kids across the county. A variety of services are already offered including special instruction by developmental specialists, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, vision and audiology services and mental health services, and now they provide autism assessments.

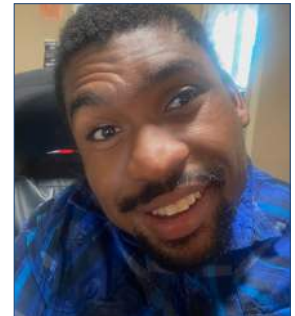
And when she's off duty?

"I love to spend time with my family. I love every minute I get with my grandchildren Mady, Jojo, Evy and Rhett," she said. "I like to hike and share my adventures with my family and others."

Neysa added that she often takes pictures and videos and shares them on Facebook for friends and family to see. She also likes to go out to dinner with her husband.



Treyvon Walker



If you spend two minutes around Treyvon Walker, you cannot help but to have a smile on your face and soon begin laughing.

The Steubenville native has a lot of charm, as well as an arsenal of knock-knock jokes and family impressions.

Ask him what he likes most and he will say he is the No. 1 fan of WWE wrestler John Cena. Treyvon added that if he had to choose between Spiderman, Batman or Superman as his favorite hero, he would definitely choose Batman.

He also likes attending PALS in Cadiz, saying the staff is friendly and he enjoys working on his laptop to complete different office tasks. Treyvon enjoys his independence, is also a snazzy dresser and said he picked out his very stylish outfit.

He loves to help around the house, cleaning the table after dinner most nights, and also helps his housemates in the morning with handing out lunchboxes as everyone prepares to leave for the day.

Meanwhile, he is a graduate of Steubenville City Schools and he was very excited to share that his little sister, Chyna, is currently a majorette for Steubenville Big Red High School.

Treyvon said highlight of his day is his daily telephone call from his mom.