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IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hamilton County MRDD Superintendent Honored For Leadership

COLUMBUS, Ohio – *Hamilton County Board of MRDD's* superintendent recently was honored at the *Ohio Association of County Boards of MRDD (OACB) 25TH ANNUAL CONVENTION* held at the Easton Hilton Hotel on Tuesday, Oct. 28.

Superintendent Cheryl Phipps was honored with the Kenneth Legats Award for Visionary Leadership in Administration. This award is presented annually to an executive who has been duly nominated by the *OACB Board of Trustees* and who over a career of more than 20 years has shown high ideals, vision, and moral leadership in administration of programs for individuals with developmental disabilities.

“Cheryl Phipps is a consummate professional,” said Dan Ohler, *OACB* Executive Director.

“There are very few individuals that can compete with her level of knowledge, compassion, leadership skills, and ability to advocate for those individuals with developmental disabilities,” Ohler said. “It truly is my honor to call her a friend.”

Phipps was presented the award by Carabeth Legats, a board member for the *Muskingum County Board of MRDD* and wife of the late Kenneth Legats, and Nancy Neely, superintendent of *Licking County Board of MRDD*.

“What awed me then and still awes me after all these years is the knowledge that for Cheryl Phipps, improving the lives of people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities is not just her life’s work, it is her passion,” Neely said.

Phipps has spent about 35 years in the field, and has worked to improve the quality of life for all individuals with developmental disability. She has been singled out for many prestigious awards, including the *Southwest Ohio Rehab Association* with a “lifetime achievement award”; by *PAR* with a “lifetime achievement award,” and by the *Ohio Self*

Determination Association with a “career achievement” award. While serving as *Licking County Board of MRDD*, Phipps received one of the first Licking County *YWCA* “woman of achievement” awards and a Pride Builder award from the *Licking County Chamber of Commerce*.

Her community involvement includes the Rotary Clubs of Newark and Cincinnati and the *United Way*, where in Licking County she served as president of the *Board* and campaign chair. Phipps also is past president of the *Ohio Self Determination Association* and twice served as the President of the *Ohio Superintendents of County Boards of MRDD*.

“Clearly, she has never been afraid or reluctant to put herself out there on behalf of others and step up to her leadership obligations,” she said.

“Cheryl has been at the forefront of making breakthrough, innovative thinking a way of acting, of turning state of the art policy into state of the art day-to-day practice. One of Cheryl’s legacies will be her moral compass, her ability to know, almost intuitively, what’s worth fighting for out there. It is one of the things I admire and respect most about her,” Neely said.

The *OACB* is celebrating its 25th year. Its mission is to “support *County Boards of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities* in providing services and supports to individuals with disabilities.”

All 88 *County Boards of MRDD* in Ohio are members of this organization whose purpose is to educate and advocate for the 80,000 individuals with developmental disabilities who reside in the Buckeye State.

CUTLINE: Cheryl Phipps, superintendent at the *Hamilton County Board of MRDD* (second from right) is pictured with *OACB* Executive Director Dan Ohler, *Licking County Board of MRDD* Superintendent Nancy Neely, and Carabeth Legats, a *Muskingum County Board of MRDD* member and wife of Kenneth Legats, a former *County Board of MRDD* superintendent.

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