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SOCOG's Tech Ambassador Grant Adventure

In January of 2020 SOCOG applied for and was awarded a grant by DODD to establish a program that would help encourage the use of technology in achieving a more independent life for individuals with disabilities. The grant called for a core team to recruit, interview, hire and train up to four Tech Ambassadors. These individuals would then lead at least twelve events across the state of Ohio where they would speak about how technology has impacted their own lives and have opportunities to mentor their peers.

Coming on the heels of previous experience with the Remote Supports grant in 2019, SOCOG again chose George Myers, IT Director for the Ross County Board of DD to lead the new grant. Myers said, "This grant has different goals than the Remote Supports grant, which was more focused on technology itself. Where our Mobile Smart Home gave people a chance to see how the technologies worked firsthand, the Tech Ambassador program is more focused on people and creating peer relationships that we hope will produce technology use and more independence."

Myers chose three people to join the Core Team who would establish the program and administer its activities. Courtney Davis, SOCOG's Special Projects Manager, was chosen for her abilities and experience working with the Southern Ohio Advocacy Group. Jeremy Joyce, Medicaid Services Manager for Pickaway County DD, was selected for his previous SSA experience and his participation in the Remote Supports grant. Heidi Cunningham from SOCOG was chosen for her flexibility and administrative experience.

As with many things in 2020, the Tech Ambassador grant was greatly affected by the onset of COVID-19. The Core Team had met twice by early March and the effort was oriented toward holding in-person events around the state which involved finding venues for the events and arranging travel for Tech Ambassadors and others to and from events. All grant activities were put on hold in April, when it became clear that COVID-19 would alter the landscape of in-person events all over the world. In July, the group reached out to Kyle Corbin at DODD to see if the grant could continue with events being virtual and in early August they received confirmation that DODD was behind this idea.

Tech Ambassadors.....continued

September and October found the group reaching out to counties and COGs across Ohio to recruit potential Tech Ambassadors and by mid November all interviews were completed. The Core Team concluded that they could not choose between the five best candidates to narrow the number to four, so asked DODD if they could have five Tech Ambassadors and were delighted to hear that they could! The five selected to be Tech Ambassadors were:



You can learn more about the Tech Ambassador program and keep up with events and activities by visiting the website at www.ohiotechambassadors.org or finding it on Facebook and Instagram by searching for “Ohio Tech Ambassador Network”.



TECH AMBASSADORS
Embracing Technology.
Promoting Independence.

Welcome our Ambassadors.....



**Chris
Cooley**
PORTSMOUTH, OH



**Marci
Straughter**
COLUMBUS, OH



**Nathan
Turner**
HOLLAND, OH



**Robert
Shuemak**
CINCINNATI, OH



**Tanner
Huff**
IRONTON, OH



NEW SUPERINTENDENTS—PIKE & ROSS

The Pike County Board of Developmental Disabilities would like to announce that Mr. Jeffrey Allen has taken over the role of Superintendent for the Pike County Board of Developmental Disabilities after the devastating passing of our dear friend Mr. Roger Kemper. Mr. Allen first came to the Board in 2001 as the Director of Fiscal Operations playing an integral part for our fiscal department while fulfilling the role of our Business Manager as well. Mr. Allen has been a lifetime resident of Waverly, Ohio and is very well respected in the community. He earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Ohio University and will complete the Superintendent Development Program through the Ohio Association of County Boards. Mr. Allen is dedicated to fulfilling all his duties as Superintendent and looking forward to serving his community and the individuals with disabilities in Pike County.

PIKE—JEFFREY ALLEN



ROSS—AMY BEELER



Amy is a lifelong resident of Ross County with 19 years of experience in the field of Developmental Disabilities. Most recently, she was the Executive Director of the Southern Ohio Council of Governments, which oversees 15 County Boards of Ohio. She is also very active in many disability-related and community organizations, currently serving as Treasurer of the Chillicothe-Ross Chamber of Commerce and was selected as the State of Ohio Treasurer's Office Regional Advisory Chair. Amy has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Central Michigan University.

As superintendent, Amy will steer Pioneer Center toward RCBDD's mission and vision by continuing to grow relationships with their providers, local and federal agencies, and the Ross County community.

RCBDD looks forward to welcoming Amy to this position and are excited for this new chapter at Ross County.

Amy will begin February 15, 2021 as Assistant Superintendent working alongside Interim Superintendent Rick Marriott. Rick will be staying until April 21, 2021 to assist with a smooth transition.

Red Carpet Christmas—Gallia County

The annual Christmas program at Guiding Hand School recently received the red-carpet treatment.

The program premiered in a drive-in movie format to allow for safe social distancing. In all, there were 40 students who participated in the program, ages 3-19 years. Student performances were pre-recorded during school hours with all the performances compiled into one movie. The theme for the program this year was “Christmas in the movies” and each classroom selected a Christmas movie to base their portion of the program. The following were selected by classes: *Hallmark, The Grinch, Elf, Polar Express, Rudolph, and Frosty.*

The program was recorded

“in house” with the use of Zoom and green screens, allowing each class to have virtual backgrounds which matched the theme of their portion of the program. Remote learners were also invited to record scenes/songs from their homes so that they could also be featured in the program.

“Our annual program is a great time to see each child shine on the stage; our families, students and staff all look forward to the program every year,” Laura Johnson, of Gallia County Board of Developmental Disabilities and Guiding Hand School director, said. “We

wanted to hold true to tradition with the annual production to give everyone something positive and joyful in such a difficult year. The teaching team discussed many options for how to still make the program happen while keeping everyone safe during the pandemic and ultimately came up with the idea of presenting it like a drive-in movie. Foster’s Sales & Delivery, Inc. helped make our dream come true by lending us a solid white box trailer that we were able to project the movie onto.”

ATHENS CO.....One-time increase in FSS funds provides \$23K to families in need

The recently-approved special FSS funding for COVID expenses provided just over \$23,000 to families in need. SSAs worked diligently and quickly to make sure eligible families were able to take advantage of this additional support. One family was able to purchase needed food. In addition, they were able to buy household cleaning supplies, soap and sanitizer to help reduce the spread of the virus.



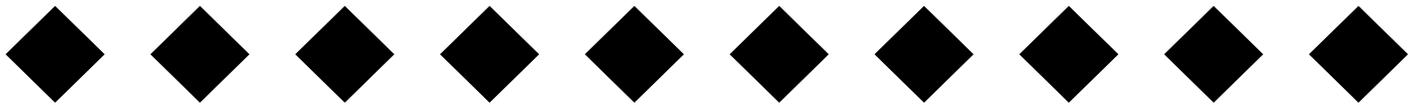
Meigs Co Canine Rescue & Adoption Center

Carleton School has been partnering with the Meigs County Canine Rescue and Adoption Center for the past couple of years to provide opportunities to participate in volunteer job experience and vocational skill training in the community for the transition age students. Colleen and her staff have been a great encouragement to the students and allow them to interact with the friendly dogs and puppies. One young man at Carleton who has participated in this activity was asked, "Do you look forward to going to the Dog Shelter?" His responses was "Yes." "What do you like to do there?" He replied, "I like mopping the floors, and cleaning windows, and looking at the dog." "Do you like to pet them?" He replied that he did. He enjoys completing these tasks as independently as possible. "I like to do it myself."

Covid-19 has impacted us all in ways we could not foresee, but it has only magnified the importance of reaching out and getting your focus off yourself and on the needs of others.



Carleton School's Transition Classroom delivers the donations gathered during their October food/supply drive for the Meigs County Canine Rescue and Adoption Center. Pictured are Ben Stairs, Instructor, Delani Cummins, Assistant Dog Warden, and Wyatt Shope, Student Volunteer.



Remaining funds used to purchase ham, turkey for Beacon families



The remaining funds allotted for the one-time initiative mentioned above were approved to be expended in another special way. The ACBDD purchased either one turkey or ham for each Beacon School family. This one-time purchase was another way of easing a small burden for the families we support during one of our most challenging years. We can only do these sorts of things with the support of the Athens County community.

Athens Co

Southern Ohio Advocacy Group



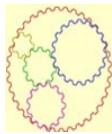
Oh, what a year! The Southern Ohio Advocacy Group has been able to continue meeting monthly through the pandemic by using the online virtual meeting platform, Zoom. Throughout the year the group has discussed their feelings and experiences with the pandemic and how the changes were affecting our daily routines and individual rights. Members who are included in the mandate are trying to stop the spread by wearing their masks. Our group is hopeful that the New Year brings some normalcy back into our lives and that we can meet in person again soon. Until further notice, our monthly meetings will be held via Zoom – upcoming meeting information can be found at: www.socog.org/staff-board/advocacy-group.html.



TRAININGS—2021

PLEASE VISIT WWW.SOCOg.ORG TO SEE OUR UPDATED TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR 2021—MAJORITY OF TRAININGS ARE HELD VIA ZOOM AT THIS TIME!

Any questions regarding training please call the office or email Myra Cryder at mcryder@socog.org.



Southern Ohio Council
A Council of Governments

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**Office hours - M-F
8:00AM-4:00PM**

The Southern Ohio Council of Governments was formed in March 1996 and began services in March 1997. The Council was created by Superintendents of County Boards of Developmental Disabilities in southern Ohio. The Council is a government entity created under Chapter 167 of the Ohio Revised Code, representing 15 County Boards of Developmental Disabilities. The Council provides administrative supports for County Boards in Adams, Athens, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties.

**We're on the web at
www.socog.org**

SOCOg Mission Statement

- **Do things together we can't do effectively and efficiently alone**
- **Offer members a trusted source of external expertise and feedback**

February 2021