



# NEWS FROM THE SENECA COUNTY OPPORTUNITY CENTER

A publication of the Seneca County Board of Developmental Disabilities

**Our Mission: To improve the lives of persons with disabilities**



After a 2-year hiatus, the Celebrity Basketball Game returned as part of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month on March 31. Over 1,300 people filled the gym at Heidelberg University.

## Board Members

- Erin Simmons, President
- Erin Lucius, Secretary
- Arrin Allen
- Sandy Hallett
- Michelle Smith
- Patricia Smith

## SCOC Calendar

- May 19 School of Opportunity Graduation
- May 26 Last day for school students
- May 27 Staff In-Service (Program closed)
- May 30 Memorial Day (Program closed)
- June 14 Board Meeting - 5pm at SCOC
- June 20 Juneteenth observed (Program closed)
- July 4 Independence Day (Program closed)

## Contact Us

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Find us on Facebook!

## Letter from Lew by Lew Hurst, Superintendent

It has truly been an amazing few months for the Opportunity Center. Thanks to the support of the community, we held our largest Celebrity Basketball Game and had a great 64th Annual Palm Sunday Dinner. Our first partnership with Heidelberg University's Theatre Department resulted in an outstanding performance of a "Year with Frog and Toad." All of these events help us fulfill our mission of "improving the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities" and allow individuals with disabilities to build relationships within their community.

The County Board is working hard to expand services in the community. We increased community employment options and volunteer opportunities for individuals. We partnered with Leadership Seneca County, Seneca County Parks District, Tiffin University, and Heidelberg University to create more opportunities for individuals to work and play in their local community. I cannot say enough about the great staff we have at the Opportunity Center and throughout our provider network who make these events happen.

Several large projects are on the horizon including the all-inclusive playground, an expanded parking lot in front of the building, and privatization of Adult Services and Transportation. We will continue to host the Letting Lew Know series to answer any questions people may have during this transition period. We are committed to maintaining the high-quality services that families expect from us, and we are developing and recruiting providers to deliver additional supports for individuals and families living in the community.

I am excited to see what new opportunities we will be able to create in the next quarter! Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

# Appointments to Local Boards

The Seneca County Commissioners appointed Michelle Smith to a four-year term on the Seneca County Board of Developmental Disabilities (SCBDD). She is the first person in Seneca County who receives services from the agency to also sit on the board. Only a few county boards in Ohio have members who are served by the disabilities system.



*Michelle Smith*

Michelle participates in UNITY Council, Aktion Club, Project STIR, and Special Olympics. She volunteered for the Read to Succeed program in Tiffin City Schools and is a member of the Leadership Seneca County Class of 2022. Michelle works at the Corner Delights Bistro at Mercy Hospital and Dollar Tree.

The SCBDD appointed John DeVanna to serve on the Northland Board. The Northland Board is organized by the Clearwater COG, meets every other month, and serves three counties – Seneca, Marion, and Crawford. They assist with upkeep and rent of residential homes for people with disabilities, enabling them to live on their own.



*John DeVanna*

John is active in Project STIR, UNITY Council, Aktion Club, and Special Olympics. He also works at the Cinemark movie theater in Tiffin.

"We are proud to support individuals in leadership roles as they guide our program towards future goals," said Superintendent Lew Hurst.

## Early Intervention

Congratulations to Early Intervention Developmental Specialist Kim Kancler on earning her PLAY (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters) and Teaching PLAY certificates. The PLAY Project is a parent implemented, intensive early intervention program for young children with autism that is evidence-based.



# Palm Sunday Dinner

ACT Council would like to thank everyone who supported the 64th annual Palm Sunday Dinner and Raffle. Approximately 775 ham and chicken dinners were served at the drive-thru event.

This event would not be possible without many amazing volunteers. A very special thank you to the Herb Faber and Cathy Faber family and crew for cooking the delicious dinner. Other volunteers included Calvert Catholic National Honor Society, Vanguard-Sentinel Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Program, SCOC Aktion Club, and many friends, families, and employees.

The Palm Sunday Dinner is ACT Council's largest fundraiser. ACT stands for Advocates Coming Together for the Seneca County Opportunity Center and is a not-for-profit group of parents, siblings, and persons with developmental disabilities. ACT uses the funds raised to purchase Christmas gifts for each of the over 600 people with disabilities served by the program.

*The Herb Faber and Cathy Faber family and crew cooked a delicious meal!*



*Calvert National Honor Society members volunteered at the Palm Sunday Dinner*



*Grand prize winner Stephanie Lucius*



*Robyn Vicek won 2 raffle baskets!*

# All-Abilities Playground Coming Soon!



Installation of the new all-abilities playground will begin in June. It will have a flat, seamless rubber surface, and the equipment will be more accessible so people of all ages and mobilities are able to enjoy it.

The playground is a collaboration between the Seneca County Park District, Seneca County Commissioners, Seneca Regional Planning Commission, and the Opportunity Center. This year's Leadership Seneca County class helped with the playground as their service project. They coordinated volunteers for the demolition of the existing playground in early April. Both the Heidelberg University and Tiffin University football teams helped with demolition.



The Opportunity Center received several state and local grants to make this playground possible. The playground was funded by the Tiffin Community Foundation, The Gillmor Foundation, the Seneca County Parks District, the Seneca County Board of Developmental Disabilities, and an Ohio Capital Grant.

## Provider Appreciation Dinner and Award

The Provider Appreciation Dinner was held at SCOC in March. Each provider who attended received a gift from ACT Council. Certificates were presented to the over 40 providers nominated for the SCOC Impact Award given to the outstanding Direct Support Professional. The award is sponsored by ACT Council.

The recipient of this year's award is Dan Exline. Dan received \$100 in Chamber Cash, and his name was added to a plaque that will hang at the Opportunity Center. When asked for a comment, Dan said, "I've enjoyed every minute of it."

Dan has worked for Future Horizons of Tiffin for 19 years. Prior to that he worked for

the Tiffin Developmental Center and the State of Ohio. Peg Martorana, owner of Future Horizons, says Dan "is a dedicated, experienced, kind, and caring man. He is devoted to his job and the individuals that he cares for. He goes above and beyond his job duties and is a mentor to all."



Above: Pat Holmer, ACT Council President; Dan Exline, 2021 SCOC Impact Award Recipient; Superintendent Lew Hurst

Left: Jodi Burks shows appreciation for provider Cheryl Strohm

## Meet the Class of 2022

Two students, Hunter Feasel and Shanya Kidwell, will graduate from the School of Opportunity on May 19th. Shanya's favorite school memories are going on outings, especially to farms and restaurants. Her family is proud of how independent she has become. She is looking forward to starting an adult day program after graduation. Hunter's favorite memories are playing basketball for the Seneca Arrows and fun field trips. He has a great memory, and his family is proud of how much he has learned over the years. Both students served as Student Council officers this year. Congratulations, Hunter and Shanya!



Hunter Feasel



Shanya Kidwell

# School of Opportunity Student Council

It has been a busy year for the School of Opportunity Student Council. In October, they sponsored activities for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. They organized a "Pink Out" and everyone wore pink to create awareness and show support. They also held a fundraiser for FACT (Financial Assistance for Cancer Treatment). Each class decorated a pumpkin, and people "voted" by adding money to the donation jar of the pumpkin they liked best. They donated over \$200 to FACT.

They held a food drive and collected loose change to donate to the Salvation Army for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in March. Children's Services Director Kaleb Kuhlman said he would take a pie in the face if they raised over \$100. In addition to several boxes of food, they collected \$173!!! So Adult Services Director Rodney Biggert also got pied in the face!



"Pink Out" for Breast Cancer Awareness Month



Student Council members make plans for a food drive.

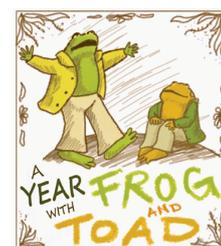


Kaleb Kuhlman and Rodney Biggert each get a pie in the face!



## SCOC Performs Musical with Heidelberg

Students and adults from the Opportunity Center shared the stage with Heidelberg University students in the musical "A Year with Frog and Toad" on April 23 at Heidelberg University's Gundlach Theatre. This unique partnership allowed individuals with disabilities to take the stage and perform in front of an audience.



Heidelberg students in the "Theatre for Young Adults" class hosted weekly workshops at the Opportunity Center, with instruction in singing, dancing, acting, props and costumes. Some cast members performed a role on their own, while others were paired with Heidelberg students and performed as partners.

The production was made possible by grants from the George W. Deinzer Endowment Fund and the Youth Advisory Council of the Tiffin Community Foundation. We hope to make an annual event!

