

WEEKLY FOCUS

Ohio | Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities

Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

February 27, 2015

The mission of the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency is to ensure individuals with disabilities achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes.

ON THE ROAD

With Director Kevin L. Miller

State of the State Events Held in Wilmington

Over the years, I have learned that it's extremely beneficial to travel out into the field and speak with people directly involved in our work to better understand the impact of our policies and programs. For this reason, I enjoy every opportunity I have to visit communities across Ohio and see the great work being done by our staff and partners.

On Tuesday, Governor John Kasich gave his annual State of the State address in Wilmington, which offered another opportunity to learn more about the impact of our work and those benefitting. Through a series of events and meetings leading up to the Governor's address we were able to connect with other state agencies, local entities, and organizations. We met some great individuals thriving in their jobs and finding increased independence as a result.

Roberts Arena

We kicked-off the day with a joint visit to the Roberts Arena with our partners at the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). With DODD Director John Martin and his staff, we toured the impressive 40 acre facility which was designed, and is operated, by a family who owns and shows horses regularly.



Director Miller, DODD Director John Martin, and OOD and DODD staff toured the Roberts Arena and discussed the Employment First partnership.

During the tour we were able to discuss how Employment First, in partnership with DODD, helps meet the workforce needs of area businesses such as the Roberts Arena. We were able to talk with Thomas Davis, a newly hired employee through the Employment First partnership, about his work at the facility and the transition to integrated community employment. It was great to see his excitement about work, his love for being around animals, and to hear about his future plans.

After the tour, staff from both agencies, and Clinton County Board of Developmental Disabilities Superintendent Kyle Lewis, were able to discuss the success of the Employment First partnership and plans to build on that success in the coming year. It was gratifying to hear about the dedication and hard work that is making this partnership work on the ground in Clinton County.

OhioMeansJobs Clinton County



Director Miller and DODD Director John Martin shared in great conversation with Thomas Davis about his new job at Roberts Arena.



OOD staff learn more about the Career X welding program.

Increased awareness and engagement on the part of employers is obviously critical to increased integrated community employment and successful employment for individuals with disabilities more broadly. With this in mind, we scheduled a Windmills training session for local employers on Tuesday at the Clinton County OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) Center. In addition to the Windmills Training, we also hosted interviews for individuals with local employers.

The Windmills Training Program is a tool designed to prepare employers to effectively evaluate, hire, supervise, and retain people with disabilities as employees. Windmills can be an effective training tool for all levels of staff, in any size company, and is designed to break down barriers and misunderstandings created by fears, myths, biases, and stereotypes.

This stop was another example of state and local governments working together to serve Ohioans. Dawn Larzelere, Director of the Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation, participated

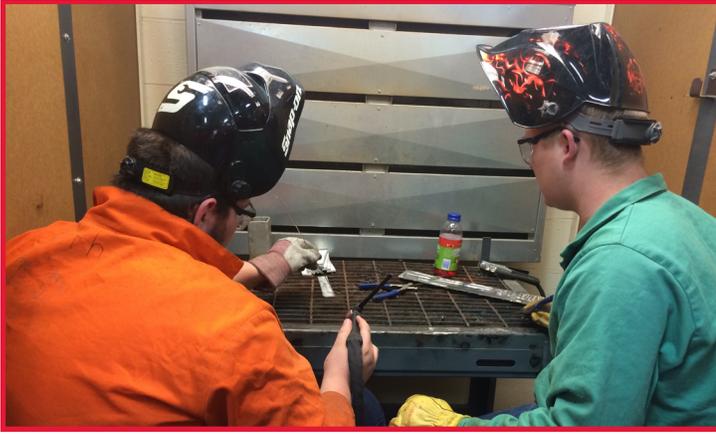
in the session. Kathi Spirk, Director of the OMJ Center, and her staff, were great hosts! It is exciting to see how Ohio’s workforce development system is adapting and evolving to serve more Ohioans, including individuals with disabilities, and do so more effectively.

Laurel Oaks Campus

After our visit to the OMJ Center we headed to the Laurel Oaks Campus of the Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development, one of the largest career and technical education districts in the United States, for a joint visit with Chancellor Carey and staff from the Ohio Board of Regents. Great Oaks has been providing career development, workforce development and economic development services to individuals, businesses, industries, labor, communities and other organizations in southwest Ohio since 1970.

Following a great lunch served by Great Oaks culinary arts students, we took a tour of the impressive facilities at the Laurel Oaks campus. They offer a diverse set of programs for both high school students and adult learners; everything from aviation and automotive technology to dentistry, cosmetology and sports rehabilitation and therapy.





Students take part in welding which is a part of the Career X program at Laurel Oaks.

In the afternoon we broke off from the Regents to focus specifically on the Career X program at Laurel Oaks. Career X is a Career Exploration and Employability Skills program for students with disabilities. It is an entry-level transition high school program to assist students in making career choices. Given the increased focus on transition services at both the state and federal level, it was great to learn more about this excellent program and how we can better partner to increase its impact. I really appreciated the passion and experience of the staff at Laurel Oaks. It is clear they are making a difference in their student's lives.

Taco Bell Employee Recognition

Our last stop of the day was the Wilmington Taco Bell to recognize Tyler Roberts. Tyler has been at Taco Bell, his first job, for two years and has really excelled. In fact, he has been recognized by Taco Bell Corporate for

his outstanding customer service. I wanted to stop by and recognize someone who has been such an exemplary employee and role model for others.

Tyler is a great employee who brings energy and excitement to his work. I was able to present him with a certificate from OOD and talk with his manager and his family about his transition to work and his plans for the future. His manager spoke very highly of Tyler as an employee and as a person and his family couldn't be more proud. It was another great example of the real life impact employment has on our lives, the lives of our family and friends, and on the community.

All of the events were great examples of what we can achieve working together to make Ohio stronger. Governor Kasich echoed that same theme in his speech that evening; the importance of serving others, self-dependence, personal responsibility, and creating an environment where people have the tools they need to succeed and thrive.

Thanks again to all of the great people who made our visit to Wilmington so successful. Also, special thanks to the staff at OOD and our partner agencies for planning the work that went into these events.



Director Miller stopped by the Wilmington Taco Bell to recognize Tyler Roberts with an "Outstanding Customer Service" certificate.

Successful Hiring Event with West Corporation at OOD's Youngstown Office

Even when you think you know what's in store, sometimes you can be pleasantly surprised.

In search of Customer Care Associates for their Niles Call Center, West Corporation held a hiring event on-site at OOD's Youngstown office on February 25. In total, nine candidates were scheduled, eight interviewed with the two recruiters, and seven were invited to move on to the next round of interviewing this week at West Corporation!

"This was great! When can we do this again?" was one recruiter's reaction after the interviews were completed, noting how impressed she was with the qualifications of the candidates. She also indicated that the candidates were prepared and presented and interviewed very well. So pleased with the quality of the candidates, one of the recruiters said, "I want to put them in my car and take them back to the office with me now!"

This excellent employer experience speaks to how well the Youngstown staff identified and pre-screened the consumers for the position, as well as the Caseload Assistant who handled each job seeker sign-in and deftly transitioned candidates from the first to second phase of the interview. Overall, this was a great collaborative effort and "all hands on deck" approach to providing a talent pool to an employer's hiring needs. Excellent job to the Youngstown staff for all of their hard work!

As of today, we have confirmed one new hire from the event. Many thanks to West Corporation for supporting OOD's mission of interviewing and hiring candidates with disabilities!

