

WEEKLY FOCUS

Ohio | Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities

Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

August 8, 2014

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.

Cabinet Members, Legislators and Governor Kasich Say “Thank You”

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment for the VR program this year has been the elimination of the waiting list for individuals with significant disabilities (SD). Removing nearly 17,000 individuals from the waiting list, giving SD individuals immediate access to vocational rehabilitation services upon eligibility, and positioning the agency to serve individuals with disabilities (D) for the first time since 1991, is an accomplishment the agency can be proud of and recognize.

Suffice to say, I was excited when a number of cabinet members, key legislators, representative stakeholders and Governor John Kasich, graciously agreed to take a moment to say thank you for the hard work and dedication that went into achieving this milestone. They recognized the positive impact this will have on individuals with disabilities in Ohio and wanted to recognize our staff, along with our partners and providers across the state, by participating in a short thank you video.

You can watch the video online here: <https://vimeo.com/101660296> (Note: Closed Captioning is available. Click on the CC icon in the lower right of the video player and choose “English”.)

Thanks again to Department of Developmental Disabilities Director John Martin, Department of Job and Family Services Director Cynthia Dungey, Office of Budget and Management Director Tim Keen, State Representatives Ron Amstutz and Cheryl Grossman, State Senator Kevin Bacon, Deaf Services Center CEO John Moore, Columbus Goodwill CEO Marjory Pizzuti, and Governor John Kasich for participating in this video. I know it means a lot to our staff.

In closing, let me say thank you to our staff whose hard work and dedication made eliminating the waiting list possible!

Governor’s Council on People with Disabilities – Youth Leadership Forum

Sunday marked the kickoff of the 16th annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) this week in Columbus. Sponsored by the Governor’s Council on People with Disabilities (GCPD), YLF is a four-day leadership training program for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities. The program is geared toward assisting students in developing leadership, citizenship, advocacy and social skills, and gaining a greater sense of independence, enabling them to pursue meaningful employment and contribute to society.

Sunday began with orientation, small group ice breakers



The 2014 Ohio Youth Leadership Forum tours the Ohio Statehouse.

and wrapped up with dinner and a movie. During the week, students were able to attend informative sessions on a wide range of topics including self-advocacy, the history of disabilities, civil rights, living on your own, social media and employment. The delegates were also able to learn about assistive technology and other

resources that can help them reach their goals; issues related to traveling with a disability and voting rights for individuals with a disability.



The Youth Leadership Forum Talent Show!

The tour of the historic Ohio statehouse is frequently a highlight as many of the staff and delegates have not had the chance to visit. This year was no exception, and as an added bonus, delegates were able to meet with both the Speaker of the Ohio House William Batchelder and Senate President Keith Faber. During a session in the House Finance hearing room, the leaders of the House and Senate spoke about the importance of communicating with elected officials on issues that are important to you and your community; and offering honest feedback on the services you receive from state government. Speaker Batchelder and President Faber also highlighted their collaboration with Governor Kasich; and were able to hear some of the challenges students face and about the positive impact of YLF.



The event is designed so that by the end of the week students will have learned about choosing a career, how to identify barriers to personal and professional success, met successful professionals with disabilities, and

developed a “Personal Leadership Plan” to reach their goals in education, employment, and the community.

After a very busy week full of new experiences, learning, self-assessment, networking and relationship building, the delegates were able to close out the forum with an impressive and entertaining talent show.

YLF is recognized across Ohio as a special opportunity for students with disabilities to learn and develop critical social and leadership skills in an environment of historic awareness, encouragement and peer support. Every year I am impressed by the hard work of the staff and volunteers and the courage and growth of the delegates.

I am proud that OOD can play a part in the success of this important program and look forward to continuing to build on this success moving forward.

Commissioners Retreat

The Commissioners held their annual two-day retreat this week here at Central Office. The commissioners heard presentations from Deputy Directors and staff on a range of subjects; from the history of vocational rehabilitation (VR), and the recently passed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to future trends in VR and expanding services for youth with disabilities.



(From left to right) Susan Pugh, VR Deputy Director; Kristen Hellings, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities; and Zandia Galvin, Rehabilitation Program Specialist discussing Range of VR Employment Outcomes.

To better understand the work that is being done in the field, facilitated panel discussions were held which focused on VR from a consumer’s perspective, the range of employment outcomes in VR, and community rehabilitation. Commissioners also received briefings on the upcoming state budget as well as an update on ethics, financial disclosure, payroll, and travel rules. Thursday afternoon they wrapped up the retreat by attending the YLF talent show.

I was again struck by the dedication and commitment of the OOD commissioners. They take their roles seriously and provide an important service to individuals with disabilities in Ohio. Thanks to both the commissioners and to the staff for the work that went into making the retreat a success.

2014 OOD Take Your Child to Work Day

With nearly 60 children attending, OOD hosted our annual Take Your Child to Work Day on Wednesday. Children attending received a welcome from Assistant Executive Director Bill Bishilany and DDD Deputy Director Erik Williamson and participated in several workshops introducing them to several different types of disabilities:



Assistant Executive Director Bill Bishilany welcomes children and parents to Take Your Child to Work Day!

- Nate Fernandes did an outstanding job of answering questions and bringing the issue of visual impairments to the forefront.



Kids participated in multiple workshops that re-enacted physical disabilities including wheelchair basketball.

- Kathy Boss, who focused on disability awareness, was very hands-on with students and spotlighted different potential impairments.

- Pamela Schneider led a workshop on hearing impairment assisted by her daughter.
- Luke Edelbrock, from the city of Columbus, instructed participants on the art of wheelchair basketball. This activity showed students the complexity of activities enjoyed by individuals who use a wheelchair.

Thanks to everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to volunteer and assist with this event. We could not have had such a great event without each and every one of you.



2014 Annual Report Available

We filed our 2014 Annual Report last week as required by statute. The report covers Federal Fiscal Year 2013 and State Fiscal Year 2013-2014 and highlights a number of the agency's accomplishments and successes from the past year. It also serves as a useful overview of the agency's work and the progress we have made together.

The Annual Report is available on our website and you can download it at this link: <http://bit.ly/OOD2014AnnualReport>

Goodbye, Stephen & Good Luck!



Stephen Wilson, Legislative Liaison, has accepted a position at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Stephen has been an excellent liaison and has helped improve awareness and support for OOD in the legislature. We wish him all the best in his new position.

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

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