

Kevin L. Miller,  
Executive Director

# WEEKLY FOCUS

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

## Veterans Day 2013



The freedom that Americans enjoy is something that we should not take lightly. Far too often we take for granted that we are blessed to live in a country that offers us the ability to live freely to pursue our dreams.

This coming Monday we will pause to celebrate the service of the men and women who have devoted their lives to defending the American way of life – our veterans. We thank those who have served, and those who continue to serve, as part of the American service branches. Their service is a beacon of hope and brings our nation a sense of patriotism, duty, and discipline.

I want to thank each and every person at OOD who has served, or currently serves, as a member of our nation's military. We are prone to use the word "hero" far too frequently, but our American veterans are true heroes. Thank you for your service.

## OSU Social and Community Justice Class

I was honored to be invited to speak to a class of graduate students at The Ohio State University's (OSU) College of Social Work as part of the school's Social and Community Justice Seminar.

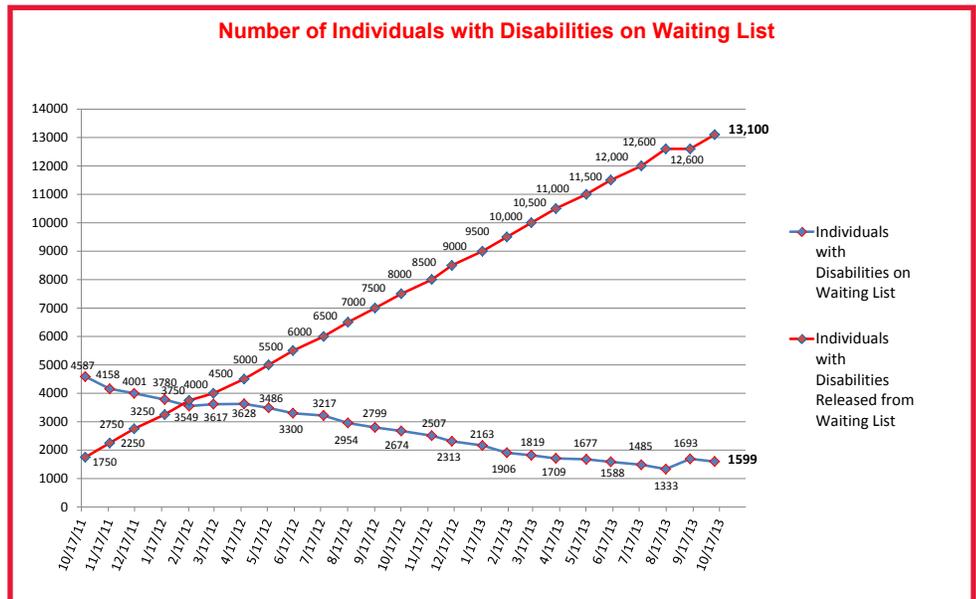
In the course of their studies, they have been examining the political, social, economic and cultural contexts in which various social welfare programs have developed in response to need, and our underlying values as a nation. Recent classes have covered how

various income insurance programs including Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, Workers Compensation and workforce development programs are administered. Currently they are talking about the role of policy advocacy, leadership, and as part of that, strategic planning.



Director Miller (standing) provides insight into recent OOD changes to OSU students.

I talked about the changes that have been made in recent months at OOD including the biennial budget



and the name change of the agency. I was pleased to be able to present to the class and was impressed by their questions and attention to connecting their classwork to the work being done at OOD.

## APSE Conference

I was able to participate this week on a panel with Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) Director John Martin and Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) Office of Exceptional Children Associate Director Thomas Lather at the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference.



Panel members (left to right) ODE Associate Director Thomas Lather, DODD Director John Martin and OOD Director Kevin Miller are introduced by APSE Board Member Pete Moore.

APSE is the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. I was happy to join with Director Martin and Associate Director Lather to discuss what our respective agencies are doing relative to Ohio's Employment First Initiative.

The work that OOD is doing in conjunction with DODD and ODE is monumental and is going to help change the way that Ohio advances employment and self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities.

## CSAs Receive Additional Training

Twelve Consumer Support Advocates (CSA) received additional training this week on OOD services and



OOD's newest Consumer Support Advocates

the Ohio Benefit Bank. The CSA program is funded by a \$200,000 interagency agreement with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and is a great example of how state agencies are working in concert to break barriers between state agencies to benefit Ohioans with disabilities.

CSAs help us bring information and referral services to individuals with disabilities who are on our Waiting List and are currently receiving services from the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired. Our CSAs have training in customer service and the latest information on all community resources available to assist individuals with disabilities. They serve as Benefit Bank counselors providing this important resource to individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

Since July 2012, 16 CSAs have moved on to permanent employment earning an average of nearly \$15 per hour. Former CSAs have moved on to work at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Ohio Department of Aging, law firms, nationally-known retailers and even as VR counselors and coordinators assisting consumers in obtaining employment. One CSA who started with us in August has already moved on to a permanent position. This shows how even in such a short period of time a little current work experience can go a long way.

## OOD Excellence in Service Awards Nominations Sought

OOD is seeking nominations for the Excellence in Service Award. Employees can be nominated by other employees or themselves. Up to six individuals or groups may be selected to receive an award and award recipients will receive one day off (8 hours) with pay and a \$25.00 gift card. This Award was designed in coordination with the DDD and BVR/BSVI Director's Advisory Groups. The first award selection was held in May 2013 and was a great success!

We have made some changes based on your recommendations. For example, the nomination form is now shorter and more user friendly! The OOD Fall Excellence in Service Awards Ceremony is planned for December, 2013 (day to be announced at a later date). Please submit your nominations to Kathy Boss at [Kathleen.Boss@ood.ohio.gov](mailto:Kathleen.Boss@ood.ohio.gov) no later than November 20, 2013. Nomination forms can be located on the OOD intranet.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Boss at 614-438-1247.

For more information or questions on stories in this publication, please call the Office of Communications at 614.438.1476.

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