



## BCB School Grant Funds Hospitality Curriculum

The hospitality industry is looking for skilled, reliable employees and finding them in graduates from the Hospitality program at the Belmont Career Center.

With the help of a \$5,000 grant from the Belmont County Board of DD, the Career Center purchased Skills Tasks and Results Training (START), a job-training program from the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute that prepares young adults with disabilities for work in the hospitality industry, which includes hotels, motels, and restaurants.

Paula Norman, Special Education Coordinator at the Career Center, said that START gives students marketable skills so they can enter the workforce after graduation.

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*Dustin shows off the new floor cleaning machine that he has mastered in the Hospitality program at Belmont Career Center.*

## Bob Quirk Takes Seat on Board



*The Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities is pleased to welcome Robert Quirk of St. Clairsville to the Board. Bob, who was appointed by the county commissioners, fills the seat vacated by Mark McVey. Bob spent 27 years as an assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Belmont County, retiring in 2009. He is active in the community and has served on a number of other boards.*

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"These targeted students are fully capable of holding competitive jobs in our community if the appropriate training is provided," Norman said. "This program further enhances the training already being provided by a career technical education."

The Belmont Career Center is on trend. Careers in the hospitality industry nationwide and locally are on the uptick. The influx of workers associated with the oil and gas industry has resulted in 97 percent occupancy rate at Belmont County hotels and motels and a new motel will soon be built in the county.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average salary for a housekeeper in the hotel industry is just over \$20,000, which is significantly higher than what a person with a disability earns in a sheltered work setting.

Ramona Tharp is the Hospitality program teacher who nurtures the skills and abilities of each student enrolled in the program.

"For parents, their goal is for their kids to get out of

school and lead a normal life," Tharp said. "Our goal is to get all our students gainfully employed."

The curriculum is designed to teach basic skills first, like learning how to cook for one, and then more complex, work-related tasks are introduced. The Hospitality students learn cooking skills in a fully-equipped kitchen and housekeeping duties in a simulated hotel room setting. They also operate the school store.

While learning how to properly make a bed, clean a floor, or restock supplies is important, Tharp also teaches the characteristics of a good employee.

"My big thing is work ethic," she said. "We talk about respect, being on time, and the importance of a positive attitude."

Tharp noted that some students are more independent and will be able to work without supports while others will need job coaches.

"There is, however, no doubt in my mind that every one of my students can work at a job," Tharp said.

*The BCBDD School Grant Program provides financial resources to public school districts and the career center for additional resources that help children with disabilities reach their full potential.*

***"There is no doubt in my mind that every one of my students can work at a job."***

**-Ramona Tharp,  
BCC Hospitality  
Program Instructor**



*Students in the Belmont Career Center's Hospitality program are pictured above. Seated are Cory and Lari Beth. Standing, left to right, are Dustin, Crystal, Amanda, and Bridgette.*



# Common Sense

By Stephen L. Williams, Director of Operations

Humorist and social commentator Will Rogers once said that “*Common sense ain’t common*,” a less than subtle remark about the lack of sound judgment in the world. It does seem that the common sense approach is often ignored, even though it yields the best results.

When it comes to arranging supports for children and adults with disabilities, the Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities is driven by what will produce the best results. Our responsibility to the people we serve can begin at their birth and continue throughout their entire lives, 24/7, 365 days per year. That is an important fact and the reason why we take a common sense approach to the way we do business and support people with disabilities.



Stephen L. Williams

**“People with disabilities are a willing and able resource in our community. When you tap into their skills and abilities you not only make a positive difference in their lives, but in the life of our community.”**

When we saw our financial resources decreasing several years ago, we took a common sense approach and began sharing certain administrative functions with the Harrison and Noble County Boards of Developmental Disabilities. By forming the BHN Alliance, all three boards have remained financially stable and services have not diminished, despite substantial decreases in funding and increased costs.

When we started asking people with developmental disabilities what they wanted in life instead of telling them what they could have, that was a common sense approach, too. By giving the people we serve control over their lives, they became happier and more successful.

Now, as we work to expand opportunities in our communities for those we serve, we’re again taking a common sense approach. Our reach can only go so far and that is why we are partnering with the public schools, private providers, and others to locate, create and support opportunities that help people with disabilities achieve their goals. These partnerships mean that employers, co-workers, teachers, and neighbors are recognizing the

valuable contributions people with disabilities make to their community. Whether they use a wheelchair, have autism, or Down Syndrome, everyone has something to offer – on the job, in school, and volunteering in the community.

If you’re looking for a reliable and competent employee, look for someone with a disability. If you need help with your volunteer activities, call on someone with a disability. People with disabilities are a willing and able resource in our community. When you tap into their skills and abilities you not only make a positive difference in their lives, but in the life of our community. And that makes a lot of sense.

## BCBDD Community Report

The BCBDD 2011 Community Report is now available online at [www.bcbdd.org](http://www.bcbdd.org). It details the Board’s accomplishments of the past year and what people with disabilities are accomplishing in their lives. Full of photos and information, copies are available at the Board office or by contacting Pamela McCort at 740-695-0407, ext. 335, or via email at [pmccort@bcbdd.org](mailto:pmccort@bcbdd.org).



## SSA Plays Key Role in People's Lives

There are many acronyms in the developmental disabilities field, but none more familiar than SSA –Service and Support Administration.

Three members of the SSA team of the BHN Alliance gave a presentation to the Belmont County Board of Directors at its annual training on March 8th. SSA Team Leader Darlene Pempek and SSAs Amber DeVenzio and Nate King shared real-life examples of the work they do in support of people with disabilities.

SSAs coordinate supports like transportation, day habilitation, residential and Family Support Services. They write the Individual Service Plan and monitor services to make sure they are of the highest quality and that people are satisfied.

There are eight SSAs – Joey DiCesare, Loretta Edgell, Amanda Tharp, Pam Tomich, Tabitha Weisend, Heather Willis, Amber and Nate. SSA Team Leader Darlene Pempek, Administrative Assistant Ame Dietz and Medicaid Services Manager Jennifer Lohan complete the team.

In Ohio's County Board system, the SSA Department is the single point of accountability and Darlene Pempek stressed the importance of the relationships that each SSA has developed.

"They know what is going on in each person's life," she said.

The SSA Department is the initial point of contact when someone requests services. In recent years, this first step, or intake, has changed. A home visit is arranged first.

"We can then get a feel for what the person needs," Darlene told the board. She noted that this takes more time, but it builds relationships, keeps families in control and lowers costs.

Each SSA has special skills and abilities and those are matched with the person requesting services. Nate has a higher percentage of people who are on the Individual Options waiver, which requires a lot of desk time and deadlines. Darlene

remarked that when she asked Nate if he wanted to adjust his responsibilities, he said he did not, because of relationships he has with the people he serves.

Amber talked about her experience helping an individual relocate from a developmental center where he had lived for many years. She noted that the SSA Dept. has a 24-hour answering service and each SSA carries the cell phone on a monthly basis.

The SSA Department utilizes a team approach and meets each week. "Because of the team approach, all SSAs are fully informed about what is going on in people's lives so when issues arise, everyone knows the person involved and their circumstances," Amber said.

Marlin Harper, vice-president of Board said, "We're proud of our SSAs. I saw you at work last year in an emergency situation and know how good you are at what you do."



*Service and Support Administrators are responsible for making sure people with disabilities receive the supports and services they need. Members of the SSA team of the BHN Alliance are pictured here. Seated, left to right: SSAs Amanda Tharp, Amber DeVenzio, Pam Tomich and Tabitha Weisend. Standing: SSA Joey DiCesare, Administrative Assistant Ame Dietz, SSA Team Leader Darlene Pempek, Medicaid Services Manager Jennifer Lohan, and SSAs Loretta Edgell and Nate King. Not pictured: Heather Willis.*



# Mary Lou Named 'Everyday Hero'

Mary Lou Kent, an advisor for People First Belmont County and Belco Works' employee, was recognized by the Wheeling Nailers as an "Everyday Hero" at the March 16th game.

The Everyday Hero program is aimed at recognizing those who go above and beyond to help the lives of others. Mary Lou has certainly done that. For the past 27 years, she has devoted countless hours at work and in her personal life to help adults with developmental disabilities lead productive and fulfilling lives. Mary Lou's advocacy for their rights is evidenced in her mentorship of the People First initiative. As an advisor, she works tirelessly year round on local and statewide fundraisers, meetings

and conferences. For the past 15 years she has also volunteered to lead Belco Works Employee Council, a group of workers whose role it is to improve the worksite for all people served.

Mary Lou was nominated as an Everyday Hero by the management team at Belco Works, who described her as a great role model for others as she strives to enable adults with disabilities to be fully immersed and involved in their communities.

As an Everyday Hero, Mary Lou received a prize pack that included 10 tickets good for any hockey game during the season, an autographed hockey stick, and dinner for two at River City.



Mary Lou Kent

## QUALITY CORNER

# Creating a Better Quality of Life for the People We Serve

*By Lea Sicurella, Quality of Life Trainer*

Spring has sprung and so has an abundance of pollen and allergies. Many of us suffer from runny or stuffy noses, itchy, watery eyes, and headaches this time of year. In any two-week period, you might be one of those who comes to work with a headache that affects your work and your energy level.

Do the children and adults we serve suffer from the same symptoms as us? More than likely, yet we might never know it because they may not be able to effectively communicate what they are feeling. That means those of us who support them must be aware of changes in their moods and activity levels and search for the reasons why.

If you notice something uncharacteristic about someone, it could mean he or she is dealing with the same seasonal allergies and symptoms as everyone else. If an individual refuses to do something, is squinting his or her eyes or hitting himself in the head, it could mean something as simple as a headache. Provide a little TLC by placing a cool damp wash cloth on his forehead and dimming the lights. That might be all it takes, or a little Tylenol from the nurse.

The people we serve have a lot of the same issues we do, but can have great difficulty conveying them to us. That's why they manifest in different actions. The people we serve don't mean to frustrate us or gain our attention for no reason. They are simply trying to find a way to communicate a problem and to, hopefully, get some help.

So, the next time you have a headache at work, think about the people we serve and how many of them may be having a headache that day, too. By recognizing this and offering some simple forms of support, you can form a great relationship and create a better quality of life for the children and adults with disabilities we serve.

*Lea Sicurella is one of a group of staff members from the Belmont and Harrison County Boards of DD, Belco Works, Paramount Support Services, and Tomorrow's Corner who received intensive Positive Culture Initiative training through the Ohio Association of County Boards to become among the first Quality of Life trainers in Ohio. To learn more about the Positive Culture Initiative, log onto [www.oacbdd.org](http://www.oacbdd.org)*

# The Value of Play

Bronte Showalter's preschool class at the School of Hope enjoyed a fun time at Tumblin Tots, a unique play center in Wheeling. Tumblin Tots is 1100 square feet of play equipment that allows children 8 years old and under to explore movement through play, music, peer interaction and a variety of unique activities. To learn more, log onto [www.tumblintots.com](http://www.tumblintots.com)



Jacob tries out the rock wall at Tumblin Tots and learns that he's pretty good at it.



Sidney climbed the giant tree and emerged from the clubhouse at the top with a smile.



The joy on Ethan's face says it all - Riding a race car at Tumblin Tots is fun!

## 2012 Board of Directors



*The 2012 Board members of the Belmont County Board of Developmental Disabilities elected officers at the January meeting. Seated in the front, left to right, are: Marlin Harper, vice-president; Cynthia Tourville, secretary; and Jay Rodak, president. Standing, from left, are John Rataiczak, Amy Dias, Annette Wiater and Robert Quirk. The Board meets on the second Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. in the Board offices at 330 Fox-Shannon Place, St. Clairsville.*



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To contact the editor, submit an article or subscribe, please call or write to:

Pamela McCort  
Communications Coordinator  
Belmont CBDD  
330 Fox-Shannon Place  
St. Clairsville, Ohio 43950  
740-695-0407 ext. 335  
[pmccort@bcbdd.org](mailto:pmccort@bcbdd.org)



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# Infant/Toddler Swim More Than Just Fun

When County Board aquatics assistant Tina Hall came up with the idea to expand the Infant/Toddler Swim to more than once a year with Help Me Grow participants, little did she know how popular it would become.

Every Friday morning, the County Board's swimming pool is where infants and toddlers with and without disabilities can be found enjoying the benefits of swimming with their moms.

This program option started in the fall of 2011 when Tina approached Chris Lubic, the aquatics instructor, with the idea to offer more swimming opportunities to babies and toddlers in Early Intervention. This idea fit perfectly into the County Board's goal of reaching out and offering its resources in ways that benefit those within the community.

Babies reap developmental and cognitive benefits from the water. By bringing them into the pool with their parents, the parents could network and support one another, a core component to Early Intervention. In the spirit of parent support, one mother whose child was in Early Intervention was allowed to invite a friend with her children. Siblings of the infants and toddlers were also invited.



*Tina Hall keeps a watchful eye on little Caleb during the infant/toddler swim held each Friday in the BCBDD pool.*

There are currently 10 children and their moms who attend. The swimming is informal in nature. Parents talk and offer advice to one another while spending quality time with their children.

"The moms support one another," Tina said. "Another benefit is that the parents of the typical children see the experience of parents who have children with disabilities, and that develops understanding."

Tina is more than a lifeguard for the swim participants. She is a practical resource for parents. More than 20 years ago, Tina became a foster parent in the

Therapeutic Network in Belmont County and she is always willing to share the joys and challenges she encountered when she adopted her son with disabilities many years ago.

For now, the swim takes place on Friday mornings, but Tina would eventually like to offer an after-hours' swim session so fathers can be involved.

To learn more about the Infant/Toddler Swim, contact BCBDD Aquatics Instructor Chris Lubic at 740-695-0460, ext. 306.

## Swimming Benefits Children with Disabilities

- Young children develop more muscle tone and strength in the water because they can move freely without restriction.
- The unique properties of water allow children to work on developmental skills such as crawling, rolling, walking, and jumping.
- If specific physical therapy is recommended, water can assist, support, or resist depending on the goal.
- Motor planning, speech, strength, and coordination are just a few areas that can improve as a result of time in the water.
- Many children with disabilities crave deep pressure. The hydrostatic pressure of water provides a "blanket" of deep pressure to the child's largest organ-the skin.
- Spending quality one-to-one time with total focus on the child by the parent aids in the bonding process.
- Young children who swim regularly often have improved appetites and sleeping patterns.
- Drowning is the third cause of infant fatality; however, it is believed that if children are familiar with the aquatic environment from an early age, they have a better chance of survival if they are ever in a potentially dangerous situation near water.



330 Fox-Shannon Place  
St. Clairsville, OH 43950



## LOCAL GIRLS DELIVER 2012 AWARENESS MESSAGE



Kati Hans, Haylee Zinn, Joy Berka and Kelsi Weaver know that "Our Community is Better Together" and lent their image to promote that 2012 Developmental Disabilities Awareness theme. The girls, who are all from Belmont County, are featured prominently on posters, billboards and other awareness materials that were on display throughout Ohio during March. They are all members of American Heritage Girls.

Kelsi, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, attends Martins Ferry Elementary School. She has always been actively involved in her community, attending cheerleading camp, participating in school plays and church programs. She joined the American Heritage Girls two years ago and participates in all AHG activities, even canoeing with her friends at camp one summer.