



Envisioning an integrated and inclusive Athens County



ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHY YOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

This year's events for DD Awareness Month promote healthy and safe celebrations

By Kevin Davis
Superintendent, ACBDD

Every year, March is designated as Developmental Disability Awareness Month, which focuses on people's diverse abilities and celebrates their contributions to our communities. For those of us at the Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities (ACBDD), we do this every day, all year round. But, for the month of March, we take a little extra time to promote who we are and what we do to a wider audience.

This year's theme is "Healthy you. Healthy me. Healthy community." We chose this theme because we wanted to highlight the hard work that has been done to keep everyone (individuals with developmental disabilities and the staff that support them) safe during these challenging times.

For almost a year now, our community has been living under COVID-19 protocols. For us as an agency, it has meant shifting everyone's focus to protecting those we serve. People with developmental disabilities, particularly those who have serious underlying medical conditions, are at a higher risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19.

Even with this shift, our programs and

services continued unabated. This is all due to the dedicated staff of the ACBDD and our community partners. Some of the changes have been so effective, they may remain with us long-term.

We may all be experiencing COVID fatigue by now, but it was important for us to take this opportunity to document some of the success stories we have seen. There is plenty to not like about this pandemic. But the resilience we have seen is something to be celebrated.

In this year's Special Edition, you will read about how the ACBDD – an agency of 100+ individuals – quickly changed with the times, in a way we have never seen before. You will read about how other community partners have worked creatively and collaboratively to keep people engaged while also keeping them safe. You will read about individuals with disabilities leading the way to advocate for new ways to meet their goals and safely live independently.

I am proud to live and work in Athens County, where incredible things happen every day to protect and empower our neighbors with developmental disabilities. Our workforce has been nimble. Our community partners have dug deep. Individuals with disabilities have shown their strength in new ways. Every-



Supt. Kevin Davis poses with a student at Beacon School.

one has embodied this year's theme – Healthy you. Healthy me. Healthy community. After reading these stories, I hope you feel just as proud.

Thank you.

Kevin Davis

Events for DD Awareness Month promote healthy and safe celebrations

Every March, the ACBDD has promoted and sponsored a number of events and activities in honor of Developmental Disability Awareness Month.

Traditionally, we have hosted large in-person events like the March on Court Street in Uptown Athens and the Developmental Disability Awareness Fest at the Athens Community Center.

This year, of course, those in-person gatherings are not recommended. Instead, the ACBDD has prepared a long list of virtual activities and events to help commemorate this special month.

This year's theme is "Healthy You. Healthy Me. Healthy Community." We will use this month to shine a spotlight on all the hard work that has been done to keep everyone safe during these challenging times.

Virtual March on Court Street



Dan, of Echoing Connections, shows the sign he made for the Virtual March on Court Street video project. Photo provided.

Be on the lookout for the Virtual March on Court Street Video. We have been collecting submissions of photos and videos of our friends holding up the signs they would have made for the actual march on Court Street to create a virtual version of this fun tradition. The video will be posted on the ACBDD's YouTube and Facebook pages.

Athens County and City declare March 2021 DD Awareness Month

On Feb. 23, the Athens County Commissioners officially declared March 2021 DD Awareness Month for the county. On March 3, Athens Mayor Steve Patterson did the same during his press conference. A few of our friends joined the mayor.

Watch the Mayor's press conference on the Government Channel or via the live stream on Facebook.

Virtual Lunch and Learn (Every Tuesday at noon)

The Advocacy Ambassadors will share a presentation or lead a discussion on different topics related to advocacy, rights and inclusion.

Everyone is welcome to join the conversation every Tuesday at noon during the month of March. The Zoom link will be the same every week and can be found by visiting the ACBDD's website or Facebook page.

Virtual Lecture Series with Noah Trembly

Noah Trembly, of Noah Trembly Enterprises, provided two virtual presentations, both at 6:30 p.m. Lecture One, on March 10, was about inclusion.

Lecture Two, on March 24, will be about barriers he personally has faced. He is hopeful the lectures will inspire others to get involved with inclusion efforts in their own communities.

The Zoom link will be the same for both lectures and can be found by visiting the ACBDD's website or Facebook page.

To stay up-to-date on all the Virtual DD Awareness Month activities, email Autumn Brown at abrown@athenscbdd.org or follow the ACBDD on Facebook at www.facebook.com/athenscbdd

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Fight against COVID-19 more proactive with vaccine in hand

Since before the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, the ACBDD had been working closely with the Athens City-County Health Department (ACCHD) for planning and preparation. The focus, at that time, revolved around preventing the spread of the virus using the only tools at our disposal — handwashing, proper personal protective equipment usage, and social distancing.

Our work now includes a more proactive measure for preventing the spread — the vaccine. The ACBDD continues to work collaboratively with the ACCHD to ensure all qualifying individuals with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities (DD/ID), and the eligible workforce, receive the COVID-19 vaccination as soon as they want it.

Starting in late December 2020, the ACCHD started what was called Phase 1a, the vaccination of people with DD/ID who live in congregate settings and the staff who support them (among others). This group has since received their second dose of vaccine and are fully vaccinated.

During Phase 1b, the ACBDD had the honor of hosting the ACCHD for a special clinic at Beacon School in late January and again in mid-

February. This clinic was specifically for those we serve with underlying medical conditions, in addition to any 1a stragglers. Nearly 150 individuals were vaccinated at Beacon School.

As identified by the state government, Phase 1b also includes those age 65 and up, those with specific medical conditions without DD/ID, and school staff in K-12 schools. Beacon School staff, who have chosen to get the vaccine, received their first round of the vaccine, along with all other Athens County School Districts, in early February. They will complete their inoculation towards the end of the same month.

To date, the ACCHD, with the assistance of the ACBDD, have administered at least the first shot of the vaccine to nearly 300 people who either receive services from the ACBDD or are a part of the qualifying workforce that supports them.

The ACBDD will continue to aid individuals in the DD/ID community, who want the vaccine, in getting the vaccine as efficiently as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about getting the vaccine, please reach out to your Service and Support Specialist or Megan Stack, RN and the ACBDD's Health Services Coordinator, for more information.



Noah receives his first shot at the Beacon School vaccination clinic on Jan. 27.

Holzer is a Proud Supporter of PersonnelPlus and The Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Services include:

- » Allergy and Immunology
- » Anesthesiology
- » Audiology
- » Chiropractic Care
- » Ear, Nose and Throat
- » Family Practice
- » Gastroenterology
- » Heart and Vascular Care
- » Imaging and Radiology
- » Lab Services
- » Low-Dose CT
- » Nephrology
- » Ophthalmology
- » Orthopedics
- » Pain Management
- » Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine
- » Pharmacy
- » Podiatry
- » Sleep Medicine
- » Sports Medicine
- » Surgical Services
- » Therapy Services
- » Urgent Care

Facility Hours are Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Urgent Care Hours & Pharmacy Hours are Monday-Friday: 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Weekends: 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Virtual Visits Available!

2131 East State Street • Athens, Ohio
1.855.4HOLZER (1.855.446.5937)



ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHY YOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Making the impossible possible

Expect More From Your Primary Care.

These days you've been giving more. Now it's our turn. When you get your primary care from Memorial Health System, you also receive:



» FREE VIRTUAL URGENT CARE WITH OUR MEMORIALCARENOW APP.....



» SAME/NEXT DAY APPOINTMENTS FOR URGENT NEEDS.....



» ACCESS TO 24 HOUR NURSE LINE ...



» TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENTS FOR APPROPRIATE VISITS

It's the great primary care you'd expect plus fast, online treatment any time for common urgent conditions.

To learn more, visit MHSPrimaryCare.org or call our Physician Referral Line at (740) 568-5241 and be placed with a provider within three days.



**MEMORIAL
HEALTH SYSTEM**
Expect More

04107



After a successful experiment with using Zoom to help her brother Robin connect with others virtually, his sister Marjorie purchased him his own tablet.

Team-based approach helps man build connections during pandemic

Last year, in the 2020 Athens NEWS ACBDD Special Edition, we shared the story of Robin and his harrowing experiences during his time away from Athens County. The story, which started tragic, ended on a high note. He was back in Athens, cared for by many, happy, healthy, and with a call to action. Robin declared quite publicly, with the help of his sister Marjorie DeWert (Robin is nonverbal), he was ready to make connections in his new community.

"My goal for the coming year," he wrote last year with the assistance of his sister, "is to connect with people, groups, and activities in the Athens community. I want to meet my neighbors. I want to find and make friends of all ages. I want to find a faith-based community that will welcome me. ... Do you have ideas on how I can achieve my goal? If so, let's connect!"

Then, the COVID-19 virus hit.

With our community essentially shut down and the social distancing guidelines in effect (even to this day), connecting with others seemed like an impossible task. But this did not stop his team from thinking collabora-

tively and creatively to help Robin safely meet his goals.

"Robin is not a social butterfly, but personal connections are important for his emotional and mental health," Marjorie said. "We decided to explore how we could use technology to help him make connections."

As an experiment, they would connect Robin virtually with his long-time friend, Mary. (Robin and Mary have been friends since the 1970s). The Direct Support Professional (or DSP) working with Robin coordinated schedules with another DSP who was working with Mary. Since neither Robin nor Mary had their own devices at the time, the DSPs shared their own equipment to make the meet-up via Skype possible.

The date was set. And as Marjorie recalled, "Mary wanted her hair done 'just right,' before she and Robin had their first video chat session."

Robin loved it. After that experiment, and the positive impact it had on Robin, Marjorie decided to get him his own tablet. He has since continued to meet virtually with his friend

Continued on next page

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

SSAs delivered more than 500 food boxes to families since start of pandemic

Heather Dikis, one of many SSAs who has been making food box/bag deliveries, carries a load to a family in need.



While the job of an SSA is to focus on an individual's ISP (reference in the previous article), it is not uncommon for some of our SSAs to deliver the occasional emergency food box to a family served by the ACBDD. Food insecurity is a reality for our area of the state. But with the pandemic came sudden job loss, fear or inability to venture out of the home, and an exponential increase in the demand for basic needs – like food.

Over the past year, SSAs have delivered approximately 523 food boxes to the households of individuals who receive ACBDD services. These resources come from a mix of community groups, including the Athens Catholic Community Food Pantry, Farmers to Families (a USDA program), and a food giveaway coordinated by the National Guard.

While delivering food boxes, it is not unusual for an SSA to help a family to other things, too, like deliver PPE, shovel snow, help put away food, or run errands.

The role of the SSA has always been important, but it has become even more so during these times. We appreciate all of their hard work and dedication to helping those we have been charged with protecting.



Ronnie poses with some of the items his family received.

Robin's story...

Continued from Page 12

Mary; his sister Marjorie and her husband; and a close family friend, Gina Holbrook.

"He is so happy when he can see their faces," said Stephanie Adams, Robin's senior DSP who works for RHDD. "Robin is nonverbal. He shows his happiness with different signs. He'll salute, or blow kisses. Each sign can be a couple different things, but that's how he shows happiness."

Robin has also made a connection with Joshua Cook, a local pastor and the SE Regional Director for the ARC of Ohio. Joshua is helping Robin connect with a faith-based community. He has visited Robin twice in person and hopes to find one or more community members who would be willing to connect with Robin for Zoom-based Bible reading and prayer sessions.

What started out as an impossible task due to the pandemic has turned out to be quite a success story. But it was possible because people cared enough to make it happen.

"It has taken many people and considerable effort to make this seemingly simple project happen," said Marjorie. "I ordered the device, Stephanie has served as our technology expert and master scheduler, Margaret Casey [ACBDD case manager] has been working with Spectrum to obtain affordable Internet access, and Gina and Josh have given their time and their hearts."

"This experience reminds me of the African proverb, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' It truly does take a 'village' of people working together to enable an individual with DD to live a safe, healthy, and happy life in the community."

Services and supports don't stop amid a pandemic

The Service and Support Administration Department of the ACBDD is sometimes referred to as the agency's "case management" division. This division employs 16 Service and Support Administrators (also known as SSAs) and a Behavior Support Specialist. Their focus is to help 425 Athens County adults and children with developmental disabilities identify and meet life goals (both big and small) and assist in crisis situations.

Services within this division can begin for individuals with a qualifying diagnosis at age 3 and are available throughout a person's lifespan. Once eligible, a person is assigned an SSA. At the core of an SSA's job is to help the individual develop what is called the Individual Service Plan (also known as the ISP). The ISP is centered on the person served, detailing out his or her wants, needs, and important aspects of life. The ISP continuously evolves and changes as the person served changes.

For example, a 10-year-old may have a goal of learning how to ride a bike. A 16-year-old may have a desire to get her driver's license. A 20-year-old may want to get his first job in the community and move out on his own. The goals and aspirations will change depending on the person. The ISP will document all of those goals, spell out possible steps to reach those goals, and the SSA helps the individual along the way to meet those hopes and dreams.

Under normal circumstances, this work oftentimes happens face-to-face, either in meetings or one-on-one interactions. Dur-



The social distancing protocols have not stopped our staff from doing their jobs effectively. Here we see our friend Jason meeting with his SSA, Mark.

ing the pandemic, this work has continued unabated, only now the interactions look a little different.

In the warmer months, many SSAs and teams met on porches and at parks. Virtual meetings have become an everyday reality for not only SSAs but for those served and their teams. SSAs have also focused on making sure a person's basic needs were met during the pandemic. This has meant SSAs have been delivering food boxes, shoveling driveways,

collecting and delivering Personal Protective Equipment (or PPE) and more recently, coordinating the vaccination distribution.

The commitment, dedication, and availability of the SSA department has not wavered. SSAs have continued to work to support an integrated and inclusive community for Athens County and those we serve in a manner that promotes the health and wellness of all of those we support, their families, and our Athens Community.

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

An introduction to the Athens City Commission on Disabilities

"I have watched Athens become more accessible over the years and I can think of several sidewalk improvement projects completed throughout the City. Some public parks have been made a lot more accessible as well as some of their buildings. The City has greatly increased the number of accessible parking spots uptown for which there was a huge need." – Noah Trembly, Vice Chair, Athens City Commission on Disabilities and CEO, Noah Trembly Enterprises

The Athens City Commission on Disabilities is a committee of City government whose commitment is to provide a means for the concerns of people with disabilities to be heard; to advocate for public policy change; to provide expertise to the community on disabilities; and to tell the community about the strengths and limitations of people with disabilities, as well as how the community can help them improve their quality of life, thereby ensuring equality of opportunity and full participation in community life for everyone.

The Commission, a liaison between the community and City government, is a community connection and a testament to the dedication of the City to make Athens a more accessible and inclusive place in which to live.

The Commission is comprised of citizens appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council, who meet once a month (the third Wednesday at 5 p.m. via Zoom) to discuss local resources, issues, and solutions impacting City residents who live with disabilities. In addition to the Commission itself, there are several committees that meet monthly to focus the group's efforts on furthering its mission.

Trembly adds, "I just started my 7th year as an official Commission member and we have greatly evolved over the years. I joined the Commission because I'm a huge advocate in general and I love Athens. I'm very proud of our current membership roster and the amazing work that our committees are doing as well as the Commission as a whole. I'm also honored to be on the executive committee with really amazing people; we work well together. I moved to Athens in 2007 because it's a very inclusive town but I believe it can be even better. The Commission is making it better!"

There are four committees and the Commission encourages public participation. The Accessibility Committee works with City officials to ensure that all public spaces in the City can accommodate residents and visitors with disabilities safely and effectively. Through

"Walk and Rolls," this Committee assesses the accessibility of streets, curb cuts, sidewalks, buildings, and entry ways, and programmatic access within City facilities. The Advocacy Committee focuses on local, state, and national issues facing people with disabilities, organizing city residents into civic action to make their voices heard. The Communications Committee works to tell the story of the Commission through local media and community collaboration. The Education and Outreach Committee brings the work of the Commission to a wide array of Athens residents by planning community events, documenting the Commission's history, and speaking at local engagements. An annual highlight, the Education and Outreach Committee organizes the Athena Award, the only award presented by the City, which recognizes outstanding service to people with disabilities.

The Commission represents and serves the community and all who wish to work with us and contribute are welcome. For more information on the Commission's work, how to attend



meetings, or how to get involved, please email disabilitiescommission@athens.ci.oh.us.

"The Commission continues growing and developing partnerships, particularly in becoming more diverse and inclusive, to address the needs of people with disabilities," says Commission member Dr. Carolyn Bailey Lewis. "Although we conduct ongoing assessments and reviews of problematic areas

and issues, we can't do it all alone. We welcome Athens community members and groups to get involved by contacting us with concerns and we welcome input during the Commission's monthly meetings or with participation on one of the Commission's committees."

The Commission educates the public on issues through media, meetings, and printed material; advocates for services that impact persons with disabilities; and connects disability and accessibility concerns to City offices or agencies. Connect with us! (Facebook: Athens City Commission on Disabilities; www.ci.athens.oh.us/99/Commission-on-Disabilities)

Thank you

Athens County Board of DD and all the SSAs for everything you do!



Now providing services to 312 individuals with disabilities across 8 counties!

Person-centered services in workforce development, day services, homemaker personal care, Ohio Shared Living, and assistive technology

Gwisco.org/mission

740-702-4000

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

A lesson on social media safety

During the pandemic, people have been turning to social media because it is so important to maintain healthy connections and avoid feelings of isolation. As we increase our online interactions, we need to be aware of several ways to stay safe while enjoying virtual time with our friends and family. The Service and Support Specialists at the ACBDD are here to support individuals as they learn social media safety. Teens are especially vulnerable, but those of all ages can stay safe by following these tips:

- Be cautious when accepting friend requests from strangers. It is best to interact with friends and family who you already know and trust. Strangers can put false information on their profile so they are not always who they seem to be.
- Never share personal details like your address or financial information. If anyone asks you for personal information, it is a red flag of possible danger.
- Your body belongs only to you. Good friends would never ask you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable like sending pictures of your body. Pictures sent in private messages have



Robin recently completed social media safety training with her SSA and created this poster with the tips she learned.

the potential to be shared with others without your knowledge or control.

- You are worth more than your number of likes and followers. You are valued and loved for who you are as a person. If your validation and self-esteem are tied to your social media, then consider taking a break to focus on what's really important.
- Talk to a trusted person if you are being bullied online. You can block anyone who makes you feel unsafe and you can set an example of being kind and considerate in your posts.

Having your own email address is both safe and empowering

As we focus on keeping people connected with others but also keeping them at a distance, email and social media has been a big part of how Jason Licht has kept safely connected during the pandemic.

Licht has been teaching people computer skills for over five years, and the pandemic has definitely exposed the importance of people with developmental disabilities having access and understanding of email and other technologies that can help them in their everyday life. It is also important and useful for keeping in contact with others in a time when isolation and loneliness is a reality for us all.

In an effort to help people with disabilities have the support they need, Licht has begun working as an advocate on a communication campaign to help support staff, case managers, and families better understand why it is important for everyone learn to how to use an email, and have their own personal email address.

Even if they need help using that email, the empowerment of having your own email for personal business, or to connect to social media, opens new doors that people without their own accounts are missing.

Email is now a primary source for communication replacing snail mail. It is how people can receive bills and access information to pay them. You must have an email to connect to social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). It opens up the ability to do safe shopping online, joining groups and networks, as these all require emails to participate.

"Everyone should be offered support to obtain an email; this promotes independence, personal accountability and responsibility," Licht said.

He shares there are ways to support people who cannot read or access an email independently. There is technology that reads emails for you, as well as dictates what you say into an email.

"I am a person with Cerebral Palsy and having a personal email is empowering and very liberating!" he said.

Once someone has their own email, we recommend if someone needs family or staff support with their account that they ask people to email the person directly and then "cc" the staff or family support.

It is important that when we are all communicating to a person, whether they have a disability or not, that the correspondence be directed to them, not the support person. The support person should be in the carbon copy line and can then assist someone with responding in whatever way they choose. This is taking the person-first philosophy and putting self-determination into action.

Licht is asking people who support a person with a disability to do all you can to help someone learn about email and support them in a way that empowers them to take a lead in their life.

Put yourself in their shoes. What if you did not have email and were dependent on only face-to-face interactions? How much more intense would the pandemic be for you if you were not connected to social media, email, or video chatting?

Licht is available to help people learn more about setting up email and best practices to support someone who needs help, and is in the process of making a tutorial video.

He can be reached at jason.licht@gmail.com.

Snider Fuller and Stroh ad

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Staying engaged during times of the COVID-19 pandemic

Agency and independent providers throughout the county have demonstrated exceptional service throughout the pandemic. The many agency and independent providers in the county provide direct support to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (ID/DD). Their priority, just like with the ACBDD, has been to keep people healthy and safe. Many times that has meant helping individuals with ID/DD stay

home.

Providers of Athens County have worked especially hard to develop creative home-based activities so that individuals we serve felt engaged and connected while staying home for extended periods.

Some activities included participating in Zoom sessions with family and friends, either as a chat, a virtual dance party or even virtual yoga. Others tried the more traditional

method of writing letters and sending pictures through the mail. Monday lunch at the Methodist Church provided a drive-thru option, another way to get out of the house and still stay safe.

Others took to a variety of arts and crafts and other activities, like a scavenger hunt. Some individuals, with the help of their support staff, started new habits, like recycling at home.

These activities are important because they

keep the individuals with ID/DD protected from the virus and also mentally and emotionally healthy. Staying at home for long periods of time can lead to loneliness and depression. The ACBDD is grateful for the agency and independent providers for their hard work and creativity during these challenging times.

Here are a few ways our friends used their time in meaningful ways, with the help of their support staff:



Tiffany's story

Tiffany is an extremely hard worker. When the pandemic hit, she took a few months off her important work with Shagbark Seed and Mill as a delivery-person, but was itching to get back to her job. Rachel Ulbrich, manager of Echoing Connections (one of many provider agencies in the county), was able to provide the services needed for Tiffany to continue to deliver Shagbark products to Kroger.

Tiffany was thrilled to be back at work, sharing she likes earning her own money. We are grateful to the provider staff in our county who have gone the extra mile to help individuals stay engaged and employed in a safe way during this pandemic.

Our friend Tiffany is glad to be back at work with Shagbark Seed and Mill.



Mary Dollison

Mary's story

Mary does not let obstacles deter her from working towards her goals. Although the pandemic delayed some things, she is still moving forward and making progress. Mary had been working towards moving into her own home (without a roommate) for months. With the help of her team, she was able to move into a single apartment in January. Mary is happy and proud to have her own place. Now, she is finding ways to safely explore her new neighborhood as she settles in.

In addition to settling into her new home, Mary recently returned to work at Ohio University's Boyd Dining Hall. She has held her job for over nine years and loves it. Mary ex-

plained she was happy to return to the people and back to something familiar. Mary has been able to do this safely and with a greater sense of ease, as she recently received her first and second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

When Mary is not working, she likes connecting with others. She has found safe ways to do so via Zoom, Facetime and social media. Mary has also remained active with the ACBDD's Integrate Athens team, with whom she meets with on a weekly basis along with other participants, to connect and discuss staying safe, healthy and happy during the pandemic.

Mary's positive outlook, goal setting and connections to others have helped her to continue reaching her goals and finding greater happiness and independence – all while staying safe within the restraints of the pandemic.

Tina's story

Our friend Tina continues to demonstrate that, with the right supports, individuals can and do overcome struggles and celebrate their goals and accomplishments. Tina is a cook, writer, artist, wife, daughter and friend.

Tina is supported by her husband and agencies like the ACBDD, the Sech-Kar Company and independently operated nonprofits like Passion Works, to accomplish her goals and to overcome challenges.

She has spent many of her days during the pandemic keeping busy in her home. In her art room, Tina draws, paints, sews, glues, and stitches. Throughout the pandemic, Tina has virtually continued to share photos, her culinary creations, encouragement of others, and well wishes to family and friends.

Tina has a gift for networking that shines through easily online. Tina shows her support for Rally for Rusty, Zoom Art Night with Passion Works, sign language practice, recipes, paper crafts, humorous cartoons, anti-bullying statements and her connection to Galelynn Lea, a well-known folk singer, violinist, public speaker and disability advocate from Minnesota. In October of last year, Tina shared



During a picnic last year with her SSA, Tina showed off one of her recent art projects – her rendition of her case manager's dogs.

her skills as an artist and advocate and was featured in "The Nora Project Facebook Takeover," a fundraiser by Gaelynn Lea.

Burnie's story

For some people who like to be on the go, staying home is not a good option. To help our friend Burnie not feel isolated and alone at home, his support team found creative ways for him to venture out into the community while staying safe. He did this with a provider

agency called Expanding Your Horizons (also known as EYH). He was able to fish, bowl, attend wrestling events, go to the movies, and visit an arcade. Burnie also shared that during this time he has even found a girlfriend! Thanks to his supportive team, Burnie has thrived, while still ensuring social distancing rules were followed.

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHY YOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Transitioning to adulthood

Faith is a smart, funny, independent young woman who welcomes challenges! Not only has she maintained basic health and safety, Faith has thrived and blossomed quite well – despite all of the challenges that the pandemic has created! She continues to practice social distancing and mask wearing, and is excited about finding more work opportunities so she can earn more money to meet her needs.

The pandemic halted the plans for many people everywhere. This wasn't the case for Faith. Last spring, Faith graduated from Project SEARCH, a program that prepares young people with significant disabilities for success in competitive integrated employment. After that experience, she was eager to take her next steps in life. She was excited to continue working with Capabilities, an employment agency that supports people with disabilities, on finding competitive employment in her community at a place where she felt valued, respected, and an equal team member.

Like many people fresh out of high school, it took some time to find a job that Faith believed was a good fit and would be a great next step on her journey. She continued to work with Capabilities and completed interviews, all while maintaining social distancing guidelines. She stayed safe and was able to make progress on her goals and plans for her future. Faith has not allowed a global pandemic to slow her momentum!

In October of 2020, she was offered and gladly accepted a position with Holiday Inn Express, where she was quick to learn a variety of tasks and found a welcome spot at the breakfast nook, greeting and assisting hotel patrons. Faith was understandably excited and quite proud of herself, as was her dad, Todd.

Faith was well on her way to achieving her next goal – living on her own! She has been working hard and saving money—and planning for how she wants to decorate her own space! To help ease her dad of the fears that one can experience when their young adult child makes the decision to live on their own, Faith has been staying alone at her residence – and loves it! Todd has learned to loosen his papa-bear strings and is realizing the importance of allowing Faith to grow into the person that she sees herself to be. Has it been scary at times for Todd? Absolutely! Has Faith hit some bumps in the road and rough patches? Yes, but who hasn't? Todd and Faith have learned, through experience, that it is okay to



Even during the pandemic, Faith has learned and grown into adulthood. She has also started scheduling her own appointments for public transportation.

fail safely. In fact, it is in these times where the most learning and growth occurs – for both Faith and her dad, Todd.

Not only has Faith found employment in a place she loves and been staying alone, but she also started using public transportation. Faith quickly learned the basics of how to call and schedule her rides, and she understands the importance of being safe and maintaining social distance. This is a huge accomplishment, mainly for dad, as he was hesitant—at best—to allow Faith to go on her own with someone he didn't know. Again, this was a situation that required Todd to let loose, and trust that he had helped to prepare Faith for this next step on her journey.

It hasn't always been easy. Faith, like so many in our community, had to be furloughed due to the pandemic. She didn't allow that to stop her, though. She continued to hunt for other opportunities to grow her skills and work towards her goals.

Faith is breaking down barriers and stereotypes. She is a capable young woman who daily shows her dad, and the rest of us, that barriers only exist in our minds and assumptions.

"After high school was a little tough," said Todd. "We didn't know what would happen because the norm stopped. I kept after Faith to stay focused on our goals (get a job, keep it for three months, and then move out). I told her to be patient. Rome wasn't built in a day. One last thing—when one door closes, another will open."

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHY YOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

What it means to be an advocate

Billy Peacock, a long-time advocate for those with disabilities, has spent his time during the pandemic changing his typical face-to-face presentations into virtual experiences. Billy likes sharing about his childhood, the pandemic, and experiences of starting a new relationship during these times.

He recently presented to the ACBDD's Service and Support Administration

division about overcoming hurt feelings and rejection during his school-age years.

"I want others to know that they are not alone," Billy said. "It is more likely than not that you or someone you know has been or will be bullied and excluded in school."

If Billy could, he would give this presentation to everyone, especially high school students, parents, and teachers. It is a story everyone needs to hear, he said, because it is the reality of many people. Despite the hardships Billy faced in school, he overcame them and is now an advocate for himself and many others who have no voice.

Billy wishes he could have given this presentation in person, but understands the circumstances. Billy, like many others, is frustrated with our "new normal." Being virtual, he says, is boring. He wants to get out into the world, shake hands, and meet new people. He simply wants to show his kindness to everyone.



Billy Peacock

He recently received his second and final COVID-19 vaccination. He says it was important for him to get the vaccine so he can stay strong and healthy. It is important to him that other people get the vaccine so they can stay healthy, too.

"The sooner people get their shots, the sooner we can get back to normal," he said.

And, as for his new relationship, he says the sooner he gets to see the woman who has helped him throughout this unprecedented time, the better.

If one good thing has come from this pandemic, it is the relationship Billy established with Mary, his girlfriend. In early fall of 2020, they made it official, but have yet to go on their first date. Billy looks forward to seeing Mary again. For now, they may try a virtual date, maybe a dinner by phone light or a movie via a shared screen. Whatever it may be, Billy hopes that others follow in his footsteps by staying safe, being patient, and being an advocate.

Promote leadership opportunities for those with disabilities

The Promoting Leadership Committee at the ACBDD started in May of 2020. This Committee is set up to help individuals we serve transition into leadership roles, within the County Board and also in the broader community. Too often, people with disabilities are kept from leadership opportunities and don't have a place at the table when making important decisions. In actuality, over 20 percent of the people in the United States are living with a disability, and having a person with a disability on your Board, Advisory Council, or group enables you to be more inclusive and better serve your

customers and needs of the community.

We are working with many partners to help identify and promote inclusive leadership to make our community stronger. Would you like to help promote leadership opportunities for those with disabilities? If so, contact Autumn Brown, Director of the ACBDD's Office of Integrate Athens, at abrown@athenscbdd.org to set up a meeting to talk through how we can help you meet your needs. The County Board serves a diverse and skilled group of people who want to contribute more to the community.

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

A link to essential workers and essential businesses

At the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACBDD took immediate action to address the health and safety of the individuals we serve as well as our staff. During the times that agency's offices were closed, some essential work was still being done in-person, but the bulk of our staff continued their work by phone and virtual services. The Employment Options Department/PersonnelPlus were instrumental in meeting the employment needs of those who were employed and those still seeking employment.

Communication

PersonnelPlus adopted the practice of "Every Call, Every Time." Our administrative staff worked very hard to be just a phone call away to those seeking employment or those already working in the community as well as the businesses we serve.

Outreach

The PersonnelPlus staff immediately reached out to individuals who were working in the community. Staff made certain that the individuals they served were safe and had their needs met. PersonnelPlus also partnered with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) in an effort to ensure the health and safety of workers with disabilities with the service titled Project REACH.

Project REACH (Referral, Educate, And Check-In) was designed to provide check-ins with workers with disabilities through OOD during the onset of the COVID-19 virus. PersonnelPlus staff contacted OOD participants to listen, offer supports, and refer and assist participants in the engagement of local community resources such as food banks, mental health services and telehealth options as well as OOD work-related issues. Likewise, PersonnelPlus, Employment Support Coordinator, contacted our workers and the businesses they were employed in. The Support Coordinator acted as an employment liaison between the

business and the individuals and their families.

Some individuals were laid off, while others felt unsafe to return to work at that time, while others still were considered essential workers and needed additional supports to work safely. The Employment Support Coordinator was able to assist both parties in developing plans to work safely or return to work when conditions were better. Often during this time, our staff worked jointly with the SSA department by communicating needs as they arose with individuals served.

Returning to Work

As individuals have returned to work, PersonnelPlus implemented a return-to-work protocol that consisted of ensuring that an individual's family/team were engaged in the decision for the individual to return to work. Staff also made sure the businesses provided the proper PPE and that the individual was able to fulfill the requirements such as wearing masks, social distancing, handwashing/sanitizing, among other practices to keep everyone safe.

Job Seekers and Employers

Our Job Developers remained busy during the pandemic as many individuals had lost their jobs and needed to continue to work to meet their needs. Likewise, many businesses needed essential workers to meet the customer demand in a variety of businesses, such as grocery stores and restaurants whose focus changed from in-door dining to take-out orders. PersonnelPlus placed 20 job seekers in 22 jobs with 13 of those employees being placed during the pandemic.

Introducing Summer Youth Foundations

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), in conjunction with PersonnelPlus, worked hard to provide meaningful employment services for youth with disabilities last summer. The service titled Summer Youth Foundations was created specifically to meet their needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Holiday in Athens hired Amy to work in their laundry services during COVID-19. PersonnelPlus Job Trainer Kailyn Sharp supports Amy as she learns her new job.

This service replaced both Summer Youth Work Experience and Summer Youth Career Exploration services. Summer Youth Foundations provided the remote delivery of additional Vocational Rehabilitation services, such as self-advocacy training and career exploration. Most importantly, it considered the needs of students and their families and provided an option for students when planned work sites were not suitable due to COVID-19.

Summer Employment/Step Into Work

In 2020, PersonnelPlus offered a remote service via Google Meetings designed for County Board of DD Enrollees with complex needs, called Step Into Work. Students participated for an hour each day for three weeks. Students were paid a stipend at minimum wage. Topics included: self-advocacy, teamwork, why people work, along with videos and activities including job site tours and informational interviews.

Transition Services/Pre-Ets

In conjunction with Opportunities for Ohio-

ans with Disabilities (OOD), PersonnelPlus partnered to offer Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS services are intended to help students with disabilities, starting at age 14, to explore career interests. Five services are offered and include Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning, Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities, Work Readiness Training and Instruction on Self-Advocacy. PersonnelPlus has received referrals from OOD to work with several Athens County High Schools. This was just another way we have been able to keep students engaged in their employment journey during COVID-19.

The Athens County Board of DD continues to emphasize the health and safety concerns of the individuals we serve as our first priority. Additionally, PersonnelPlus continues to strive to meet the employment needs of our individuals. Whether that is helping students prepare for work or supporting people already employed and the businesses they work in, PersonnelPlus is proud to be an essential link supporting essential workers in essential businesses.

Job seeker undeterred by job loss during pandemic

Our friend Jon came to PersonnelPlus nine years ago to find employment in the community. With the help of our services, he was offered and accepted a job at The Rocky Boot Grill in Nelsonville as a dishwasher. This worked out perfectly for Jon, who lives in Nelsonville and often times walked to and from work. There were many days when he walked in rain and snow.

In March of 2020, the world changed when COVID-19 caused nearly everything to shut down. Unfortunately, due to the loss of customers, Jon was laid off and eventually lost his job.

Losing his job of nine years was no fault of Jon's and did not

deter him from continuing to find a job in the Athens community. In July of 2020, Angela, one of the PersonnelPlus Job Developers, contacted the owner of Texas Roadhouse to find out if there were any potential jobs that Jon would qualify for, since he had nine years of restaurant experience. After setting up an interview, Jon was hired to work part-time in the kitchen as a dishwasher. Jon started his new employment at the end of July, 2020.

A few weeks into his job, Jon reached out to Angela and said his new job.

"I work with good people," Jon said. "We all work as a team

at the Roadhouse, and that's how it should be. I live and stand by this saying, 'You're entitled to nothing in this world. You want it? EARN IT!'"

Jon has continued to work hard during the pandemic, while also following all social distancing and health and safety protocols. The resilience that Jon has shown over the past year should be commended. He has continued to be employed as an essential worker throughout 2020 and shows no signs of slowing down in 2021. Congratulations Jon and we all wish you the best of luck.

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHY YOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Learn more about DD at your local library

Want to know more about developmental disability history, personal experiences, or advocacy? We hope you'll start at your local library! The Athens County Public Libraries carry books in all genres (a few by local authors!) — plus films, research resources, art exhibits, and book displays on this theme.

For example, our adult fiction/nonfiction collection offers titles like "Being Heumann: an unrepentant memoir of a disability rights activist" by Judith Heumann, with Kristen Joiner; "Normal Sucks: how to live, learn, and thrive outside the lines" by Jonathan Mooney; and "A Disability History of the United States" by Kim Nielson.

Books for younger readers include novels like "Wonder" by R. J. Palacio, now turned into a popular film (also in our collection). The streaming service Kanopy also offers library card holders free films under the subject search "Developmental Disabilities." "States of Grace: an inspiring journey of resilience, and renewal; Life, Animated: an autistic young man finds his voice through Disney films;" and "Born This Way" are just a few.

Our partnerships with local organizations like the Beacon School and Passion Works help to connect individuals with disabilities to library resources. We have also partnered with

Passion Works to bring their artists' works to the community, including a library-themed coloring book, a mural in the children's area at the Athens library, plus workshops and programs.

For many years, chapters of the Next Chapter Book Club have met in Athens and Nelsonville, a reading group inclusive of adults with developmental disabilities. During the pandemic when our buildings were closed to the public out of concern for the health of our staff and visitors, Nelsonville librarian Deborah Parsons re-imagined the logistics of her club, and the Virtual Bandits Book Club now meets online to read aloud, visit, and discuss their current title selection.

Our pop-up library made its debut at the 2019 Disabilities Awareness Festival, and in the future, be on the lookout for more library outreach and access services (including an accessible Bookmobile later this spring!). The Athens Area Knitters who meet at our Athens location have also funded the development of an accessible bike for our Book-a-Bike program so that a person with a disability can enjoy a ride with a non-disabled person. There is much to look forward to together, and we hope you will come find us — and yourself in a story or two — at MyACPL.org!

Dungeons and Dragons group transitions to virtual gaming

My name is Laura Rosario, and I have been working as an Independent Provider for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities since 2017. A major part of my job is connecting the individuals that I serve with the community. Well, I am a bit of a nerd/geek, so the community that I know is slightly different than most.

As many of you know, when you are working with people you tend to talk about the things that you are interested and involved in. While working with the individuals, I started talking to them about one of my favorite activities, which is playing Dungeons & Dragons. Several of the individuals I served at the time indicated that they would be very interested in playing.

For those that don't know, Dungeons & Dragons is a cooperative story telling game. The people playing the game come up with a character and go on an adventure together to achieve a goal- taking down a bad guy, finding a treasure, or getting rid of a curse.

When the individuals I served said they would like to get involved in the game, I told them that I would sign them up at the place that I played at. Then, Heather, an SSA for the ACBDD, recommended I run a game with them.

I followed through with her idea and took it a step further to make it where they were actually involved with their community. I put out flyers at all of the branches of the Athens County Library and then a couple weeks later we had our first session at the Nelsonville Library.

We have been meeting there every Monday since then until the pandemic. Because of the type of game that Dungeons & Dragons is, many would assume that since we couldn't meet at the library any more that our group would no longer have the community involvement- that is where you would be wrong.

With modern technology, we are still able to have our weekly game — albeit over the internet- and we still get to use our imaginations and go through our stories.

By using current technology, we have actually had the opportunity to have new people in our game that wouldn't have been able to before. For one of the campaigns that we did, we even had some people from other states join us.

If you or anyone you know is interested in joining us and learning this fun game or getting back into it, you can contact me at laura.l.rosario21@gmail.com.

Carpenter & Associates

Making a difference in our businesses and their lives.



Freddie & Mike

We support PersonnelPlus and all ACBDD programs
MICHAEL J. CARPENTER, CFP®

Securities offered through Brokers International Financial Services, LLC. Member SIPC. Investment advisory services offered through LexAurum Advisors, LLC, a registered investment advisor. Brokers International Financial Services, LLC and LexAurum Advisors, LLC and Carpenter & Associates are not affiliated companies.

92 N. Court, Suite 101 **740-592-2825**

Let PersonnelPlus Assist You on Your Path to Employment!

PersonnelPlus connects the skills and abilities of workers with **disABILITIES** with the needs of Athens County Businesses.



740-592-3416

Located at The Market on State
1002 East State, Suite 4
Athens, Ohio 45701

* We are Local * We are Non-Profit *
* We are Community *



PersonnelPlus is an Employment Service of the Athens County Board of DD and Equal Opportunity Provider of Services

620411



ECHOING HILLS of Southeast Ohio



Residential Services



Adult Services

740.594.3541

ehvi.org



ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

PersonnelPlus adapts summer youth employment programs for pandemic

PersonnelPlus, the employment service of the ACBDD, in collaboration with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), provides summer youth work experience to transition-age youth in Athens County. In previous years, the students would participate in a five-week program, utilizing the approved curriculum of “Skills to Pay the Bills.” In the past, students worked with a PersonnelPlus job trainer at an approved job site earning minimum wage. The students worked 20 hours a week. This program has always enabled the students to walk away with a sense of accomplishment, empowered with knowledge, and a little extra money in their pocket.

In the spring of 2020, our society was in the early stages of a global pandemic. PersonnelPlus and OOD knew they needed to come up with a way to continue to offer the summer youth program, even if it looked a little different than it had in the past. Working together, a plan was created.

Last summer, the program was three weeks long, with the students participating for 12 hours each week. The services were provided virtually through Zoom. The students learned about money management, effective workplace communication,

and important skills to pay their bills. They discussed work site etiquette including the do’s and don’ts at work, engaged in virtual activities and small group exercises to promote teamwork and practice skills learned. Lastly, Zoom meetings were scheduled with local businesses to give students a better view of what it was like to work there.

Prior to the program starting, staff were excited to begin the program in a new way but also unsure of how the students would respond to being online for three hours each day. In the end, the program was a huge success. All of the students involved signed on each day ready to learn, some made new friendships, and all were pleased to have the opportunity to participate.

This summer, as we move forward during these unrepresented times, the summer youth program will once again look slightly different. PersonnelPlus is excited to consider two options this summer. Students will have the choice of working in the community or participating in a different online service.

For more information on this year’s services, contact PersonnelPlus at (740) 592-3416.



Emmett, a 2019 Summer Youth Participant, works at Athens High School cleaning lockers. PersonnelPlus was able to host its summer youth employment programs in 2020, but they were done virtually.

620003-1; ACBDD; Ginger Schmalenberg; Color; 4 x 5; XPos: 0 YPos: -0, Width: 738 x 360

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

The making of a successful school year

Creating an educational path to independence and community

It is no secret that planning for a new school year during a pandemic was difficult. Schools throughout the world were struggling with the complications of the “new normal.” Quarantines, learning and teaching from home, making plans to ensure student and staff health and safety were the top priority, among so much more while still providing a quality education for the students, certainly posed many challenges for all districts. Beacon School was no exception.

Prior to the pandemic, most of our students learned best in an educational environment with routine, in-person instruction. However, at Beacon School, we do so much more than academics. Many of our students rely on their occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language therapy, socialization, and functional life skills taught during in-person learning. It soon became evident that there had to be an in-person option at Beacon School.

Beacon has been successful operating school over the past year due to the resilience, flexibility, compassion, and mutual respect between the school staff, students and our families. Dr. Kevin Davis, ACBDD’s Superintendent; and Becky Martin, Beacon’s Principal, along with other administrative staff paved the way for success, while the instructional

staff made learning work for students with all levels of abilities. They found new, innovative methods using technology to help our students succeed in the learning process.

Over a relatively short amount of time and with new safety precautions in place, Beacon was able to open its doors for our families and students who chose to return to in-person learning. For those who felt safest learning from home, our staff was able to provide remote learning opportunities while continuing to deliver in-person services simultaneously.

Our transportation, facilities and food service departments have never stopped throughout the pandemic. From early March 2020, they continued meal delivery to all students during the closure, and to families who wished to continue remote learning after Beacon’s reopening. Their efforts continue to this day, with the preparation and delivery of meals for Beacon students as well as the extraordinary sanitizing efforts of the custodial crew.

Parents have continually been willing to help make their student’s educational experience a success, even with many unexpected changes. We could not have been successful without the team effort of administration, staff, students and families. Thanks to all for your continued support during this most challenging time.

Integrate Athens, a division of the ACBDD, is in the process of developing transition resources for students and school districts. They are doing this through a new series termed EPIC, Educational Path to Independence and Community. These tools are focused on helping students and their families prepare for the many life changes that occur as teens grow into adults and begin to gain independence.

The first resource came in 2019 and is the EPIC Passport, a brief guide to exploring the community. In 2020, the EPIC Workbook was released and is a series of activities that helps students, teachers, and support teams work through the process of gaining independence, planning for the future, as well as connecting to the community.

The team is on their third resource that will be known as EPIC Elementary. This is a tool that will be shared with elementary schools and will provide approximately 20 activities for students from Preschool through sixth grade. The activities will be age-appropriate ways to introduce students to growing in their independence and learning about their community.

These tools are created for students with developmental disabilities in mind, but are

created as a universal tool that all students can benefit from. There are many challenges faced within a family of a child that is diagnosed with a developmental or intellectual disabilities. The focus is often on therapies, adapted academics, and numerous other components that support the child and their family as the student enters school. The development of a child’s sense of community and natural desire to gain more independence as they mature starts at a very early age. Preschool classes and classroom settings foster those concepts as children are introduced to interacting with other students and explore careers through play and conversation. The classroom is often a child’s first micro-community where they learn their role as a member and how to be part of a group or team. EPIC Elementary will enhance and promote those concepts in a way that helps students gain interests, explore new skills, and begin to imagine what their life can be as they learn and grow.

The EPIC Series is meant to help students prepare to take a lead in planning their future. The activities provided are intended to help educators keep students on a path to transitioning into contributing members within their community.

ACBDD 2021 — HEALTHYYOU. HEALTHY ME. HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Strong partnership provides essential care to essential workers

There are numerous things that can be said about the past year. The word difficult comes to mind and that is something everyone in communities all over have shared. However, this gives us so many opportunities to overcome these difficulties and work together as a community. Getting through challenges requires teamwork, trust and communication and PersonnelPlus and the ACBDD has been very fortunate to be able to have Kroger of Athens to help our community get through this past year. Over the past 20 years, Kroger has employed people with disabilities in different areas of the store, from individuals providing customer services like bagging groceries, to stocking merchandize and helping maintain a clean store. These individuals are a part of the Kroger team.

Currently there are four people who work at Kroger that PersonnelPlus continues to provide support to, if needed. In March, when COVID-19 changed our communities, Kroger

worked with PersonnelPlus to ensure the safety of those employed. Two people needed to take leave due to their own health and safety concerns. Kroger has continuously been supportive and worked with PersonnelPlus to make sure the employees had the necessary information. Kroger management has been in communication with PersonnelPlus weekly and even sometimes daily throughout this unprecedented time. They have been understanding and willing to do what was needed to support their employees. Fortunately, one person was able to safely return to work in July and the other person will be returning within the month.

Everyone has been navigating the unknown, and Kroger has been diligent in working through any issues to keep people as safe as possible while also respecting the decisions by the employees to continue work if they choose. Grocery stores and their employees are essential workers, and it gives the employees with disabilities tremendous pride to be essential!



Blane works bagging groceries, helping customers and checking the store problems like burned out lights, fallen displays or other problems. Blane has worked at Kroger since 2012.

Partnership creates new services for seniors

HAVAR, Inc. is excited about the new opportunity of collaborating with The Athens Village, United Seniors of Athens County and Benjamin Rose Institute to provide care consultation to area seniors including aging persons with developmental disabilities. This program will provide an information resource and referral service to obtain assistance for people wanting to remain

in their own home. If you are interested in participating in this service, you can contact The Athens Village at 740-447-0500.

HAVAR, Inc. is also in process of developing health improvement initiatives to support those individuals we serve. We are proud to continue offering services that teach individuals how they can live happy, healthy inclusive lives within their communities.

ACBDD mobilizes to distribute PPE

Throughout the pandemic, the ACBDD has proudly supported those we serve, their families, and their staff with Personal Protective Equipment (or PPE). What started out as collecting handmade masks from local makers evolved into bulk orders of hard-to-find items like N95 masks, gowns, faces shields, gloves and pulse oximeters.

These items, secured through our local community, Athens County EMA, the local health department and by partnering with neighboring County Boards of DD, were quickly distributed to our provider network and secured for the ACBDD staff. We continue distributing PPE today and are grateful to provide this service to the workforce who supports those we serve.



Steve Kramer, the ACBDD's Finance & Operations Director, poses in front of a collection of PPE he helped secure.

Healthy music making with the Athens County Community Singers

How do you make music during a pandemic? Especially with a group of individuals without everyone getting sick? You rehearse over Zoom and contribute videos of your work! That's what the Athens County Community Singers (ACCS) has been doing since late April 2020.

During the month of March 2020, ACCS had to cancel their rehearsals since everything was shut down. Formed by Stephanie H. Morris, MM, MT-BC (music therapist-board certified) and Neurologic Music Therapy Fellow in 2013, some choir members were rehearsing at Echoing Connections on Columbus Road on Wednesday mornings and others were coming to the Athens Community Church on Columbus Road on Thursday afternoons prior to the shutdown. "A Choir for All Voices," ACCS serves those with and without disabilities; however being safe was Stephanie's No. 1 goal.

With the assistance of her employer, Central Ohio Music Therapy (COMT), Stephanie was able to set up Zoom rehearsals with choir members so they could rehearse from their homes. The times remained the same, but it took getting in touch with the Service and Supports Department from the ACBDD, residential and day habilitation providers to get everyone online. According to Stephanie, without these providers, many of the choir members would not be able to participate.

Zoom can be somewhat challenging when

it comes to making music. Designed as a meeting platform, Zoom doesn't handle music all that well, so as the director, Stephanie has to mute everyone's microphone when they start singing together. She stated, "If we don't do that, everyone is on a different beat." Choir members have adjusted quite well and for some, it is the highlight of their week.

Since all in-person performances had to be cancelled, Stephanie and the choir started working on how to make videos of songs the choir was rehearsing. Stephanie sends everyone a practice track so they can make their own video. Then, with the assistance of Sara May, MA, MT-BC, a colleague at COMT, all the videos are synced together so that everyone is singing at the same time. The choir has now produced a total of four videos, which all can be found on the choir's Facebook page located at <https://www.facebook.com/athenscountycommunitysingers>.

Rehearsals started again in February, so the choir is busy getting ready to share more music online during Developmental Disability Awareness Month and beyond. They are interested in providing entertainment for your event via video, too. Do you have a virtual event coming up that you would enjoy having some music? Please contact the director at Stephanie@ohiomt.com if you are interested in the choir assisting you.