



# 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**



What an inspiring and unforgettable experience at Unity 2025 "Saddle Up for Success!" The event was filled with empowering activities, from spirited performances, creative art, and more. Here's to connection, empowerment, and memories!

## SCOC Calendar

Feb 16th	President's Day (SCOC Closed)
March 16th	Teacher In-service (School closed)
Apr 2nd- Apr 7th	Spring Break
May 21st	Last day of school for students
May 22nd	Last day for 9-month staff (work day)
May 25th	Memorial Day (SCOC Closed)

Palm Sunday will be on **March 29<sup>th</sup>** with pre-orders due **March 13<sup>th</sup>**. Keep an eye out for more information.

## Board Members

Erin Simmons, President  
 Arrin Allen, Vice President  
 Frank Lengel  
 Joe Moore  
 Kim Radison  
 Michelle Smith  
 Kenneth Clason

## Contact Us

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 419-447-7674

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 419-436-0797

Service and Support Administration  
 567-938-2381

Find us on Facebook and Instagram!



## Letter from Lew

by Lew Hurst, Superintendent

As we bring in the new year, we want to share important updates regarding the ongoing privatization process and what lies ahead in 2026. This marks the final year that adult services staff will be employees of the Seneca County Opportunity Center. By January 1, 2026, these dedicated team members will officially join Preferred Pathways, continuing their commitment to providing high-quality services to adults in our community.

Additionally, starting January 1, transportation services for adults will no longer be provided by the Seneca County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Instead, transportation for day habilitation services will be managed directly by Preferred Pathways and other private providers. This change is part of our effort to streamline services and enhance flexibility for individuals and families. Rodney Biggert, Executive Director of Preferred Pathways, will operate out of the Optima Building and part of the Fairlane Building to ensure seamless service delivery. Currently, Preferred Pathways serves approximately 120 adults.

So far, the transition to privatization has gone very smoothly, with individuals choosing from a variety of providers across the county. These options are helping us deliver more personalized and effective services. Although we are no longer the provider of services, we still fund these programs and services in Seneca County.

Looking ahead on 2026, our focus will shift toward school-based services. We are excited to announce plans for additional classrooms to meet the growing demand for children's services. Over the past several years, the Opportunity Center's census has changed significantly, and we now serve as many children as adults—a reflection of our evolving community needs.

Thank you for your continued support as we navigate these changes and work together to provide the best possible services for individuals and families in Seneca County.

*Lew Hurst*

## Hoot in the Park

On October 9th, the Seneca County Opportunity Center had their non-scary Trick or Treat Trail through Opportunity Park for kids 10 and under. The event offers a way for those with developmental disabilities, local businesses and community members to connect and engage together.

The Seneca County Opportunity Center, ACT Council and Aktion Club thank you for your participation in this year's Hoot in the Park. Without the generosity of the sponsors and community members who volunteered their time and talents the event wouldn't be possible.

Make sure to mark your calendars for next year's Hoot in the Park on Thursday, October 10th, 2026.



## PJ Reading Day

The School of Opportunity had a PJ Party with camping-themed reading stations! Kids enjoyed activities such as decorating cookies inspired by *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, making fruit caterpillars from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and creating their own s'mores snack mix while exploring *Pete the Cat Goes Camping*! Plus, they played parachute games, explored the night sky tent, created All About Me Books, and decorated PJ coloring pages. A fun-filled day of reading, creativity, and adventure!



## Halloween School Festivities

Ghouls and ghosts paraded through our haunted hallways, and the candy trail had everyone feeling sweet and spooky! A sensory room was set up for kids to touch "brains" — or rather, spaghetti noodles, and other fun things. Our Halloween party was a graveyard smash with spooktacular games and snacks. A Halloween of un-boo-lievable fun. Can't wait for next year's fright fest!



## Muffins & Me



The School of Opportunity had a Muffin and Me event where students invited their families in for muffins and crafts. The crafts gave the students the chance to be creative and draw their dream muffin with family.

Thank you, families, for visiting students and enjoying a sweet treat!

## Student Council Election

On Election Day, the Seneca County Opportunity Center hosted its Student Council election, where students delivered speeches and cast their ballots to choose their leaders. Congratulations to the newly elected Student Council officers: President Heaven, Vice-President Kamarah, and Secretary Logan!



## Advocate of the Year

During the "Saddle up for Success," Unity Conference, the Self-Advocate of the Year award was announced. This is given to someone who has shown growth and development. This year, Betty Woodruff was picked for all of her hard work and dedication in becoming a leader. Betty also engages in a lot of volunteer work and has demonstrated growth in the community as well through Community Connections. Recently, she spoke at the Life Course Showcase in Grandview Heights regarding her experience completing Guided Implementation Training and her own experiences utilizing services and tools to advocate for herself.



## Emotional Support Kits

SCOC Aktion Club members had the idea to make Emotional First Aid kits to give to the Tiffin Police Department and Seneca County Children's Services for children in crisis in Seneca County. The kits include tools to calm, cope, and connect during difficult conversations and uncertain times. Some items included in the kits are a weighted stuffed animal, Play-Doh, which provides therapeutic, sensory experiences; bubbles that help with deep breathing and activate your body's relaxation response, slowing your heart rate and reducing stress. Aktion Clubbers partnered with the Tiffin Key Club, who provided handmade inspirational cards for the kits and helped put the items in the bags.



*Past Aktion Club President, Jolsh Meyers, and Advocacy Coordinator, NataLie Ranker delivered the kits to the Tiffin PD.*

## Seneca STIR

A few Seneca STIR leaders had the opportunity to meet with Seneca County Commissioner, Brent Busdeker, to learn more about his role in supporting the county. They were able to discuss the challenges that are facing Seneca County and the various projects the commissioners are currently working on. Seneca STIR is so thankful that Commissioner Busdeker took time from his busy schedule to meet with them.



## Synergy 2025

Advocates from Seneca County traveled to Sandusky, Ohio, for the kickoff of Synergy Conference 2025! Synergy is a conference for people of all abilities to come together! The Seneca County Opportunity Center thanks the Seneca County Board of Developmental Disabilities for giving our advocates the chance to go to Synergy so they can grow, learn, find connections, and synergize.



## Impact Melanoma Project in Opp Park



SCOC is grateful for the community's efforts in successfully unveiling the new sunscreen dispensers in Opportunity Park, making sun safety more accessible for everyone! A huge thank you to the Seneca General Health District, Tiffin Community Foundation, and SCOC Aktion Club for their generous support. We would also like to thank Christine Focht for making the themed cookies.

## Aktion Club Induction

The Seneca County Opportunity Center's Aktion Club held its annual officer installation and new member induction ceremony. The club welcomed 21 new members and installed the 2026-2027 Aktion Club Officers: President-Kayla Y., Vice President-Ruben V., Secretary-Jerry R., Treasurer -Matt S. Aktion Clubs' new member total is 74, which is the largest in-person Aktion Club in Ohio.



## DSP of the Month: Sept-Dec

Every month, ACT Council and SCOC Board Members plan to recognize a DSP. Direct Support Providers support people with disabilities and help them live, learn and work in their community. If you or someone you know would be interested in becoming a DSP contact Karen Frank, Provider Liaison at 567-938-2381 ext 1010 or email [kfrank@senecadd.org](mailto:kfrank@senecadd.org).

### September: Pam Kingseed



"Pam is one awesome person. Even though we may disagree on things, we always make up! While driving bus and taking care of me with special needs, she is running a household too. My mom goes above and beyond making sure I am safe, happy, and loved!"

### October: Ashley Schoen



Ashley works for ECI and has been praised for her hard work and dedication even off the clock: "Simply, she is the best! She helps with everything, including answering questions off the clock, day or night. She cares for clients like they were her own family. Ashley puts the care in caretaker. She is everything a DSP should be and more."

### December: Melanie Brown



Melanie has worked in the field of Developmental Disabilities for several years in various direct support capacities. She continues to have a huge impact on folks as a DSP and works at Ability Acres.

"Melanie is one of the best providers because she is there for me, she cares, and she considers me her main priority. I have gone on so many new activities since working with Melanie, including going roller skating, to the drive-in, to the Taylor Swift tribute concert, and I drove a golf cart for the first time!" I admire Melanie's kind heart as she helps me believe in myself and to believe that I matter to people!

## SCBDD President Erin Simmons goes to DC

A group of Ohio advocates traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with congressional officials and highlight urgent concerns about the potential impact of Medicaid and tax cuts on families and children in Ohio. They emphasized that these cuts threaten vital county services funded largely through Medicaid and local taxes, worsen staffing shortages in schools and developmental providers, and lead to long delays in essential medical and behavioral services for children. The advocates warned that such reductions could have devastating short- and long-term effects on children's well-being, family stability, and community health, underscoring the critical importance of early intervention programs that save costs and improve outcomes for children with developmental disabilities. Despite tight schedules, their engagement left a strong impression on lawmakers, reaffirming the need for ongoing dialogue and support.



## Retirements

During the SCOC staff Christmas Breakfast, Carol Gee, Lareen Priddy, Bill Swartz, Jeff McDaniel, and Melody Reinhart were honored for their hard work and dedication before retiring.

SCOC thanks you and wishes you a happy retirement.



## SCOC Welcomes New Employees



Jenny Werling  
Sub bus aide  
Hobbies: football  
Fav healthy snack: carrots



Carolyn Jordan  
Sub teacher aide  
Fav healthy snack: mangos  
Fav pizza topping: Pineapple



Jim Oliver  
SSA  
Fav Snack: poptarts  
Fav color: green



Kaylor Reynolds  
Assistant Custodian  
Sub  
Fav beverage: Mt Dew  
Hobbies: Video Games



Maison Hawley  
Sub teacher aide  
Fav restaurant: Olive Garden  
Fav season: fall  
Hobbies: Video Games



Tessa Tooley  
Substitute RN  
Fav snack: coffee  
Fav color: purple



Ruth Shaver  
SSA  
Fav color: orange  
Fav season: fall



Cassie Davenport  
Nurse  
Fav snack: trail mix  
Fav restaurant: Turntable



Nolan Martin  
Sub Bus Aide  
Fav Snack: mint cookies  
Fav season: summer

## We Are Hiring!!

If you or someone you know would be interested in a job please check out our website listed below to see open positions or check out our Facebook page:

<https://www.senecadd.org/about/careers/>

Check out our DSP video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhjud9EzSOU>

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

[www.senecadd.org](http://www.senecadd.org)

## Seneca County Opportunity Center: Holiday Edition

### Aktion Club Bell Ringing

The Seneca County Opportunity Center had a great time bell-ringing for The Salvation Army Tiffin Citadel! Thank you to everyone who donated. SCOC Aktion Club is a division of the Tiffin Kiwanis Club. SCOC Aktion Clubbers are passionate about giving back to their community! They do this by hosting fundraisers & completing service projects throughout the community.



### Aktion Club Caroling at The Willows

Aktion Club members had a great time caroling at The Willows! Aktion Clubbers were filled with joy to go and sing to the folks at The Willows. Huge thank you to Dave Gase for accompanying us and playing all our favorite Christmas songs.



### Staff Christmas Breakfast

The Seneca County Opportunity Center's Management team had its annual staff Christmas breakfast. SCOC's staff enjoyed a breakfast cooked by the management team and had the option to participate in a white elephant gift exchange. The management team expressed their gratitude to the staff for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

# THANK YOU!



### Christmas Spirit Week

The last week of break, the School of Opportunity had its Christmas-themed Spirit Week. Students and staff dressed up in different themes all week to get ready for Christmas.



Students caroling around SCOC dressed up for Christmas Character Day.

### Unity Merry Mixer

Tis the season to gather with friends! SCOC Unity Council hosted its Merry Mixer. They sang some Christmas karaoke, made Christmas cards, made a Christmas craft, and played BINGO!



### STIR Christmas Party



Northwest Ohio Regional STIR held its Christmas Party at NCOESC. It was a special day to celebrate advocates & their hard work, dedication, exemplary leadership skills, and commitment to advocacy efforts in Northwest Ohio. The festive day was filled with advocacy, reindeer games, and networking!

### EI Christmas Party

Seneca County Early Intervention hosted a Christmas Party for children to meet Santa and enjoy festive activities and snacks. It was a great time had by all!

