

# actodd Updates

News and information from Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities

Spring 2022

## COVID-19 safety precautions lift slowly

As the agency and the community start to see a dramatic drop in the number of positive COVID-19 cases, the agency has made some adjustments to its safety protocols.

With the latest updates from ODH and the CDC, masks are no longer required in the buildings or on transportation. This will only change if positive cases rise above a certain level in the community.

The school program is also no longer required to announce school-related positive cases or to keep a public dashboard. Routine cleaning throughout the day of high-touch surfaces has also ended.

The agency-wide mandatory staff testing initiative will continue only through April 30 (though testing if ill or exposed are still required). In addition, in-person meetings will be kept to a minimum. Most group meetings will be conducted virtually. Lastly, outside groups are permitted to use the agency's facilities again.

We are happy to see these change, but these are all fluid situations. Safety protocols will adjust, depending on the positivity rate in the community.



## Supt. presented leadership award from Arc of Ohio

“The mark of a great person is not so much what they’ve accomplished for themselves but what they accomplish for other people.”

These are remarks from Joshua Cook, Regional Director of Southeast Ohio for The Arc of Ohio. He made them during the agency’s January board meeting, where he presented an award for excellence to the Superintendent, Dr. Kevin Davis.



“It’s been a rough couple of years due to the pandemic,” Joshua added. “No one could see this coming. But what we have seen is certain leaders who have stepped up in amazing ways, and we are appreciative of that.”

“I am here today on behalf of the ARC of Ohio to present the ‘ARC of Excellence Award’ to Kevin Davis, for all that he has done for the last couple of years,” Joshua said. “His creativity and his passion were activated in an amazing way during the pandemic. But even pandemic aside, before all of this happened, we are all very appreciative of Kevin.”

The Arc is a disability rights organization. Staff of the Arc work with and for people with intellectual / developmental disabilities, their families, and communities to achieve positive change with the use of advocacy. The Arc of Ohio also has a series of awards presented to exceptional people in the field. Davis was selected for his exceptional service during the

pandemic and also for his life-long commitment to the field.

For the past six years, Kevin has served as the Superintendent of this agency. He brings to this role over 30 years of experience working in this field, having started out on the front-lines as a Direct Support Professional (DSP).

“This award really belongs to the board members and to the staff,” he said. “Nobody can do this alone. This is the best group of people that I’ve ever worked with in my professional career. From top to bottom, all of our staff are amazing, caring, and supportive of people with developmental disabilities. I couldn’t be more proud to work with all of you. To the board members, even more so. You volunteer your time to be here. We couldn’t do what we do without you authorizing us to do it and supporting us. We appreciate it.”

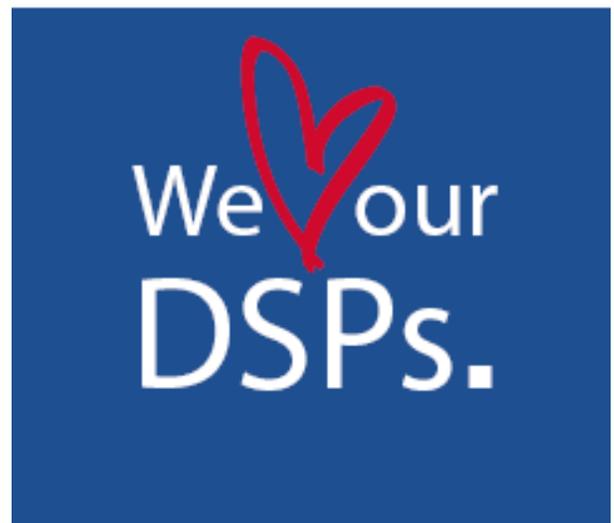
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## Supt. presenting information on new program to support DSPs and its impact on the agency’s budget

Supt. Davis recently presented information to the board about a new program that would support DSPs. The Recruiting and Retention Proposal Payment Program offers the equivalent of a 6.5% rate increase statewide.

“As an agency, we support the program and understand its need,” Sup. Davis said during the presentation. “DSPs provide critical care to those with I/DD, and the DSP staffing crisis is real. This new program could help. However, as an agency, we will need to be fully aware of the impact these new costs will have on the budget.”

Supt. Davis also presented information about the ACBDD’s 10-year financial forecast, both with and without the 6.5% increase, and steps being taken at the local level to address these changes. He will continue to offer this same presentation to staff and other stakeholders. Be on the lookout for announcements for “Chats with the Superintendent.” Staff are encouraged to attend and to ask any questions.



# Please join us in welcoming our most recent hires!



Amy Sheridan



Bianca Sankar



Brittany Fulton



Chelsea Oswald



Sara Pelfrey



Stephanie Kendrick



Stevie Putnam-Young



## We are pleased to announce the hiring or internal promotion of several individuals.

**Amy Sheridan** is the agency’s Medicaid & Support Services Coordinator. She has a BS in Health Information Management with 13 years of experience in healthcare administration. She has worked in leadership roles in medical billing and patient care coordination, health information management and medical records.

**Bianca Sankar** is an SSA. She comes with previous experience in this role from Fairfield CBDD, working mainly with adults on her caseload for the past three years. Prior to that, she was a Community Support Specialist with New Horizons Mental Health in Lancaster, where she provided assessments for individuals

on a variety of diagnosis and worked in a team environment to provide individualized plans in support of clients.

**Brittany Fulton** is a substitute custodian. She is a native Albany resident with a determination for thoroughness and quality. She will assist the custodial crew intermittently by stepping-in when others are off or extra help is needed.

**Chelsea Oswald** is an SSA. She is from the Toledo area but now calls Athens home. She holds a BS in Human Development & Family Studies, and she most recently worked as a Service Coordinator for Early Intervention in Lucas County.

**Sara Pelfrey** is an SSA. She comes to us from Hopewell where she was a case manager, and prior to that she spent four years as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) for SOAR. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Human Services in Youth & Family Services and Administration.

**Stephanie Kendrick** is our MUI Coordinator. She has been an SSA with us for the last three years, and she recently received her Master’s Degree in Social Sciences from Ohio University. In addition, Stephanie is active, involved, and committed to our local community and serves as a village council person in Albany.

**Stevie Putnam-Young** is an SSA. She most recently worked for Integrated Services as a Community Behavioral Health Worker, engaging individuals to explore local resources to provide stability. She also worked as an Equine Specialist for Natural Freedom Wellness Center, where she facilitated equine activities and a nature-based environment to aide individuals.

*Over the last two years, the ACBDD has filled approximately 8 manager/administrative positions (because of retirement, death, people leaving, promotion). We are proud to say we have hired/promoted internally for 6 out of the 8 positions. This speaks highly of our agency and of the incredibly competent and professional people who work here.*



## Job openings with the ACBDD

### Beacon School Instructor



Beacon School has an opening for an Intervention Specialist. This position comes with a competitive starting rate and comprehensive health and life insurance and participation in State Teachers Retirement System (STRS).

**Accepting applications until filled.**

**For more information about job postings, visit [www.athenscbdd.org](http://www.athenscbdd.org)**

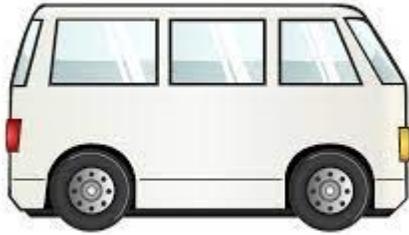
### Summer Camp Positions



The ACBDD has several openings for the upcoming summer camp at Beacon School. Positions include an Assistant Director, Camp Counselors, and Camp Assistants.

**Accepting applications until filled.**

### HAPCAP's out-of-county transport pilot project



With grant funds from the DD Council and matching dollars from our agency, HAPCAP is developing a new transportation program that will provide trips door-to-door out of the county. This is a much-needed service, and we appreciate HAPCAP's work in the area. Unreliable transportation continues to be a barrier.

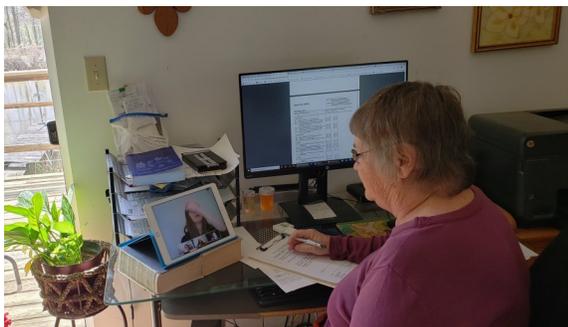
### Agency receives Keep Families Together funds from DODD



The agency was grateful to be one of the recipients of the Keeping Families Together (KFT) Fund through DODD.

Athens County received \$75,000, which will be used to supplement the FSS program, specifically for multi-system youth.

### Remote Work Policy approved



The ACBDD board recently approved a new policy formally permitting eligible positions to be performed remotely up to two days per week. The measure is expected to help with recruitment and retention efforts and take advantage of some efficiencies. Interested staff should contact their direct supervisor.

### Thank you to the Goldsberry family



A very special "Thank You" goes out to Stephanie and Alan Goldsberry for another \$300 donation to Beacon School. Over the last five years, they have donated a total of \$2,200.00 to the school. We appreciate their thoughtfulness and generosity.

## Tri-County Career Center adopts DSP training curriculum

As a way to help address the DSP crisis, the ACBDD and Tri-County Career Center have teamed up in a brand new way.

With curriculum provided by the Ohio Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (OADSP), we have piloted a DSP training program for students in Tri-County's Nursing Tech and Medical Professions programs.

By this summer, this cohort of 26 students will have their DSP Basic Certificate and a job shadowing experience completed. We are excited for what this could mean for our local workforce.



## Board membership changes in 2022

During the last ACBDD board meeting of 2021, we said goodbye to Sherri Oliver, who completed a four-year term as a board member.

We are incredibly grateful to board members like Sherri. She brought a unique perspective, as having previously served as a director of a local nonprofit and now serving as the director of OU's Community Health Programs and Area Health Education Center.



During her time on the board, she offered sound advice and guidance, served on multiple committees, and was instrumental in formalizing the ATCO Legacy Fund. We thank her for her service.

At the start of this year, we welcomed Barry Oches as a new board member. Barry comes to us with over 12 years of experience serving on the Athens County Children Services board. In addition, he is a former special education teacher, previously worked with Ohio University's Voinovich School, and has a family member with a developmental disability. We are grateful for his service and the expertise / experience he will bring.



# The ACBDD, along with the community, commemorates Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

The ACBDD coordinated a number of virtual and pandemic-safe in-person events to commemorate DD Awareness Month with the community. We thank everyone for taking part!

This year’s theme was “My Voice, My Choice.” We used the month to highlight individuals with disabilities gaining independence, being empowered to make their own choices, and being supported in their decision making.

The month kicked off with the traditional proclamations declaring March DD Awareness Month at the county and city levels. We then hosted a series of virtual events, from a Virtual March on Court Street to various discussions on topics such as supported decision making, Employment First, ableism, and even a virtual movie night.

We ended the month with publishing the annual special edition in partnership with The Athens NEWS. If you missed out, let us know. We will get you a copy.

New this year was our partnership with the local libraries and The Market on State for an art showcase. Art capturing the theme “My Voice, My Choice” was on display at these locations for the entire month, offering a pandemic-safe in-person experience. Art pieces came from school-age children, professional artists, and other community members.





A two-year-old child recently met several of the outcomes that the family had been working on: requesting a drink; expressively using words and combining words as well as joining in social games such as hide-n-seek. Way to go!

A 27-month-old who has global developmental delays has been making great progress toward talking and playing, as she is currently joining in finger-play songs (especially “The Wheels on the Bus”) and will initiate her desire to “sing” it by using the hand motions; hums to all songs; imitates the “more” sign when asked if wants more of something; goes to her highchair and stands next to it when she wants to eat; imitates a lot of sounds and words; and enjoys “feeding” her baby doll and “talking” on the phone. Nice job!

A 33-month-old child has made great progress in running, climbing, kicking a ball, using a spoon and transitioning from a 360 cup to an open cup. Congratulations!



## School takes fieldtrip to see movie Encanto, successfully uses sensory tent

The school took a field trip late last year to the Athena Grand to see Disney’s Encanto.

The sensory tent was set up at the theater, as well, which gave students a safe space to take a break from sitting in the theater.

Several students used the tent for a short break and then were able to return to the movie successfully.





## 4th annual Polar Bear Plunge raises \$13,000

This year's Polar Bear Plunge, organized by the Albany VFW Post 9893 and WSEO 107.7/WAIS 770, was another great success. This year had approximately 215 plungers, which is the most ever, and the event raised \$13,000 for the Beacon School PTO. This brings the event's total support over its four years to \$39,430. Funds will be used to finance the renovation of the active sensory room at Beacon School. During the "thank you" ceremony at Beacon School, each staff member spoke of their appreciation for the organization's continued dedication to the school and what the new sensory room will mean for the students who attend. Supt. Davis presented the VFW members with a plaque, and the students presented them with cards and cookies. We are grateful for the continued relationship with this wonderful organization.





## Debbie Dixon to retire after 30+ years of service

Debbie Dixon, Preschool 2 Instructional Assistant, recently announced she plans to retire at the end of this school year. She was recently acknowledged at an all staff in-service for completing 30 years of service with the ACBDD / Beacon School. Debbie always wears a smile, carries a positive attitude and willingly shares her knowledge and experience with others. What she does not know, she will gladly research and find out. Debbie has been a tremendous asset to Beacon School, and she will be missed tremendously. We all wish her the very best!



## Starla Chiki retires



Congratulations also goes out to Starla Chiki, a Paraprofessional in the Intermediate I classroom. She retired on March 4.

Starla had worked for Beacon School for nearly 10 years as both a classroom and one-on-one aide. We appreciate her dedication to the students at the school. She will be missed.

## Valentine's Day party!



It was another special Valentine's Day at Beacon School. Students and staff enjoyed dancing, butterfly cupcakes, bug jello, bug juice and making Valentine crafts.

Special thanks goes out to the Preschool classrooms for organizing a great party.



## Bus garage staff get new break room

The agency's bus garage is now completely cleaned out, a project that took several months to finish. And now, the previous break area for drivers/maintenance crew is a shared office space for both the Integrate Athens department and the garage. This space now houses the copier and all office supplies for easy access for both departments. The drivers/maintenance crew break room is now located in the back of the garage, giving the employees a roomier and more comfortable space.



## Facilities crew helps reorganize Integrate Athens

The Integrate Athens office went through some reorganizing recently. The MUI office has been cleared out and repainted, the front closet area has been turned into an office for the FANs coordinator, and the printer/supply storage room was turned into a small office (this office is still a work in progress). We appreciate everyone's hard work in getting these projects completed.





# SSAs and teams work creatively through DSP staffing crisis

The DSP work force crisis has continued to create deficits in staffing for those served by the agency. SSAs and teams are continuing to work creatively to increase usages of remote supports and assistive technology, when applicable. Additionally, teams continue to look at ways services can be consolidated through shared service models and roommate opportunities. We appreciate everyone’s hard work during these challenging times.



## Angela Carter named Ambassador of the Year

Congratulations goes out to Angela Carter, Director of Employment Options / PersonnelPlus. She was recognized as the Ambassador of the Year, an award given by the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, to honor a Chamber Ambassador who goes above and beyond to demonstrate extraordinary dedication to the Chamber and its mission. Well done, Angela!



### Dale to celebrate 5 years at job



Our friend Dale soon will be celebrating his fifth anniversary with Texas Roadhouse. While working at Texas Roadhouse, Dale was named the 2018 PersonnelPlus Employee of the Year Award. Be sure to congratulate Dale the next time you visit the restaurant.

### “Job for everyone!”



Job Developer Chris Linscott was recently presented with a shirt to recognize his hard work and recent success with helping several individuals secure jobs. The shirt says it all, “Jobs for Everyone!” Congratulations, Chris!



## PersonnelPlus celebrates recent retirements

The PersonnelPlus team recently celebrated the retirements of two individuals.

Bill (pictured in the top photo in the center) retired after working for over 30 years. His last job was working for Athens City. In retirement, Bill said he is planning to spend more time helping his neighbors and visiting friends.

Mark (pictured in the red shirt in the bottom photo) recently celebrated his last day from his position at the Albany Roadside Rest. Mark has been working at the Albany Roadside Rest since 1988.

Congratulations to both Bill and Mark for reaching this milestone! Your years of hard work and dedication are appreciated.



## PersonnelPlus & pre-employment supports

PersonnelPlus supports individuals before and as they transition into the workforce to help identify special skills and interests. These experiences also help people decide what kind of careers they wish to pursue. Reno, pictured at right, recently visited a pet store to see what job duties and skills are needed to be a staff member there. Reno has an interest in animals and would some day like to have a job that involves working with animals. Experiences are key. The more they can be offered to young people like Reno, the better.





## Tina Wilson nominated for the Leite Engagement Award

Tina Wilson, the Integrate Athens Coordinator, was recently nominated for the Leite Engagement award, which is given annually to a valued OU College of Health Science and Professions (CHSP) community partner. She was nominated by Rebecca Miller, CHSP’s Senior Director of Community Relations. In her nomination letter, Rebecca wrote:

*“Tina has been an integral partner in the Age-Friendly Athens County (AFAC) project in a variety of ways. She has taken on a leadership role with the Respect & Social Inclusion subcommittee, in addition to serving on the executive committee and taking on the immense task of building and updating the AFAC Facebook page, which serves as the main mode of communication with the public at this time.*

*“She is diligent about sharing information, engaging with the community and this has established a solid following and reputation. Tina has been vital to the initiative and she is a trusted and valuable partner that should be recognized for her outstanding efforts and commitment.”*



What a great nomination! Congratulations, Tina!

## Integrate Athens helps build accessible raised garden beds

Integrate Athens and FANs Coordinator Izzy Hutchinson have participated with Community Food Initiatives to build three raised, wheelchair-accessible beds in a local community garden.

Community Food Initiatives (CFI) is an organization that fosters equitable and inclusive food systems in Southeast Ohio.

On January 21, in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Integrate Athens and CFI partnered with COMCorps, an AmeriCorps program, to build the garden beds.

These raised beds have been placed at CFI’s Southside garden, located on Carriage Hill Drive in Athens. They are available to any community member who needs a space to grow food, and they now provide additional accessible garden space for community members who need or pre-



fer to garden at a seated level.

Once the weather warms, COMCorps members will reconvene to paint the beds and fill them with soil. This project was made possible with a generous grant from ServeOhio.



## 52 individuals enroll in grant-funded meal kit delivery program

The meal kit delivery program, funded by a grant through the Athens County Foundation, has reached its capacity! Fifty-two individuals have enrolled in the eight-week program. This means an individual with disabilities, and their caregiver, will receive one free meal kit per week for four weeks and then two meal kits per week during the next four weeks.

This collaboration has worked hard to consider individual food preferences, adaptive cooking needs, food allergies, and texture sensitivities. Additionally, participants will receive all cooking tools necessary to cook their meals at no cost.

The program is intended to help address food insecurity, enhance cooking skills, and help develop healthy eating habits.



## Beacon students experience Career Discovery

Some of the students at Beacon School who are of transition age are starting their Career Discovery experience. The Community Discovery process helps young adults explore their communities, discover their interests, and assess their skills. This information will be helpful as students prepare for life after high school.

Pictured at right is our friend Emily during her Career Discovery kick-off meeting.





## Transition Coordinator helps plan visit to Ambassador Laundry for Beacon students

The Beacon School Young Adult Class participated in their monthly job exploration at Ambassador Laundries in Athens late last year. During their visit, the students were introduced to a number of industrial machines that still operate, in many cases, with manual switches and buttons. Time was also set aside to allow students to ask questions about what it is like to work there.



The outing included a stop at Kroger, where students were divided into groups and given a shopping list to follow. Their shopping list included words and images for easy identification.

Each of these community field trips helped students enhance critical skills needed as they prepare for adulthood.





# ATCO, Inc. board honored for their years of service during the nonprofit's last meeting

The ATCO, Inc. board held their last board meeting recently to complete the dissolution of the nonprofit. During the meeting, Supt. Kevin Davis presented each board member with a plaque to express appreciation for their years of service.

ATCO Inc., often confused with ATCO Adult Services, was the non-profit board established in 1969 with the purpose of providing sheltered employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. Through the years, ATCO Inc. provided many work opportunities. With the movement of true integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities becoming a reality, segregated work became less and less over the years.

Today, the ACBDD's Personnel*Plus* supports approximately a hundred individuals working in area businesses. The efforts of ATCO Inc. and its numerous Board members will be remembered as the catalyst for integrated employment for all.



## The ACBDD in the news

### ACBDD superintendent awarded for work

The Athens Messenger — February 3, 2022



### Fourth Annual Polar Bear Plunge returns to raise funds for Beacon School

The Post — February 10, 2022

## Work Anniversaries

### April

- Carl Johnston — 16 years
- Kris Dunlap — 11 years
- Mary Howell — 9 years
- Barb North-Moss — 7 years
- Jamie Hart — 7 years

### May

- Susan Weaver — 24 years
- Rex Maccombs — 18 years
- Jerry Swackhamer — 7 years
- Ron Kelley — 6 years





## Polar Bear Plunge pictures, continue...



## Beacon School and ACBDD staff showing their support for the Bengals and Joe Burrow ahead of the Super Bowl earlier this year

