

MARCH 2024



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



Self advocates David Adkins, Cindy Moyer, and Ryan Herr accepted the proclamation at the Commissioners meeting accompanied by Superintendent Lew Hurst, Director of Community, Advocacy, and Supports Amy Miller, and Resource and Support Coordinator Heather Smith

SCOC Calendar

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| March 26th | Bakery Bingo |
| March 28-April 2 | Spring Break (program closed) |
| April 8 | Solar Eclipse Day (program closed) |
| April 27th | "A Barnyard Moosical" @Heidelberg |
| May 23rd | Last day of school for students |

Board Members

Erin Simmons, President
Arrin Allen, Vice President
Jim Oliver, Secretary
Frank Lengal
Joe Moore
Kim Radison
Michelle Smith

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Service and Support Administration
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Find us on Facebook and
instagram!



Letter from Lew *by Lew Hurst, Superintendent*

We are busy promoting all of the exciting events during DD Awareness Month. As a reminder, Bakery Bingo is March 26th. The proceeds from Bakery Bingo help support our Unity Council to reduce the costs for individuals attending the conference. The Unity Conference is a one-of-a-kind event planned and hosted by self-advocates. Please show your support by donating baked goods or attending Bakery Bingo and other March events.

The Seneca County Opportunity Center is excited to enter into the next phases of building construction at the Optimal Opportunities building and the Fairlane building. We are working on the final details of the bid process with Telamon Construction, Inc. We hope that they will begin construction in May and complete construction in August with a tentative move date of September for the Service and Support Administrators (SSA) and the adult program. This will allow us to begin to expand the school so that we can address the growing number of children who need support.

The privatization of adult services continues to go smoothly. All individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities on Medicaid waivers have selected private providers for adult day services. The Service and Support Administrators (SSAs) are currently working with those adult individuals and families who are not on a Medicaid waiver to offer an individual budget so they can select a private provider as well. It is important that families and the community understand that SCOC has been required to privatize adult programs and services per state rules and regulations. SCOC is also obligated to continue to fund said programs with our tax levies along with continuing to fund adult residential support as well.

All those services, as well as Service Support Administrators (SSAs), Community Advocacy and Supports (CAS) including the Investigative Agent (IA), Special Olympics, After-hours programs, School of Opportunity, Transportation, and Early Intervention (EI), services all fall under the responsibilities of SCOC. We continue to face a growing demand for our services and operate within the resources of local tax levies. Since our levies are continuous they do not generate any additional funds from recent tax increases. We do receive some additional revenue from new building development; however, those funds are limited. SCOC continues to operate as wise stewards of taxpayer dollars and maintains tight budgets as our services continue to expand. In fact, since the local economy slowed down last year, we felt it important to let a half-million dollar levy go to help reduce property tax county-wide last year.

Lew Hurst

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Developmental Disabilities (DD) Awareness Month and the Seneca County Opportunity Center's (SCOC) theme for 2024 is "Building a Better Community." SCOC serves almost 600 people throughout the community from birth to adulthood. The month of March is a way to celebrate inclusion and awareness. SCOC appreciates the connections that help bring everyone together to build a better community.

DD Awareness Luncheon



The DD Awareness Luncheon held on Friday, March 1st kicked off the month with local community members and advocates. Superintendent Lew Hurst gave a presentation on SCOC's services and STIR advocates announced upcoming events. Lastly, a tour was given of the building.

Radio Shows

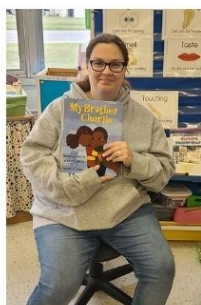


SCOC advocates went on the radio to promote upcoming events for DD Awareness Month. Patrick Steyer went on WTTF Radio with Superintendent Lew Hurst on March 4th, Sean Allison attended the radio station at WBVI 96.7 in Fostoria on March 5th, and Josh Meyers promoted the Celebrity Basketball game on WTTF Radio with Board Member Arrin Allen on March 11th. If you weren't able to catch any of the shows you can listen on <https://wttf.com/> or <https://wbvi.com/podcasts/keith-dawn>.

Aktion Club Reading

Aktion Club Awareness Week was March 4th-8th and to celebrate DD Awareness Month members (like Ashley Steed in the picture) visited Lincoln Pre-K and SCOC to read to the children. These books included "My Brother Charlie," and "The Girl who Thought in Pictures." These books promote inclusion and awareness for disabilities such as autism.

Aktion Club also partnered with Kiwanis to collect donations for Chemo Care packages that were donated to Mercy Hospital.



Proclamations



Bill Young and John DeVanna attended the Tiffin City Council Meeting with Superintendent Lew Hurst to accept the proclamation declaring March as DD Awareness Month.



Sean Allison went to the Fostoria City Council Meeting with Community, Advocacy, and Supports Director Amy Miller to receive the proclamation.

Celebrity Basketball Game

The Seneca Arrows joined teams with local celebrities and Heidelberg athletes at Heidelberg University for the Celebrity Basketball Game. The annual game brings the community together and raises money for Special Olympics.



SCOC appreciates everyone for attending the game and showing their support for the Seneca Arrows.

Student Council Food Drive

The School of Opportunity's Student Council is participating in a "Be the CHANGE food drive," during DD Awareness Month. All donations go to the Salvation Army of Tiffin. Nonperishable food and hygiene items can be brought into the Opportunity Center. SCOC is also collecting change to send along with the donations. If over \$100 is collected Director of Education Kaleb Kuhlman will participate in a "pie in the face," event.

Suggested items: canned fruits, meats, vegetables, and soups. Boxed goods, toilet paper, paper towels, dish detergent, multi-surface cleaners, antibacterial wipes, Kleenex, deodorant, hand lotion, shampoo, body wash, baby/children shampoo and body wash, etc.

Investigative Agent Olivia Cleveland recognized

A Zoom training was conducted after The Ohio Department of Medicaid reviewed DODD's MUI department with over 200 people across the state of Ohio. During the training, they presented Investigative Agent, Olivia Cleveland's work to show how to conduct investigations using a trauma informed care approach including identifying the cause, contributing factors, and prevention planning. SCOC is appreciative of Olivia's hard work and dedication!



Preparation for the Solar Eclipse

A total eclipse will occur in Seneca County on April 8th, 2024 at approximately 3 PM EDT for 3 minutes and 52 seconds (totality). Seneca County is predicted to have an influx of visitors and a potential shortage of food, supplies, and gas due to the increased demand. There may also be delays with emergency responders and gridlocked traffic. Make sure you're prepared and have a plan!

The Seneca County Opportunity Center (SCOC) will be closed that day along with other schools in the area.

If you plan to watch the eclipse make sure to have the special glasses that meet ISO 12312-2 International standard to view as looking directly at the sun can cause damage.

Upcoming Events

Bakery Bingo is on Tuesday, March 26th in the SCOC gym. Doors open at 5pm with bingo starting at 5:30pm. Bingo cards are \$5 and all proceeds go towards the 2024 Unity Conference, a self-advocacy groups that plans the conference every year.

Wear blue on Wednesday, April 3rd to celebrate World Autism Day.

"A Barnyard Moosical," featuring Heidelberg students and SCOC adults and children will perform at Heidelberg's Ohl Concert Hall at 2pm on Saturday, April 27th. Tickets will be \$5.

More information on upcoming events can be found on SCOC's social media.

Protecting the Health and Safety of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

As many of you are aware we had an article in the Advertiser Tribune reporting that a staff member at the Opportunity Center allegedly assaulted a student. It is our top priority to protect individuals with disabilities throughout our community. I want to review the processes that we have and briefly explain those processes.

First, SCOC regularly provides training to all staff on PCI (Positive Culture Initiative) and Good Life; both of these trainings focus on positive intervention strategies to use with students and adults. These trainings provide valuable tools to assist staff in de-escalating crises and promote everyday interactions that are positive and supportive to the person.

Second, every staff member who works at the Opportunity Center is a mandated reporter and receives training at least annually on the proper way to address these situations. Staff can be terminated for not reporting allegations of abuse or neglect. When an allegation is made, our procedure is to place the staff member on paid leave until an investigation can be conducted. That paid leave is to protect the individual with a disability and the staff. We must assure the safety of the individuals and we have a responsibility to make sure that staff is protected against any false allegations.

We have a full-time Investigative Agent (Olivia Cleveland) who ensures that all reported allegations are investigated to ensure the health and safety of the adults and students we serve in accordance with ORC 5123-17-02. After the allegation is investigated by the SCOC Investigative Agent (IA), if certain criteria are met it will be reported properly to authorities who will take the lead on the investigation. If an allegation includes a minor, the report is forwarded to child protective services and law enforcement so they can lead the investigation. Once the investigation is completed, action will be taken to ensure the health and safety of those served, which may include discipline, termination, and retraining of staff and/or creation of prevention plans.

Since the allegation was made about a staff the report was forwarded to law enforcement and child protective services. Police incident logs are routinely monitored by news staff.

It is important to note that these processes are designed to protect students, adults, and staff from harm. Since these events do not happen that often, it is crucial that everyone remember their role in the state-mandated reporting system to safeguard the people we serve. SCOC takes all allegations very seriously and has zero tolerance for any abuse or neglect.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Loretta Hunt".

Recognition of Service: Bruce Porter Congrats on Retirement: Tom Scott

Bruce Porter celebrated 9 years of service with SCOC on Tuesday, December 19th, 2023. His hard work as a nurse isn't unnoticed.



Tom Scott celebrated his retirement on Friday, December 15th. He was a bus driver for 18 years. SCOC thanks Tom for all of his hard work and dedication.

Service and Support Administrators Welcome Intern

The Service and Support Administrators welcomed an intern, Serenity Hooper. Serenity is from Carey, Ohio, and attends Indiana Wesleyan University. When asked what advice she'd give to her future self, Serenity said she would tell herself to keep pushing forward and always stay open-minded, while continuing to work hard for the goals she set for herself.



Favorite season: Fall
Most Played song: No Rain by Blind Melon

DSP of the Month: January-March

January: Crystal Steel



Crystal works for Renaissance House, Inc. Her nomination form described her as someone who "takes the time to understand the individuals she works with and uses compassion and understanding when caring for them." Crystal never hesitates to jump in and help when needed and develops wonderful relationships.

February: Shelia Blackford



Sheila works for Future Horizons of Tiffin, LLC and is known to always go above and beyond for the individuals "Shelia is what a leader is all about. She cares about the individuals and the workers and makes us all feel a part of the team."

March: Sierra Garcia



Sierra works for REM Day Hab and is someone who's known for always being nice and taking the time to talk to people. She plans fun trips such as going to Cedar Point.

SCOC Welcomes New Staff

Alexa Hess
Service and Support
Administrator



Relatable
superhero: Starfire
Favorite season:
summer

Marci Bowen,
Service and Support
Administrator



Favorite restaurant:
Lazy Dog
Favorite beverage: Iced
Chai Latte

Kaitlin Henline
Sub Cook



Fav beverage: sweet
tea or coffee
Most played song:
Fictional by Khloe Rose

Del Ray Fox
Sub Van Driver



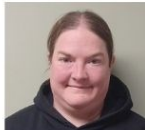
Last TV show:
AGT
Most played
song: Hold my
hand by Hootie
and The Blowfish



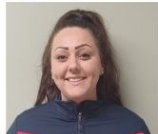
Jerry Johnston
Sub Custodian
Hometown: Findlay
Comfort food:
chicken and noodles



John Osborn
Sub van driver
Favorite beverage: Mt. Dew
Favorite Restaurant:
City BBQ



Melissa Searles
Sub Aide
Comfort food: tacos
Favorite color: pink



Hannah Terry,
Teacher Aide Sub
Comfort food:
mashed potatoes
Favorite color: pink



Marsha Mullholand
Bus Driver
Hometown: Charleston, WV
Favorite color: red



Brittany Wyant,
Teacher Aide Sub
Favorite dessert:
chocolate ice cream
Hometown: Risingsun

We Are Hiring!!

If you or someone you know would be interested in any of the jobs listed below please check out our website to fill out an application or check out our Facebook page:

<https://www.senecadd.org/general-9>

Check out our DSP video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhjud9EzSQU>

Instagram page: [@senecacountyopportunitycenter](https://www.instagram.com/senecacountyopportunitycenter)