

The Vision of the Ohio Association of County Boards of MRDD is to promote self-directed and self-determined choices in programs, services and supports for individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities.

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY BOARDS

CELEBRATING THE ABILITIES OF OHIO'S 80,000 INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES OF MRDD



Ready, Set ... Convention Is October 27-29

It is not too late to make plans to attend the 25th anniversary *Ohio Association of County Boards of MRDD (OACB) ANNUAL CONVENTION* to be held Monday through Wednesday, Oct. 27-29. We are pleased to present Kim Peek, "The Real Rain Man", who will be present with his father, Fran Peek, throughout the entire conference. In addition, Nancy Thaler, Executive Director of the *National Association of State Developmental Disability Director Services* in Washington, D.C. will be a feature presenter. Dave Miller, a Board Member in Wood County and the very first President of the *OACB* will be joining us for a special event celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the *OACB*.

At the 2007 ANNUAL CONVENTION, we debuted an Art & Vendor Show, which displayed products made by individuals with developmental disabilities. This event was such a huge success we are proud to sponsor the 2ND ANNUAL ART & VENDOR SHOW from 4:30 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 28. This is a great way to shop for early Christmas gifts while enjoying the company of other conference attendees.

As we do every year, we will recognize individuals for their dedicated service to



Some of the highlights from last year's convention included these award winners. Above, longtime Auglaize Board Member Gweynne Freytag received a *Distinguished Service Award*, presented to her by *Auglaize County Board of MRDD* Superintendent Al Willis. Below, Rep. Fred Strahorn (D-Montgomery) gave an emotional speech as he accepted one of two *OACB* "legislator of the year" honors. Jimmy Stewart (R-Washington) received the other "legislator of the year" award.

individuals with developmental disabilities. The *Distinguished Service Award* will be presented to a Board Member from small, medium and large counties. In addition, we will present the annual Betty Macintosh Award, Ken Legats Award, Partners in Excellence Awards, and will honor the Board Members from the first *OACB Board* 25 years ago.

The 25TH ANNUAL CONVENTION will be held at the Hilton at Easton. While there are no rooms now available at the Hilton, you can receive special *OACB* rates the Hampton Inn & Suites at Easton, as well



as the Courtyard Marriott. Both the Hampton Inn and the Courtyard Marriott will provide complimentary transportation to the Hilton.

A Word From Our President ...

Siblings Bear Awesome Responsibilities

By Robert Milliken

President, OACB

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The one constant I have found as I have talked to the hundreds of people I have had the opportunity to meet since becoming a Board Member for the Stark County Board of MRDD and an OACB Trustee is this – everyone has a story.

Some of the stories would bring the toughest person I know to tears. Others will have you doubled over in



Robert Milliken

laughter. More times than not, they are simply stories of how families cope with the challenges that inevitably cross their paths as they do their best to help a loved one with developmental disabilities.

All of us are framed by our history. For me, my story and my history are entwined with the facts of my childhood, and growing up with two older brothers who had developmental disabilities. Those memories and experiences have shaped the way I perceive the world of developmental disabilities, and are the foundation for the votes I make as a County Board of MRDD member and a Trustee for the OACB.

A unique perspective that I bring to the table is that of a sibling. When I talk to other siblings across the state, they

share many of my experiences and as such, many of my thought processes. It occurred to me that my role may be to share that perspective with others, as it is very different.

One of my earliest memories as a young child – we're talking 4 or 5 years of age – is my father telling me it would be my responsibility to care for my older brothers when I was older. While most siblings I talk to throughout the state consider it a privilege to care for their brother or sister, I would encourage parents to be careful on the level of burden they lay on their children. While many siblings are happy to care for their brother or sister with a developmental disability, they need to come to that

See "Milliken"
Continued on Page 6

Stewart, Strahorn Introduce Bill At Conference

Led by members of his own House District, Representative Jimmy Stewart has asked a longtime friend of the developmental disability community to partner with him to introduce groundbreaking legislation.

Representatives Jimmy Stewart and Fred Strahorn introduced bipartisan legislation to take the words "mental retardation" out of the name of *Ohio Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities* during the OHIO SELF-DETERMINATION CONFERENCE at the University Plaza Hotel in Columbus on Sept. 17.

"This piece of legislation is constituent driven," Representative Stewart said.

See "Bill"
Continued on Page 4



To the cheers, tears and ovations by more than 200 individuals, many with developmental disabilities, Representatives Jimmy Stewart and Fred Strahorn introduced House Bills 620 and 621 that will take the words "mental retardation" out of the name of the *Ohio Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities*. Pictured above are (seated) Jason Licht, Andy Linebaugh, Glenda Murray, (standing) Athens County Board Member Margaret Demko, Representative Strahorn, Representative Stewart, and Athens County Board of DD Superintendent Jody Harris.

Protection Of Consumers Is Top Priority

By Dan Ohler

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As I travel throughout the state and visit your *County Boards of MRDD*, I am always impressed with how many of you are accomplishing, in spite of our current economic situation. I am

afraid that ingenuity is going to be put to the test even further in the next couple of years as our state lawmakers deal with the economic crisis that Ohio's government is facing.



Dan Ohler

We had anticipated an ugly battle for the biennium budget in 2009. No one had anticipated those 10-percent cuts would come six months early, which is the issue we are facing now. For some counties, this has been completely devastating news, and programs and services already have been cut back. Other counties have not been hurt at all. We have a handful of counties that get less than 5-percent of their entire budget from state subsidies. They certainly are the minority.

The OACB is very concerned about how consumers will be affected by these financials cuts. One of the things we have been most pleased about in our meetings with *Ohio Department of MRDD* Director John Martin is that he doesn't refer to budget lines when talking about money – he talks about consumers and their services. We have been told that Governor Ted Strickland has

See "Ohler"
Continued on Page 6



Josh Maddux works for a local Mary Kay Cosmetic salesperson, and is sealing items into a bag.

Paychecks, Pride In Fayette

October is NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT month, and throughout Ohio, good businesspeople will be thanking their local *County Boards of MRDD* for giving them a strong, capable work force.

Fayette County in central Ohio is fairly typical of many small counties throughout Ohio. What it may lack in numbers it more than makes up in heart, gumption and pride.

"I have a lot of jobs, and I always do my best," said Ronnie Morris, a client at the *Fayette County Board of MRDD*. "My employers think I do a good job. I just think I'm doing my job."

Ronnie is one of more than 30 people served by the *County Board of MRDD* who works in the community, accord-

ing to Mark Schwartz, who has been *Fayette County Board of MRDD's* Adult Services Director for six years.

"Everybody loves getting a paycheck. When it is a payday, everybody is waving their checks and saying 'look how much I made!'" Schwartz said.

The local Wal-Mart also is one of the big winners in the work program. Not only do they employ several individuals who receive services from the *Fayette County Board of MRDD* in custodial work, they also are the recipient of much of their money. "Everyone wants to go to Wal-Mart and spend their money on payday. Plus going out to eat is a big deal," Schwartz said.

See "Employment"
Continued on Page 6

Best PR Advice: Leave Your Office Behind

By Linda Oda

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We all have heard the old saying, “when the going gets tough, the tough get going.”



Linda Oda

In some instances, that means people “get going” by running for the hills because they don’t want to deal with the issue. But in most instances,

the “tough” are those of us who hunker down and prepare for the fight.

With the news out of Columbus these days, we really don’t have much of a choice. We either fight for our 80,000 consumers, or we really should be looking for a different line of work. Let’s face it – if money was never a problem or there were no difficult issues to tackle, most of us wouldn’t have jobs.

Since the bad financial news began flowing out of Columbus about six months ago, I have had the opportunity to attend several meetings hosted by several different stakeholder groups. Truthfully, the dialogue from all of them was pretty much the same.

From a communications standpoint, it does seem that a lot of people are panicking, and it is fairly obvious who those

people are. They are the ones who are pointing fingers at other people, and saying that others should take more responsibility to make these problems go away.

If only it were that simple.

The first thing *County Boards of MRDD* must know and act upon is the knowledge that everyone – repeat, everyone! – must be communicating with their legislators. Please rest assured that the OACB is in constant contact with our lobbyist Tom Pappas, government officials, and legislators. But they need to hear from other people.

There are 99 members of the *House of Representatives* and 33 members of the *Senate*. I can tell you personally when I talk to any of our legislators, I am so pleased that they are actually listening and seem to have a heart for what we are trying to accomplish. No one has been disrespectful, and certainly none of the legislators I have talked to have told me they won’t be mindful of our financial situation.

But there are 132 of them. No one person can be expected to have a personal relationship with 132 diverse legislators.

Want to know which legislator listens to me most? Shannon Jones. The reason is pretty simple. Shannon is my legislator. She lives in my neighborhood, knows me and my family personally,

and knows that my family and I talk to other voters in her district.

All of you hold the exact same ability to garner the attention of your state legislators. If you do not know their name or contact information, please contact me and I will get you everything you need.

We have a long and difficult fight in front of us to maintain any semblance of our current financial outlook. One person, five people or even a dozen cannot get this job done. It is going to take everyone, working together, to make the impact we need in the *General Assembly*.

Those in leadership positions (superintendents, board presidents, etc.) already should have strong relationships with their legislators. If you do not, it is not too late. Establish those relationships now. Your legislators are in your counties between now and Election Day November 4. There has never been an easier time to meet them.

As someone who has been in the communications field for 30 years, I can tell you that the organizations with the best public relations are the ones where everyone takes responsibility for doing their part. It is time for people to move out of their safe environments and into the political arena.

The future of Ohio’s 80,000 most vulnerable citizens depends on it.

Bill (From Page 2)

“Advocates from my district, especially in Athens County, have convinced me this is the right thing to do for those with developmental disabilities in Ohio.”

Representative Stewart said he reached out for Representative Strahorn’s support because “Fred has shown a passion to help Ohio’s 80,000 developmentally disabled individuals.” Both Representatives Stewart and Strahorn have been recog-

nized as “Legislators of the Year” by the OACB

There are 10 counties that have already unofficially changed their name to *County Board of Developmental Disabilities*. However, due to how the current statutory language is written, they cannot legally remove the term ‘mental retardation’ from their agency name. The bill introduced would permit them to do so.



Six OACB Delegate Resolutions Reviewed

All 88 *County Boards of MRDD* are encouraged and expected to have a delegate at the *25TH ANNUAL OACB CONVENTION* at the Easton Hilton on Monday, Oct. 27 at 6 p.m. for the Delegate Assembly.

This year, we have six issues facing the delegates. In an effort to give County Board Members the information they need when making decisions, the *OACB* has put together a synopsis of these resolutions.

OACB's staff cannot and will not take a stance of any of these resolutions. However, we thought it was prudent to spell out what the resolutions are and their effects to our County Board Members.

1) Re-districting regions from which *OACB trustees* are selected. The reason for this resolution is frequently, there will be 2-3 people who want to serve from one region, and other regions won't have any because some regions are larger than others. The re-districting puts 11 counties in each region so there is balance. Also, it adds two seats statewide. Again, the purpose is so that more *County Boards of MRDD* Members have the opportunity to serve statewide. If the resolution doesn't pass, the regions will stay the way they are today.

2) This resolution has been generated by *Delaware County Board of DD*. If approved, *County Boards of MRDD* would be able to purchase property without seeking approval from their county commissioners, similar to the way residential homes are purchased. If delegates approve the legislation, *OACB* staff would lobby the *General Assembly* to change the laws so that this can

occur. This may put us in conflict with the *County Commissioners Association of Ohio* (our representative on the *Commission to Reform Local Government*) in front of the *General Assembly* on this issue. If delegates approve this resolution, it is important to note that it simply gives the *OACB* staff the directive to lobby for this change in the OHIO REVISED CODE.

3) This resolution modifies the attendance for Trustee members attending *OACB* Trustee meetings. If it passes, trustees will have a better understanding of what the attendance requirements are. If it doesn't pass, the same confusion will remain in the policy.

4) This resolution was generated by *The Preble County Board of MRDD*. Similar to Resolution 2, if delegates approve the resolution, it would give a directive to the *OACB* staff to lobby the *General Assembly* to allow general operating funds to be used to operate levies conducted on behalf of *County Boards of MRDD*. If it passes, the *OACB* staff will begin asking legislators to approve a new law, giving *County Boards of MRDD* the ability to pay for levy expenses out of their general funds, similar to how mental health boards pay for their levies. If the resolutions fails, *County Boards of MRDD* would continue to use the same practice of having an outside committee raise money for levy operations.

5) *Erie County Board of MRDD* has asked for a resolution that would require the *OACB* to conduct a customer service survey every year,

and those results would be incorporated into the *OACB's* Strategic Plan on an annual basis. If it passes, the *OACB* would hire an independent contractor to conduct the annual survey, which could result in additional fees to *County Boards of MRDD* because of the costs of the surveys and implementation costs. It also would negate long-term planning as each year, the survey would dictate an annual strategic plan. If it fails, the *OACB* would continue to run customer service surveys by independent contractors every four years, as recommended by the *Ohio Association of Non-Profit Organization*. Those survey results are used in the *OACB's* 5-year strategic planning, which is updated on an annual basis. The cost of the survey every four years is already built into *County Boards of MRDD* fees.

6) From *Athens, Allen, Butler and Union County Boards of MRDD*, a resolution that would require dropping "mental retardation" from the names of all *County Boards of MRDD*. If it passes, a policy would be developed on implementing this change. If it fails, the names of *County Boards of MRDD* would remain intact.

We hope this gives *County Board of MRDD* Members the information they need to make decisions in their local counties so that their delegates will know how to vote on each of these important resolutions.

As always, if you need additional information or have concerns, contact Director of Communication Linda Oda by phone at 513-218-4851 or by email at loda@oacbmrdd.org.

Ohler *(From Page 3)*

taken the same approach. When it came to budgetary cuts, he talked to his directors who serve Ohio's most vulnerable people and asked, "What will this do to the services these people are getting?" That is exactly what our state leadership should be asking.

Just like crisis we face at home, the best way to tackle any problem like this is to face it head on. When talking to your staff, let them know that Ohio is in deep financial straits, and you are depending on them to find new and innovative ways to reduce the amount of dollars spent.

Encourage your staff to find ways to cut costs, especially at the administrative level since these costs typically do not affect the services our consumers so desperately need. Maybe you want to initiate a cost savings contest. In any event, no one person has all the ideas and knowledge in these situations. The entire staff needs to be involved.

The *OACB* has already issued three *NewsAlerts* this year about upcoming budget cuts, and we will continue to stay on top of these issues. Not a day goes by that we are not talking to a cabinet-level state administrator, one of the top directors at the *ODMRDD* or a legislator about the budget. The good news is, everyone seems to be on the same page as far as budgetary panning. The bad news is, none of the news is good.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of our staff. *OACB* is available to provide training technical assistance during this difficult time. Kim Linkinhoker and Lori Stanfa have more than 60 years of combined experience in this, and are available to assist you.

The key to weathering this storm is to deal with this crisis now. If you need help, ask.

Milliken *(From Page 2)*

conclusion on their own. Many siblings are overcome by the responsibility and become resentful that their life's choices were made for them.

Just as importantly, do not leave a sibling out of the decision-making process when short or long term situations are discussed. Even younger children have the capacity to understand some situations, and by including everyone in on the decisions, there will be a better "buy in." That will result in siblings being more apt to participate in work or recreational experiences with their sibling.

It is understandable that parents are consumed by the needs and challenges a child with developmental disabilities brings. Certainly, they will spend more time and resources with that child. The very nature of developmental disabilities requires countless physician visits, therapies, school meetings, and the list goes on and on.

For siblings, it may appear that the parent is spending an unbelievable amount of time and resources on the child with developmental disabilities –

at their expense. Again, it is easy for resentment to build when a child is feeling left out.

As adults, we all realize that no parents want to spend their time and resources on doctor's visits and all those things that go long with raising a child with developmental disabilities. For a child, though, a parent missing a baseball game to go to a therapy session (or even an MRDD meeting!) can seem like an unfair amount of time to one child versus another.

It's hard parenting a child with developmental disabilities. I am certain of that. I am even more certain – having lived through the experience first-hand – that it is difficult being raised in a household with someone with developmental disabilities.

Robert Milliken has been a Board Member for the Stark County Board of MRDD for 8 years. He has been an OACB Trustee for three years, and currently serves as President.

Employment *(From Page 3)*

Fayette County's ACE (Accessing Community Employment) Club is a winning program on many levels. Not only are people gainfully employed and earning a paycheck, but they have been ambassadors for the *Fayette County Board of MRDD* in the community.

"Our folks fit right in. People in the community know they have a disability, but they know them as people, and they really aren't seen as different," Schwartz explained.

About five individuals from *the ACE Club* participate in a mowing and landscaping service. They are busy because people in the community know they do a good job at a good price.

"When I'm driving a mower, I think about keeping a straight line," said Robbie Laird. Robbie's love for mowing made him a perfect match for the mowing and landscaping enclave, Schwartz said.

Mowing also has helped Robbie maintain his love for "anything with sugar." He also helps maintain the rest area on I-71 in Fayette County. Not surprisingly, his favorite part of that job is the vending machines.

For everyone in the *ACE Club*, Ronnie sums up the general consensus. "ACE jobs get me out of the house, and I just like to work."

OPAC-MR Golf Outing



The Ohio Political Action Committee for Mental Retardation (OPAC-MR) hosted its annual golf outing September 25. There were 76 golfers and many volunteers who participated, making it a big success. The golf outing is the primary annual fundraising event for the OPAC-MR. Proceeds fund the political education efforts of OPAC-MR that support passage of legislation to improve the quality of services to Ohio's citizens with developmental disabilities. We look forward to your participation in the 2009 golf outing!

