

# MURRAY RIDGE COURIER



MurrayRidgeCenter  
HELPING PEOPLE...FOR A LIFETIME

## Raiders Bring the Heat at Northeast Ohio Regional Tournament

The Murray Ridge Center (MRC) Raiders basketball teams brought their incredible skills to the Northeast Ohio Regional Tournament in Geneva on February 8 and 9, as they battled tough opponents with grit, determination, and plenty of heart! Here's a recap of the action!

The Grey team dominated both the Ashtabula Lakers and the Coshocton-Hopewell Indians, earning Grey a spot in Sunday's semi-finals, where they defeated Stark DD Black. The electrifying championship game against the Carroll County Cougars ended in a nail-biting showdown, with the Cougars' final shot falling short in the game's last few seconds, securing a thrilling 20-18 victory for the Grey Raiders!



With this hard-fought win, the Grey Raiders are now headed to The Special Olympics Winter Games at The Ohio State University, March 7-9, to compete for the Division 5 State Championship. Get ready, Columbus—the Raiders are coming for the title!



Pictured top left: Assistant Coach Melanie Liddy and Megan Craig. Pictured top right: Nathan Gezzer and Jeffrey O'Brien. Pictured bottom (l-r, front): Assistant Coach Melanie Liddy, George Giganti, Kevin Long, Megan Craig, Robert Assanakis, Coach Russ Moyer; (l-r, back) Volunteer Coach Scott Gezzer, Charles Johnson Jr, Nathan Gezzer, Jeffrey O'Brien. Grey team members not present: Bobby McFadden, Daniel Montgomery, Sani Smith, and Sarah Ward.

The Raiders Red Team went head-to-head with the powerhouse Mayfield Lancers. Despite their determination and strong teamwork, the Red Team couldn't quite clinch the win—but they left it all on the court!



The Raiders Scarlet team kicked off the tournament with a bang, securing a solid win against the Stark Public Royal Knights. In their final game, the Raiders fought fiercely but fell just two points short, as a last-second three-pointer against the Summit Warriors narrowly missed the mark.

Pictured above (left), Jeremy Foster (Red Team) showing off his moves. Right, Rob Messenger (Scarlet Team) going for the layup!

# Skills for Days

The MRC Special Olympics Basketball Skills players also lit up the courts at the Northeast Ohio Regional Tournament, showing off their talents and bringing home five (5) gold medals and one (1) silver medal!



Chelsea Jenkins  
GOLD



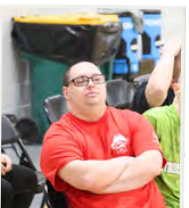
Tim Quisenberry  
GOLD



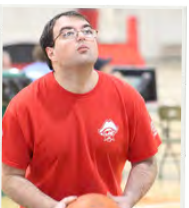
John Ahart



Dennis Johnson



Andy Prihoda

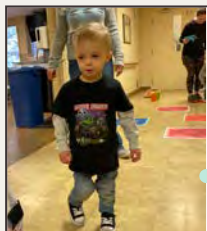


Joseph Linden



Alex Schneider

# EI Winterfest Wonderland!



MRC's Early Intervention (EI) team hosted its annual Winterfest on February 12! Seventeen EI children and their families joined in the fun—from cookie decorating to crafting Valentine's Day masterpieces and exploring sensory tables, there was something for everyone to enjoy! Attendees even got to decorate their own picture frames to take home as a keepsake. Topping off the event was a fun raffle featuring prizes generously donated by MRC staff. Thank you to all who helped make this year's Winterfest a heartwarming day of fun, connection, and community!



Pictured above, left (top - bottom): Ariel Hickman with mom enjoying music and story time; Zuri Neer with mom Jocelyn Neer and MRC Developmental Specialist Kim Gabel; Athena Guma in the sensory table area. Pictured above, middle (top - bottom): MRC Developmental Specialists Shawna Livingston and Amber Bowers; Nathan Lysaght; and the raffle basket table. Pictured above, right, MRC EI Department and Neighborhood Alliance Service staff, (front row, l-r): Melanie Liddy, Jenna Coughlin, Neighborhood Alliance Service Coordinator Jennifer Keller, Shawna Livingston, Angie Rogozinski; (back row, l-r): Kim Gabel, Bonnie Minnich, Melanie Hinton, Kathy Bevaque, Neighborhood Alliance Service Coordinator Carrington Partin, Heather Knoble, Neighborhood Alliance Service Coordinator, Kyra Smith, Ashley Balasko, Kim Ohl, Amber Bowers, Jen Doseck, Cindy Castora.




February 21 is National Caregivers Day! MRC extends our deepest gratitude to those who support people with developmental disabilities, and to everyone who dedicates their time and heart to caring for others—thank you for all that you do!

*Thank you for all that you do!*





# Making Waves at Regionals

The Canton McKinley High School pool was filled with excitement as Murray Ridge Center competed in the Special Olympics Regional Swimming Tournament on February 2! Congratulations to all our athletes!

 **Amy Trigilio**  
100 meter GOLD


 **Ryan Eliason**  
100 meter BRONZE  
50 meter freestyle 4th PLACE

 **Lutz Fazekas**  
50 meter freestyle SILVER  
25 meter freestyle 4th PLACE

 **Joseph Linden**  
50 meter freestyle BRONZE  
25 meter freestyle BRONZE

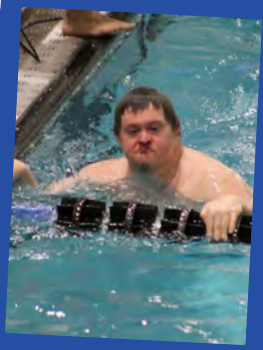
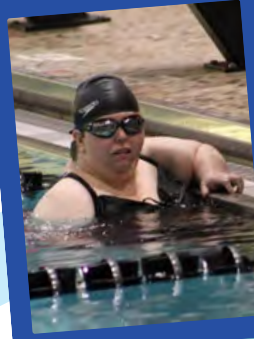
 **Kenny Martin**  
50 meter freestyle BRONZE  
100 meter 4th PLACE

 **Pamela McClain**  
50 meter backstroke BRONZE  
25 meter freestyle 5th PLACE

 **Jane Squires**  
100 meter SILVER  
50 meter backstroke SILVER

 **Justin Tucker**  
25 meter freestyle SILVER

 **Amy Trigilio, Ryan Eliason,  
Kenny Martin, Justin Tucker**  
Mixed 100 meter relay SILVER



Pictured above, right (top - bottom): Ruth Squires, Kenny Martin, Lutz Fazekas, Joseph Linden. Pictured above, middle (top - bottom): Amy Trigilio, Pamela McClain, Ryan Eliason, Ruth Squires and Justin Tucker. Pictured left (l-r): Ruth Squires, Assistant Coach Starr Price, and Justin Tucker.

# From Wish to Reality to Celebration!

It's amazing what a simple conversation can do.

A year ago, Melanie Liddy (pictured, right), Murray Ridge Center (MRC) Developmental Specialist, volunteered at the Night to Shine Prom, held at Open Door Christian School, and began chatting with Prom attendee and MRC Raiders basketball player Megan Craig (pictured, right).



Megan noticed the banners that adorned the gym walls, celebrating the school's athletes, and mentioned to Melanie that she wished the MRC teams had the same recognition.

"We work hard and do not have those," Megan shared. "I wish we had them, too—it would make us normal, like them."

That moment created a commitment between the two and set a plan into motion. Over the next few months, Megan and her new advocate, Melanie, worked together to apply for funding through MRC's R.I.C.H.E.S. Program.



Together, they created a presentation to share Megan's vision. Their hard work paid off when they won the R.I.C.H.E.S. Diamond Award and received funding to purchase banners.

Now, one year later, banners celebrating MRC Special Olympics athletes have become a reality. And the impact of this collaboration has been profound.



As banners were being hung in the Murray Ridge School gym, an athlete approached Melanie and said "Thank you for doing this." Those words reminded Melanie just how much representation and recognition matter.

Beyond the banners, Melanie and Megan's journey has forged a strong friendship and Melanie's deeper involvement in the Special Olympics community; she is now coaching Megan's team (pictured, left), an experience that—for both women—has been just as rewarding as seeing their banner idea come to life.

Small ideas can lead to big changes. Megan and Melanie have proven that a simple wish can turn into a win for all.



Pictured, back (l-r): Coaches Russ Moye and Scott Gezzer. Pictured, front (l-r): Raiders players Bobby McFadden, Robert Assanakis, Sani Smith, Charles Johnson Jr, Daniel Montgomery, Megan Craig, Kevin Long, Nathan Gezzer, Jeffrey O'Brien.





# International **LEGO** Day at MRC

January 28th was International Lego Day, and what better way to celebrate than to build something together with friends! Adult Program participants at the Lorain Opportunity Vocational Center (LOVC) built a giant house using only cardboard boxes and their imagination!



Creative masterminds and LOVC Adult Program participants pictured: (left) Steven Gonzalez and Hector Ortiz; (middle) John Armstrong; and (right) John Armstrong, Steven Gonzalez, Jasmine Zan, and Jonah Griffore.



## Paint & Sip!

Adult Program participants from the LOVC brought creativity and fun to an unexpected spot—a local McDonald's! Participants let their artistic sides shine during their very own Paint & Sip party, where they created colorful masterpieces, proving that a little paint and a lot of fun can turn any place into an art studio!



Pictured, left (l-r): Penni Shuster (staff) and Jasmine Zan; right (l-r): Michael Telloni, Trevor Doty (staff), and Vincent Skerl.

## Pizza Party!



LOVC Adult Program participants got hands-on with some delicious pizza-making at Cozzeria Pizzeria in Elyria! With the help of the friendly and welcoming Cozzeria staff, they rolled, topped, and baked their very own creations. From classic cheese to loaded-up specialties, each pizza was as unique as its maker. The best part? They got to eat their masterpieces!

Pictured, left (l-r): Jasmine Zan, David Helton, Chelsie Jenkins; right: Cozzeria staff member shows how to roll out the pizza dough!



# Join Us at the Connecting for Kids Fair!

Join MRC’s Early Intervention and Service and Support Administration Departments at the free Lorain County Resource Fair!

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND?** Anyone in Lorain County and surrounding communities concerned about a youth’s mental health, academics, or disabilities and developmental delays.

**WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?** Find resources and talk with service providers.

**WHEN?** Tuesday, March 18, 2025, from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

**WHERE?** LCCC Spitzer Conference Center, 1005 Abbe Road North, Elyria

**Scan the code** to learn more or register!



# FORE! LOVC Goes Golfing... in the Library!



Did you think libraries only had books? Not in Elyria!

On January 17, Adult Program participants from the Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center (LOVC) played miniature golf and other fun games (like Jenga!) at the Elyria Public Library.



Pictured (left): LOVC Adult Program participants; (right) Jessica Mager and Abby Kisner play Jenga.

## Boardroom Briefing – February 2025

The Lorain County Board of DD convened at 6:30 p.m. on January 27, 2025. At its annual Organizational Meeting, held immediately prior to the regular meeting of the Board and Ethics Council, Board President Bev Gedid announced the re-appointment of Board members Lisa Mager and Beverly Gedid. The Board then elected the following officers for 2025: Rebecca Cornman, Secretary; Robert Gajdos, Vice-President; and Beverly Gedid, President. President Gedid made committee appointments, and the Board established meeting dates for the remainder of 2025 before adjourning the Organizational Meeting. At its regular meeting, the Board unanimously approved a resolution to provide educational services to children ages 6-21 in the 2025/2026 school year. Director of Educational Services Dann Swift discussed the design of a summer camp for Murray Ridge School students in 2025. Superintendent Fisher provided an overview of 2024 Agency spending, as compared to the 2024 and 2025 budgets and 2023 spending.



# Stop to Pet the Animals...



Volunteering is a valuable opportunity to engage with the community, build skills, and make a meaningful impact.

And that's just what Adult Program participants from the Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center (LOVC) do once a month at the Friendship Animal Protective League (FAPL) in Elyria!

Through this experience, volunteers from MRC develop confidence, social connections, and contribute to a very important cause. Their involvement not only benefits the FAPL, but also fosters a more inclusive community!

MRC volunteers James Wilson (above) folding towels, and Dennis Johnson and John Armstrong (right) cleaning windows.

# Then Stop to Smell the Flowers!

Adult Program participants from the Lorain Opportunity and Vocational Center (LOVC) LITERALLY stopped to smell the flowers when they visited the GREAT BIG Home and Garden Show at the Cleveland I-X Center on February 3.



From towering floral displays to fish-shaped chairs, these gardening enthusiasts enjoyed a day of sights, scents, and vibrant gardens!



Pictured, top (l-r): Austin Carpenter, Emilie Grosel, Sarrah Zeiter (staff), Steven Gonzalez, Abby Kisner, Darryl Jackson, Hector Ortiz; pictured, left (l-r): Steven Gonzalez and Hector Ortiz playing checkers; pictured, right: Emilie Grosel checks out a fish chair!

# Lorain County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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## MRC Intervention Specialist Makes the Chronicle!

MRC's own Megan Martin was featured on February 7 in the Chronicle-Telegram's Career Profiles, a weekly series highlighting community jobs and career exploration. Megan shares how she got started in the field, how others who are interested can learn more, and some words of advice for those looking to get into similar careers. Scan the code to read the entire profile! Way to go, Megan! Thank you for representing MRC!



**Megan Martin**  
Intervention Specialist  
Murray Ridge Center/  
Murray Ridge School  
Elyria and Lorain County