



The ALL-STAR Newsletter

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Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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Steubenville Boy Finds Strength through EI

Two-year-old Tylee Hython playfully pushes a blue toy car atop the dining room table with his right hand, appearing to be like any typical toddler.

His mother encourages him to use his left hand, something that has been a struggle since he presumably suffered a stroke in utero. Tylee complies and pushes the car with his clenched fist, bringing a smile to her face and a squeal of delight. The son of Ricky Williams and Reva Hython of Steubenville, he has been finding strength through occupational therapy and working with the Early Intervention (EI) program at the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Now he is looking ahead to becoming a preschooler.

"He was seven or eight months old and wasn't rolling over," Reva Hython recalled. "He always kept his hand in a fist close to his body. Those were the signs that made me take him to the doctor."

Tylee was sent to Akron Children's Hospital where he underwent an MRI and was found to have suffered a stroke. Medical officials were not 100-percent sure it occurred while still in the womb, but Tylee would go on to meet with neurologists and seek physical therapy. He received a Botox injection to loosen his hand but still favors his right and he has received occupational therapy at ACH and in Boardman. Tylee's pediatrician also referred him to the EI program where specialist Jennifer Orlando has regularly assisted him since he was 10 months old.

"He doesn't use the left side of his body to its full potential," Hython continued. "He started sitting up and the doctors said he wouldn't walk, but he does. He began walking at 18 months old."

Orlando originally visited his home for biweekly sessions, then stopped by each week. Since then, she reverted to monthly meetings because he has improved significantly.

"He had complete left side weakness because of his stroke," Orlando



Two-year-old Tylee Hython has been working his way back to health following a presumed stroke in utero. With the support of occupational therapy and the Early Intervention (EI) program through the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities, he is now getting ready to begin preschool this fall. He is pictured with his mother, Reva Hython.

said. "We did an assessment and he qualified across the board. There were difficulties eating and he was not rolling or sitting."

The first meeting occurred in March of 2023 and a therapeutic program was implemented to help him thrive.

"We did a lot of positioning and working to move his left hand," she added. "We did activities to encourage him to use both hands such as playing 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat.' By his first birthday, he was rolling and Army crawling with his right arm and he used his left leg before his left arm. We encouraged him to use that arm and I provided his family with two-handed fine motor activities to work with him."

Orlando continued that a brace was also applied to his left foot but he did not require it.

"Once he started walking, he got into climbing and kicking," she said. "Right now, he will move his arm at the shoulder and elbow but his hand remains clenched. His only

delay is in self-help because of his hand, but he is ready [for preschool]. His attention is so good and he has interest in balls, animals and colors."

Orlando said he has come a long way.

"I've been doing this for 25 years and I thought he wouldn't get a lot of use back. The fact that he's doing everything is amazing and I will miss him."

Plans are now to enroll him at Wells Academy so he can join his older siblings at school. Tylee is one of six children, including Tariyah, Tajon, Tanajah, Tiyonna and Tariq, the latter of whom Orlando and Hython credited for guiding the youngest brother.

"Tylee has no learning issues; it's just his motor skills," Hython added. "He likes playing with cars and throwing the football. He's awesome and it's not holding him back at all. I think (EI) has been more helpful to open him up. It's extra help and it's greatly appreciated."

Couple's Love Story Endures after 36 Years

With February being Valentine's month, there is nothing better than a sweet love story--and few are better than that of Donnie Armstrong and Mary Jean Devore.

The local couple personify the power of love and will celebrate 37 years together this spring, marking an enduring and endearing relationship. They began as friends after meeting at the Jefferson County Board of Developmental Disabilities' Jeffco Workshop in Steubenville, but love eventually blossomed.

Armstrong, a resident of Mingo Junction, recalled the day he was introduced to Devore, a Steubenville resident who is also known as M.J.

"[My friends] told me to talk to her," he said. "We talked and we got together."

"We were friends for a while," Devore added. "We got along."

Both previously worked with the janitorial crew at The School of Bright Promise but are now retired. Armstrong, who is 72, and Devore, 66, currently spend their days at PALS Chrysalis Health Adult Day Service in Mingo where they enjoy art, activities and genuinely being together.

However, things became even more special when he popped the question--ring and all--on their 36th anniversary.

"On April 11, we got engaged," Devore commented, adding that they had discussed the issue for some time.

"Someone gave me a ring and I got on my knee," Armstrong added. "I said, 'M.J., do you want to get engaged?' She said, 'Yeah.'"



Mary Jean (M.J.) Devore and Donnie Armstrong's love story has endured for the past 36 years since their first meeting at the former Jeffco Workshop. These days, they are happily engaged and spend time at PALS Chrysalis Adult Day Center in Mingo Junction, where they say they simply enjoy being together.

However, they are not planning any nuptials but don their own special bands: Hers is gold while he has opted to sport a silver skull ring.

The couple prefer to remain engaged and say they are happy just the way they are. They added that they have made their longtime relationship work through communication and mutual interests such as taking walks, shopping and dining out. Armstrong has also provided gifts such as a Cabbage Patch doll, a radio and a globe engraved with their names.

Those who know the couple describe them as sweet and kind people who show what happiness truly is.

"I've known Donnie for just over two

years. As I've known Donnie, I've also known Mary Jean for just over two years. They are a pair and are often found together, spending time with each other talking, putting together puzzles and more," said Ed Lantz, Armstrong's service support administrator (SSA) through JCBDD. "I love talking to Donnie, and anytime I ask him a question, he will keep Mary Jean in his mind when giving the response. It's easy to see there is a genuine love there. They've been together for many years and I can't see that ending."

Lantz also noted Armstrong's unique style, which includes a love of knick-knacks featuring dragons and skulls that he has amassed at home. He also likes to wear shirts, jackets and other items with similar designs--like his ring--and Devore seems to enjoy that about him.

"They are an amazing couple and I wish them many more years together," he continued.

"Professionally, I have known Mary Jean and Donnie for nine years and their relationship is very important to them," added Tracey Thomas, who has served as Devore's SSA. "Mary Jean says that she just loves him and is quick to add there has never been anyone else. They talk on the phone every night and have never missed a call in all their years together."

When asked to describe what they like best about each other, Devore said, "He's a nice guy."

And Armstrong?

"I love her very much," he said.

Night to Shine

Zach Daniels and Mackenzie Owens donned crowns and made their way down the red carpet for the Second Annual Night to Shine at Toronto City Schools on Feb. 7. More than 200 people, including honored guests and volunteer buddies, gathered for dinner, dancing and festivities to celebrate people with disabilities.

The Tim Tebow Foundation began Night to Shine a decade ago and events are hosted by churches around the world. This year's fete included a catered dinner by Baby-Boyz BBQ of Toronto, music by DJ Chelsea Householder, photo opportunities and a red carpet featuring a cheering crowd and "paparazzi." Decorations were provided by Shelly Collaros, Elevated Designs and Lovie Balloon Designs. Meanwhile, local sponsors included Jeffco Services Inc, Franciscan University, Trinity Health System, TIMET United Steelworkers, Kiwanis Club of Steubenville, 7 Ranges Entertainment, Capital Health Services, Exquisite Creations by Joel and Bella Cappelli Academy.

