



Couple Inspires Creation of BCBDD Award

A remarkable act of compassion and kindness shown by two foster parents toward a young man with disabilities inspired creation of an award that was recently given by the Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Carol and Roger McMillen were presented with the Board's first *Inspiration Award* in recognition of their support of Ryan, a student at the School of Hope, and the positive influence they have had on his life.

The award was presented to the McMillens at the February board meeting. In making the presentation, BCBDD Superintendent Monty Kerr said, "The impact you have had on Ryan's life is extraordinary and obvious. You are model examples of the positive influence we can have on others when we put our words into action."

The McMillens were not in the foster parents' program before Ryan came to live with them, although Carol had grown to know and love him through her work as a teacher's assistant at the school. When he was placed in foster care due to circumstances in his life, she and Roger did not hesitate to open their home and hearts to him. Ryan moved in with the McMillens in February 2010 and from the beginning, they made sure he had a stable and loving home.

"This experience has been a blessing for us," Carol



The Belmont County Board presented Carol and Roger McMillen (seated) with its first *Inspiration Award* for their efforts to provide a stable, loving home to Ryan (pictured center). The McMillens were the inspiration for this recognition that will be given to acknowledge those who go above and beyond in support of people with disabilities. Board members pictured standing, from left, are: Amy Dias, Jay Rodak (board president), Marlin Harper (vice-president), Cynthia Touvelle (secretary), Annette Wiater, Mark McVey and John Rataiczak.

said. "Ryan has filled a void in our lives."

The McMillens were asked to share their experience as foster parents with the Board on the one-year anniversary of Ryan coming to live with them. The couple and Ryan,

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Together Everyone Wins

**By Monty Kerr, CEO/Superintendent
Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities**

For a person with disabilities, barriers outside of their disability may be the hardest of all to overcome. Attitudinal barriers like fear and negativity block them from the things they want out of life. The result is loneliness and isolation for them, which is more detrimental to a person's health than disability ever could be.

John Cacioppo, a Professor in Psychology at the University of Chicago, has done research

"People with disabilities want the same things everyone else does - acceptance, understanding and love."

on how social isolation affects the brain. Cacioppo, one of the nation's leading scholars on loneliness, showed that loneliness can harm our health and be as detrimental as smoking. In fact, about one in five Americans experiences loneliness. As we consider this statistic, is it a coincidence that one in five Americans also has some type of disability?

Many other researchers have reached

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Bellaire High Grad Recognized at Statehouse

When this year's Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month theme was being created, Trent Butler was learning skills that would help him get a job. By the time it was unveiled at the Ohio Statehouse on March 3rd, Trent was on the stage as an example of what can be achieved when preparation meets opportunity.

Over 500 people turned out to celebrate "Together," the 2011 Developmental Disabilities' Awareness Month theme. Trent, of Bridgeport, was featured in the program as a person who has had Success in the Community. He was accompanied by Peg Gast Stipetich of Belco Works and Monty Kerr, CEO/Superintendent of the Belmont County Board of DD.

Trent obtained a competitive-wage job through skills and support he received in the *Bridges to Transition* program. *Bridges* is a statewide, grant-funded initiative that brings together the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission, Boards of Developmental Disabilities, and school districts to help students with disabilities explore career options and receive job skills' training.

Peg Gast Stipetich was one of those who helped Trent receive the training he needed to get a job after graduation.

"Many people expected Trent to attend the sheltered workshop after he graduated from Bellaire High," Stipetich said. "It was evident to us that Trent did not belong there and that he could succeed at a job in the community."

Kara Shutler, the Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator at the Belmont County Board of DD, the private provider Belco Works, and Bellaire School staff worked together to help Trent develop his potential and gain the skills he needed to get a job. Trent is now employed at Sam's Club in St. Clairsville where he has become a valued member of the team.

"I have a real job," Trent said. "I love it and the people I work with."

Monty Kerr noted that times have changed and that systems of support like the Board are now helping people create lives that resemble those of their peers who do not have disabilities. He said that Trent's success underlines the importance of not letting disability stand in the way of a person's success.

"We believe that people with disabilities should be given the same opportunities as everyone else," Kerr said. "Trent's story demonstrates what is possible when we see the person first and the disability second."



Trent Butler of Bridgeport (center) was featured at the 2011 Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month kickoff event March 3rd at the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus. Trent's success on the job was spotlighted to demonstrate that people with disabilities achieve more when they are given opportunities. Trent is flanked by Peg Gast Stipetich, Community Employment Director at Belco Works, which provided Trent's vocational skills' training, and Monty Kerr, CEO/Superintendent of the Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities, which funds these and other supports for eligible children and adults in Belmont County. The annual kickoff is hosted each year by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and Ohio Public Images.

Kara Shutler couldn't agree more. "We must stop predicting a person's future based simply on his or her disability," Shutler said. "When people with disabilities are given opportunities, they can and do succeed, and that benefits them and the community in which they live."

"Our goal is to give Trent and other young adults and their families a fresh look at what the future can hold for them – a future in the community, not apart from it," Kerr added.

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who was also present, were not aware of the real reason they had been asked to attend.

"The McMillens' remarkable act of compassion and kindness is a model example of what we are seeking to recognize with the *Inspiration Award*," Kerr said. "They truly inspire us and others to do all we can."

Kerr explained that the *Inspiration Award* will acknowledge individuals and organizations that inspire others by their words and deeds to create opportunities for people with disabilities.

The McMillens were presented with a hand-blown glass sculpture and gift card by Board president Jay Rodak, who read the following:

"What you have done is the perfect example of the positive outcomes that can be achieved for people with disabilities when we are motivated by compassion and act in love. By opening your home and becoming surrogate parents to a young man with disabilities, you have brought happiness and stability to his life. This Inspiration Award recognizes your caring, compassion and service. By your words and deeds, you encourage excellence in us all. You have distinguished yourselves among others and your remarkable kindness and service is an inspiration."

Special Olympics Belmont County Seeks Sponsors

Special Olympics Belmont County is the newly-formed, non-profit organization created to support athletes who compete at local, regional, and state levels in basketball, track and field, bocce, and bowling. Currently, the organization has more than 30 athletes per sport, and the numbers are increasing every month.

The organization, which is accredited by Special Olympics Ohio and operates under its guidelines, exists entirely on donations and sponsorships. All donations, which are tax-deductible as a donation to a non-profit entity, remain local and directly benefit the athletes who compete for Belmont County.

Those who wish to support Special Olympics Belmont County can do so in the following ways:



Pictured are members of the Advisory Board for the newly-formed Special Olympics Ohio - Belmont County. Pictured, from left: Eric Petho, Steve Williams, Albert Davies, Greg Hocking, and Local Coordinator Tom King. For more information about how you can support Special Olympians in Belmont County, call King at 740-695-1110.

ADOPT-AN-ATHLETE PROGRAM

\$225 per Athlete

It costs a little over \$225 per athlete, per sport, for things like uniforms, supplies, transportation, meals, specialized supervision, medication handling, lodging for State competitions, and coaching.

ANNUAL SPONSORSHIPS

SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

BRONZE \$500 to \$2,499

SILVER \$2,500 to \$4,999

GOLD \$5,000 to \$9,999

PLATINUM \$10,000 or more

PATRONS

Donations that do not meet the Adopt-an-Athlete Program or Sponsorship criteria will be listed as Patrons in all programs. No amount is too small!



Special Olympics
Training for Life

For more information or to donate, contact Tom King, Local Coordinator, at 740.695.1110

Donations, with checks payable to Special Olympics Ohio-Belmont County, may also be mailed to Special Olympics Belmont County, c/o 66730 Pogue Rd., St. Clairsville, OH 43950.

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Cacioppo's conclusion, and those of us in the developmental disabilities field see the effects of social isolation every day. From the woman with an intellectual disability whose only "friends" are paid providers to the child with cerebral palsy who is not invited to his classmate's birthday party, people with disabilities are lonely because there are so few people willing to welcome them into their lives.

That is why our efforts and the efforts of others to help children and adults live, work, learn and play **in the community** are so very important. In Belmont County, we believe that building relationships is more important than creating programs. The Board is still at work, but we're working in a different way by introducing people

with disabilities to opportunities in the community where the potential for relationships exists. That means helping a child with disabilities learn alongside her typically-developing peers by providing modifications to the classroom. It means helping a young adult develop skills so he can obtain a job that pays a decent wage. It means helping parents plan for the time they can no longer care for their adult child by exploring other options.

We don't do this alone. There are employers, providers, teachers and people across Belmont County who are partners in our efforts to help people with disabilities create lives of meaning, and there is always room for more.

Children and adults with disabilities want the same things everyone else does

–acceptance, understanding and love. However, they will remain lonely and isolated if we fail to see their potential and help them develop it.

The March 2011 Awareness Month theme is "Together" and we believe that word speaks volumes. Together we all accomplish more, but only if we are willing to suspend the old way of thinking and open our minds to the idea that people with disabilities deserve the same opportunities as everyone else. When we do, a world of possibilities opens for them. When we do, people with disabilities have a lot to gain – **and so do we.**



These two billboards supporting the 2011 Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month theme were posted by the Belmont County Board of DD in March. They can be found inside St. Clairsville and along Route 7 near Bridgeport.



Our Mission:

To encourage, support and respect people on their journey through life.

Board Members:

Jay Rodak, President

Marlin Harper, Vice-President

Cynthia Touvelle, Secretary

Mark McVey

John Rataiczak

Annette Wiater

Amy Dias

Chronicle Extra is a publication of the Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities. It is published occasionally to highlight up-to-the minute news.

Chronicle is the Board's quarterly newsletter. Questions and comments may be directed to pmccort@bcbdd.org

Belmont CBDD
330 Fox-Shannon Place
St. Clairsville, Ohio 43950

Calendar of Events

April

- 14 - Belmont County Board of DD monthly meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 16 - Belco Works' Shred to Save at Riesbeck's, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Special Olympics Bowling Qualifier at Cambridge
- 22 - Good Friday - School of Hope closed; No Board Transportation
- 23 - Special Olympics' Bowling Qualifier at Zanesville
- 30 - Special Olympics' Track Meet, Carrollton

May

- 7 - Steubenville Qualifier (Bowling/Track/Bocce)
- 11 - Belmont County Exceptional Student Banquet, 6 p.m.
Belmont Career Center
- 12 - Belmont County Board of DD monthly meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 14 - Track Meet at Minerva
- 24 - Last Day of School (pending approval by state legislature)
- 30 - Memorial Day