



MurrayRidgeCenter  
HELPING PEOPLE... FOR A LIFETIME

# The View From The **RIDGE**

Lorain County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities  
**Fall Quarterly**

**FALL 2024**



**Joshua Haught, Jessica Mager, Annie Cirilo, Amanda Spreng, Juliaunna Mason, Dylan Stearns, Judy Tesar, and Jessica Massey** outside of the Valley of the Eagles in Elyria, where they had lunch with the Mayor of North Ridgeville

## Lunch with **The Mayor**

On July 17th, our Service & Support Administration Department coordinated a self-advocacy luncheon with **Kevin Corcoran**, the Mayor of North Ridgeville, and more than 60 adults eligible for services from the Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The luncheon provided an opportunity for an open-ended conversation, and attendees were able to ask about topics that are important to them. At the gather-

ing, the mayor explained his role in the city and how he likes to work closely with the residents of North Ridgeville. The event, which was paid for through the Myrtle Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation of Lorain County, was a great way for those we serve to practice self-advocacy. Thank you to Mayor Corcoran and everyone involved for working to make this luncheon possible!



**Dylan Stearns** with North Ridgeville's Mayor, **Kevin Corcoran**

# October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month



Did you know that according to the National Institutes of Health, each year about 6,000 babies born in the United States have Down syndrome - that's about one in every 700 babies born in this country. Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring chromosomal condition. Since the 1980s, American families touched by Down syndrome have observed October as National Down Syndrome Awareness Month: a time to recognize that those born with Down syndrome can live happy, long and productive lives, while making valuable contributions within their communities. This month, please join us in celebrating our friends and neighbors with Down syndrome. To learn more, visit the National Down Syndrome Society website at [ndss.org](http://ndss.org).

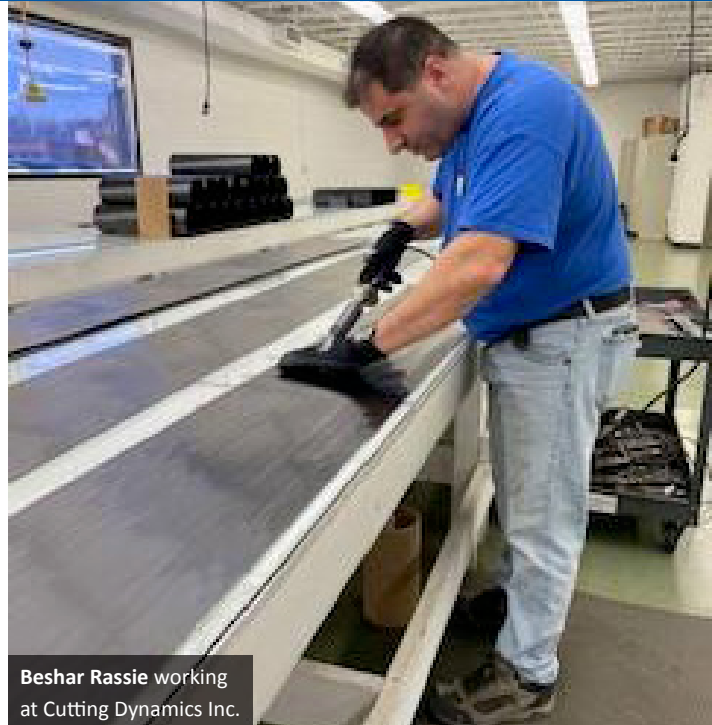
## OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH



Julie Knight working at Pizza Hut in Elyria

### Supported Employment Spotlight: Julie Knight

Julie has worked at Pizza Hut in Elyria for the past several years, where she is a diligent, hard worker. Julie lives at home with her mom and has a boyfriend, James, with whom she enjoys spending time.



Beshar Rassie working at Cutting Dynamics Inc.

### Supported Employment Spotlight: Beshar Rassie

Beshar works at Cutting Dynamics Inc. in Avon Lake, having started at the former enclave there in September, 2003. He was recruited last year to work in a full time capacity, about which he says, "This is my dream job." He lives independently in Avon Lake, and outside of work, he likes to spend time with his family and exercise.



Sean Ware working at Kendal at Oberlin

### Supported Employment Spotlight: Sean Ware

Sean works at two competitive employment sites: Kendal at Oberlin and Bill's Burgers and Swirls. He also attends our Oberlin Opportunity & Vocational Center, participates in Special Olympics, and enjoys traveling with his family. Of Sean, Vocational Placement Specialist **Lisa Reed** says "He is a great worker and is always willing to jump in and help."

Murray Ridge Center was once again pleased to participate in National Disability Employment Awareness Month, an annual awareness campaign that takes place each October. We're proud to salute the Lorain County citizens with developmental disabilities who are part of the local workforce, and the local businesses that provide jobs for these individuals. Through our Supported Employment (SE) Program, Murray Ridge Center continues to focus on finding and placing individuals in positions where they can grow and excel in today's competitive job market.

# EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AWARDS PRESENTED



The Summer Quarter's recipient of our Exceptional Service Award was **Bernadette Seitz**, a Job Coach in our Supported Employment Program nominated by **Holly Kessler** and her daughter **Dawn Hennigan**. Pictured, left to right: **Dawn Hennigan**, Job Coach **Bernadette Seitz**, **Gavin Hennigan**, and **Holly Kessler**

Recently, families and community members nominated Murray Ridge employees from various departments of the agency for the **Exceptional Service Award**. Award recipients included **Job Coach Bernadette Seitz** (left), **Music Teacher Lissa Lopez** (below left), and **Service and Support Administrator Kim Fuller** (below)



The Winter Quarter's recipient of our Exceptional Service Award was **Kim Fuller**, a Service and Support Administrator at our agency, nominated by **Mira McDermott** and her family. Pictured, left to right: Superintendent **Amber Fisher** and Service and Support Administrator **Kim Fuller**



The Fall Quarter's recipient of our Exceptional Service Award was **Lissa Lopez**, a Music Teacher at Murray Ridge School, nominated by **Moir** and **Dan Erwine**. Pictured, left to right: Board Member **Rebecca Cornman**, Murray Ridge School Music Teacher **Lissa Lopez**, and Superintendent **Amber Fisher**

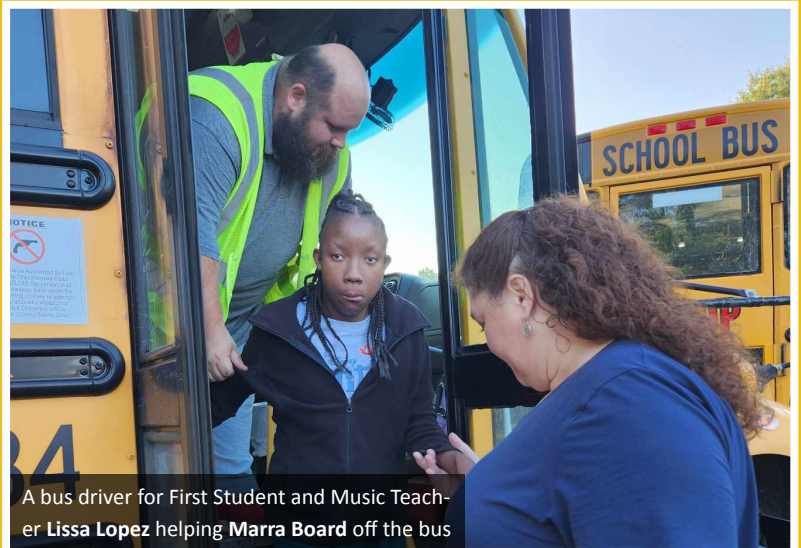
Do you know a Murray Ridge staff member who has gone "above and beyond"? If so, please submit your nomination to Kevin Naughton, Director of Communications, by phone at (440) 329-3734 or by email at [kevin@murrayridgecenter.org](mailto:kevin@murrayridgecenter.org).

Murray Ridge School Supervisor **Stacie Starr**, **Sariah Lugo**, and School Aide **Joe Croftcheck**



## A New Year at Murray Ridge School!

Thursday, August 22nd was the first day of classes for the 2024-2025 Murray Ridge School year! We would like to extend a warm welcome to all of our new students and staff members, as well as those returning for another great year of learning. For more than a half-century, our school has provided a positive and nurturing environment that enables students to develop functional skills in an environment that fosters self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment. In addition to a solid life-skills curriculum supplemented by academics, art, adaptive physical education, music, science, and more, students' classroom learning is enhanced by community experiences and volunteer opportunities.



A bus driver for First Student and Music Teacher **Lissa Lopez** helping **Marra Board** off the bus



## Brew it Smooth at the County Commissioners' Office

On September 13th, our Murray Ridge School coffee shop and vocational program, the Brew It Smooth Café, was invited to set up and serve its drinks and snacks at the Lorain County Commissioners meeting! We at Murray Ridge are grateful and fortunate to have so much community support for our endeavors to bring work experience and job training to students at Murray Ridge School. School Aide **Mary Huff**, **Brady Bella**, Teacher **Taylor Blascak**, **Jenny Sislowski**, Personal Aide **Terri Mahon**, **Tyrese Whitfield**, **Ja'Quan Warren**, Teacher **Kristin Dickerhoff**, **Ja'Laysia Brown**, **Nick Green**, **Patrick Boey**, **Evey Rodgers**, and Personal Aide **Amy Marrero**.

# EARLY INTERVENTION Special Events

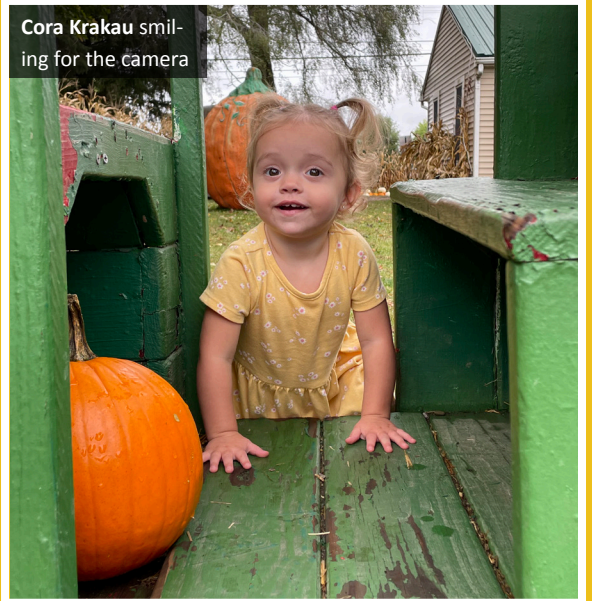
Left to right: Dorothy Andrews and Kai Catanese with Developmental Specialist Amber Bowers



## EI Visits Apple Hill's PumpkinLand

Early Intervention staff and families went to Apple Hill in Amherst on September 25th for a play date in PumpkinLand!

Cora Krakau smiling for the camera



## Lakeview Park South Ribbon Cutting Event

On September 28th, The Lorain County Children and Families First Council in partnership with Lorain City and in consultation with the Murray Ridge Early Intervention Department added an area to Lakeview Park South specifically designed for children of all abilities, ages 0-5.



Pictured above, left to right: Murray Ridge Early Intervention service recipient **Hendrix Booker** cutting the new park's ribbon with the support of (left to right) Lorain Mayor **Jack Bradley**, Hendrix's mother **Tianna Lusane**, Murray Ridge Early Intervention Supervisor **Heather Knoble**, Early Intervention Director at Neighborhood Alliance **Isaac Young**, Executive Director of the Lorain County Children and Families First Council **Chelsea Freeman-Yates** (along with her son **Bo**), Lorain City Public Property Manager **Lori Garcia**, Lorain City Parks and Recreation Superintendent **Eric Lahetta**, and Lorain City Recreation Coordinator **Mindy Stoyka**.



Either a very small Early Intervention Supervisor **Heather Knoble** holding a normal-sized pair of scissors or a normal-sized Early Intervention Supervisor **Heather Knoble** holding a very large pair of scissors

# MURRAY RIDGE IS ON PARADE!

## WOOLLYBEAR PARADE IN VERMILION

On September 29th, Murray Ridge Center was proud to once again take part in the annual Woollybear Festival Parade in Vermilion, Ohio! Our representatives came to the parade decked out in orange and brown, with a giant Woollybear decoration made by Program Specialist **Tammy Stanley** and Adult Program Instructor **Kevin Chutes** at our Oberlin Adult Opportunity & Vocational Center (OOVC). Thank you to everyone involved for making this a fun, inclusive event!



Pictured, left to right: **Christopher "John" Hall**, OOVC Secretary **Tina Tucker**, **Shari Reitenbach**, **Tiffany Harris**, OOVC Program Specialist **Tracey Lewis**, **Jeremy Foster**, **Alicia Lawrence**, **Brittany Tidd**, Developmental Specialist **Kathy Bevaque**, Superintendent **Amber Fisher**, **Charles Johnson Jr.**, Provider Compliance/Resource Specialist **Michelle Woodham**, Provider Compliance/Resource Specialist **Kim Phillips**, **Lisa Schultz**, and **Colin Ryan** in front

Murray Ridge Center has been busy making appearances at parades throughout Lorain County! On July 18th, Murray Ridge Center staff and individuals with developmental disabilities proudly represented Murray Ridge Center in Sheffield Lake's annual Community Days Parade. Participants coordinated and wore red and the announcer even called out Adult Program participant **Charles Johnson** by name! Then, on Sunday, August 14th, was the annual North Ridgeville Corn Festival's Parade! For this parade, participants wore tie dye and took on the long parade route as a team. Great job, everyone!



**Tim Quisenberry** and **Kim Herman** at the North Ridgeville Corn Festival Parade

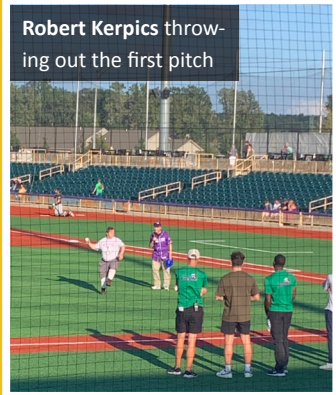


**Saundra Kilgore**, **Charles Johnson**, and **Alicia Lawrence** at the Sheffield Community Days Parade

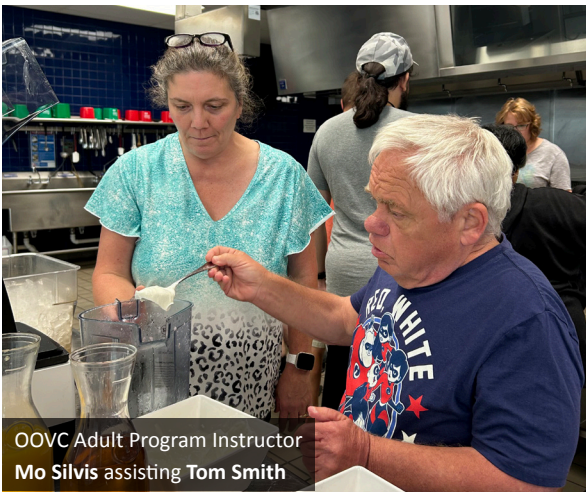
Parades and other public events like these are great opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to be represented in our communities, and to further our agency's goal of promoting community inclusion and acceptance.

# MRHC's Annual Crushers Baseball Event

On August 29th, Murray Ridge Housing Corporation (MRHC) hosted its annual trip to Mercy Health Stadium to watch the Lake Erie Crushers. This event, sponsored by MRHC, is a way that the housing board says "thank you" to its tenants; more than 75 of the tenants were present. Pictured, left to right: LCBDD Superintendent **Amber Fisher**, LCBDD Administrative Assistant **Jennifer Ryan**, MRHC Trustee **Terry "Pete" Shilling**, LCBDD SSA Manager **Nancy Hollins**, MRHC Vice Chairperson **Tim McLaughlin**, MRHC Trustee **Lynne Barth**, Maintenance Technician **Chuck Heisler**, MRHC Treasurer **Ken Oswald**, MRHC Secretary **Bill Forthofer**, **Stephanie Forthofer**, and **Charles Johnson**.



Robert Kerpics throwing out the first pitch



OVC Adult Program Instructor Mo Silvis assisting Tom Smith

# Cooking Classes at LCCC

This summer, adults eligible for our services had the opportunity to participate in eight cooking classes held at Lorain County Community College's Culinary Arts Institute. During each session, the instructor taught basic cooking skills, leading the class through an entire meal's preparation. Afterwards, the participants were able to enjoy the fruits of their labor and share them with their friends, family, and caregivers in attendance. Such activities help those we serve to grow, express themselves, build self-sufficiency, and learn how to become the best versions of themselves. This opportunity was organized by the Murray Ridge Service and Support Administration Department, and paid for through the Myrtle Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation of Lorain County.



Chefs in training! Left to right: Esther Schnable, Tyler Watkins, Sandra Kilgore, Taylor Tanner, Joyce Cox, Kyle Porter, Cathy Pence, Jacob Pantalone, Rozalynne Everett, Tom Smith and Matthew Caldwell

Lorain County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities

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**Photo of the Month:** Breaking news! Broadcasters **Ja'Quan Warren** and **Brady Bella** delivering one of their daily news broadcasts with their classmates on our Murray Ridge School Facebook Page

## Contact Us

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